Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Sunday, September 18, 1994

## What Lies in Our Power to Do

The progressive flow of bad news about water supply in the metropolis is unnerving. First, it was unquantified scarcity that had made news, but interminably. Then came a hair-raising detail: WASA water was not safe to drink, it had better be drunk after boiling or Chlorinating. This was followed by a can't-help-it-anymore disclosure that everyday half of the city's 8 million dwellers were going without potable water. Now comes the very ruffling news that this water crisis would linger for a decade. We expect the next piece of bad news to be the inevitable overshooting of even that time-frame because of a galloping city population.

Should Dhaka necessarily be condemned to a prolonged water scarcity? We don't think it should be. The supply short-fall can be met at a rate much faster than has been projected in the current plans to alleviate it. The present approach is flawed as it has no definite answer to the system loss we have allowed to grow up to 40-45 per cent. If the figure of waste hadn't reached such a level, it would have been that much easier to meet the water deficit. The shortfall is nearly equal to the system loss through pipeline leaks, open-nozzled hydrants and unauthorised connections.

The mitigation strategy we have adopted is reflective of a one-track mind. The Tk 3000 crore Syedabad Water Treatment Plant is scheduled for completion in 2010 AD and not a single brick has been laid on the proposed site as yet. That kind of money - Taka 3 billion is not easy to get; besides there is a natural cost escalation over the next sixteen years by which time the project is supposed to be completed. Even that overlong time-frame looks a bit variable, because we might fail to begin early enough.

Our grateful thanks to the French government which has indicated its readiness to fund the crucial phase of setting up the Syedabad plant. For such a huge project we are naturally looking for co-financiers. Our approach to the World Bank has led the latter to lay down certain conditions including a drastic curbing of the system loss. The other conditionalities are privatisation of the utility service with the right vesting in a private company to determine the rates on a purely commercial basis. The government is yet to relinquish its responsibility in keeping some sort of control over the rates, if not fixing them as such.

Containing the system loss is a much softer option holding as well the key to a sizable easing of the water scarcity. And if the public sector is keen on having its decisive say on the utility rates its rationale on this score would be strengthened if it were to succeed in arresting the system loss through sheer efficiency.

What a high premium have we to pay now for our failure to timely put a new water treatment plant in place. Even the BMRE of the outdated Chandighat surface water treatment plant, which is to commence in December, with assistance from Japan, is four years too late. As a result, we are now having to sink 20 deep tubewells against our best judgement. We know full well that subsoil water sources have dried out due to their over exploitation.

It is a pity that Dhaka city which has an abundant supply of surface water around its perimeter should be practically starving of it. This is a result of lopsided prioritisation, not so much lack of money. Now that the financial estimates have soared by our own default we may jestfully go on money-hunting paying little attention to what lies in our power to do — control the systemic waste of water, in the first place.

## Dismal Thoughts

Yesterday the Education Day passed without any fitting commemoration. It is the students who built this day with their blood way back in 1962. Even the students, with the honourable exception of the dissipated and by now largely inconsequential Bangladesh Chhatra Union, didn't do anything to remind the students themselves of the struggles waged and glories achieved by those who preceded them in the academies. Why? Has the Education Day in the three decades since been eroded so much so of its significance? Does it stand shorn of all relevance to the realities of an independent Bangladesh? The answer must be in an emphatic no. Then why is this sliding into oblivion?

Independence has done one thing to education. Allocation has gone up and up till it has hit the uppermost perches of the budget figures. But has it meant any desired change in the kind it is being offered these 47 years or any significant improvement in its quality? In inverse proportion to the rising money inflow, the quality offered has been going down and further down - with the kind remaining rooted to where it was in the semicolonial and backwardlooking days of a young Pakistan. Pressure for education in the meantime has escalated specially at the graduation and postgraduate level. The society and the successive governments have completely failed to make good use at all of this happy development.

On the contrary this most respected zone of our national life - respected for its cleanness of dealings and moral probity and a spirit of dedicated service that informed it — has been wholly commercialised and corrupted to is entrails. Knowledge and skill, mental maturation and acquisition of a will to live for the society — the best values that can accrue from education, have all become very alien concepts to Bangladesh's education. Schools, like hospitals, have been reduced to no better than recruiting centres for traders practising education instead of medicine.

The rise of tutorials and coaching centres are the best and most dubious distinguishing marks of the present education picture, signifying a definite goodbye to true knowledge and intellection through which alone knowledge can be acquired. But these new-fangled institutions did not evolve all by themselves. Innovations were made in school and college education that invited the birth and prosperity of these. The toll that the examination innovations have taken of the national intellect specially over these past half a dozen years, would take decades upon decades to recover from. Education in the post-independence years has been given over to operators who could abuse it worst. And no one cared. Except the students. Now it seems that the students too have abandoned the cause of education.

# Natural Resource Management Govt-NGO Interaction: Some Lessons and Strategies

ment of Bangladesh has been increasingly interacting with and involving NGOs in its development work. One area which has been of special interest is environment and more particularly the management of natural resources such as land, water, trees, fish and livestock, etc. Over the last few years, different agencies and projects of the government have attempted to involve and engage NGOs in a number of areas pertaining to environment and natural resource management. These have been from the local level to the national policy level. The experience gathered so far has been quite a mixed one from both the government as well as the NGO's side. This ranged from cooperation to confrontation between government and NGOs.

## NEMAP

National Environment Management Action Plan (NEMAP) is a project of the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF) which it had been carrying out with national and expatriate consultants and UNDP funding for several years. One of the criticisms of the first couple of draft NEMAP documents produced by the consultants was the lack of any really meaningful consultation in their — preparation. The Ministry of Environment sought the cooperation of the NGO community through the Association of Development Agencies of Bangladesh (ADAB) in developing a consultative process. ADAB in turn referred the matter to the Coalition of Environmental NGOs (CEN) which is affiliated to ADAB and consists of over 200 NGOs working on environment related issues (the CEN also contains non-ADAB NGOs) Together with the Ministry of Environment, Department of Environment, CEN, ADAB and others such as the Forum of Environmental Journalists and Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies a steering group was formed and there developed a process of consultations and awareness raising involving twenty-three grassroots workshops, six regional workshops, five professional workshops and one national workshop (With the Prime Minister) as well as leaflets. advertisements and a TV. radio and print media campaign.

Although there were occasional hiccups and misunder-

the side of the road.

Displayed on the

HE teenager stands by

sidewalk near him is a hand-

lettered sign that reads:

"Willing to do any kind of

work." As he stands shivering

in a threadbare jacket in be-

low-freezing weather, he ex-

plains that he has just arrived

by train from his home in a

quires everyone to have a resi-

dence permit. But lack of a

permit is proving to be not

much of a deterrent to more

and more people these days, as

life for farm families has be-

rioted in rural areas of Sichuan

and other provinces. Last year,

several hundred thousand

farmers from Sichuan flocked

to Shanghai in search of work.

But they were moved out after

failing to find employment, ac-

cording to a report in the offi-

In the country's more open

climate, youth in search of

better prospects find it easy to

hop on a train. New arrivals

can be seen hunched on the

ground outside railway stations

cial "China Daily."

Discontented farmers have

come increasingly difficult.

city, the capital of China.

here in Beijing."

standings between the government and NGO groups along the way, the overall level of cooperation was very high and the entire public consultation phase was successfully completed on schedule within a matter of a few months. This was possible mainly due to the proper working atmosphere of partnership between the MOEF and NGOs. The NGOs were involved in the entire conceptual and planning phase of the exercise and were full partners, even to the extent of contributing about 20 per cent of the total costs in terms of their venues and manpower. The government also contributed around 20 per cent in terms of manpower and TV and radio time with UNDP contributing the remaining 60

per cent of the total expenses. At the national workshop which culminated the consultative phase, the Prime Minister commended the MOEF and the NGOs for the model of cooperation they had demonstrated in a national

Tree Planting NGOs have been actively planting trees for many years and it has been one of their most successful activities. They do so on homesteads, beside roads, embankments and railways and in fallow land and in and around forest areas. The planting of trees on homesteads does not involve any interaction with government lexcept perhaps to get saplings) and indeed the homestead forest sector is the major contributor of timber and firewood in the country However, for tree planting on government land it is necessary to come to some arrangement with the relevant agencies (e.g Railway Department, Roads and Highway, Local Government or Forestry Department). Following a workshop on Social Forestry issues organized by Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies in Chittagong in 1989 involving NGOs, Forest Department and donors, the World Food Programme (WFP) and Government of Bangladesh agreed to allow wheat under Food for Work (FFW) to be used by NGOs for tree planting programmes. Subsequently a number of NGOs received allocations of foodgrains every year to plant trees, mostly on strip plantations alongside roads. embankments and railways. At the same time the Government of Bangladesh through the

by Dr Saleemul Huq

Ministry of Environment and Forest, in dialogue with NGOs. had developed a formula for sharing the products of trees planted by NGO group members. This formula has been successfully used for involving NGOs in other projects such as the Thana Afforestation

The Forest Department has also been working with related NGOs involving the group members in agro forestry activities within forest lands as well as helping the Forest Department project their own forests.

### **Fisheries**

There are two main areas of activity in the inland water fisheries sector for both government and NGOs, namely aquaculture (mostly in ponds) and openwaters (rivers, floodplains, beels and haors). In the aquaculture sector NGOs have been very active for many years and have been promoting aquaculture by their groups for income generation. The interaction with government has been minimal, except to pur chase fingerlings from government hatcheries. The NGOs also have developed their own hatcheries as well as they also buy from the private hatcheries. There has been some attempts at collaboration with government-run projects such as the DANIDA funded project in Mymensingh where credit for pond aquaculture was disbursed through some selected NGOs. Another government-NGO interaction in this sector has been the handing over of some government fish farms to Grameen Bank.

in the openwater fisheries sector, where most of the poor fishermen operate, there have been a number of interactions between government and NGOs under different projects with mixed results. To cite some examples, under a Ford Foundation funded project the management of a number of Jalmahals (fisheries) were given to selected NGOs on an experimental basis; also under an IFAD/DANIDA funded project a number of Baors (OXbow lakes) where the Department of Fisheries (DOF) gave BRAC the responsibility to organize the fishermen and to give them credit and other support. Under the Third Fisheries Project funded by World Bank, UNDP and ODA, a mumber of NGOs have been en-

gaged in floodplains selected for stocking by the DOF to organize the fishermen in order to prevent catching of the stocked fish while they are still undersized. The experiences gained through these exercises have been quite mixed mainly due to the varying capabilities of the different NGOs ranging from big to very small as well as due to the complex setting, both natural as well as socio-economic, of these "common property re-

sources'

Another examples of government NGO cooperation has been in the shrimp sector under World Bank funded projects where CARITAS worked with DOF to organize local landowners to from groups and carry out shrimp farming for . themselves rather than to give out their land to outsiders on lease. They also tried to organize landless and women's groups in the shrimp growing areas. Again the experience has been mixed as shrimp growing tends to be socially

polarizing and contentious. Livestock In the livestock sector. NGOs have been working for many years in helping the groups raise cattle for dairy or meat purposes as income generating activities. The interac tion of NGOs with the government through the Department of Livestock is to ensure the delivery of vaccine and other medicines for livestock and poultry. The cooperation in this sector between NGOs as the demand generating agent and the government as the supplier of services has been quite successful.

### Land Resources

Land resources in Bangladesh, particularly government owned khas land has often been a contentious issue. The government has some years back involved NGOs in the Land Management Committee to decide on the distribution of land to genuine landless groups. The Land Reclamation Project in Noakhali with funding from the Netherlands government also involved an NGO, Nijera Kori, in identifying the genuine landless for settlement on the newly accreted chair lands. This experience was, however, not very happy.

> Agriculture NGOs have been at the

forefront of environmentally sound agriculture and horticulture with groups from Proshika and BRAC practising organic farming without pesticides and NGOs like MCC collecting hundreds of local varieties of seeds of fruit and vegetable plants. Most of these works have very little interaction with government agencies, however some initiatives have been taken through various agriculture sector projects to involve NGO particularly in technology extension in horticulture and agriculture.

### Projects

A number of major projects in different sectors have tried to involve or interacted with NGOs on their own with both good and bad experiences. some of which are described

Jamuna Bridge: This is the biggest infrastructure project in the country at a cost of over US\$ 700 million funded by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Japan and as the construction will have environmental as well as socioeconomic impacts including the displacement of thousands of people, the Jamuna Bridge Authority with donor support has developed both a resettlement plan and an environmental action plan to mitigate the impacts. It has involved BRAC to carry out the initial survey of project-affected people and is seeking further NGO input in the mitigating strategies.

Flood Action Plan (FAP): This is one of the most controversial projects of the government with multi-donor support coordinated by the World Bank. The initial, study phase of the project involved about US\$ 150 million, mostly for foreign consultants and a decision is due late this year on how to implement the proposed plan. The role of NGOs has been to oppose the FAP on the grounds that it is ill advised. not environmentally and socially sound and is likely to adversely affect the poor, such as the char dwellers who will get no protection. The debate between proponents and opponents of FAP has often been very heated and has spilled into the international arena with NGOs in Europe and America lobbying their governments and the World Bank to re-examine the project. This is an example of government NGO confrontation rather

Conclusion

The foregoing has been an attempt to describe (albeit not exhaustively) the different experiences in government-NGO interaction in the area of environment and natural resource management.

The experiences indicate that while it is possible for government and NGOs work together sometimes, at others it is almost impossible as they get entrenched into opposite camps making cooperation difficult. It is probably the right time to take stock of the different types of experiences and develop a modus operandi for government-NGO interaction and collaboration in the field of environment and natural resource management. Some possible points for consideration are this suggested below:

1. It is advisable for the government to involve the NGOs from the very beginning of the project design to ensure their active and proper partic-

2. The government should involve the NGOs as genuine partners rather than as simply sub-contractors (like consul-

3. Since NGOs have their own programmes, ways of operation, target groups and resources, they should be given an opportunity to make suggestions about the entire project design to ensure that the benefits go to the poor.

4. It is probably best in most cases to deal with an apex body of the NGOs like ADAB or CEN for environment and like VHSS for the health sector. They can then involve the relevant member of NGOs in the field.

5. There should be a mechanism for on-going dialogue between the government and NGO body at a higher level to review activities and sort out problems.

6. The NGO organisation and input should be independently monitored and evaluated to ensure that the benefits are actually reaching the

The NGOs should ensure a genuine sense of participation of the target beneficiaries. particularly the poor, in both project planning and implementation.

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# China Steps up Efforts to Protect Children

Paul Murphy writes from Beijing in most big cities, their pos-

> There are fears that the problem of street children will grow as China's market reforms gain momentum

dren, a very small proportion

work all over the city.

poor rural area of Shaanxi of the country's 300 million province, just south of this youngsters. Although the country's street-children problem I'm from a poor farmer's is small compared to the troufamily." he says. "There are bles faced by other nations. more chances to earn money there are fears that it will grow as China's market reforms gain The teenager's move to this momentum. city is illegal; Chinese law re-

sessions bundled into knap-

sacks. In Beijing they solicit

has about 200,000 street chil-

The government says China

Wang Daming, programme officer in Beijing of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for children with special needs, says the organisation has been working closely with Chinese authorities for the past couple of years to find ways to help street

Youngsters may see big cities, particularly in the booming southern coastal areas, as money-making meccas, says Mr Wang. But they generally lack skills, and when they arrive they find that money is hard to come by. As a result. they become vulnerable to the many hazards of street life, including crime. Chinese newspapers have reported cases of children, both in the cities and in the countryside, being kidnapped and forced to work.

"I know of cases where people have gone out to poor rural areas in Hunan province and persuaded children to return with them to Guangzhou to become flower sellers," says Mr Wang. "Buying flowers in much of China is still a luxury. but some people can now afford them in the richer cities. Businessmen like to use children to sell flower because they look appealing. But in some cases the flower children were not well looked after and it turned into a problem."

A survey of street children in Shanghai has been conducted by UNICEF with the local civil affairs department and the women's federation. Although the analysis has not been completed, initial results show that youth go to the cities because of broken families,

poverty and lack of skills. "Seventy per cent of the children are dropouts from schools," says Mr Wang. "If they can receive training, they

are less likely to go to cities in search of work. Prevention is as important as helping those

in trouble." Governments in Anhui and Hunan provinces are now sponsoring programmes to train rural children. Youngsters aged 10 to 12 years are learning to raise rabbits. chickens and pigs; those 16 and older learn skills, such as shoe-making, needed in rural factories. More than 1,000 children have been trained so far, says Mr Wang.

China ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. One year later, the country mandated care of children through the Law on the Protection of Minors.

In addition, the government is working to sensitise people to the needs of children. Last year the Chinese National Committee for Care of Children, through a one-hour programme on national television, called on people to help youngsters with special needs.

including street kids. UNICEF is training local officials about the underlying problems of street children.

We held three major training courses for key offi-

OPINION

cials, mainly from civil affairs departments, in nearly every province in China on how to deal with the problem," says Mr Wang. Key officials were also sent to the Philippines to learn about the problems of street children in another country.

Depthnews Asia

## The Politics of Brinkmanship a Game-theoretic Interpretation

## Wahiduddin Mahmud

Daily Star (This Brinkmanship may Easily Go out of Hand. September 12) has tempted political crisis in terms of Game Theory — which is a wide applications in behavioral sciences. Let us think of the tween the government and the opposition as a strategic game in which each side can choose among three options, that is, either to remain unyielding in its present position, or to surrender to the demands of the other side, or to offer a compromise (which the other side may or may not accept) Depending on how each side will use its options, this game will end in producing any one of the following four alternative outcomes: (a) the government concedes to the opposition's demand for a caretaker government; (b) the opposition gives up its demand in favour of the government's position of holding elections under the present party rule; (c) both sides agree for a compromise solution (say, a national government with representation from various parties according to some agreed formula); and (d) the confrontation, being unresolved, leads to a disaster'.

What option each side decides to use will depend on its above four outcomes as well as on its assessment of how the other side will behave. To simplify the analysis, we shall designate the preference pattern of a side as 'totally irresponsible if it prefers a disas ter to a compromise; 'partially irresponsible if it prefers a disaster to a surrender; and not irresponsible if any other outcome is preferable to a disaster.

A disaster is unavoidable as an outcome of this game under three alternative combinations of the preference patterns of the opposing sides, namely, if both sides are totally irre-

A recent editorial in The sponsible', or if one side is 'totally irresponsible' while the other side is only 'partially irresponsible or the vice versa. me to interpret the prevailing In all other cases, the disaster is avoidable, but still remains a possible outcome depending mathematical theory having on how each side actually plays the game. For example, if both sides are 'partially irresponsion-going confrontation be- ble', a compromise is possible (and is, in fact, the only feasible outcome other than a disaster). But the danger is that each side may refrain from offering to compromise if it mistakenly believes that the other side is 'not irresponsible' and is therefore liable to surrender. In such a case, a disaster may happen even if both sides would have preferred a compromise. This is the danger of political brinkmanship as rightly pointed out in the editorial mentioned above.

The editorial is equally right in pointing out the futility of making accusations and counter-accusations at each other. We hear both the government and the opposition accusing each other to be irresponsible or even worse. An interesting aspect of the 'game' described above is that each side, by making such accusations about its opponent, may be unwittingly revealing the darker side of its own character. If, for example, one side really believes that the other side is even partially irrerelative preference for the sponsible, it should know that the best it can achieve is a compromise. By not offering to compromise, it will therefore only prove itself to be 'totally irresponsible. The logic of this follows from the fact that by merely criticising the opposing side, neither side can ab. solve itself of the responsibility of how it chooses to utilise its own options (given its assessment of how the other side will behave). One does not need to be an expert in Game Theory to appreciate the irony of this logic

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## Begumbazar

## graveyard

Sir, Graveyard, the last mortal resting abode of the human being, is said to be the holiest and the most respected place on earth. It is the place where complete peace, purity and tranquillity is felt. Whenever we visit the graves of our dear and near ones, it becomes obligatory on us to bathe or ablute ourselves. In Hadis, it is said that the holy Prophet (SM) used to visit the graves of his parents every Thursday or Friday. According to the sayings of many holy men, even the angels make transitory visits to the graveyards. But unfortunately, today not all graveyards are re-

spected. I regret to bring to the information of the readers that the Dhaka Nawab family graveyard in Begumbazar is in a deplorable and disrespectful condition. The very entrance of the graveyard has turned into a waste dumping yard, where garbage of all types are thrown and piled. However, dumping of the waste is not the main complaint. After all, the population and the city as well is expanding and the municipality has hardly done anything about it. The worst part is that some delinquent youths of the locality have been carrying on disgraceful activities inside the graveyard for quite some time. I would request the author-

ity and the religious welfare organisations to kindly look into the matter, and if they could also kindly take steps to raise the walls of the graveyard in Begumbazar as well as those of other graveyards where the situation is similar. Couple of

years back, the authority concerned took up noble steps to renovate old and worn out mosques all over the city. It will be highly appreciated if the authority concerned take up similar measures to renovate and protect the city graveyards.

I would also request the elderly people of the locality to caution and make the youngsters understand the importance of graveyards, so as to keep up with the very essence and sanctity of the resting places of the dead.

Moinuddin Dhaka

## Education system

Sir, I read your editorial of

September 4, "Revealing Exam Results" with great interest. As a student. I became aware of the different systems of education prevalent in this part of the world. I am impressed with the

outstanding results that a lot of students acquired in this year's SSC examination. But I am quite disheartened to know that students did not fare as well in the essay part of the examination as they did in the objective section.

The objective questions which now form the major part of the SSC examination should be lessened. I believe a greater stress should be given on one's acquirement of knowledge through years of education. Comprehensive understanding and an analytical mind should be developed at an early age. And such form of questions should be given more importance in the examination. Maybe, decreasing the objective questions would help in doing that.

The teaching of English is another important element which, unfortunately, is not given due importance in our education system. It is essential that we spread knowledge of English among the youth. The delay may prove too costly for the nation.

If we want to enter the street of success. I feel some changes are necessary in the education system of this country. We can only then say that we are ready to face the challenge in the present day competitive would. Our destiny does not lie in the stars, but within ourselves.

Nabeel A Chowdhury Dhanmandi R/A. Dhaka