

Feature Environment

NEMAP: Participatory Rhetorics, Project Wish List and Consultants Cornucopia

THE National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP) was initiated in 1989-1990, by the newly established Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF) with funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The NEMAP exercise was preceded by International Union of Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) sponsored National Conservation Strategy (NCS), which was completed in 1987 and published in 1991. The first and second drafts of NEMAP reflected an interventionist approach largely drawn upon conservation needs outlined in the NCS. Interestingly, both NCS and early drafts of NEMAP were produced by a team headed by the same person, a retired civil service official. Although the contents of these two reports were presented in different structured form, the findings, conclusions and future strategies were very similar. Therefore, the twin efforts in environmental and natural resource management planning remained essentially within same mode of thinking.

The NEMAP formulation and finalisation process remained dormant since the publication of the second draft in November 1991, and was rekindled after in late 1992 with the hiring of an international and a national consultant. This new crew reworked on the initial draft and prepared a third draft in 1993, a summary of which was presented at a donor-local consultative group meeting. The process got a fresh boost early this year when International Development Agency (IDA), the loan giving arm of the World Bank, issued an ultimatum to Government of Bangladesh to the effect that if NEMAP is not finalised by this fiscal year all future loan commitments to Bangladesh will be facing uncertainty as part of IDA's worldwide conditionality on environmental conservation and sustainable development. Since then, beginning this year the NEMAP process was again underway, this time with national consultants only.

The other unique aspect of the NEMAP finalisation process is the adherence of the so-called participatory and consultative process in eliciting and incorporating affected people's and other stakeholders opinion and views in the finalisation process. This unique and laudatory process started in February and culminated in the National Workshop held at Dhaka on June 29 this year. In all, twenty-three grassroots level workshops were conducted in various parts of the country, followed by five regional workshops, eight professional level workshops and finally the National Workshop, held at the International Conference Centre, Prime Minister's Secretariat, Dhaka. The National Workshop was inaugurated by the Prime Minister himself and was attended by ministers, parliamentarians, heads and representatives of donor and diplomatic missions and others signifying the importance of the workshop attested by all concerned parties.

The latest and final effort (in finalising the NEMAP document) has in addition to holding workshops, circulated

some thousands of questionnaires seeking responses on most important national and local environmental problems and their mitigation measures. Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) in association with the Coalition of Environmental NGOs (CEN) is entrusted with this opinion seeking process as well as co-ordinating the holding of the workshops. These questionnaires are supposed to be processed and summarised by BCAS. UNDP has selected four consultants to oversee the consultation process and finalisation of the NEMAP document.

Objectives and contents of NEMAP

As mentioned earlier the first two versions of the NEMAP document was project biased and sought mitigation measures to deal with degrading environment and natural resource base of the country. The currently available NEMAP versions state that it provides a portfolio of proposed interven-

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tions that is complementary to the national development plans. In Bangladesh development planning is carried out through the vision and project description as outlined in the Five Year and Annual Development plans. Therefore, in the Teams own view the NEMAP is complementary to the National Development Plans and provides a portfolio of projects for implementation during the Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-1995). It was also stated that it is a logical follow-up to the National Environmental Policy and the NCS. The long-term objectives of NEMAP is sustainable management of country's natural resources so that the pace of development can become sustainable over time, and thus allow the fight against poverty to continue. The existing documents then proceeds to identify the major concerns and strategies in various sectors, i.e., water resources, soils and land, wetlands, floodplains, agriculture etc. The documents then provide half to one page descriptions about in number of projects identified for ecologically sensitive and critical areas and in line with the environmental concerns identified for various sectors. Finally the NEMAP documents described an action plan for strengthening institutions and supporting environmental information collection and dissemination.

NEMAP process: a critical review

The main thrust of recent renditions of the NEMAP formulation process documentation is its participatory and consultative mode. As has already been mentioned, the grassroots level, regional and Dhaka based professional workshop were held to elicit views from cross-section stakeholders. Ostensibly the purpose of holding such consultation meetings were to encourage people's participation

by Dr Zahir Sadeque

in the NEMAP process. Recently, BCAS, circulated summarised versions of opinions and views generated from the grassroots and regional level workshops. The summary listed some fifteen environmental problems and also stated their mitigation measures as identified by participants in the grassroots workshops. The environmental problems identified and the mitigation measures suggested in these workshops as summarised by BCAS are instead of regional or location specific, are rather national and generic in nature.

Even when such problems like river erosion, deforestation etc. affected the lives of area residents, their recommendations were aimed at national policy making and actions. Or were they? While it may be unfair to comment on the process and outcome of these consultations without attending them personally, nevertheless it is logical to assume that either these consultation process were less than opti-

mally participatory or the opinions expressed in the meetings were overly edited to produce substantive reports.

The consultation process must have had the intent that, representative local people would participate in the discussion, identify problems that affect their lives and seek solutions that incorporates their participation. People's participation in plan formulation should exactly mean that type of *modus operandi*. Instead of that the grassroots level workshops were presumably managed and moderated by NGO representatives and the NEMAP entourage. In any event the output of grassroots level workshops and reports about the workshops do present evidence of a consultation process which may be a joint meeting between NEMAP formulators and selected NGO representatives, but not necessarily people's participation, as claimed by NEMAP team and their sponsors.

As already mentioned earlier, several versions of NEMAP report (an ongoing effort for the last several years) is available. The major thrust of these reports was to identify number of projects to mitigate environmental stress of critical and threatened ecosystems and existing natural resource management practices. The Second Draft of NEMAP identifies, describes and recommends 34 projects for different sectors. Each of these project descriptions also provides schedule for TOR, PRODOC, TAPP, PVP etc formulation. Implicit is the idea that many or most of these projects will be donor financed and form part of the national planning exercise (Five Year Plans, Annual Development Plans etc). Actually major portion of the NEMAP report occupies description about these projects. A relatively small section of the report (Chapter 2) discusses objectives of NEMAP and major environ-

mental issues of the country and sectoral concern and strategy, reiterating findings from the already completed NCS report.

The major weakness of such an approach in planning is its superficiality and wishful thinking. Firstly, these project portfolio in entirety or in part was never discussed with potential donors who are eventually expected to fund these projects. Neither were they discussed in donor consultative group (LCG) meetings. The NEMAP formulators should have also consulted and analysed donor financing trends, priorities and interests if they were pinning their hopes for donor financing of this rather long and ambitious wish list. If the consultants perceived funding would come from Bangladesh Government, then, NEMAP document should have analysed the planning framework of the government. It should have undertaken an exercise to analyse the perspective of national planning, resource availability, allocation

principles and finally the philosophy of political leaders and policy makers.

However, how much of it is going to be reflected in actual planning exercise and how much resources are going to be allocated for this goal is the real issue. That should have been the guiding principle for the NEMAP consultants in formulating a project list. A prioritisation should have been there. List of planned activities should have been prioritised according to their relative urgency and importance in maintaining a pace of development that is sustainable.

A planner would do more harm to the cause of environment if they present a plan that may be technically correct but so ambitious and unprioritised that throws off policy and decision makers due to the fact that resources are finite and priorities are overwhelming. Therefore, in short, I feel that the approach of listing numerous projects without prioritisation is an exercise that is neither going to help the cause of environment nor does it provide decision makers a balanced choice that is implementable.

Finally, the NEMAP documentation process, I believe, has so far been an activity that has had too little coordination and lacked intellectual leadership aimed at synthesizing country's needs, priorities and planning goals. The process, it seems has gone in a way that can at best be called consultant driven. The recent reincarnation of the process has had the benefit of several local consultants; a hydrogeologist, a civil engineer, a geographer, a journalist and a woman, presumably a WID expert (UNDP: Status Report on NEMAP, June 1994). The composition of the team, it seems is overly water expertise inclined. After all, environment in Bangladesh, is much more than water alone. Clearly missing was a botanist/agriculturist, fish-

eries/wildlife, industrial/urban specialist, social scientist, economist and finally a planner type. The omission of a biologist, sociologist and economist is the most critical lacunae in the NEMAP formulation process. Presumably, the biologist and chemist support may have been provided by BCAS through an oversight function, but the missing social and economic expertise became painfully exposed. Also, the role of an experienced planner could have made a lot of difference.

The NEMAP process as it has so far continued seems to be still obsessed with developing a grandiose project list. This is symptomatic of a very biased and myopic view of environmental management. The conventional wisdom of "Command and Control" thinking gave way to conservation minded projects. Never to perceive, what resources is that going to take and how much of that precious resource is available at the disposal of planners and decision makers. The benefits of policy reform and institutional strengthening could perhaps achieve much more than combined outputs of all these projects. For instance, if stumpage and harvesting fee for forest resources is brought in line the true value of these products, forests of Bangladesh would have been spared the destruction that it has faced in the recent decade. If severely polluting industries like tanneries, textiles, paper and pulp manufacturers were provided with financial incentives to minimise wastes, waterways of Bangladesh would have been cleaner than it is today. If the environmental legislation were finalised by now instead of the procrastination that it is going through, and if the government was serious in refraining from being the biggest polluter, environmental management would have been a much easier task for everybody. If the intended beneficiaries and area residents were consulted as equal partners in the design of large physical projects (water resources, agriculture-irrigation, water supply-sanitation), physical environment would have remained cleaner and biological resources would not have met the fate of extinction as they are experiencing now.

Conclusion

The NEMAP process, long overdue to produce a final version amidst all the fanfare and support from the highest political and governmental authority, is eagerly awaited by all concerned citizens of the country. However, the glaring omissions that were pointed out speaks of the typical bureaucratic non-challenge and superficiality, both on the part of the government and the donor. As owner of the document MOEF should have been more proactive in providing the guidelines and philosophy upon which the plan should have been built. As financier of the NEMAP UNDP should have been more cautious in quality control and forthcoming in providing intellectual leadership in producing the NEMAP document.

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Water Dampens Peace Hopes and Whets the Appetite for War

by Barry Chamish

AS the Middle East peace process moves forward, an old problem blocks its path: water.

Dividing the region's scarce water supply between Israelis, Jordanians, Palestinians and possibly Syrians is a critical problem. With technological solutions such as piping water from Turkey or desalination too expensive, what water there is must somehow be shared or no peace will ever be reached.

The water issue is stumping the Israeli planners of the current peace process. It is intractable already but the

traces of water in rivers, lakes and aquifers to which Israel has access, the Jordanians and Palestinians are demanding 1.3 billion cubic metres, he said. "If the Syrians enter the negotiations, the total amount demanded will be more than the entire supply."

Israel's 5.4 million people use substantially more water annually than the 1.5 million Palestinians. But Tsur insists this does not mean Israel is acting recklessly. Israel uses only a third of the water per capita of Syria and gets by

"mixing religion with their water. Their position is that rain comes from Allah and that since practically all of Israel's coastal rivers and wells originate from West Bank rain, we are stealing their rainwater."

The Palestinians have demanded that Israeli repay them for all the water stolen since 1948 (when Israel was created in what had been Palestine) — over 40 billion cubic metres. "I told them to get off their high horses and start being serious," Ben Oz says. "Their compromise was a demand for repayment of all water used by Israel since 1967."

A Palestinian delegate to the water talks with Israel, Refwan Hadad, argues that "the Israelis want everything to stay the same. They'll keep pumping all they need and we'll get a fifth the amount they use per person."

While the Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians are deadlocked over the fact that there just is not enough water available to support three societies, the inclusion of Syria into the equation could make Israeli concessions impossible unless the Syrians show great sensitivity to Israel's needs.

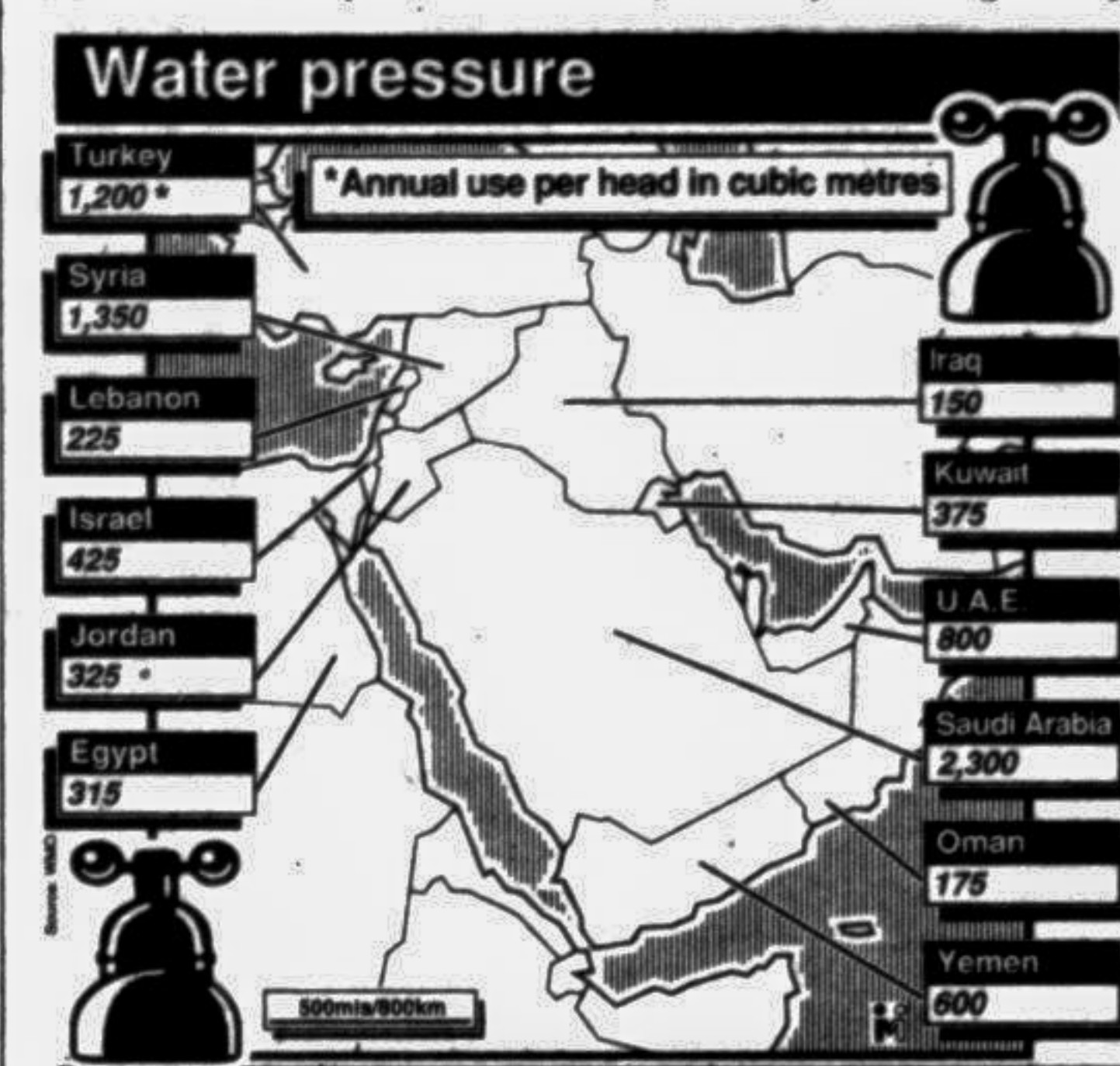
Thirty per cent of all the water in the Sea of Galilee drains in from the streams of the Golan Heights. In 1966, Syria tried to turn northern Israel into a desert by damming the water. Israel responded by bombing the dam sites, an act which contributed to the outbreak of the Six Day War the following year.

In the past decade Israeli farmers have greatly increased the efficiency of the Golan waters by constructing a series of reservoirs that conserve practically all the rainwater that falls on the Heights. By doing so, they block as much water as they formerly used, thus keeping the Sea of Galilee in balance.

Few doubt the great threat to peace posed by the water debate. Martin Sherman, a geologist and political activist, believes that if the Syrians took over the entire Golan Heights they would use the reservoirs to capture all the rainwater flowing to the Sea of Galilee.

"They'll claim they have the right to do what they want with rain that falls on the Golan," he says, "and there will be another war over water."

— GEMINI NEWS



growth of population in Arab countries will, according to a government report, cause such a shortfall by the year 2010 that armed conflict is a real possibility.

"The likelihood of war over water is there," says Gideon Tsur, Israel's national water commissioner. "But after the war ends, there still won't be enough water to go around."

A confidential report by Tel Aviv University's Institute of Strategic Affairs predicted in 1991 that any future peace negotiations would be confounded because the "other side will demand every last drop of water."

It has proved prophetic. General Uri Saguy, head of Israel's Internal Security Services, told the Cabinet recently: "The problem of water cannot be solved by diplomatic means."

Of the 1.8 billion cubic me-

tres of water in rivers, lakes and aquifers to which Israel has access, the Jordanians and Palestinians are demanding 1.3 billion cubic metres, he said.

Jordan is making claims on all the water that flows into the Sea of Galilee and Jordan River from its side. To get King Hussein to sign a non-belligerency treaty, Israel had to offer four million cubic metres of water as a one time gift.

Tsur says: "At the multilateral talks on water, I said, 'Let's now divide the water. Of course, we all know there isn't enough water so the end result for both of us will be zero.' The Jordanian delegate, Munther Haddadin answered: 'In that case, we want half of zero.'"

The Israelis are also squaring off with the Palestinians over water. Avraham Ben Oz, the country's chief negotiator over water at the peace talks, accuses the Palestinians of

Garden City Turns Green

Spic and span Singapore wants to be the world's greenest city by the year 2000. Kunda Dixit of Inter Press Service reports.

HUNDREDS of trees and shrubs dot Singapore's sleek cityscape, but the tiny island republic wants to be greener.

Having attained Asia's second highest living standard, Singapore now wants to turn itself into the world's most environment-friendly country by the year 2000.

Singapore is already Asia's cleanest city. Its air quality is better than in most advanced nations. Its rivers and lakes teem with fish and the average Singaporean lives to a ripe age of 76.

Much of this has been achieved with carefully-planned public campaigns used as an instrument for social engineering, such as a circa 1970s programme to transform Singapore into a 'Garden City'.

Today, Singapore keeps itself spic and span with strict controls on vehicles and industries and an array of stiff fines for everything from littering to not flushing toilets.

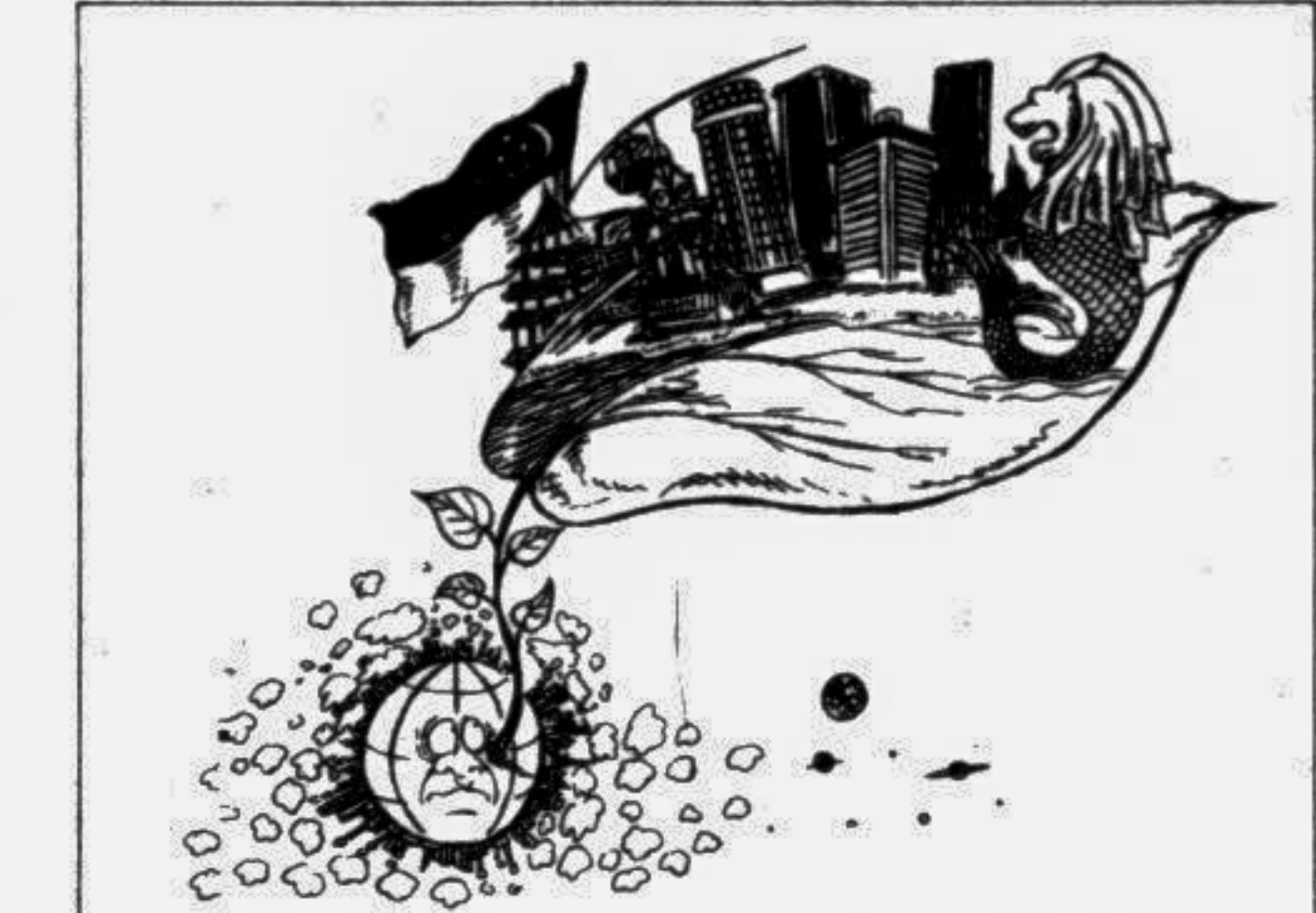
To become a model green city by the year 2000, Singaporean officials are using a two-pronged massive education campaign to make the island republic's citizens environmentally conscious and to minimise wastage of resources and energy.

"We are fortunate that we started our environment protection programmes early, but we cannot afford to slacken our efforts," Singaporean environment minister Abdullah Tarmugi told journalists at a recent conference here on urbanisation.

Despite the fines, Tarmugi said, "Social habits like littering still persist. Stricter penalties cannot be the solution in the long-term."

Since the 1960s, Singapore's public health and environment campaigns have often been launched in war-footing and are named like military operations: 'Keep Singapore Mosquito Free' and 'The Clean Public Toilet Campaign'.

"While foreigners may be cynical about our fines on flushing toilets or chewing gum, it is true that public



campaigns with punitive action and rewards have been highly effective," says Victor Savage of the Singapore National University.

A media blitz coordinated with an education campaign in primary and grade schools have proved to be very potent tools for social engineering.

Says Savage: "The government has felt that one of the best ways of bringing home the message to the family is by way of its children. Children listen to parents, but in Singapore the parents have also to listen to their children."

Singaporean officials now want to take the green campaign one notch higher by not only addressing issues like nature, recycling and noise pollution but also problems of wasteful consumerism.

"In our goal to make Singapore a model green city by the year 2000, we have to address the more fundamental issues of consumption habits and the values tied to a material society," said Tarmugi.

Older Singaporeans who remember the time when the city was a colonial backwater with endemic tuberculosis and malaria shake their heads at a younger spendthrift generation that they say has taken affluence for granted.

At a convent school in Singapore, for instance, the principal shows a cabinet full of watches, wallets and other valuables that were lost by students who never came to collect them.

"By the 1980s, we had the basic infrastructure in place," says Yeo Boon Leng, chief engineer of strategic planning and research at the environment ministry. Yeo sees several worrying

trends: consumption and waste generation are soaring as incomes rise. And despite taxes that make cars in Singapore the most expensive in the world, the city's number of vehicles is rising.

The Singapore masterplan for the year 2000 calls for reducing carbon dioxide emissions, improving energy efficiency and keeping daily garbage production at one kg per person.

Singapore also wants to be a hub for green technologies for the Asia-Pacific region and eventually become an exporter of environment-friendly products.

Despite its small size, the 620 sq km island republic is setting aside five per cent of its land area for 19 nature reserves linked by nature corridors.

Critics of the Singapore plan, while applauding the moves to curb consumption, say the country is so microscopic that whatever is done here will have minimal impact regionally.

Singapore is also a major transshipment point for timber exports and toxic wastes from industrialised nations bound for other countries in the region.

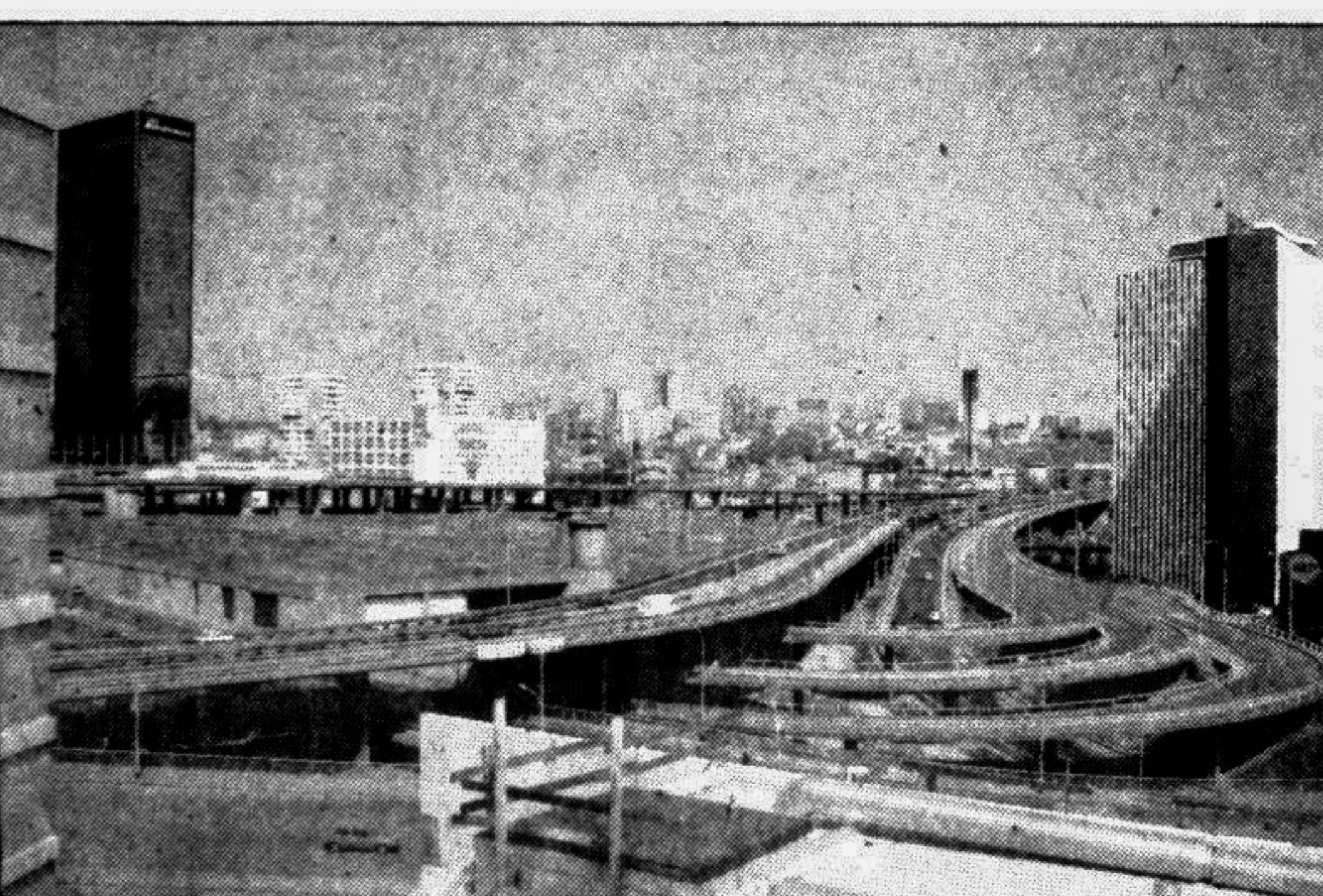
Conservationists are worried that the government's actions go against its green rhetoric. The government has decided to give permission to build a golf course that encroaches on a lake used by migratory birds.

A new breed of the 'Ugly Singaporean' also seems to have evolved — Singaporeans who feel so restricted by rules at home that they go on a littering rampage the minute they cross over into Malaysia.

Listening to a Town's Heartbeat

by Antoine Bauer

In order to fight noise more effectively, the city of Nantes has installed a sophisticated acoustic system. It makes it possible to establish a map of the town's sound environment.



A sophisticated installation erected for combating of environmental sound pollution in a town.

registered sound sequences representing different times of the day. These walks, which were repeated in the morning, afternoon and the evening, created a sound picture of the noises of the city from the quietest to the most deafening.

The "urban stethoscope" consisted for the most part of a digital recorder with microphones which were specially

designed to ensure the accurate location of the noises during the playback.

As all sound phenomena can be broken down into a series of elements that can be listed, the sound sequences recorded were arranged in six different sources. They are:

— background noise, which measures the moments of silence or "false silence"

(residual noise)

— the sounds of nature (birds, wind, fountains etc)

— urban activity, linked to mechanical noise (cars, buses, motorcycles, road and building works)

— human presence (commercial and leisure activities and general bustle)

— language and communication (intelligible voices, mu-

sic, sound signals).

Using this data, a computer programme created a "sound map" which was combined with a street map of the area concerned. Different coloured zones appear on it. Blue indicates areas with pedestrian-type noises. Red shows traffic sounds. Green reveals combined noise areas dominated by humans. Orange shows areas in which urban noise predominates and yellow indicates areas where people stay and live.

"This inventory of sounds proves to be extremely useful for town councils which wish to improve the quality of life of their fellow citizens," explains one of the CNRS researchers who worked on the project. "It helps them to know their town better and to deal with one of its major problems."

Several French and foreign towns are already interested in the Nantes experiment. The urban stethoscope with be a precious instrument when, for instance, a decision has to be made concerning the development of a district, the deviation of main traffic or the organisation of a street function.

Moreover, it will make it easier to overcome that feeling of discomfort and insecurity felt in various places by the inhabitants or by passers-by and to do something about it.

Thanks to this instrument, it will finally be possible to forestall many of the conflicts arising from neighbourhood noises which so often envenom relations between city-dwellers.

— L'Actualité En France

Recording the noises of the town

In the course of several series of walks, each lasting two hours, with 30 specific points for making sound recordings, the equipment