The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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Need for a Changed Social Attitude

On Thursday which marked the beginning of the Shishu Adhikar Saptaho '94 (Children's Rights Week '94), there were at least two exclusive news items on children. Incidentally all the three involved in the two incidents are girl. What has happened to them is bad enough to make a mockery of the ritualistic celebration that goes in the name of upholding the rights of children. In one of the cases a 16-year-old girl has been repeatedly raped by an Ansar constable and a launch employee in a cabin of the Dhaka-bound vessel. In the other case, two girls of class VI were missing - apparently abducted on their way to school. Reportedly 40 children of the Dhaka Metropolis have been missing over a period of 27 days of this current month. Other such statistics are likely to

be no less chilling. So naturally, it is not a question of one or two isolated incidents of children rights' violation but a broader issue of the social apathy to treat the vile trend as seriously as it demands. The ansar constable who was supposed to protect the girl from any harm has himself turned the violator. And as everyone now knows he is not the first to change his role from a protector to a violator. Some are apt to argue that law enforcers like him are an aberration of the system and therefore the entire body should not be blamed for a few of the members' fault. But the omissions and commissions are multiplying so much so that these are to be owned up and set right by the law enforcement structure as a whole.

Both discipline and law and order — the first is the enduring quality and special stamp men in uniform proudly wear as a batch and the second they ought to defend - have thus become a casualty time and again here. With such despicable records to the credit of some of their colleagues, the law enforcers are indeed illequipped to provide society with an effective protection against abduction and all kinds of crimes the evils commit. Children by nature are more vulnerable - the girls of them are even more - and in a society where the adults themselves do not feel secure, they are doubly vulnerable. The question is whose rights we are taking about. In this society double standards are at their despicable best. Those children attending the functions in the city's best auditorium perhaps need not have somebody cry hoarse to establish their rights. Their privileged social positions earned them their rights without asking.

The deprived millions who do not have enough food to eat, cannot go to school and have to do inhuman and bone-crushing labour at their tender age are the ones needing a social guarantee for their rights. No lavish function would be able to get them out of sight. But vainly do we try to hide this hard reality behind the artificial pomp and gaiety. To establish the rights of these children is to set a tolerable - if not altogether uniform - standard for them all. To do this the respect for life, which is now missing, has to take root in the social ethos. Children's lives are precious too and even sacrosanct. Unless society can establish this fact through a series of reforms brought about in its order, such an attitude will mane approach as against a self-seeking and commercial one might be an answer to our present problem.

Madrid Mood

Statistics are building up into an avalanche centring on the annual meeting of the Bretton Woods twin, the IMF and World Bank, in Madrid. The WB's Annual Report, 1994 and the "World Economic Outlook" of the IMF are going to form the basis of discussions at the sessions likely to be attended by as many as 180 countries. But because the meet marks the 50th birthday of the two institutions it won't be any ordinary stockholders' conference at the year-end. The temptation will be great on the part of the poorer countries receiving assistance from them to refocus on the IMF and World Bank policies with the benefit of a long hind-sight.

Indications are palpable that the institutions are going to come under pressure to change their shock therapy and prescriptive policies that betray a power of the purse syndrome. This is somewhat antithetical to the universally valued concept of an interdependent world. The expectations nurtured about the World Bank and IMF are naturally very high at this juncture. Because they remain charged with the responsibility of creating a new economic order with the underpinnings of a free market system which most of the countries in the world are wedded to at the present moment. If laissez faire were adopted from the vantage point of an equitable international economic order things would have been that much easier for the success of the former. Inasmuch as this is not the case, the onus lies, in no small measure, on the World Bank and the IMF, to be patient with the pace of reforms in deference to differing country perspectives.

Even established democracies have to be mindful of the socio-political costs involved in controlling expenditures which is likely to be unpopular. Cut-backs on social welfare benefits people have gotten used to can boomerang on governments. Alternatively, high taxation to scrape funds for such projects can be equally unpopular. If that has been the dichotomy for the advanced industrialised countries it is easily imagined how much acute the same can be for the least developed countries if they are to hurry through reforms.

The World Bank-IMF assessment shows that the global economy is poised for the 'strongest growth since the late 1980s but advises to avoid the mistakes of the past recovery — running up huge budget deficits. The English-speaking countries have come out of recession already while Japan and the rest of Europe are to come through later. Growth managed with low inflation happens to be the principal preoccupation of countries which have had the fastest growth in the recent years. China enjoyed a growth rate of 13 per cent for two consecutive years before it tapered off to about 11 per cent this year. Inflation runs at double digit though. India's rapidly growing economy too is going through a marked inflationary pressure. Growth with the least price pressure on the economy can help avert budgetary deficits. The other interesting feature of the assessment is that southeast Asia does 30 per cent of its trade within its own region — ASEAN, for the most part. SAARC countries can take the cue.

less should provide little room for complacency in a country like ours where such facilities

are yet in acute scarcity. The time is perhaps, ripe for a new look at the management and operational modus operandi of such services along with the role of government therein. The basic premise upon which such a vision should hang around should comprise inter alia the ways to make infrastructure "more efficient, more user responsive. more environment friendly and more resourceful in using both the public and private sectors". There is no denying the fact that the past efforts towards this end had hardly any expected dent to the effectiveness and efficiency of service operation and also there has been very little progress in discovering new ways of delivering the services to the peo-

Bangladesh Perspective

The services that business trade and industry need in Bangladesh such as power. natural gas, telecommunications, transport and their associated facilities are mostly public sector supplied. It is being alleged that virtually the whole infrastructure suffer from under investment inadequate attention to maintenance, poor operational man-

Myanmar and Cambodia, which

appeared in the state-run me-

to diplomatic analysts.

plained.

dia Aug. 16, came as a surprise

place there never was an an-

nouncement on the breaking

off of diplomatic ties between

the two countries, they ex-

nations cooled off when the

last Cambodian ambassador,

Am Umreth, packed up and

left in the early 1970s, literally

diplomatic relations with the

People's republic of China

(Beijing) but not with the

severed diplomatic relations

with was the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea on

Nov. 4. 1983. This was when it

was established that North

Korea sent a three-man mur-

der squad to assassinate then

The only country it formally

Republic of China (Taiwan).

Myanmar has maintained

closing down the embassy.

Relations between the two

This is because in the first

Infrastructural Hazards and Economic Development

agement. In inconsequence the provisions of such services have substandard performance and the penetration of infrastructure and utility services remains among the lowest in

"powerful" power sector. To achieve the target growth rate of 6-7 per cent per year by the end of the decade it is reasoned that the country needs the availability of an adequate reliable and reasonably priced electricity. Power utilities are controlled by the Bangladesh Power Development Board and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority In addition rural electricity co-operatives operate under and are regulated by the Rural Electrification Board From FY 80 to FY 93 power generation has grown at about Il per cent per year compared to a GDP growth rate of only 4 per cent. It may sound comfortable but the fact remains that only 12 per cent of the households in Bangladesh are at the moment electrified and the per capita generation at about 80kwh p. a. which is among the lowest in the world and also the lowest as compared to that of Sri Lanka India and Pakistan averaging 200-300kwh. About one-fourth of the installed generating capacity (nearly 600-700 MW) in

Take the case of the

the world.

by Abdul Bayes

Bangladesh is reported to be out of service awaiting major maintenance and rehabilita tion. The annual load factor of 58 per cent is low compared to an world average acceptable limit of 60-65 per cent and 62 per cent in the neighbouring countries. System loss in the power sector at 40 per cent still continues to be the major headache for the policy makers and the donors. It follows then that a reasonable price and timely availability of this important input should constitute the major determinant of

investment decisions. Now let us look at the telecommunications sector. Bangladesh's telephone penetration rate of two main lines per 1000 population is one of the lowest in the world. The rate is 10 and 7 respectively for India and Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Over the years the demand for telephone lines far exceeded the supply. For example during 1988-91 the mainline demand increased at a compound growth rate of 6 per cent per annum while the growth rate of waiting list for telephone services increased at 9 per cent per annum. This has happened despite one of the highest installation charge for digital lines in the world currently around US\$500 per line. All available indicators

tend to show that the sector could hardly grow as invest ment trade and business friendly in Bangladesh. It is being alleged that the relative rate of telephone charge is less important than the availability of the lines where a potential businessman has to wait for 12-15 months to get a new connection.

. The pace in development of the gas field at its nascent stage is another hurdle to the development of the economy Currently about 90 per cent of the power generation is based on natural gas. Power generation and fertilizer production account for about 43 and 34 per cent respectively of total gas consumption in Bangladesh while the rest goes to the industrial commercial and residential consumers. Despite its importance in the development the gas sector is haunted by inefficiency and ineffectiveness. The system loss is also not insignificant.

Improved Performance

Needed It appears that the infrastructural hazards in Bangladesh continue to affect adversely the supply response. It also tends to erode the comparative edge of producing goods and services.

We, therefore, need to improve the performance of

reform objective in the power sector should be to ensure its operation on commercial basis with least government subsidies and provide adequate and reliable power supply to consumers. The imperatives should focus on breaking the government's monopoly in the power sector and make attempts to generate competi tion transparency. A firm polit ical commitment is required in this regard.

these sectors. The overriding

Similarly, an environment of competition should also dominate any thinking about the reforms in the telecommunication sector. So far line major constraints to this sector's development have been (i) lack of clearly articulated government regulatory policy for the sector: (ii) the absence of an effective regulatory structure: (iii) ineffective incentive structure etc. A political commitment to this end is urgently called for.

The transport sector. although at a backward stage of development, does not seem as precarious as others. Over the years, however, there has been some attempts to develop the roads and highways network. However, we still need a far better roads network.

A road to good infrastructure is a road to better growth end development.

YANMAR re-establis hed recently diplom-▲ ▼ ▲ atic relations with diplomatic relations, between

Cambodia, a step generally perceived as an attempt by this Least Developed Country (LDC) to prove it was no longer isolated and that its efforts at rejoining the international and regional community were pay-A joint announcement read:

T goes without saying that

the adequacy of infrastru-

cture helps determine one

country's success in divers

ifying the structure of

production, trade and coping

with population growth,

reducing poverty or improving

environmental conditions. The

impact of good infrastructure

in raising productivity and

lowering production costs is

well documented in current

economic literature. However,

lack of investment friendly

infrastructural facilities

continues to be the perennial

source of sour in developing

Bangladesh. Although develop-

ing countries invest \$200 bil-

lion a year in new infrastruc

ture - four per cent of their

national output and a fifth of

their total investment - infras-

tructural services are yet to

ing potential investors from

home and abroad. Available ev-

idence tends to show that over

the past decade and a half

there has been marginal im-

provement in respect of the

share of households with ac-

cess to clean water (which in-

creased by one-half) and avail-

ability of power and telephone

lines per capita (which have

doubled) to contribute feebly

to raise productivity and im-

proving living standards. These

accomplishments, neverthe-

grow up to a standard of allur

countries

including

"In conformity with the interest and desire of the two peoples. Burma (Myanmar) and Kingdom of Cambodia have decided to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries at the ambassadorial level as of 16 August 1994."

"The two governments have agreed to develop friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries on the basis of five principles enshrined in the charter of the United Nations (UN)."

To date, Myanmar has established diplomatic relations with 71 countries. It isolated itself from the rest of the world after the 1962 coup.

The two-sentence joint an-

Myanmar Renews Ties with Cambodia

Minn Thu writes from Yangon

The announcement caught the diplomatic community by surprise as they did not even know that ties have been broken

visiting South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan.

President Chun narrowly escaped being blown to pieces when the assassination squad led by one Major Zin Mo. bombed the most revered martyrs mausoleum in the morning of Oct. 9, 1983 where he was to pay respects to Myanmar's fallen leaders. Major Zin Mo was later executed.

In a way, Myanmar's move to restore bilateral ties with Cambodia was also expected. Recently the ruling military has been exerting all efforts not only to improve bilateral relations but also to polish its image abroad.

Last year, it sent a four-man image polishing mission abroad to beef up efforts of its diplomats already based there. For the first time. Myanmar attended a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This was the recent July summit in

Bangkok. Myanmar probably felt that the six-nation forum might expand to include all 10 countries in Southeast Asia and that its presence at the ASEAN was proof that its efforts to improve bilateral and regional cooperation were succeeding. ASEAN members at present are Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia. Singapore and Thailand.

Following the United Nations resolution lifting the sanctions and prohibitions on South Africa, Myanmar did the same effective Mar. 23, 1994.

It also sent Deputy Premier Vice Admiral Maung Maung Khin to attend President Nelson Mandela's May 10 inauguration. During his courtesy call the next day. Mr Khin handed President Mandela the congratulatory message from chairman Than Shwe of the ruling military state law and order restoration council (SLORC).

Myanmar apparently chose not to dwell on Mr Mandela's call, in accepting his Nobel peace prize last December. called for the unconditional release of 1991 Nobel peace laureate Aung San Su Kyi.

Major donors suspended all aids and loans to Myanmar due to their dissatisfaction over the way the military handled the prodemocracy movement and reports of human rights viola-

They had been calling for the unconditional release of Ms Su Kyi and other remaining political detainees, and the

speedy transfer of power to those duly elected in the May 1990 elections.

The international community has also been pressing for a dialogue between Ms Su Kyi and the military.

The military has told a Burmese Buddhist missionary Rev. U Yewata Dhamma from Birmingham, who was allowed to visit Ms Su Ky last Aug. 7. as well as the "New York Times" that it would dialogue with the detained political leader at an appropriate time in the not too distant future.

Burmese Ambassador to London Hia Mauing also con firmed that either Chairman Than Shwe or a senior official representing him would meet with Ms Su Kyi soon.

According to diplomats, UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) rapporteur, Professor Yozo Yokota, has been given the mandate to visit Myanmar to investigate human rights violations. The UN high commissioner for refugees is also expected to come here.

— Depthnews Asia

T ASSAN Gasim is a worried and angry man ▲ ▲ as he sits outside his small house in this southern atoll in the Maldives looking

out into the Indian Ocean. The sea has given food and livelihood to the Gasim household for generations. But all this could soon be snatched away because of the decision by the government to throw open the waters of the archipelago

to foreign fishing vessels. "They are destroying my life," Gasim says. Maldivian fishermen have never used nets, preferring to drop a line and haul in just enough fish to meet their needs and allowing

the schools to regenerate. Unlike the seas off the coast of neighbouring India which are overfished, the lagoons and channels in the Maldives teem with fish.

When trawlers from East Asia start dragging their nets across the tuna-rich seas off the Maldives, there will not be much left for fishermen like Gasim who have fished sustainably amidst the atolls and

Maldives: Fishing Other's Waters The decision of the government of Maldives to open up the country's waters to foreign trawlers has local fisherfolk fuming.

More than a third of the tiny South Asian archipelago nation's annual income comes from fisheries. Tourism, with 200,000 visitors every year as much as the country's population - generates maximum earnings, but fishing creates the most jobs.

Nearly half the working population of Maldives depends on fishing. The annual fish catch has more than tripled to 90,000 toones since 1977 to keep pace with population growth and exports.

It is not only local fisherfolk like Gasim who are agitated by the government's decision to let foreign vessels fish up to 120 km from the Maldives shoreline. In the capital of Male, rumours of foreign fishing companies having bribed politicians have fuelled re-

sentment. An opposition lawmaker will move a private member's bill in the next session of the national parliament to regulate Mohamed Nasheed reports for Inter Press Service from Hadumathi, Maldives

foreign fishers.

The government these days is showing increasing sensitivity to criticism. The reporter of a local daily who recently published a story critical of the fishing policy was detained by

authorities for questioning. About 25 foreign vessels have already begun working the seas off Maldives. Each can fish with more than a thousand lines at one time. A ship belonging to the foreign Dongwong industries is reported to be using 2,500 lines

simultaneously. Gasim's shallow-bottomed boat, locally known as a dhoni is 10 metres long - the largest among traditional boats and

carries a crew of eight. They put out to sea before daybreak and on a good day, catch about 500 fish, mainly Skipjack and Yellowfin tuna.

Faced with such competition, the Maldives' artisinal fisherfolk will have no choice but to give up their ancestral vocation and move to the congested capital city in search of other work.

The 200,000 people of the Maldives are dispersed over 100 inhabited islands, more than a fourth live in Male. The capital's population has doubled in the past decade, with an officially estimated 12 people per house.

Some experts say the fears

of traditional fisherfolk are baseless. They say the big foreign vessels will only catch species like Yellowfin tuna which are found in the deep seas where local fishermen do not venture.

Since foreign vessels are already poaching off the Maldives, what is wrong with the government getting some royalty out of it, they ask.

But the government's own statistics show that traditional fisherfolk catch the same commercial species as the foreign trawlers. In 1992, local fisherfolk landed 8,697 tonnes of Yellowfin tuna and this is increasing by 25 percent every

Gasim does not need figures to be convinced that his catch is decreasing day by day. He insists that the foreign vessels are already encroaching within the 120 km limit.

Huda Ahmad, a fisheries science graduate from India,

says it is still not known what effect over-fishing in the deep seas will have on the eatch of the traditional boats.

But she warns: "We are falling into a trap that other nations have fallen into. This is very foolhardy." Huda notes that it is easy to bring in high technology and investments in the name of economic development. But låter, govern ments often find that this has undesirable effects and are.

The Maldives has dramatically modernised fisheries with Western aid in recent years. Before the entry of the foreign vessels, traditional dhonis were supplemented with mechanised fishing boats.

Its fleet of over 1,600 mechanised fishing vessels is capable of landing at least 30 tonnes each boat annually. thrice of what the dhonis bring in.

Environmentalists say the entry of profit-driven foreign trawlers is going to wreck an age-old fishing tradition that allowed Maldivians to live sustainably off their seas.

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.

Motor workshops on busy roads

Sir. Part of Dhaka-Narayangani road from Hardeo Glass Factory/Folder Street point to old railway crossing at Nawabpur/Gulistan is one of the most crowded and terribly traffic jam areas of Dhaka. It not only links the thickly populated old Dhaka with new Dhaka but it is also the centre of our metropolitan city.

This public road about half a mile long, which was once the property of Bangladesh Railway and now bears as many as five different names - Folder Street, Hatkhola, Joi Kali Mandir Road, Toynbee Circular Road and Captan Bazar Road — has been turned into a haven of innumerable open air motor workshops. Hundreds of buses are parked and stranded there continuously for weeks and months for various repair works, vulcanizing, engine overhauling, body building and painting etc. creating intense traffic jam and road blockade causing untold suffering to the

people We wonder how the motor workshops have sprung up on . this busy and important public thoroughfare in the heart of

the city. How did the Dhaka City Corporation issue and continue to renew trade licence to the workshop owners, if they maintain any, and if not, how do they exist? We would request the

Dhaka City Corporation to kindly look into the matter, arrange shifting of the motor workshops from the busy, crowded and centre of the city to at least 2-3 miles away and mitigate the sufferings of the

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203

Sincerity at workplace

Sir. "A bad workman quarrels with his tools " - the proverb is a valuable guide in our practical life. A lazy and incompetent person is always found to grumble with his work. He finds nothing to his liking. He has less inclination to do any work, and always seeks better condition and ideal atmosphere for work. But a good workman takes every thing in a good humour. He understands and realises that

he cannot expect everything to his liking readily, and at the same time feels that the work entrusted to him should not be allowed to suffer. If he finds difficulty in doing the work he accepts the challenge and sets himself to the task of removing the hurdles in the way. Such a man wins the heart of others and is voluntarily helped and assisted in his work, when he finds the job not equal to his capacity or capability. He regards grumbling as bad manner and something not at all helpful in doing the job. A good workman instead of finding fault with his tools or available working conditions, sets and follows a policy of mending them. Everything is possible in life for a good, honest and sincere worker. The proverb, therefore

should make us understand the reasons of our failure and teach us not to seek or find fault with others. In our day to day work we often come across people who offer various pleas to avoid doing a work. The practice is rampant in government offices.

In any non-government or private organisation, a staff member, when approached. readily takes up the work, while in many government offices, where there are sufficient workers doing little work and whiling away time idly, one will not work on different pleas, which stands greatly as impediment in the way of bringing dynamism in such organisations. People at the helm of affairs should not only carry out their responsi-

bilities, but also see that those below them do their part sincerely.

N Rahman 4. Lalbag, Dhaka

Ombudsman

Sir, I fully associate myself

with the conclusion drawn by Mohammed Quamrul Islam in his article on the above captioned subject published in your esteemed daily on September 21, 1994. It appears to me that passing of the Ombudsman Act in 1980 by our National Assembly might have escaped the notice of the writer as no mention of this has been made in his article. The Ombudsman Act, 1980 is to come into effect on such date as the government may by notification in the official appoint gazette, Unfortunately, the government could not bring this Act into force till the martial law was imposed on March 24, 1982. Since the statute has not been repealed. I urge the present democratic government to take immediate steps for implementing the Act.

According to the provision of the Act, the Ombudsman is to be appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Parliament. The Parliament is to recommend a person of known legal or administrative ability and conspicuous integrity for appointment as Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is to hold office for a term of three years and shall be eligible for reappoint-

ment for one further term. He is not to be removed from his office except by an order of the President passed pursuant to a resolution of the Parliament supported by a majority of not less than two thirds of the total number of members of the Parliament on the ground of proved misconduct or physical incapacity. No such resolution. however, shall be passed until the Ombudsman has been given a reasonable opportunity of being heard in person by the National Assembly.

If the present members of the Parliament go through the Ombudsman Act, 1980, they will find that many of the ills of the present executive wing of the government shall get cured if this Act is brought into being. I only wish ardently that the cherished goal of General Zia is fulfilled by bringing this Act into force. A A G Kabir Juarshara, Dhaka-1227

"On the Campus: Africa"

Sir, The Daily Star of the 23rd September carried an article on the situation prevailing in the Nigerian universities. The fight between student groups has caused unscheduled vacation. As a result one university has already gone behind by a year. In the otherwise dismal situation, we see a ray of hope there. The government has woken up and issued directives to the police force to weed out the culprits responsible. Secret service men have been employed.

The situation is not much different in our universities. only worse. Each of the universities is now running two to three years behind schedule. A student takes six to seven years to complete a four-year course. Bloody fights between student groups have become a common affair. Arms are openly used, while the authorities remain, or have to remain, silent onlookers. Can't our government take a cue from the Nigerian government action?

It's high time the authorities realized that money from the public exchequer is spent to run the universities and the public has a right to demand a healthy academic atmosphere. How long do we have to wait to see some bold action taken?

Opposition

Maleeha Shafique Deptt. of English Chittagong University

Sir. What's wrong with the Opposition? They criticised visiting dignitaries such as the British Parliamentary Delegation, and Commonwealth Secy Gen, on their pet obsession which goes by the name of caretaker government for a short period. Professionals know what to say when they open their mouths How can the

Opposition be right all the time? Work, or let others work.

A Zutir

1 Hickory