

WB's Fresh Pointer

There is no sign that the World Bank will soften its attitude towards our power sector any time soon.

It all started brewing three years ago with the system loss in the power sector running as high as 40 per cent.

With time the PDB's problems have only mounted. Its aging power generators are increasingly running the risk of massive break-downs.

The fact that the rural electrification has virtually no system loss is a strong case in favour of getting the PDB rid of this malaise.

Death in the Southern Districts

In greater Barisal, following a vicious outbreak of diarrhoeal epidemic, well over 2000 people have in a week been attacked, 37 of them already dead.

And haven't these names of the new districts in Barisal been for years on end a happy hunting ground of cholera or diarrhoea or whatever you will?

Tubewells have always been the best bet against this fatal epidemic, why should tubewells be failing specially in this diarrhoea-prone zone?

Potable water is necessity number one for sustaining our big population in health.

Sweet Oscar

For Tom Hanks it has been a success story all the way sweetly told. Indeed, immediately after his appearance in the world's most famous stardom, the Hollywood, he has taken it by storm.

Now 38, Hanks seems to have a long way to go. The question is how will the future rate him as an actor if he collects more laurels.

"Forrest Gump," the film in which he acted, collected six Oscars out of 13 categories it received nominations for.

During 1960s, a campaign was launched to popularise maize cultivation in the then East Pakistan (Bangladesh).

I fervently hope and pray that neither FAP nor public participation in it meet this late Of course FAP is a serious business but would tend to become a joke.

As I wrote before, we are not only living with the floods for at least a thousand (if not many more) years.

In Bangladesh, our lives are well adjusted to rising levels of water in the months of rains when rivers overflow their banks.

As reports of more and more Serbian violations of the United Nations resolutions, in the form of helicopter shipment of arms across the border to the Bosnian Serbs, are confirmed,

The only problem with this rationale is that there are other aggrieved parties to the conflicts, namely the Croats and the Muslims, who refuse to follow the contact group in groveling to the Serbs.

The so called 'contact group' has no common point of contact. America, and to some extent Germany, are the only honest brokers.

To the Editor

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space.

Mr. Every newspaper plays a crucial role in protecting human rights by disseminating information and raising awareness about human rights violations.

Last month, your paper gave front page coverage to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights Practices in Bangladesh.

The State Department's report dealt at length with the issue of the right to freedom of expression, and categorically identified as a violation of this fundamental human right the pending criminal case against Dr Taslima Nasreen.

It is ironic therefore to note that this particular case finds no mention whatsoever in the summary of the State Dept's report. It is unfortunate to note that journalists, whose life and livelihood is dependent on their free exercise of the selfsame right to freedom of speech, are often so quick to deny this right to others.

S M Hassan Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka

BNSB Hospital

Sir, in today's climate of a massive flight of rich patients for expensive treatment abroad, I'd like to share with your readers my experience of a hospital in this country which compares favourably with any centres of excellence abroad.

I am talking about the Bangladesh National Society for the Blind (BNSB) Hospital at Pahartali, Chittagong. I had the fortune recently to have an

Flood Action Plan and Public Participation

What is required is a major scheme to resuscitate the whole system by dredging, digging and creating additional drainage capacities and revive an ancient system, capable of disposing of huge quantities of water from the world's highest rainfall areas into the Bay of Bengal.

flows of water and forcing rivers to maintain their courses for all times to come.

When FAP is fully implemented, we will not be living with the floods any longer. Is it feasible — living without the floods? First, the soil would be denied the essential nutrients every year and as a result, productivity of land would go down and the process of diminishing returns from lands would set in.

Changed Situation

However, things have changed from the days of our forefathers. The relentless process of siltation have considerably lowered the depths of rivers, canals and lakes.

Starting with the much vaunted 'Vance-Owen peace plan' to the debacle at Bihac, the contact group has always retreated under Serbian intransigence.

The September agreement stipulated that if Serbia broke its promise, the embargo will be quickly reimposed. It has not. If Serbia breaks its new promise, and it will, be sure that Russia, Britain and France will use their veto.

dependent on water from this river will be badly affected. No water from the river will be replenishing the Dhaleswari floodplains nor will any fish and other aquatic animals migrate.

US State Dept Report

One report in UK states that at least one third of the boys and 28 per cent of the girls have taken illicit drugs by the age of 15.

Such use of drugs and their availability in students' circle have prompted large number of private schools in UK and other western countries to use urine tests for suspected drug takers.

We believe drug testing will not only be a deterrent, but it would also be a way of identifying pupils with drug problem for effective counselling. Cannabis is the most common drug taken by school students in the west. Then comes the use of amphetamines etc.

Finally, coarse drugs found at cheap rates are reportedly being smuggled in by some unscrupulous traders at random for easy money.

Drug tests in schools and colleges

Sir, Recent incidents and reports of experts reveal that the number of teenagers experimenting with drugs has trebled in the past few years.



lized, not only to raise the levels of villages well above the flood levels, but enlarge the flood-free village homestead land areas to be used for year-round intensive growing of vegetable, fruit and animal fodder.

The proponents of the FAP would consider my suggestions inhuman; although we have been living with the floods in fresh water islands for at least ten centuries.

Needed: Drainage Action Plan Not flood action but drainage action plan is what we need. It is a matter of strategy based on objective

Do Not Lift Sanctions on Serbia

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton, USA

The one embargo that the contact group refuses to consider lifting is the one that should not have been imposed in the first place: the one that hinders the Bosnians from defending themselves.

The contact group now wishes to lift all the remaining sanctions on Serbia only if they promise to recognize the borders of Bosnia and Croatia.

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realisation of hard practical realities of our deltaic land, its rivers and the perennial floods thereof. And here the role of public participation will indeed be critical.

But what I have proposed refers to a different culture as well as value structure, unknown to the bureaucratic imitatives of official schemes implemented through the established competitive bidding system.

Russia will run out of all excuses for inaction, and third world countries will gladly supply replacements.

Russia is beginning to find out in Chechnya that suppressing the legitimate aspirations of a people comes with a heavy price tag.

Bureaucratic Mystique in South Asia

by A K M Jalaluddin

ACR-I A Love Letter from Government

ACR (Annual Confidential Report) is an essential element in our government's system of personnel management. Drawing on its 28 years of public service, the author discusses, in the five-article series, various aspects of ACR management in South Asia with its hilarity and seriousness.

THE year was 1942. The Second World War was just about its mid-career and the Japanese bombs were raining death and destruction on the Burmese front.

In the rarefied atmosphere of the Writers' Building, Calcutta, hawks and doves were equally disturbed: what would they do with the huge number of vacancies that were arising in various areas of government?

The letter was somewhat like this: "My dear XYZ, [SECRET CONTAIN] You have been recently promoted to the position of Additional SP at Burdwan Government would like you to know that it was not because of your merit that this promotion was given but because of an acute shortage of competent officers that this promotion had to be effected.

Records do not show how Mr XYZ reacted to the letter — but soon the British rule ended in the subcontinent and a different set of norms and ethos overtook the new government of East Bengal. The love letter had not altogether lost its relevance but was not counted as a big minus for Mr XYZ. He did well in service and prospered both with Pakistan and Bangladesh regimes.