

## Beyond the Science Week

The state of science and technology in a country reads like an open book, this being a mirror-image of the national thought-process and the life as lived daily. There are exact nuggets, niches and notches against which claims of achievement in the field of science and technology can be tallied for determining their veracity and tenability.

Our showing in these affairs, candidly speaking, has been abysmally poor. Where is science in our contemporary thinking? One may very rightly ask that question today. For, even the lively debates that used to rend the air in the closing years of seventies — on appropriate, low-cost and intermediate technology — have since fallen out of fashion altogether. The de-prioritising of the subject has set the mental clock back. Then comes poor physical organisation as an impediment to the advancement of science and technology. The Science and Technology Ministry we now have is not headed by a full minister with the kind of credentials that would ensure expert handling of the affairs. The perfunctory approach persists.

We have a plenty of ingenuity among our people which has come to bud in the wilderness without the help of government funds. Their low-cost improvisations can bloom into flower-beds now if these are recognised, patented, provided with working capital and inputs, and helped with marketing at home and abroad. Let there be an all-embracing one-step service opened by the Science and Technology Ministry, to promote individual and group activities in the private sector starting with the well-known enclaves such as Dholai Khal or Zinjira to the mufassil locales, strong in innovative flair and improvisation. This is the way in which China has developed an efficient technology of its own. Even Japan's early leap forward in technology, traced back to the immediate post Great War period, came through the knocking down of machines of western origin and learning the ropes in good time.

We need to put together all the tiny parcels into an indigenous technological whole and then promote furtherance of it through increased expenditure in research and experimentation, duly aided by import and translation of relevant foreign books and journals on technology. Only a well-developed local technology can provide a proper backward linkage to the bigger industries sustaining them as part of a wider national self-reliance drive.

## A Patient's Due

A top bureaucrat now looking after health establishments and institutions of the nation has done a bit of self-patting, saying that in the matter of medicare-Bangladesh has registered considerable progress. This news was carried by the press on Sunday along with another news that almost mocked at the claim. A Dhaka University survey team has reported that in Dhaka city private medical practitioners give 7.3 minutes to each of their patients. In the villages this improves somewhat to 9.2 minutes. A separate survey conducted by UNICEF, however, has come up with far more unflattering figures. In the thana health complexes, doctors spend a minute with each patient. If treatment is any part of national medicare, it stands there exactly at what these figures should mean. Revealing? Ridiculous? Shameful? Shocking? Yes, all combined together and more — this is the reality and any sensible person may not please be tempted to vaunt about gains made in this area.

It is a two-way traffic that makes these fantastic figures possible. On the one hand, there is tremendous patient pressure on most established doctors — giving enough time to a patient would amount to refusing many patients. On the other, the ethical and professional qualms balking at such summary treatment have become so weak over the years as to be unable to pull back the doctor from the stream of money flowing in on its own.

Settling for a nationwide mean of four minutes to a patient, what can a doctor do by this time? Neither science, nor profession, to be sure. And what does the patient pay for such service — if service it indeed is? The university survey says many patients part substantially with their life's savings. And quite a number sell property to buy the doctor's time and, in certain cases, personal and familial ruin. Unfair, to state the obvious.

In the virgin soil of the body of our village people, first drugs indeed work miracles. The quack is more adept than the doctor in taking advantage of this. How can we, and the doctor, convince the patient that it is to his or her good to go to a doctor than to a quack — specially if both of these prescribe the same antibiotic pills, impairing the body's immunity system?

If we would only heed Lewis Thomas — one of the wisest among the practitioners of the art of healing and teachers of the biomedical sciences — in the final analysis, the doctor's best service is just to stand by his patient and reassure him.

## Marquiss de Sade Shamed

She is only ten and comes from a remote Barisal village. She has been in this city for over a year, doing a servant's job at some government job-holder's residence in the Ramna area. It has been more a hell than a home for her with hardly a day passing without some hard beating.

On Saturday evening the master of the house, supported by the mistress in his painstaking task, ran a safety razor blade on her head and breast, hands and legs, making bloody furrows. The job done, they threw the bleeding child out into the street. An officer of the Ramna Police Station found her in this state and took her to the DMC hospital for treatment.

Child-bashing has been steadily on the rise for some years. The gruesome read on the newspaper page translates immediately to piercing shrieks — interminable but perhaps muffled by some crueller device — of the child. And one is at once impelled to look into the insides of the minds of the two engaged almost in a flailing job — flailing a girl-child of 10 alive. They were not insane! What sane man and woman can co-operate on such a job without fear of hating each other! They were surpassing Marquiss de Sade. Society to be society, must be rid of such criminal perverts.

# Foreign Aid: Donor Community's Dilemma

**Donors themselves often create confusion by using aid to test their pet theories, establish spheres of influence, win political support or just promote export of their goods and services. Recipients of aid, on their part, might use the money to finance budget deficits and not development or build projects which might bring political advantage but not welfare.**

I am not good at being bad! mused cartoon character Dennis the Menace. "I'm just bad at being good." That also sounds like putting the donor community's dilemma in a capsule.

World's poor nations keep running all the time to the rich countries, pleading for aid. Somewhat resembling the good Samaritans, the affluent nations obligate, getting to be known collectively as the donor community. Aid for the poor nations comes in the form of grants, loans and technical assistance. Alas, unlike the good Samaritans, the donor community seldom indulges in unalloyed altruism and aid carries strings.

Poor nations snap up the aid, strings and all. However, they also have imbibed the disconcerting habit of looking the gift horse in the mouth. Soon enough the aid recipients start grumbling about the conditionalities attached to the assistance package. They rile at their debt burden. Even more galling, when the turn for repayment comes, debtors clamour for loans to be forgiven. The donor community apparently has fared badly in doing good!

The clamour for debt forgiveness reached a crescendo at the March 6 to 12 United Nations sponsored World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) held in the Danish capital Copenhagen. The first point to wonder is how could the issue of poor countries' external debt burden crop up at a global summit for social advancement. Well, it's all a question of money really. The summit had alternately been named poverty meeting. It had also been called the people's summit. Upgrading social conditions in developing countries calls for additional outlay in money and

resources. Developing countries particularly the poorest among them, are, on the other hand, strapped for funds to embark on expanded programmes for social development. So comes the question of easing their debt burden.

The focus of the summit's attention was on a proposal which 'come to be known as the 20-20 compact. The plan eventually got through at the summit but only as a non-binding goal. The idea is for the donor nations and institutions to direct 20 per cent of their foreign aid towards financing expenditure on basic social needs — schools, hospitals, women's programmes and the like. In return, developing countries would spend 20 per cent of their national budget on such programmes. These nations now allocate on average 10 per cent or less of their budget on social sectors. In other words, poor countries would have to double their expenditure on this account.

As could be expected in these circumstances, developing countries participating in the WSSD made a pitch for increased foreign aid and cancellation of outstanding debts to enable them to take on expanded social development programmes. The poorest nations, designated as Least Developed Countries, seemed to have a particularly strong case in this regard. Official data suggests that the economic situation in these 47 countries has actually deteriorated over the past decade or so. The average per capita income in the advanced market economies rose from \$16,159 in 1980 to \$20,309 in 1991.

During the same period, average per capita income among all developing countries increased marginally from \$1,035 to \$1,118. However, taken separately, the poorest 47 among the developing countries actually saw their incomes decline. The per capita income in these Least Developed Countries dropped to an average of \$349 a year in 1991 from \$369 in 1980.

In the event, WSSD did not bring promises of more foreign aid. The donor community now allocates roughly 7 per cent of the aid money for social development programmes abroad. If

nations dilemma. They want the poorest countries to conform to their own ideas of social justice but are reluctant to lay out more money to put such notions to work abroad.

Perhaps part of the donor community's strategy is to make the faster-growing developing countries, perceived as emerging economies nowadays, pay their own bills. The WSSD debt reduction measure also serves as a pointer in this regard. At the summit, the richer nations eventually agreed to a non-binding provision for cancellation of debts of the Least Developed Countries

poorest countries, these are all in general terms, setting only goals and directions. Questions remain about cancellation of debts owed to multilateral institutions such as the World Bank. Modalities for debt forgiveness remain to be set. Perhaps the question of asking the recipients of debt concession to spend the money saved exclusively on basic social services, could yet turn out to be a thorny issue. The situation could get even more complicated if the countries drawing the concession are also required to match the amount of forgiven-debt by their own money, all to be spent on, social development. Then again, should the donor community insert spending on social services as a conditionality for aid? Well, the plot thickens and the donor community's dilemma becomes more perplexing.

Otherwise also, donors themselves often create confusion by using aid to test their pet theories, establish spheres of influence, win political support or just promote export of their goods and services. Recipients of aid, on their part, might use the money to finance budget deficits and not development or build projects which might bring political advantage but, not welfare. Somewhere, a leader and his minions might siphon aid money away to line their own pockets. All the cross-currents add to the donor community's quandary.

In retrospect, WSSD debt cancellation package may also be regarded as an

extension of the Group of Seven (G-7) industrialized nations' (Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States) move last year to write off part of the official development assistance (ODA) loans given to the poorer countries. Writing in these columns last year (G-7 Naples Summit's Gift for Poorer Nations — July 25 '94) had mentioned that the Group left it to the Paris Club to draw up modalities for the proposed debt relief. The Paris Club is the forum for some 18 rich creditor countries to consider rescheduling and cancellation of ODA loans. The Club agreed last December to write off up to two-thirds of all outstanding government-to-government loans of poorest nations. The snag is that debt relief would be considered on a case-to-case basis and only the poorest country with a strong record of meeting its commitments would qualify for the maximum benefit. So the poor nations have to fight another battle to lay their hands on the prize.

Bangladesh is one of the world's 47 poorest countries.

Per capita income has actually gone up a bit over the last decade or so but still remains quite a way below even the poorest countries' average. The World Bank reckons that it was \$224 in 1993-94. That ought to be a plus point for securing debt relief. Well, total ODA related external debt, outstanding at the end of the last financial year, stood at roughly 12 billion dollars. Another silver lining for debt relief is — adherence to the WSSD 20-20 formula would not stand as an obstacle, at least not for now.

As much as 28 per cent of this year's budget would be spent on social programmes.

## ALONG MY WAY

S B Chaudhuri



the 20-20 formula works out, donors will probably end up diverting funds from areas such as infrastructure development towards social sector to raise their contributions to that field to the agreed level. The net flow of foreign aid will not increase. In fact, the United Nations' target for the richer nations to spend 0.7 per cent of their gross national product in official development assistance remains a distant goal as before. At \$56 billion, official development assistance in 1993 had fallen to a 20-year low. It came to \$54.5 billion in 1994, recording a further decline. That means only about 0.3 per cent of the donor countries' GNP. And that also is a part of rich

only — not for all indebted developing nations. Released from the obligation to repay debts, the world's poorest nations would be enabled to divert resources saved consequentially towards other sectors. All the same, in extending the concession to the poorest nations alone, the donor community has also sent a clear signal to other developing countries: that they are expected to fulfil their obligations under the 20-20 covenant with own resources.

But that is not all. The concession on debt reduction held out to the poorest countries is nonbinding on the richer nations. Although the summit documents make mention of total debt cancellation for

# Making the Police Secular in India

T Ananthachari writes from New Delhi

**One of the qualities ingrained in policemen is patriotism. In a multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-regional and multi-cultural society, the society's strength lies in synthesising and fusing these diversities rather than exploiting them for narrow political gains.**

than the disease itself. This is what is happening with regard to the police vis-a-vis secular aspects of law enforcement.

Secularism has taken a beating on many occasions, sometimes at the behest of the political masters and sometimes even without their contribution. The fact is that the political masters seem to overlook the fact that when they violate secular considerations with the help of the police, the latter are prone to treat it as a signal or licence for them to act singularly with impunity.

Luckily such violations by the police on their own have not been many, though in the recent years one or two police forces have come in for adverse notice. Notwithstanding the happenings which took place at the time of partition in 1947 and again in 1964 (when large scale refugee movement took place from the then East Pakistan consequent to the missing of the holy relic from Hazratbal), the police maintained good secular traditions. But the manner in which the police and security forces are being commanded by short-sighted and self-seeking politicians and also the non-balance with which their blatant commissions and omissions involving violation of secular considerations and norms are overlooked and compromised, have not particularly helped in sustaining secular traditions nurtured over the decades by the police and its hierarchy. The attitude and directions shown by very highly placed politicians during the height of the Assam agitation and also the 1984 riots in Delhi and other parts of India, are but two of such examples.

The fact is the police and security forces cannot but be secular. They have to be moral actors in the society's stage. It has been recognised that police have access the sources of developments of character formation in the society. Therefore, by their own conduct they are in a position to influence the character of a society. It is the failure to recognise this latent quality

and strength of the police, both by the leadership levels in the police and also the political parties, which has resulted in police secular neutrality being brought to disrepute in the recent times in Meerut, Delhi, Bombay and other places.

This is now being further compounded by the king of measures which are being advocated and in some cases even being implemented in the name of remedying the situation. There is a persistent demand that religious minorities, particularly the Muslims, should be given proportional representation in the police forces. However, well-meaning and well intentioned such a suggestion — maybe, it is wrought with very serious consequences; what is desirable to do, on the contrary, is to provide all facilities and help to minorities and similar other groups so that they can equip themselves appropriately to compete with other and join the police forces in large numbers. Police loyalty should be to the Constitution and not to sectarian interests.

One of the qualities ingrained in policemen is patriotism. In a multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-regional and multi-cultural society as ours, the society's strength lies in synthesising and fusing these diversities rather than exploiting them for narrow political gains. When police personnel owe their entry into the force of communal considerations, it is bound to dilute both the qualities of patriotism and loyalty, with long-term adverse effect on the single identity of the police as an impartial and non-partisan law enforcement instrument. We have already noticed the enormous damage communal approach has done to the political system. Surely we cannot afford the same

thing happening to the police. In fact the irresponsible manner in which political gains are sought to be achieved at the expense of secular demands has brought to surface a new set of threats to internal security, stability and integrity.

Not many years ago, the Armed police lines in an important and populous State, had developed the tradition of running messes on caste lines. In the more recent times, some Chief Ministers are openly advocating recruitments on caste and communal lines on the pretext of bring-

ing about social justice and secular outlook. These are bound to undermine not only the very principles sought to be established but will destroy discipline, impartiality, loyalty to the principle of Rule of Law etc. which are so much an important and integral part of the police. Instead, if we are really serious about the neutrality and secular credentials of the police, we should implement them through a training curriculum which will inculcate these principles not only at the beginning of the service but throughout one's career.

In some these qualities may be inborn. In others, these will have to be inculcated. Training as a tool will be a very useful weapon in such cases. Equally important, if not more, is the need to keep police insulated from political and sectarian influences. Unless this is en-

sured, police attitude will continue to remain to be suspect.

Often allegations and complaints of violation of secular considerations by policemen are heard. But one is not sure that in many cases of gross and proven violation adequate disciplinary action has been taken. Secularism vis-a-vis police in the same category as corruption, partisan behaviour and disregard to human rights. There is a lot of loud protests and momentary assurances but very little by way of follow up action and taking things to their logical end.

Only public accountability of those, particularly the political authority, who are in position to set things right can help. It is high time that the public took interest in such matters and made authorities realise that they cannot be taken for granted any longer by the latter.

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## Syed Mahbub Murshed: A Tribute

by Justice KM Subhan



ABINDRANATH has said that it is possible to find a person worthy of seeing, but it is not easy to find a worthy place to see him. I realised the truth of it in a wedding in 1938. I was then a student of class ten. I saw the groom, turbaned and donned in a light cream 'sherwani' under a 'choga' embroidered with real silver work, tall and erect, bright eyed and slightly tanned complexioned — that was the first sight I had of Barrister Syed Mahbub Murshed. I saw him in the worthy place.

After about four decades, in remembering him, I am asking myself why is it so important to talk so much about his looks? It was probably necessary because unknown to myself I accepted him as my hero — who later became my idol in my professional life.

In 1943, when I was a student of Calcutta University Law College, I was lucky to be present in the courtroom where a murder trial was on and the counsel for the accused was the prosecution witness. Those days little did I understand the pointing questions, young and old, were sitting in the courtroom — one of whom said "the questions indeed are worthy of barrister" the prosecution witnesses were tumbling. The judgement was delivered. The accused got a clean acquittal. I saw him after this in a few other cases. His questions were equally pointing. The witnesses dared not look at him straight. Still then I was not very sure if I would take up legal profession — but the more I saw him the more I was convinced that if there was any worthy profession it was to become a barrister. I, till then, saw him from a distance.

August, 1946 — in the great Calcutta killings — I had my first chance of getting little close to him. He was then one of the leading barristers of Calcutta High Court — a terribly busy practitioner. A relief committee was organized which was located at ground-floor of the Congress Exhibition Road residence of Khan Bahadur Ataur Rahman Khan in Park Circus. The

drawing room of late Mr Ismail — a reputed industrialist — was used as the office. Within a few days, 'legal complications' cropped up concerning those who were arrested during the riot and concerning property and families of those persons. I was entrusted to contact Syed Mahbub Murshed as I was the only one in the committee who had something to do with legal affairs. I was then a law student waiting to take the law final examination which was postponed because of the riot. After much of hesitation, I picked up courage to meet the legal luminary in his flat but before I could finish, he came down with me to the office. The other members — late Mr Ismail, late Mr Sayedul Hasan, Poet Golam Quddus and few others who were present — were puzzled over the situation and were eager to know the proper procedure to be followed in the matter. Very briefly and within a short time he clarified the situation and told us what to do. I saw him, that day, to frankly discuss with us the problems and give as much time as needed although he could hardly spare that. He helped us voluntarily and ungrudgingly. I witnessed his concern for the affected people — his sympathy and help for those who lost everything during the riot. In a short time he became a respectable leader. His success went beyond the legal matters.

Later I saw him as judge of the Dhaka High Court in every case it was wonderful to see how he applied legal principles to facts. His way of looking at facts and the application of

law stood out from other honourable judges. He could fathom even a difficult case in the shortest possible time. His interpretation and application of legal principles were subjects of envy. The subordinate staff found a father figure in him when he became the Chief Justice of East Pakistan.

The first blow was struck at the autocratic regime of Ayub Khan by the Dhaka High Court and Chief Justice Murshed was the author. He excelled himself in analysing and setting the constitutional issues that were raised before him. His rich language intermingled with the interpretation of law. His superior power of interpretation of legal principles and fearless disposition of constitutional matters once prompted Ayub to say, "Pakistan was rightly proud of two things — the cricket team and the judiciary." He was the author of most of the constitutional case that settled the rights of the citizens, the human rights, and established the supremacy of the rule of law.

In this area he was uncompromising, unique and fearless in his confrontation with the tyrannical and autocratic regime of Ayub Khan. He was both an architect in upholding the rights of the citizens and a terror to the ruling clique. He had thus created a few conspirators who like the creatures of darkness fought against the light of the day.

He preferred to resign his high office rather than to bow before the authoritarian regime. The loss was entirely that of the nation, of the people and of the judiciary. The blow was to the public conscience from which the nation perhaps has not yet recovered.

One gets overwhelmed with emotion in writing about him. The country is deprived of his unrivalled personality, his scholarship which was not only confined only to jurisprudence but pervaded to world of literature, music and socio-political philosophy and economics. Whenever he broached a topic he appeared to know more than the others as he just finished talking. His genius lit up anything he touched.

## To the Editor...

### Sports Development Fund Lottery

Sir, The draw of the seventh Sport Development Fund Lottery has been held recently. I don't understand why it has become essential to arrange lotteries repeatedly to promote sports sector of our country, luring people with huge sum of prize money? I think people have the right to know how much money has been earned and how it is being utilized as, after all, this is their money.

Lottery tickets should be sold through banks but we noticed that during the last few times NSC lottery tickets were being sold from parked vans here and there, attracting public through microphones. As forgery is a problem in our country, doubt arises as to the genuineness of all these tickets which are sold in this way. Now-a-days arranging lotteries has become a common practice and people are doing it indiscriminately. I think

there should be law restricting it and government must take actions against those who disobey.

Nur Jahan  
East Nasirabad, Chittagong

### Deportees from Saudi Arabia

Sir, We are stunned to see the fate of the Bangladeshi deportees from Saudi Arabia. There is no doubt that they have been inhumanly treated, far from what could be expected from the authorities of a fellow Muslim country. Not only the unauthorised but also the authorised ones with valid work permits have been forcibly deported. Besides, the way about 2000 of them were herded like cattle in a ship with capacity for less than 1000 is highly objectionable. Subsequent alleged tortures in the form of denial of food and drink and physical maltreatment are outrageous. Will it

not affect the country's reputation for hospitality and Islamic spirit?

Faruquddin Ahmed  
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### World's highest!

Sir, Press report: The world's highest temperature was recorded in Bangladesh on Friday, March 24, 1995 with the mercury shooting upto 38.8 degrees Celsius at Ishardi. A rating for Bangladesh!

I am afraid, there is no mechanical instrument for measuring the political temperature. Had there be one, it would perhaps be evident that the present political temperature in Bangladesh is also the world's highest!

Can't we shoot up our degree of patriotism which has perhaps dropped to the freezing point?

M Zahurul Haque  
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