



HYUNDAI

CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

Trade unions not opposed to privatisation of economy

Politicians, industrialists and labour leaders at a workshop here said that the trade unions in the country were not opposed to privatisation of the economy, reports UNB.

Labour leaders Protapuddin Ahmed of the Bangladesh Trade Union Sangha, Nazrul Islam Khan of the Jatiyatabadi Shamik Dal, and Nazrul Islam of the Trade Union Centre were unanimous in removing all misgivings by declaring that the workers of Bangladesh are not opposed to privatisation.

The primary aim of the workers is security of job and they would therefore want the industries to continue operating, the labour leaders said at the workshop on 'Trade Unions and Privatisation' organised by Centre for Analysis and Choice on Saturday.

They said that some of modalities employed to achieve privatisation were incorrect and that is why controversies have emerged regarding the privatisation policy of the government.

The labour leaders also believed that if the authorities

took the workers into confidence and thus gained their cooperation then the process would have been smoother. The workers, they said, are more interested in their jobs and fair wages than in who actually owned the factories.

Opposition political leaders also echoed the opinions of the trade union leaders and said there had been no political opposition to privatisation though there had been resistance to the way it was being done.

They said, because of the inappropriate way the government handled this issue of privatisation the process has run into problems. Rather, they felt, trade unions would be of assistance in helping this process move forward if the authorities had taken the workers into confidence.

Presenting the keynote paper, Ahmed Ali of the Policy Implementation Advisory Group said as far as sheer numbers are concerned, privatisation in Bangladesh has been no less successful than elsewhere in the world.

The real failure of privatisation has been that the expected private-sector-led takeoff of the economy has yet to take place, he said, adding that the principal culprit is the absence of an enabling environment.

Left Democratic Front leader Hasanul Huq Inu said the trade unions have not been any obstacle to privatisation, rather political reasons have been responsible for the delay in the privatisation process.

Inu, however, felt that the state should have a limited role in the economy and the sectors for this should be decided on the basis of a consensus. He also said that bad management has created industrial relations problems in the country.

The workshop witnessed a consensus among the BNP MPs, opposition political leaders, industrialists, and labour leaders on the issue of privatisation in the country.

They all expressed the view that no one is opposed to privatisation, rather the slow-

down in the process has been due to political failures. If the privatisation process is pursued on the basis of consensus and by taking the cooperation of all parties concerned then there would not be any problems in achieving the required goals, it was felt.

President of South Asian Federation of Accountants Jamal Uddin Ahmed was the moderator at the workshop.

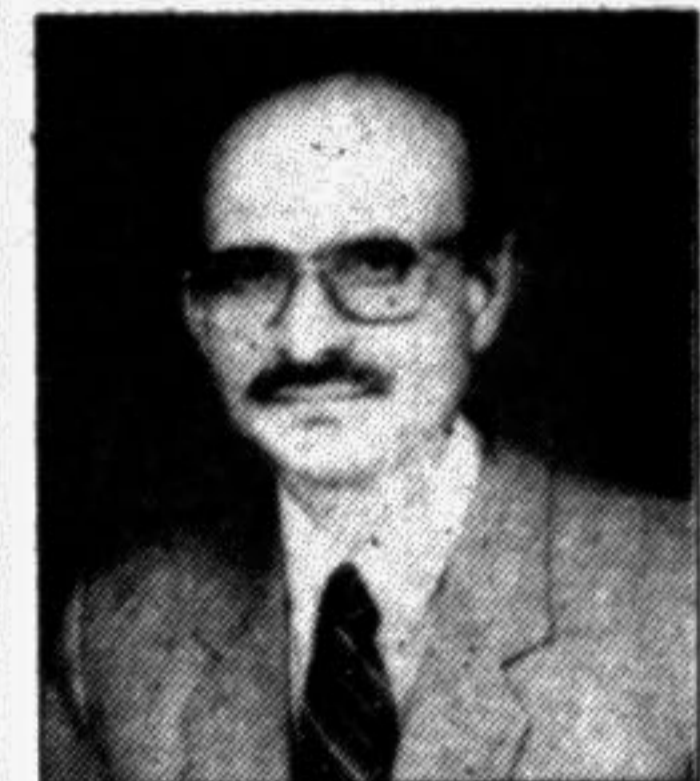
The other participants included Col (ret) Shawkat Ali, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Prof Abdul Mannan, Abul Kalam Azad, Motia Chowdhury, M Yusuf, Khan Tipu Sultan, and Imran Ahmed of the Awami League, Anwar Hossain Manju of the Jatiya Party, Sheikh Ansar Ali of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Farida Hasan MP, Maj (ret) Hafizuddin Ahmed MP, and Ameer Khasru Chowdhury MP from the BNP. Subid Ali, president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, R Maksud Khan, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Rokia Rahman of the Bangladesh Employers Association.

India okays 69 foreign investment proposals

NEW DELHI, Apr 4: India on Monday approved 69 foreign investment proposals worth 140 million dollars including a subsidiary of US carmaker General Motors, a government statement said here, reports AFP.

The projects were cleared by a special committee headed by Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, the architect of India's 1991 policy of liberalisation.

General Motors got the green light to set up two manufacturing units for car parts as well as a separate engineering centre to provide expert services to the giant's global operations, it said.



Benazir seeking major US investment commitment

ISLAMABAD, Apr 4: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto begins an ambitious trip to the United States this week, looking for investment and an end to five years of sanctions that have strained relations with Washington, reports AP.

Ms Bhutto, who arrives Wednesday in Washington, will get a sympathetic hearing from the Clinton administration, which has praised her economic reforms and efforts to combat drug trafficking and terrorism. First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Pakistan last week in a show of support for Ms Bhutto's elected government.

Ms Bhutto wants much more than moral support from the Americans. But she is unlikely to get the major investment commitments, lifting of sanctions, or delivery of F-16 fighter jets that Pakistan badly wants.

Pakistan's economy is stagnant and the widespread violence in its business capital, Karachi, has frightened away potential investors.

Also, Ms Bhutto has refused to roll back Pakistan's nuclear program, which has led to a completed cutoff of American

aid. The prime minister is trying to portray her country as a moderate Islamic state that needs American support, not sanctions, to battle extremists.

"One of the messages I will be taking to the (US) administration and Congress is that you are a fair nation and we've been allies," Ms Bhutto recently told a small group of American journalists. "Help me strengthen the forces of moderation by taking away the factors that fuel fanaticism."

Ms Bhutto has shown great willingness to cooperate with the United States.

Pakistan on Sunday extradited two of the country's most notorious drug lords, Iqbal Baig and Anwar Khattak, to the United States. Two months ago, Pakistan and US officials in Islamabad captured Ramzi Yousef, the man accused of masterminding the World Trade Center bombing in 1993. He, too, was extradited to face an American court.

Ms Bhutto also has followed International Monetary Fund guidelines to rein in government spending. But her policies have yet to provide an economic boost to a country

where per capita income is a paltry 400 dollars a year.

The United States and Pakistan were close allies in the 1980s, when they armed anti-communist rebels in Afghanistan. With the end of the Cold War, the United States withdrew from the region, while the guns and drugs spilled over from lawless Afghanistan and contributed to Pakistan's problems.

Ms Bhutto, as well as the rest of Pakistan's political and military establishment, repeatedly complains about the US sanctions imposed in 1990 to protest the nuclear weapons programme.

They note that no such punitive measures have been placed on Pakistan's neighbor and archrival, India, though that country has a much larger nuclear program and until recently was never too friendly toward the United States.

The Pakistanis have the capability to make nuclear weapons, but say they haven't done so. The Americans say Pakistan could assemble a bomb on short notice.

In addition to halting aid, the sanctions have prevented Pakistan from taking possession of 38 F-16 fighter jets.

Convention of Asian labour exporting countries held

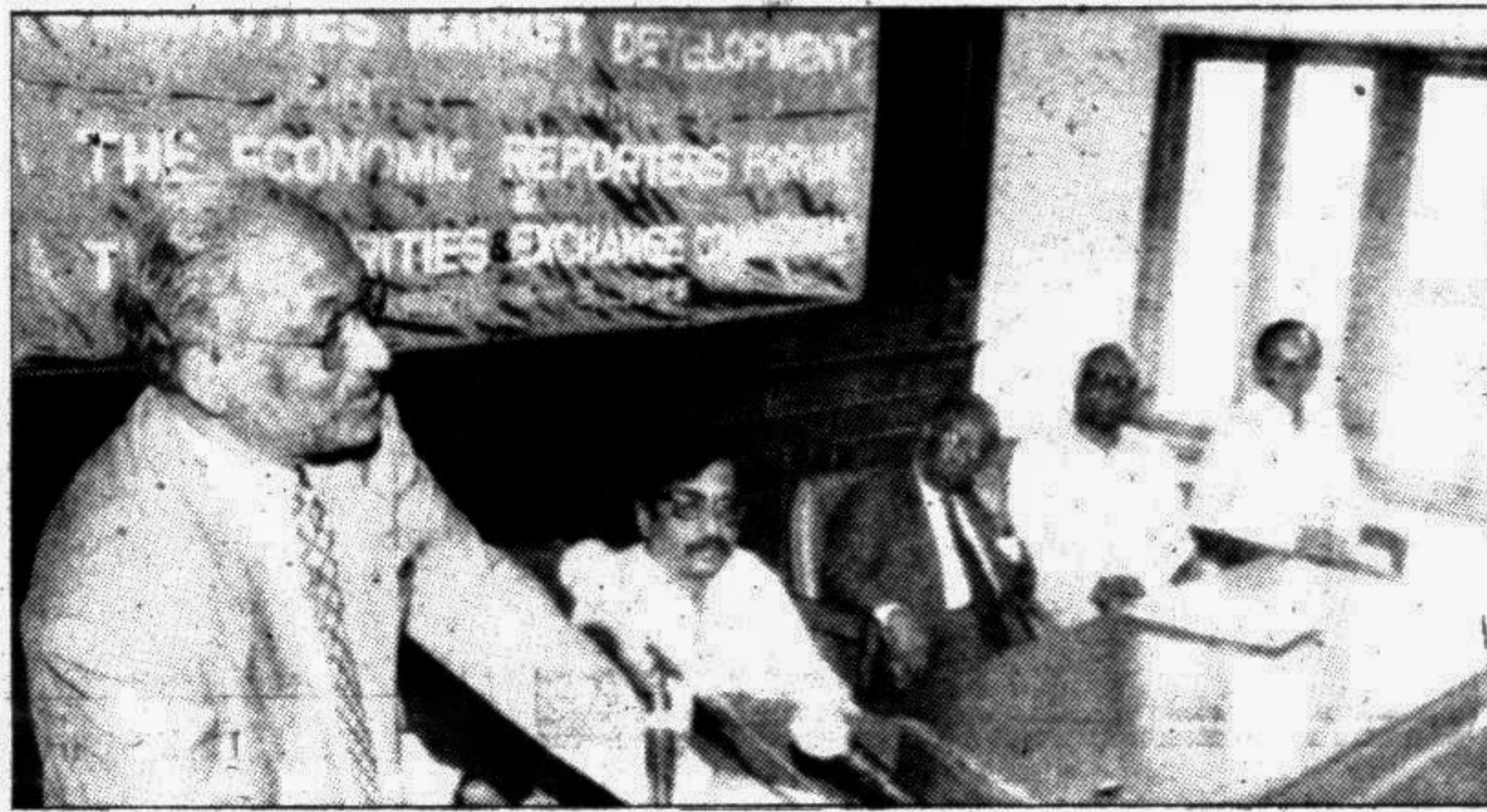
A convention of Asian labour exporting and importing countries under the title of First Asian Recruitment Council Convention participated by nine Asian countries was held in Singapore from March 28 to 31 to form an international body under the name and style of 'Asian Recruitment Council (ARCO)', says a press release.

The charter of the Council is to represent, promote and develop the overseas recruitment industry by providing employment opportunities for the exclusive benefit of the general membership of the Council, generate goodwill between and among private, government and other entities involved in the industry, and enhance the social economic and psychological well-being of all overseas contract workers.

The countries participated in the Convention are Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Korea, Nepal and Bangladesh, and the total representation was 240 participants.

The Council will be registered in Singapore, and a Board of Trustees were formed with two-member representation for each country. BAIRA represented Bangladesh in the convention and sent an 8-member delegation headed by Minhaj Uddin Ahmed, Sr Vice-President.

M Mosharrar Hossain, and Minhaj Uddin Ahmed, President and Sr Vice-President of BAIRA respectively are selected as Bangladesh representation in the Board of Trustees of ARCO. The Trustees of ARCO in its first meeting on March 30 elected Salvador S Curameng of Philippines as Chairman of the Board and Dr Chua Kim Seng of Singapore as President of ARCO for two years term.



Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman addressing the workshop for media on securities market development at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. Also seen in the picture from right Shamsul Haq Zahidi, Khurshid Alam, Sultanuzzaman Khan and Moazzem Hussain. —Star photo

Asian stock markets close higher

HONG KONG, Apr 4: Asian stock markets closed generally higher Tuesday, with share prices rebounding in Tokyo and Hong Kong on bargain-hunting reports AP.

Tokyo's Nikkei Stock Average of 225 selected issues rose 249.24 points, or 1.62 per cent, closing at 15,630.53. The average had fallen a total of 1,130.93 points in the previous two trading days.

The Tokyo Stock Price Index of all issues listed on the first section was up 19.87 points, or 1.59 per cent, to 1,270.48. It had lost 57.28 points, or 4.38 per cent, Monday.

Dealers said share prices opened lower because of the US dollar's weakness but then rose because of bargain-hunting.

SYDNEY: Australian share prices closed higher, with the key index rising to its highest level in more than four months on heavy buying from overseas investors. The All Ordinaries

Index rose 36.8 points to 1,936.3.

WELLINGTON: New Zealand share prices closed higher in busy trading, with brokers expecting the market to hold its gains. The NZSE-40 Capital Index rose 20.73 points to 2,019.62.

MANILA: Share prices closed higher on selective buying of blue chips. The Philippines' PSE index of 43 selected issues rose 41.75 points to 2,418.38.

SEOUL: Share prices closed lower in directionless trading. The Korea Composite Stock Price Index fell 10.92 points to 911.61.

SINGAPORE: Share prices

closed broadly lower in light trading. The benchmark Straits Times Industrials Index slipped 0.60 point to 2,074.05.

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian share prices closed mostly higher, boosted by the rebound on regional markets as well as the higher overnight close on Wall Street. The KLESE Composite Index rose 7.72 points to 974.03.

BANGKOK: Thai share prices closed lower in dull trading. The Stock Exchange of Thailand index fell 2.57 points to 1,184.14.

JAKARTA: The stock exchange's Composite Index rose 0.713 of a point, closing at 425.203.

Rashid new GM of HBFC

Mohammad Abdur Rashid has joined as General Manager (GM) of House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC), says a press release.

He took up his new assignment on Saturday.

Prior to this, Rashid was Deputy General Manager (Loan) of the corporation.

A graduate of Dhaka University, he joined HBFC in 1964 as Assistant Regional officer and held important assignments.

Sino-Thai jt venture accords signed

HONG KONG, Apr 4: Thai-Chinese businessmen have signed nearly nine billion yuan (1.1 billion US dollars) worth of joint venture agreements including infrastructure projects in Southern China's Guangxi region, it was reported yesterday, says AFP.

The agreements were reached following a five-day visit to Guangxi province by a delegation from the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce led by Boonsong Sriffueng-fung, the China-funded Wen Wei Po Daily here said.

The report said the agreements included a 5.78 billion yuan (610 million US dollar) Sino-Thai joint venture for the construction of a super-highway linking coastal Beijing with the provincial capital Nanning.

A letter of intent was also signed by the Thai delegation to set up an industrial park in Yongning, about 50 kilometers (31 miles) east of Nanning.



Shafat Ahmed Chaudhuri, MD and Actuary of Delta Life Insurance Company, handing over the 'Loan Cheque' to Abu Ahmed Fazle Mukim under the 'Home Loan Scheme' of the company in the city recently. Mozammel Huq (C) Executive Director of the Company is also seen. This is the first such scheme in Bangladesh.

World trade surges in 1994

GENEVA, Apr 4: Global merchandise trade surged in 1994, returning the best growth figures for nearly 20 years, World Trade Organisation (WTO) Director-General Peter Sutherland reported yesterday, says Reuter.

Sutherland, previewing a report to be issued by the WTO on Tuesday, told Canadian business leaders in Ottawa that world trade growth last year was more than double that of 1993 when it increased by just under four per cent.

And he said the prospects for 1995 were for continuing strong trade expansion "though at a somewhat slower pace than last year."

Without giving the exact figures to be released in the report, he said they would show that in 1994 trade growth was the highest of any year since 1976, when it scored an 11 per cent increase.

"Here, in the best world trade figures for nearly 20 years, is the immediate impact of the Uruguay Round's success Sutherland said in a speech to Canada's Business Council for national issues. A text was released in Geneva.

The seven-year Uruguay Round negotiations for a new world trade treaty were completed in December 1993. Signed in April last year, the

accord went into force on January 1 with the launch of the WTO.

Sutherland, from Ireland, steps down at the end of this month and will be replaced by Italy's Renato Ruggiero. He is widely credited with steering the stalled round to a successful outcome.

He said the figures would show that trade growth was spread evenly across most of the world's regions, and that output growth was also stronger than in 1993 although lower than the figure for trade.

Sutherland said several factors contributed to what he called "this dramatic result."

Real estate development in Bangladesh: Problems & prospects

By Arshi Haider

As John Howard Payne said, "Through pleasures and places though we may roam; be it ever so humble, there is no place like home." From time immemorial, owning a home has been one of the basic and instinctive human needs. By fulfilling this need, man provides security for his family for the present and the future. We, members of REHAB are very proud to be involved in a noble profession which helps fulfill the life long dream of so many people.

The concept of Real Estate Development on a commercial basis dawned in Bangladesh more than three decades ago. However, until recently it was targeted to satisfy the requirements of a very narrow socio-economic strata of the society i.e. the middle-income group.

The last decade has seen some dramatic changes in this sector. The spectrum of the target consumer group has been broadened to include the lower middle income group as well as the higher income group. Whereas the traditional apartment complexes were 6-storey walk ups consisting of 1500-1600 sft apartments, today developers are offering a wide array of architectural concepts which include low density exclusive and glamorous residential enclaves to centrally located high rise apartment complexes with all mod-

ern amenities. The sizes of apartments now available in the Metropolis range from 700 sft to 3500 sft. Furthermore, some developers have embarked on land development projects and these large scale projects have significantly contributed towards mitigating the housing problems of the capital. Whereas 10 years ago, there were only about 2 dozen companies operating in this business, today more than a hundred companies are offering their products to the buyers thereby offering choice and an opportunity to get the best bargain in a fiercely competitive sector playing by the rules of free market economy.

However, the real potential of this sector remains totally untapped. Bangladesh was a signatory to the United Nations sponsored commitment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 that each and every citizen shall have a house by the year 2000. So far, the above commitment appears to be mere lip service. Statisticians have it that the present population of 120 million in Bangladesh will double by the year 2020. There is a tremendous flow of the people to the Capital from the rural areas: slums are becoming more and more widespread in Dhaka and there is a massive pressure on the utility services. Every year there is a shortfall of 100,000 new housing units in the Metropolis. To face the challenge, the gov-

ernment needs to take a coordinated approach towards the issue. It is not my objective or intention to give a detail elaboration of how the policy-makers should tackle the housing problem of our country but one basic concept has now been proven and accepted worldwide that the Government authorities should be there to facilitate development and not to carry out development themselves or as in our case, to obstruct the development from taking place.

I will now highlight some of the major problems facing the Real Estate Development Sector of Bangladesh:

The real challenge lies in housing the low income group and the slum dwellers. From time to time we hear about vague projects being taken up by various government agencies to mitigate the housing problems of this group of people. Can we say that these endeavours have been a resounding success? One of the prime reasons why successive governments have failed in this objective is because the product needs to be marketed and the projects needs to be profitable and the executing government agencies are not qualified to ensure either of these requirements. The only way is to turn towards the private sector.

We the Real Estate Developers have not been able to tap into the market of the slum

dwellers and the lower income group because such projects by definition are very big and need a lot of support and facility from the government. I emphasize that the words 'support and facility' are distinct from the word 'subsidy and Charity'. It is our opinion that by simply implementing the undermentioned policy the government could significantly help solve the housing needs of the lower income group.

The government should earmark certain areas to be developed for low income housing schemes. The land should be acquired and then allotted auctioned to the developers for building marketing housing units of a specific size, specification and price range.

Most of the buyers in such projects will be fixed income groups and therefore an efficient financial facility must be provided.

Infrastructure facilities like road, transport, electricity, water, gas etc. should be provided by the government.

In the present context, the developers can go a long way in solving the housing needs of the lower middle income, middle income and higher income group of people. However, the following problems are a constant obstacle to our progress.

ment as land transfer and registration costs; this includes gain tax, stamp duties, registration costs etc. Naturally this cost is to be borne by the consumers and if the government is serious about addressing the housing crisis in our country, this cost needs to be rationalised. We propose that this cost be reduced to 6 per cent. We also feel that the above mentioned reduction will not make any significant loss to the govt. exchequer since the lower cost of registration will result in higher volumes of sales.

House Building and Finance Corporation is the lone financing agency in Bangladesh. The bureaucracy and loan approval procedure in HBFC is so cumbersome that HBFC fails to play any effective role in financing our clients. Therefore, only 10 per cent of our clients avail loans from HBFC. This is a very sad reflection of the performance of HBFC. In all the developed countries, housing is considered one of the safest investment for banks and financing companies and they are willing to finance up to 90 per cent of the value of the house with no extra collateral.

The legal system needs to be strengthened to deal with the default culture of housing loans. Unless the bank and financial institutions feel legally protected, they will not come forward to finance home own-

ership. Mortgage foreclosure procedure needs to be simplified.

RAJUK procedures for approval of building plans is both inconsistent and inefficient. The zoning laws and building construction codes for the Metropolis need to be revaluated and the approval procedure in RAJUK needs simplification.

In 1991 housing sector was declared an industry. Therefore the companies involved in this business should have been entitled to tax holiday and other incentives given to industries. However, to date the Ministry of Finance refuses to grant tax holiday or any other fiscal benefits to this sector.

It is often said that Real Estate Development is one of the most accurate barometers of the economy. Many industries are benefited by this sector and it has great employment generation scope. However, a word of caution is also due — failure to nurture the growth of this sector and negligence in solving its problems may have catastrophic consequences on the entire social fabric of our country because the need for shelter is a basic demand of every citizen which the authorities must fulfil.

(The author is the Vice-President of the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) and also the MD of the Building Technology and Ideas (I.T.I.)

জাতীয় শিক্ষাক্রম ও পাঠ্যপুস্তক বোর্ড

পাঠ্যপুস্তক ভবন
৬৯-৭০, মতিঝিল বা, ঢাকা।

পত্র সংখ্যা-৪৯ প্রশা/১বি-৩/৭৯ (২য় খণ্ড) তারিখ: ২৯/৩/৯৫ইং

বিষয়: অত্র বোর্ডের মনোহারী দ্রব্য ও বাসন—

কোসন (ক্রকারীজ) মালামাল ক্রয়ের

জন্য পুনঃ দরপত্র আহবানের বিজ্ঞপ্তি

নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারী কর্তৃক প্রকৃত ঠিকাদার/বাসায়ীদের নিকট থেকে উপরে উল্লিখিত দ্রব্য/মালামাল ক্রয় করার জন্য নিজস্ব প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্যাডে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহবান করা হচ্ছে। দরপত্র আগামী ১৬/৪/৯৫ইং তারিখ বেলা ১১.০০ টা পর্যন্ত বোর্ডের ৫ম তলায় কমন সার্ভিসেস শাখায় রাখা উক্তার বাক্সে ফেলা যাবে এবং এ দিনই বেলা ১১.৩০ মিনিটে সমস্ত উপস্থিত দরদাতাদের সামনে যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) খোলা হবে। নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের পর কোন দরপত্র কোনক্রমেই গ্রহণ করা হবে না। বিস্তারিত বিবরণ ও শর্তাবলী সম্বলিত প্রতিটি নির্দেশিকাপত্র যে কোন সিডিউল ব্যাংক থেকে চেয়ারম্যান, জাতীয় শিক্ষাক্রম ও পাঠ্যপুস্তক বোর্ড, ঢাকা"-এর অনুকূলে ৪০০/- টাকার (অক্ষেরতথ্য) পে-অর্ডারসহ নিজস্ব প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্যাডে আবেদন করে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর অফিস থেকে অফিস সময়ে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। উক্তার খোলার দিন কোন নির্দেশিকাপত্র বিক্রি করা হবে না।

বোর্ড কোন কারণ প্রদর্শন ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা সকল দরপত্র বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে।

ডিক্রিপশন-৭৮১১-১/৪ সচিব
জি-৫২০ জাতীয় শিক্ষাক্রম ও পাঠ্যপুস্তক বোর্ড, ঢাকা।