Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Saturday, June 10, 1995

Message of Ashura

Ashura, the tenth of Maharram in the lunar Islamic calendar, sends us on an emotional pilgrimage - back to fourteen hundred years ago on the banks of the river Euphrates. There it was enacted: the tragic martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R). Ali Asghar, Sakina and some of his followers by Yazid's forces. Literary lores including Mir Mosharraf Hossain's epical portrayal of the tragedy have added poignance to its historicity.

What we reap out of the commemoration of this landmark event are not just pathos and tears but a great natural reverence for the exemplary sacrifice and dedication shown to a cause held so dear. So very cruel was the way in which they were done to death that it came to be eventually

bemoaned by the Shiates.

It no doubt represented a political watershed in Islamic history, one of far-reaching consequences at that; yet, it is the human appeal of the tragedy that has proved to be of timeless value. While the empathy has been pronounced on such an occasion among the Muslims recalling those moments of pain and anguish suffered by the progeny of Hazrat Ali and Fatima, the spirit owing its origin to that focal-point of a tested dedication to a cause, may be of use in the contemporary world.

When it comes to the issue of humanity, divides and conflicts cannot be stretched too far without imperilling the very fabric upon which the progress of human civilization hinges. So, rather than emphasising discordance we have to consciously work for harmony, peaceful reconciliation and rational adjustment between differing forces.

Dhaka's Future

In The Daily Star-BUET Roundtable held last Thursday, a strong recommendation was made to bring the various government agencies like WASA, DESA, Titas Gas, Rajuk, DMP, etc. under a single broad-based authority. This view was expressed by the works minister, the mayor of Dhaka, heads of various bodies, experts and concerned citizens. The fact that one political party controls the government, and another the DCC, led to some divergence of views at to who should run the proposed centralised authority. Not withstanding that, there was a surprising consensus of views for a change of the status quo. The present system of several bodies doing their own thing, and at their own sweet convenience without the least bit of coordination or forward planning, was rejected by speakers from all professional groups and disciplines.

The question that puzzles us is that why are we not learning about city management from the rest of the world. Earlier when we had our first ever elected mayor, we felt that we finally got started on the right direction and the system of city government will be instituted here. But unfortunately we went on a confrontational track. Anyway, the direction for us is clear. City will have to be run by one authority which will have to encompass

everything.

Point was also made that whom is the city for? So far all facilities are geared towards catering for the rich, while 80 per cent of the urban population is poor. The economic benefits of cheap labour that the poor bring to the city will have to be properly evaluated. We support this idea and urge the authorities to bring in the perceptive of the urban poor into planning for our cities. In this regard we would like to add our voice to the idea of forming an urban coalition of citizens to act as a watchdog body. This body should be formed with the participation of all community-based organisations and expert groups who will have something to contribute to the proper functioning of the city.

The bottom line is that Dhaka's population is growing at 6 to 7 per cent per year. This will result into doubling of this city's inhabitants within the next 10 years, given the compound rate of growth. Are we prepared for such an expansion? Will Dhaka be livable at that time? How will we cope with all the attendant problems that such a growth will bring? These are the questions that we plan to address in our "Save Dhaka" campaign.

Dream Figures

Who are feeding the Prime Minister with such fantastic pieces of statistics? The people who told Begum Khaleda Zia that school enrolment of children in Bangladesh now stands at 92 per cent and that drop-out rate has come down to 20 per cent or that 80 per cent of the enrolled would complete the five-year primary level should right away lose their job. And the Prime Minister should take care not to be so gullible as to take these figures as they come and give them to the nation from her position of authority.

The national target was to achieve 82 per cent enrolment at the primary level in 1995. If we have to believe the Prime Minister's advisers this nation has overshot the target by as much as 10 per cent or enrolled more than a million children beyond the target by '95. No one ever knew of this fantastic achievement and the Prime Minister was to reveal it in a prize-giving function!

As to the question of drop-outs, the national target was to take the completion rate to 52 per cent by '95. The PM has been told that it has indeed risen to 80 per cent. This is a world-beating

achievement. Only it is most improbable figure. Government coffers are being depleted by all kinds of imaginary and fictitious establishments and manpower. The libraries getting government help for giving public service do not simply exist in most cases. So is the case with thousands of schools. The average school size of primaries in 1993 was 260. By this token we should now have 64,000 primaries of that size. How many have we? Statistics printed on government authority. specially those related to education, are highly suspect. The reason is understandable. Expenditure is made basing on these bloated figures.

We can only dream of a day when 80 per cent of school-age children will go to school. For that day to materialise this century we have to follow a

far more vigorous action than now.

Such ill-advised figure-flaunting notwithstanding, there has lately been some remarkable progress in the primary sector. The gains made are not that modest either. But still there remains a wide gap between reality and official record.

Macro Economic Scenario: Promises and Premises

The current investment level in Bangladesh is hovering around 13-14 per cent of GDP. To pull the a 'plethora' of policy economy out of the low-level equilibrium trap, a massive dent is urgently needed. The most shifts since the early pertinent question is: Is it possible to achieve such a jump in investment given the prevailing macro 1970s. Bangladesh is reported to have been placed on an appreciable state of macro economic stability. To bear this out, one needs to look at the most recent Jespecially of the early 1990s) trends in the movement of macro indicators. Available statistics point to a record low level rate of inflation, an unprecedented build-up of external reserves and an improvement in government's hitherto fragile resource position. These developments, as policymakers and donors would argue, are evidence of a successful stabilisation scheme that sprang mainly from a "sound macro economic management. To the critics, however, such a stability is deemed the experience of the manufacturing sector in the eighties to have been woven by eco point to a relatively mere dinomic stagnation and low ecoversified growth with a feeble nomic activities — both being contribution from RMG. Thus, fallouts of lower aggregate dethe promised diversification of mand in the economy. While industrial growth, upon which arguments replete on both the on-going macro economic sides of the fence, the notion policy reforms are premised, that the much avowed journey had hardly taken place in from stabilisation to higher growth path is yet to take Bangladesh. This phenomenon is closely followed by an export place in Bangladesh can hardly structure where earnings from be contested. RMG tallies with more than The Independent, Review of three-fourths of the total ex-

FTER having witnessed

Bangladesh's Development (IRBD) of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) produced a review of the macro economic scenario of Bangladesh focusing on its attendant prospects and problems. The section on Recent Macroeconomic Scenario was prepared by Professor Wahiduddin Mahmood an ace macro economist of the country. The following observations are drawn from the report of the IRBD:

Disconcerting News

The trend growth rate of GDP since the early 1980s hovered around 4 per cent per

workers' remittances rather annum and that of the most than by export earnings from recent sub-period's does not merchandise exports. Given an appear to be much different eiundiversified manufacturing ther. The official production base of the economy, "it may index for large scale manufacturing tends to show that between FY '90 and FY '94, nearly three fourths of the overall growth in manufacturing production originated from the growth in RMG industry while fertiliser, drugs and pharmaceutioal industries accounted for the rest one-third. Production in almost all of these industries including fish, shrimp and leather is reported to have declined during the same period of time. In sharp contrast.

port earnings and the economy

continues to experience a one-

commodity show on the export

seems to originate from the

service sector. Over the period

FY '89 to FY '94, nearly 60 per

cent of the incremental GDP

has been in the service sector

compared to only 12 per cent

in the manufacturing sector.

The relatively low share of

manufacturing in GDP could

partly be explained by the

"pattern of consumer demand"

where imports are financed

largely by foreign aid and

Islam meant the brother-

lievers, limited only by their

freely given and revocable loy-

alty to their chosen leader.

The Islamic Caliphate was

established to serve the cause

lam. Upto four pious Caliphs, it

somehow served the actual

purpose. But later, it seemed

to serve the interests of a

small group of rich and power-

ful men, who maintained it by

methods that approximated, to

an increasing and disquieting

extent, to those of ancient

Roman and Persian Empires

that Islam had conquered.

Wealth and status, power and

the absolute authority which

the Arab conquerors brought,

were regarded by the pious

Muslims as a derogation from

the authentic message of Is-

lam. Pious and earnest men

denounced the Caliphs as

worldlings, usurpers and

tyrants; angry and ambitious

men joined them in seeking to

overthrow this tyranny, and

the state and community of Is-

lam were convulsed by a series

of bitter civil wars. The de-

clared issues were the

Caliphates (i.e., who should

rule and how) and the restora-

tion of authentic Islam. Each

victory, whether of the rebels

or of the defenders, ended

with a reinforcement of the

sovereign power and a further

step in the direction of a cen-

tralized autocracy in the Mid-

dle Eastern style. By a tragic

and spread the message of Is-

Larger share of GDP, of late,

be premature for Bangladesh to focus exclusively on a medium-term growth agenda that relies on an export-oriented, private manufacturing sector." While the importance of manufacturing growth should duly be recognised, any over emphasis on it alone should be shelved unless a development strategy crops up to take into cognisance the likely contribution of other sectors

substantially shrank from 7 per cent of GDP to less than 2 per cent during the same period. The beefy savings rate could be adduced to (i) a significant improvement in the government's budgetary position (revenue as share of GDP rose from 9.3 per cent in 1989-90 to 12 per cent in 1993-94) and (ii) increased flow of remittance which rose, in volume, by 1 per cerit of GDP during the same period of time.

Over the last couple of years, the growth in foreign reserves also continued to herald happy news. The aver-

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes

or sub-sectors (non-crop sector, rural industries, formal and informal service sectors etc). An appropriate development strategy, thus, should go hand in hand with a marketoriented liberalising policy re-

Concerting Views

The most striking (and, perhaps, the most exulting) development of macro economic balance in the 1990s is said to be the steep rise in the national savings rate. From as low as around 6 per cent of GDP in the late 1990s, savings rate perked to 12 per cent in 1993-94. The investment/GDP ratio during the same period experienced a marginal rise from 13 to 14.3 per cent and the current account deficit

age annual increase in foreign reserves has been about 2.5 per cent of GDP during 1990-91-1993-94, accounting for nearly half of the annual capital receipts. "The continuing build-up of foreign reserves along with low rates of inflation is symptomatic of a prevailing problem of deficient aggregate demand resulting from feeble investment

Total real investment grew at 2.8 per cent per annum during 1980-81 to 1993-94, at 2 per cent during 1986-87-1993-94 and at 4.1 per cent during 1989-90 to 1993-94. After a dip, investment seems to have picked up in recent years both in the public and the private sector. However, it remains to be seen whether

the recovery in investment ... represents a transition to a higher rate of sustained growth or a mere return to the low growth trends of the earlier years.

Potential vs Actual

There is no denying the fact

that the current investment

level in Bangladesh is yet to be up to the mark and is hovering around 13-14 per cent of GDP. To pull the economy out of the low-level equilibrium trap, a massive dent into this sphere is urgently needed. The most pertinent question is: Is it possible to achieve such a jump in investment given the prevailing macro scenario? The IRBD tends to argue that given the continuation of the current trends in domestic savings and foreign aid availability, there lies a bright possibility of raising investment/GDP ratio to 18 per cent within a five-year period, without creating undue pressures in the economy's aggregate resource balance. To arrive at this level of investment/GDP ratio total investment must increase at above 10 per cent annually which could only be possible through a major upswing from the current unsatisfactory trends. The recent upturn should; therefore, be properly monitored and carefully nurtured to arrest any downturn. However, such an upswing might breed inflationary pressure following a rise in aggregate demand, cause real exchange rate to appreciate and thus negate export growth. Only a judicious timing and tuning of policies so orchestrated could stop that to hap-

roads'. There is potential to move into an accelerated growth path but the actual performance lies much below the potential. The report also foresees some unforeseen political contingencies which might jeopardise the achievements so far. For example, the prevailing macro economic situation might lead to a distortion of government's policy priorities necessitated by political considerations. The apparently comfortable budgetary situation could tempt the government to be lavish before the upcoming general election. "There is also a danger that, as private investment proves inadequate and economic stagnation continues, the government may adopt policies to lure private investment by providing more and more concessions." This could result in a "fake" boom in investment like the one experienced in early 1980s.

According to the IRBD re-

port, the macro economy ap-

pears 'crisscrossed by cross-

Concluding Remarks

While Bangladesh economy continues to keep up favourable macro indicators the sine qua non of high economic growth — its failure to enter into a higher growth path seems to vex politicians, academics and policymakers. One of the principal reasons lack of an appropriate devel-

for this failure might be the opment strategy, maybe in consort with market oriented liberalised policies. The urgent call of the hour is to raise domestic investment levels through prudent policies and governance. Until then, the stability may stab the economy at its back at any time. After all, promises should stand on sound premises.

Significance of Ashura: Struggle against Injustice and Inequality

by Siddigur Rahman

Will the teachings of Karbala and Ashura, where and when Hussain risked his life for the sake of his principles, inspire the Muslims in bringing the 'Islamic ummah' to its original and correct path of justice, equality and brotherhood?

SHURA, the tenth day of A the sacred month of Mu-1 . harram, is observed by the devoted Muslims as a voluntary fasting day. It is related in the Hadith book Mishkat Sharif that the great Prophet Muhammad (SM) observed fast on this day and said that it was the day respected by the Jews who were used to observe fast on this day in gratitude to Allah because He liberated Hazrat Musa (AS) and Israelites from the oppression of the Firaun (Pharaoh) who was drowned to death along with his troops in the river Nile in Egypt on this very day. The pre-Islamic Arabs also: traditionally observed fast on this day (Islami Vishwakosh by struggle for justice. the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Volume 3, page hood and equality of the be-

Ashura is the day observed by the Sunni Muslims, being also the day on which, it is said, Allah created Adam and Eve. heaven and hell, the tablet of decree and the pen (Lauhu wa Qalam), life and death, etc. It is also said that the universe was created on this day and will be destroyed

on this day. But all the above have been superseded by the most tragic shahadat (martyrdom) of Hussain, the second son of Ali and Fatima, the Prophet Muhammad's (SM) daughter, in Karbala on this day in the year 680 A D (61 A H). The greatest tragedy in the Muslim history, the most cruel, and tragic 'qatl' (killing) of Hussain, the beloved grandson of the Prophet (SM) in an unlawful and tricky war unleashed by Caliph Yazid, son of Caliph Muawiya, occurred on this day of the sacred month of Muhar-

The deviation of the Muslim leadership from the social principles of Islam was the root cause of this tragedy. But even after this great tragedy, it seem, the religious leaders, instead of struggle for justice and equality, used this day of Ashura to encourage the faithful to beat themselves with chains, to beat their own chests, to slash themselves with swords and daggers and so on. It appears that to dissuade the

people from their struggle paradox, only the strengthening of the 'Islamic state' could against injustice, inequality save the identity and cohesion and autocracy, the rulers enof the Islamic community. And couraged them to forget the the so-called Islamic state, as cause for which Hussain sacriit grew stronger, moved furfieed his life and to remain satther and further away from the isfied and consoled by self-torsocial and ethical ideals of Isture. The 'matam', and lam. Feudalism and autocracy 'marthia' depictions of the sufreplaced the Islamic social sysferings of Imam Hussain and tem. Resistance to this process his family in Karbala, had been of change was constant and used in the countries such as vigorous, sometimes success-Turkey, Iran, etc. to console ful, but always unavailing. Out them in their own misery, inof this resistance, there stead of arousing them for emerged only a series of religious sects and factions.

> The first civil war ended in 661 A D with victory of Muawiya and the establishment of new Caliphate, in his own family, that lasted for ninety years. The discipline and order of Muawiva's regime, in contrast to the anarchic factionalism of many of Ali's supporters, seemed to offer a better prospect for the unity and survival of Islam and its protection against the forces of disruption, and many even of the pious transferred their allegiance to the less attractive but more effective Umayyad. The Umayyad Caliphate, in its successive phases, set up an imperial system that gradually borrowed more and more of the structure and methods of the defeated empires. The Ab-

basids followed suit. The process was not unresisted. The Kharijites continued to oppose the Umayyads and after them the Abbasids. The Shi'ites showed their allegiance to the Prophet's (SM) family (through Fatima and Ali. not through Abbas, the son of Abdul Muttalib) and followed a series of rebels. It may be noted that the martyrdom of Hussain at Karbala, more than any other single event of the time, helped to transform the Shi'ites from a political faction to a religious sect with strong messianic overtones. The new converts as well as the pious and discontented Arabs, especially those who suffered from

the sharper economic and social differentiation that came with conquests and riches. were readily attracted by the claims of the house of the Prophet (SM), which seemed to offer an end to the injustices and inequality of the existing order and a fulfilment of the promise of Islam. But the situation did not change. The conflicts between the rich and poor, between the possessors and the dispossessed were not

At present in the oil-rich Muslim states, there is the accumulation of private fortunes under an avowedly western capitalist economy. For instance in Kuwait, it is possible for a businessman like Khalil Osman, born in Sudan, to move to a financial position which he describes as "30 to 40" times over "subject to the market being healthy" (The Rose and the Rock, by Bruce B Lawrence, page 164). The wealth of such magnates as Abdul Aziz Suleiman and Adnan Khashogi of Saudi Arabia for example, is measured in hundreds of millions of dollars. The accumulation of personal fortunes is rapidly having profound implications. "The austerity and restraint characteristics of Bedouin life, sustained by Islam, is now seriously chal-

lenged by conspicuous con-

sumption and ostentation. Only

have on the Islamic social order." (ibid) The derailing of the Islamic

'time will tell what this will

society from the track of the Holy Prophet (SM) and the four pious Caliphs was consciously initiated by Muawiya and his son Yazid. The derailing continued during Umayyad and Abbasid periods and it continues till now. Will the teachings of Karbala and Ashura, where and when Hussain risked his life for the sake of his principles, inspire the Muslims in bringing the Islamic ummah' to its original and correct path of justice, equality and brotherhood? Let us hope that Muharram and Ashura would teach us to stand up and fight for what we be-

lieve to be right and just. The writer is a former Research Fellow, Islamic Re-

I could not do any better

Arrangements have been

Bureaucratic, Mystique in South Asia A K M Jalaluddin

What the CSP's were Taught-X Hard Work, Very Hard Work; the Elitist Way

HE CSP and PFS proba tioners were gradually ing broken into the rigours of official life. Indeed, they had to put in very hard work; but the elitist way.

First, the residence. It was a palatial building, of Anglo-Mughal architectural design. It was the residence of the British Resident to the PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union). More often than not, he would be a Lord or a Knight and live in a grandiose style. The rooms were very big and the ethos and whole environ took one away supposedly to the wonderland of power and glory' - far from the madding crowds of Nawabpur (Dhaka) and Bunder Road (Karachi).

Henry Frank Goonow, the reputed American expert on public administration took particular exception to the beautifully maintained spacious driveways which, he thought, were enough to create an impression of 'unreality' of some kind in the minds of the would-be administrators. "You live on the laps of luxury," a friend of ours concluded after having seen only the lounge and the dining room. "I am not sure." I told him, "please see us riding horses at five o'clock tomorrow morning."

The training schedule for us was as follows: October 66 — June 67: Academy training

July 67 — Sept 67: District attachment (to the wing other than the probationer's domicile)

1st Week of Oct 67: Final Passing Out (FPO) examination conducted by the CSPC (Central Public Service Commission) Oct 67 — Jan 68: Training

as assistant commissioners

(on-the-job training) Dec 67 - Mar 68: Settlement training

chances allowed)

Mar 68 - Jan 69: Departmental examinations (four

Aug 1968: Secretariat train-

Jan 69 - Feb 69: Army attachment (with 2 EBR) March 69: Appointment as

During the Academy training we undertook extensive tours all over West Pakistan. We saw nearly everything that was worth seeing: visited the principal offices, all the service headquarters. PIA, the Central Secretariat at Islamabad, the State Bank (including the vault where our gold reserve was kept). The tours were no excursions — they were truly educational tours requiring us to take extensive notes. These were later translated into full-fledged reports. They were very carefully evaluated by DDT Tariq Siddiqui and counted for our over-all final seniority. So these tours were no pleasure trips at all they were hard work.

We were required to maintain a detailed diary of everything we saw, heard and experienced. The diary was an open-ended multi-dimensional exercise designed to - convince our trainers that our intellectual horizon was being widened, surely and signifi-

 provide us with a larger number of tools of analysis/frameworks of reference; - grow the habit of on-thespot assessment of various

It was, of course, as already mentioned hard work the elitist way, the CSP/PFS probationers would travel by special trains with their personal bearers, cook etc. When we went to Comilia by train the timing was odd for arrival (3 am). So arrangements were made that the coaches carry ing us would be detached at Comilia and we were expected to get down at 7 or 8 - as we normally did on other touring days (in the academy, we, of

search Institute, Karachi. course, had to get up much

than quoting from the official

circular given to all trainees.

earlier for riding etc.)

"Instructions:

made for travel by a special train comprising the following FS ... 2, FS ... 2, CDAC ... 1. TIL ... 1. Power Charging ... 1.

With the following accommodation: 1st Class berths,

46; 2nd Class berths, 36; and servants approximately 25. There are 9 1st Class 2 berths coupe and 7. Four berths 1st Class compartments and 6 berths three 2nd Class compartments. Three two berth coupes will

be reserved for the (Directing) Staff and the remaining first and second class betths shall be available for use by the probationers. It should mean 40 probationers will travel first and eight will travel second. The reservation chart is being issued separately.

Six room bearers will travel with the train and each bearer will look after 8 probationers. PMC should assign duties to room bearers accordingly.

Messing Arrangements: The mess will comprise of the following: 4 room bearers;

2 cooks; and mess steward. There will be a dining car attached to the special train. in which the mess will be lo-

cated. The mess will cater not only for the probationers and staff but also for the room bearers travelling with the train and the railway staff i.e. guard, engine driver etc. The probationers will be

served breakfast, lunch, dinner, evening tea in the dining car. The PMC will have to regulate the timings according to the programme and the seating capacity in the dining

Probationers have to be

strictly punctual in attending the different lectures and visits, arranged for them. Any delinquency, in this regard. would be seriously viewed with as this not only defeats the very purpose of the study tours, but also creates a very bad impression in the minds of the organizers of these programmes regarding the Aca demy and the probationers."

Bengalee Muslim ICS

Sir, This has reference to Syed Ashraf Ali's letter published in your 'Letter to the Editor' columns on May 31. 1995. As far as I know there was no Muslim Bengalee ICS in British India. There were, of course, a number of Muslim IPS officers like Late Zakir Hossain, Late A M S Doha, Late Hafizuddin Ahmed, Mohiuddin Ahmed and Anwarul Huq. But there is no record, at least to the best of my knowledge, of any Bengalee Muslim who joined Indian Civil Service through open competition. The only Bengalee Muslim ICS, whom my generation knew was Mr T I M Nurunnabi Choudhury. But ther, he was an ICS by "nomination". Some of my learned senior friends also spoke of one Mr Mujibur Rahman as a "nominated" ICS of

whom I have no knowledge.

heard the name of Akhtaruzzaman Khan as an ICS officer from Bengal. Even if there was one, he may not have been a Bengalee.

T A Khan Dhaka

Imran's marriage survey

Sir. Pakistanfs have expressed mixed feelings over the wedding of former cricket star Imran Khan with British heiress Jemima Goldsmith. Some approves the marriage while others maintain reserva-

According to a survey conducted by Gallup Pakistan, a Gallup International affiliate. Khan has lost ground among a group of those who were in a mind to support him, should he form a political party. The But none of us has ever

survey also revealed that the proportion of those willing to donate to Imran Khan's cancer hospital dropped from 29 per cent before the marriage to 19 per cent afterwards.

Whatever, I wish the couple a happy and prosperous life. Meanwhile, it would per-

haps be better for Khan to adhere to his philanthropic mission instead of getting involved in politics. And everyone should help Imran in setting up his cancer hospital in Lahore which he is building in the memory of his beloved mother and to serve the humanity. Let this cancer hospital be developed as a modern and sophisticated cancer treatment home where cancer patients, from rich to poor, can get equal treatment facilities at a cheaper rate.

M Zahidul Haque Asstt Prof. BAI. Dhaka