

SAVE DHAKA ROUNDTABLE

New master plan in the offing

By Rashida Ahmad

The first master plan for Dhaka was prepared in 1959, for a city of 320 square miles and a population of less than one million, by the then Dhaka Improvement Trust. The DIT, now known as Rajuk (Rajdhani Uন্নayan Kartirpakkha), was established three years earlier in 1956.

Later, Dhaka became the capital city of an independent country and its jurisdiction has spread to almost 600 square miles. The city's population has increased to somewhere between six and nine million (depending on whose statistics you choose to believe).

The plan was prepared, with the collaboration of a reputed British firm, to undertake land development, urban planning and construction programmes, and to control development through zoning. The original master plan was not properly implemented, nor updated in over thirty years.

But for the first time since 1959, a new revised master plan is now being prepared, and is expected to be completed by the end of the year, said Humayan Khadem, Chairman of Rajuk, while speaking at The Daily Star-BUET Roundtable on 'Save Dhaka' held Thursday.

The new master plan is being prepared with assistance from the UNDP.

The main revisions to the original master plan attempt to deal with the changing character of Dhaka city, fast going to be a megacity as the turn of the century approaches. All areas of development are being updated — from urban planning, land use and zoning of the newest outer regions of the city, to sewage and water facilities and road planning. For the first time, environmental impact of the city's growth is being considered.

But the main consideration must be the 300,000 new inhabitants a year that the city must house, in addition to the lakhs of already shelterless people.

But, according to many of the experts present at the Roundtable, shelter and housing for all by the year 2000 is in fact, little more than a slogan.

With 50,000 new dwelling units a year, at a density of six people per unit, required just to house the incoming poor, there is little hope of providing even the meagreest shelter for those already on the streets by the turn of the century.

Khadem listed a number of Rajuk's future development plans which included housing projects in various areas of the city such as Yusufganj, plans for a residential area in Savar, construction of multi-storey buildings in Zigatola, Mahakhali and Moghbazar, developing ten major roads and widening 1000 lanes and by-lanes to deal with traffic congestion.

However, according to Prof Nazrul Islam of the Centre for Urban Studies of the DU and Kazi Faruque, Executive Director of Proshika, the problem with many such plans of Rajuk, and most existing policies for Dhaka's development, is that they ignore the poor. But it is primarily the poor that have to be taken into account in order to save the city, according to Kazi Faruque.

"Rajuk has taken four years working on its master plan, meanwhile the situation has been deteriorating," said Prof Islam. "Fifty to eighty per cent of Dhaka's population is poor, but it is the rich urban elite planning for themselves how to save the city. The style of planning is wrong."

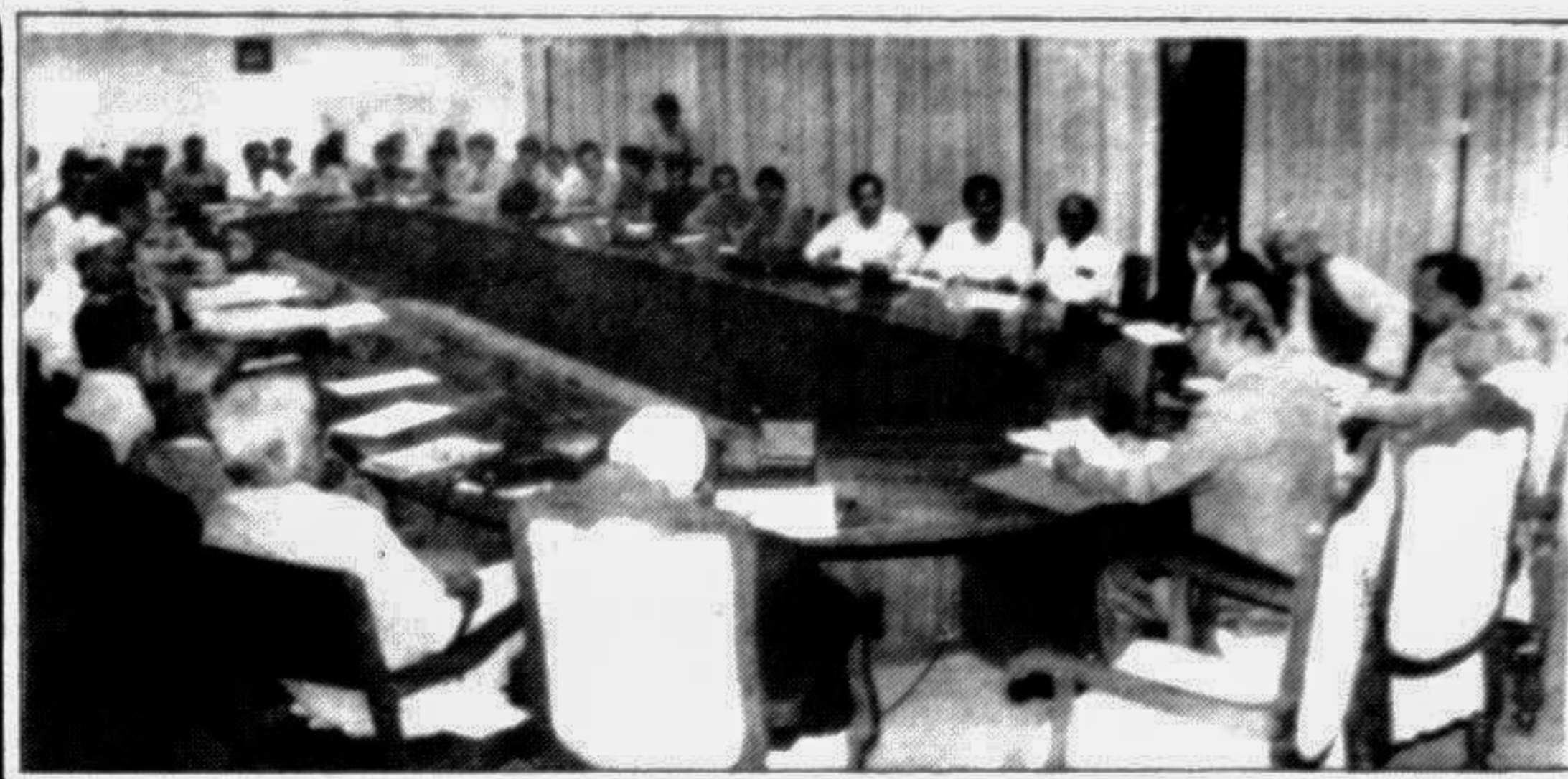
Md Anwarul Alam, chairman of Rajuk, agrees that

Rajuk plans for the upper classes. "Most of Rajuk's housing projects have been for the rich residential areas of the city — Gulshan, Uttara, Baridhara. But for those who urgently need housing, Rajuk has done very little," said Alam in a recent interview. "However, Rajuk or the government are not in a position to solve the housing problem by providing shelter for the homeless. How can they house three million people? It is the people themselves who must solve the problem," he said.

None of the problems facing Dhaka's development can be tackled immediately, least of all housing. "Short term solutions are not enough, what is needed is real and proper planning," according to Dhaka City Mayor Muhammad Hanif. "Rajuk, WASA and DESA must join with Dhaka City Corporation to create a single coordinated body if we are to save Dhaka."

Khadem claimed, "Discipline, law and order are a precondition to development. We don't need money from World Bank. If we can create discipline, law and order, development can be achieved on our own."

According to Pierre Landell-Mills, Resident Representative of World Bank, however, discipline, law and order are not the only obstacles to saving Dhaka. Too few people were involved in creating the new master plan, which will cause problems. But it is not too late to save it, if, before completion, over the next six months to a year, workshops are held to analyse and criticise. "Many more experts need to become involved in order to revise and rationalise and create a more comprehensive and coherent development plan, according to Mills.



Chief Election Commissioner Justice A K M Sadeque exchanging views with representatives of some political parties at his office yesterday. — Star photo

Zillur protests

From Page 1

not accepting the resignation of the MPs has acted not only against the constitution but also against the fundamental rights of the MPs. The Speaker's amazing and unilateral ruling has further deepened the present political crisis in the country. Ruling given by the Speaker is outside his jurisdiction and being unlawful has not only created political problems for the country but have also led to many problems and complications for the resigning MPs.

"Since the Speaker has not accepted their resignations, the telephones, rooms and passports issued to them continue to remain officially in their names. For this situation are the resigning MPs responsible or is not the Speaker and his ruling? Instead of blaming those responsible for this problem (the Speaker and the government) the victims of the situation are being blamed to divert the attention of the public."

"He (Zillur Rahman) asked the people to remain alert against such diversionary tactics."

"He also said that after the resignation of the MPs by keeping the ineffective parliament in existence crores of taka are being wasted. The Prime Minister is also spending crores of taka from public exchequer in making party propaganda and benefiting ruling party MPs by allocating crores of taka and sanctioning thousands of tons of wheat."

"For all this the ruling party will have to answer to the people."

We note that AL Secretary General's protest statement does in no way question the authenticity and factual basis of our news report. The points he makes were not subject of our report.

However, we would like to add that this paper, through its reports and editorials has persistently protested, and will continue to do so, against the use of the official facilities by the Prime Minister and other BNP leaders for promoting party work, and using state-owned radio and TV for party propaganda.

—Editor

HC issues rule on Rouf

From Page 1

take cognizance of the matter because the Supreme Court interprets the constitutional disputes, he told the court.

Islam said that the office of judges is in the service of the Republic and a component of the State. If the service of a judge were not contemplated with the service of the Republic then the judge's office will be ousted from the State component.

He said the constitutions of other democratic countries need to be consulted along with the Constitution of Bangladesh to resolve the dispute.

Defining the meaning of 'government', Barrister Islam cited six judgements of the US Supreme Court.

Quoting from a book 'The American Constitution and the Judicial Process,' written by Wallace Mendelson, Islam said 'government' has three distinct functions. The legislative department has been committed to the duty of making laws and the judiciary has been entrusted with the duty of interpreting and applying them.

He said the role of the Supreme Court in an age of positive government must be an active participation in government, assisting in furthering the democratic idea.

Legal notice on EC

Lawyer of a detained political leader yesterday served a notice upon the Election Commission demanding that he (leader) be enrolled as a voter, reports UNB.

Advocate Adilur Rahman Khan served the notice on behalf of Mostafa Farook, a central leader of the Smajtantrik Samik Front and member of the Dhaka City Bangladesher Smajtantrik Dal (BSD).

BNP standing body meets

A meeting of the BNP Standing Committee was held last night with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair, reports UNB.

The meeting discussed organisational matters including recent conflicts in the party's Narasingdi district committee.

Party Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder was given the responsibility of resolving the problem there, the source said.

Differing with Islam's contention, Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Khandaker said the Constitution of Bangladesh is good enough to interpret the appointment of Justice Rouf, which is now being questioned.

He said the service of judges are not a service of the Republic. Judges' services are distinctly different from other services of the Republic.

Khandaker yesterday submitted the appointment letter of Justice Rouf to the court and said now all doubts and misunderstanding regarding his appointment by the President should be removed.

The court also fixed the hearing of two other writ petitions against Justice Rouf of June 20.

Space confce

From Page 1

ICC and reconstitute itself into a new inter-governmental consultative mechanism on regional space applications programme for sustainable development.

Begum Zia said Bangladesh is striving hard to devise national action plans and coordinated programmes in the light of the Beijing Declaration made in September last year.

The Beijing Ministerial Conference, attended by 31 member countries and 20 international organisations, launched the regional space applications programme for sustainable development and adopted environmentally sound policies.

The Prime Minister asserted that Bangladesh would do everything possible to implement the recommendations adopted at the Beijing conference.

The inaugural function was also addressed by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, State Minister for Science and Technology Prof M A Mannan, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP Seiko Takahashi, UNDP Resident Representative in Dhaka Eimi Watanabe and ICC Chairman Dr A A Z Ahmed, who is also the Chairman of the Bangladesh Space Research and Remote Sensing Organisation (SPARRSO). Some 80 representative from ESCAP member countries, Canada, the USA, Russia, France, UN bodies and host Bangladesh are participating in the conference.

The Midnight File

Imran flays Benazir

NEW DELHI, June 14: Pakistan's Test cricket hero Imran Khan has accused Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's ruling party of orchestrating a campaign against his marriage to a British woman. "The concerted attack... is to ensure that I am not a threat politically," Imran told The Telegraph newspaper of Calcutta, reports AP.

CEC on ID card issue

From Page 1

made to him by various political parties and organisations at different times for making the election procedures more smooth, the CEC said. "We are taking all possible steps from our side to accommodate maximum number of suggestions and demands raised by the political parties."

The power of the EC has already been enhanced to a great extent and now "we need the power to take action against any sort of contempt of the EC. Power to void polls, if necessary, within 30 days of election results and simplification of the time-consuming procedure in disposing the cases relating to elections," said Justice Sadeque.

If the independent position of the EC can be established, then a government of whatever party comes to power in future, things will move in a better way, he added.

About voters' ID card, the CEC said though 25 computer companies have expressed their confidence in completing the task within six months, experts expressed the view that it would be quite difficult to complete the database and introduce ID cards for all voters before the next general elections.

He said different parties have suggested various measures for holding free and fair elections. These include holding

HC orders govt to reinstate Huq as Babu's counsel

The High Court yesterday directed the government to restore Advocate Sirajul Huq as the state defence of Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, an absconding accused in a murder case, reports UNB.

The rule was made absolute on a petition by Nurunnahar Zaman, the wife of Babu, challenging the legality of the withdrawal of her husband's state defence Sirajul Huq and the appointment of an Assistant Public Prosecutor in place of Advocate Huq.

Babu, an Awami League MP, is an accused in the Humayun Zahir murder case. Jumping bail, he fled the country two years ago.

A High Court Division bench comprising Justice M M Huq and Justice Nurul Islam had earlier issued rule upon the State and stayed all further proceedings of the Humayun Zahir murder trial, fixing yesterday for hearing.

Constitutional crisis

From Page 1

with the above contention and said that only a political consensus among the different political parties could resolve the crisis.

They said, if all parties agreed, then the consensus decision would be ratified by the next Parliament. A referendum may also be needed for such an amendment.

Some of the legal experts, however, feared that any sort of extra-constitutional arrangement might be challenged in the highest court and no one could assure that the court would reject such a prayer from any aggrieved citizen.

If the seats of the opposition MPs fall vacant due to 90 days of consecutive absence, two options would be left — to hold by-elections in the vacant seats or to announce dates for fresh polls by dissolving Parliament.

According to ruling party insiders, BNP is likely to opt for by-elections as per Article 123 (4) of the Constitution. The by-elections must be held within 90 days of vacation of the seats.

BNP insiders hinted that announcement for a fresh election may come just before the holding of the by-elections, permitting the ruling party to get additional 90 days' time.

According to the present constitutional provisions, the Prime Minister will have to continue in office until his/her successor takes over following the general elections. But ruling party sources said that the Prime Minister was still ready to resign 30 days before the general elections.

Both the ruling party and the opposition leaders expressed their hope that they would be able to reach a consensus before the next general elections but none of them could specify what would be the solution and how they would work it out.

The tenure of the Fifth Parliament will be completed on April 4, 1996. Its first session began on April 5, 1991.

Article 72 (3) of the Consti-

ing elections free from the influence of money, arms and muscle power; limiting the ceiling of a candidates' electioneering expenditure to Taka two lakh, more empowerment of the EC, barring defaulters and black-money holders from taking part in the race, allowing each candidates to compete from as many constituencies as one wishes, barring people, who retired from government service or were fired from jobs within five years, from taking part in elections providing equal publicity to all parties in the state-run electronic media and making it mandatory for all candidates to submit estimates of property he or she possessed before filing the nominations.

In reply to a question, the CEC said, "I was expecting Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat in this meeting but, they did not come."

Baul festival

From Page 1

of humanity, peace and wisdom."

The inaugural ceremony was also addressed by joint convenor of the Baul Mela '95 Lt Col (ret'd) S I M Nurunnabi Khan Bir Bikram. He said that the bauls were above the earthly greed and they were 'living wisdom' of hundreds of years.

The festival began with a seminar on 'Traditional Bauls of Bengal and Modern Poetry' which was presided over by eminent poet and folk literature expert Dr Ashraf Siddiqui, Mohammad Abdul Hai, Mostafa Jaman Abbasi, Rafiq Azad, and Ali Ahmed participated in the seminar.

Presenting the key-note paper in the seminar Mohammad Abdul Hai said that baul song was first recognised in the later part of the middle age. Earlier literatures of the 15th and 16th centuries ridiculed bauls but writers and poets of the 19th century began respecting the lyrics and wisdom of bauls. Baul songs influenced Rabindra Nath Tagore, Nazrul Islam, D L Roy and other poets. Writings by Shamsur Rahman, Al Mahmud, Syed Shamsul Haq, Nirmalendu Gun and others are also influenced by baul philosophy, he said.

The festival will continue from 4pm to midnight till Friday. The programmes include discussions and performances by traditional singers. The music sessions begin at 7 pm.

Budget

From Page 1

lay of Tk 12,100 crore, projecting a six per cent growth rate for 1995-96, has already been approved by the government. Education and other social sectors will continue to get priority in allocation.

The 1994-95 budget had a Tk 21,733 expenditure outlay with an overall deficit of Tk 8,096 crore. The revenue income target was set at Tk 13,637 crore, revenue expenditure at Tk 9,948 crore and the ADP allocation was set at Tk 11,000 crore.

Manzur murder

From Page 1

date for hearing the sensational murder case.

Official sources here, on condition of anonymity, told UNB that Ershad would not be produced before the court tomorrow due to security problem and other complexities.

But they said three other accused in the case — Major General (rtd) Abdul Latif, Lt Col (rtd) Shamsur Rahman Shams and Major (rtd) Kazi Emdadul Huq — would be brought to the dock.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: It could not be known clearly whether Ershad would be escorted to Chittagong tomorrow for being produced in the court.

No information from Dhaka was received here today about bringing Ershad though as per law appearance of an accused is required on every date of hearing of a criminal case, officials here said.

Meanwhile, authorities kept police force ready to provide required security if Ershad is escorted to Chittagong tomorrow, officials further said.

Indian team

From Page 1

the two countries' protracted endeavour to hammer out an acceptable solution to the problem, the source said.

The two sides will strive to apportion the dry-season flow of the common river during the talks, he said.

India is willing to share with Bangladesh half the flow which works out to be roughly 27,500 cusec. But Dhaka under no circumstances is reported to be yielding to anything short of 34,500 cusec, he added.

In the 1976 Indo-Bangladesh water sharing agreement, Delhi had conceded to Dhaka 34,500 cusec of the Ganges flow.

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Luxury buses yet to resume service

By Staff Correspondent

The luxury coaches on the Dhaka-Chittagong route did not ply for the fourth day yesterday as a suitable place for a new terminal was yet to be found.

Despite that, the transport agencies at Fakirerpool sold tickets to resume operation from last night. But due to some problems they had to cancel trips to Chittagong late last night and the tickets were refunded, according to sources.

The transport agencies, mostly operating the luxury coach service on the Dhaka-Chittagong route, stopped plying their vehicles following the removal of their 'unauthorised' bus stand at Fakirerpool in the city Sunday morning.

The owners of these transport agencies continued negotiations with the authorities to solve the problem.

Transport agency sources say the normal operation may resume today.

Social sectors should get priority in budget

From Page 1

and order, political stability, deregulation, removing bureaucracy and red tapism, etc.

The mix between revenue and development expenditure is justified. Revenue expenditure may be curtailed to a great extent by reducing unnecessary bureaucratic network and subsidy to government-owned loss making businesses. These are not only unproductive expenditures, but also hinder private sector business activity through too much regulations.

Similarly, government may reduce its burden of development expenditure by giving some of those to the private sector on a commercial basis.

DB: What should be the priorities in the next budget? What type of intervention steps should be initiated to tackle poverty?

BA: Next budget should give priority to primary education, primary health care and family planning, law and order, judiciary, and infrastructure development. In this respect education is most important in which we are far too behind compared to rest of the world.

Creation of job opportunities is the prime requisite for tackling problems of poverty. NGOs are doing an excellent job in this regard and even World Bank has recognised their increased role. Our government should follow the pattern of the NGOs for creating rural-based job opportunities, making available small credit for productive activities. Projects under 'food for work' should be promoted. We have achieved good employment opportunities in the government sector and overseas manpower employment. Such

sectors should be explored and patronised.

DB: What are your views on the ongoing economic reform programmes? Do you think the thrust of the reforms are in the right direction? Is the pace of the reforms appropriate?

BA: The ongoing economic reforms are moving in the right direction as is evident from recent improvements although not to our total satisfaction. Deregulation in various areas are successful, such as in foreign exchange, import and export, private sector bank and insurance, interest rate deregulation, abolition of subsidies on food and others, reforms on import tariff, introduction of VAT, abolition of permission for setting up industries, privatisation of government-owned enterprises etc.

DB: In brief, what, in your opinion, are the specific problems in the agriculture, industrial and financial sectors?

BA: Agriculture is the only sector not affected by political instability. In agriculture we are already using modern methods in fertiliser, irrigation, seeds, etc. We have to put more emphasis on preservation techniques, transport and marketing. For these we can go for foreign investments.

In industry, we should take advantage of our cheap production base. Both local and foreign investors need to be encouraged. This again depends on investment environment prevailing in the country. The present unstable political environment, lack of law and order will deter even a local entrepreneur.

DB: What impact did the reforms have on the performance of overall economy? Do you have any alternative suggestions?

BA: Although the reform that took place should have brought about a greater pace of