Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Sunday, July 16, 1995

# Sanitation: Key to Health

At a time when the UNICEF is about to withdraw itself from funding one of its highly appreciated programmes in this country relating to the production of rings and slabs for water-sealed latrines, the government is stepping in to make sure that the good work continues. Called Rural Sanitation Project, the proposed venture will cost Tk 170 crore and is expected to expand sanitation coverage, according to a report, from the existing level of 35 per cent to 70 per cent by the year 2000. The project is being placed with the ECNEC for its approval.

It is good to know that the Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperative Ministry has shown remarkable promptness to save a vitally important programme for the village people. We congratulate everyone who has pursued the issue to the stage of submission of the proposal. Hopefully its approval will not be delayed. Because by the end of the year, the UNICEF will stop assisting the programme. Now that the government is likely to fund the project through subsidy, many an eye-brow will be raised. But what else could be done in a situation like this?

Providing subsidy as a concept is not welcome according to the proponents of free-market economy. But there are areas like education and health, where the theory does not always work. This is an investment in human resource development. Let us consider the issue from the opposite point of view - that is what it would or could mean to our rural society if no subsidy were provided. Most likely, the sale and use of water-sealed latrines would have sharply fallen to a minimum number. At present the ring and slab for a latrine cost Tk 250 to Tk 350. After the Directorate of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) takes charge of supplying the sets, each set will cost Tk 405. Already a considerable increase has occurred in the price for the village people. For many in the rural areas even the existing price is not affordable. The rise in price will certainly have a discouraging effect. In the absence of subsidy the cost was sure to go up further. That would have limited the use of such types of latrines to a very low proportion.

That certainly could make our rural health an easy prey to all sorts of hazards. The hundreds of tons of excreta left in the open are already posing serious health problems to the entire country. The diseases that are caused almost each year due to the lack of safe disposal of human wastes exact a heavier toll compared to the burden of the subsidy. What we need most of all is to promote the water-sealed latrines among the village people through a consistent campaign. If we can ensure hundred per cent safe disposal of human wastes - which should be our aim - a huge cost will be saved by way of getting rid of a number of common but deadly diseases. And then imagine the prospect for biogas through a recycling of the wastes. We wish all success to the sanitation project.

# No More Nuclear Testing

Come what may, France is determined to conduct a series of underground nuclear tests in the South Pacific between September, 1995 and May, 1996. Her plans are to carry out the nuclear blasts, eight in number, to be precise, at the Mururoa Atoll, a French overseas possession in Polynesia, six months ahead of a comprehensive test ban treaty which France is committed to signing along with other nuclear powers in November, 1996.

The fact that France would ultimately be a signatory to the test ban treaty does not absolve her of the responsibility for ending a three-year testing moratorium she had accepted earlier. This actually goes to lend credence to the critics of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty who point out that it allows the nuclear weapons powers the chance to retain their nukes while keeping the others out of the

By turning a deaf ear to worldwide protests against his adamancy to go ahead with the tests, French President Jacques Chirac is making no secret of his plans to perfect his nuclear arsenal before giving up the choice for testing altogether after 1996. France which has had a tremendous cultural and civilisational appeal to the rest of the world does not perhaps need pandering to national pride by considering the nukes as the mainstay of it. After all, her strategic concerns for a nuclear parity seem to have been taken care of in essential details. And if we are all working towards a world free from nuclear threats of all kinds then this is hardly the way to go about

Chirac's persistence with his plans for nuclear testing casts a shadow over the benign revolutionary spirit of the Bastille Day on July 14 which France celebrated as her National Day and the rest of the world remembered as something of a prized heritage for mankind. Even the fact that France has issued a 48-hour ultimatum to her allies to act in Bosnia or else France would unilaterally move to break the Serbian stranglehold around Sarajevo could not put her in a better light against the backdrop of her reaffirmation to push through her nuclear testing plans.

In the Pacific itself France will be up to its neck in combating an anti-nuclear campaign that is gaining ground almost everyday. The Greenpeace's protest ship Rainbow Warrior may have been turned away by a French commando attack but its other ships Vega and Bifrost are in the vicinity. New Zealand may be sending in a flotilla of non-combatant naval vessels. The Tahitians and Australians marked the Bastille Day by a public demonstration of the 'No Nukes' sign.

There is still time for France to go by its best instincts which must be telling her to avoid risking any damage to her international image.

## Godspeed to STOL Service

After a nervous initiation of the process to get a private airliner break a fresh ground in Bangladesh, we have the good news at long last that STOL service is going to be inaugurated officially from today. It is to operate commercially from tomorrow with three flights daily between Dhaka and Barisal. The flights to and from Shamshernagar are likely to begin next week.

While congratulating Aero Bengal, the private airliner, which has made bold to pioneer the service and the Civil Aviation Ministry which is assisting it to do so, we venture to advise them both that a teething time must still be allowed for the operations to be steady and viable. It is during this time that they should have a check-list to make sure nothing goes wrong. For instance, the fact that it is going to be operated between Tejgaon, the old airport, and the low-profile aerodromes like Barisal and Shamshernagar should reinforce the necessity for taking extra care of the security and safety aspects involved in the operations. The Y-12 aircraft is compact and has a good track-record for safety but it is the human factor that will still be an important input to ensure it despite the aircraft's operational simplicity. The seating capacity for 17 persons makes it easy to equip it with all kinds of safety devices. It is the civil aviation authority upon whom will devolve the full responsibility to operate the technical facilities for the STOL service with maximum efficiency. They are coming into this after having dealt with the requirements of much bigger aircrafts belonging to international airliners, let alone our own national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh. So, the expertise is very much there.

The Aero Bengal for its part must be professional from day one to progressively acquire the standard depths and dimensions of operational capability. This part of the region had experience in private airline business during the pre-partition days. The stimulus to be efficient should come from the tremendous potential for viability the STOL aircraft has in a small country like ours. If six flights a day can help the airliner reach a break-even point on two routes only, then one can easily imagine the great commercial prospect awaiting it with an increase in the number of routes. In time, the fares are expected to be more reasonable with the expansion of the service.

# Flood Action Plan versus Jamuna Bridge

by Dr Saleemul Huq

The NGO community by and large opposed FAP on grounds of lack of satisfactory environmental and participatory mechanisms and had targeted the FAP 20 Project in particular for criticism.

Controversy

HE Flood Action Plan (FAP)

important infrastructure projects in

Bangladesh in recent years. It is ironic

that the two projects are at

loggerheads due to the closure of the

northern intake of the Dhaleswari

river by the Jamuna Bridge Project

which is likely to affect one of the

Flood Action Plan

recently completed its study phase

over the last five years at a total cost

of around US\$150 million. One of the

very few actual construction projects

included in this phase was FAP 20 or

the Compartmentalization Pilot

Project (CPP) jointly funded by the

governments of the Netherlands and

Germany to the tune of almost US\$ 20

million. This project being executed

in l'angail was supposed to try out a

novel technology of controlling flood

water coming into the flood plain

from the river and then going back to

the river when the water levels go

down, through a series of water-tight

compartments with water control

structures to let water in and out only

when required. It included a sizeable

amount of embankment building as

well as water control structures and

also substantial social inputs ranging

from surveys to organizing water user

HERE are at least three

importance in the present context of

Bangladesh, Firstly, it is often said

that although Bangladesh has made

good progress in various fields, it is

yet to shake off its "Image" as a so-

called "basket case." Secondly, and

as has been rightly emphasized at the

highest level, the need of the hour is

vigorous economic diplomacy in

order to promote trade, private

foreign investment, technology

transfer and the channelization of aid

into crucially important areas.

Thirdly, we have to face and

hopefully, gain something out of the

complexity of the present-day

interdependent world, characterized

by unipolarity, numerous regional

cooperation alliances, a plethora of

world bodies (i.e. inter

governmental, UN and non-govern-

mental bodies), communications

revolution, rising international crime,

violence and intolerance. In all these

efforts, the role of the Foreign Office

(and its Missions abroad) stands out,

and hence the necessity to revamp it.

at present the Foreign Office is sad-

dled with all kinds of problems, and

hence is severely constrained in per-

forming its rather demanding role. Let

us attempt to outline some of these

problems, along with some sug-

gested solutions, Firstly, Foreign

Office personnel have been tradi-

tionally misused for counterproduc-

tive and demeaning protocol work

consisting of "receiving," "looking

after" and "seeing off" VIPs and se-

nior officers at the cost of time,

money and other substantive work.

Essential protocol work will always

have to be done, but then why is it

that what could have been handled by

a Protocol Assistant must be per-

formed by a Counsellor, if not the

Ambassador himself? The situation in

this regard deteriorated to an all time

low during the autocratic rule.

Although things have somewhat im-

proved after 1991, much remains to

be done. The practical solution in this

regard seems to be to frame unam-

biguous detailed rules to minimize

protocol through wide ranging con-

However, the bottom line is that

reasons why our Foreign

Ministry assumes an added

The Flood Action Plan (FAP) has

FAP projects (FAP 20).

and the Jamuna Bridge are

two of the most costly and

As the FAP 20 or per CPP project was really the major physical construction project under FAP (most of the other components being studies) it gave rise to controversy from an early stage. There were widespread demonstrations by women's groups and local NGOs against the project in Tangail and even some incidents of violence between pro and anti — FAP groups in the area. The NGO community by and large opposed FAP on grounds of lack of satisfactory environmental and participatory mechanisms and had targeted the FAP 20 Project in particular for criticism. Nevertheless the project continued despite several review missions and even though the European parliament had recommended a moratorium on construction.

#### Jamuna Bridge

The Jamuna Multi Purpose Bridge (JMB) has been a much cherished dream of Bangladesh for many years. It finally left the drawing board to go into implementation phase in 1994. As part of the feasibility study for JMB a fairly thorough Environmental

Impact Assessment (EIA) had been carried out by experts organized by BUET who prepared an **Environmental Management Action** Plan (EMAP) which identified possible negative environmental impacts and recommended suitable mitigation actions and monitoring to minimise such negative impacts. In a project of this magnitude it is impossible not to have some negative environmental impact but the important thing is to recognise it and take necessary steps to mitigate the negative impacts on the environment as well as compensate the people likely to be affected. Accordingly the EMAP made a budgetary allocation of approximately US\$ 4 million for a number of monitoring and mitigation measures including fisheries monitoring, fish production, compensation for fishermen, tree planting, compensation for displaced boatmen, changes in agricultural practices, etc. The mitigation measures were to be implemented by suitable NGOs and other local groups under the supervision of an Environment Unit set up within JMB Authority with advice from an Environment Management

Committee (EMC) which included representatives from other relevant ministries such as agriculture, fisheries, environment, forest, etc as well as environment experts from BUET, Dhaka University and NGOs.

Closure of the Dhaleswari Northern Intake

One of the requirements of ensuring the viability of the Jamuna Bridge for the future is to ensure that the lamuna river continues to flow under the bridge. The river is well known to have changed its course numerous times historically. Therefore the JMB project has a substantial component (in fact approximately half the total project cost) allocated for the river training which will reinforce both sides of the Jamuna river from several kilometres upstream before it reaches the bridge, to ensure that the water actually flows under the bridge. In order to carry out this river training it was necessary to close the northern intake of the Dhaleswari river which flows from the Jamuna upstream of the bridge site. Accordingly this was done in late 1994.

FAP 20 and Dhaleswari

Now it so happens that the Dhaleswari river is the main source of flood water expected for the FAP 20 (CPP) area and by cutting off the

northern intake of the Dhaleswari by

JMB the prospects of FAP 20 getting floods is greatly reduced, if not eliminated. One of the most suprising aspects of this lack of communication is that both the consultants for FAP 20 project as well as the main contractors for the river training works were two well known Dutch construction and consulting companies respectively. It is amazing that they should not have communicated with each other about this potential problem before it occurred.

In recent weeks the FAP 20 through the Ministry of Water Resources has approached the JMB Authority about the closure and have proposed that an artificial spill channel be constructed downstream of the bridge site to reconnect the Jamuna river with the Dhaleswari which would ensure water for the FAP 20 project area. However, the osten sible reason given for this concern is

the spill-channel is being justified to restore the fisheries loss due to the closure of the northern intake. This argument seems quite redundant since the closure of the northern intake of the Dhaleswari was always envisaged in the feasibility study of the Jamuna Bridge and the EMAP had made provision for both monitoring the fisheries loss as well as taking adequate mitigatory measures to address both the fish loss as well as fishermen affected. Furthermore, it is by no means established that the lost fisheries will re-establish in the new spill-channel built several kilometres downstream at a completely different location, nor is the stability of such an artificial spill-channel assured.

the fisheries loss due to the closure of

the Dhaleswari northern intake and

The final question, however, is who is to foot the bill for establishing the new spill-channel (estimated at US\$ 5 million). Is it to be the JMB project, FAP 20, the Water Board or the Netherlands and German Governments? Who-ever it is (and if it goes ahead) it will be ironic that a Flood Protection Project worth USS 20 million had to spend another US\$ 5 million to bring the water to test the

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# Revamping the Foreign Office

Foreign Office personnel have been traditionally misused for counterproductive and demeaning protocol work consisting of 'receiving," 'looking after" and 'seeing off' VIPs and senior officers at the cost of time, money and other substantive work.

sultations, have these approved by the PM and then ensure their strict compliance, In framing the new rules, the practices in other countries should be carefully studied. Also, the tendency to rub shoulders with important people and a valet mentality on the part of some officers have to be curbed in implementing the new secondly, training facilities both

in and outside the country for foreign

service officials have to be increased on a priority basis, so that they may acquire a minimum of specialization in various fields of economic diplomacy within the next five years. Although all restrictions on training abroad imposed during autocratic rule were removed after 1991, not much has happened in the Foreign Office since then, owing mainly to lack of interest in senior officers. Another lame excuse is that there are not enough officers to spare. Yes, it is true that Foreign Service intake through competitive examinations has always been of good quality. However, the combined negative impact of protocol duty at the cost of more substantive work, poor grooming and almost no training will soon turn them into rusty swords, useless for the kind of battle outlined above. On the other hand, there is so much to be done in revitalizing the Foreign Service Training Institute and making greater use of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies by way of exhausting the internal training capacity. A dynamic Foreign Secretary can also arrange quite a few relevant training programmes abroad. There is, however, an unhealthy tendency among some officers to run after postings rather than going for training abroad for obvious short term pecuniary reasons. Also, senior officials generally feel slighted if

posted to the Foreign Service Training Institute. But they would not if they were later rewarded with a good posting abroad. All in all, these tendencies will have to be dealt with, using a carrot and stick policy Thirdly, the Foreign Office must have a modest research wing headed by a Director-General genuinely interested in this kind of work. If no one from the Foreign Service can be found, he/she should be brought in from outside, with adequate incentives. Indeed, without an in-house research facility, thousands of post reports have been, are and will continue to be marked "Seen, File". Similarly, there is

piece-rate basis. It is rubbish to suggest that such services are not available in Bangladesh. For a proper price, supply is bound to respond to demand. Fifthly, there has been extreme demoralization in the Foreign Office, owing to massive influx of "outsiders" without any explicit consideration of merit, particularly during the autocratic rule. It has, no doubt, adversely affected quality. esprit de corps and career prospects of those who came through competition. While it should be ensured once and for all that there is never a repetition of what happened in the past, i is also counterproductive not to ac-

their authorship should be acknowl edged and not "hijacked" by superior officers. The reports must not only describe and analyze but also point out the implications for Bangladesh and make specific recommendations. Finally, these must be read and acted upon in the Foreign Office, one way or the other, and this should also be communicated to the Embassies concerned. I am sure there is nothing to prevent a strong-willed Foreign secretary from issuing a detailed cir cular on report writing from Missions abroad and have it ingrained into the system. Seventhly, on the basis of "costs"

and "benefits" (financial, economic political, etc.) in both the short and the long run, the Foreign Office should work out a prioritized plan for future opening and closing of Missions abroad. This is necessary because in the not too distant past patronage was more important than national interest in opening new Missions. However, once opened, a hasty closure can also be costly in terms of the goodwill lost, the case of Brunei, for example. Eighthly, at present nothing is being done by our Missions in the sphere of technology transfer. At a time when foreign aid is dwindling, technology transfer has emerged as a serious source of selfsustained economic development. US, UK, Germany, France, Japan, China, India and Thailand should perhaps be our main targets in the effort to ensure a flow of relevant technology to Bangladesh. But this kind of work can be done only by doctors, engineers, scientists, etc posted in our Missions in these countries. Since we must not increase posts, the only way out is to rationalise posts where there is scope. This is perhaps possible in the case of some posts in the Missions held presently by

**Education**, Defence and Information Ministries. The Foreign Ministry, in consultation with relevant Ministries, should take a lead in ensuring that Bangladesh stands to gain from an organized flow of relevant technology from outside. Ninthly, ambassadors find it in-

creasingly difficult to cope with a chain of command disrupted by dual lovalties of the officers from other ministries in Missions abroad. In the short run, the solution lies in holding regular coordination meetings of Ministries with representation in Missions abroad under the chairmanship of the Foreign Minister. This should provide a forum to sort out outstanding problems and take an informed coordinated position on various important issues. However, in the long run, it seems that an integrated foreign service, as in India, is the answer to our problem. In other words, all work (except Defence) in the Missions abroad would be performed by Foreign Service officials, but during home posting they would also be required to serve in the Ministries they represent abroad. For obvious reasons, such a proposal would be extremely difficult to implement at the present moment. The time of this idea will surely come, but only if the Foreign Office can quickly train its officers in economic diplomacy and demonstrate its ability to deliver the goods in terms of this ob-

Tenthly, every Embassy should be given a quantifiable yearly target in the various aspects of economic diplomacy. It should not be imposed from above but agreed upon through consensus between the Embassy and the Ministries concerned. A proper evaluation of this on a regular basis should not only be in the country's interest but also help in sorting the chaff from the grain.

We have now a distinguished committee headed by an unbiased outsider with unflinching commitment to economic diplomacy look ing into the various problems of the Foreign Ministry. Hopefully, this Committee will be thorough in its work, and come up with practical recommendations.

# Making Government Work by Analyst

now no one to feed the top echelons of the Foreign Ministry with long and medium-term policy perspectives based on solid in-house research. given that territorial desk officers are overworked in managing routine matters. Fourthly, the Foreign Office must be well equipped with professional speech writers, language editors and interpreters to take care of the innumerable speeches, reports, translations, etc. in connection with international conferences and meetings and top-level visits. Otherwise, senior officials will get bogged down under the pressure of this burden at the cost of more important policy formulation work. It is not at all nec essary to employ these categories of people on a permanent basis. Some of these services may easily be pur chased from the market. A pool may be created, and as and when required such services could be procured on a

cept those who are already there. Training, grooming and proper placements, coupled with meritbased fairness across the board in matters of postings, transfers and promotions are the only ways to deal with the different categories of officers now serving in the Foreign

Sixthly, the present system of report writing from the various posts appears to be no more than going through the motions. These reports are sometimes 'cut and paste' exercises which even an Assistant can perform. Also, these reports are hardly made use of in the Foreign Office, for whatever they are worth. Several measures may be taken in this regard. These should be written through brainstorming among Embassy colleagues under the guidance and encouragement of the Ambassador. These should be short and crisp and

#### Don't destroy the rickshaws

Sir. "DCC may destroy 7000 seized rickshaws" was the heading of a news published in The Daily Star on 1.07.95. The good part of the news is that of more than one lakh unlicenced rickshaws, 7000 could have so far been seized by the DCC. The bad part of the news is the fate (that is being decided by the 'higher authorities' of the city) of the seized rickshaws.

Although rickshaws are environment-friendly vehicles, the argument in favour of plying more rickshaws on the busy city roads is no more tenable. Therefore the authorities of the capital are indeed right in not allowing more rickshaws, especially the illegal ones, on city roads. But should they crush rickshaws by bulldozers? Are the rickshaws harmful to human beings and the environment as a whole? What is the material difference between a rickshaw having a licence and the one without that? Bangladesh has to import most of the raw materials and some of the prepared parts of rickshaws from foreign countries. The few indigenous materials including wood are also very scarce. Then how the country can afford to destroy this wealth!

The news item also disclosed that such seized rickshaws were auctioned off in the past. Why doesn't the DCC do the same at present? Perhaps the problem of selling the seized rickshaws is their return to the city roads. The fault lies with the profit-making rickshaw owners, the povertystricken rickshaw pullers and the DCC itself because of its failure in combating the crime in the proper way. But the punishment is being prescribed for the inanimate poor rickshaws! Such a punishment will cause the rickshaw owner-cum-pullers to lose everything.

Perhaps, the authorities of the city know that in some districts (including Tangail and Shariatpur where I observed the phenomenon) vans, that usually carry goods, are used for carrying humans. So, the rickshaws seized so far and those to be seized will not be excess to our national requirement.

Therefore, I request to 'higher authorities' of the city to give the order (for which the DCC is waiting) not to

destroy the rickshaws, but to auction them off to the parties who will sell the rickshaws to district and upazila towns where they are badly required. I further request the DCC, if possible, while seizing the rickshaws the ownercum-pullers be identified and the rickshaws be returned to them directing them to leave the city and to ply them in the pullers' own district or upazila ( if they have any!). The DCC is also to keep vigil that the auctioned-off rickshaws do not return to the city. Obviously a continuous surveillance is required to save those rickshaws

M A S Molla Member, BAAS, Dhaka

### Fish hatcheries

Sir, There is an acute scarcity of fish in the country. This has pushed fish prices up beyond any reasonable limit. If fish fries can be made available to farmers at a cheaper rate, this is likely to enhance fish production to a large extent very quickly. This can be done by setting up one hatchery in each union of the country by the Fisheries Department. This will no doubt involve subsidy from the government but is worthwhile in view of its tremendous potential in production, employment and income generation.

Government is providing subsidy to the tune of crores of taka to different sector corporations because trade unions of the corporation are very strong and volatile. But these corporations are practically acting as a brake on national development. On the other hand, an insignifi-

cant amount of subsidy on fish hatcheries can revolutionize fish production in the country. Through correct policy in this regard government of West Bengal has already succeeded in increasing fish production substantially and as a consequence fish prices there have come down a lot and it is now much cheaper than that in Bangladesh. But only a few years ago situation was just the re-

May I, therefore, request the Parliamentary Committee on Ministry of Fisheries to look into the matter and do something in this field which is likely to be very productive and

which will go a long way in providing much needed protein for all and

It may not be out of place to mention here that supply of saplings at a subsidized rate by the Forest Department is producing good result. This is worth emulating by the Fisheries Department.

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury Dhaka Cantonment

#### Moudud's book — a review of the reviewers

Sir, Moudud Ahmed has stirred up the hornet's nest enough. His latest book "Democracy and Challenge of Development: A study of politics and military intervention in Bangladesh" has drawn fire from all corners since its launching on June 3.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has branded him as a political turncoat, although she did not clearly deny that she had gone on a long drive with General Ershad during the military ruler's years in power in a bid to reach a political understanding.

Some Jatiya Party members are apparently furious and are scheming for an onslaught on Moudud for exposing General Ershad and thus knifing the party at the back. Whether Moudud is strong enough to with stand that assault remains to be seen. The ruling party leaders are still

quiet, although its Secretary-General Abdus Salam Talukder has said the book is not worth reading. He made this comment without ever seeing the book at all. But there is no reason for the BNP to be happy, because Moudud has tried to paint Ershad as a better reformer than the assassinated president Ziaur Rahman. Nobody will deny that Moudud is

out and out a controversial politician. His rise to the limelight was basically through the two military leaders who had ruled this country for a total period of 15 years. One of them was a freedom fighter and the other a repatriate opportunist. The former vice-president has therefore reconciled to taking the robe of a permanent chameleon. He makes no bones

of it. As he told his audience at the

book launching meeting, his elec-

torate is unhappy because he is not in the government. What does this ac-

mally imply, only time will say. But why can't our society have tolerance enough to see his talent as an author and read his book in the spirit it had been written? What kind of argument is it that he has forfeited his right to write a book because of his political past? Doesn't the holy Ouran say "Hate the sin but not the sinner"? I know many of his scoffers will not like this reference, and may even try to snuff me out as a "fundamentalist". Nobody can help them if they settle for being congeni-

tal myopics.

Moudud Ahmed has tried rather assiduously to piece together a chronology of events that have dominated the sad history of a country where two presidents, including the country's founding-father, had been assassinated. He has also given an elaborate account of General Ershad, the man who ruled us for nine years after seizing power in a military coup. Many of the details are just trifle and many are questionable. But there are many more which Moudud alone could relate with authority because of his proximity to the power that was. All those details would never have seen the light of the day had he not written the book.

But the review of his book on June 3 was disappointing. As one who was in the midst of the audience by chance and had eventually managed to procure a copy of the book, it seemed to me that atleast five of the six reviewers did not do their homework and therefore had indulged in useless rhetorics. The sixth man who had probably read the book at some length was thoroughly biased in his evaluation. Talukder Maniruzzaman, a senior

professor of political science at the Dhaka University, was probably there more as an old buddy of Moudud. He gave a rehash of the book that he had written few years ago on the role of the military in politics and made some casual criticism of the two generals, Ziaur Rahman and Hossain Mohammad Ershad for their advent in Bangladesh politics. But his comments were rather shilly shally and he made no judgment of the strength

and weakness of the book.

Enayetullah Khan, who has also

served in the regimes of the two gencrals as minister and ambassador, did not seem to have read the book properly. The result was that he did what many people do in such circumstances. He simply played it out by waffles. But he made a vital point clear — Ziaur Rahman did not take power by a military coup: the takeover was simply thrust upon him. It was good occasion to reiterate

Professor A K M Mohsin of the history department of Dhaka University was as much critical of the two generals as of Moudud. But he criticised Moudud for saying nothing new. He bemoaned because the book did not contain any classified information. What kind of so-called classified information he had expected of the book was not clear.

that point.

Atiqui Alam, Editor of the Morning Sun, spoke in perfect Queen's English, but he seemed to have read only one chapter of the whole book and therefore did not make a proper review. However, he admitted that he had glanced through the book only for few hours. As an old hand who has spent long time in international journalism, he ought to have realised that evaluation of a book without reading it fully is no evaluation at all.

Mizanur Rahman Shelly, another former minister under Ershad and one of the country's frontline intellectuals, seemed to be more concerned about defending his own position than making an honest review of the book. He had spent much time explaining that he did no wrong by beng a minister and that he had left with his record as clean as ever. He did not touch any point made in the book with depth and had chosen to be ambivalent, neither criticising nor commending.

Muntassir Mamun, the young pro fessor of history at the Dhaka University, was the most devastating critic of the book. He spoke like a diehard politician of a Third World country rather than an academician. Still more unusual is that he wrote his script in Bengali for a book written in English. He said the English readers might appreciate the book, but not the Bengali readers. He argued that the military officers repatriated from Pakistan after the liberation war in 1971

should not have been taken into the military because all of them in a way were "collaborators". He said Moudud had no right to talk about democracy because he had served the dictators. If so, what about those who had changed a democratic constitution into a one-party monolith in two minutes?

Simply put, Mamun's arguments were frivolous and his comments betrayed the outrage of an angry young man not finding the world going the way he liked. He admitted that he could not rise above bias. What he perhaps did not realise was that review is not a biased man's job.

The issue is judging the contents of the book written by Moudud, and not Moudud himself. Condemn him for his political past and torture him with every refinement of cruelty for helping the dictators perpetuate their rule in this country. But please do not overlook the fact that the Oxford University has taken up the book for publication. Having spent nearly two and half decades of my life in that parish, I am quite familiar with the level of quality it demands. Moudud Ahmed has emerged to meet such standard.

Aslam Azhar Dhanmandi, Dhaka

### 'Bengalee Muslim ICS'

Sir. We have read several letters on the above topic in your paper. One such letter was published on the 28th June written by Mr Tarun Kanti Barua of Chittagong. We like to add the following two names as written by late Syed Martuza Ali in his book 'Hazrat Shahjalal and History of Sylhet." Mr Gazanfar Ali Khan of Sylhet passed ICS examination in 1897 and Mr Guru Saday Datta of Sylhet passed ICS examination in 1904. So, we also request the writers to mention some names of Hindu Bengalee ICS (from this part of the then Bengal) for our general information and knowledge in

Rajshahi

M Ali