Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Saturday, December 2, 1995

Closure Again at RU

Rajshahi University has been ordered closed for the umpteenth time. This time it is a one-month forced vacation starting today. An unremitting reign of terror by Shibir and protest agitations against that by the victims is said to be the reason for the closure. In fact, the university hasn't functioned as a teaching body for even a whole week since its first forced closure on February 12 this year. Thursday's announcement asking students to leave hall is but a corroboration of the complete standstill there.

If a university does not keep the classes open for even a month during a whole long year then it should better be closed down aftogether. It's beyond the understanding of all what does the government want to gain by keeping the institution in a state of suspended animation. They should either impose normalcy on the place by replacing the VC and taking legal and restrictive administrative measures against all known recalcitrant stu-

dent elements or shut it down.

One cannot again help wondering what Jamaat must be aiming to earn from their continual success in making the university inoperational in all sense of the term. The teachers on their part have been assiduously moving for the VC's removal - he being little besides an accessory to the Jamaat foul play.

Something big and radical must be done at Rajshahi to heal it of the disabling disease it is long a prey to. Jamaat is irresistibly on path to do this same thing to Jahangirnagar University. Chittagong University is Jamaat territory for years. What is their big plan? Whatever, they must be stopped here and now. But the present government as well as the student politics situation have proved no match for the Jamaat march.

We have long denounced the practice of treating university campuses as excluded areas - where law not operate. This has come about through the government party itself harbouring violence and making use of it. The government as well as other parties must give up this immoral practice if they indeed want to rid the universities of Jamaat finx.

AIDS Prevention

Like so many other 'Days' we observed World AIDS Day yesterday. The observance mainly consisted of the usual rally, poster, TV programme, seminar and other things that we witness on every such 'event'. The very method of our observance clearly shows that we do not know what we are doing. As we all know, the only thing one can do about AIDS is to prevent it. For, till today, we have found no cure for it. Preventing AIDS means that the time to act is now, when the number of known cases are still very limited. The usual response — to act when a disease spreads — is completely ineffective in this case. Once AIDS spreads then it is already too late. This makes public awareness to be the only effective means to fight this deadly disease. Public awareness does not mean once a year event where there is some publicity because the ministers utter some inane platitude, and some boring programme is conducted on the BTV. AIDS awareness programmes will have to be a round the year affair, repeated frequently, if not daily, and in the most creative of manner.

We must be aware that if an AIDS outbreak occurs in Bangladesh, it will happen among the poor and the illiterate classes where multiple marriage is frequent, abandoning wives and taking up new ones are not uncommon and information concerning preventing highly communicable AIDS is almost non-existent. It is this group which will have to be addressed. And since AIDS deals with our sexual practice, which is an extremely private affair, any discussion on it will have to be persistent and persuasive, and carried out in a manner that protects privacy. As it is, in our culture, talking about sexual habit is considered a highly indecent and offensive matter. AIDS education has, therefore, to overcome this extremely well entrenched cultural norm. However, we must remember that many other societies have had similar taboos against such subjects, but they have successfully dealt with it in their AIDS awareness campaigns. We will have to learn from them. We extend our wholehearted support behind the point made by the eminent physician-turned-politician, Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury in a speech on Thursday, and by the National Committee on AIDS about the need for a National Policy on AIDS prevention. We urge the Health Ministry to take up the task on an emergency basis.

A Big Examination

Yesterday about four hundred thousand aspirants for a primary teacher's job took a qualifying examination. Only six thousand candidates would be taken in against as many vacancies. But another five thousand from among those would be enlisted for future appointment.

The government earned Taka two crore by selling application forms. There is another and a truly sprawling big party which, allegedly, also stands to make a heavenly business of it. One does not know about the going rate now, but, reportedly, for some years it has been Tk 30 thousand in bribe for one primary teacher's job.

Two questions come put to mind over this sad primary circus. Perhaps all of these appointments are going to be made against vacancies. Why not against new posts? The government is claiming fantastic progress in primary enrolment. Has this been achieved without a matching rise in teacher employ-

ment or, rise in the number of primaries? After large scale nationalisation of primaries, society is in no mood to go for primaries on private individual initiative. What has the government done to encourage people to build schools on their own and not keep looking up to government for all eternity? It is both in the interest of education and of social and cultural development that the big government presence in the primary sector be matched by similar participation by the society at large.

Agricultural Growth and Linkages HE linkage effects of

The changing patterns of demand forestalls the obviousness of changing policy prescriptions attentive and sympathetic more towards the promotion of non-cereal crops and fish and livestock products.

cent advance in population control seemingly posits rural population growth rate below that of the national rate and the slow growth of population so observed has a substantial positive effect on rural per capita incomes; (b) within rural areas. labour force moves from agriculture to rural non-farm activities. To substantiate this hypothesis, Hossain, drawing on a BIDS study, pointed out that while the rural labour force grew at 2.1 per cent per year during the 1988-95 period. the number of agricultural workers dwindled by 0.4 per cent per year and the rural non-farm sector witnessed a surge in employment at 5.8 per cent per year. Thus substantial gain in labour productivity in agricultural sector could be in evidence even with a modest growth (two per cent) in agricultural value added. Hossain, further drawing on the same study, observed that "average rural household incomes increased by 2.9 per cent per year during the 1989-94 period when the agricultural incomes increased by only 1.4 per cent per year. The stimulus to agricultural growth came from a 5.1 per cent per year increase in income from rural non-farm activities. mainly from trading and services. The growth in per

agricultural growth are

well-documented in

economic literature. Changes

in the structure of the

economy and the boon of

economic progress, that is

likely to closely follow, are

believed to hinge on, inter

alia, the various farm and

non-farm linkages that such

growth tends to generate. In

the realm of linkages, how

ever, both demand and sup-

ply sides operate - the

former being income in

duced expenditure on food

and non-farm goods and ser-

vices (forward) and the lat-

ter, from the use of larger

inputs (backward). Empirical

evidences for a number of

countries clearly speak for

immense economic benefits

arising out of linkages but not

much is heard about the

eminent economist of Bang-

ladesh (who now works as

Division Chief, IRRI, Manilal

in a recent presentation

made an attempt to highlight

the linkage impacts that the

growth of agriculture in

Bangladesh so far injected

into the economy. At the very

outset, however, one needs

to know that substantial

ductivity and incomes have to

be filtered through before

linkage effects are expected

to have significant impact on

the structure of the rural

economy. On this score

alone, the long-term growth

of Bangladesh agriculture

value added at only two per

cent per year (below the

population growth ratel

should render the issues of

structural changes from farm

dundant and enimportant for

Hossain, however, seems to

contest this notion of down-

rates in evidence.

and non-farm linkages re-

doses of agricultural pro-

Dr Mahabub Hossain, an

same in Bangladesh.

Forward Linkages

capita rural income was es-

timated at 3.8 per cent per

year because there was a 0.9

per cent per year decline in

the average size of the rural

sizing the importance of Theory postulates that as agricultural linkage notwithincome goes up, incremental standing the slimmer growth expenses on food items go down, other things, remain-The reasons that he cited ing same. In other words, acare as follows: (a) rapid rural cording to the standard ecourban migration and the renomic theory, the income

enues of cooperation. They

are going to introduce a sin-

gle currency for the whole of

the Union. Movement of civil-

ians has been made free with

the right to employment and

economic pursuit. The mini-

applicable for the locals has

mum wage which was so long

been made available to all the

EU member citizens. Europe

did this to sustain the stan-

dard of living that they have

attained by ensuring unhin-

dered maximum utilisation of

the available resources in the

zone. When the process of

withdrawing various restric-

tions was initiated, it was ap-

prehend that the growth rate

and standard of living in the

comparatively developed

sates like Germany, France,

the United Kingdom etc.,

shall suffer but in reality the

same has been proved to be

wrong. Unification of Ger-

many in 1991 also created

the same fear that western

Germany shall suffer because

of the lower level of eco-

nomic development in east-

ern Germany. These fears

have proved wrong. The for-

mation of the EU prompted

signing of North American

Free Trade agreement

(NAFTA) to maximise the

utilisation of human re-

sources of Mexico, the capital

and technology of the USA

and the natural resources of

Canada. The SAARC was

formed to foster better ties

elasticity of demand for non food items is higher while that of the food items is lower. The household expenditure pattern tends to tilt, as income rises, towards relatively more consumption of vegetables, fruits, fish, meat etc. than cereals and grains. Quite obviously, the importance of rice should be on a wane in terms of importance in the consumption basket and also in the economy due to economic prosperity. It is estimated that the income elasticity of rice in Bangladesh is only 0.18 implying that with a 10 per cent increase in income, the demand for rice will increase by only 1.8 per cent. The in-

ward linkage effects? Well the market for rural construction and services would expand by 15 per cent, livestock products by about 15 per cent, fish by one-tenth and cereals by about only 5 per cent. Technological progress is the linchpin that promotes marketable surplus for agricultural goods and along with this surplus, the demand for trade, transport and processing services increase generating additional employment and incomes in rural non-farm activities.

The Backward Linkages Agricultural growth in

Bangladesh mainly sprang from the technological

ant with the size of landholding, but non agricultural investment was positively assoctated with the size of land ownership." Interestingly. the landless and marginal farmers who tend to eke out their living mostly from rural non-farm sectors, had an investment rate of 6.5 per cent of their incomes, 44 per cent of which was allocated for non farm activities. Needless to mention, perhaps, that provisions for credit to these groups could allow more participation in these activities?

Who Benefits from Linkages?

backward linkages could be

much higher than what has

been witnessed so far. Be-

non-farm sector is also gen-

erated through the reinvest-

ment of agricultural sur-

pluses. Non-agricultural in-

vestment was found to be

highly responsive to growth

in agricultural incomes. The

rate of investment in agricul-

ture was found almost invari-

sides these, the linkages to

Agricultural growth per se might result in unequal distribution of the fruits growth since possession of land stands as the arbiter of the gains from production. But if agricultural growth generates linkages, there is sufficient ground to believe that such linkages do tend to minimize the differences. Two reasons could be adduced to this rosy phenomenon. First, income and employment beefed up by these linkages take place mostly in rural areas and second, the income induced goods and services are also produced by small labour intensive enterprises. Dr Hossain cited the data collected by the Analysis of Poverty Trends Project to support

the above hypotheses. According to the project findings. "the concentration of income in the scale of landownership is much less for incomes generated in processing, trade and services than for crop incomes. The concentration of ratio of land owned was estimated from 1995 survey at 0.70 while the ratio was 0.59 for the incomes from crop cultivation, 0.32 for income from trade and 0.30 for income from services. Because of the greater access of the nonpoor households to wage income and incomes from business and services, the overall inequality in the distribution of income in the scale of land ownership was only 0.27 but when measured in the scale of per capita income the concentration is about 0.40."

Policy Implications

manual labour were consid-

Traditionally, land and

ered major determinants of rural income. The advent of modern technology seems to have propped up a new horizon where investment on water resources, investment in rural non-farm activities and on education emerged as critical factors for higher incomes. The changing patterns of demand forestalls the obviousness of changing policy prescriptions attentive and sympathetic more towards the promotion of noncereal crops and fish and livestock products. According to Dr Hossain, the government should place heavy emphasis on agricultural research for development of (a) appropriate technologies for rainfed ecosystem; (b) HYV for non-rice crops; (c) farming system to fit nonrice crops in rice based system that takes into account the seasonal distribution of rainfall and other agroclimatic factors and (c) appropriate institutions and social organisation to promote rice fish farming system.

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes

teresting question is: Bangladesh an exception to the theoretic juxtaposition mentioned above?

Dr Hossain noted that, as per the 1988/89 rural Household Expenditure Survey (HES), "the market for non-farm goods and services are fairly large and agricultural growth will expand the market substantially "It has been observed that rural households speed only 18 per cent of their incremental incomes on cereals, 14 per cent on other crops, onetenth on fish and livestock products and about one-third on goods and services produced in the non-farm sectors. If, for example, rural incomes increase by 10 per cent, what would be the for-

progress that had shifted the production possibility frontiers. Although mostly in rice, such technological progress gave a tremendous boost to the use of modern agricultural inputs such as chemical fertilizers and irrigation water, there has also been noticeable increase in the growth of demand for mechanical power. Massive consumption of chemical fertilizer prompted an expansion of the fertilizer industry with attendant positive impact on employment generation and infrastructural uplift. Had the industrial sector seized the opportunity of supplying pumps and motors for minor irrigation that are now being mostly im-

ported, the magnitude of Towards Harmony for Prosperity

by Mostafa Ameen

HE sovereign countries of our region namely Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal. First and Second World Wars India, Sri Lanka, the Malprimarily in their own land. During the Second World War dives. Pakistan and Aighanistan have glorious alone, 650 million people were killed in Europe and cultural heritage with many similarities. We have been practically the whole contihistorically sharing and innent was destroyed. Now Euteracting with each other and rope is emerging as a single for obvious reasons developed socio-economic entity. Fora sense of togetherness in mation of the European Ecoculture and heritage with dinomic Community (EEC) has versification that glorified, paved the way. enriched and broadened our Now the European Union vision towards life which is (EU) has opened new av-

humanistic. This region comprises of followers of all the major religions. In our villages people from all the religions have lived with amity for centuries. Though we have such rich history and the region is bestowed with the treasures of nature, colonial exploitation along with other factors that helped develop disunity among us have contributed to the present day poverty prevailing in the region.

essentially progressive and

The majority of our people live below the subsistence level, literacy rate is low and a large number of our children suffer from malnutrition. The annual per capita income in the subcontinental states is \$300-400 against \$20,000-30,000 of developed countries. Two days' earning of an average person in Europe is equal to that of 365 days' of an average per-

son in our region. The Europeans fought many battles among themselves for centuries. They engaged in war that continued for years together some of which are known as 100-year war, 60-year war, 30-year war, seven-year war etc. They fought on the struggle of supremacy between the Pope and the King. Protestant-Cathotic issue was also a cause of discord for centuries. Of late, they fought the amongst the people of South Asian region but has become an easy prey of the state communalism. Our region is in an unde-

clared allout war. The Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Chittagong Hill Tracts Kashmir, Jaffna, Karachi, Ayoddyha, Abghanistan are our battlefields. Our region represents one-forth of total arms market in the world. We spend a substantial part of our national budgets for defence. Allegations are there that Bangladesh trains the Nagaland and Mizoram insurgents, India provides all logistic supports to the Shanti Bahini, MQM and LTTE, Pakistan organised the bomb blast in Bombay and directly habour, the Kashmir war. Declared intensified wars were fought in 1965 and 1971 destroying our potentiality of growth and prosperity in addition to the perpetual undeclared wars we are all in. We all are behaving in an insane manner. Unless the region is freed from this madness, all endeavours for sustainable development is bound to end up in nothing.

This region has geophysical dependence. The seven north-eastern states of India have been subjected to untold suffering because they have been deprived of the port facilities that were being used before 1947. In the same manner, a large area of Bangladesh has been deprived of the water flow of the Ganga that it used to enjoy before 1971. Bangladesh has water bodies and manpower which can be better utilised if agro-based industries like pisciculture, poultry,livestock are developed. Problem here is the scarcity of food. Bangladesh has an acute annual food shortage.

India and Pakistan have surplus food which can easily be used for the development of the above mentioned sectors Free movement of citizens in the region with the right to work shall ease the tension and accelerate the growth process. We all shall be benefited. Communalism is the main hindrance to evolving the process of cooperation in

our region. Political use of re-

ligions has been the main cause of discord. Australia, North America and the Russian Federation have large areas of land with natural resources, proper utilisation of which can increase the world productivity and help improve the overall quality of life on earth. Restrictions on immigration to

Sampradaik Samprity Parishad (Council for Communal Harmony) was formed in 1993 at Dhaka. Committees of the Council have been formed in most of the districts of the country. Committees are being formed in all the countries in the region, as well as in Europe, America, Australia, Japan and other places where people from our region reside.

these lands is the prime rea-

son for non-utilisation of

those resources, some o

which are also perishable.

For improving the quality of life of the people of our region we expect:

 The states to be run democratically with the principles that religion remains in the individual's own domain and the state belongs to all; politics in the name of religion not to be encouraged and harmony is established shunning all religious and parochial conflicts.

 Planning for maximum utilisation of human, water, communication and other re-

number from our region to Australia, America and other sources to be undertaken for the region appreciating geophysical interdependence of the states on the basis of equity and justice.

Arms race in the region is to be stopped and resources to be diverted to the sectors of education and poverty alleviation by reducing the expenditure on defence. Free movement of civil-

ians along with the right to work in the region, as allowed in the EU states, is to be ensured and all restriction in the movement of goods and services thus withdrawn. Immigration in greater

regions where natural resources are in abundance and yet to be properly utilised for shortage of labour be allowed for ensuring better life of more people with a view to building up a world of prosperity for human race with Unity among the masses of

the sovereign countries of our region is a precondition for achieving the above rational objectives. Unless these are achieved, we will remain poor and shattered for all the time to come. The writer is the General

Secretary of 'Council for Communal Harmony'.

Buchwald's COLUMN

Fasten Your Seat Belts

Y favorite curmudgeon in Washington is Newt Gingrich. Apparently, he shut down the US govern-▲ ▼ ▲ ment because he felt that President Clinton snubbed him on Air Force One when they were both flying back from Prime Minister Rabin's funeral in Israel.

I have always considered Newt to be smart, but to bring the most powerful nation in the world to its knees because of a perceived presidential slight was really good thinking. I can imagine the conversation with his wife when they

arrived home from the trip. "That does it," Newt said. "If he won't talk to me on the plane, it's no more Mr Nice Guy. I'm going to close down the government and let the US default on our government

bonds for the first time in history." I like to believe that Mrs Gingrich tried to talk him out

"Newt, maybe the President was playing gin rummy with Leon Panetta and he didn't know that you were on the plane."

"Of course he knew. That's why he put Bob Dole and me in tourist class. He even made us pay for our own drinks." "You should have sent him a note telling him that it was

no way to treat the speaker of the house." "I did. I said that I wanted to discuss the budget with

him and he explained that he was doing the Times crossword puzzle. This town is going to be shut tighter than a drum unless I get a public apology. "Did you talk it over with Bob Dole?"

He told me that I could shut down the Grand Canyon as far as he was concerned. Bob said that when Clinton seated us at the back of the plane with the bomb-sniffing dogs, he insulted the entire Republican Party and he will be impeached for it when no one picks up the country's garbage next week."

"Newt, are you planning to go public with the snub?" "I have to. The American people will start to ask why we have shut down the government. When the good citizens hear what they fed us for lunch on Air Force One, they'll understand our decision."

'Maybe you ought to sleep on it, Newt."

"That's another thing. Do you think that the speaker of the house should be seated three across on the plane between two Marine Guards?"

"Hillary was very nice to me, Newt." "She's always nice to the wives. But she walked right

past me when she handed out the hot towels. Some day when the history books are written, that airplane ride will go down as the defining moment of this century.

If the President makes the speaker of the house exit out the back door of the plane again, every government worker in the country will be sent home."

"I get so upset when you're angry, Newt." "I have always said. 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can to (ital) to (unital) your country." By arrangement with Los Angeles Times Syndicate and

Awami League lacks directions Sir, It is a matter of regret

to observe that Awami League (A .) is now passing through a ci icial time just due to their inefficient and immatured s eps in making political de-

The party had a long and orious background begining from the Language Movement of 1952. Bangobandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's leadership played the most vital role in 1969 which brought the nation in the limelight of the world map as an independent country in 1971.

At present, the activities, decisions and political programmes of the Awami League, perhaps are not really liked by the people in general. The greatest blunder done by them was 'en

mass' resignation from the Parliament. Begum Sufia Kamal eminent poet and a true follower of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, expressed her deep dissatisfaction on the AL's resignations. The Statesman of India made the similar comment recently.

Now they say that they have no way out other than calling repeated hartals. Hartals have failed to earn desirable support from the people which can really topple the present government like the autocratic regime of Ershad. We are, now, deeply concerned regarding Awami League's downward trend in term of its popularity and support by the people just due to lack in taking decisions by its top-ranking

Motius Samad Chowdhury Phultala Tea Estate, Sylhet

leaders.

Being cost conscious

Sir, Bangladesh signed the General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT) agreement in April '94 at Marrakesh, Morocco. The main content of GATT and subsequently WTO, is free trade globally but all members are allowed to have some time to protect their industries through tariff or imposition of duties but not for an unlimited period. It is expected that all nations will strive for cost competitive products against low priced ones produced else-

However, South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement is another free trade zone, so to say, and our products should be cost-wise competitive and we should not go for those products which are comparatively

costlier. We hear everyday about the prices of essentials over radio and read in daily newspapers. Unfortunately the prices of all the essentials as often published are at least three times or more higher compared to the prevailing prices in Calcutta as broadcast by All India Radio.

Against this backdrop, it is essential to acquire technology from India so that we can produce the essentials at a cheaper rate while the prices of all the daily essentials as given by the All-India Radio may be published in our daily newspapers. Thus we shall know what is the price at our neighbour's market and we must be cost competitive so as to fight back imports.

Salim Ally Elephant Road, Dhaka