

Technology, Investment and Development

Arun Ghosh writes from New Delhi

WHILE scientific and technological advances have made for undreamt of possibilities of meeting the material needs of mankind, new problems have arisen. The use of equipment is now rapidly displacing labour in all production processes; and even in the hitherto high-employment industries (in particular, engineering industries), a few white collar workers (manipulating robots with the help of computers) are replacing a large number of blue collar workers. Technology in general is rapidly getting to be more and more capital and skill intensive.

The evolving system, while it is capable of producing all the material needs of humanity, has yet found no way to distribute the social product to all citizens, leading to the prevalence of large pockets of poverty even in developed countries. In the USA, this is particularly true of the Blacks, the Hispanics, and various other groups. In Germany, this is evidenced by the emerging terrorising of 'immigrant' workers who had, for more than a generation, helped Germany to grow into an economic power.

For developing countries, the situation becomes all the more difficult for yet another important reason. Increasingly, the state, in India, appears to have no resources for the build up of basic infrastructure; indeed, it has no resources even for basic education, health and similar services

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As per the 1995-96 budget of the Central Government, some 70 per cent of the revenue receipts go for 'debt servicing' and for defence. The 'revenue deficit' of the Centre in 1995-96 was budgeted at 35 per cent of 'revenue receipts'. Indeed, as a result of the economic reform policies, domestic savings have declined from 23.7

per cent of the GDP in 1990-91 to 20.2 per cent in 1993-94.

After the 1996 general elections, any new government would face three major problems: (a) rapid technological changes around the world; (b) rising 'expectations' among the people in general, as a result of the communications revolution and satellite TV; and (c) a bankrupt fisc, with current expenditures of government far in excess of revenues, leaving little scope for expenditure on even basic education and health of the people, let alone infrastructure development.

While the outlook is, doubtless, gloomy, three points need to be emphasized. First, the people of India need to understand that economic development can be propelled only through the efforts of the people themselves. Foreign private capital is interested only in making profits, not in India's development; and foreign funds would come in only where there are opportunities for large profits to be made. Secondly, every country, every people can make the effort required for its development, provided the people are convinced that the benefits of the process would accrue to them. In other words, economic policies have to be people-centric, and not calculated to benefit only a few.

Finally, India has both the scientific and technical capability and the physical capability — by way of an existing production apparatus — capable of developing on a competitive basis. We need to halt the disintegration of this capability through the sale of the equity of public enterprises and their denigration by the authorities. We need to cut at the roots of the present unholy alliance between domestic capital and international financial capital; we need to break the nexus between the above and a few corrupt politicians, aided and abetted by a few equally corrupt bureaucrats. — *Mandira*

The writer is a former Member of Planning Commission.

Introducing the Department of Anthropology at Dhaka University

by Farhana Azim

HUMAN beings bear a natural curiosity for any unknown phenomenon. And this outstanding quality made them to reveal both their own past and present — to know more and more about historical past and cultural heritage, along with contemporary issues. And this endeavour in the academic arena created a new dynamic discipline — Anthropology. So, such a holistic area, i.e. — 'the scientific study of man both as a biological and as a social being at any time and in any space' — has been given importance by the department of Anthropology at the University of Dhaka.

Initially, 'Anthropology' was introduced as a course in the Honours 'Degree of Sociology department in 1957. During that time the founder of Sociology department of Dhaka University Professor A K Nazmul Karim categorically said that Sociology in Bangladesh will remain as social Anthropology at least for some years to come. Realizing its importance as an independent identity, Professor Anwarullah Chowdhury took the first initiative to establish this department and as a result of his persistent efforts it was formally created in 1992. This was a long-felt need of the University's teachers and the students. The first session (1992-93) of the department started with 50 students and five teachers — two of them were on part-time basis. But the situation has improved since then. Now, the department has four full-time and five part-time teachers.

The teachers of this department are — Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury, (Founder Chairperson, recently has been deputed by the government as member of 'Bangladesh University Grants Commission'); Prof. Shahed Hassan (Present Chairperson); Nasima Sultana; Mr Saifur Rashid — as full-time teachers and Dr H K S Arefeen; Dr Habibur Rahman; Dr Kibriaul Khaleque; Mrs Shahin Ahmed and Dr Ahsan Ali — as part-time teachers. All of them completed their higher studies from different reputed Universities at home and abroad.

This department is fortunate to have all these teachers with higher degrees and excellent teaching and research abilities. And with this, the department could draw the attention of all as outstanding amongst the newly opened de-



Students interviewing respondents



partments. The teaching process of this department is more scientific and applied. The curriculum of this department has been designed with an objective to orient the students with concepts, theories and their appropriate applications in the field of development. In view of this, the curriculum has given special emphasis on practical exposure through direct participation in development activities at grassroot level. During the four-year long Honours and Masters course, field work assignments are compulsory for

each student in each year on various practical issues operative in different parts of the country. The field works are conducted under the guidance of faculty members. In spite of giving emphasis on field works, the theoretical components of the Honours and the Masters degree syllabuses constitute an important component. They include — classical, early and modern anthropological theories, research methodology, elements of physical anthropology, ethnography of South Asia, anthropology of rural society,

belief system and certain contemporary and critical issues, such as — gender, environment, health and nutrition, population and demography, urban anthropology, political-economic anthropology and a preliminary input of computer soft-wares for the anthropologists.

The career prospect of students graduating from this department is highly promising. With its holistic and applied aspects along with distinguishing participatory observation method and computer skill, the students of

this department have a brighter chance to obtain a good career and prove their skills by using their analytical abilities. The students upon completion of their study in Anthropology would be skilled researchers, programmers for social change and development of the country. For example, they may get jobs in NGOs, in different Universities, in international research and development organizations etc.

To meet the necessary expenses for continuous fieldwork and to establish links with many development organizations, the department has taken initiative for 'collaborative research' with different research institutions, development organizations, NGOs, donor agencies and Universities, which would serve the interests of both parties, as the field orientation of the students aptly relates to counterparts strategies. The Founder Chairman of this department very confidently said, "Such collaborative research work will enrich the skill of the students in field oriented activities supported by their theoretical knowledge. With such field exposure, the students once graduated will be potential manpower resources with a spirit of professionalism to meet the demand of development agencies working throughout the country". The department has a plan to establish a museum with rich artifacts, some of them have already been collected. In near future, it will certainly turn out to be the department's valuable unit of research for the students and the teachers.

Despite possessing some stellar qualities and glowing prospects, the department has certain limitations. Although this department has scarcity of books but it does not have any seminar library — which is an imperative need for the students. We hope the authority will take this matter in their consideration seriously and act accordingly.

However, this department is developing with striking features and commendable success. Students seeking admission are required, at the moment, to have 10 marks out of 30 (in 'D' unit) and 8 marks out of 25 (in 'B' unit) in English. The newcomers will obviously observe a different and unique academic atmosphere where the senior students and the teachers are friendly and act as guides.

Fisheries Management Policy Needs Amendment

By Dr Bob Pokrant and M Saifur Rashid

FISHERS everywhere depend on water and its products for survival, and so they have a strong interest in ensuring that the resource is managed properly. A progressive fisheries management policy involves a concern for equity, productivity and sustainability. By equity it is meant that fishers have security in their profession and are able to ensure themselves of a decent standard of living from fishing. Productivity refers to producing more and more fish a less cost. Finally, strategies of sustainability are necessary to ensure a fish stock in the long-term. However, since colonial times fishers have seen their living standards and productivity decline, their control of water bodies reduced, and the fish resource depleted.

and the leasing system: 1947-1986; and Contemporary Bangladesh — the New Fisheries Management Policy: 1986-present time.

The British Period and Zamindar Rule: 1793-1947

As part of the land settlement of 1793, known as the Permanent Settlement, the newly established colonial state ruling through the East India Company, vested in local Bengali rulers and revenue collector of the Moghul Empire, collectively known as zamindars, permanent rights of private property in water bodies attached to their landed estates in return for which these landed interests paid to the state a fixed proportion of their land revenues in perpetuity.

With some exceptions, such as navigable rivers and certain forested regions, fishers no longer had direct and unrestricted access to most waterbodies and were required to come to some arrangement with those who

owned the water bodies, namely, the zamindars, or those who leased such waterbodies from them, known as *ijaradar* or leaseholders.

In 1859, the colonial state attempted to tax the right of fishers to fish in navigable waters, but after much protest from fishers, *ijaradars* and zamindars, each of whom had different reasons for opposing governmental action, the state refrained from actively pursuing this policy. For the most part, zamindars treated their waterbodies as sources of rental income and leased them out to others, often wealthy local farmers (*joidars*), who allowed fishers to fish, paying them either in cash or in a share of the total catch. Sometimes, these leasees sub-leased the waterbodies to sub-leasees.

Leasing was often short-term and the owners and leasees showed little interest in protecting fish stocks, preferring instead to seek the maximum income possible by intensive fishing. Some

fishers were able to become leasees but the majority were not and remained throughout the colonial period a dependent stratum with practically no property rights in water or in fish.

East Pakistan and Early Liberation Period

In 1950, with the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, the zamindar system was abolished and the newly formed Pakistan government took control of all fisheries which it then proceeded to lease out through open auction. It was only the rich and powerful who were able to afford such leases which were granted much below their market value. These leases were increased at a minimum rate of 10 per cent yearly. The state saw fisheries merely as a revenue-raising device rather than a resource to be nurtured and protected.

This policy continued until the late 1960s when pressure from fishers' coopera-

tives led to registered cooperatives being given preference in the bidding process provided they offered the highest bid. After the Liberation, fishers' cooperatives were given the exclusive right to bid for leases during

protest took on a more organised form. They demanded an abolition of the leasing system through tender, which they considered a

NGO intervention
Photo: Courtesy-EWF



a first round. If a minimum bid was not attained, the bidding was made public. This led to abuse as local wealthy non-fishers backed fishers' cooperatives to gain control. Fishers, unable to raise sufficient cash on their own, found themselves pressured into accepting financial support from these outsiders. Despite the apparent preference given to fishers' cooperatives, the old policy of leases to the highest bidder continued.

'death trap' for the fishers, and the Ershad government, out of a mixture of motives, responded by introducing the new fisheries management policy (NFMP).

The aims of this policy were as follows: a) To shift control of government-owned water estates (*jalmohals*) from middlemen to fishers through a system of licensing under which fishers would pay a yearly fee depending upon the kind of fishing gear they used; b) To increase production rather than revenue through the use of new management techniques; c) To ensure sustainable fish stocks by removing the short-term leasing system and giving fisher greater long-term security.

Since the adoption of this policy, only 300 water estates out of over 10,000 have been transferred to the genuine fishers and their associations. The causes of this failure are complex, but amongst the most important are the following:

a) Opposition at national, regional and particularly local levels from a few wealthy men who had gained substantially from the old leasing

system and saw themselves threatened by the new policy.

b) The problem of coordination and control within the government bureaucracy between the powerful Ministry of Land and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. The Ministry of Land continued to regard fisheries as largely a revenue-raising activity and

sary for fishers to exclude non-fisher control of cooperatives. Furthermore, any loss at the point of production from reduced fees can be regained through higher incomes and spending power of fishers.

The government can then obtain revenue from taxes on consumption while at the same time stimulating economic growth through a growth in consumer demand. Despite criticism, the fundamental strength of the NFMP is its recognition of the central importance of giving fishers a permanent stake in the running of the industry and that this can only be achieved if they are granted long-term control over the resource. The success of Dak Mondup Duidaha *Jalmohal* of Natore District where fishers have accumulated funds and have acquired nets, boats, proper office accommodation on land purchased from the cooperative funds, and some permanent staff is a good example of what can be accomplished.

Returning to the three goals of the NFMP, namely, equity, productivity and sustainability, the policy has produced a small shift towards greater equity. Further initiatives by fishers, government and NGOs working together should be taken to transfer more waterbodies permanently to fishers and to begin the process of community control of fish resources.

Furthermore, licence fees should be reduced and much greater efforts made to provide fishers with credit on easy terms. Productivity and sustainability in open capture fisheries can be promoted through the restoration of natural eco-systems linking natural waterways and waterbodies to encourage fish migration and bio-diversity.

For such a strategy to be successful it is essential to draw on the local knowledge accumulated by fishers and farmers over the centuries. We need to return to an approach that sees agriculture and fishing as complementary.

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