rch literature contains a plethora of evi dences that illiteracy and poverty are inter-related and they are the happy bed-partners whose legitimate off-spring is maldevelopment. The government of Bangladesh whose national commihas therefore incorporated removal of illiteracy as one of

strategy package. Non-formal Primary Education Programme (INFEP) literacy reaches its rural arwhich has by now taken the eas. It is inhabited by a conshape of an autonomous body servative population majority attached to Primary and Mass of whom are illiterate, and Education Division under the therefore, dogmatic and fataldirect supervision of the istic in their approach to life. Prime Minister is the proof of the government's firm in- try and livestock are the tent to remove illiteracy from the country by the year 2000. The success of the effort. however, depends largely on the role of district administrations which represent the national government at the district level.

Under the technical guidance and financial support of INFED, a few district administrations like Lalmonirhat and Bhola have launched total literacy movement in the respective districts and available reports indicate, their performance in this regard is exemplary and spectacular.

Scenario

RAFFIC jams in the

Philippine capital are

not yet as bad as

Bangkok's, but that is little

comfort to many fuming Fil-

ipinos stuck in gridlocked

Manila's streets looked like

dammed rivers with reser-

voirs of cars backed up all

over the city. Commuters and

shoppers jammed the

streets, going nowhere fast.

It was normal to spend two

hours on a trip that normally

takes 30 minutes. In jeep-

neys and buses, commuters

inhaled carbon monoxide and

diesel smoke spewed by rows

an estimated 600 million dol-

lars a year in lost man-hours.

This has prempted demands

for drastic solutions in recent

years, ranging from outlawing

jeepneys to a lawmaker's

proposal to halt car produc-

close to chaos," says Ramon

Fernan of Manila's recently-

formed Sustainable Transport

government launched its lat-

est plan (some called it yet

another experiment) to re-

strict car use. Private cars

with less than three passen-

gers are to stay off main

roads during rush hours on

alternate days, depending on

whether plate numbers end

lem, but everybody's prob-

lem," appealed traffic chief

mixed start and eased traffic

in some areas, but anti-traffic

schemes are a tricky exercise

in a country where com-

plaints have stopped plans in

their track. A recent colour-

coding scheme was scrapped

after jeepney drivers went on

strike to protest their inclu-

use is a short-term solution

that needs to be done along

with a discipline campaign,

better public transport sys-

tems and improved urban

planning, all of which are

challenges that cities face in

18th largest metropolis with

9 million people, will attain

Megacity status by 2000. It

accounts for over half of the

Manila, now the world's

managing urbanisation.

Analysts say regulating car

sion in the control plan.

"This is not just my prob-

The first day got off to a

in odd or even numbers.

Romeo Maganto.

"What we have now is

Just before Christmas the

Traffic snarls cost Manila

of idling engines.

Forum.

This Christmas season.

streets of the capital.

Inter Press Service, reports from Manila.

Bhola, an island and a new district under Barishal divi-

Total Literacy Movement The Bhola Experience

by Syed Naquib Muslim

tment is poverty alleviation sion, has a total population of 14.36 lac of which 4.17 lac are illiterate. It is the general the core components of the belief of the people that national development Bhola which feeds a number of districts by supplying agro-The creation of Integrated based food ftems can further develop itself if the light of

> Agriculture, fishery, poulprincipal sources of their income. Because of illiteracy. the people of Bhola have not been able to enjoy the fruits of modern technology, developed health and sanitation awareness and grow needbased forestry to create a nature-friendly environment.

The Bhola sadar thana which has 39 wards and which constitute the command area of the literacy programme has only 165 schools and these are not enough to accommodate learners every year. According to an estimate, 90 marriages are registered and 28,000 babies are born daily in Bhola and if this trend continues, 417 years will be

Gridlocked Nation

If traffic jams are a measure of a nation's economic progress, then

the Philippines is fast catching up with Thailand Johanna Son of

national total of cars, using

less than two percent of the

nation's roads. Many major

roads do not connect and are

made for low traffic volume.

Recently-built flyovers end up

are growing by three percent

a year, the number of cars is

rising at a much faster pace.

Buoyed by a stronger econ-

omy, car sales rose by 31 per

cent so far this year. Trans-

port officials warn that with-

out new infrastructure and

reforms, the traffic jams will

worsen in the next five years.

Metropolitan Manila Devel

opment Authority says

Manila's key roads are "fully

saturated," adding the

"unabated increase in volume

pected to further exacerbate

The need for mass trans-

of vehicular traffic is ex-

the worsening traffic situa-

port is reflected in the irony

that while 70 per cent of

passenger demand in Manila

is for public transport, 75

per cent of vehicles on its

speed is down to 18 kms an

hour -- prompted new pro-

jects such as an elevated ex-

pressway and a second Light

Manila's main EDSA artery is

on track this year after

weathering business spats

and charges of bid-rigging.

Construction on the 700-mil-

lion-dollar project, the sec-

ond of four planned lines, be-

the project took out full-page

newspaper ads to allay

doubts. It says the 17.3-km

network can serve 600,000

passengers a day, aiding 2.3

million commuters using

EDSA daily. The new line

could cut to 15 minutes the

90-minute trip from the

Makati business area to Que-

LRT line built elsewhere.

saying it would draw more

traffic instead of decongest-

ning director at the Philip-

pine transportation depart-

ment, calls the protests

"misdirected perception" and

says construction of LRT-1

caused only localised conges-

But critics want the new

George Esguerra, plan-

zon City in the north.

ing EDSA.

The consortium behind

gins in March.

A new LRT project for

Railway Transit (LRT) line.

Traffic woes -- average

roads are private cars.

An October study by the

And while road networks

clogged with vehicles.

required and 112 primary schools need to be set up evcry year to educate the existing and upcoming illiterate population.

Background Activity

Soon after assuming the office of the deputy commissioner (DC), Sikander Mondal, the present DC of Bhola, conceived that under the aegis of district administration it would be possible to launch a total literacy movement in the style of the programme in Lalmonirhat and free the people of Bhola from the curse of illiteracy if all the segments of society are mobilised. To him, for achieving total literacy, it is not practicable to cover the entire district and rather conduct the programme incrementally or by phases.

A literate person, according to him, hardly remains hungry and foods follow the rich; a person can become rich in a fair way if he or she gets educated and without education it is not possible to develop 'life-skills'. With the consultation of the local minister, he has taken up Sadar Thana as the focal unit to initiate literacy campaign which

tion and its benefits today far

ment launched a 1.15-billion-

dollar 'skyway' project span-

ning 35 km. Experts admit

having four mass transit lines

will only meet the needs of

10 per cent of Manila's pas-

sengers. "But we have to start

Transport planners know

somewhere," says Esguerra.

that road-building is unlikely

to ever catch up with vehicle

growth. Nor should this be

their goal, as new roads ac-

tually encourage new traffic

"Mass transport systems

and after a year, they're con-

are important, but they are

just one part of the a whole

package of policies which

have the best results when

implemented together," said

Paul Barter of the Malaysia-

based Sustainable Transport

Action Network (SUSTRAN).

high car registration and

road fees as in Singapore

would be harder to imple-

ment in a raucous democracy

like the Philippines, but Es-

guerra said: "We are trying to

promote the concept of pri-

vate vehicles as a responsibil-

ment is tied to wider policies

to decongest urban centres

like Manila, by having good

roads and communication

lines with suburbs and en-

couraging industrial centres

and factories outside the

lation policies and pursuit of

urban development patterns

match public transport sys-

tems can make cities much

New York-based Institute for

Transportation and Develop-

ment Policy: "It is often be-

lieved that urban congestion

and pollution are the price

we all must pay for economic

development and growth. But

it doesn't have to be that

Says Brian Williams of the

actually carried out."

more liveable.

capital.

He says traffic manage-

Drastic measures like

gested again.

Last month the govern-

outweight inconvenience.

began from March 26, 1995. The official objectives of the campaign are : to declare the sadar thana as a illiteracyfree zone within 6 months; and to link the to-be-literate population with the mainstream of government's general, technical and madrasha education.

Thus operation for removal of illiteracy began initially in 39 wards excluding pourasava wards and 1,75 literacy centres (which later increased to 3,914) have been created to educate its lac and 6 hundred 49 illiterate population. The campaign was preceded by a comprehensive survey which concluded in last November to determine the size of the illiterate population of Sadar Thana. Primary school teachers of government and nongovernment schools were mobilised to conduct the sur-

The DC along with the members of his team undertook extensive advocacy tours to the nook and corners of the district to motivate the illiterate people so that they joined the literacy programme and attend classes at the centres. Folk-songs were sung throughout the village areas to attract attention of the people. Continuous meetings were held under the leadership of Sudhir Kumer Das and G M Jahirul Alam, the concerned local administrators to form action committees, identify prospective literacy centres, appoint voluntary teachers and supervisors and organise training courses. A pool of 102 master-trainers was created with the technical support of IN-FED: of the 102 mastertrainers, 52 trained, 4.000 centre-teachers through three-day intensive training courses organised on different dates. Football stars were invited to inaugurate the activities of the new centres Organisational linkage was forged with the important local NGOs such as Jatiya Bandhujan, Association for Family Development and

Swedish Free Mission. The response of the people was unexpectedly spontaneous. But finance which is the life-blood of any development activity posed as the major concern for the promoters. Although voluntarism was conceived to be the core principle, the team was able to raise an initial working fund of 5 lac taka by persuading the district and thanalevel officials to sacrifice their one-day salary and mobilising other local economic sources. The chairmen of 13 thanas also came forward and allocated 10 per cent of the thana development fund for incurring the preliminary expenses.

Later on, on being convinced of the prospects and practical needs of the on-going programme, Kazi Rak-

ibuddin Ahmed and Khondaker Md Shahidul Islam of Primary and Mass Education Division were kind enough to sanction Taka 91 lac to enable the Bhola district administration to carry forward their noble venture.

Thus the phase-wise activities that were sequentially conducted may be summed up as under : Conducting survey to determine the size of the illiterate population; Mobilising local institutional and economic resources including the NGO's; Creating a reservoir of master-trainers. committed teachers and supervisors through administration of three-day training: and Formulation of rules and norms in view of the behavioral characteristics of the local people to facilitate the success of the programme.

The learning-teaching package includes teaching the learners how to read the Holy Quran in the noorani system within 21 days and how to read and write Bengali with in 45 days.

The programme is characterised by a few distinctive features which are:

The whole activity is being conducted under the framework of the government unlike that of the Lalmonirhat programme. INFED is providing not only the technical assistance but also financial back-up.

Unlike the Lalmonirhat programme, this is very limited; only sadar thana has been taken up for experimentation and results are being watched for possible replication in other thanas of Bhola. This sounds pragmatic and involves less risk.

Both GOs and NGOs are working on a collaborative basis to make the programme a success. NGO involvement is multiple.

Learning and teaching hours have been fixed on a flexitime basis depending on the convenience of the learners and teachers. Response of the female learners is more encouraging.

The literacy centres are to be identified not by any big sign-boards which are made at the cost of huge amount of money; orange-coloured flags willinkeep fluttering which will indicate place where the sacred learning-teaching activity is going on.

Lesson plans have been formulated and followed throughout the year so that learners and teachers find little opportunity to deviate from the standards or lessonschedules.

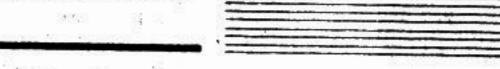
Leadership Factor

The initial success of the programme in Bhola testifies to the fact that leadership is a crucial factor to the accomplishment of any development programme especially those that concern the welfare of the common people. An accessible, informal and egoless person. Sikander Mondal has proved that the traditional paradigm of administration is no more functional in the present-day context and people respect those who really work for the public interest.

The writer is working for BPATC as deputy director

Rao Plays the Corruption Card

The loss of three ministers as a result of corruption allegations looked like a blow to the Indian government's chances of re-election. But with polls probably only weeks away, there is speculation that the move may be part of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's campaign strategy.



ITH a general election imminent, India's main political parties are in disarray following the resignation of three federal ministers and the opposition leader over allegations of involvement in dubious foreign exchange deals worth billions of dol-

And with the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) likely to unveil accusations of involvement in the financial scandal against other senior politicians, more heads could roll within the ruling Congress party and the opposition Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The CBI alleges that members of both political parties received election funds five years ago from questionable foreign sources.

/Activists in all parties have been stunned by the timing of the disclosures in the case. which has been under investigation for nearly five years. In the past, no corruption

scandal involving senior ministers or MPs has ever been allowed to proceed unbindered by the government.

For example, investigations are still under way into allegations that in 1987 the Swedish arms manufacturer AB Bofors paid \$50 million in kickbacks to senior politicians and officials to secure a contract for artillery for the Indian army. The Bofors scandal was a key factor in the defeat of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's Congress government in 1989. Dev. 481 East 25, 11 tem

In 1992, a \$1.28 billion securities scandal involving senior ministers was also brushed aside by the government. Little emerged from an all-party parliamentary inquiry.

This latest case is the first time that a government agency has not only investigated senior ministers and

MPs, but also charged federal ministers with laundering

Rahul Bedi writes from New Delhi

money. Some Congress MPs say they are convinced that Prime Minister Narasimha Rao persuaded the CBI to make the findings public now in order to neutralise corruption charges levelled against him and his government before the election campaign begins in earnest. Speculation is high that Rao

will call elections for April. Smearing senior party colleagues and the opposition with the same "corrupt" brush, they argue, was part of the same strategy of demolishing corruption as an effective electoral weapon.

"Mr Rao has targeted and sacrificed ministers loyal to him to give the investigations a semblance of impartiality." said one Congress MP who declined to be named. The Prime Minister was telling voters that corruption was not confined to any single political party.

BJP head and opposition leader Lal Krishna Advani moved swiftly to limit potential damage by immediately resigning and demanding a speedy conclusion to the investigations, but his image has been tarnished.

The party will now be hard-pressed to justify its claims to be a "clean" alternative to Congress.

"The BJP can no longer make government corruption an election issue," said a party MP.

With Advani's resignation. Rao may have significantly increased the chances of Congress' re-election. It currently has 254 seats in the Lok Sabha (Lower House). The BJP has 116, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) 36, Janata Dal 23 and the Communist Party of India 14. The remaining 33 seats are held by regional parties.

The BJP also holds power

in four states, including the federal capital, New Delhi.

In addition, by selectively exposing his detractors within his party, Rao has demonstrated that he will go into the elections as the party's undisputed leader.

But even hardened Congress MPs balk at Rao's gambit.

"Such obvious manipulation of the corruption issue by Mr Rao, who is determined to get a second term in office, is volatile and dangerous," said one Congress MP

Congress insiders feel that given the fragile state of their party and the alienation Rao has caused, the party itself could become a casualty of the witch-hunt launched by the newly emboldened CBI.

Over the past two years, the judiciary has increased its role, assuming greater power, and influence. Some analysts suggest these increasingly active state institutions such as the CBI are now turning their "cleansing wrath" on politicians. But several Congress MPs

Rao's actions will completely discredit Indian politics by removing corruption from electoral politics and thus formally institutionalising it. By adopting such a confrontational course, Rao also

fear that in the long term,

risks provoking a counter-at-. tack from within his party. Yet even his critics con-

cede that in the political chess game, Rao remains several moves ahead. · With corruption out of the

way, he will try to fight the election on issues such as Hindu fundamentalism, associated with the BJP and its allies, as well as on the BJP's opposition to overseas investment and market reform policies. — GEMINI NEWS

RAHUL BEDI is the Indian correspondent for the 'Daily Telegraph', London, and 'Jane's Defence Weekly', UK.

Alamgir M. A Kabir — Reminiscences

HE late Mr Alamgir M "There should be a re-A Kabir was one of the thinking of the whole urban finest men I met in my plan for Manila," says Ramon life. I first came to know him Fernan of Manila's Sustainduring 1954-'55 when he able Transport Forum, "There came to Sardah Police has been no plan. People say Training College as its nice things, but nothing is Principal. I was already there as a Medical Officer. His predecessor was Mr Mellor, Together, experts say mass transport capability and an Englishman from Indian Police Service who opted for improved public transport systems, car and traffic regu-Pakistan.

> Mr Kabir was a younger brother of late Professor Humayun Kabir who was a legendary person for his outstanding merit. My generation's ideal scholar was Professor Humayun Kabir. I had good fortune to discuss politics with him during early forties in Calcutta which was then a hot bed of political ideologies. His political opinion influenced me a good deal. He was a radical humanist by conviction. Professor

> > ALL THAT — SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR THIS ONE! I THINK SHE BIT A POSON CAPSULE!

Kabir did not opt for Pakistan. His attainment in India is well known.

When Mr Alamgir Kabir came to Sardah, I had in mind to talk about his brother but he avoided any discussion about his brother. I thought, being a Pakistani police officer, he was disliking any reference to his brother. Later, it was found to be my wrong idea. The day Prof Kabir died in Delhi, we were in Dhaka. He rang me and gave the news. He said, he was going to Delhi and whether it would be possible for me to accompany him. I

could not go at that time. During the early thirties, at least five Bengali Muslim scholars competing for Indian Civil Service, were selected for Indian Police Service. They were the late Zakir Hossain, Abul Hasanat Mohammed Ismail, Hafezuddin. Alamgir Kabir and still alive Mr Anwarul Haque. All of them were well known personalities. All of them left behind their brilliant record of service to be examples for their successors.

Alamgir Kabir will be remembered for his uniqueness. When I first met him in his Principal's office at Sardah, his smile and hearty handshake reflected the warmth of his heart. 'Come to my residence for tea with your wife'. Of course, he did , not want to waste time. Six months ago, I went to his office of the Chairman of the Diabetic Association. He called the person concerned on phone and said: Dr Hossain is like a younger brother of mine. He just asked me to go and see the person concerned. That was my last visit to him. There was no change in his behaviour between

the hospital the day after he joined. He told the patients: 'you have got the best doctor'. My prestige was immediately upgraded in the Police Training College. His mother came to live with him. She had geriatric ailments. One day, I suggested she should be seen by the Civil Surgeon from Rajshahi, he was my boss. Mr Kabir replied: 'you' are my civil surgeon'. The Civil Surgeon was never

by T Hossain

called in, I gained self confi-

On the third day after he

joined as principal, he came to the hospital accompanied by the Chief Drill Inspector who was in charge of administration. I was picked up from the hospital. We visited every house within the compound irrespective of cadre. The hygienic condition and the sanitation of each house was inspected. The drains, the latrines, the kitchens, the water supply were the main focus of attention. At the end of couple of hours' inspection, he told me: Won't you see, at least once a day, from where the diseases originate?' He looked at me and said: 'Thank you. The obligation is not imposed. It is just reminded: So long was there, this was never

He disliked my absence from the games, riding, at PT at 6am and 6pm. I had free excess to Officers' Mess to play billiard. By usual custom, a second class officer has no entry to the Officers' Mess. One day, he took me to

the Bazar. He looked around all the shops. He told me : You have the right to prohibit the sale of polluted food stuff. Regular visits and tests should be carried on'. Mr Mellor's attention was

fixed to the efficient training of the cadets and recruits. He never invited me to do nor prohibited me from doing anything. He was a very efficient, self-less duty performer. Mr Kabir had comprehensive outlook of social welfare. His conduct, remarks and instructions were always associated with smile. sharpness and specificity.

Once, I had a quarrel with the Vice-Principal. It was a bitter one. I sent telegram to the Civil Surgeon and he came immediately from Rajshahi. I told him my story. Mr Kabir took him and me to his residence. The Civil Surgeon was late Dr Asaduzzaman (from Sylhet). He was a soft spoken person but outspoken too. He said: 'Mr Kabir you belong to a highly cultured, educated family. Police job is incompatible with your gentleness'. Mr

Kabir asked me to go home. A couple of hours later, the CDI came with a typed statement made by me and the Vice-Principal: It read

like this: We, so and so, forget, without blaming each other, what happened last evening. The Vice Principal had already signed it and after my signature, two witnesses - the Civil Surgeon and the Principal - would

I was called to Principal's office. The Principal, Vice-Principal and the Civil Surgeon were there. The Principal prompted the VP, he got up, stretched his hand to shake with mine.

Subsequently, I worked for three years as Registrar and Resident Surgeon of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Mr Kabir was also transferred to Dhaka. Our relationship grew more intimate.

Before I left for USA for advanced studies. I received assurance from him about looking after my family. Often, Mrs Kabir inquired from my wife about her and the children's well-being. Before I returned in August. 1966, I informed him, I was overloaded with luggage and family. I did not seek any help from him, just mentioned the flight number. At Tejgaon airport, one Police Inspector announced for my identify. I met him. He said. he was sent by IG Kabir with transport to escort me.

Next day, I went to see him at his Minto Road House and received a hearty welcome. I was going to thank him for the escort. He stopped me with his index finger on his lip. In January. 1968, he asked me to see him in his Segun Bagicha Family Planning Association Office and told the Secretary: Dr Hossain will perform 10 vasectomies daily. You will have to get the clients ready daily by IO am. We worked in close co-operation at the Family Planning Association until the nemesis of 1971 fell

upon us. My intimacy with Bangabandhu kept me involved in politics since his release from the Agartola conspiracy case. I was sent to England in September 1970 with a senior leader to explain the

implications of six points in Awami League arranged meetings at Pakistan High Commission office, in Birmingham, Bradford, Manchester and North London and destiny compelled me to leave my profession and possession to join the organisation of the Provisional Government of Bangladesh.

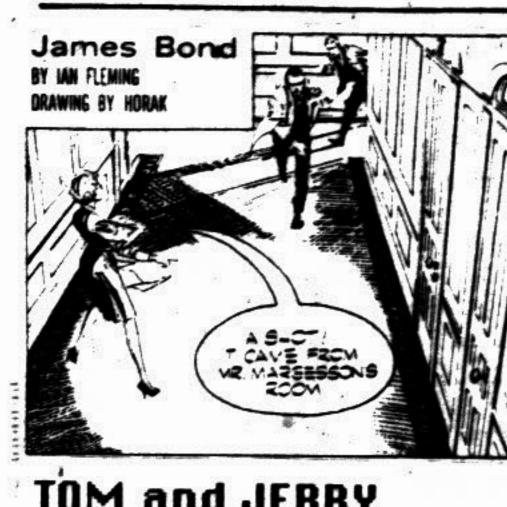
On return, I was to continue as Secretary of Health and Family Planning Ministry with specific assignment to make the Health Plan of 1972 for the Government and implement it by constructing 360 Thana Health Complexes in the rural Thanas. I always received advise from Mr Kabir on Family Planning matters and solving all administrative problems in implementing the Health and Family Planning programmes. To have such a guardian was a source of my inspiration.

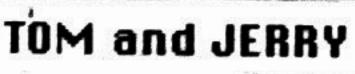
He became the Chief of the Lions' Club and toured abroad frequently. He introduced and encouraged me in all related organisations. Those who had the opportunity to work with him, knew or know quite well what a great personality and a dedicated, sincere person he was. He had no prejudice.

While I was in Iran for 15 years, one day I received a phone call from the son-inlaw of Mr Kabir, the then Ambassador of Bangladesh in Iran, to go to Tehran immediately to see him. Mr Kabir stopped at Tehran on his way back from USA where he went as Bangladesh Lions Clubs' Governor. I rushed to Tehran from Iraqi border where I was engaged as war surgeon. The depth of feeling for an acquaintance in Mr Kabir was immeasurable.

It was an act of great justice on the part of Justice Shahabuddin to appoint him as his advisor in the interim ' government. It is an example of a right person to select another right person for the right job.

Real great man is the true good man. Alamgir M A Kabir was one of the best examples of such a great men of the 20th century. His name will shine in the galaxy of the great souls because he was good very good, indeed.

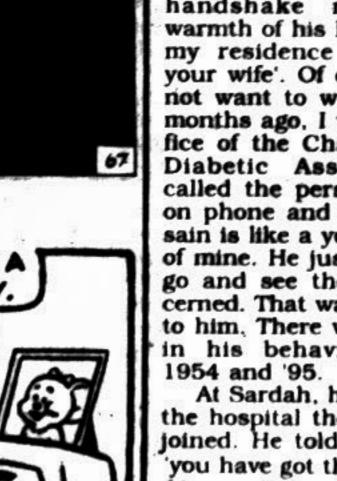












At Sardah, he came to visit