Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Monday, August 12, 1996

## Some Change for WASA

Water supply and sewage system have assumed monstrous proportions as some of the lingering urban problems. In fact, the situation is so bad that any move designed to charge the state of affairs in WASA, irrespective of the promise and potential of its effectiveness, is bound to be welcomed. In the light of the problem's intensity and the overriding necessity of addressing it, the bill just passed in the Parliament in this respect. is a timely and commendable one.

Apparently, it is a nomenclatural change of the highest executive slot of the body. The Water Supply and Sewerage Authority Bill '96 heralds the end of the days of chairman as the executive head of WASA. Under the new legislation a managing director will be the executive head.

More importantly, the executive committee will be consisted of thirteen members drawn from various professional and user groups. We welcome this touch of democracy inside an agency that has, over the years, been a classic study in mismanagement, inefficiency and loss. We believe, the cerebral and experiential input of representatives of different professional affiliations, will trigger off dynamics aimed at efficiency.

Things are in a real bad shape on the water front. At present WASA is capable of meeting only 63 per cent of the total demand for water consumption which is a scary reality in the context of spiralling urban population and Dhaka's emergence as a megacity. The water treatment plant at Sayedabad is likely to ameliorate the situation considerably when it will be fully functional and for that the legislation was inevitable because World Bank, the main financier of the project, made some changes as the preconditions for its assistance. We hope the changes will have paved the way for the better but room for a little pity and doubt cannot be ruled out. Why could not we be intelligent enough to visualise ourselves the changes necessary for the protection of our own interests? Why the World Bank had to suggest such an elementary thing as the appointment of an MD? Besides, it remains to be seen whether the renaming of the highest executive position will bring about the change we are all looking forward to.

## The Festering Wound

The Yasmin case is shaping into a tough test for the government. Dinajpur is again getting restive. The horror that was Yasmin's rape and murder by police personnel and its social sequel still haunts its inhabitants.

The case is looking like being transferred to somewhere outside Dinajpur for disposal which the Dinajpurians would never accept. The necessary approval of government for prosecution of the case against seven killings in the wake of the Yasmin incident is being delayed inordinately. Government has not yet withdrawn its cases against 118 persons involved in the agitation in which those seven were killed by police bullets.

In the explosive Yasmin case — one that can harm the present government mortally if handled ineptly - things seem to have got into some unexplained meshes of administration. If the home and law ministries cannot sort it out between themselves as something screaming for priority treatment the Prime Minister will be badly needed to act. That she will do, we are confident about it. But why is administration failing to be enough responsive in this case? Hasina's action should dispense with the Yasmin case to the satisfaction of all. But cannot the same be done without her intervention?

The whole array of Yasmin-related problems has the policemen at the wrong end. That shorld be more the reason why these should be disposed of in ideal time and in the most stringent fashion. Any further delay in responding rightly to the demands of justice would be damaging for the government. Yasmin remains a wound on the nation's soul. It shouldn't be allowed to fester.

## Attack on Shabash Bangladesh ·

Of the handful of universities in Bangladesh. Rajshahi has been the most bede illed by an interminable and almost visible siege laid on it by fascistic and anti-independence elements calling themselves students. This time they have gone a step further. The Shibir, student wing of the Jamaat, as is so painfully known to all, has damaged the plaque of the monumental sculpture -Shabash Bangladesh — that celebrates of the Liberation War. And the Shibir has warned that no one will be allowed to observe the National

Mourning Day inside the campus on August 15. There is hardly anything more sacrosanct politically as well as morally — to a citizen of Bangladesh than the Liberation War out of whose womb this state was born. Whatever Shibir's patrons may say about revising the position they took on the Liberation War, there cannot be a more eloquent testimony of their pathological hatred of that war than this piece of vandalism on Shabash Bangla.

In spite of RU's being specially vulnerable to unrelaxing Jamaat-Shibir muscle-power, the first Liberation War museum was opened there and it prides itself on its Shahid Minar, the grandest among the University Shahid Minars. In the absence of partisan intervention by government, which was the rule for over two decades, the students and teachers of RU should be able to mercilessly neutralise the anti-Bangladesh elements now calling all the shots in that heroic yet unfortunate campus.

# Don't Ignore Diplomats

MBASSADORS," said They helped us in 1991 in giving us a good election and they came to our rescue again in 1996 in our Demosthenes, "have democratic transition. No amount of hand-wringing and closet-room criticism diminish the constructive role no battleships at their disposal, or heavy in of our diplomat friends in Bangladesh during the critical days of May and June. tantry, or fortresses, their

> to them by the satraps kings and queens and plempoten tiaries. Sometimes they were required to perform jobs not fully commensurate with their declared list of responsibilities if only to satisfy their patrons at home. Taking of gifts for the monarchs or emperors was a tradition set in by the earliest envoys. The receiving countries also tried to impress the foreign ambassadors in various ways. In Turkey the rulers for a long time used their newfangled knowledge of gun-powder to impress the new ambassadors with the art of fireworks. In the court of Aurangazeb, the Uzbek envoys used to bring thoroughbred horses and other gifts to please the Emperor. The Emperor in return would use some stratagem to prolong the visit of the ambassadors by giving special considerations to impress the local population. The ambassadors from Yemen. Makkah, Basra and Ethiopia were no exception, although the envoys of Yemen and Makkah were shabbily treated because of their unimpressive gifts! They were not so opulent. Napoleon publicly insulted the British ambassador in Paris. He called him a liar. French ambassador in London organized a Jocobin fifth column in England, whereas the British government encouraged monarchist uprisings in France with money and mate-

while going to present his condentials to the Ottoman Emperor with an entourage of 50 people along with a band of unisicians to please the monarch, he reportedly lost half of the people at the hands of highwaymen, including the musicians! The monarch was so angry that reportedly he put the envoy in semi-isolation for a while in the castle of the Seven Towers. Soviet ambassador Ivan Maisky to the Court of St James, during World War

II. was summoned to the

procure these arms and ammunitions on an urgent basis from the underground arms bazar. Same was the fate of the Pakistani diplomat in Prague. Later Pakistani Ambassador lost his job for writing a rather amourous book entitled. Love in the Ruins' (Toro Romano). Many Bangladeshi diplomats have been reprimanded for not supplying shoes and bags and other merchandises to the visiting premier. Two diplomats lost their jobs for uncovering corrupt practices in the em-

# ENCHIRIDION

Waliur Rahman

Kremlin for a meeting with Stalin. Ambassador Maisky returned to London after a wait of two months without meet ing Stalin!

In the diplomatic history of the subcontinent, diplomats have had a variegated experience as well. During the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965. Pakistan consul-general in Madrid reportedly incurred the displeasure of President Ayub because he furnished a shopping list of arms and armaments to the Spanish government! The Pakistani official was supposed

bassies! A Sri Lankan Ambassador was shown the door when a book critical of the President was found in his drawer

Very often people back home in the capitals tend to forget that diplomatic assignments carry an onerous burden with the jobs. True, the conventional diplomats receive conventional honour in the countries of their accreditation; their jobs nevertheless are strewn with difficult and sometimes hazardous sand

banks and shoals. Diplomats by and large have to promote the interest of their countries in foreign lands - an interest that Churchill called the creation of convenience. But it is not always so very easy. Even in this age of instant communications, difficult decisions have to be made on the spot for promoting their country's interest. Sometimes you risk to tread on unknown errain. As a result many diplomats have been the victims of ethnic violence, tribal wars and civil conflicts. It is said that more diplomats have, died in the past 50 years in harness, than journalists killed in crossfires and boobytraps in battlefields. Diplomats are indeed the first line of defence of every sovereign country:

In Bangladesh, we have accorded a special place of honour to foreign diplomats for historic reasons. UNDP and UNROD set the rule as it were. The donor community. along with the World Bank and IMF. do play a role, very often larger than life, and sometimes to our regret. But their role in promotion of democratic culture in our country is indeed praiseworthy. They helped us in 1991 in giving us a good election and they came to our rescue again in 1996 in our democratic transition. No amount of hand-wringing and

COLUMN

paneled library after dinner.

could afford a decent Haut Brion 1949.

evening, but my Gulfstream is laid up in the shop."

basketball until I bought a string of race horses.

loset-room criticism diminish the constructive role of our diplomat friends in Bangladesh during the critical days of May and June. One of those persons who will be remembered by all decent men and women and democracyloving citizens, is very soon going to leave us on completion of his four of duty. He is Peter J Fowler, High Commissioner of Her Magesty's government. A graduate of Trinity College, Oxford, Peter Fowler came to Bangladesh with rich experience of the subcontinent. He served in Delhi and earlier in Calcutta when the Declaration of Independence was made by the Mujibnagar government. He will certainly be remembered for the extraordinary role he played along with our other G-7 friends, particularly the Italians and the Americans immediately after the February 15th

Stephen Solarz, Peter Shore, senator Zuluetts, Japanese Ambassador, Commonwealth and SAARC Representatives all had made their contribution in promoting our struggle for democracy. We may be too near history, but it may not be disputed that when men of goodwill get together they can reach great heights and important goals in all human endeavours. Restoration of democracy and its march towards maturity in Bangladesh is a story that cannot be told without remembering diplomatist friends like Peter

# Redeeming BTV's Lacklustre Imagination

by Farid Hossain

It appeared that a domestic news-drought hit the BTV news bulletin, even though the flood h is not yet ease it in every part of the country. It has rather deteriorated in one or two southern districts as the BTV news said

N Friday night (9-8-96) state-controlled BTV's Bangla bulletin failed to last its usual 30minute duration. It ended five minutes earlier. No explanation was given. Nor was it expected. One may as well come to one's own conclusion. Parliament is in session, but there was no sitting on the weekend vacation. Until the bulletin the Prime Minister had no official activity. Most of the ministers except Education Minister A S H K Sadek and Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim must have been enjoying a break from their official functions.

weapons are words and oppor

a sovereign independent coun-

try. Bangladesh stands out as

the most eloquent witness to

the musings of the Greek

writer. At the height of the

War of Liberation, Pakistani

diplomats of Bengali origin

started quitting the Pakistan

Foreign Service, the most

prestigious service of the day,

in groups and singles from

world chancelleries, in pro-

test against the Pakistani

military oppression in

Bangladesh. President Yahya

Khan is reported to have con-

fided to his Intelligence Chief

General Omar, "It was perhaps

a mistake to go in such force

to suppress the Bengali aspi-

rations." Yahya Khan never be-

lieved that so many diplomats

could have abjured the coveted

posts of the diplomatic ser-

vice for a cause — for an ideal

After all never in history had

so many diplomats in such

numbers tendered resignation.

Towards the end of September

'71, the Pakistani strong man

even told Sultan M Khan, then

Foreign Secretary, rather rue-

fully. We should perhaps re-

lease Sheikh Mujib. Bengalees

may have a cause, otherwise so

many Bengalee diplomats

wouldn't have defected! Sadly

enough, the realisation to

President Yahva came rather

turies have had to perform var

ious responsibilities entrusted

Diplomats over the cen-

Born in blood and sweat, as

lunities

For the BTV news bulletin did not broadcast anything about them, there was, however, a pleasant departure. The BTV sent its camera crew to a function attended by Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament. The

bulletin was otherwise domi nated by events that happened in foreign lands, the swearingin of Russian President Boris Yeltsin amid the fighting in Chechnya being the lead news of the night. It appeared that a domestic news-drought hit the BTV news bulletin, even though the flood has not yet eased in every part of the country. It has rather deteriorated in one or two southern districts as the BTV news said.

rial. The Swedish ambassador.

Bangladesh is and has always been a 'newsy' country. The newspapers, most of them in the private sector, hardly run short of news. The BTV also remains under tremendous news pressure. But that is only when the prime minister and the ministers perform their functions. In doing so they also make it easy for the BTV, which is not run by professional journalists. It is no difficult to cover the government ministers' functions because the BTV is used to it.

The BTV management runs short of its imagination only when either the prime minister or the ministers take their day-off. Because the BTV's new section is tuned to only covering the ministerial functions, it finds itself lost in a dark wood when there is no news made by the ministers.

This underlines the need for overhauling the BTV's news management. Ministers don't always make news. That does not mean that the BTV will leave a part of the time reserved for news bulletins unused. It can fill the gap with its creativity. For example, the five minutes that the BTV did not use on Friday night could have been devoted to the coverage of one of the myriad of the problems the people of Bangladesh endure every day.

Who or what is preventing them from doing so? The government? That's the excuse the BTV may offer. That is not

totally acceptable. The drought in the BTV's creativity and imagination is the main problem. While the people want the BTV to be free of the government's control, the BTV does not. Because of it likes to be controlled by the government. If one demands an inefficiency explanation it has the readymade answer: the government wants it this way.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has promised to let the BTV to go an autonomous way. The reiteration came also the other day. This should have cheered the BTV. Unfortunately, it seems they are not. The people in the BTV are simply programme to be oneeyed. It sees only the government that controls it.

True, it is only the government that can change the face of the BTV. Until, it occurs, there is nothing wrong for the BTV people to demonstrate that is worth of becoming in-

dependent.

### "He went to England to be knighted by the Queen as the Most Valuable Knight of the Garter." "What about Juwan Howard?" "He's aboard his yacht in the Mediterranean." "During the basketball season?"

beat Michael Jordan in a jump up.

Where is Michael, by the way?"

play or not.

He just flies back on his Lear jet when it's his night to Alonzo Mourning said, "Don't you just love this game?

Dunkin' Dough-nuts

Gregory Sonnabend, centre for the Washington Bullets

Leslie Torbend, forward to the Miami Heat, said, "I'm glad

Walter Hildebrand, defense man for the Los Angeles

Big Shoes Bogan said, "Weren't you supposed to play the

"Only if I happen to be in Los Angeles at the time. My deal

Nike Nichols of the New York Knicks said. "I used to love

"Now," he added "I'd rather win the Triple Crown than

with the Lakers is that I get \$1 million each game, whether I

passed the port as he smoked a \$10 cigar. "Did anyone else

you mentioned it. At these prices, you'd think that the club

Lakers, said. "I hadn't actually planned to be here this

find the red wine a touch cooler than room temperature?"

HE members of the Billionaire Basketball Players and

Athletic Club were sitting around the mahogany

"I never thought that tossing a basketball into a hoop would give me enough money to buy the Empire State

"Does anyone want to play cribbage for their Pepsi Cola testimonial money?" One of the players asked.

Gary Payton said, "I'd love to , but I have to be up early and play polo tomorrow morning." Shaquille O'Neal, centre for the Lakers, lit his cigar and

said. "What I hate most about the government is that they're always thinking of new ways to tax the free agents. We do a lot more for this country than the poor.

"The media keeps writing about how much we get paid. but they never say anything about all the free throws most of us make.

"Or how much Gatorade we sell at the A&P." "I heard that they even object to us having this club with its leather chairs and Michelangelo murals. "But if it allows us some privacy they have no right to com-

One of the players said. "Who wants to go downstairs to the gym and shoot some baskets?"

O'Neal replied, "We've done that already. "I'd rather play golf on the club's Robert Trent Jones course. "Me too. Once you make one slam dunk, it's waste of money to make any more.

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### Lock in for foreign investors

Sir, Our attention has been drawn to a letter on the above subject written by one Mr Abu Ahmed and published in your esteemed daily dated 28th July 1996. As the contents of the letter may create misunderstanding in the minds of your readers, SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) clarifies the position as follows:

a) Lock-in policy was introduced by SEC to require the private foreign investors to pay a price for their privilege of getting "private placement". The price was locking-in the securities for a year

b) After introduction of the

policy, various foreign investors objected to it on various grounds. c) The foreign investors did not participate in any foreign

placement after introduction of the policy. The foreign investors also withdrew largely from the secondary stock market of the country, especially, in the buying side. The net foreign portfolio investment flow be-

larger than the inflow. e) These situations seriously affected the primary stock market, leading to under-sub-

came negative — the outflow

being more than 2.5 times

scription of big public issues. f) Accordingly, it was thought expedient by SIEC to omit its Lock-in policy, that to continue to restrict the foreign placement to one-third of IPO to protect the interests of local

g) It may be mentioned here that there is no Lock-in for three years for foreign placement in India and Pakistan, as stated by the

h) It is not also correct that SEC allowed companies "to float shares at premium rates without proper examination" as alleged by the writer. SEC allows floatation of shares at a premium on the basis of welldefined policy, after proper examination by its officials and approval by its Board. So, there was no question of encouraging the foreign investors and discouraging the local investors by the premium policy. Rashida Khatun

Deputy Director SEC, Dilkusha, Dhaka

Human rights

Sir, I am writing to you on behalf of Amnesty International which is a human rights organisation working all over the world for the release of prisoners of conscience, fair trials

for political prisoners and abolition of torture and the death

I am particularly concerned about an incident which took place at Jagannath Hall on 31st January, 1995, which involved students of religious minority. It has been reported that charges brought against those arrested during the police raid may have been politically motivated. The raid took place in the context of an ongoing countrywide operation by the security forces to confiscate illegal weapons, none of which, according to independent sources, were found. As well, other incidents or torture and ill-treatment of unarmed civile ians by law enforcement personnel have been reported since the crackdown on unauthorised weapons began.

I have written to the former Minister of Law informing him of my concerns and requesting the Government of Bangladesh to publicly condemn torture and ill-treatment, and to bring justice anyone found responsible for human rights violations.

I appeal to your organisations to do whatever possible to bring these matters to public notice so that those responsible for violating human rights can be dealt with in the appropriate manner and also that everybody will realise that this type of behaviour is totally unacceptable.

Patricia Gralton 29 Bennard Street Claremont 6010 Western Australia

### The other side of the coin

Sir, Often the government doctors are criticised for refusing to work outside the capital for negligence of duty by those posted outside the city etc. Please permit me to narrate a few instances as to what happens to those who do leave the city for their native town to serve the humanity at no extra pecuniary benefit.

1) A lady is working in one of the newly upgraded district hospitals. She is the only lady doctor in the hospital but has to share her consultation room with a male colleague. This is derogatory not only to the doctors but an insult to the respected female patients who naturally seek privacy.

2) A doctor couple are posted in two different thanas of Barisal and Chittagong divisions for more than two years. In spite of a standing government order, they have failed to be posted in the same district because they have refused to 'please' the officials concerned.

Can one honestly blame if they are away from their duty stations for a good number of days every month pursuing the DG health officials?

3) A doctor recently returned home after obtaining a post-graduate degree in Public Health from a renowned Western University. Ever since his attempts to get a suitable posting where he can make use of his expertise has gone in vain and he is still working in a Thana Health Complex (THC). A senior assistant secretary of the ministry has 'advised' him to forget about his PhD and obtain an FDPS! Is there no public health problem in Bangladesh where according to the 1996 Unicef report 67 per cent children are undernourished and the incidence of the (preventable) chronic diseases is rising exponentially? Ironically, the same ministry recruits a large number of expatriates with similar degrees resulting in the drainage of a huge sum of

foreign currency. 4) A lady doctor with two very young children is posted in a remote THC in Mymensingh while her husband is in Chittagong. She went to seek advice and help of a professor regarding a transfer. To her utter dismay all he said was that if her local loss was one of his students he could talk to him so she need not go to the THC more than

once a month! The authority concerned is requested to look into the matter and mitigate the sufferings of not only the doctors but the people of the republic. F H Choudhury

4/3/F, Lalmatia, Dhaka

# "Better you should go

to the Americans' Sir, The universities of London, had inaugurated an Education Fair from this year through the British High Commission in all over India, in order to encourage thosewho were interested to study in England for higher education in self-finance as well as under the scholarship schemes. The opportunities were open to all Indian students. The authority, along with them, had brought a selection Board to interview the interested and qualified candidates who would be taken to England for their admission after the selection. Most impressing or all these was that the leading universities or London as well as of the world, like the Cambridge University. the Oxford University, the

University of Leeds, the University of Liverpool, Essex University, etc. offered job guarantee after completing the respectable courses and if any candidate would fail to afford the tuition fees, would be granted a scholarship from the university fund.

Being a bona fide foreign student, studying English Honours in Jadavpur University, Calcutta, I attended the fair which was held at Park Circus, Calcutta.

There was a huge crowd in the fair. Students from all the Départments including BBA. MBA, Hotel Management, visited and were given prospectus and admission forms of the universities free of cost. The arrangement of the fair was wonderful. Each college or university had its own Information Bureau but failed to distribute necessary materials due to the shortage. They took the addresses of the students with a promise to send the papers by post within one month, which I myself had received attorney residential address in due time.

In order to avoid communication gap I did not give my permanent address of Bangladesh. Instead of that I used my friend's address. Accordingly I went to the British High Commission, where I came to know that the opportunity is only for the students who are Indian by birth.

"I am Bangladeshi by birth"

- was my reply when my interviewers asked me my nationality. "Your people never follow the British" - he said in an odd expression. "If I am not mistaken you follow the Americans," his tone was interrogative. "Yea, we practise American accent as well as system" was my reply. "Accent never matter in studying English literature". "That's true but the opportunity is only for the Indians who follow British accent and system. Better you should go to the American and request them to inaugurate an education fair on behalf of the American universities to encourage the students who follow their accent and system. Sorry young man, you try in that way," he told this for without taking any breath and with a mocking tone adding "If you were an Indian, you would have been lucky". I left the room giving him only a look of anger and saying "I must request the US government and the universities for a same education fair to be held in Bangladesh.

T M Russell F 19 Katju Nazar Jadavpur, Calcutta-32

## **OPINION**

## Some Suggestions for Improvement of Health Services

· The government doctors of all ranks must be guided by ries, mills etc there will be service rules like other officers government doctors by deputa-

of the government. their own senior physicians. surgeons and gynecologists and senior government doctors must not be allowed to be attached to any private clinics for reason of corruption.

Government doctors must be at their respective place of duty for the specified period and must be available for evening round (to visit admission and operation cases).

done by professors/assistant professors. The professors must complete the course in time, so

that the students do not suffer

through shifting of examination dates. Principals of medical colleges must be from the basic other stores. science (Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology) and not

from clinical sides (Medicine. Surgery, Gynaecology). attendance and performance of doctors from capital to sub-di-

There should be mobile (like in India, Pakistan, Sri team of physicians, surgeons and gynaecologists who will obvious reasons. trainup doctors in district hospitals and also render ser vice to the patients in those hospitals.

In the universities, factotion for three years, so that Private clinics must have young post graduate doctors can be exposed to render better services in those areas.

> The school health services for all the schools of the country is a must, so that defects in children, say, of heart, eye, ear and others can be detected

The Health Service should be divided into divisions like the Police Directorate, to minimise corruption. Administra-Major operations must be tion will be with the Divisional Directors, DG office will look after the policy, teaching and

> foreign affairs. The alleged corruption in Central Medical Store can be stopped by placing the fund to the respective medical institutions for purchase of drug and

For each large and medium size medical institution (Medical College Hospital/District Hospital etc) there must be a There must be officers governing board comprising from DG office to supervice respectable persons of the

AMC Officers must not have

private chambers in civil areas

Lanka) to attend patients, lor

Dr Surya Bari Dhaka Medical College