F WAS

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Sunday, August, 18, 1996

**Avoidable Water-logging** 

At last the causes of water-logging in the city's worst affected areas have been identified. Or, could it be that the authorities concerned were aware of the causes but did not make these public? The reasons for water-logging in Paltan, Segunbagicha, Shantinagar, Rajarbagh, Motijheel, Fakirerpool and Secretariat areas, according to WASA sources, are unauthorised structures at four crucial points on the Segunbagicha canal. Construction of the storm sewerage under the ADBaided Tk 159-crore Dhaka Integrated Flood Control Project has come to a halt at those points.

Now the question we cannot help asking is, whether the structures had been there before the storm sewerage project was taken up or the encroachment took place after the project work had begun. If the unauthorised structures existed from before, how could such an important project involving a huge fund from outside sources was pushed through without taking into account the physical obstructions to its implementation? And it seems, it is none other than RAJUK - an organisation under government control - which has encroached on a part of the canal behind the Bangladesh Bank after the project was given a goahead. Can we hope that in future no project is made to suffer due to such negligence or oversight?

Now the storm sewerage has come to a snag because two of the unauthorised occupiers have got court injunctions against the government attempt at eviction. The slow process of settling land disputes does not help matters. We suggest that in case of such civil suits involving public interests and projects of immense importance. special judicial arrangements be made to dispose of the cases. The encroachers must not be encouraged by huge monetary compensations. For the demolition of a part of the structure, Tk 2.5 lakh will be paid to one party. But for another the compensation money has not yet been fixed because the demand is too high to be met. Laws should be clear about structures constructed on government land and without the approval of RA-JUK. Only then it will be easier for the public works department and other agencies to take appropriate measures against unauthorised occupation. Water-logging caused in different other areas of the city due to man-made obstructions must be solved simultaneously.

## Tragic

The possible death of Moinuddin Kashem Tareq, 21-year-old son of a bank chairman, from a weird plunge he apparently took at the Meghna ghat in the small hours of Wednesday night is most tragic indeed.

The entire sequence of events as revealed so far reads like a hallucinating fantasy-world story: Tareq eating at a city restaurant with his three friends including the girl named Lubna, having an altercation over her with one of the friends, drifting those many miles away from Dhaka to Gazaria and then melting into the mighty Meghna.

Till the writing of this comment, the body of young Tareq has not been found. Efforts are underway to use divers to search the bottom of the river for his body. So far three of his friends have been taken into police custody for questioning. We would not like to speculate about the causes of the possible untimely death of this young man. The incident becomes even more tragic because of his young age.

He was known as one of the computer wiz-kids of Bangladesh. He belonged to a select group of brilliant young men who pioneered the introduction of Internet and related technology to this country.

We sympathise with Tareq's parents at their grievous loss. At the same time we urge the investigating authorities to spare no effort to find out exactly what happened. Tareq's possible death raises a lot of questions about the life-style of young adults of our country.

Outwardly so bright why should such fate befall him? Our young people should ask some serious questions about the company they keep, and things they do.

## Traffic Inconvenience

A report has termed last Wednesday the worst day for Dhaka in traffic inconvenience in the recent times. Some of the causes of traffic dislocations exacerbating, the usual gridlock snarled a shade more on that day. That's all. So, an odd Wednesday may have increased the quota of suffering for the teeming millions of Dhaka but the general pattern of disruptions in traffic is same through the week, through the month and through the year.

A recent report in a Bangla daily focused on the observation of an international seminar on urban management. It said, within a few years Dhaka could be far too disorderly for traffic management. The report tried to sound optimistic in a general context of depression by turning attention to the prospect for a number of buses, with better looks, facilities and enhanced fares coming out on the city streets. But to what effect? If the city managers cannot invent a way out of the terrible traffic problem the city is in for, what advantage its dwellers can expect from the distribution of a few huge vehicles except more environmental pollution, more traffic gridlocks, more sufferings. From the viewpoint of problem in traffic management, the decision appears like putting the cart before the horse.

The government should take note of the fact that continuing failure on the part of agencies involved in traffic management would reflect badly on its own efficiency. If the government cannot tackle an urban problem of the capital city itself, what will it do to address similar problems in other urban parts of the country? Dhaka is the heartland of the whole of Bangladesh insofar as the art and efficiency of governance goes. And the alarming growth of a problem like traffic inconvenience and the inability of the authorities to do anything noteworthy in alleviating it, have the potential to be one if not the only source of disillusionment of the people with the government.

## Human Development Report 1996 and Bangladesh: Unfairness Revisited

by Dr Mohammed Farashuddin

This sounds like a familiar albeit repugnant aspersion on the poor by the well-to-do. In the absence of further clarifications from UNDP, I am unable to give it a benefit of doubt that would absolve UNDP of the charge of looking down upon the poor through the concept of "capability poverty measure."

anti growth. HDR 1991 came up under heavy fire from the Group of 77 against the socalled "Freedom Index" advocating, inter alia, right to homosexuality. Eventually, "Freedom Index" was dropped from the HDRs. Since 1992. UNDP has been treading a carefully balanced approach until this year. In its 1996 HDR, the seventh in the series. UNDP has introduced the concept of capability poverty which I find very unfair as a concept and particularly hard for Bangladesh to digest. More on this later.

HDR '96 contains several

aspects attractive to an economist - a set of relevant facts, analyses and conclusions about growth and human development trends, links between growth and human development, growth as a means to human development and importantly Bangladesh translation of growth into employment opportunities. The report warns against some recent pitfalls of economic growth, namely, jobless growth, ruthless growth, voiceless growth and futureless growth. Again the inherent message is for growth to be concerned with people who should have a say, participation and central mooring and benefit if it is to sustain into

human development. HDR '96 prepared under the overall coordination of the celebrated economist Richard Jolly demonstrates many special features some of which

1. It ranks Canada at the top of HDI and shows Niger to be at the bottom amongst 174 countries

are cited below:

2. Bangladesh ranks 143, two places better than 1995 but three places worse than the traditional per capita real GDP ranking. It means that the human development in Bangladesh is lagging behind its economic growth rate.

3. Bangladesh has a life expectancy at birth of nearly 56 years, a literacy rate of 37 and a per capita income of \$ 220

4. The gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world is increasing. One fifth of the countries of the world own almost four-fifths of the global GDP of \$ 23 trillion.

5 Eighty-nine countries of the world, good many of them in Africa, are worse off economically today compared to a decade ago

6. There are 358 billion aires (in US dollars) in the world today and their combined assets are larger than those of 45% of the people at the bottom end of the po-

Employment is a sagging bridge between economic growth and human development although it is a major tool for the income generation of the relatively disadvantaged. Economic growth turns into a powerful job creating bridge if there is (a) a strong political commitment to full employment. (b) an enhancement of human capabilities. (c) a strengthened mini. small-scale and informal sector. (d)

development 8. Poverty does not mean only a lack of income. Neither is people's living standard measured by income alone. Growth does not automatically trickle down to the poor. I takes policy interventions, at times direct action, by the government to ensure that income helps citizens to expand their choices and to get adequate food, health, education and shelter for themselves and their children.

broader and egalitarian access

to land and (e) research and

There is a remarkable con vergence of ideas contained in HDR '96 and the policy an nouncements so far made by the new government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh First the Bangladesh objective of rapid economic growth for ensuring social justice is in tune with the remark "new theory and evidence suggest that growth and equity need not be contradictory goals" made by the UNDP administrator in his foreword to the Human Development Report 1996. Second, the GDP growth rate of 5.5 per cent set by the government for the year 1996-97 will yield a per capita growth in excess of 3 per cent target set by UNDP HDR '96. Third. urgency in Bangladesh towards poverty alleviation. Fourth, we in Bangladesh are strongly committed to give highest priority to agriculture including a facilitation of availability of all inputs for agriculture at sub-

There are at least three areas of disagreement between what have been stated in HDR 96 and what are widely believed in Bangladesh. First is a minor difference - there is a discrepancy between the literacy rate of Bangladesh (37%) shown in HDR '96 and the literacy rate (44%) reflected in the 1996-97 national budget What is the source from which UNDI gathered its figure? Second is the question about

sidised price, if necessary, for

the upliftment of the condi-

tion of the farmers. And finally.

productive job creation is seen

as a very important bridge for

economic growth to translate

into sustainable human devel-

the per capita GNP figure of 1993: I am aware that the World Bank figures used by UNDP lag behind a couple of years. Given the critical importance of per capita GNP/GDP figures in HDI, could UNDP not find ways to get its own and more update data on national income?

And finally, about the highly objectionable concept of capability poverty'. There are two things about it that bothers me a lot. The first is a general concern about the 'capability poverty measure." From the Technical Note 3 of HDR '96, it appears at least to me that UNDP is surmising a lower than average intellectual capability to children grown in poverty situation. This sounds like a familiar albeit repugnant aspersion on the poor by 'he well-to-do. In the absence of further clarifications from UNDP. I am unable to give it a benefit of doubt that would absolve UNDP of the charge of looking down upon the poor through the concept of "capability poverty measure." To make matters worse, out of the 36 countries for which UNDP has, in my view, arbitrarily tabulated "capability poverty measure" in page 112 of HDR '96. Bangladesh appears second from the bottom. But in Table 1.7 in page 27 of the main text, Bangladesh was highlighted at the bottom. wonder why!

The author is an economist. educationist and retired civil

# Shadow over Somalia: Farrah Aidid is Dead, What Next?

ARRAH Aidid, the vastlyadored "self-proclaimed" (western media version) President of Somalia, known as the deadliest enemy of the West, particularly of the USA, is dead. It has cast a dark, gloomy shadow over Somalia. With the assumption of leadership by his son Hussein Aidid, as an 'interim president,' has created new hopes and prospects. Either the darkness of fear and despondency would melt away with a new dawn, or

a new 'black hole' tragedy

awaits the nation.

HANKS to a major cont

community of the would saw

the rediscovery of a useful and

more relevant criterion to

measure the state of economic

development in a country. The

Human Development Index

(HDI) of UNDP replaced per

capita GNP which fails to

account for interpersonal and

inter-country differentials due

to taste, geographic conditions

and purchasing power. HDI is

an weighted average of three

different measures of human

welfare, namely, life

expectancy at birth, literacy

rate (of late coupled with time

spent in school) and

purchasing power as reflected

in the per capita income.

Through this significant

change UNDP has successfully

focussed attention on the fact

that growth is a means to

achieve human development.

All development activities.

therefore, must put people at

the centre and ensure an

enlargement of the choices

Notwithstanding some criti-

cism of the high-nosed theo-

value judgement in selecting

the indices as well as their rel-

ative weights in HDI, practi-

cally oriented policy makers

find it to be a fair yardstick to

measure success or lack of it

in economic development ac-

strong attacks in the first two

years of its launching. In

1990. UNDP had to repeatedly

defend that its HDI was not

HDI of UNDP faced two very

reticians alleging subjective

them.

available to

tivities.

ribution by UNDP since

1990, the development

they were moving heaven and earth to achieve this!) from the scene can set the foundation for a more peaceful future for Somalia". If with the change of leadership, things begin to move for the better, as already indicated by the new leader, it would be most welcome not only by the hard-hil people of Somalia but also by the whole world. But will that dream ever come true? Whatever might be the cause of Aidid's "removal from the scene", it has undoubtedly created a big vacuum in Somalia's national scene and

by AMM Shahabuddin Siad Barre ruled the country as a dictator for long 21 years. Meanwhile, America was looking for its chance to step in. When in 1974, the pro-Western government of Haile Selasse of Ethiopia was replaced by a pro-Moscow government, America rushed into Somalia in support of Siad Barre who had already ended his 'honey-moon' with the Soviet Union. Cushioned with full support of America, Siad Barre

continued his absolute rule

backfired and proved a total misadventure, as Aidid consistently accused USA of favouring his rivals to gain an upper hand to achieve their goal. curity Council came out with a resolution, egged on by USA. offering a sum of \$ 25,000.00 on the head of Aidid, caught live or dead. But when nobody came forward to get this much-publicised cash reward

tion in Somalia and afterwards When America failed to bring Aidid to his knees, the UN Se-

icky, seeing the engulfing darkness around them and a wild dark horse like Farrah Aidid kicking Aidid had already declared the US forces, running relief operations as "occupation forces". The rest is

#### New Opportunity

Now with the assumption of leadership by Hussein Aid.d. a new opportunity has been created to usher in a new era with more conciliatory efforts to put an end to bloody clan warfare. Aidid Jr has already given out

with USA. If he succeeds in tackling the USA on one hand and his rival clan leaders on the other, definite viz., media is bound to emerge. It all depends on how far Hussein Aidid can strike an honourable deal with USA, as the president of an independent country. And America will have to give up its 'gunship diplomacy' and follow a more civilised diplomatic posture to win friends in Somalia. Only future will show how and where the episode will end.

### Farrah Aidid, a known politician, diplomat and, above all, a general made a name and fame during the autocratic and despotic rule of Siad Barre. When the dictator scented that Aidid was planning to oust him from power, he was arrested and put in jail for some seven years.

Farrah Aidid, a known politician, diplomat and, above all, a general made a name and fame during the autocratic and despotic rule of Siad Barre'. When the dictator scented that Aidid was planning to oust him from power, he was arrested and put in jail for some seven years. But Aidid succeeded in his missions in the long run to overthrow Barre. But with the fall of Siad Barre in 1991 mainly through the struggle by that charismatic national leader Aidid, the west lost a genuine friend, just as they had lost many such friends earlier, like Shah of Iran and Marcos of the Philippines. Aidid proved a hard nut to crack for them as he was a leader made of a different metal. But countries with vested interests play much deeper games. Somalia was involved in a bloody 'civil-war' or rather 'clan war'. Aidid's rival was another clan leader Mohamed Ali Mahdi, more flexible and more acceptable to the West. Somalia literally turned into devastating "killing fields" with deaths, destruction and streams of homeless people.

Hussein Aidid — New

Leadership

Now in the death of Aidid. many western political analysts find new hopes and 'positive developments'. The US Administration has already expressed the "hope" that Aidid's "removal (mark the word as if

a great opportunity for his opponents to fish in the troubled waters. Hence the new leadership would have to move very cautiously, keeping the ideals of his late father not to yield to foreign intervention and pres-

When Somalia gained independence in 1960 nobody could foresee that this land of rich resources and a population of some eight million would be reduced to such a pitiable condition in 30 years When the colonial powers leave they always leave behind some 'booby-traps' or 'plant a time bomb' that would cause havoc in the days to come. That is what exactly happened

Victim of Cold War During colonial rule Somalia became a victim of cold-war' between the two super-powers to gain foothold for strategic position there. The Russians were already there holding the key position with a modern airport, built by them. During the first eight years of its independence, Somalia was ruled by a democratically elected government. But as it happens in the Third World countries, some ambitious general is always on the lookout like a shrewed wolf to have his 'grand feast' at mid-night. So came in, Siad Barre, dissolving the democratic government on charges of corrup-

tion, nepotism, inefficiency

and what not.

with increasing brutality and ruthlessness. But every episode has its end — good or bad. So ended Barre's regime, mainly due to the struggle of Farrah Aidid who had earlier served under Barre as a General, then as a cabinet minister and lastly as an Ambassador to India. Aidid's fighters drove Siad Barre out of Somalia in 1991. But unfortunately, then began the flowing of the river of "blood, tears and sweats" that ultimately 'removed' Farrah Aidid in the midst of the devastating 'civil war' or 'clan-war'.

## **US Misadventure**

The period between Barre's ouster from Somalia and "the removal" of Farrah Aidid from the national scene is perhaps the blackest chapter of Somalia's history with outside intervention and intrigues against Aidid. When the country became a running 'killing field'. with thousands dead and starred, the US landed its Marines in Mogadishu on 8 December in 1992, with the "blessings" of the UN. Rather the US used the UN as an umbrella in its relief operation code-named Operation Restore Hope. But it proved otherwise. The US forces became "overaggressive" in their dealings and ultimately had to depart from Somalia in March 1994. Farrah Aidid dubbed the US force as the "occupation forces". But several US measures taken during its opera-

for Aidid's head, America became desperate and launched that most miscalculated gunship attack on Aidid HQ to capture him. But again the 'mission' failed, Aidid escaped unhurt; instead heads of 18 US Marines rolled on the Mogadishu street, some being lynched by Aidid's men. America had to retreat from Somalia in 1994 to save her from further humiliation. But they couldn't forget the humiliation They were leaking their wounds, watching for better avenues to get through.

But why America wants to get so deeply involved in Somalia and why George Bush rushed in with the US Marines, when others stood by? The answer is simple: the US has a much deeper interest in Somalia that meets the eyes The hard fact is the US investment of billions of dollars in oil exploration. (It is that same 'oil story' that inspired America to rush in the Gulf War, more to ensure steady oil supply than to liberate Kuwait

from Iraqi aggression). So the Operation Restore Hope was the proverbial Trojan Horse, more dangerous things were hidden inside. According to press reports, twothirds of Somalia's oil exploration were allocated to four American oil giants during the regime of Siad Barre. The US oil companies made hay while the Barre sun was shining. But as the sun set, they felt pan-

## OPINION

## Education System Needs a Chance, Not Ignoring Mother Tongue

My attention has been ks. joint venture enterprises

warul Kabir and published in The Daily Star dated July 25,

made some sweeping comments regarding the importance of reintroduction of English Schools at the government level so as to make the education available at the doorsteps of the common people. He claimed that immediately after independence, the then Awami League government introduced 'Bangla' in all respects cornering the English medium schools, I don't understand what did he actually mean by saying that Bangla was introduced in all respects. If he meant that Bangla was introduced in all the educational institutes i.e., schools, college, universities and English was banished altogether, then well, the actual scenario was quite contrary to such a baseless claim. As everybody knows that immediately after independence naturally 'Bangla' as the mother tongue of an independent nation got some natural priorities in the disposal of official matters. But still English was widely used in most of the ministries and departments. English medium schools very much remained there and none of these schools were cornered by the Awami League government at that time. So the question of rectifying past wrongdoings cornering the English medium schools by the then government does not

I have also been surprised to note that the writer with his very shallow knowledge about the affairs of the world today made a comment that Japan. France, Russia and China are already developed and so they can afford ignoring English language nowadays. This is not a reasonable contention by the writer as everybody knows that not only Japan, Russia, France and China; but all other European countries like Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands etc., achieved tremendous development through their mother tongue. Not only that, in the recent days the five economic giants of Asia namely South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia attained spectacular economic development only pursuing an education system in their mother language. Mr Kabir made a confusion by saying 'top down' and "bottom up" without relating the terms to any pro-

position. The writer talked about the prospect of job and commented that the students of English medium institutions would be getting lucrative employments in the multi-national companies, foreign ban-

drawn to an article with the and top private organisations. title "Education System Needs The writer is quite unaware of a Change" written by Md An- the fact that in our government still is the lone biggest employer and caters to the needs of employment of thousands of fresh university pro-In the opinion Mr Kabir ducts through holding compe titive superior services examinations every year. Almost a million employees are working in various government departments, ministries, district and thana administrations in lower capacities and all of them are the products of Bengali medium. The so-called multinationals, foreign banks, joint ventures can offer job opportunity for not even a handful of our youngsters. The percentage is very negligible and for those enterprises the government's initiative as proposed by the writer to expand the number English medium schools by spending money from public exchequer can never be justified.

> soil who are now secretaries of the ministries, the ministers, the judges of the Supreme Court, High Court, the teachers of the universities, the eminent journalists, the engineers and doctors, the law makers in the legislative assembly almost all (who determine the destiny of the nation) are the products of Bengali medium schools. Of course, as a language we may be have sort of soft corner for English because we had been subjugated by the English for about 200 years. This long period of subjugation and slavery has produced in our minds a feeling of superiority for a foreign language, ignoring our own. Well, some of the law makers may send their wards abroad for education. But this is somebody's individual choice, and it justifies that the government should take initiative to introduce more and more English medium schools all over the country.

We should never forget the

fact that the best sons of our

Finally, I would like to draw the attention of everybody that language is not a barrier for a really talented person to flourish. And the primary level education in the country ought to be in Bengali medium, and then, at higher level one might have the liberty to go for any language — be it English, French or German. I would like to emphasise once again that the easiest way to impart education extensively in the hearts of the common people is the use of Bangla in all primary institutions of Bangladesh and none should be misled by the whimsical suggestions of some unwise thinkers. Our prime task at the moment is to increase the national literacy rate. And the expansion of literacy rate in shortest time to a satisfactory level is possible only through elementary education in our mother language.

## AIDS victim

Sir, I would like to respond to a report and an editorial of your paper dated 12th and 13th August 1996 respectively regarding a female AIDS 'victim'. I was disturbed to read that all details of the 'victim' were published, and she has been treated according to your report as a common criminal, both by yourselves in a judgmental frame and by the authorities who hunted her outand incarcerated her.

A responsible media, which values basic human rights as your esteemed paper claims to do, ought to be advocating a healthy response to HIV/AIDS in the society, rather than being scare-mongers. Her basic human rights are that she be given confidentiality and support in her need, not to be condemned. Where is the concern for the poor woman who was perhaps the 'victim' of abuse by some infected person in the first place? What about her need for someone to care about her? She is obviously a sick person, as she visited a doctor for treatment. That does not mean she is going to go around infecting other people. She needs support and counselling. What is society giving to this victim? Only condemnation and incarcera-

tion? At present I believe there are 61 known cases of HIV in Bangladesh, three of whom have died. Apart from them. there are probably thousands, maybe lacs more of virus carriers. Are we going to hunt them all out, expose them, then incarcerate them? Where do you plan to put them all? What if one HIV positive person happens to be you? There are few modes of spread of HIV, including blood (of which there is so far no testing done before transfusion in Bangladesh), sex with multiple partners, and unsterile infected needles and syringes. HIV is in our country to stay, and we need to implement a social campaign for helping people to live with HIV/AIDS rather than feeding the impossible notion of an HIV/AIDS free country.

E M Flintoff Hse # 40B. Road # 11 Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Sir. I read the news report that appeared in The Daily Star about Ruby (the HIV+patient deported from Bahrain) with considerable alarm. The fact that she was treated like a criminal upon her return to Bangladesh shows the ignorance in which most of the Bangladeshi authorities oper-However, what was even

more alarming was your editorial the following day. You have made certain suggestions as to how Ruby should have been treated upon her return. One of your recommendations was to quarantine her at the airport because of her "infectious" condition. It surprises me that a learned man such as yourself could have even made such a suggestion.

AIDS is not an infectious

disease in a common sense of the word. It is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or through exchange of bodily fluids. It is not passed on like a common cold or through airborne or water-borne, virus and bacteria. Therefore there is no need to quarantine AIDS or HIV+ patients at the airport. What is needed is educa-

tion. Instead of the police, it should have been the health workers who went to Ruby. It is the responsibility of the health workers to explain the dangers of AIDS to presumably illiterate persons like Ruby and those in her village. It should have been them who took Ruby in their custody to give her the benefits of good treatment to lessen her pains.

At a time when Ruby is perhaps already scared about the severity of her illness, she does not need the added tension and fear of being branded a criminal and an outcast. What she needs is compassion and the helping hands and support of her country women. As the more educated class, it is up to us to dispel the myths surrounding diseases like AIDS and to help prevent their spread through educating the less fortunate.

I hope in the future the readers of The Daily Star will not be subjected to such shallow news reports.

Fahima Choudhury House 46, Road 2/A Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1209

You are right. We apologize

for our insensitivity — Editor

### Homage to Elvis Presley

Sir. The 16th August came back once again to remind millions of music lovers all over the world the death anniversary of Elvis Presley. On this day he left us 19 years ago at the age of 42. When Elvis Presley died thousands of his fans and film artistes had gathered in his funeral to pay their last homage to this great entertainer who was called 'the King of Rock 'n' Roll'. Many Bangladeshis will not forget this great singer-actor who became one of the greatest entertainers in history. By 1956 he was a national star, making large hits like 'Hound Dog'. Blue Suede Shoes', 'Jail House Rock' and 'Love Me Tender' Presley eventually recorded 94 gold singles and 40 gold albums. He also starred in 27

films or more. In spite of many appeals in the past through the newspapers, Bangladesh Television never obliged the Elvis fans in the country by telecasting an Elvis movie to commemorate his death anniversary. Through this column, of your paper I appeal to the BTV authority to telecast either a feature film starred by this great showman or any film based on his life.

Adib Reza Paribaah House Dhaka 1000