

GO-NGO (Working) Relationship : Some Suggestions

by Shamsheer A Chowdhury

THE NGO Affairs Bureau was established in 1990 with the sole purpose of monitoring and assisting the work of the NGOs as a one-stop service.

(ADB) and the World Bank (WB) in collaboration with local consultancy agencies under joint supervision of the Bureau and the resident offices of the two international agencies.

problem areas and issues are not enough. There is, therefore, a continuous need for suggestion/recommendations for solutions to problems presented.

On the other hand, one must also accept the fact that the present government has to deal, among others, with a lot more complex issues compared to its predecessors which are not only complex but often considered difficult.

Therefore I would consider it to be too ambitious for all parties involved in this exercise to expect any easy or ready solution. As a matter of fact I believe the matter should now be handled in a well-thought-out way with real political commitment.

three major factors stand in our way without a clear understanding of which the right climate cannot emerge for hardcore practical steps by any and all parties.

The government, on its part, must spell out in concrete terms as to its perception of the 'NGOs lacking in their transparency of operations'. The NGOs on their part must be clear as to their role as catalytic agents in the overall poverty alleviation and development perspective in the national context.

The NGO/Government relationship is as vast and complex as can be. Yet one or two practical issues are clear enough and I strongly believe can be acted upon.

I am not too sure about the total number of NGOs currently operating in Bangladesh but suffice it to say that there are at least about a thousand

NGOs registered with the Bureau which are active. It is however important to note here that at the time of establishment of the Bureau the number of NGOs registered with it was 200 only.

The way the Bureau is structured today any one can see that it cannot function effectively despite best of intentions. Its overall staff strength, the access to professional resources within the set-up including the vested authority are absolutely inadequate to meet the day-to-day challenges.

The existing status of the Bureau should also be elevated. It also needs to be stabilised. The Bureau should have an extended authority in its operational jurisdictions. For this it should be headed by an official of the rank of an additional secretary to the government.

Consideration should also be given in enhancing its status to that of a Ministry, if found feasible. Under the existing arrangement, the Bureau is a part of the Prime Minister's office. This was initially done for some historical reasons which I believe no longer exist.

good governance we need to decentralise the overall administrative, machinery to the farthest extent possible. It is counterproductive to place such a highly interactive department dealing with numerous complex and micro-issues under the aegis of the Prime Minister's office.

Within a span of about four years the Bureau has witnessed changes in its leadership as many as five times. Not only that even with its current staff strength which is grossly inadequate there has been too many shifting in its job assignments between and among the existing staff.

I would like to point out that the steps suggested may not even be implementable and may not even be wise to act upon. A more comprehensive dialoguing and deliberations may be necessary, there is however one issue that the Government and the Bureau could give serious consideration with some urgency is the revision/rationalisation of the Bureau's Rules of Procedures for governing of the NGOs in line with ADAB's memorandum of 1992.

I can say with confidence that a step towards this direction alone will be the longest leap ever towards improvement and development of the existing GO/NGO relationship.

Time Runs out for Dirty Industries



In response to local and foreign pressures, Pakistan is launching measures to clean up its urban environment. Gemini News Service reports on a problem which the national environment council chairman says seems as big as 'infinity'.

Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto: 'Committed to the environment'

Shakil Shaikh writes from Islamabad

THE Pakistan Government has announced tougher measures to ensure that industries comply with environmental legislation. It will focus on the enforcement of National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS), which set pollution limits.

The main parties agree that action is required. Although it is Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto who is giving the current push, it was her predecessor, Nawaz Sharif, who activated the national standards in 1993.

That period of grace expired this July. Penalties for non-compliance are one million rupees for industrial polluters, followed by a daily fine of 100,000 rupees and, finally, up to two years imprisonment.

However, Sharif, now leader of the opposition, disputes Bhutto's claim that 'Pakistan's commitment to the cause of the environment is beyond question'. He says: 'Proper attention has so far not been given to environment problems.'

However, there is an understanding between government and industries that punitive action will not be taken immediately.

Initially, Zardari had a credibility problem, but his top-level connection appears to have helped give him weight in talks with industry.

The government appreciates that in a number of cases compliance with the NEQS calls for substantial investment," says the former president of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, S M Munir, who owns a chain of tanneries and textile mills.

He is also critical of the performance of the Environment Protection Council and of its chairman — who is Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari.

Industrialists argue that anti-pollution measures will push up costs, and are constantly lobbying for the enforcement of legislation to be postponed. But they are having to respond to a range of pressures.

Its resources may be limited, its efforts may be inadequate, but its commitment to this noblest of causes is no less genuine than anybody else's, and what it is doing to translate the commitment into practical action is more impressive in size and content than many.

Some industries fear restrictions will be imposed on their products in foreign markets if they do not clean up their act.

He points to the achievements of a campaign to plant 600 million saplings in the past three planting seasons; the relocation of heavily polluting textile factories in Faisalabad, the third largest city, to a designated industrial estate; plans to curb vehicle emissions through the use of catalytic converters and unleaded petrol; and the inclusion of the environment on the school syllabus.

In addition, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other financial institutions and aid donors are increasingly insisting on the application of environmental measures, and occasionally support clean-up projects.

For some problems, such as the poor state of urban infrastructure, which Bhutto admits is a major issue, there are no obvious solutions. Others, such as Zardari's suggestion for a ban on smoking advertising by the year 2000, will be delayed by industry.

Two large tannery treatment plants in central Pakistan and in Karachi, for example, are being financed by industry associations, the government, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation and the Dutch government.

But it looks as though a start is being made.

In the past two years, expanded media coverage of green issues in Pakistan — particularly deforestation, vehicle emissions and industrial and municipal waste — has raised public interest and awareness. Environmental groups are beginning to exert powerful pressures.

SHAKIL SHAIKH is senior correspondent with The News in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Haripur Oil : A Success Heads to Failure?

by Fateh Osmani and Mahmood Aziz

IT is the tale of triumph and tragedy. Touted as the only success story in Bangladesh's long search for oil Haripur oil field is now on the verge of becoming a nightmare.

Extraction ceased almost a year ago. Despite relentless efforts, scientists of Petrobangla, who had exulted in the discovery of the country's first oil field a decade ago, have failed to resume its operation. They now hope that their worst fear does prove wrong — a total shutdown of the field.

The authorities attribute the failures to the fall in natural pressure which helps extract oil from the underground deposits.

The oil field at Haripur, 12 miles from Sylhet, was discovered in December, 1986, the first ever achievement of Bangladeshi scientists in oil search that began in this part of the world in 1910.

The discovery was celebrated by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh who immediately expanded its programmes to find more oil fields. The celebration is proving short-lived. Commercial production of crude oil from the field started at Well No. 7 in January '87 under the management of Sylhet Gas Fields Company Ltd, a subsidiary of Petrobangla.

Until last year, a total of seven lakh barrels of crude oil were extracted from the well. The average daily output during 1986-87 was about 29 barrels which went up to 400 barrels in three years. Afterwards, the production started declining gradually and came down to 100 barrels a day during 1992-93.

According to sources, precipitation of wax on pipelines, used for extraction of crude oil, aggravated the situation further. To remove the trouble, a team of foreign experts worked for about a month last year but failed to restore the line.

Things deteriorated further when water surfaced in the well. "There was no way that we continue extraction," said a Petrobangla official. He, however, informed that the authorities are contemplating some geo-morphological survey to delineate the viability of drilling more wells around the existing well.

Since the discovery of the Haripur oil field, no exact appraisal of the reserve was done. However, it is estimated that there is about eight million barrels of crude oil, of which, at least two million barrels are recoverable.

According to Petrobangla sources, the then government had made an agreement with Canadian Scimeter Exploration Ltd in 1988 to explore petroleum in an area covering 1650 Sq Km in Haripur gas field. The signing of the deal kicked off a controversy with fierce protest from public and politicians across the country.

The activities of the company, which tried to lease out its share of the oilfield to a US based company, had always remained shrouded in mystery. And the company lost its contract in 1992 when the new government refused to renew the controversial agreement.

The company drilled two wells, out of four, for which it was contracted, and found gas from one of them. Later, they tried to export the gas to India but failed to implement their plan due to intervention from the government following political changeover in 1990. The company sealed one of the wells declaring that there was no gas in it.

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Thai — Rising to the Challenges of the 21st Century

by Syed Fahim Munaim

THE World is our market. Asia is our core. Thailand is our home. Bangkok is our hub. read the one page advertisement in major dailies of Thailand welcoming dignitaries, guests, and over 1000 delegates from around the world to THAI's 1996 Corporate Planning Conference held at Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre, Bangkok, 22-24 July, 1996.

This is a very special year for THAI as they celebrate the 36th Anniversary or third cycle anniversary according to Thailand's traditional calendar. In this era of globalization THAI has positioned itself to take advantage of the opportunities and challenges now emerging, particularly in this part of the world, where the forecast is unparalleled growth in the coming years. THAI's President Mr Thammawong Wan-glee in his speech categorically stated "We want to be No. 1 - 1st Choice Carrier." To achieve this THAI has taken 43 major initiatives to improve in all fronts: One of the major initiatives being the formation of strategic alliances for the first time between three big airlines from three continents - THAI from Asia, LUFTHANSA

from Europe and UNITED from United States of America, have joined together to form an alliance which is currently considered the largest in the aviation industry. This partnership will provide an opportunity for passengers of all three airlines to have a wider route network as well as added customer services which include the use of the Royal Orchid Lounge and accrual of mileage flown on board each of the airlines through the frequent flyer programmes.

Over 1,000 people attended the spectacular Corporate Planning Conference which included officials representing the government, tourism industry, THAI senior staff both local and overseas, airline partners, aircraft manufacturers and international as well as local press.

The conference was declared open by HE Mr Banharn Silpa-archa, Prime Minister of Thailand. In his speech, the Prime Minister stated that, "It is the policy of the THAI government to build and strengthen, in every possible way, Thailand's position as the aviation hub of Southeast Asia." He further stated that, "We are confident that THAI will attain its goal of becoming a world

leader in aviation and the first choice among airlines." During the past year, THAI has been in a state of change. THAI is currently undergoing a metamorphosis, changing its structure, strategies and operations. Sweeping changes are now being made to all aspects of the airline, from safety and customer service to organization, employee relations and financial soundness.

The current fleet of 71 aircraft will be systematically upgraded and the less fuel efficient models will be gradually phased out. In 1995, THAI was the first Asian airline to operate the Airbus 330-300 and early this year, THAI took delivery of the world's first Boeing 777 with Rolls Royce Trent 800 engines. 1996 will be the year when THAI adopts a completely new corporate identity. The change will not only be in aesthetic such as staff uniform, aircraft, interior design and equipment but also in enhanced passenger services. Serving procedures are being modified to allow passengers to decide for themselves when they would like to eat or sleep. Menus are being adopted to reflect people's different tastes in cuisine. Recently, THAI introduced in-seat videos for its Royal Executive and Royal First Class passengers in B777 and B747-400 aircraft. Telefax and telephones were installed in B777 aircraft and will soon be on all B747-400 and B777 aircraft.

THAI is proud to be the world's largest airport handling agent responsible for 53 airlines with scheduled flights to Bangkok. Last year, THAI introduced a common check-in system for all flights so that passengers can check-in at any THAI counter.

THAI has also taken strong measures to improve baggage delivery in the arrival hall. The objective was set to deliver the first piece of luggage within 15 minutes of aircraft landing and the last piece within 30 minutes.

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