

Not a Drop to Drink

"Steps to increase use of surface water". It is Daily Star headline for a front page item. Or is it a joke? Perhaps it wasn't meant to be such but it is an irony all right.

For too many years we have been fed on a dream of having a gigantic water treatment plant at Demra or Syedabad. That could add to our supply of surface water in a big way.

Is it only a growing demand for water that creates the problem? No, it's more how we use water and what we do to our rivers and ponds — some two lakhs of them — that push us perennially towards a critical situation and developing large areas of subhuman condition.

It's a cliché to remember the Ancient Mariner's anguish in such pressed time but we have reduced ourselves exactly to the Mariner's condition.

Now Malaysia

The imminent Malaysian freeze on immigration of Bangladeshi workers to that country stands on the foreground of tighter controls already exercised by UAE and Saudi Arabia.

The allegations are very serious bear as these do implications for our national image in respect of a country whose traditional friendliness and generosity towards us have not only endeared her to us but also prompted us to hold it in very high esteem.

For all one knows, with Malaysia we have relentlessly tried to perfect the recruitment procedures that had earlier on come under clouds. A recruitment agency authorised by both the governments has since been in place eliminating a multiplicity of them which spawned racketeering in the business.

Kuala Lumpur is contemplating on what sounds like an extreme measure. Some of the workers may have been at fault but we expect human touch and an unabated interest in over manpower from a country as friendly as Malaysia.

Roguary Unlimited

A Dhaka University dormitory's repertoire of shockers seems pathogenically endless. From the anointed heights of rival groups of students having signed a self-imposed code of conduct and visibly sealed all routes of entry of strangers to a hall, comes this bizarre nose-dive: senior pharmacy student Sarwar Alam gets thrown out of a first floor window at the Zahurul Haq Hall by 'outsiders' as he protested their snatching of a necklace and ear-rings from his girl friend who had gone in to see him.

No untoward incident in a university hall is ever spared the stigma of a political colour or attribution. Sources have claimed that it was the work of 'outsiders belonging to Bangladesh Chhatra League'. Were they BCL students from other halls or academic institutions or complete outsiders brought in to do a job?

Not only has the code of conduct to be followed to the letter and spirit by all student groups, the student wing belonging to the ruling party is on a severer test to prove its bona fides.

Foreign Aid and Domestic Reforms

Aid search has become almost an ethos and no one seems to be able to think of an economic existence without aid. What one should have a hard look at is the current Debt: GDP ratio which is about 2:3. What is more, if the present dependence on aid continues for another decade or so, then a day will come when external debts will be higher than the entire GDP.

generating higher rate of savings from which the initial capital loans can be paid off, and yet the economy can be put on a higher growth path. The internal economic growth, therefore, doesn't have to be savings-driven, as the well-known growth theories hypothesized, but it can also be loans-driven.

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Rationale for Economic Aid

The essential argument for economic aid, including grants and loans, has been that when a country, whether rich or poor, cannot raise sufficient amounts of domestic savings to finance its required level of investments to increase the desired rate of growth, then it is justified to fill the gap by foreign aid.

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What has Happened in Bangladesh?

After twentyfive years of massive aid flows — almost \$ 1.8 billion a year — Bangladesh

doesn't seem to be anywhere near the fast rate of growth that it needed. Its maximum average annual rate of growth is about 4.5 per cent which is not strong enough to pull the economy out of the doldrum that it has been trapped into by series of policies adopted over the decades.



INSIGHT by Kabir U Ahmad

velvet, the economy on the basis of its own resources combined perhaps with some judicious amounts of loans.

The current generation's responsibility seems to be to raise aid and enjoy its bonanza leaving the responsibility of its repayment to the unborn future generations. What a sense of inter-generational justice!

What Reforms were Needed?

Everyone knows that Bangladesh was a British colony for 190 years and was under Pakistan's domination for 24 years. During this long period, its socio-economic and political system was so straggled as to serve these foreign regimes political-economic objectives.

programmes. The first and the most important of such policies was to introduce a drastic land reform to put its agriculture, the most important sector of its economy on a sound footing for future growth.

One has to understand why land reform in a poor country is so vital for rapid development and poverty alleviation. In the first place, vast amount of data collected by the World Bank shows that farmers access to assets like land and financial resources contributed substantially to the fast growth of the economy and the poverty alleviation in many countries.

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Bangladesh agriculture due to non-accessibility to land. It is well known that a farmer who cultivates his own land puts more efforts and longer hours in caring for his land and its output compared with a farmer who cultivates rented land from large land owners.

In the second place, Bangladesh inherited from Pakistan period an import substitution strategy of industrialisation within high tariff wall which builds into the system an antiexport bias because of the tariff-induced high prices of goods. This policy gave birth to an economic climate in which inward looking, anti-competitive and inefficient industries were rewarded while export industries were discouraged.

In the third place, the newly independent government went for wholesale nationalisation, partly by force of circumstance (abandoned enemy property) and partly by ideological choice, which created a climate of completely controlled (socialist) economy.

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In the fourth place, inheriting from the socialist period a large number of publicly owned inefficient industries are still maintained at the expense of government revenues costing the country Tk 2.5 billion every year. There are many other inefficient and loss-making government departments maintained at the expense of taxpayers' money which need to be slashed, but nothing has been done.

Finally, the financial sector which is steeped in heavy losses due to loan defaults needed to be drastically reformed, but no radical measure has been adopted so far. Government recapitalises whenever any one of these sick institutions faces the risk of collapse.

Concluding Observations

Contrary to what has been publicised, the economy has considerable amount of resources to be able to sustain a respectable rate of growth. But a substantial portion of it has been, and is still being, wasted through public sector activities, administrative inefficiencies, and systemic leakages.

Give Us Water and Not Sympathy

by Abdul Hannan

The Ganges water-sharing problem is a creation of India and has to be solved politically by the Indian authorities and not based on the findings of the experts committees alone. The progressive dwindling of the flow of Ganges was caused by withdrawal and diversion of water by India.

THE West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu has said, 'Solution to Ganges water sharing might take a little more time. There is no need for a 5-year agreement.'

Addressing a press conference in London recently as quoted by BBC and monitored by The Daily Star he added, 'Let us see if we can give them a little more water for two years. I am aware of their difficulties and very sympathetic in this regard.'

It may not be a mere coincidence that earlier the Indian High Commissioner Deb Mukherjee in an interview published in The Independent also reiterated, 'The problem of Ganges water will be solved on the basis of availability of Ganges waters.'

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Higher studies and marks. Sir, Every student wants to take higher studies. But, in effect, it is not possible to materialise in all students' lives for various reasons in our country.

assess the availability of water is a case in point.

For any discerning India watcher, these are troubling signals betraying what is up in the sleeves of recent Indian overtures to Bangladesh to improve Indo-Bangladesh relations particularly on the solution of the problem of Ganges water-sharing.

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It is a common knowledge that the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and the Prime Minister of India in a joint declaration on 16 May 1974 expressed their determination that before the Farakka barrage is commissioned, the countries would arrive at mutually sharing of the waters available during the periods of minimum flow (January to 31st May) in the Ganges.

Reduction of prize money of Prize Bonds. Sir, During the Pakistan regime ten-taka prize bond was introduced to collect small savings from the public and to combat inflationary trend in the market.

natural and historic dry season flows and 40 per cent of the total available flows of the Ganges. The proposal of Bangladesh for conservation of huge monsoon flow through storage reservoir in upper catchments in Nepal to augment the dry season flow of the Ganges was rejected by India.

Those who blame the past governments during the last 23 years for alleged inaction and politicisation on the water-sharing problem with India are a trifle naive and indulge in motivated make-beliefs. It is no secret that after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman India's dealings with the succeeding governments in Bangladesh during the last 23 years has been less than cordial and warm and their attitude has been one of condescension.

As has been emphasised by Vergese, the noted Indian journalist, 'The Ganges water-sharing problem will have to be decided not on the basis of territorial sovereignty or riparian rights but on the basis of equitable apportionment for beneficial usage. India cannot claim an absolute right to obstruct or draw whatever quantities of water it deems fit or argues that as upstream demands increase the flow will inevitably go on diminishing.'

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prize bond in the hope to get a good amount of prize after the gestation period of 3 months.

But the reduction of prize money will rather discourage the small savers to lock their money for 3 months without any profit. So it is apprehended that the small savers will move to share market to try their luck there.

It is learnt that the government has issued another 100 crore ten-taka prize bond on 1st October. It is presumed that the savings directorate has readjusted the prize money already allocated for each draw. The savings directorate could enhance the period of each draw keeping the size of prize money unchanged.

His able daughter Sheikh Hasina, the popularly elected Prime Minister is certainly on a stronger ground able to safeguard our national interest on the issue of sharing of Ganges water. What is needed is for our Foreign Minister to argue our case with Delhi with courage, determination and firmness and not with entreaties and supplication by visits to Calcutta or Bihar or Uttar Pradesh to ensure our inalienable, just and legitimate rights of share of Ganges water based on the moral grounds of justice and fair play and accepted norms, principles and practices of international laws and conventions regarding trans-national rivers.

There is no denying that there is deep distrust, suspicion and misgivings in the relations between the two countries. The emergence of new leadership both in Delhi and Dhaka offers an opportunity for hope and renewal to forge a better and friendly relation. India is a big country and can and must behave big by taking a bold initiative with the sublime spirit of nobility of heart in the interest of good neighbourly relation. The new Indian leadership must leave past perceptions behind and act positively with a vision beyond the present by granting Bangladesh its due and legitimate share of Ganges water by a permanent settlement of the problem. Bangladesh for its part will never be found wanting in extending its arm of warmth and friendship.

The writer is a former Press Counsellor, Bangladesh Mission to the UN, New York.

Prize bond is a good way of saving money. Small-income group can save by way of buying prize bonds. The government is not paying any interest except the prize money. A good amount of money always remains in the pipe line. This money can be utilised in domestic developmental work. Again, it has been observed that there remains much unclaimed prize money.

This money too go to the exchequer, take prize bond on time. The school and college going boys/girls were also inspired to buy prize bonds. I think we should not consider only the profit aspect, rather we should attach importance to macro and social aspect.

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