

## Karbala All Around

The town-dwellers all over Bangladesh have been getting inured to power blackouts without a notice. They were hoping against hope that this would not affect nights during the SSC exams. Sudden unwarned power cuts, strangely called loadshedding by even the consumer, hit the nation, and with it Dhaka, with a vengeance never experienced before — ironically enough roughly around the commencement of the exams.

If that was irony what followed was mindless cruelty. It can safely be said without fear of contradiction that in this metropolitan city at least six million people have been for the past dozen days going without their daily bath. In a million houses in Dhaka soiled clothes are piling into hills and pans and pots and dishes are being dumped resignedly into heaps for days on end. In many families there isn't even a drop of water to drink. This is Karbala, literally. Newspapers have for quite some time been publishing photographs of endless rows of vessels and pitchers kept around some street tap with teams of women and children mounting a round the clock vigil in the hope of catching a gallon or two of water whenever the dream of gushing water materialises for a spell. In fact, this has been a yearly press feature around these times of the year. These pictures this year do not speak of the inferno that the well-plumbed mansions housing dozens of flats have been reduced to. Bengalees may not be the cleanest of the nations — they cannot simply be so with the scandalously sickening public as well as personal hygiene records still holding good for the society at large. But they are — each one of them — compulsive bathers.

Power shortage, built into the energy sector by the earlier administration, joined by a dangerous fall in the ground water level, has been making it impossible to cater to the water needs of Dhaka's snowballing population up to any human level. But there is no sign anywhere that the intolerable domestic water situation has been able to touch the sensibilities of any important people and move any quarter to do something helpful on an emergency basis.

Mosquitoes are a menace, may be even a foreboding of some looming epidemic. Power blackout is irritating for those that are used to power — and definitely it spells doom for industrial production and exports. What is a waterless house? It is the end of civilisation at its best and death at its worst.

## Corpse on Campus

Again a corpse. The deadly blend of gun and politics in our educational arena has once again taken its toll: this time on Arifur Rahman, a third-year of the Bengali department of Dhaka University. He was brutally killed on Thursday dawn by the feuding members of the party he himself belonged to, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

It gives a sad commentary on the party high command's sincerity and ability to control its activists. The most unfortunate part of it all is that no one seems keen to learn from these pathetic and premature deaths. If it has been the AL plan to keep its own student front BCL off violent incidents and get the JCD into trouble by breeding disunity within its ranks through allurements then it can be safely said that the former has succeeded to quite an extent and JCD has failed in coming up with a ruse contra ruse. Of course, the BNP and JCD leadership can attribute this to the obvious effect of being a party on the receiving end in an atmosphere of political adversity but then the character of a political organisation is best shown in times of crisis.

As it came as the umpteenth proof of the suicidal trend and depravity of our student politics, Thursday's killing comes to show how sadly the law enforcing agency has failed to live up to the expectations in manning a place traditionally as irruptible as the campus. There must have been police patrol in or around the campus when those miscreants with their weapons and professed militant mood, scaled the walls from the adjacent roads to carry out the operation. Yet it all happened by the path of an all too familiar pattern. Surely, this will not bring any relief to the Home Minister. Government will probably give its opposition a handle or two for criticism based on allegations of repression and partiality but as long as it remains committed to the cause of violence-free campus, moral approval and support from the saner and larger section of country's population including the students will never be in short supply.

## After Mother Teresa

She was astonishing in her ability to fight age and illness as she was in spreading the message of love and offering succor to the suffering and untouchable people. There were times when it seemed that this daughter of an Albanian grocer whom love and affection for humanity transformed into the greatest living epitome of the Christian concept of agape would go on forever as the head of the order she established way back in 1948, the Calcutta based Missionaries of Charity. Such was the universal expectation over a prolonged stay of this Nobel Laureate at the helm of the sect she founded to alleviate man's sufferings.

But time and mutability are great foes of human longing for permanence and Mother Teresa too had to pass the mantle of leader of the order. Sister Nirmala has been elected as the new leader of the Missionaries of Charity Order. Although we all would have liked the universal mother to stay there a bit longer we nevertheless deem it as salutary that she has seen in her life time the development of the leadership of an organisation so close to her anima. While praying for her health and longer life and, of course, an inspiringly effective reign of sister Nirmala as the head of the order, we hope this transition to be an apotheosis of the true spirit of leadership which envisions the life of an institution beyond the rise and fall of its founding figures.

# No More 'More' Rice

**"In general, urban households spend a relatively smaller share of their income on food than do rural households. A 10 per cent increase in per capita income for rural households will increase the demand by 16 per cent for livestock, 8.9 per cent for fish and edible oils, 5.6 per cent for potato and vegetables and pulses and only by 2 per cent for rice and wheat."**

It has now become crystal clear that with the avowed goal of food security as enshrined in successive plan documents, Bangladesh, admittedly or inadvertently, was destined for a monocrop system where agricultural growth related policies tilted heavily in favour of increased food production especially rice. Available evidences suggest that almost 70 per cent of the total land area in Bangladesh is now cultivated, 95 per cent of cropped land used for food production and 75 per cent is devoted to grow rice only. But how long can we cling on to rice production alone, albeit, mostly?

In a recent seminar paper, "Sustainable Agricultural Development in Bangladesh: Challenges and Issues" two of the celebrated economists of Bangladesh Drs. Mahabub Hossain of IIRI and Quazi Shahabuddin of BIDS attempted to provide a fairly thought-provoking response to the question posed above. At the outset, however, one needs to bear in mind that, in Bangladesh, agriculture's contribution to national income had already dwindled to 35 per cent in 1993/94 when compared with 51 per cent in the immediate post-independence era. The apparent wane has been in evidence in the face of the moderate economic progress that the country witnessed over the last two decades or so. The most pertinent question is, if Bangladesh at all succeeds in accelerating its economic growth at say, 6.7 per cent per annum, what kind of structural transformation should await our agriculture?

Quite obviously, the immediate problem would be caused by the expected income growth induced rise in demand for non-food items among income recipients. Let's not forget the famous Engle's law that states that proportion of income spent on non-farm goods and services goes up at a relatively faster

pace *pari passu* the income growth. And so, in Bangladesh, consumers would possibly reallocate their budgetary expenses in favour of vegetables, fruits, fish and livestock products leaving less to think about rice. Again, since economic growth and urbanization go hand in hand, a change in consumer tastes and preferences springing from a rise in urban population from around 20 per cent to a higher level in future would possibly add another fillip to the necessity of budgetary maneuverings.

The above mentioned economists tried to piece such a shift in demand drawing from Household Expenditure Survey

noncereal crops and fish and livestock production.

"Faster development of livestock and fisheries may promote both equity and food security by focusing attention on the disadvantaged social groups and regions where the crop environment is favourable." There is another social-economic argument that tends to clench the above strategy: "Livestock and poultry raising are usually performed by women who can do the work within homesteads, in between performing their domestic roles." This follows suit is the provision for credit, especially to the poor women to raise poultry



## Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes

conducted by BBS for 1991/92. "In general, urban households spend a relatively smaller share of their income on food than do rural households. A 10 per cent increase in per capita income for rural households will increase the demand by 16 per cent for livestock, 8.9 per cent for fish and edible oils, 5.6 per cent for potato and vegetables and pulses and only by 2 per cent for rice and wheat." Thus a tripling of the per capita income over the next quarter century, the authors tend to argue, would force consumers to a substantial slash in the budgetary allocation for food. The observations, thus, point to an imminent differential pattern of demand growth and a pertinent necessity of a much more diversified agriculture in the early 21st century. In other words, keeping the changing patterns ahead, the upcoming agricultural strategy should embrace the development of

and livestock. On the other hand, the commercial fishermen are found to hail from low income groups and the promotion of rice-fish cropping system in the deep-water flood plains and saline affected coastal areas — areas so far by passed by green revolution — could cut both ways; increased rice and non-rice crops.

Rice research, therefore, should explore possibilities of inducing non-rice crops into rice-based farming which is not beyond the possibility frontiers given that seasonal distribution and other agroclimatic conditions are duly taken into consideration. The projected urbanization at 40 per cent by year 2020 is likely to tilt the balance of food production from subsistence orientation to commercial production. Thus, the relative prices and profits will become a more important driving force behind the growth of food production than it was

# A New Political Era for Chechnya

by ASM Nurunnabi

GENERAL Aslan Maskhadov has been elected President of Chechnya in the election held on January 27 defeating 15 other candidates by an impressive margin winning 65% of votes. The election was held against a backdrop of war-shattered towns and villages. Maskhadov, a former Soviet army officer, led rebel forces in the separatist war and then negotiated a peace agreement with Moscow last August that provided the pull-out of the defeated Russian troops.

It was barely two years ago that Russian President Boris Yeltsin sent troops and tanks pouring into Chechnya, expecting a swift bout of a lightly armed band of several thousand Chechen fighters. But the Russian forces struggled at every step and when the Chechens caught them napping and retook capital Grozny last August, the Russians agreed to a peace deal and withdrew their last troops about a month ago.

The death toll for the Chechen war has been esti-

mated at anywhere from 18,000 to almost 100,000, most of them civilians. By either count, it is the greatest loss of life among Russians or Soviet citizens in any conflict since World War II. The battle for Chechnya is now set to become a political struggle.

Chechnya's new president Aslan Maskhadov took the oath of office amid heavy security, pledging to strengthen the self-proclaimed independence of his breakaway Muslim republic. Swearing on the Korean, Maskhadov pledged to defend the constitution, the laws and freedom of the Chechen state.

The new Chechen president sounded a note of conciliation with Moscow after his victory, saying he was ready to negotiate over his republic's ultimate political status. But he cautioned that he would only compromise "within reasonable limits."

The new president inherits a collapsed economy, the capital city and numerous villages in

ruins, streets full of men carrying weapons and a crime wave. The economy is so dependent on trade with Russia that economic pressure is now Moscow's most powerful weapon to negotiate over status.

The new president says that he wants to make Chechnya an Islamic state and plans to demand war compensation from Russia. But he acknowledged that Chechnya, which had only 1.2 million people before the war and has fewer now will need strong economic links with Russia regardless of whether it achieves independence. "If the Russians finally realise that they have tried every single method and that the only thing that is left is direct talks, then we are prepared for this," The new president said.

In Moscow, President Boris Yeltsin stood firm against Chechen independence. A Presidential spokesman said the outcome of the Chechen election provides hope for produc-

tive negotiations "in determining the status of the Chechen Republic within the Russian federation."

Alexander Lebed, the former national security chief who negotiated the peace deal with Maskhadov, said as an officer, Maskhadov unconditionally would keep to the peace agreement-inculcating suspension of the issue of independence.

But Maskhadov considers valid the republic's 1991 declaration of independence. "We declared Chechnya an independent, sovereign state in 1991," Maskhadov said. "Now, the only thing that remains is to have it recognised by the whole world."

Maskhadov soon might find himself on a collision course with Russia, if he decides to immediately press for the international recognition of Chechnya and tries to cut all links to Moscow. But observers feel that knowing all the odds, Maskhadov might prefer a long negotiating process while paying lip service to radical calls for immediate independence.

## To the Editor...

### Pay Commission

Sir, The article written by M N Chowdhury titled *Pay and the Pay Commission* in your paper published on the 20th February '97, is based on fact and past experience of the writer. The writer has written in detail about the necessity for adequate pay, a compensation policy, not *ad hoc* pay revision, private and public policy in salary, rationalisation of pay scales, keeping public enterprises outside government pay scales and that reasonable pay scales can be indexed to cost of living each year, etc.

Now we appeal to the government, if we expect good services from the employees, we should pay more which satisfies them. It should be implemented without delay. Because, the government employees are frustrated due to the poor performance of the economy, and the government.

M Ali  
Dhaka

### Jumuna Multipurpose Bridge

Sir, A controversy has arisen as to the naming of the underconstruction bridge over the river Jumuna. Different political parties are putting forward different proposals. The Jumuna Bridge, after construction will be a common property of (property) the people of Bangladesh and therefore they must have a say while naming the bridge. The following points are worth-consideration before a final decision is taken.

1) Jumuna, the name of the river, it bears from the time immemorial. It is a mighty river running through the heart of the country. It will be quite appropriate and logical that the bridge over the river bears the name of the river.

2) Jumuna is an age-old traditional name and it is associated with the sentiment of the people of the country.

3) People suffered and scarified a lot due to the strange behaviour and oft-repeated change of its course. It washed away many historical memorable monuments during such

change.

4) The huge loan with which the bridge is being constructed will have to be borne by the people of the country. So a common name acceptable to them should be adopted.

5) Loan was sanctioned in name of the river. Re-opening of the settled issue will create new problem in a country which is already ridden with thousand and one problems.

6) It has been a tradition from the time immemorial to quote very after the name of the river in many works done by the writers and poets, of this country.

7) This river is a witness and associated with many historical events and ups and downs of the nation from the distant past to the present day.

To pay due respect to the sentiment of the people and their tradition and to commemorate their sufferings and scarifies, it will be in the fitness of thing to name the Bridge as Jumuna Multipurpose Bridge.

M A Lashkar  
Tajmahal Road, Moham-madpur,  
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### Hazaribagh tanneries

Sir, I would like to point out the environmental pollution being created by Hazaribagh tanneries in the city. This tannery industry is located in the vicinity of residential areas of Dhanmondi, Zigatola and Rayerbazar not to speak of the BDR HQ at Pikhana. The inconvenience created by the operation of tanneries here includes obnoxious smell, polluted drains and open movement of raw hide and skin. The drainage system here is peculiar. Instead of discharging the waste towards low land in the west, it is diverted eastward seemingly towards Dhanmondi lake. The chemical effect of the liquid killed living organisms and plants down the line. The potency of the waste lasts for a long time and affects the environment wherever it finds access to.

Few years ago, it was decided by the government to remove the tannery to a suitable place,

but it has not yet been materialised. May we hope that the present government would take up the matter in right earnest to remove the tannery from the city area? In doing so, an area of high land can be salvaged and developed for residential purpose yielding huge financial benefits from which the compensation, if any, could be paid to the affected parties.

Capt. (Retd) Badruddin Ahmed Chowdhury  
68, Zigatola, Dhaka.

### India and Pakistan

Sir, India and Pakistan have been at daggers drawn over Kashmir for the last 50 years. They also fought as many as three wars but nothing tangible has been achieved or done so far either by India and Pakistan or by the world community to solve the dispute.

It appears that both New Delhi and Islamabad want to water the top of a plant after cutting its roots. We all know that a bad workman quarrels with his tools. We feel that in case of Kashmir, both India and Pakistan are following a policy of "avarice leads to vice and vice leads to death". Due to strained relations between them the sufferings of the peoples of the two countries as well as SAARC countries know no bounds.

South Asia is unable to undertake any pragmatic socio-economic development plans and programmes for the welfare of people beset with hunger, disease, illiteracy, unemployment, poor and low standard of living for decades together. We wonder how South Asia would behave in the 21st century and how long the people in the region would live in hostility and economic degradation?

We are not optimistic about an early solution to Kashmir dispute.

We, however, wonder if Bangladesh and India can solve sharing of the Ganges water after long 20 years of negotiations, why Pakistan and India cannot work out a peaceful solution for the 50-year-old Kashmir dispute. Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda said he wants to resume talks with Pakistan, but not on the biggest

irritant — Kashmir. Gowda said he welcomed statement by Pakistan's new Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on his willingness to improve ties with India but Kashmir is a 'closed chapter'.

As well-wishers, we would like to advise the New Delhi leaders that if Israel and Palestine, Russia and Chechnya can successfully make endeavours for peaceful solution to their various problems through negotiations, then what is the harm in resuming talks with Pakistan to help solve the Kashmir dispute?

O H Kabir  
6, Hare Street, Wari, Dhaka

### Traffic jam

Sir, The DCC deserves congratulations for erecting a number of under- and over-bridges all over the capital city. But it would appear redundant to anyone who has some idea about traffic jam in Dhaka. When automobiles as well as rickshaws get jam-packed and the roads become impassable for traffic, no one cares to ride an overbridge for one can easily get across the road straight. What is really necessary is to quickly build at least half a dozen flyovers at places like Gulistan, Magbazar, Farmgate, Sayedabad, Jatrabari etc.

It is understandable that flyovers would not only involve a much higher financial cost but also implementation difficulties like widening the roads and taking over at least marginal land. But that is inevitable. We cannot cure a serious patient by massages or just a painkiller when he needs high-powered antibiotics. For an ever-growing metropolis like Dhaka, a little far-sighted programme as suggested above would help not only the present generation but also the posterity. We would expect the DCC, LGED and other agencies concerned to sit together and chalk out plans that would be beneficial as a long-term solution to the endless, painful problem of traffic jams.

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# Dhaka Day by Day

## Inclined Overseas Way

by MJH Javed



The concept of free-market economy is very popular with us today. Discussions, seminars, exchange of views and search are going on this crucial issue. Aside from the arena of thought, impact of this newer concept is strong in the day to day life of the Dhaka city dwellers. When you return home from the shopping centre with any garment of the newest design, the first and foremost question you face is as to whether it is from abroad or not. You can seldom satisfy any member of your family with indigenous clothes. When you are at the shopping centre you ask the salesmen to display before you only the 'Indian saris or kameez' or Thai Jeans of European skirts and what not. That things from outside our territory are superior in quality seems to be the attitude.

There are a lot of shops in Dhaka city, which display signboards like, only foreign clothes are available. You rush to the 'hi-fi' part of any shopping centre in the hope of buying gorgeous one at a fair price. You ask the salesman to tell the name of the country from where this or that has come. As it is from India or United States or Australia you need not bargain. You at once meet the price of the 'priceless thing'. Had it been home-made, the case would have been different. Of course, you would say, the colour is bad or dead, knitting is poor, quality is low, the price is so high and so forth. Thus, the nationality of the 'foreign clothes' serves you at least one purpose, it refrains you from unwanted bargaining and saves your time.

More often foreign clothes are cheaper, especially the ones which cross the Indo-Bangla border, thanks to the active presence of the smugglers. In

dian saris, rather than those of Tangle or anywhere else in Bangladesh are overwhelmingly accepted by Bangladeshi ladies because these are both cheaper and better designed compared to ours. Our market is not under our control at all. In the eyes of passive observers, such a situation is advantageous for us as once we had to travel to Calcutta or Bombay to buy some Indian things, now we can easily procure those from Dhaka.

The trend is so strong that some indigenous garments factories are making endeavour to sell out their products under the false name of any Thai or Australian company. Any domestic name is not reliable to them. They adopt this way, understanding the prevailing psychology of the customers. The smart businessmen are putting any foreign sticker, or domestic sticker bearing name of any foreign company in the hope that this would serve them well. What a fine strategy to sell out goods (domestic) that buyers are not ready to buy!

Finally, such apathy towards home-made goods is not necessarily for quality-related reasons; rather mainly for socio-psychological reasons. Our failure, in all spheres of national life has resulted in such a negative attitude. A stereotype, notwithstanding partly true, has developed in our minds that very few things of this land are pure and qualitative. We have no faith in ourselves and the base of our confidence as a nation is very weak. May be our goods are at fault or not up to the mark but who would accept those if we refuse? Is another movement necessary to patronise our home-made things as we did during the British regime in protest against colonialism?

## OPINION

# The Road to Development and the Human Side of Enterprise

M Wahiduzzaman

This has reference to the Focus article entitled "Poverty Count, Poverty Alleviation and Growth with Social Justice", by Md Anisur Rahman (The Daily Star, Dhaka, 11 March 1997).

Mr Rahman's article is a counter to the economists' long refusal to consider ethics and make any value judgment in their discipline, and I agree with the learned author that the poor must not be reduced to the level of productive animals by maintaining their productive power only, ignoring their creative power. Man rises to his best stature by creating things. And things are produced only after they have been created. Clearly then, there is a difference between creation of things and production of things. You create a thing first and thereafter you produce a thing time and again as long as you need it. In the former case you are a creator (and in your best stature) and in the latter case you are a manager or a worker. In his article, Mr Rahman argues that in our development analysis we are concerned with achieving growth through poverty alleviation — just by maintaining the productive power of the poor, which necessarily means their muscle power only, and this is how they are reduced to the level of animals.

In the developed societies of the West the managers of production learned long ago that they could not increase production just by maintaining the productive power of the workers. They researched on the problem, and came out with the theory that the economic enterprise had a human side. They analysed the needs of the workers — raised a hierarchy of their needs, such as, needs of food, medicine, clothing, shelter, etc. The researchers further found that the workers had their ego and a desire to work with pleasure. They concluded that for achieving increased production all such needs must be met.

But if the Western society has discovered the human side of enterprise, they have done it primarily for the purpose of producing more and more, and making more and more profit. There is nothing wrong in it. Rather, this is the only road to

development, which has been trodden by all developed countries. There is no shortcut to this. A producer must make profit. Otherwise he cannot survive in business. So long as profit is not there in the production system, growth will either slow down or fall or will stagnate.

But if the developed societies recognized the human side of enterprise, it is not out of their altruistic love for workers. And it could not be so, either. The reasons are that (1) of all creatures man is the noblest as well as the most wretched one; (2) even if all the people of a society were given equal opportunities to become their best, all of them will not be equal in all respect; (3) so there cannot be absolute equality between man and man.

So, to achieve growth, (1) all people must be given equal opportunities to develop their faculty to the fullest extent; (2) since even with equal opportunity everyone will not be equal in all respect, we should not insist on having absolute equality between man and man; (3) following the reason 2, one must not have any hindrance in becoming as rich as one can be through his creative and productive efforts so long as by becoming so one does not make others suffer or make them poor; (4) if one should be allowed to become as much rich as one can be, one must also have the obligation to alleviate the sufferings of one's fellow citizens with his affluence. In other words, the rich must share their riches with their fellow citizens. If necessary, one must be reminded of altruistic love one must have for one's fellow citizens; and (5) finally the governors of society must find out the needy and disadvantaged people and give them everything they need to stand on their own feet.

Finally, achieving development means releasing human energy to create and produce things. It is expected that the fulfilment of above conditions may release human energy for achieving growth and development, if not fully, to a certain extent.

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