

## FOCUS

## Greening of Plans: Reviewing FFYP

by Dr Mahfuzul Haque

*People, especially the vulnerable groups, poor and women must be consulted in order to make a pro-poor, pro-people participatory plan. People should be put in the centre-stage of development.*

PANNING Commission has recently submitted the draft Fifth Five-Year Plan — FFYP (1997-2002). Views and comments of cross-section of the people were sought in the draft plan. While reviewers, mostly the country's eminent economists, are examining the plan from various perspectives, it might be worthwhile to see how an environmentalist will look at the plan. Like green party, green police, green government, 'green peace', can there be green plans and policies of the government? The answer perhaps is 'yes'. A plan, which ensures steady growth, conserves the environment and promotes sustainable development, is generally said to have considered the green issues.

Since independence, four Five-Year Plans and one Two-Year Plan have been implemented so far. Prior to the fifth plan, in a sharp break from the past, the past government had proposed adoption of a Participatory Perspective Plan (PPP) covering a 15-year timeframe (1995-2010). Based on the premise that people are the core of development, the PPP placed specific emphasis on growth and investment and suggested strengthening of institutional infrastructure for rapid implementation of development programmes. While searching for green issues within the FFYP, efforts will also be made to have cursory look on the PPP.

**Fifth Five-Year Plan:** Most of the plans are generally sectoral covering all aspects of development during the plan period. Environment being a cross-sectoral issue remains to be addressed cross-sectorally. Although, within the plan, there is a macro chapter on environment (chapter-ten) titled, 'Environment and Sustainable Livelihood', which elaborately discussed major environmental issues of the country, described goals and objectives, suggested policy outline and strategies for sustainable development. The question is whether 'environment' being a cross-sectoral issue, has been duly addressed in all the sectors of development. We know that 'environment' includes water, air, land and physical properties and the inter-relationship which exists among and between them and human beings, other living creatures, plants and micro organism [section 2 (d), Environment Protection Act, 1995].

If that be so, it should be kept in mind that impacts of that specific sector on environment should be considered in order to achieve sustainable development. For example, we know that excessive withdrawal of ground water causes environmental degradation (lowering of ground water table, land sub-

sidence, less water available in tube-wells, arsenic etc.).

Accordingly, it has been suggested that we should increase use of surface water. If we agree to the above hypothesis, we are to address this issue in all other sectors; like, food, agriculture, ecology, environment, water resources, energy, health, conflicts resolution etc.

**How Far Green is the Plan:** From the draft FFYP, only few sectors will be discussed here. They are: environment and sustainable livelihood; agriculture, water resources and rural development; resolution of conflicts; energy; oil, gas and natural resources; transport and physical planning; water supply and housing. It would be seen whether the proposed development activities to be taken under these sectors have duly considered their impacts on environment.

The very objectives and strategies of the plan started with a dismal picture of Bangladesh. It began with 'Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries...' and gave all negative statistics like illiteracy, mortality, poverty, hunger, malnutrition and unemployment; instead of statistics on literacy, economic growth, crop production etc. [para 2.1.1]. One would expect optimism, enthusiasm and pride in such an introductory paragraph. At another place, the plan identified environmental concerns like deforestation, chemical fertiliser, pesticides, industrial pollution and land degradation [para 2.1.4]. Under the same chapter, the plan put emphasis on more fertiliser use and increased irrigation using LPPs, DTWs, [para 2.3.6] knowing well that excessive withdrawal of ground water causes environmental degradation.

The macro chapter on 'Environment' and 'Sustainable Livelihood' added a new dimension to the plan. Among the major environmental issues, the plan identified impact of chemicals, industrial pollution, deforestation, salinity etc. It suggested setting up of common treatment plant for Hazaribagh tanneries and not relocating the same, a position contrary to the views espoused by the Ministry of Environment and Forest [para 10.10.2-11].

The ministry is of the view that even for further development and modernisation of the tannery sector, Hazaribagh tanneries must be relocated to somewhere with proper waste treatment facilities. In the section on 'General Remarks' it was expected that effects of global warming and concomitant sea-level rise would be taken into consideration while

making a projection [para 10.11.4]. It was not there. It is known by now that 17.5 per cent of Bangladesh will be permanently inundated, if the sea level rises by one meter only. In the 'Resolution of Conflicts' macro chapter, the plan praised the role of NGOs and stated that 'NGOs may over the years make the need for local government bodies minimal', a wish not in line with the Local Government Commission Report submitted recently [para 12.19].

The sectoral chapter on 'Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development' is rather well developed addressing the issues of concern. In some areas, corrections are needed. While discussing strategies for sustainable development in agriculture sector, the paragraph on 'Environment Protection' should have incorporated the major issues like, soil erosion, soil degradation, mono-cropping, agro-chemicals, pesticides, FCDI projects, ground water abstraction, arsenic etc. [para 13.16].

The 'Fisheries' sub-section raised some controversial issues. When the Third Fisheries Project supported by World Bank is facing increasing criticism from the fishermen regarding faulty stocking of fishery programme, the plan suggested the 'stocking' programme in its policy/strategy section [para 13.23.3]. In brackish water aquaculture section [para 13.24.3], the plan should have mentioned the issues related to shrimp farming like, environmental degradation, destruction of bio-diversity, killing of juveniles, social disorder and conflict, waterlogging, salinity intrusion, land degradation, crisis of fish and fodder etc., and would suggest remedial measures. Farmers are eager to have technology [intensive or semi-intensive], know-how, flow of capital, anti-virus measures etc. These suggestions are missing. The adverse impacts of ground water irrigation with suggestion for more use of surface water should have been mentioned [para 13.52].

Adverse environmental impacts of handloom industries like, discharge of untreated effluents in the open waters, occupational health hazards, spread of skin diseases in the neighbourhood etc., should have been touched upon in the strategy section of handlooms [para 14.6.6]. Moreover, emphasis should have been given on the strict compliance of environmental guidelines and regulations regarding chemical industry, cement, urea fertiliser, paper and pulp, sugarcane etc. [para 14.6.15]. The chapter on 'Energy' following the recently

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By Hanna-Barbera

## Tom and Jerry



## IAN FLEMING'S James Bond



Rob tells seminar  
Nat'l shipping  
policy to be  
announced soon

Shipping Minister A S M Abdur Rob said yesterday that a national shipping policy would be announced within the next three months, reports BSS.

The Shipping Ministry has formed a 111-member committee in this regard comprising representatives from different political parties, officials and others concerned to formulate the draft policy within a very short period, he said while speaking at a seminar.

The seminar, rehabilitation of cyclone damaged jetties at Jaldia and Patenga, a case study, was organised by the civil engineering department at the Engineers' Institution.

He underlined the need for formulating a national shipping policy as the present government is determined to make the sector more dynamic bringing forth epochal changes to its infrastructure.

He said it is very essential to

arrange eye camp, dental camp, family planning and other development programmes towards the welfare of the people.

He said this while inaugurating "Lions Service Week" yesterday at Dhaka National Medical Institute Hospital organised by Lions Club of Dhaka

State Minister for Jute and Textiles AK Faezul Huq has urged social welfare-oriented organisations to come up with more realistic programmes to serve the distressed and unfortunate people in the society, reports UNB.

He said this while inaugurating "Lions Service Week" yesterday at Dhaka National Medical Institute Hospital organised by Lions Club of Dhaka

to formulate a national shipping policy as the present government is determined to make the sector more dynamic bringing forth epochal changes to its infrastructure.

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Dhannondi district 315 A-1 Bangladesh.

The state minister said that

Lions members have to take

pioneer role in curbing terrorism

and drug abuses and other social evils.

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