

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.

PLANNING 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 organisms (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 subsidence, 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 LLPs, 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-h).

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 fish fry programme, the plan suggested the "stocking" programme in its policy/strategies 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, water logging, salinity intrusion, land degradation, crisis of fuel 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

approved Energy Policy, 1995, took note of new and renewable energy technologies (mini-hydro-power, solar, wind, tidal and wave power, bio-gas etc.), which is commendable (para 15.14). The chapter on "Oil, Gas and Natural Resources" has incorporated a section on environment (para 16.12). It has rightly identified the environmental concerns related to oil refinery. However, the remedial measures are missing in the policy and strategy section.

The environmental impacts concerning the transport sector are: carbon dioxide emission, use of conditioned cars, noise pollution, faulty fuel use, traffic congestion etc. These concerns should have been adequately addressed in the policy and strategy section (para 17.6.2).

Participatory Perspective Plan: Let's have a cursory look on the draft Participatory Perspective Plan. The uniqueness of the plan is its planning process based on countrywide consultation. Unlike the FFYP, the sectoral plan on "Forestry and Environment" is poorly developed. The portion on environment is hardly half a page. A 15-year perspective plan should have taken note of long term environmental effects like global warming and sea-level rise etc. Moreover, adverse impacts of other sectors (food and agriculture, fisheries, livestock, rural development, energy, industry, transport, communication etc.) on environment have not been adequately addressed. One would have expected this long-term perspective plan to be all-encompassing.

Conclusion: The other aspect of a green plan is its participatory planning process. National Environment Management Action Plan (NEMAP) is a model, where views and comments of grassroots level people were taken into consideration in a country-wide consultative process. 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. It will help a planner to closely look into their problems through their eyes. A poor may be illiterate, but she is not uneducated. She knows about her problems and probable solutions better than anybody else. Keeping this in mind, a planner has to wear a 'green glass' and plan his policy and strategy accordingly.

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BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

Verbatim Text of Cross Examination of Seventeenth Prosecution Witness

Havildar (ret'd) Shamsul Islam, the 17th prosecution witness in Bangabandhu murder case, was cross-examined by the defence lawyers when the court resumed Tuesday morning.

Advocate Gazi Zillur Rahman, state defence for absconding accused Lt Col (dismissed) Khandakar Abdur Rashid, questioned him first while other state defence counsels declined.

Following are excerpts from cross-examination by advocate T M Akbar, defence lawyer for accused Lt Col (LPR) Muhiuddin:

Q: When did you retire from the Army?

A: On October 3, 1990.

Q: When did you join?

A: On October 4, 1969.

Q: What was your post when you joined the Army?

A: I joined the Artillery of the then Pakistan Army as a sepoy.

Q: Were you in the country during the 1971 Liberation War?

A: No, I was not in the country.

Q: Who was Commander of the Romio Battery during the incident?

A: I don't know.

Q: Did you know at that time?

A: No.

Q: Who was Commander of the Headquarters Battery?

A: I can't recall his name.

Q: Did the training of the four batteries take place at the same place?

A: Sometimes the training took place at the same place, sometimes at different places.

Q: Did you take part in the training along with the Romio Battery?

A: Sometimes.

Q: Did you see the Commander of the Romio Battery during the night exercise on that night?

A: No, I didn't see him.

Q: Who was 2-IC of your battery?

A: One lieutenant. I can't recall his name.

Q: How long did you serve under him?

A: One to one and half months.

Q: And under Commander Jobayer Siddiqui?

A: Six to seven months.

Q: Tell us your chain of command.

A: A Battery Captain or Lieutenant after the Commander.

After him another Lieutenant and then Battery Subedar, Battery Havildar Major, Havildar, Naik, Lance Naik and soldiers.

Q: How many personnel were there in your Cubec Battery from the Commander to soldiers?

A: 70 to 80.

Q: How do you identify a havildar who is in charge of a cannon?

A: Gun Number One.

Q: Did all of the Cubec Battery fall in on August 14?

A: Yes, all.

Q: What is the name of the place where you fell in first?

A: MT Garage.

Q: Did all of the four batteries of the regiment fall in?

A: Yes.

Q: Were the cannons with you during the fall-in?

A: Those were kept beside us.

Q: Did you fall in with personal arms?

A: Yes.

Q: What was your arms?

A: An SLR.

Q: From where did you receive the arms?

A: We received the arms from the battery armoury after signing on register book.

Q: What was the distance between two batteries in the fall-in?

A: Five to seven cubits.

Q: Who was in charge of your gun number 5?

A: Havildar Gunner Abdur Rauf.

Q: There were a Gun Position Officer (GPO) in every battery.

A: Yes.

Q: Who was GPO of your battery?

A: I can't recall his name.

Q: What is the function of a GPO?

A: He makes directive about degree, angle and target.

Q: The angle is decided so that the shell hits the target.

A: Yes.

Q: Who does prepare the shells?

A: All the gunners who accompany the havildar.

Q: Is there a loader for loading the shells?

A: Yes.

Q: What was the size of the shell of the cannon number 5?

A: 105 diameters.

Q: How did you go to Balurghat New Airport?

A: All of the Cubec Battery by trucks.

Q: Were the six cannons hooked with the trucks?

A: Yes.

Q: How many Artillery Guns were taken to Balurghat?

A: 18.

Q: Did all of the three batteries go to Balurghat together?

A: No, separately.

Q: Did you find others when you went there?

A: I can't recall whether others went before or after us.

Q: Were all of the four batteries present in the fall-in at 7 pm?

A: The three batteries who had cannons fell in. I can't recall if the Headquarters Battery who had no cannon fell in.

Q: Is it necessary to take cannons in the night exercise?

A: The exercise takes place with the cannons.

Q: How did you keep the cannons?

A: We kept those in a row.

Q: Were the cannons of the respective batteries kept separately?

A: Yes.

Q: What was the distance between the cannons of the two batteries?

A: 25 to 30 cubits.

Q: What was the distance between two cannons?

A: Five to six cubits.

Q: Did you carry the personal arms for the night exercise?

A: Yes.

Q: Who is responsible for account of the shells?

A: Gun Number One.

Q: The army personnel who was in charge of the truck from where you took shells and ammunition of personal arms is also responsible for account of those.

A: Yes.

Q: Did Battery Commander Captain Jobayer Siddiqui and JCOs and NCOs go to Balurghat in the trucks?

A: I don't know about Captain Jobayer Siddiqui. However, all JCOs of the battery, including JCOs and NCOs went by trucks.

Q: Does the night parade take place outside the cantonment?

A: No, it takes place in the cantonment area.

Q: Where did you take part in training on that night?

A: At Balurghat New Airport.

Q: Is the place more developed now in comparison with the condition in August, 1975?

A: I don't know what development took place there.

Q: Didn't you go there after 1975?

A: No, I didn't go.

Q: Were you in Cubec Battery of Artillery till 1990?

A: Yes.

Q: Was there no night parade after August, 1975?

A: Yes, there were so many night parades. But inside the cantonment. If there was any outside the cantonment, it not at Balurghat.

Q: The place was dark on August 14 night.

A: There was as usual electric lights.

Q: Can you recall the names of those four to five personnel whom Hashem Saheb called from Cubec Battery and asked to board the trucks?

A: Shamsul Islam, Gunner Idris Mia, Gunner Shamsheer and myself. I can't recall the names of the rest.

Q: Can you tell us the name of driver of the Kalabagan-bound truck?

A: I can't recall his name.

bound truck?

A: I can't recall his name.

Q: Can you say the truck belonged to which gun?

A: No, I can't say.

Q: Violating the chain of command in Army is punishable.

A: Yes.

Q: Were you punished in Army for breaking chain of command till you went on retirement in 1990?

A: No.

Q: Do you know that Captain Jobayer Siddiqui was later promoted to Brigadier?

A: No, this is not known to me.

Q: How long Captain Jobayer Siddiqui was in your regiment after the incident?

A: He was transferred after six to seven months.

Q: Six cannons were taken to Mirpur Road. What about the rest 12?

A: I don't know.

Q: Do you know where the Rakhi Bahini Headquarters was situated at that time?

A: It was not known to me.

Q: Did you make any statement to anybody before giving witness to this court?

A: Yes, I gave a statement to CID.

Q: When?

A: On November 4, 1996.

Q: "I fired four shells," you told the investigation officer.

A: I can't recall whether I told him or I wrote.

Q: Did you tell the IO that "I knew how to prepare and fire shells."

A: Yes, I told him.

Q: Can you mention the names of those who went to Kalabagan along with the six trucks and cannons?

A: Havildar Gunners Abu Taher, Abul Bashar and Abul Kalam. I can't recall the name of others.

Q: Can you recall who were in which gun?

A: No.

Q: From where you heard the Ajan of Fazr on August 15 morning?

A: I can't remember.

Q: When did you leave Kalabagan area?

A: At about 7 am.

Q: You are a self-confessed killer in this case.

A: This is not true.

Q: You can't do anything without permission from your battery commander. Isn't it true?

A: Yes, it is true.

Q: Was there any place to keep all the six cannons of your battery?

A: Yes.

Q: Where was the place.

A: There was a specific place in the regiment which was called gun-shed.

Q: When the cannons remain in the shed an officer is given charge for the protection. What was the designation of that officer.

A: Yes, Quarter Master.

Q: Records were kept while bringing out and taking the cannons into the shed.

A: Yes.

Q: Those cannons have separate numbers.

A: Yes.

Q: The trucks, which carry those cannons, were also kept in fixed places.

A: Yes.

Q: What was the number of the truck which carried cannon no-5.

A: I don't remember.

Q: You went to Mirpur Road under the order of your cubec commander.

A: It is not true.

Q: The firing did not hit the target as you had fired the cannon without anyone's order.

A: It is not true.

Q: What you did on the night following August 14 was by the order of your cubec commander. For that reason both you and your commander were responsible.

A: It is not true.

Q: You have given false statement to save yourself and your cubec commander.

A: It is not true.

Q: You have identified Muhiuddin in the dock as shown by

the prosecution.

A: Not true.

Following are excerpts from cross-examination by advocate Abdur Razzak Khan, defence lawyer for accused Lt Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahriyar Rashid Khan:

Q: You have been visiting Dhaka since long. Your visited Dhaka before joining your service and after your retirement.

A: Yes.

Q: Bangabandhu had been residing at Road — 32 since long. Even before the Independence War, he led the movement of 1962, 1966, 1969 and the War of Liberation from this house.

A: I did not know that.

Q: You were posted in Dhaka after your repatriation from Pakistan.

A: Yes.

Q: You were on duty at Dhaka Cantonment till August 15, 1975.

A: Yes.

Q: You knew that the then President used to reside at Road-32.

A: No.

Q: Bangabandhu had offices at the secretariat and the Ganobhaban.

A: This was not known to me.

Q: Armed with cannons, arms and ammunition, did you ever have night parade in the Dhaka city before August 15.

A: No.

Q: You told the IO that after installing cannon beside the lake you heard heavy firing of light arms from Bangabandhu's residence.