

Impressive Earnestness

Ms. Carol Bellamy, the new Executive Director of Unicef, was recently on her first official visit to Bangladesh. During her trip she tried to see as much of our varied countryside and as many of our multi-faceted development projects as was physically possible. She impressed us with her earnestness and sincerity of purpose. She was frank and open. Her concern for our children was obvious. While here, she engaged herself in a genuine dialogue with our experts on what Unicef and Bangladesh should do to meet our development challenges, especially take care of millions of children languishing in neglect. It was as a part of that engaging dialogue process that she met us and talked frankly about what she learnt, and the challenges that we needed to face.

Interviewed by Mahfuz Anam

Mahfuz Anam, Editor, The Daily Star (MA): What are the things that struck you during your visit to Bangladesh?

Ms. Carol Bellamy (CB): Many things have struck me so far, like the strength of some of the women I have met. They include the women who talk about maternal mortality and about their mothers who have died. The women of non-governmental agencies who talk about the violence against women. Not just violence, they talk about girls and women in this country who have a right to be treated fairly, just as anyone else.

When I talked to the Prime Minister herself about issues of health education and maternal mortality, she got energised. That was something that impressed me.

I've been impressed by the intelligence, the understanding, not just academic but operational understanding of some of the issues regarding child labour and importance of educational opportunities, realising it's a very complex matter.

MA: Was there anything that overwhelmed you, shocked you, disappointed you?

CB: I had the opportunity to meet some of the survivors of acid throwing. What was shocking about it was that this seemed to be a form of behaviour that was not condemned as much as it should be. Without some kind of public condemnation, it's not a discouraging environment for it. May be a couple of boys here and there have been put into jail, but it doesn't sound like there is an overwhelming public reaction to it.

MA: What are the priorities of the Unicef office in Bangladesh that you would like to see?

CB: I think the priorities are really to look forward and make sure that Unicef itself is positioned to respond to the challenge of children in Bangladesh in the next century.

This office is really one of the cutting edge offices in the area of child rights, building in a rights perspective in everything that we do. It's not just seeing the immunisation part of the child, but looking into the rights of the child. So it's recognising the inter-connection of water, hygiene and sanitation to children's health and children's education. It's looking at the whole child and trying to intervene in different ways for the development of the whole child. It's very important.

As another priority we have been looking at how we can enhance our advocacy. We are looking at how decisions are made, how opinions are shaped. Looking at how to get the message across. We can analyse issues, but those messages must get out and get out in the best way. The messages may be given out by the community, not by just an official standing out there in a suit.

These are some of the challenging issues which are proving to be more difficult than we thought. Maternal mortality, nutrition are priority issues.

MA: What is your personal vision of Unicef?

CB: My vision of Unicef is really of an advocate for children. It's not an organisation that's doing work for others but

is looking for ways to enhance the capacity of people to do things which need to be done for children. I see it as seeking ways to influence policy. This can be done in several ways. It can be done through pilot projects.

With the Convention of the Rights of the Child in place in nearly all countries of the world, the rights of children will really shape Unicef's work over the next few years. It doesn't say that Unicef will intervene the moment a child isn't immunised, but that from the moment a child is born till it is 18, it has certain rights. So if I can leave any mark, it will be the rights of children will be in everything that Unicef does.

MA: Do you find anything frustrating in Unicef operations?

CB: There is that element of UN bureaucracy that makes things go more slowly than I would like them to go. So my great frustration is perhaps at the speed at which change takes place, the speed at which the systems in which we work allow change to take place.

MA: Is there anything in Unicef that you'd want to see changed tomorrow morning?

CB: I think organisationally, systematically, we are doing very well. I think we are not as good in our management of human resources as I would like it to be.

Internally, I think we do have to really think how we should evaluate, measure and monitor quality factors. We have a series of systems of looking at how many children there are in each country, but there are adding value in terms of



Ms. Carol Bellamy

the quality of education or ways of dealing with exploitation of children, whether it is child labour or whatever? It is not just a matter of measuring. You learn from what you are doing and you want to do corrections sometimes.

MA: If there was a resolution in the UN and you were given all the money you need, tell me what are the things you would do?

CB: Education. Informal early child education, primary education and secondary education. I believe in education with a particular emphasis on girl's education.

Then there is children's rights to become reality rather than words.

MA: I always think that your logo has overlooked the man it only depicts the mother and the child. It should show the whole family. Perhaps you should add a silhouette.

CB: Looking at the whole child today is actually going to bring the family into the scene. From just a little gurgling baby you look at the broader environment in which the child is growing. When we are talking about the maternal mortality rate, we're talking about men and boys and the messages for men and boys. This means looking in a more integrated way.

MA: Thank you.

Transcribed by: PROBE

Bonheur for Bangladesh

by Fayza Haq

THE Rotary District 5960 (USA) Group Study Exchange Team to Bangladesh District 3280 was here for a month. Speaking to the team members Joanne Barr, Barbara Kass and Don Miller one gleaned some notion about their task in Bangladesh.

Joanne Barr, who comes from Minnesota, the northern part of the United States, the leader of the group study, discussing the activities of the team in Bangladesh says, "We saw industries, clinics, schools, public health systems and even more important, how people live here. We were somewhat unfamiliar with the country to which we came though we had several months of meeting and talking to some Bangladeshi people. We read a few magazines and books from our group. In addition we had some information from the internet. The people we met included Dr A Majid Khan, president of the Independent University of Bangladesh. He had just been in Dhaka three days before he talked to us. (He is an exchange professor with Hamelin University in Minneapolis.) The other is a restaurant owner in Rochester, Minnesota. With him was a graduate student from Bangladesh who goes to school in USA."

When asked about some general views about Rotarians being the upper crust of society, for the work that they do is often questioned and viewed as elements of snobbery when there is a lot of charity work done by other people that does not get such media flash, Joanne replied immediately and vociferously, "I found the Rotarians to be very much interested in what they were doing, visiting the projects about twice a week. We were tried to balance it with trying to talk to people like women's groups, women's volunteer associations and other individuals. We have tried to compare and we have found a lot of attachment and enthusiasm among the project workers. We were very impressed with their integrity so far. Perhaps the view you mention is a biased one. In our country, Rotary is not seen as only a high class group. It is viewed as more democratic, as the members come from all occupations and walks of life. We have teachers, principals, librarians and nurses. I myself

the Rotary, a wheel that is formed. Today Rotarians all over wish to share their ideas."

Dwelling on their impression of Bangladesh over the few weeks that the group has been here, Joanne comments, "We could have been here for a year to barely begin to understand the country. We would like to stay longer but it is impossible. Our impression is that it is a very dynamic country with people trying to make change and find very creative solutions to difficult problems, as regards health, education, social work, business the newsmedia. They are striving to be better and better every day."

"As for the people they have been just wonderful in that they are very easy to talk to, and hospitable. They are interested in our country and ask questions about it. They readily answer questions about their own country, their culture and religion. They have been very generous with their time — and their thoughts."

Joanne's leisure hours include hiking and biking. She has five children, four daughters and a son.

Barbara Kass, a social worker by profession, asked to comment on her work said, "I love my work as I work with volunteers in our community. I match children who may not have a father or a mother to give them a support and to do well in school — and do activities that the missing parent would do. I see the best of my community who give their time freely to better them and I see the children really benefiting. They are much better off because of the good time that they are spending."

Talking about the places that she had visited in connection with her work, here in Bangladesh, she informs me, "I haven't been to so many. I've been to a woman and child health clinic. There I saw very well run facilities. I witnessed education in which I am interested. My sister is a mid-wife. Also, I have three children so I am naturally interested in young ones on that account. Prenatal and general children's healthcare fascinates me. I saw immunisation facilities and a thousand people a day came to the clinic run by the

ple told me this and I am impressed by this. In USA, on the other hand, we import a lot of food."

Giving more details of the Bangladesh scene, Barbara adds, "The people will not have many problems in the near future. Take the small example of plastic bags and the question of where they are going to go. This is not any different situation from east Kentucky in USA where the people make compost and dissolve this into the soil. I have been asking questions as regards recycling, and I was told a solution is coming in Bangladesh. People are understanding that this is a problem and looking at solutions."

"As far as pollution and the western media image of Bangladesh of being a country of floods, cyclones and political agitations, I knew some of that from USA already. But I knew very little when I read the ad to apply to the team. I studied on the internet to learn about biodynamic farming, that is, ways of crop rotating and making sure that the soil does not get depleted. Production is more important than sustainability. Of what I have seen of farming, I have found the techniques very good. My impression, before we came here, was that there was a lot of change in women's rights, education and economic growth opportunities and I have found that to be true."

We also had time for some sight-seeing and souvenir shopping but we had to much of serious work to fit into our tight schedule."

In her leisure hours Barbara plays the accordion and the piano, and skiing in winter.

Donald J Miller, a civil engineer from Rochester, dwelling on what he had learnt in Bangladesh, says, "The gentleman I spoke to as regards civil engineering was very knowledgeable about building up a metropolis, but if they have the resources for what they would like to do is another question. Their basic knowledge of engineering is very good."

Adding his general impression of Bangladesh, Donald says, "I've been very impressed by a lot of the Rotarians, especially the manufacturers who come from the middle class of the pharmaceutical and garment factory origin. I believe Bangladesh is a nation in early

Metropolitan



Visiting Vice President of Islami Development Bank (IDB) Ousmane Seck called on State Minister for Planning and Civil Aviation and Tourism Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir at his office yesterday. — PID photo

BFUJ blasts BNP for obstructing sale of Purbanchal

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) president Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and secretary General Abul Kalam Azad, in a joint statement, yesterday strongly condemned and protested, what they said, "Obstructing the circulation and sale of Dainik Purbanchal through destructive activities," reports BSS.

They expressed their deep concern to see that "Leaders and workers of BNP and its affiliated organisations are obstructing the sale of Purbanchal, bombing the newspaper office and putting the newspaper on fire centering publication of poem on the Victory Day issue of the newspaper." As a result of this, the newspaper would not be circulated at many places, they said.

The BFUJ leaders said the authorities of the Purbanchal had already regretted and apologised for the publication of the poem and given rein to this connection. Even after this, obstructing the circulation of the newspaper, bombing and arson are undesirable and such attitudes greatly obstruct the unhindered growth of newspapers.

The journalist leaders said BNP would have to bear the responsibility for any situation if this did not end immediately.

Workshop

A day-long workshop on Disposing-off audit objections and accountability will be held at the conference room of Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management today, reports UNB.

Death condoled

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Photo-Journalists' Association has condoled the death of mother of Sheikh Enamul Haq, a senior staff photographer of The Daily Star.

She died of old age complications on Saturday night, according to a press release of the Association yesterday.

Govt striving to recover Khas lands, says minister

The government is making vigorous efforts to identify and recover the Khas lands which are illegally occupied by unauthorised people with a view to rendering more benefit to the landless poor families, reports BSS.

State Minister for Land Al-haj Rashed Mosharrar said while addressing the *Krishak* and *Khet-Majur* organisations held in the conference room of the Land Ministry today. Representatives from the 17 *Krishak* and *Khet-Majur* organisations attended the meeting.

The State Minister said the Land Ministry has already formulated *agro-Khas* land distribution management policy among the landless and landless poor families with a view to alleviating poverty.

He called upon the members of the *Krishak* and *Khet-Majur* organisations to give specific and constructive suggestions in distributing *agro-Khas* land among the destitutes.

Young girl killed

A young girl was killed as a speeding truck hit her in Uttara thana of the city early yesterday, reports UNB.

Police said Anwara Begum, 22, who was crossing the road in front of Joyal Market, died on the spot.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. A UD case was filed.

Bengali cultural festival begins in Khulna today

KHULNA, Dec 21: A two-day Bengali cultural festival begins at the local Shaheed Hadis Park tomorrow under the joint auspices of the education and cultural research centre and the Bangali Sanskriti Utshav Ujjan Parishad, reports BSS.

The two-day festival will be formally inaugurated by Dr Mahbubur Rahman at the Shaheed Hadis Park.

The festival includes a colourful rally in the city, *Palki Gan*, *Dhali Gan*, *Bijoy Giti* and *Jari-Sari Gan*.



A 2-week-long computer networking course organised by IUB's Extension and Continuing Education Centre (ECEC) for enhancing communication skills has just concluded. Participants, university official and faculty members are seen with Abdul Hai Sarker at the certificate awarding ceremony on Thursday.

Minister addresses 1st annual convention of SAGN

Socio-cultural movement can help uproot discriminatory culture

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak said yesterday that a socio-cultural movement should be built to uproot the discriminatory culture and traditions of the society, reports BSS.

Speaking as the chief guest at the first annual convention of South Asia Gender Network (SAGN) at a local hotel, the minister said only enactment of law was not enough to change the injurious social practices of discrimination and exploitation.

Formed in 1994, SAGN has been working to address the common gender issues within the SAARC countries and increase collaboration among the like-minded people and groups in the member countries. SAGN groups are formed in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Maldives.

The minister described the formation of SAGN as a positive step towards changing the unequal relationship of men and women and said it can help create congenial atmosphere in taking gender issues with due

weightage in South Asian countries.

Referring to the declaration of the national women development policy by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina early this year Razzak hoped that the policy would bring about a meaningful change in the life of women and pave the way for equal human relationship.

In this respect, he said, a Law Commission has been formed to examine the existing laws.

The commission is making necessary recommendations to match the laws with the fundamental rights as provided in our constitution, the minister said.

Razzak said SAGN could play an important role to help implement the national women development policy in Bangladesh and preventing trafficking in women and children.

The minister also said that the government would extend every possible support and co-operation to carry forward the movement for emancipating women from all forms of discrimination and exploitation.

Weather

Night temp may fall

Dry weather is likely to prevail over the country at the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Slight fall in night temperature is expected across the country, the Met Office said.

The weathermen predicted little change in the subsequent two days and no marked change for another five days.

The country's highest temperature 25.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and the lowest 9.0 degrees at Rangpur.

The sun sets today at 5:17 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:38 am. Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in Percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	22.6	11.0	97	75
Chittagong	24.1	12.5	96	73
Rajshahi	19.6	12.2	75	86
Khulna	23.3	12.6	73	58

HERE and THERE

BCSIR
A two-day long science and technology exhibition organised by the Ministry of Science and Technology concluded at the premises of Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) yesterday, says a press release.

In a closing address of the exhibition Prof. Moshazzaman expressed gratitude to the Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, members of the organising committee and scientists of the participating organisations for taking all out efforts to make the exhibition a success.

Moreover he expressed hope that scientists will be able to exhibit more new samples and processes in the exhibition to be held in future. BCSIR, BAEC, BANSDOC, Bangladesh Computer Council and National Sci-



Don Miller, Barbara Kass, Joanne Barr and Abdul Rahman Talukdar (from left to right)

ence and Technology Museum showed about three hundred samples and processes in the exhibition.

PIB

A planning workshop entitled "Facts for Life (FFL)" was held at the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) yesterday, reports BSS.

Speakers at the workshop stressed the need for media campaign to ensure health and welfare of women and children.

The workshop organised by the PIB was addressed by child specialist National Professor Dr M R Khan, journalist Rokonzaman Khan, Prof Q A I M Nuruddin and Dr Shaikh Abdus Salam, DG of PIB.

Golam Kibria, Director Training of PIB, acted as moderator of the workshop.

am a psychologist and sociologist — my work at present is a part time one, working 20 to 30 hours a week. I work with my husband, who is a pediatrician and who has a clinic that deals with children who have chronic diseases, facing difficult decisions, such as, placing their child in residential treatment. We have an extremely large troubled teenage population — something I know that does not happen here. We are trying to make things better for the teenagers. When I worked full time I did so in a residential treatment centre for emotionally disturbed children. I have taught at a college and at family education which is something like what is being done here too.

Asked why the group are called Rotarians, Joanne explained, "It was started by Paul Harris with four men, who were in different professions, whom he used to meet to discuss sufficient to be able to produce the food that the people of Bangladesh need. Several peo-

Radda Baranen. One day, while we were visiting the Parliament, and some other tourist interest, a 13-year-old girl was able to accompany us. So we were able to ask a lot of questions about teenagers' attitudes regarding growing up. I learnt that they are perhaps less rebellious than our own children and that they take education more seriously than their counterparts in USA. I think they are very hopeful. I asked her if she thought that her opportunities are larger than her parents' and her answer was in the affirmative. She added that she had more choices."

Dwelling on her general impressions of Bangladesh, Barbara says, "It is good. I grow my own food and live on a farm in Wisconsin and so I'm interested in vegetables and the food that is grown here. I understand that you are 95 per cent self-sufficient in being able to produce the food that the people of Bangladesh need. Several peo-

stages of industrial development and has a lot of the problems that other industrialised countries had at a similar stage in their history — and they are now working through these problems just like industrialised nations have done before."

His leisure hours include basketball and cycling and non-fiction reading. He is a father of three small daughters.

Only the team leader was a Rotarian. The other two were here to study on an exchange programme. They were guided by Abdul Rahman Talukdar, the district secretary of the Group Study Exchange Committee.

It uplifts the heart and mind when western visitors have good words to put in for Bangladesh on their trips to this country. Their optimistic vision gives impetus to our workers, thinkers, industrialists, and individuals from all walks of life.

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