

FOCUS

For Sustainability of Flood Control and Drainage Projects

by Md Nurul Haque

AGRICULTURE of Bangladesh plays a key role in the national economy. But the trend of this sector in recent years is not encouraging which is manifested by the gradual declining of crop production during the first half of the present decade. Different factors are responsible for this negative trend which may require a comprehensive study to find out.

Although 'self sufficiency in food' is the common aim of all the Five-Year Plans of the government yet still the target remains unachieved. Many development projects with the main objective of increasing agricultural production, farm incomes and employment opportunities have been taken in this sector and most of the projects are of flood control, drainage and irrigation [FCD&I] type.

Various types of interventions like embankment, canal digging, river dredging, sluice gate, fish pass, boat pass etc. are common in most of the FCD projects. Each year a major part of our development budget is spent on implementing these projects. But the lesson learned from the past is very frustrating except the case of minor irriga-

tion schemes. Even the FAP (Flood Action Plan) studies of recent years which introduced many innovative ideas and technological developments to make the projects environmentally sound and sustainable can be accredited for the findings that helped the projects to be more sound but failed to remove the existing bottlenecks still threatening their sustainability. This is the general view regarding most of the FCD projects and the recent FAP studies as well. Although adequate corrective measures have been proposed in FAP studies against the lacking of the past but all the studies have been found defective at least in one crucial point, which may not be conducive for the proposed projects to be sustainable.

Operation and maintenance (O&M) stage is the most crucial part of a water resources development project. After the successful implementation of any FCD project the smooth operation and maintenance play a key role in the sustainability of that project. The O&M must be self-sustaining and for this, among other factors like proper institutional and organizational set-up, the issue of cost-recovery has become a prime

concern. This is a long-standing bottleneck in the planning and decision making process of the projects. Unless it is properly addressed the benefits envisaged cannot be realized.

Now it is realized that traditional O&M works will never bring the targeted achievement of the project. The reason generally quoted by the organization concerned [BWDB] is the poor O&M status is the non-availability of the required funds. In some cases, annual O&M budget allocation to BWDB is used mainly for paying staff salaries.

Breaching of embankment, silting-up of drainage canal, non-functioning of sluice gate, etc. are the very real and common features of these projects. Due to lack of proper operation and maintenance the system so built suffers throughout its lifetime and in the end the investments are lost.

The capital expenditure incurred to build the project be- comes meaningful only if the beneficiaries take over O&M re-sponsibilities.

The government, appreciating the importance of cost recovery for project sustainability, has initiated number of studies through its relevant agencies to identify suitable mechanisms for achieving it. All the efforts to devise a self-sustaining mechanism through which fund can be created for smooth operation and maintenance of the project have failed.

The main hindrances identified in O&M cost recovery are the general unwillingness of the users to pay and non-deposit of the amount collected by the middlemen to BWDB.

A new suggestion about O&M cost recovery has been made in a very recent study report of an FCD type project. According to the suggestion, a flat rate land improvement tax on all holdings within the project area is to be imposed and the Union

Parishad will be empowered to assess and collect that tax with necessary cooperation and help from the revenue Tahsil offices. The ministry concerned seems to be satisfied with this suggestion.

The suggestion to impose a flat rate land improvement tax on all holdings within the sub-project area is workable but not justifiable on the ground that the impact on different lands due to the project will definitely not be flat or be of same degree.

Therefore, benefit derived by different land holders will be different within the project or SPS area. The suggestion of flat rate tax is very likely to cause serious social repercussion. So it is only justifiable to collect tax from the beneficiaries proportionate to the benefit they derive due to the project intervention.

Secondly, the suggestion made in the report regarding the mode of cost-recovery is not

social unrest. This idea is not a new or unprecedented one, it is practiced in other sectors of the government.

SUGGESTION: Instead of tax collection directly from the beneficiaries an arrangement is to be made so that the fund necessary for the O&M of the project, after its implementation phase, will be provided from the Hat/Bazar leasing fund of the respective Thana Parishad [TP]. Water Management Committee [WMC] of the project or SPS will prepare a need based budget and submit it to the respective TP. Thana Parishad will allocate the amount from their leasing fund. For this additional allocation TP will increase the rate of tax [khazna] at certain percentage on listed commodities/products impacted positively due to the project interventions. The decision of increased rate of tax will be informed to the prospective bidder prior to the bidding for leasing out of Hat/Bazar within the project or SP areas. Consequently bidding will be higher and the TP will get additional money required for such new allocation. The lessees, the most efficient agents of tax collection will collect tax with their own mechanism, man-

power and traditional practice. This mechanism of tax collection will be more proportionate to the benefit derived by the beneficiaries because most of the benefit due to the FCD project will result in higher agricultural production. If the tax is imposed on the products it will be justifiable on proportional ground. An additional tax for project with the existing tax [khazna] on these products in Hat/Bazar will not be difficult to realize by the lessees. This is the system of fund procurement by which collection cost can be totally avoided, regular cash inflow will be ensured, the long-standing problem of project operation and maintenance due to the lack of required fund would be solved and in turn, sustainability will prevail.

If the suggestion is taken into account a study in this respect will be needed and if the study result shows that the suggestion made is workable, most sound and sustainable, a recommendation should be made and put forward to the government for approval backed by necessary legal framework.

The writer is Assistant Director [Tech.], Department of Environment.

An Unfair Convention in Kyoto

by Sarwat Chowdhury

Even if the Clinton administration is sincere in efforts to raise the emission standards, it faces major obstacle from the Senate which insists that the developing nations also have to cut their greenhouse gas emissions before the US can join a global climate treaty.

THE UN Convention on Climate Change was held in Kyoto, Japan early December last year. Despite all the preparations, the treaty does not seem to have achieved much consensus. The agreed upon level of emission is said to be highly compromised and has some major loopholes. According to some environmental groups, this newer version of compromised treaty may actually cause a rise in the global emissions level in early 21st century. These results are well known. What is probably not well known is that: for about two months prior to the conference, there was a full-front attack on the US media on the so-called 'unfairness' of the proposed climate treaty and how it could affect the day-to-day lives of hardworking Americans.

These negative advertisements were quite unabashed in showing the maps of countries like China, India, and Mexico, where presumably the citizens would not be paying for environmental compliance, and compared them to the ordinary Americans who would be forced to pay higher gasoline taxes etc., and supposedly be forced to a lower standard of living. Such media campaigns do influence public opinion which is reflected in the Congress.

Therefore, even if the Clinton administration is sincere in efforts to raise the emission standards, it faces major obstacle from the Senate which insists that the developing nations also have to cut their

greenhouse gas emissions before the US can join a global climate treaty.

If I did not know better, I would probably be just as horrified at the unfairness of these scheming Chinese and Mexicans! Obviously a large number of the American TV viewers are not very familiar with these foreign countries, their histories etc., and take the information from the media on their face value. Most of them also probably do not bother to find out that these negative media campaigns were funded by large and very strong oil, coal and car company lobbies. These companies had a lot at stake in the Climate Change Treaty and did not hesitate to spend millions of dollars to influence public opinion in US so that the treaty is not binding for the US as the convenors had hoped.

The ITN news recently reported that the Exxon company [US] recently spent \$13 million in a major campaign to manipulate public opinion. Such lobbies sometimes referred to as 'brownies', as opposed to the environmentalists or the 'greens', has also been accused of misrepresenting the relevant facts to the developing countries... thus creating an atmosphere of non-cooperation on both sides.

Unfortunately, these same browns continue to push advertisements for increasing sales on newer and faster models of cars, and all the other consumer goods that exemplify the 'good' life!

To keep the sale of the gas guzzling cars high, consumers are offered various credit opportunities, the gasoline price is highly subsidised. Not surprisingly, gullible consumers spend their money on all such items that they seem to 'want' but do not actually 'need'. But, no one bothers to show them how these symbols of good life are much more scarce in the day-to-day lives of ordinary Mexicans or the Chinese.

By making it easy for the Americans to change to newer models of cars, these sellers also advance the process of 'trashing' of unwanted objects which sometimes are thrown in landfills, and sometimes float around the globe in a ship filled with 'toxic waste' — which no one wants. A few years back, reportedly, Bangladeshi farmers were the unfortunate victims of the handling of toxic waste imported by a US company, which was subsequently given to the farmers as fertilizers.

Such incidences sometimes find place in the media. But, somehow it does not seem enough. It is the age old conflict between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. But, for the sake of fairness, we should all be playing on the same level field.

If the media is bringing the whole world together, it should not just be in the form of MTV, but in truthful, responsible programmes as well. May be there should be a worldwide ban on all the various forms of propaganda war that takes place in

the media. Otherwise, a small farmer in Iowa or a green grocer in Wisconsin may grow a subconscious hatred against those Chinese whom they actually never met — this image just does not seem harmonious in this well-connected globe. Above all, those who will suffer most from the effects of greenhouse gas emissions will be poor countries like Bangladesh that cannot buy their way out of disasters.

If we become complacent and decide to wait for the perfect and certain knowledge, it may be too late to do something about the emissions (especially since we are the inhabitants of a country extremely prone to the possible sea-level rise effect of the climate change).

On the other hand, if the people of a developed country like US are fortunate enough to enjoy cheap gasoline and electricity, and continue to waste these bounty (at least from a Bangladeshi's point of view), they also need to know and understand that they are responsible for environmental clean up. The developed countries had the luxury to industrialise and raise their lifestyles and to continue to pollute the earth for a much longer time than the rest of the world.

Surely even their supposed lowering of living standard could never reach the point of an ordinary Bangladeshi farmer!

The writer is a Ph.D student in environmental policy at the University of Maryland.

The Daily Star TV Guide

Monday 19th January
(All programmes are in local time but subject to last minute change.)

BTV

3:00 Opening announcement, Al Quran, Programme summary
3:10 Recitation from the Bible
3:15 Patriotic songs 3:20 Sports Programme 3:50 Dosh O Biganjan 4:00 News 4:25 Open University 5:05 Mahe Ramadan 5:45 Dolan Changa 6:10 Bidhyangon 6:30 News in English 7:05 Health Tathya 7:20 Ban-sharee 8:00 News in Bangla 8:45 Package Drama 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shilpok 10:55 Comedy Series: 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tuesday Programme summary 11:40 Close down.

BBC

6:00am BBC World Headlines 6:05 USA Direct 6:30 World Living: Top Gear 7:00 BBC World News Inc. Asia Today World Business Report, 24 Hours 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 World Focus: Correspondent 11:00 BBC World News 11:30 Hard Talk 12:00 The World Today 1:30 World Living: The Clothes Show 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 World Focus: Correspondent 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Hard Talk 4:00 BBC World News 4:30 World Focus: Style! 11:00 BBC World News 11:30 World Living: Earth Report 12:00 The World Today 13:00 Hard Talk 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 World Focus: Science World 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 World Living: Holiday 4:00 BBC World News 4:30 Europe Direct 5:00 BBC World News Inc. World Business Report, 24 Hours

STAR PLUS

6:00 Travel Asia 6:30 Nisha 7:30 Good Morning India 9:30 So Let's Yahoo 10:30 Maneka's Ark 11:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 12:00 Model TV 12:30 1:00 Over the Edge 12:00 Turn On T [V] 2:30 V News 2:45 Turn On TV [V] 3:00 Simply South 3:30 Turn On T [V] 4:30 V News 5:00 Turn On T [V]

STAR MOVIES

7:30 Comedy: Full Moon High 15:30 Action: Project A 15 (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Horror: Tomb Of Ligeia 12:10 Romance: Family Album 15:30 Thriller: To Catch A Killer 15:30 Action: Planet Of The Apes 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Family: My Friend Joe 15:30 This Week That Year 10:00 Comedy: Recruits 15:12:00 World Cinema: The Wives — Ten Years After 18:10 Film Club: Wide Sargasso Sea 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 4:00 Romance: Bed Of Roses 15:30 Action: The Himalayan 15 (Arabic Subtitles)

STAR SPORTS

7:00 Olympic Destinies 7:30 Scuba Diving ea TV 8:00 Golf Omega Tour 9:00 Indian Football League 11:00 All Pro Sports Series American Football 11:30 World Swimming Championships 12:30 Asia Sport Show 1:00 Sports Unlimited 2:00 NBA Basketball Orlando Magic vs. Utah Jazz 4:00 Cricket Up Close 5:30 Asian Football Show 5:30 Asian Football 6:30 World Swimming Championships 7:30 Ex-

Turn on T [V] 7:00 By Demand VJ Trey 8:00 House Arrest VJ Ranvee 8:30 Turn On T [V] 9:00 BPL Oye 10:00 Liberty-First Day First Show 10:30 Turn On T [V] 11:00 Over the Edge 12:00 Turn On T [V] 2:30 V News 2:45 Turn On TV [V] 3:00 Simply South 3:30 Turn On T [V] 4:30 V News 5:00 Turn On T [V]

DD 7

10:30am Game Gane 10:35 Daily Scope Oga Priyatama 11:00 Daily Scope, Rajeshwari 11:15 Classical Folk Songs 11:30 Parliament Hour 12:30 pm Serial Chuti Chuti 1:00 Asha (Serial) 1:30 Simarekha (Serial) 2:00 Kuasha Zakhari 2:30 Monerakho Mor Gaan 3:00 Daily Scope Oga Priyatama 3:30 Daily Scope, Rajeshwari 5:05 Nepali Programme 5:30 News 5:15 Tundarer Janney 6:00 Pali Katha 6:20 Ganer Kno 6:55 Jamnabumi (Serial) 7:30 Bangla Samabd 7:55 Dinendan 8:00 Serial: Priyatama 8:30 Serial 9:00 Jamnabumi (Serial) 9:30 Drama: Surja Sanan 10:00 Bengali Movie Club Film Show 1:00 Closed

PTV

8:00am TILAWAT-AUR-TAR-JUMA/HAMDNAAT 8:20 CARTOON 8:30 KHAIBRAIN 8:45 Abb Pata Challa 9:05 KHAT FARMAISH 9:20 Sargam 9:45 ILAAJ-BIL-GHIZA PAKISTAN 10:05 Shab Daigh 10:35 ENGLISH FILM: Goat Troop 10:55 MILLI NAGMA 11:00 KHAIBRAIN 11:10 The Saint (Eng Film Roger Moor) 12:00pm Drama Serial 12:55 QURAAN-E-HAKEEM 1:02 BIS-MILLAH 1:15 Drama Serial 2:00 Drama Serial 2:50 THE FACE OF CULTURAL BUSINESS 1:35 Roushani 3:30 Paimaney 4:00 Ghardari 4:35 Biology for 10th/Geog-raphy/Chemistry 5:55 INTER COLLEGE QUIZ 6:25 AIOU COURSES 7:00 Taranan (Drama Serial) 7:45 ENGLISH NEWS 8:00 POTTLUCK 8:20 Ali Baba (Drama Serial) 8:45 Serial 9:00 Break for Headline News 10:00 Khabaranna & Commercial News & Pak Business Update 11:15 Classics Drama Serial: Janglee 12:20 Special: TBA 1:00 KHAS KHAIBRAIN/CLOSE DOWN

ATN

7:00am Brakhi Bhavna 8:30 Bhabishay 9:00 Tere Sur Mere Geet 9:30 Once More-Hindi Film Trailer Show 10:00 Spring The Wheel 10:30 Junjan 11:00 Hit Beats 11:30 Hum Kisse Kam Nahi (Game Show)Latest Film Songs 12:00pm Over Drive — Hindi Pop Songs 12:30 Sangeet 1:00 Touch of Classics 1:45 Mast Masala — Hindi Film Trailer Show 2:00 Gurbanj Prog — Sapna Na Vavtar 3:00 Hindi Film Based Prog 5:00 ITN 5:30 Geet Chal 6:00 English Songs/Bhajan 6:30 Bangla Programme 7:00 Bangladeshi Prog 7:30 Bangladeshi Prog 8:30 Parag — Andaj Apna Apna 9:00 Spinning The Wheel — Pop Songs 9:30 Once More-Hindi Film Trailer Show 10:00 Adalat (Anchor — Rajat) 11:00 Farz 1:30 Bangladeshi Songs/Home Shopping 2:00 Ilu Ilu 2:30 The Moon Channel Songs

EL TV

7:00am Yedon Ki Barat 7:30 Haseen Pal 7:40 Sur Tal 8:20 Bajri Darpan (Trailer Show) 8:30 Teer Kamon 9:00 Bourni Quiz Contest 9:30 Zee News — English 10:00 The Dream Merchants 10:30 Ap Ki Adalat (Anchor — Rajat) 11:00 Hum Zameen 11:30 The Shotgun Show 12:00pm Special Report 12:30 Zee News — Hindi 1:00 Hay Ha 1:30 Ummed (Serial) 2:00 The Peep Show 2:30 Choti Miya Bade Miya 3:00 Naya Nagma 3:30 Sitcom: Paying Guest 4:00 Daily Sope: Newsline Scandal 4:30 HFF 7:20 Haseen Pal 7:30 Serial: Campus 8:00 Zee News — English & Zee Business 8:30 Parachute-Premiere 12:00pm Jagir 12:30 Tank Jhank 1:00 Hostel 1:30 Kahene Pe Kya 10:30 Zee News — Hindi 2:30 Cine Marzi 10:30 Zee News Hindi & Zee

SONY ET

8:30am Gaane Jaane Mane 9:00 Cartoons Real Ghost Busters (Hindi Dub) 9:30 Silver Spoon 10:00 Whose The Boss 7:00 Different Strok (Hindi Dub) 7:30 Bewitched 8:00 Parachute-Premiere 8:30 Humse Barker Gong 9:00 Dekh Tamasha Dekh 9:30 Chamarikar 10:30 Shikast 10:30 Baat Ek Raj Kali 11:00 BATA-Superhit (Trailer Show) 11:30 Cine Prime-Hindi Feature Film 2:30 Closed

TNT CARTOON

07:30 The Popeye Show 08:00 Scoby & Scrappy Doo 08:30 Peril of Penelope 09:30 Josie & The Pussycat 09:30 Dink The Little Dinosaur 10:00 Flintstone Kids 10:30 Richie Rich 11:00 Top Cat 11:30 The Yogi Bear Show 12:00 Scoby Doo 12:30 The Cartoon Grand Prix 1:00 Captain Planet 1:30 Top Cat 2:30 The Real Adventures of Jonny 3:00 Mask 3:30 Sky Commanders 4:00 Centurions 4:30 Swat Kats 5:00 Ninja Robots 5:30 Flintstones 6:00 Tom & Jerry Kids 6:30 Captain Planet 7:00 The Mask 7:30 Dexter's Laboratory 8:00 The Adams Family 8:30 Scoby Doo Where Are You? 9:00 The Popeye Show

CHANNEL V

6:00 Turn On T [V] 6:30 V News 6:45 V Spot 7:00 Turn On T [V] 7:30 Rewind VJ Sophia 8:30 Turn on T [V] 1:30 By Demand 2:30 Liberty First Day 3:00 Win-ner Mangal Hal 3: