

## Unabated BCL Tyranny

It is no longer the universities. Factional feuding in Bangladesh Chhatra League — ruling Awami League's student front — has even reached the madrasahs. One young man died and a few others were admitted to hospital as the rival factions of the BCL fought late Saturday night for the control of a dormitory of the centre for religious education. Martian youths armed with hockey sticks, firearms and bombs fought for hours much to the terror of the inhabitants of an area that is never quite short of either people or police.

But the police have apparently adopted — or they have been made to adopt — a policy of not 'touching' the BCL hoods. Because a lot has been written and reported on the BCL involvement in crimes. From extortionism in the marketplaces to hall capture there is hardly any crime that the BCL cadres have not been associated with in recent times. But they do not seem to make any impact on the AL leadership. Rather some party elements in the administration seem to have kept the government machinery anaesthetised. And ... quiet continues the BCL anarchy.

What makes it so frustrating for public is the simultaneous expression of government's will to stamp out terrorism and the want of its reflection in its action. At the very outset of her party's return to power, PM Sheikh Hasina asked the law enforcers not to hesitate in arresting the criminal even he or she belonged to her party. One and a half years down the line, that loud and generous statement jars the ears as a bad joke. Did Sheikh Hasina mean it?

We would like to believe she did, but find it increasingly difficult to do so. We would further add that none of the anti-terrorism pronouncements or efforts will be of any help in ameliorating law and order unless the government succeeds in reforming the 'student terrorists'. This is essentially the job of the party in power. We appeal to the PM, please take care of your 'boys' or these 'boys' will 'take care' of you. And you can only take care by delinking the BCL from AL effectively. The long arm of the law will then do the rest. Lead by example. You will not lose. Nor the opposition will steal a march over you. Because the people will then be with you. But the way BCL is going people will refuse to be with you.

## Madhyapara in a Limbo, Why?

We are certain that the most ingenious of men, from Sherlock Holmes to Hercule Poirot, would resign baffled and befuddled if given to solve the Madhyapara Hard Rock Quarry mystery. Why is this being kept hanging for so long? The project is heading neither towards completion and production by the slated 2001, nor towards winding up. Bangladesh very much needs such rocks and has to import them from abroad at a price of up to 70 dollar a ton and the local need is said to be around 50 lakh ton, projected to increase annually at the rate of 25 per cent. And the proposed Ganges Barrage alone would need at least 90 lakh ton hard rock. This is all to say we need hard rock for building and public works by the lakhs of tons.

It is years that we hit a mine of hardrock in our northern districts. Projects were drawn up and geared to marketing the first mined rocks in 2001 — all 16 lakh tons of them. That is actually the size of yearly mining at the Madhyapara 8 billion taka programme. The investment can be ploughed back to government coffers by the sate proceeds of only seven years' output. Mined at this rate the reserve is said to be mineable all of 70 years.

The project has recently hit a very formidably hard rock. The state and nature of the professed transparency of governance in Bangladesh is such that no one seems exactly to know what is going to happen to Madhyapara. But that is absurd. Some people at the top — both for and against — must be knowing every inch of the mystery. But not one among them seems to believe in the people's right to information.

Meanwhile, President Shahabuddin has visited the site and sent a make-haste memo to the concerned authority. Another secretary of a concerned and supervisory department has written perhaps to the relevant ministry, in the same vein. But the project in spite of all such, seems to have ground to a solid halt. The screeching sound has been so loud as to lead the BR to close down its track laying operation from Madhyapara to Bhavanipore after spending 250 lakh rupees on the rock-carrying line.

Close down the thing if it's indeed commercially unfeeling. If it's not, please go for it but with your heart in it. For, an investment of 8 billion taka in a northern backyard will be mightily beneficial for the Varendra which demands the best of our national attention.

## The Twin Should Meet

Speaking on ASEAN-SAARC cooperation imperatives at the BLISS auditorium on Sunday, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas succinctly put forward his vision: "There is much that we can learn from each other and perhaps much we can do for each other." Some sort of networking would be indispensable for both the learning and doing processes to ensue.

In recognition of this basic necessity, the SAARC ministerial council has taken the initiative to build an institutional bridge between the SAARC and ASEAN secretariats. A positive response has reportedly been signalled by the ASEAN side to this SAARC overture whose fruition, we believe, brooks no delay, especially in the light of the financial crisis the South East Asian economies have been writhing under. We see the debacle not merely as a product of internal mismanagement but also as a manifestation of the flipside of globalisation. So, this contains lessons for both South and South East Asia. We need to exchange notes, jointly write a handbook on dos and don'ts and keep it handy for use.

The two economic groupings are endeavouring to convert themselves into free trade areas — SAFTA and AFTA. With that happening, inter-regional cooperation is likely to acquire shape and receive a new spurt because two free trade zones would be ideally suited for carrying out mutually beneficial transactions. Dividends of trade in terms of national development inputs being five times greater than those of foreign aid, the option seems too obvious to be missed. Bangladesh is only lucky to be a natural bridge between South and South East Asia.

## Impending Attack on Iraq: Conflagration of World War III

by Dr F H Chowdhury

*The diplomatic skills should be applied fully and no stone should be left unturned to avoid another deadly confrontation with Iraq as this will have immeasurable effects on the economy of Iraq and its neighbouring Middle Eastern countries ... Unlike previous attacks on Iraq, on this occasion there could be a strong resentment by the Arab world against such an attack.*

THE world, is left with no heroes now. In history, it is not uncommon for the real villains to have proclaimed as heroes. The role of the US and that of Iraq in current UN crisis — re: post war, implementation of UN mandate and UN's role in inspecting the sites of their presumed areas harbouring weapons and research facilities of mass destruction in Iraq — have turned both Saddam Hossain and Bill Clinton into villains of history.

The Persian Gulf is full of demonstration of US naval might to try to corner Saddam for the third time in recent years. The NATO bases in Turkey are humming with activities in preparation for war.

The irony is — it is the masses of the Iraqi population that are bound to suffer in this never-ending conflict. In the years following the Allied invasion of Iraq followed by strict sanctions imposed by the UN and guarded by the US, people of Iraq have suffered enormously. There is not enough food, very little medicine, no luxuries of life and within a matter of a few years this oil-rich upcoming country has swung back to its

pre-oil agrarian society and even worse than that. Although people displayed enormous courage in recovering from the devastation of war and the effect of sanctions, they were beginning to build up their country again and life was beginning to return to some semblance of normality.

Iraq has recently been allowed to sell 2 billion US dollar worth of oil to purchase food and medicine and the Secretary General of the UN has recommended that this be doubled up. Of course, the proceeds of sale are not entirely spent on food and medicine. Iraq is obliged to pay out of it for the war reparations and also the UN officials supervising the scheme. In civil aviation and communications with the outside world, the sanctions are in place. People's general health has deteriorated, children's growth has been affected, malnutrition based illnesses have become manifest in

the general population. People are having to sell their seed corn in order to buy food.

In these circumstances there is lack of will on the part of the International community to unite to launch another destructive air and naval attack on Iraq.

In the Security Council Russia, China and France are opposed to such action. The US and the United Kingdom are in favour of launching another attack aiming at strategic targets and Iraq's research facilities on lethal gas and germ warfare. Iraq's budding nuclear facility has been nipped in the bud, according to US reliable sources.

The diplomatic skills should be applied fully and no stone should be left unturned in this field to avoid another deadly confrontation with Iraq as this will have immeasurable effects on the economy of Iraq and its neighbouring Middle Eastern countries and also on the world

economy generally.

Bill Clinton's ill-judged action of another round of air and naval attack, might, according to Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President, plunge the world into World War III. This may be an overreaction on the part of the Russian leader, but based on America's expressed intention, as it has assembled its biggest fleet since the Gulf War, such remarks are a timely reminder for the world to note. Despite Iraq's sizeable armoury of biological and chemical weapons, its possible reaction to a massive Anglo-American attack will only be pin-prick to the allies' unparalleled superiority in the air and at sea. The tragedy will be, if in response to America's threat of missiles and air strikes, Iraq finds itself releasing its deadly chemical sprays and biological germs.

Iraq's merciless attacks on the innocent civilians of Hal-

abja during the fag end of the Gulf War shows that in desperation Iraq might use its well tested lethal gases and germs which in return might provoke America to use nuclear missiles to end the war.

In the face of great opposition by the world opinion against the use of force, US will be ill advised to do so. Diplomacy should be allowed to run its full course to solve the problem. Furthermore, without a fresh mandate from the UN, use of force led by America to change the Baghdad regime or assassinate Saddam Hossein will only complicate the problem.

Iraq's present regime has been in power far too long. Change of regime is of course the prerogative of the people of Iraq. Given the encouragement, lifted the sanctions and communications with the outside world opened up, people themselves will throw away the ex-

isting regime as it has wrought a lot of misery to the innocent Iraqi people.

There are no doubts expressed in many quarters that Bill Clinton is trying to divert attention from his own problems at home, that he is contemplating launching an attack on Iraq, in order to gain foreign policy success and to show his fellow Americans that he is a strong leader: this of course is a dangerous gamble.

Unlike previous attacks on Iraq, on this occasion there could be a strong resentment by the Arab world against such an attack. Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Conference have already voiced their fierce opposition to it and UN Security Council will not sanction an attack on Iraq for what its worth.

Perhaps the solution to the problem lies in the Arab League and the OIC's joint efforts in preparing the UN member countries against such an attack and sending a strong team representing various UN blocks with the mandate to negotiate with Iraq to implement UN resolutions relating to the Gulf War. In the meantime, the world will hold its breath with a sense of alarm.

## The Davos Connection

*For Pakistan, Davos is a must but it can only be better utilized by mobilizing Pakistan's business leaders to attend the Forum on their own expense to gain maximum mileage out of this most educative experience of informal networking among the world's most recognized leaders in every field.*

NO similar gathering in the world brings together so many of the world's top leaders, political, academic, business, media, etc as does Davos. Fully 2000 plus of the world's elite (and their spouses) assemble in the last week of January every year in this ski-resort town of Switzerland to debate (and to counsel) the most important issues confronting the world in virtually every field. A very strict membership criteria applies, inside the Congress Center one could be rubbing shoulders with Heads of State and Government, the world's business leaders and top entrepreneurs, etc. While the more affluent take it as a means of networking, for Third World leaders Davos is a must. For those desperate for investment, it is criminal not to make a pitch every year at this almost informal forum.

There are many events to choose from, other than plenary sessions in the Main Hall, there are about 7-8 sessions taking place simultaneously, making it almost difficult to choose from. In economic priorities, of the scores of sessions available, one may mention Asia-crisis, finance risks, economic volatility, emerging markets, tigers/jaguars, commercial diplomacy, economic powerhouses, global economy, etc. On regional and national priorities one could like in political Islam, Indian Ocean Rim, Mena Brainstorming, Mercosur, NAFTA, China, Central Asia, etc. In global priorities there were geo-political environment, enviro-protection, globalization, women/islam, global institutions, etc. Priorities in business, management and technology included aging, CEO update, family business, millennium bug, 21st century strategies, global ethics, innovation, leadership, etc. In science and medicine the subjects were genetics, vaccine, mad cow, aesthetics, cloning, allergies, healing, stress, ozone hole, etc. Of other shared concerns such as art and culture, the agenda included ethical dimensions, power of images, credibility, relationships and attitudes, media and society, global citizens, uncivil society, media responsibility, privacy, etc. Since it is humanly impossible to take in more than 10 per cent on offer, summaries and videotapes of most of the sessions are available at a later date. This year among Heads of State were Presidents Zedillo of Mexico, Cardoso of Brazil, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, Museveni of Uganda, Rawlings of Ghana, etc. Among the PMs other than Mian Nawaz Sharif, there were Valery Pustovoi

of Ukraine, Ramgoolam of Mauritius, Mendiskhany of Mongolia, Drnovsek of Slovenia, etc. There were a host of Deputy PMs, each country had sent a Minister at the very least. Charles Helmut Kerry of Germany and President Cotti of Switzerland chaired the opening session. Among those who chaired sessions were Columbian William Saifre, James J. Schiro, Chairman and Senior Partner Price Waterhouse, USA, US Senators Orrin Hatch and John Kerry, US Congressman Newt Gingrich, Ronnie Chan of Hong Kong, Jean-Louis Fache of Aerospatiale, France, Helmut O. Maucher, Chairman, Nestle Switzerland, Professors Rudi Dornbusch of MIT, Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard, former PM Raymond Barre of France and a host of others like Joseph Stiglitz, Senior VP, World Bank, IMF's Stanley Fischer, Moises Naim, Editor, Foreign Policy, USA, etc. With such a wealth of speakers and subjects to choose from there is always a nagging frustration at missing out a particular event in the short six days from Thursday Jan 29 to Tuesday Feb 3, 1998. This is a tremendous opportunity to meet people at this level informally in a short intense period of time. Unfortunately, as compared to the 70 plus strong Indian business contingent who all pay their own way and establish lasting contact and goodwill through positive networking, only President, Allied Bank of Pakistan, M. Rashid Chaudhry and myself were there to show the Pakistan flag. There were no entrepreneurs from Sri Lanka or Bangladesh, a very serious short-coming considering the networking and inter-action at this level. While Amre Moussa, Foreign Minister of Egypt was on first-name basis with Rahul Bajaj of India, what can one expect but for him to look glassy-eyed when someone like me is introduced to him from Pakistan? We need our business leaders to get membership of the World Economic Forum (WEF) and spend their own money on their own behalf and on behalf of the country in establishing mutually profitable lasting relationships. In the strong inter-action evident with respect to the Indians the rest of the South Asians have been left far behind. In the context of globalization this is criminal.

To illustrate one example, I took in the session over lunch called 'The Indian Ocean Rim, political myth as a business reality'. This session was moderated by Tarun Das, Director General, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), India. In the panel were Foreign Minister Alexander Downer of Australia, Alec Erwin of Ministry for Trade and Industry of South Africa, Ajit Gulabchand, an Indian businessman, Raj Makood of Mauritius and the Mauritius PM Ramgoolam. The first shocking revelation was that Pakistan was not a member and the members were in no

hurry to increase the membership. When I raised the subject, an ambiguous answer was given about letting the relationships grow slowly but surely. However this brought a strong retort from the Australian Foreign Minister who said Pakistan and Thailand needed to be members and there should be no political compulsion in keeping them away. We need to know about the Indian Ocean Regional Cooperation immediately, better still, for economic reasons we need to become members even faster immediately. We cannot afford commercially to be left out. I hate to say it but this seems to be a typical Indian ploy to set up regional sub-groupings isolating Pakistan and Sri Lanka. One cannot imagine the damage to our trade potential because of this amazing lapse.

Over dinner with the IMF's Senior Vice President Stanley Fischer and Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard one learnt why and how the world's financial institutions were intervening in South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia. We learnt also how, when the indications were there, the financial analysts had gone wrong in their predictions about these so called 'Tiger Economies'. We were told as to how South Korea received IMF experts with the slogan 'IM Fired'. Jeffrey Sachs put the IMF on the mat and Fischer, who deals with Pakistan, reluctantly agreed that maybe they had been over-enthusiastic about opening up the economies. He agreed with my suggestion that the South Asian

panic had not fallen to the panic because our private foreign debt (i.e. short term credit, was much lower as compared to debt owed to the world financial institutions over the medium and long-term. He also agreed that the pace of opening of the market has to be cautious and constantly monitored. I think this country owes a debt of gratitude to the State Bank of Pakistan for maintaining tight monetary control and restricting private foreign credit. The World Economic Forum (WEF) was bereft of South Korean,

Masoumeh Ebtekar of Iran who gave an excellent account of how Islam is misinterpreted by vested interests and held her own against very pointed questions.

Pakistan was presented by PM Mian Nawaz Sharif over a lunch session entitled 'Pakistan, the new business environment', in which he gave out his vision for Pakistan and the economic reform agenda for 1998. He invited the foreign business community to play a concrete role in accelerating the country's economic progress and integrate into the world economy. Later over a dinner session about 'Asia' the PM along with other leaders continued the invitation for investor participation. He was assisted by the Finance Minister Senator Sartaj Aziz, the Petroleum Minister Ch Nisar Ali Khan, etc. Included in the entourage were Chief Ministers of Punjab and NWFP, Mian Shahbaz Sharif and Mahtab Abbasi respectively, the BOI head Senator Humayun Akhtar, the Chairman, Privatization Commission Khwaja Asaf and for good measure the Minister for Education, Syed Ghause Ali Shah.

More important, on Sunday Feb 1, 1998, the PM was on a panel which studied 'Energy Powerhouses, managing the volatility of globalization'. Other than Mian Nawaz Sharif the panel included President Eduardo Frei of Chile, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, President Carlos Menem of Argentina. The Ses-

sion was chaired by one the most successful CEOs in the world, Percy Barnevik. At issue was the fact of emerging economies challenging the traditional heavyweights of the global economic system and the Asian economic crisis undermining this momentum, with a decrease in capital flows to emerging markets. The question the assembly addressed was how emerging economies could use globalisation without being victimized by it. Even more important the PM announced the very first in Islamabad on Sep 20-22 with the WEF partnering a Session of Central Asia and South Asia confirming Pakistan at the crossroads of the region. This is a very important milestone for Pakistan as it will herald an annual meeting of political leaders, international and regional businessmen, academics, media persons, etc. In the short time available, the PM also spent useful time talking to political and business leaders. One word of advice, instead of a large delegation that does nothing much except hang around the PM, their time would be better spent for Pakistan networking the leaders in various disciplines from other countries. Also, I feel that it is time Mian Nawaz Sharif tried to speak extempore instead of using printed text — this will definitely have more impact.

For Pakistan, Davos is a must but it can only be better utilized by mobilizing Pakistan's business leaders to attend the Forum on their own expense to gain maximum mileage out of this most educative experience of informal networking among the world's most recognized leaders in every field.

## AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

hurry to increase the membership. When I raised the subject, an ambiguous answer was given about letting the relationships grow slowly but surely. However this brought a strong retort from the Australian Foreign Minister who said Pakistan and Thailand needed to be members and there should be no political compulsion in keeping them away. We need to know about the Indian Ocean Regional Cooperation immediately, better still, for economic reasons we need to become members even faster immediately. We cannot afford commercially to be left out. I hate to say it but this seems to be a typical Indian ploy to set up regional sub-groupings isolating Pakistan and Sri Lanka. One cannot imagine the damage to our trade potential because of this amazing lapse.

Over dinner with the IMF's Senior Vice President Stanley Fischer and Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard one learnt why and how the world's financial institutions were intervening in South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia. We learnt also how, when the indications were there, the financial analysts had gone wrong in their predictions about these so called 'Tiger Economies'. We were told as to how South Korea received IMF experts with the slogan 'IM Fired'. Jeffrey Sachs put the IMF on the mat and Fischer, who deals with Pakistan, reluctantly agreed that maybe they had been over-enthusiastic about opening up the economies. He agreed with my suggestion that the South Asian

Thai and Indonesian entrepreneurs as they stayed home in droves to cope with the complete and total collapse of their banking system.

The session on 'International Corruption' moderated by the CEO of BHP Australia John Prescott with the panel consisting of Peter Eigen, Chairman, Transparency International, Herran Franz, Chairman Siemens, Lal Jayawardena, Advisor, PM, Sri Lanka and Joseph E. Stiglitz, Senior VP, World Bank, was very interesting. There seems to be a consensus developing that corruption undermines good government, distorts public policy, leads to misallocation of resources, harms the private sector, deers foreign investment and harms civil society. But there is still no consensus as to what if anything, can be done to combat corruption and whether effective international action is possible. Initially, Ms Benazir and her spouse figured prominently, just ahead of the Marcoses, the Mobutus, etc of this world. The World Bank took some hits on the Elawan/Brian Cheng score but with things still unraveling, officials were not commenting.

My wife attended the Session on political Islam 'what level of Islam for the 21st century?' moderated by Alain J. Madec of Total France with Iranian Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar, Ahmad Ezz of Egypt, Professor Nulfer Gole of Turkey, Professor Gilles Kepel of France and Professor Fatima Mernissi of Morocco. She came back totally impressed by Vice President

## OPINION

## Why High Price of Petrol?

Rafi Omar

I would like to recall the detailed and analytical write-up 'Price hike of petroleum: Was it warranted?' by Mr Osman Ghani Khan under the above caption in your issue of 11th November 1997. At that point of time the ruling prices of crude as well as refined product that he quoted resulted in showing the extent of unreasonableness of what showed by the government in hiking the local price of all petroleum products as of August 18, 1997.

I would now like to quote excerpts from an article appearing in the international magazine *Business Week* in their issue dated February 2, 1998 which will further land to prove the point Mr Khan was trying to make.

In an article captioned 'How low can oil prices go?' the author Gary Williams and James Knight write: 'Are oil prices headed lower? The price of crude has tumbled 28 per cent since October, in the wake of sudden drop in demand from ailing economies in the Far East, mild winter in the US and Europe, and an ever-expanding supply..... On January 21st, oil futures sank to a 4-year low of US \$16.15 a barrel after the US oil inventories ballooned by the largest weekly amount in a decade.'

'And there's no reason to believe the situation will change soon. Asia's economic woes are still being sorted out, the world is awash in supplies of everything from gasoline to heating oil, and new fields in the North Sea and elsewhere promise to boost this year's inventories. There's enough oil that prices could go to \$10 a barrel', warns analyst Ken Miller of Houston-based energy consultants Pervin & Gertz Inc. He expects oil prices to slip to \$15 a barrel by February. The one thing that could halt the slide, he says, is an OPEC agreement to curtail production — a move many analysts think unlikely....

'Asia's gloom continues to be the biggest damper on crude prices. Consumption by the now-tamed Tigers, which drove the prices higher in recent years, is slowing dramatically.' 'Another factor preventing a quick fix is OPEC's chief renegade, Venezuela. Its Oil Minister refused an invitation to attend an OPEC emergency meeting in

Vienna. What is more, it is running full steam ahead.'

In his article Mr Khan quoted the price of oil on August 18th '98 to be US \$ 18.50 per barrel which translates to Taka 5.00 per litre. And now as per the figures quoted in the above referred *Business Week* article the prevailing prices are around \$16.50 per barrel and going down with no scope of improving. This would then translate to about Taka 4.47 a barrel. This is about 11 per cent cheaper than the August price levels. And should the prices go to US \$15.00 as predicted above then the local price would read at Taka 4.00 (per litre) which would then be 20 per cent cheaper than the August figures.

It is therefore, extremely difficult to understand what the government is doing by holding the prices of the oil products to the levels they raised on 18.8.97. One can only agree with the quote of the former Finance Minister that the price-hike was actually to cover the failure in revenue collection.....

We fail to understand why the government should victimise only a selected class of the society in particular just because they have reached a level of affluence which most have achieved from hard labour and by taking business risks. We pay higher taxes already in addition to our dues towards VAT and other indirect taxation. The petrol bill for car owners using only petrol has gone up by 53 per cent and for those using octane by 57 per cent. This is a very heavy burden to pay for owning a means of transportation which has become almost a necessity in view of the lack of proper public transport system.

There is, therefore, absolutely no justification for the government to continue to keep the present price levels unless they would like to admit their failures — to raise revenue on other counts. In such circumstances would it be too much to say that it is the right of the citizens to seek redress from any government's high handedness in arbitrarily raising the prices of essential products and thereby adding to the already manifold miseries of the population in general?

## To the Editor...

## 'Newspaper Black-out'

Sir, The third editorial on 2 Feb is actually the crying from the heart of many of your readers. In Malaysia, the papers publish a full-page list of shops in Kuala Lumpur and other cities where the paper would be sold on the following holidays (during Chinese New Year and Eid). The hawkers can go on their holiday and the subscribers only suffer a little inconvenience but not totally blacked-out.

Can we not do this?

A Reader  
Dhaka 1205

## 'Pak apology?'

Sir, The news appearing in the front page, column 1 of the DS is no surprise. To offer apology for something (like atrocity on civilians) needs a nation to achieve a certain greatness and civilisation which the Japanese and the German have done.

We hope a future Pakistani generation can do the same.

M.A.Haq  
Dhaka

## Development rhetoric

Sir, Anthropology student in the USA, Lamia Karim, is to be commended for focussing attention on rethinking on the rhetoric of development in the poor countries (DS, Feb 3) — the war of words on the war of

poverty. 'Poor' is taboo; the substitute expression is 'economically disadvantaged'.

Where is the point of entry of 'empowering women'? How the family is 'empowered' when the babies are dumped elsewhere during the office hours when the parents attend office or are engaged in national development activities? How homes and family life have broken up in the West? What is the difference between 'birth control', 'family planning' and 'population control'? Is the latter a form of genocide?

'Manpower' is now human resources, being sensitive to the gender. God made man and woman to live in harmony, complementing each other's roles. The human civilisation appears to be having serious problems late in the 20th century. Hair-splitting definitions never brought about development, as the pioneers of the Wild West would have confirmed.

But the departed generations cannot be witnesses to the current debate on development rhetorics. The quill trials will to eradicate poverty, 'over-population', mosquitoes (watch the ecological balance); alleviate hunger, enhance the women, or separate or harmonise the genders (am I getting confused?).

The UN document is full of weird words and expressions which hardly make impact on the poor and undeveloped countries. I have been going through the printed literature of the UN agencies and the western donor agencies. These are

full of refined concepts and system diagrams, suitable for approving the development projects in the LDCs, but the prescriptions from the developed and industrialised countries with high standard of living have mostly failed for decades; and the disparity between the rich and the grassroots levels goes on increasing, to the dismay of the donors and the recipients or beneficiaries. (see UN data).

The rich donors have not experienced poverty in their societies for several generations since the Industrial Revolution got into stride. Therefore the concepts are mostly CAD (computer-aided design). Computers cannot 'alleviate' poverty unless empathy is established with the grassroots level.

So the latest development fad is the bottom-up approach, compared to the previous top-down trickle technology. The bureaucrats are unhappy at being side-tracked, and the go-slow mood in the processing is evident to the keen observers.

Alif Zabr  
Dhaka

## Tax self-assessment number

Sir, I am yet to receive my TIN or new number as a freshly joined member of the tax-paying citizens.

I collected the forms. I filled them up, I paid Tk 1400 to the taxation office after queuing up at the Bangladesh Bank to get the 'Challan' — but that was in

the last week of October. Till today I have the receipt, but no number. The office, which means the dealing officer, the clerks, and other desk-bound personnel (as contrasted to those who go visiting to see if tax assessment is as reported) are very co-operative but somehow, somewhere there is a flaw in the machinery.

The person who had signed and provided the receipt claimed specifically that he had seen my form. It had been sent back with 15 others. So the number could be available from the supervisor who had the forms 'locked up' in his drawer. All other files are on the table and the file rack, but not that file with the forms. It is to the credit of the staff that they co-operated fully. But I have been going to that 4-storied building repeatedly, 21 times in fact, but all in vain.

Nurul Alam  
Badda, Dhaka

## Wake-up call for BTV

Sir, What the BTV telecast on the occasion of Eid was a sheer wastage of tax-payers' money. BTV authority doesn't have to care for any popularity survey like Nielson's rating in the US, they are king of their own domain.

How long we are going to tolerate this kind of stupidity in the name of 'Anandamela' or 'Eid Drama'. When are they, going to wake up?

M Reza  
Green Road, Dhaka-1205