

## Pressmen Should Provide Correct Information to the People

by Shahabuddin Ahmed

**Each party however speaks of consensus, but it seeks it in its own terms and conditions. That is 'our party is the only patriotic party and our party's programme is the best of all and hence all other parties must accept it if they want consensus; if not, they are enemy of the people.' Press should tell them that this is not the way. In these circumstances, the press, therefore, has got a tremendous responsibility to the nation.**

**G**OOD governance guarantees dispensation of justice in a social system that ensures security and freedom of the individual and equal opportunities for all without any discrimination. The media's role here is to expose the wounds that the vested interests try to conceal. The media thus plays the vital role of a physician, although the patient may not always appreciate it. It is here that the media has got to be most persistent in its effort to establish a link between governance and its professional obligations.

Today the necessity of Press freedom is recognised on all hands and it has been provided in the Constitutions of many democratic countries. Press freedom was guaranteed as a fundamental right in the Constitution of Bangladesh also, but it was not given in full until February, 1991. Struggle for Press freedom has a long history in India, starting almost from the beginning of the British rule. From long before the Battle of Plassey in 1757, which laid the foundation of the British rule in India, the Press in Britain had been enjoying the freedom of expression. It is the criticisms in the British Press of some faults of the East India Company that had brought to the attention of Clive of Plassey and Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of British India. Result of the impeachments, which continued for several years, were that, though ultimately acquitted, the former committed suicide and the latter died broken-hearted. Press was one of the unofficial westernising agencies in India which brought the Indian life and society in contact with the West. The first newspaper in India was the Bengal Gazette edited by James Hickey which appeared in 1780; but it was suppressed within two years for criticising some policies and actions of the Governor General.

But from that time, a succession of journals appeared and a running fight for freedom of speech was waged with the Government. This culminated in John Adam's Regulation of 1823 which required a printer to obtain a licence before he could publish a newspaper. Lord Hastings expelled the famous Editor John Silk Buckingham from India for infringing the said Regulation. In 1835, Sir Charles Metcalfe, a very liberal minded Englishman was appointed Acting Governor-General on the expiration of Lord Bentinck's tenure of office. But he forfeited his chance of permanent appointment as he freed the Press from all restrictions. These matters rested until Lord Lytton's Vernacular Press Act, passed in 1878, which imposed the restriction only on the Vernacular Press. This Act was repealed four years later in 1882. This was followed by appearance of a number of newspapers, such as Calcutta Statesman and Bombay Times of India. Raja Ram-mohun Roy published two newspapers in Persian — one was Mirabul Akhbar (Mirror of News) and the other was Sambat Kumudi (Moon of Intelligence). For these bold steps, he was rightly regarded as the founder of serious Indian Journalism. After the Sepoy Revolt of 1857-58, the Madras Hindu and the Allahabad Leader took their places beside their British brethren.

Newspapers in those days both in English and vernacular worked with a reforming zeal offering constructive criticism of Government policies and

formulating public opinion. It may be mentioned here that the degree of Press freedom in those days varied with the change of Tory or Whig Governors-General. In the movement for Indian independence and later the Muslim League's demand for separate homeland the Press played a great role in formulating public opinion.

From the time of our independence in 1947, through both Pakistan and Bangladesh periods, till 1990, history of the struggle for press freedom is known to you all and as such it need not be discussed here. During the people's democratic movement of December, 1990 which toppled the undemocratic regime, the Alliance of main political parties drew up a Charter of Demands called 'নির্ভয়ে স্বাধীনতা' (policy-outlines of three alliances) which, among other things, included a demand for Press freedom. The Interim Government, which is also referred to as the first Caretaker Government, headed by me, in spite of its preoccupation with larger national issues, took up this demand, appointed a Press Committee headed by a Supreme Court Judge, which submitted its report in the second week of February, 1991. As the long awaited General Election was approaching there was hardly any time to pay attention to the said Press Committee's Report. But all members of my Interim Government agreed with me that Press freedom must be given at once and this could not be left for the next political government whichever party might

form it. That is why just one day before the election i.e. on 26.2.91, full Press freedom was given by amending five relevant Laws, such as — The Special Powers Act, The Printing Presses and Publications Declaration and Registrations Act, The Press Council Act, The Code of Criminal Procedure and The Penal Code.

These legislations, however, covered the Print media only, and not the electronic media like Radio and Television. Persistent demand of all political parties and the country's intelligentsia is for constituting an autonomous body to own and manage them. But mere creation of such an autonomous body will not ensure its independence. To run it properly what is essentially required is a team of men of character and integrity with high sense of responsibility and patriotism and not sycophants or time servers who change colours with the change of circumstances.

In Great Britain, the Press because of its great influence in socio-political life has been called the Fourth Estate. There are the other three Estates are the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal and the House of Commons. These three Estates constitute the British Parliament which is a sovereign authority — so sovereign that it can do anything except making a man woman or a woman a man. Now see, how the Press has been put-at-par with the Parliament because of its importance and influence in the British national life.

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## Waterlogging in Dhaka City

### Consequence of Ill-planned Urbanisation

by Md. Asadullah Khan



(Rain and flood) waterlogging in old city (Bahadurpur Lane) area.

**W**ATERLOGGING in Dhaka city, in the current monsoon period has assumed an alarming proportion exposing the citizenry to sufferings beyond measure. As reports indicate more than 50 per cent of the 276 sq. km area of the Dhaka City Corporation has gone under knee-deep and at places, waist deep water in the face of flood. The areas most visibly affected, among other places in the city, are Motijheel, Fakirapool, Shantinagar, Basabo, Rampura, Shabuabagh, Shahidbagh, Shantibagh, Kamalapur and even Paltan and Dhakeswari areas that remained immune so long. And a large part of the greater Dhaka city area spread over 1400 sq. km continues to be under threat.

As statistics reveal, the great flood recorded in 1988 that caused extensive damage and devastation to lives and property almost pale in contrast to this year's engulfing flood mostly because of the population boom in the city areas every the last ten-year period. Statistics reveal that in 1988, total population figure in the same affected areas of the Dhaka City Corporation was 35 lakhs, whereas at the present moment, about 55 lakhs people are living there. Most of the people are abysmally poor and living mostly in the flood prone zones. In the greater Dhaka city area, almost 90 lakh people inhabit as against 65 lakhs living in 1988. This makes one thing apparent that even a flood of moderate intensity has been causing colossal damage to a larger number of population.

In engineering practice, any flood protection scheme should be designed to provide full protection that aims at preventing spill of river waters by constructing embankments along the rivers and minimising internal flooding due to abnormal rainfall through appropriate drainage structures. More specifically, partial protection from river flooding is provided by constructing low, submersible embankments that are allowed to be over-topped during monsoon. Along the embankment, over flow spillways are used to withstand erosion during overtopping and regulators are preferably incorporated to allow river water to enter protected area without overflowing the embankments.

The colossal suffering caused in the year's flooding compounded by abnormal waterlogging in the Dhaka city, especially in the contrast to previous year's which eventually has caused drainage congestion in absence of adequate and effective underground sewerage system. This view was expressed by Dr M Ferose Ahmed, Professor of Environmental Studies in the Civil Engineering Dept., BUET, Professor Ferose Ahmed further said that because of sheer callousness and total ignorance of a large section of the citizenry including shop owners, hawkers and streeturchins in disposing of polythene bags, green coconut shells, factory wastes, scraps and other heavy metals in the manhole and drains, the drainage system has been impeded beyond rectification by simple means.

It neither rains nor gets decomposed nor can be melted away and it offers resistance to the passage of water even under gravity flow. Dr. Ferose Ahmed added that the storm sewer in the Narinda area that would exhaust the incoming flow cannot possibly function properly because of its higher elevation. Other than this, pumps can't work for more than two hours at a stretch because of congestion and clogging of the pipe hole by undesirable materials like polythene bags and other garbage. Sometimes, these have to be cleared manually.

True, because of the construction of flood control embankments around Tongi canal, the Turag river and the Buriganga up to Lalbagh, the area on the south-western side including Mirpur, Mohammadpur upto Lalbagh has been partially saved but as the flood prevention ethics dictate, intervention in one place exacerbates problems elsewhere. Flood water this time has found access into the city area through the rivers, streams, beels and haors located in the eastern side of the city. Noticeably, for water logging problem in the city largely responsible is the filling up of the small channels like Dholaikhal, Ramchandrapur Khal, Segunbagicha Khal, Begunbari Khal and other Khals (canals) situated in the Gulshan, Banani, Uttara, Khilgaon, Basabo, Abdullahpur and Ramchandrapur areas of the bigger city that carried away the sewage, wastes round the year and rainwater during heavy monsoon.

Experts wonder as to how the enormous volume of human excreta and effluents from these buildings that would continue to pile up year after year would be drained out or disposed of safely. This might pose a menacing health and sanitation problem exposing the city dwellers to enormous risk, among other things, of carcinogenesis after about ten years in absence of efficient sewage treatment facilities.

It is learnt that a scheme costing to Tk 218 crore to ease out waterlogging problem of the city involving Jurain in the DND project area, Shonir Akhra, West Jatrabari on one side and Senpara Parbata, Shewrapara, Uttara etc on the

other, that was submitted by Dhaka WASA to higher authorities in 1997 remains buried under the rug. On the other hand, facilitating the drainage situation in the city area through mechanical means that was envisaged through the financial assistance of JICA is still in limbo because of the lack of response from the Japanese government.

Little did the planners of this city realise that the 'megacity' they were and are contemplating to build would turn into a hell-hole and become unlivable after few years since now. Fleeing droughts, floods, and starvation, people arrive here steadily from all parts of the countryside rendering the city areas full with pollution of all forms. With drainage congestion exacerbated by littering, sewage of all forms, polythene bags, kitchen wastes, poultry wastes and even residues of slaughtered cattle thrown at will in the drains and open spaces that ultimately find their resting places in the drains that just exist in name, this 'paradise city' has turned into a choking hell.

Precisely true, even during the Moghul period or British colonial rule urbanisation took place with the highest attention attached to sewage management. A cursory look at the old Dhaka city would reveal that although at that time roads were narrow, drains were quite wide and deep to allow passage of water and wastes with little hindrance. As every one knows, Dhaka city could once boast of at least 22 canals that would have allowed easy and quick disposal of wastes without creating waterlogging in any area. But much with greed as well as with need we have filled up the canals and marshy lands to develop housing for the growing population of the city that only invited colossal sufferings.

People by now know that sprawling residential areas like Demra, Jurain, Dolairpur, Maniknagar, Monda, Nandipara, Kadamtali, Goran, Khilgaon, Rampura-ulan, Badda, Baridhara, Mirpur, Gabtali, Kalyanpur, Rayerbazar, West Dhanmondi, Kamrangirchar etc. have sprung up through earth filling. By constructing embankment around some of these places, we could withstand the onslaught of flood water leaking into these areas partially, but what avenues do we leave to prevent waterlogging due to internal flooding or heavy rainfall?

To be sure, all these 'development works' were done with a myopic vision. Environment was never a part — and largely still isn't — of either the government's or RAJUK's or City Corporation's agenda of action. Historical records reveal that in the 'Dhaka City Development Plan of 1917, highest importance was attached to conserving the Dholaikhal and other Khals and navigational facilities in the adjacent rivers.' But to-day even the Buriganga faces extinction due to human onslaught. The 20-year plan formulated for the Dhaka City Development in 1997 emphasized maintenance and conservation of sewerage lines, installation of pumping stations and strengthening of the city protection embankments. The report suggested construction of structures on pillar in the flood prone areas to allow free flow of water during high rainfall and flood. The recommendation among other aspects emphasized the construction of 30 large tanks in different areas of the city to enable the city dwellers escape the fury of water logging. Shockingly, without taking any such steps, some of the tanks, large and small, that already existed have been filled up.

Despite the fact that rainfall is not so high these days because of adverse climatic situation and freakish weather pattern, still water logging is a common problem. It's not true that either general public or public leaders and policy makers did not know what actually played havoc and compounded their problems. Shockingly, the government

does nothing, and the people don't protest, perhaps because we are the people who stand by and watch a murder being committed and do nothing to stop it.

During 1988 flood, possibly the worst in living memory, heavy onrush of water overflowed the banks of the Buriganga and Turag, and flooded the surrounding habitat, but this year people inside the embankment and poldered area are in greater predicament than those living outside. This was apparent from an old women's fervent appeal to the Prime Minister who went to visit an affected area inside the embankment. The old woman said, "we don't want relief, please take prompt measures to drain out water from inside the embankment."

To be sure, there is an overriding non-chalance over the city's demise. Administrators, occasionally seem to be trying to make a quick buck to worry about keeping the city clean or to rid of the festering problems and then lapse into total inaction. Most appalling citizens are cynical about the ability of government or its agencies like RAJUK, City Corporation or WASA or DESA or PDB to combat the problems. In fact the dirty nature of politics in the country has ruined all systems in the country. There is hardly any consensus on any issue affecting public life. On the other hand, public leaders and government officials, in an effort to inflate the cash-strapped public exchequer have allowed buildings and market places to be put up here and there on payment of sky rocketing sale price without any attention to planning laws and environmental ethics, thereby making room for pollution and degradation to figure up prominently.

Interventions caused by raising structures here and there without any regard to environmental hazard, have caused increased flood risk elsewhere, affecting monsoon flow in the river and wetlands, raising river bed and creating waterlogging. Noticeably, such interventions often result in conflicts between different categories of people, within and outside the protected area. All these experiences about people's sufferings and woes only demonstrate the need of maintaining harmony with the nature and resources to the extent possible while carrying out urbanisation programme to meet the needs of the burgeoning population.

The serious waterlogging problem in different parts of the city has brought home to the concerned agencies and planners that it is not possible to feel secure and happy by constructing houses by earth filling the low lands. Shockingly, RAJUK so long have finished their obligations through selling plots and approving plans for structures without any thought to keeping spaces for roads or leaving any provision for drainage facilities. Even in the growth of new posh townships like Gulshan, Baridhara, Banani and Uttara, hardly any provision for drainage or sewage disposal was kept in view and people are now paying the price for such monumental lapse on the part of the concerned government agencies.

The writer is Controller of Examination, BUET.

## Yunus and Economics

by Mohammad Osman Gani

**M**UHAMMAD Yunus says that poverty is the result of bad ideas advanced by prevailing economics. These bad ideas tell people in positions of power to adopt action plans that are not right for the poor. The remedy lies in rewriting economics, by purging the bad ideas and by introducing the good ones.

Muhammad Yunus reminds us of the Biblical parable of the namesake Yunus, the prophet swallowed by a whale, but later disgorged unhurt. It was indeed a miracle that one could survive such a fate. It is nearly a miracle that Muhammad Yunus managed to escape with his brain intact after having been swallowed by the whale of conventional economics.

Why? The mainstream of conventional economics is neoclassical economics. It is a body of knowledge created by the ceaseless work of thousands of economists. This body of conventional wisdom rests on something quite strong. But it is strong only so long as there is none to shake it at its foundations. The small minority of Austrian School economists rejects it. And Yunus is but a one-man minority to question its strength. Yunus complains that conventional economics misreads the world and by putting misperceptions into people's heads, helps miscreate it. He demands a new textbook, one free from the misdeeds of conventional economics. But most students of economics can not even begin to see the point of the complaint, much less to have a clue about the content of the new textbook.

Let us consider the main elements, complaint against conventional economics.

**The Missing Theory of Self-employment**  
Conventional economics has no valid theory of employment. Classical economics conjured a theory of full employment, formally known as Say's Law. This can not explain why

there is unemployment. Indeed, the main point of Keynesian economics was to present a theory of unemployment. Keynesian, post-Keynesian and neo-Keynesian economics all failed to offer a clear and convincing theory of employment. So economics remains without a theory of employment. Freshmen students of economics of course have no clue why the matching of demand and supply of labour does not constitute a theory of employment. This is because they have no idea that equality of demand and supply is necessary but not sufficient. Something else is also necessary. That something is totally missing from prevailing analysis.

**The Missing Theory of Entrepreneurship**

Conventional economics lacks a theory of entrepreneurship. It cannot account for the changes in the constraints facing individuals. Entrepreneurship requires the violation of constraints. The result is that products with previous zero demand are sold, markets that do not exist begin to appear and processes that were not optimal begin to be used. William Baumal, then President of American Economic Association, lamented in his 1968 address to the Association that entrepreneurship disappeared from economic theory. Despite ceaseless attempts by many, the situation remains the same. Freshmen students of course have no clue how to analyze the determination of the constraints themselves. All they can do is to optimize subject to given constraints. Taking clues from Menger, Wickseil and Leontief, one could develop an all new analytical tool to analyze how constraints change. But that will simply require one to throw away neoclassical economics.

**The Missing Theory of Credit**

Conventional economics has no idea of credit. It can not

begin to see how the volume of credit affects the volume of output and employment. The Keynes-Hicks formulation of IS-LM analysis is a blind alley leading to nowhere when it comes to credit. But of course Yunus says credit is an instrument of empowerment of the poor and a necessary resource to fight poverty. The challenge is to build a model to show this formally. If any freshman out there think it is easy, try your demand and supply ideas to show how credit affects the level and the rate of growth of output and employment. Then you will begin to see why conventional economics needs no respect.

**The Missing Theory of Institutions**

Conventional economics has no ability to talk about institutions. It must take them as given. The so-called institutionalist school has done nothing to make institutions a part of the general equilibrium model. The clueless freshmen will of course wonder why some people care so much about Marxist economics, or Islamic economics or such other things. And yet Yunus claims that what we do is dictated by what we think. Freshmen out there: try building a model of demand and supply to explain how institutions govern ideas, which in turn govern actions. But don't it has nothing to do with demand and supply.

The challenge is to rebuild an economics which incorporates the missing elements. It will help nobody to imagine that neoclassical economics has an answer for every economic question.

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## Benazir — Caught in a Nightmare

Reuters reports from Karachi

**Crises have followed Benazir Bhutto since she lost power in November 1996, but she vows she will not quit or slide quietly into the exile she believes her enemies seek.**

**P**AKISTAN'S Benazir Bhutto feels she is caught in a nightmare.

The former prime minister is entangled in a web of corruption charges: her passport has been confiscated, her husband is in jail, her children are in Dubai and allegations of human rights abuses and extra-judicial killings have been thrown at her.

She dreams of her brothers, both dead, and it has been almost 20 years since her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was hanged.

"I feel absolutely confused and caught in a nightmare," Bhutto told Reuters on Friday of her latest difficulty — a Swiss court's decision to indict her for corruption. But she was determined to stay in control of her life.

"I hope that I am in control of my life even when I am out of power because in power you never have a moment for yourself. You are always rushing from one crisis to another," she said.

Crises have followed Bhutto since she lost power in November 1996, but she vows she will not quit or slide quietly into the exile she believes her enemies seek.

"I couldn't accept being branded with corruption charges. I thought it was important to prove to all those who believed in me, women in particular, that those charges were false," she said. "That is the reason why I'm here."

At 45, she has twice been leader of this Islamic nation of 135 million people, 90 per cent of whom live in poverty.

Her pale, aquiline profile is framed by an elegant headscarf, but there is no mistaking the acute political brain within.

Lining the staircase leading up to her private residence, a series of framed cartoons drawn by a pro-democracy admirer have struck a chord with the woman known to many as simply 'B.B.'.

One cartoon shows Bhutto looking at a road sign that reads 'caution — fame is a magnifying glass.' Another cartoon is captioned: "For everybody's prejudice I know a thing or two."

I can smell a trap in half a minute and I do.

A nose for danger is an invaluable gift in Pakistani politics. Alliances are made to be lost and there are recurrent rumours of shadowy fundamentalist cliques, made up of ex-soldiers and civil servants, which lie behind the mainstream policy.

Sometimes she feels her life is like a movie. If the plot reads like a Shakespearean political drama, so does the script.

"Last night I dreamt of my brothers," says the woman local reporters privately call Lady MacBeth — a role she says does

not fit her.

Her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was hanged in 1978, after a military coup. One brother, Shah Nawaz, died in France in 1985 amid rumours of poisoning. The other, Murtaza, was killed in a Karachi shootout two years ago.

Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, a local businessman, is in jail on conspiracy to murder for the swaying, along with other charges of corruption. She visits him a almost daily and blames rogue paramilitary elements for Murtaza's murder.

Bhutto is fuming over last week's decision by a Swiss investigating magistrate to indict her in a money laundering case. The probe began at the behest of prime minister Nawaz Sharif's government.

A key piece of evidence is a near 200,000 US dollar diamond necklace purchased with money from a Swiss bank account allegedly funded with kickbacks paid to win government contracts during Bhutto's tenure.

Neither the necklace nor the bank account are hers, she said. And she scoffed at the idea that she needed money from bribes to buy a necklace, however extravagantly priced.

Labelled a "champagne socialist" during her student days at Oxford and Harvard universities in the 1970s — she says she does not drink — she has converted to market economics. The conversion helped her attract a wave of foreign investment to Pakistan, she said, attacking Sharif's policies.

"Nawaz Sharif has rolled back the frontiers of the free economy by putting restrictions on the repatriation of foreign exchange," Bhutto says. The PPP (Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party) stands for free economy, global trade and deregulation.

But she says she still believes in socialism's egalitarian ideals.

She admits to expensive tastes — her favourite London store is Harvey Nichols, a choice shared with the late princess Diana — but has neither time nor inclination to indulge in them.

"In a sense I have had the means but I have never been bothered about the money," Bhutto said.

"I come from a wealthy and privileged background, and I am grateful to God for that," Bhutto wants to lead Pakistan to a third time and is busy cementing alliances with regional parties which once foresaw her for Sharif.

"My family and friends keep saying... miss my children — being away from them is what cuts me up most," she said.

One last cartoon at the bottom of the stairs echoes her thoughts and is captioned: "Every little absence is an age."