

# FOCUS

## Trade and Environment: Perspectives of the North and South

by Dr Saleemul Huq

*While it is true that there is not likely to be any immediate ban on Bangladeshi products on environmental grounds, in the near future, it is nevertheless necessary to use this time to put our house in order and take pre-emptive action if we are to avoid being faced with a ban all of a sudden as happened with export of shrimps to the EU.*

well as trade lobby groups. **A Positive Example** A good example for the way to deal with such contentious north-south trade issues can be seen from a different sector, namely child-labour, where imposition of the Harkins Bill in the US Congress banning import of garments made with child labour temporarily threw the garment export trade in countries, such as Bangladesh, into turmoil. However, by moving together with the exporters, importers, NGO advocates on child-labour and international organizations like UNICEF and ILO it was possible to show the Congress in the US that merely throwing the underage workers in Bangladesh out of work may in fact expose them to a fate worse than child labour.

On the other hand by providing them with schooling (through NGOs with support from UNICEF, ILO and others) with the promise of employment on their attaining working age it was a better and more humane solution to the problem. This allowed the objectives of avoiding child labour, which was in fact also not allowed under Bangladesh law, while providing schooling and other benefits to the underage children. Such a model of pro-active handling of a problem requires patience, cooperation and the goodwill of all parties concerned including the importers in the US, the exporters from Bangladesh, the two governments, NGOs and honest brokerage by the concerned international organizations such as UNICEF and ILO.

On the issues of trade and environment, however, there are still no such good examples of mutually satisfactory arrangements between exporters and importers in the south and north. The time is ripe to start examining possibilities of such arrangements in specific areas before they blow up into confrontations.

### British Council Meeting

A recent meeting held in London, UK under the sponsorship of the British Council sought to bring together over 100 representatives from more than 20 countries including government, NGO representatives as well as from international organizations who discussed the issue of 'Environmental Responsibility in World Trade'. A number of examples of fair trading guidelines and practices in the north including the one of eco-labelling and environmental guidelines from the International Standard Organizations (e.g. ISO 14001), the guidelines on environmentally sound production were discussed with a view to developing a consensus on how future world trade can be channelled in a manner that is both fair to all parties (particularly between north and south) and also environmentally sound.

### World Trade Organization

In particular, it was noticed that the WTO had set up a Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) to discuss these very issues but that the committee had so far failed to produce any substantial consensus or recommendations.

One of the reasons for this failure is that countries continue to view all issues from a narrow perspective of how each country's trade will be affected. Another reason is that so far the issues have been negotiated by teams representing the trade and industrial parts of governments and has no input from those responsible for environmental issues. A further factor in the failure of the WTO is that unlike in other sectors such as environmental and social sectors where NGOs and other elements of civil society including the media play an important role in steering the negotiations, albeit indirectly, the WTO is still the exclusive preserve of trade negotiations from government departments representing commerce and industry who are more used to negotiating behind closed doors.

The way forward out of this dilemma, therefore, seems to be for the WTO negotiations to become more inclusive, not only involving the environment departments but also NGOs and other bodies including civil society and more importantly for environmental groups in both the north and the south to get more involved in the negotiations early on. So far most environmental groups have tended to stay away from the WTO and trade related issues but this needs to change and more attention needs to be given to these important issues. Environmental groups in the north and south have already been successful in forging links on important global issues and negotiations on issues such as global climate change and biodiversity and have often been conduits for allowing controversial issues to be satisfactorily negotiated between the countries of the north and south. They, therefore, would also be able to play a similar role in the WTO if they were to take the initiative.

**Importance for Bangladesh** Why should Bangladesh take the issue of trade and environment seriously? There are a number of areas in which the issue of trade and environment may become important to Bangladesh. Exports of Bangladesh shrimp to the European Union have already received a setback mainly for health and safety reasons but the issue of environmental degradation from shrimp growing could also soon become another issue if preemptive action is not taken early enough. A number of groups in Europe and Canada have already started raising the issue of both social and environmental problems with shrimp growing in Bangladesh and could possibly

make it an important enough issue to restrict exports of shrimp to their countries.

Another area is the garment industry which so far has been targeted for child labour but not for environmental reasons. However, this could change if further backward linkage textile industries are set up in Bangladesh without the requisite environmental standards. Fortunately, most such textile industries are newly set up and are putting in place the requisite environmental waste management systems.

However, in the case of leather export most of the industries are old and highly polluting. It is very probable that in the very near future the importing countries may enact laws banning such leather being imported from polluting factories. Therefore, there is urgent need to ensure better waste management of the leather industries of the country.

With respect to agricultural exports such as jute and tea while these are in themselves not environmentally problematic the use of certain batching oils in the jute industries and certain banned pesticides in the tea industry could lead to sanctions against these products in the importing countries if we are not careful.

### What should Bangladesh Do?

While it is true that there is not likely to be any immediate ban on Bangladeshi products on environmental grounds, in the near future, it is nevertheless necessary to use this time to put our house in order and take preemptive action if we are to avoid being faced with a ban all of a sudden as happened with export of shrimps to the EU. There are a number of actions which could and should be taken in the short and medium term. Firstly, the negotiations in the WTO have to be taken seriously by the government and the negotiating team should in-

clude both the commerce and environment ministries who should build expertise on the issues in order to protect Bangladesh's interest in the negotiations.

In addition the government should link up with the non-government sector including NGOs and think tanks with knowledge and expertise on these issues in order to present a broad based negotiating position in the international debates which will increasingly happen.

Secondly, the country must put its own house in order by requiring that all industries including both new as well as old ones, comply with the Environment Protection Act of 1997 and if necessary assist those industries (e.g. leather) which may find this difficult to do on their own.

Thirdly, there should be greater dissemination of information to existing and prospective exporters regarding the environmental rules and regulations both in Bangladesh as well as in importing countries and also providing some support in acquiring the necessary environmentally sound technologies and practices. In this regard it should encourage individual industries as well as organizations of industries in different sectors (e.g. leather, textiles, pharmaceuticals, etc.) to develop and adopt voluntary guidelines such as the ISO 14001. Fortunately, some individual industries are showing foresight and beginning to adopt such measures already. They need to be encouraged and replicated by others.

If the above steps are taken up seriously by both the government as well as the exporters it should be possible for Bangladesh to not only avoid the dislocation that may be imposed by sudden bans of our products in importing countries but will also be able to make a constructive contribution to the global negotiations, on trade and environment. All these will, of course, come at a cost. However it is better to pay the price now and make the transition in a relatively smooth manner (while at the same time improving our own environment) rather than pay a much higher cost both in terms of dollars as well as social disruption if we do not take the necessary action now.

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## Modernising Cardiac Treatment

Interview of an International Expert by Naimul Haq

PROFESSOR Waheedur Rahman, an international cardiologist at the Broussais University Hospital in Paris, recently visited Dhaka to see the state of heart treatment in his home country. Prof Rahman is an honorary member of World Heart Foundation, European Society of Cardiology and French College of Interventional Cardiology.

Prof Rahman has performed over 10,000 cases of coronary angiogram (CAG) and 4,000 cases of ballooning and stenting world-wide. He had been a visiting consultant to leading hospitals in Singapore from 1990-1995 and has performed the first PTCA operation and implanted first ballooning stenting at Dhaka's National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD). This internationally renowned cardiologist talked to The Daily Star about his views on the existing problems and transfer of technology in the sector.



Prof Waheedur Rahman

**DS:** Do you think France can help Bangladesh in transferring medical technology?  
**WR:** Yes. In fact, France donated 7.5 million Franc in 1982 to purchase highly sophisticated medical equipment including catheters. A project was also taken up to train local doctors in angioplasty and ballooning surgery. Some doctors from NICVD are being sent to my hospital in Paris for training in modern technology.

**DS:** Do you think the existing private level cardiac facilities here are appreciable?  
**WR:** Not at all. I have seen a number of private hospitals and clinics. Out of the total I have visited, only two are capable of providing 'standard' cardiac facilities but their capacity is far less than the demand. There should be more cardiac centres at private initiative.

**DS:** What generally are the problems at NICVD?  
**WR:** NICVD is doing well but the problem lies with the system. The doctors do not appear to be accountable to patients. Doctors should develop better relationship with patients. There are some young doctors who have good talent. I expect them to see in the front row in a couple of years. They should develop skills so that each of them can become internationally recognised cardiologists.  
**DS:** Thank you for your time.

## Deadly Sterilization Drug Banned

by Naeem Mohaiemen

*What of the 100,000 women in 20 countries, who were sterilized without ever being informed of side effects? What about their human rights? Not just in Bangladesh, horror stories have surfaced from India, Thailand and many other countries.*

consequences of quinacrine were documented exhaustively. One notable feature of this report was the extensive focus on the use of the drug in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi doctor Naeem Rahman was reported to have praised quinacrine, while Dr. Zafrullah Chowdhury and Health Minister Salahuddin Yusuf were extremely critical of the drug. In a remarkably insensitive interview with the WALL STREET JOURNAL, Dhaka based gynecologist Dr. Naeem Rahman voiced strong support for the drug. Speaking about the dangers of the drug and issues of human rights for Third World women, Dr. Naeem said: "First, let these women be accepted as humans and then let's talk about human rights. As it is, they're going to die, so what do the long-term complications of quinacrine matter?"

Alex Freedman also reported that Dr. Rahman believes that the developed world's cautious standards of medical ethics and safety have no place in the lives of women for whom repeated pregnancies bring nothing but deprivation and danger. In a narrative that shocked the regular readers of the WALL STREET JOURNAL, Alex Freedman gave a graphic account of the conditions under which Dr. Naeem Rahman administered quinacrine to her patients. Reporting on the experience of 45-year-old maid Ambia Khatoun, Freedman reported that the patients were given a very minimal, often misleading explanation of the drug's potential side effects. Dr. Rahman did not provide any patient with a "informed consent" form, standard practise in many other countries. In a chilling sequence, Freedman reported, "Mrs. Khatoun moans softly as Dr. Rahman briskly thrusts an IUD inserter filled with 12 quinacrine pellets deep into the patient's uterus. Moments

later, the doctor instructs an assistant to mop up a small pool of blood that has dripped onto the floor."

When told by the foreign reporter that the Bangladesh government had banned the drug, Dr. Rahman, who has performed 2,900 such sterilizations in the past three years, replied: "No one ever told me this drug is banned in Bangladesh." On the other side of this debate was Health Minister Salahuddin Yusuf. In a meeting with a reporter, Mr. Yusuf firmly stated his position on quinacrine: "We don't allow doctors to do this - if they can't do this, if anything goes wrong or someone dies, who will compensate these women?"

Dr. Zafrullah Chowdhury provided a frightening first-person account. In 1973, Dr. Kessel first brought quinacrine to Bangladesh in liquid form. "Idealistic young public-health doctor", Dr. Chowdhury expressed interest in testing the drug. However, within minutes he was told to inject the liquid into the uterus of a 28-year-old mother, she died from the toxic side effects. Completely shattered by the horrific experience, Dr. Chowdhury never touched the drug again. In the JOURNAL report, he was quoted as saying that it was, "for all practical purposes, cold-blooded murder."

### Racist Anti-Immigrant Agenda

Who are Dr. Kessel and Mumford, with their deadly sterilization drug quinacrine? It turns out that they are no "angels of mercy", but rather racists with a sinister agenda. As the WALL STREET JOURNAL reported, Mr. Mumford is strongly opposed to immigration from the Third World to America - this presumably includes the numerous Bangladeshis who can be seen on New York streets. In the bat-

tle against immigration, he sees quinacrine as a powerful ally. Reducing population in Third World countries will choke off the supply of hungry immigrants coming to the US. Speaking to the JOURNAL reporter, Mumford talked about the increase of immigration to America in apocalyptic terms: "This explosion in human numbers, which after 2050 will come entirely from immigrants and the offspring of immigrants, will dominate our lives. There will be chaos and anarchy."

Dr. Kessel sounded a more moderate view than Mumford, but he did say in the same report:

"The present rate of illegal immigration isn't healthy." Even more revealing was the fact that much of quinacrine's funding now comes from strongly anti-immigration lobby groups. Mumford and Kessel first used quinacrine while working at Family Health International (FHI), North Carolina. Both men were fired from FHI in the 1980s. Since then, funding for Mumford's research has come from Population and Security, and free distribution of quinacrine has come from Washington DC based Donald Collins, Sally Epstein, the Scaife Family Foundation and the Dallas-based magnate family Fikes. All four of these sources are also big contributors and board members of Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) - a group regarded by activists as a racist, xenophobic organization strongly opposed to immigration from Third World countries.

### Global Condemnation

Quinacrine has been strongly opposed by various international organizations. Adrienne Germain, president of International Women's Health Coalition, said quinacrine was

"highly open to abuse." The WALL STREET JOURNAL reporter gives the impression that we have different standards for poor women. The programme has already been shut down in Vietnam under pressure from the WHO. The FDA's ban has been followed by a SIXTY-MINUTE investigation that may air on television tonight. But will this chorus of outrage be enough to stop the fanatics pushing quinacrine? The US FDA only has jurisdiction over drug manufacture inside the US and their export overseas (in fact, the FDA often allows drugs to be exported even when they are not legal in America). Even after the quinacrine ban, there is nothing the FDA can do to stop its manufacture abroad.

Previously, Sipharm Sissein AG was producing the drug in Switzerland. In the June 18 WALL STREET JOURNAL report, the Company's President Fritz Schneider was quoted as saying: "It isn't our role to check if this is safe or not." However, a week after the damaging report, Sipharm announced that they had stopped making the drug. But this is unlikely to deter Mr. Mumford, who is looking for other countries to make the drug and told the JOURNAL: "Arrangements have already been made to manufacture and distribute quinacrine overseas." What of the 100,000 women in 20 countries, who were sterilized by quinacrine without ever being informed of side effects? What about their human rights? Not just in Bangladesh, horror stories have surfaced from India, Thailand and many other countries. Rubber plantation worker Nguyen Thi of Vietnam was sterilized without her permission in 1993. Angerly talking about the Thai doctor who gave her quinacrine and the American researchers who created the drug, Thi asked the JOURNAL's reporter: "Did they consider us lab rats so that they could do whatever they wanted with our bodies?"

Will the guilty parties ever answer her question? (Based on Wall Street Journal, FDA Press Release and wire reports)

## Iran-Taliban Stand-off Concern over Implications

by A S M Nurunnabi

*The question is: Will Iran take the risk? One possible answer could be, according to some analysts, that while it may not embark on direct armed conflict with Afghanistan, it might try to check the orthodoxy and influence of the Taliban.*

TENSION on Iran-Afghanistan border has reached a flashpoint. Relations between the two neighbours had been strained ever since the Taliban militia established its control over the greater part of Afghanistan and set up their own style of Islamic order. The battered ties sank to a new low when on August 8 last, the Taliban took the northern town of Mazar-e-Sharif and captured at least nine Iranian diplomats, and later admitted their killing in the hand of Taliban defectors. Iran held Pakistan and Taliban responsible for the killing and issued a stern warning of a possible regional conflict. So long the Taliban had been pursuing unrelenting religious zealotry; after it has captured nearly the whole of Afghanistan, the fear has been very much pronounced that it may go for ethnic cleansing in a country which, especially in the newly captured northern region, has a plurality of ethnicity and sects.

In this background, the massive deployment of troops by Iran on the Afghan border has already created a grave situation. The initial deployment of 70,000 troops with further reinforcement by another 20,000 lank in an apprehended menacing war has created mounting tension in the region. The ominous question in this context is: Is the Islamic world poised for another conflict? Both Pakistan and Iran are believed to have larger economic and strategic interest in the region, for which control of Afghanistan would offer a decisive advantage.

The only positive factor is that on both sides there is awareness of the chilling consequences of an armed conflict. Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei has warned that once a fire has been lit in the region, it will be hard to extinguish. By imposing Islam at its harshest Pakistan may be just trying to keep up with the neighbours. Next door are two profoundly fundamentalist Muslim countries, Iran and Afghanistan. Common faith doesn't make them friendly, though Iran and the Taliban militia are playing out an ancient schism in Islam between the followers of Sunni and Shia paths.

Most Iranians are Shia, and they've watched with growing disgust over the past four years as the puritanical Sunnis of the Taliban blazed across Afghanistan like a fierce sand-

storm. Iran has given shelter and logistical support to various ethnic Afghan forces confronting the Taliban, but so far this has failed to halt the advance. When Taliban warriors, using the traditional Afghan method of bribes and bullets, conquered Mazar-e-Sharif, the last city held by the rebels, they also overran the Iranian consulate. A month after the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif, the Taliban's leaders admitted that nine Iranian diplomats and a journalist holed up in the consulate were massacred by the invaders. The Iranians along with human rights organisations were also alarmed over stories by refugees that the Taliban went on a rampage against the city's Shias. This was ostensibly to pay back equally vicious behaviour last year by Shia militiamen who executed thousands of captured Taliban.

Afghan experts in Peshawar and Islamabad were of the view that Iran has three military options: launching a punitive air strike on Taliban positions, giving solid back-up to 4,000 anti-Taliban forces that have massed along the border or going for an all-out military offensive against the Taliban. The latter move would involve opening up a safe corridor to the besieged Hazara Shias in the mountain valley of Bamian and attacking Herat, Badghis, Faryab and other towns near the Iranian border, installing anti-Taliban forces there. But the Taliban won't go down without a fight; they have nearly a dozen Russian-made Scuds and, according to one Taliban leader, these missiles are now aimed at Iranian cities. If the Iranians do nothing, the Taliban will probably defeat the remaining rebels and impose their brand of radical Sunni Islam on the entire country - and perhaps spread it into Central Asia.

There are indications that Pakistan too may find itself dragged into the Taliban's showdown with Iran. Tehran accused Pakistan of using Pakistani fighter pilots for flying bombing raids during the Taliban's assault on Mazar-e-Sharif and Bamian, a charge that Pakistan denied. The rapid escalation of tension between Iran and Afghanistan is disturbing to all Islamic countries.

The greatest concern appears to be that any conflagration between Iran and Afghanistan will have spill-over effects on the neighbouring countries of the region as Iran and the Taliban of Afghanistan are on opposite sides of the divide in Islamic sects - Shia and Sunni, as already noted. Most of the countries including Pakistan are inhabited by both sects of Muslims. Any armed conflict between Iran and Afghanistan would likely to cause eruption of sectarian conflicts in the neighbouring countries with devastating consequences.

There is a view that Iran who fought almost a 10-year war with Iraq may not be prepared to embark on a war with Afghanistan for a long haul. Whatever economic progress Iran has been able to make after the war will be placed in jeopardy. The question is: Will Iran take the risk? One possible answer could be, according to some analysts, that while it may not embark on direct armed conflict with Afghanistan, it might try to check the orthodoxy and influence of the Taliban. According to the view of these analysts, Iran might try to coordinate its action with Russia and other Central Asian Republics as to how to bolster the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance to fight against the Taliban. Iran's massive stationing of troops on the border of Afghanistan is likely to engage all attention of the Taliban on the border, leaving weak defences within Afghanistan. The weakening of Taliban defences within the country could provide an opportunity to the Northern Alliance to gain strategic areas in Afghanistan from which they would be able to take full advantage against the Taliban.

Meanwhile, as reported, the UN Security Council on 15 September last condemned the slaying of the Iranians and called for the UN to participate in the investigation. It demanded that the Taliban fully respect international law and human rights. The UN Secretary-General asked the three governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates that recognised the Taliban government to intervene and persuade the Taliban to respect the rights of all people in Afghanistan.

The US is said to have concerns on the situation because any armed conflict might put the world's power balance at risk. The US has reportedly commenced its talks with Iran on the rising tension over Afghanistan. Although the risk of armed conflict looms large, it is hoped that the initiatives taken by the US and the UN provide an opportunity to defuse the alarming situation. However, at the moment, both Iran and Taliban are in a 'war of nerves' state.

## The Dimensions of Indiscipline

by A M M Aabid

books have the same admonition: who will cast the first stone? Has Administration got this diskette?  
Indiscipline in the horizontal layers is easier to combat by the upper layers of the society or administration. But it is complex, as there are many layers, and many sectors (360 degrees). Cleaning the vertical layers introduce system weaknesses, because the cleaners belong to a higher hierarchy, and the dishonest are protected by layers of power and influence. For a good autocast, the job is easier than in a democratic set-up, bringing in the concept of team-work at different locations and levels.  
What about post-cleaning operation? There are human complexities: the disposal or dispersal of the accused persons spreads the virus (perhaps reduced) in to new configurations, before and after the various

modes of punishments. Therefore the moral rehabilitation programmes have to be pre-planned with care, and implemented in user-friendly mode. Passing on the liability to other locations is not a fair game. The world has seen many rearmament movements come and peter out, because evil has the greater staying power. Today a similar concept, but limited in scope, is one dealing with the protection of intellectual property.  
In the public services, the day-to-day rules and regulations are drafted in such a way that evil personnel would find it very difficult not to be caught at some stage of the operation, now or later. Therefore procedures are introduced into official procedures and documentation to discourage unfair means, keeping an eye on

the public interest. This is the beginning of bureaucratic delays and centralization. Habituated to the latter prescription, the civil service is loath to relinquish hold and power when exercises come up dealing with new decentralisation schemes or reforms.  
Even with a seemingly fool-proof system, another bug remains: the notorious human factor. Since the latter practice devious means, it is a variable factor, beyond the control of machines and automation (the super computers cannot predict the weather accurately, as there are hundreds of variable factors changing, say, every fifteen minutes).  
Therefore it is not surprising that anti-corruption campaigns, appear to disappear prematurely. The half-done work is taken up, after a break, in a half-hearted manner, by the new administrators, and the exercises never seems to end. Students of mathematics are familiar with the conundrum of a person trying to get the distance, then pauses for a while, then proceeds to one half of the remaining distance.  
So what is the theoretical solution to combat indiscipline, and what are the options available? That is not enough. How far the theory could be applied practically in a local environment? How to reduce the variable factors, and make every member of the staff of act in a directed way. There are several components of the staff or teams: The authority or the policy makers; the implemental groups and the group under surveillance. The supplementary groups are the vested interests, the negotiators, and the us-tads or godfathers. The latter play the role of Mr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

INDISCIPLINE in society is never linear. It is a 3-dimensional cliff, playing hide and seek when not expected. Its guise is disguise, but in a totally undisciplined environment it rears its head more frequently in ugly defiance.  
Indiscipline's envelope is a solid-angled, like that of a sphere, not a flat circle on paper. This immoral virus has length, breadth and thickness. Therefore controlling so many dimensions simultaneously is difficult, and needs a great deal of planning and coordination, and extra cooperation from all.  
Today, in our society, corruption, nepotism, rent-seeking, and blackmailing (components of indiscipline) have assumed alarming proportions. To tackle the menace, the cleaning agent must not be infected, like rebooting an infected computer with a clean booting diskette. The sacred