ANGLADESH has been

disaster of catastrophic

dimension. After the longest

flooding Bangladesh is now

busy in resettling and re-

building. This is almost like a

post-war struggle for rehabili-

tation. More than three-fourths

of Bangladesh was literally

submerged under floodwater for

about two months. Never in the

history of this part of the world

there was such a devastating

and long flooding. This was in-

deed a crippling flood. As a re-

sult the damages too have been

colossal. Besides loss of pro-

duction in the agricultural sec-

tor, this time the small and

medium size industries suffered

heavy loss. The self-employed

sector was also badly hit. Two

major crops have been gone.

Also gone are the stocks of the

commercial units and indus-

tries. Some of the vital ma-

chines have become inopera-

tive. The running capital has

been consumed during those

difficult days. The initial capi-

tal mobilised through savings

and micro-credit from NGOs

has also been eaten up by most

borrowers. The roads, bridges

and culverts have been badly

damaged. The livestock have

been seriously affected. The

health system has been particu-

larly under pressure. The econ-

omy was literally in 'stand still'

position for more than two

months. Nothing moved in or

a new struggle for rehabilita-

tion has been started. The na-

tion as a whole responded

boldly during the flooding.

There was a tremendous up-

surge of social capital during

those critical days. A recent

survey revealed that 84 per cent

of the affected areas received

relief from one or the other

sources. The sources included

government, NGOs and private

individuals or group. Besides

governmental or NGO efforts, at

least 42 per cent of the respon-

dents informed that the indi-

viduals, relatives, social organ-

isations/networks came for-

ward to stand by the flood vic-

tims. It was indeed a heroic

struggle. This was almost a re-

peat story of 1971, the year of

liberation struggle of

tion is equally struggle some.

Indeed, this phase of the strug-

gle is even more critical. Nor-

mally, individuals and societal

networks recede as soon as the

flood water recedes. As a result

UBURBAN floodplain en-

Oceeded unquestioned for

many years in Dhaka, more re-

cently, has been a concern be-

cause of its effect on farming.

Most research on this subject

regard residential expansion as

fundamentally hostile to farm-

ing. Despite considerable inter-

est in this phenomenon, there

are very few research that

shows what factors play signif-icant role in residential expan-

sion in the suburban flood-

plains. Both micro and macro factors may have influenced the

residential expansion process. The macro factors which influence the pace and character of private land development are important in the land conver-

sion process. However, it is the micro factors that determine

why some parcels of land are

developed and others are not. The macro factors are repre-

sented by public policy changes

during a certain time period.

e.g. legislative actions and re-

sulting shifts in the roles of

various government agencies

are in this category. The micro

factors describe the land units

about which decisions are

made, and characteristics of

landowners, individuals, com-

munity officials and others

whose actions and beliefs affect

floodplain management deci-

The Affecting Factors: From

the available literature, five

possible factors are assumed to

explain these types of scattered

and dispersed developments.

These are: i) socio-economic

characteristics of landowners.

ii) accessibility to public ser-

vices, iii) accessibility to road

networks, tv) land price, and v)

physical characteristics of

land. Besides the above five fac-

tors, the author as a 'cultural

insider' emphasizes the role of

the 'accessibility to the pro-

posed flood embankments as

one of the most important fac-

tors that could be added to the

list in explaining the scattered

and dispersed residential de-

velopment in Dhaka. The im-

portance of this factor may be

justified by the reasons that a

proposed flood embankment

will ensure perceived safety

against future flooding. More-

over, alignment of the em-

bankments along the river

banks would mean probable

road in the future and ensure

good accessibility for settle-

ments, markets and schools.

The above six factors can be

classified further in terms of

their impacts on the supply of

or demand for land develop-

ment. Included in the former

category are the physical char-

acteristics of parcels and socio-

economic characteristics of the

landowners. Increasing the de-

mand for certain land parcels

are the accessibility to public

services, accessibility to road

networks, recent trend in land

price, and, accessibility to flood

statistical model was formu-

lated in order to explain the re-

lationship between the rate of

floodplain encroachment by

two types of houses Pucca and

Semipucca and a set of explana-

tory variables. The selected set

provided an explanation for

about 64.0 per cent of the vari-

ance respectively. Following

discussions are based on the re-

sults of statistical analyses and

Results and Discussions: A

embankments.

croachment, which pro-

The post-flood rehabilita-

Bangladesh

Given these damages/losses,

experiencing yet another

====F0CUS======

disaster. So let us do two things:

gramme at least in these pock-

sations and individuals to col-

lect winter clothes so that they

can be distributed to the poor

families living in these pockets.

the people of these pockets. This

year the onslaught may be even

stronger. The knitwear facto-

ries may also be requested to

share their 'rejects' with the

poor. Almost all middle class

and rich families can share at

least one set of winter clothes

with the poor families. This

campaign should be initiated

immediately. Here the NGOs

social and philanthropic or-

ganisations can take the lead.

Identify some spots where peo-

ple can donate the winter

clothes and then some credible

organisation can pick them up

preparing quilts, which may

cost only about Tk 200 to 300, to

be distributed among the prob-

Alert organisations to start

for distribution.

Winter normally hits hard

expedite the housing pro-

· alert NGOs, social organi-

Keep an Eye on the Distressed 'Pockets'

by Atiur Rahman We got to rethink our conventional development strategy and focus more sharply on the people who may have been passing through difficult time in the post-flood Bangladesh.

the onus falls on the government to rehabilitate the affected people. The NGOs too take up some responsibilities. But the spontaneous response of the individuals and social organisations is not that visible during this phase. But people have been showing tremendous resilience and steadfastness during the post-flood coping pe-

But even then the government has to remain vigilant about not only the prompt rehabilitation activities but also about unexpected mishaps in some distressed pockets which may not be so easily reachable. We may, therefore alert the government to remain ever vigilant about some of the following 'likely pitfalls' which can surely be avoided:

The Pockets are Vulnerable

There are a number of pockets along the Brahmaputra basin which are normally erosion prone and backward. The roads are underdeveloped, the administration is weak, the NGO coverage is small. These are the pockets which again have been badly affected by this year's flood (see the chart for a glimpse at these affected pockets). A few hundred families have already fallen victim to the river bank erosion and they are now living on high roads. These areas have been experi-

· acute shortage of work opportunities acute malnutrition and

food shortage · acute shortage of capital for restarting business and rebuild-

ing houses.

There may have been enough food around. The VGF Cards have already started arriving. But the extent of deprivation among the flood victims of these pockets is too acute to be covered by conventional efforts. There is indeed a need for special efforts for creating jobs and providing purchasing power to the vulnerable people of these pockets. More than 75 per cent of the families in these pockets live below poverty line. Even the rich farmers' land has been sand cast and two of their crops have been completely de-

stroyed. The NGOs are tradi-

the river bank erosion-affected people. So there is a need for special focus on these pockets. In fact there are the pockets where public action is needed the most. Don't leave them to the conventional rehabilitation efforts normally carried out by the administration. We are not doubting their sincerity. But the problem is too vast to be

addressed by the 'officials' only.

There has to be another kind of

special mobilization at least for

these pockets.

tionally shy in giving credit to

Indeed a special task force/squad may have to be dispatched to look after these traditionally famine prone pockets. So the administration should be doubly cautious about what is going on in there. The newspaper reporters, researches, monitoring agencies should better visit these pockets to get firsthand feeling of the magnitude of deprivation

therein. A number of thanas e.g. Akhaura, Burichang, Chandina, Sharasti, Bakshiganj Motherganj, Mymensingh Sadar, Fulpur, Ghatail etc have been experiencing higher price of course rice. Something should be done now to stabilise this price.

OMS can at least be initiated in those areas where there may have been the rising trend of price of coarse rice. The NGOs too can complement these efforts of the government. The work for cash, test relief and food for works should immediately be initiated so that lack of work opportunities does not further complicate the situation in areas where coarse rice is being sold at a higher price.

One should not forget about the danger of acute malnutrition of the children and lactating mothers in such areas. The wheat given through VGF Cards may not be sufficient to ensure enough nutritional intake. Both government and NGOs may think of doing something more to avoid malnutritional crisis which may be brewing in such pockets.

The winter is not far away. The housing condition of the majority of households is simply poor. If the winter sets in earlier, there will be another

as relief.

Keep an eye on the agricultural wage level, the migration of rural people to the city areas. to monitor the extent of depravation existing in the flood-affected areas.

well be sold at a subsidised price

to those who need not take them

I have only indicated a few areas of public action in a postflood situation, focusing on some pockets. There may be many more such pockets. We got to hunt for them and be prepared to stand by the wretched people struggling hard to survive in this difficult period. Both government and civil society should continue to monitor some of the above indicators so that there is no mishap. This is a very crucial time for maintaining law and order, higher level of national unity and vigilance in all fronts. If we can do these, surely Bangladesh can turn this disaster into a number of opportunities. People and the nation do change after disaster. They change, to face a difficult situation. As a result a momentum is set in motion for better society and economy. So let us

not miss this opportunity.

We got to rethink our conventional development strategy and focus more sharply on the people who may have been passing through difficult time in the able cold victims. These can as post-flood Bangladesh.

	List	of Affected Areas	
District	Thana	Union	Villages
Kurigram	Roumari Chilmari	(All)	Khanpara
		Not Sadar Ramna	Bhangapara
		Nayerhat;	Kawerchar
		Ashtimirchar	Fulerchar Kurirchar
		Mohanganj	Tapurchar
		970.0 FS	Hakanda
			Jadurchar etc.
	Ulipur	Jatia	
	Rijibpur	(All)	
Gaibandha	Fulchari	Erandabari	
		Fazlupur	
		Kanchipara	
		Gozaria	
		Uria	
	Shaghata	(Char Area)	
	Gaibandha Sadar		
	Shadullahpur		
Jamalpur	Dewanganj	Chenadoli	Char Gelabari
	Islampur		Kutubullah Char
	Motherganj		Char Nandanerpara
	Bakshiganj		Bir Nandanerpara
	Sarishbari	Satpowa))
	Melandoha	Jhagurara	
		Tupkarchar	
		Mahmudpur	
		Chineytola	
		Sudhibari	
		Haripur	
NB This is n	ot a complete list. The	ere may be a few other	r such pockets as well.

Factors Affecting Floodplain Encroachment

Experience from Dhaka-East

by Dr Md Rashed Chowdhur



embankments provide safety

have been limited to those significant variables which are deemed to be of interest or importance, and also subject to logical interpretation:

Socio-economic characteristics of the landowners: The preferences, personal desires, and expectations of individual plot owners could be a major factor for some tracts being developed while others around them are not. Educational attainment was, therefore, an important factor that can contribute to the encroachment process. Higher level of education was expected to be associated with agricultural land transition to high quality houses. However, this variable was found insignificant throughout the series. Similarly, land inheritance period is a factor as well. It has been found that those least likely to sell their land were those living on the land, those who were not retired, those who owned the land by themselves and has held the land for more then 10

Accessibility to educational facilities: Easy access to educational facilities are important assets to a development project. Distance to educational institutions is an important decisionmaking factor for the residents. It has been found that the residents of Pucca houses are influenced by this variable while others displayed a weak asso-

Accessibility to road networks: Closely related to public services in creating demand for individual land parcels are certain accessibility factors Accessibility is defined as the quality of location with respect to the array of economic activities. Access to employment opportunities, shopping, and cultural and recreational facilities can enhance the development possibilities of a land parcel. Close proximity to key transportation routes appeared to have enhanced the accessibility and increased the demand for certain sites for residential

construction. Accessibility to flood embankment: Flood protection services are important components of land use change. Flood

against perceived flooding. As a result, land use in the proposed embankment areas have undergone rapid changes indicating an increase in residential and decrease in agricultural land uses. Experience from Dhaka-West shows that flood embankments lead to interventions in the existing drainage channels resulting in the formation of stagnant ponds inside the embankments and, therefore, some portion of lands became unusable for agricultural purposes. Role of flood embankments may, therefore, have two ways of influences on floodplain encroachment e.g. safety against flooding and vacant lands not usable for agricultural purposes. This is the most important decisionmaking variable that influences simultaneously all the residents. While it seems reasonable to believe that people would care more to live far way from the embankments, findings of this study revealed that rate of encroachment increased near the embankments.

Recent trend in land price: It is an important component that influences significantly the floodplain encroachment process. As compared to the urban area, comparatively disadvantaged floodplains offer a relatively cheaper land price which is said to have attracted many potential new-comers. Further land price hikes attract many buyers for procurement of more lands. Recent studies suggested that the land prices have appreciated to a greater extent due to the proposed flood embankments. Despite an increasing trend in land price two reasons are directly responsible for increasing encroachment. These are a) some of the agricultural lands are becoming unusable for drainage congestion, so, agriculture is becoming less profitable; b) rent as well as demand for low-cost Semipucca housing is increasing, so, many farmers constructed and rented these houses to other people which provided them a major source of monthly income. Besides, an indirect reason responsible for expansion of these houses is: farming in

Bangladesh is mostly a family

business and this problem is aggravated if their children work in the non-agricultural sector. Farmers, therefore, have less incentives to continue farming and switch over to low-

cost housing. Physical characteristics of parcels: One factor that must be considered in analyzing why an idle parcel of land is developed is the physical characteristics of the site itself. The size and shape of a parcel can influence its development potential by limiting the construction activities suitable for it. Land located in low lying areas may not be physically suitable for constructing a permanent Pucca house while a low-cost Semipucca house can be constructed without much difficulty and, therefore, residential construction tended to expand towards the high agricultural lands mixed with residential

Conclusion: Findings provided an important basis for preliminary evaluation of the landowner reaction to the proposed flood embankments in the eastern perimeter of Dhaka city. It involves not only the perceptions and motivations of the landowners, but particularly, an insight into the capacity and mechanism by which landowners are influenced by the proposed Greater Dhaka Flood Protection Project (GDFPP). Locational and accessibility factors, the traditional focus of geographic research in explaining urban growth and expansion, seem to have influence on the landowners' decision-making. Statistical results confirmed the role of various hypothesized factors, some variables were consistently dominant whereas some others offered subordinate or even marginal roles. Among others distance to the proposed flood

Correction

The Daily Star on October 20, 1998 published an article titled "The Making and Maintaining of the Female Divorcee Destitute" by Lubna Mariam. Who was identified as a member of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK). Ms Mariam is neither a member of ASK.

embankments' has been found to have influenced most significantly the residents in their decision making for residential expansion in the floodplains of Dhaka-East

The writer is an official of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre of the Bangladesh Water Development Board. The above article has been prepared on the basis of a study conducted by the writer in

A Tribute To Amartya Sen

by M. M. Akash

"Amartya Sen has made several key contributions to the research on fundamental problems in welfare economics. His contributions range from axiomatic theory of social choice, over definitions of welfare and poverty indexes, to empirical studies of famine. They are tied closely together by a general interest in distributional issues and a particular interest in the most impoverished members of society"

TE all in Bangladesh specially rejoice the ▼ ▼ winning of Nobel prize by Amartya Kumar Sen. It is like getting an award long overdue and long awaited for. Last year the Nobel prize in economics went to the two financial specialists Messrs Metrons and Scholes for their contributions to the theory of options pricing. But it was not above controversy. Many people thought that such technical discoveries in a narrow field of money market is too narrow to deserve a Nobel prize. Even hardcore Chicago economist like Gary Becker (who himself had got the nobel prize in economics) had remarked this time that poverty and underdevelopment are rather more important problems than financial problems. Moreover, later when the winners of the last year's nobel prize together went for building a so called hedge fund in the money market using their theory, it failed miserably. Even the pro-business Wall Street Journal had to recognise that such a crisis has really "tarnished" the image of the Nobel prize. So this is the background of the current year's Nobel prize in Economics.

Thus, this time when A.K. Sen's name was announced then nobody could say that the prize has gone to a person whose contribution is confined to a narrow specialised area. A.K.Sen as we all know has always tried to extend the border of the dismal science (the pet name of Economics). Perhaps he is the only economist in the world who shares simultaneously two professorial chairs in the two different disciplines of "Economics" and "Philosophy" in the University of "Harvard" The strength of Sen lies in his easy passage and perfect command of both. Thus he is a philosopher who can claim to be the editor of as technical a journal as "Econometrica" and he is also an economist who can publish articles in all the world famous journals of Philosophy.

What especially distinguishes Amartya Sen from other economists is his extreme humanitarian concern for the poor and the famine-stricken people. Even the first reaction that he had expressed after getting the Nobel Prize was to take joy in the fact that the Nobel committee by recognising his works has also recognised the importance of the so called ugly subjects of "Poverty" and "Famine". Perhaps this was due to his childhood memories of the infamous Bengal Famine in 1943 when Sen was only eleven vears old!

A.K. Sen was often dubbed as a "leftist" for his special bias

towards the downtrodden. An

editor of the wall street journal got so infuriated by Sen's success that he could not but write that since Sen is an economist who does not like to tread the middle path and rather leans to the side of left so it would have been more correct for the Nobel prize committee to "refuse to give an award rather than default to someone of such a debatable merit." But this type of remark only shows how strong is Sen in his commitment. Another good point of Sen is his



commitment to his own coun try and nation. Sen had till now not given up his citizenship of India and always proclaims proudly " I am an Indian and a Bengali". Sen's English is extremely lucid and he has the finest ability to make hard technical economics popular. easy and lucid, retaining the substance and depth as well. Perhaps more lucid is his Bengali. Anybody who has gone through his "Jibonjatra O Arthaniti" will be amazed at his ability to invent new Bengali terms and categories in the field of Economics.

In the citation paper of this year's Nobel award in the field of Economics it was rightly

"Amartya Sen has made several key contributions to the research on fundamental problems in welfare economics. His contributions range from axiomatic theory of social choice. over definitions of welfare and poverty indexes, to empirical studies of famine, They are tied closely together by a general interest in distributional issues and a particular interest in the most impoverished members of society" (from the Web page of Nobel Foundation)

Actually the most wellknown work of Sen is specifically concerned with famine and its causes. He through his incisive detail analysis of a few cases of famines in India, Bangladesh and Saharan countries has proved that famines

can occur in a region even when the available food-stock is equal to that of any normal previous year's stock. In other words Famines in these cases are caused basically due to problems in the distribution of the available stock of food. Sometimes the hungry people did not have the purchasing power to buy food and sometimes the bad managers could not reach out the famine areas in time or sometimes the managers even took the wrong decision to export the available food! Thus it was an old story retold by Sen but in a very rigorous manner so that it could capture the mind-set of the western authorities.

We Bengalis are proud of Sen's achievement. We are not a materially rich nation but in terms of intellectual capability we always produced and perhaps will continue to produce from amongst ourselves men like Satyen Bose, Rabindranath Tagore and A.K. Sen. Actually Bangladeshis all over the world immediately became jubilant at the news since Sen's original home was in Manikganj, a district in Bangladesh and he is also the nephew of the famous Bengali progressive writer Satyen Sen. Although Sen himself does not think in the same way and has asked everybody to try hard to solve their worldly problems before taking pride in intellectual feats. Perhaps Sen is more interested to change the world than just to interpret it.

Sen in his personal life is a very affectionate father and a teacher as certified by his exwife the famous Bengali writer Nabonita Dev Sen. A.K. Sen is also a very handsome and attractive personality. There are many anecdotes about Sen's colourful student life. We can end this tribute by mentioning only one of them. During his study at Cam-

bridge in the late fifties Sen had colleagues who had later become as famous as he is now. One of them was Late Mahbub-Ul Huq from Pakistan and who was also the chief editor of the famous "Human Development Report" published annually from the UNDP. During their student days it is reported that once upon a time the two friends had a heart to heart talk between themselves. At one stage Huq had remarked that he did not believe that traditional economics really can solve the problems of mankind. At that stage Sen asked him then why he was reading economics. Hug replied that in today's world to get your message heard you will have to be an economist! From then on the two friends cooperated with each other to build a non-conventional economics. And Sen at last won the Nobel prize in "economics"!

Blair Leads a Very British Revolution

As the British House of Commons starts its second full session under the control of the Blair government, Labour Party circles talk of a "continuing revolution." Traditional Labour ideology is giving way to traditional Tory pragmatism. And the changes under way have huge implications for Britain's future.

Derek Ingram writes from London

LOWLY, but ever so slowly, the medieval trappings that surround the British ruling establishment are disappearing into history.

A gentleman holding the title of Silver Stick in Waiting, who attends on the Queen every year at the opening of parliament, will not appear this time. His superior, Gold Stick, remains on parade.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine - the man who controls the British legal system - will no longer walk backwards in front of the Queen. But others, known as the Great Officers of State, will do so: not because the Queen wants them to, but because they do. Meanwhile, the "dignitaries" in the procession have been cut from 54 to 40.

The members of parliament who have to stand outside the House of Lords, the upper house largely populated by hereditary nobles even today, will have less time to wait before three ceremonial knocks on a slammed door lead to its open-

All this is part of what is in British terms a revolution. Slow, peaceful change has been the British way for more than 350 years.

What is the British way? The Conservative ('Tory') Party is desperately trying to find out. Until recently it ruled so mightily under Margaret Thatcher, but now it has become so invisible to the British public that few even remember the name of its thirty-something leader, William Hague.

Mind you, the Labour Party under Prime Minister Tony Blair now claims to know. Or at least it has been ahead of the game.

At this year's Conservative Party conference, Hague used the phrase "the British way" more than 20 times in his rallying speech.

two Conservative prime minis-

ters who have not spoken to

Critics quickly pointed out that Labour ministers had already used the phrase almost to extinction in speeches over the previous year, and that many of Hague's best lines were copycat quotes from Blair. Labour won their great 1997

election victory by pinching the Tories' trousers. The Tories are now trying to pinch them back, although for the moment it seems a feeble effort.

In a breathtakingly crass piece of public relations, Thatcher and Edward Heath -

Knocking Britain's institutions for six

each other for 20 years - were seated glowering at each other on the brightly-upholstered

The arrangement merely highlighted how deeply the party is still rent, particularly over relations with the European Union and membership of a single European currency.

But the key to the conference season was not the reforming of old enmities on the Tory conference platform. It was the way Blair and what he and his cabinet now routinely referred to as "new Labour" have entrenched themselves by launching what in Mao-like terms they dub "a

continuous revolution. Certainly, as parliament reopens, they can record 18 breathtaking months.

In right wing disguise they have launched a raft of fundamental changes. Political parties' funding will be shaken up. Hereditary peers will depart the House of Lords. Scotland and

Wales will get separate parlia-

And there's more. The Bank of England has been loosed from government control. New local government will start with a mayor for London. A commission will shortly propose elections should switch to

ments.

proportional representation. At present, British uses a first-past-the-post system where the electorate is divided into constituencies, each represented by the person who wins the most votes in the constituency. As a result, most governments achieve an absolute majority of seats on less than 45 per cent of the vote.

Each reform alone, if carried forward, would transform the constitutional face of Britain. But, as always, nothing will happen quickly. The end of the first-born noblemen in the Lords is only one stage to the ultimate goal of reforming the institution — a totally unelected

upper house in a country which has long claimed to be the Mother of Parliaments.

Moving to an elected upper chamber is fraught with complications, for its members not only comprise people chosen by government but also the Prince of Wales, Prince Philip and other royal dukes, as well as 15 bishops from the Church of England.

Reform will deeply affect the monarchy, sitting at the top of this establishment pyramid, and the continuation of an established church in a now multi-religious society.

The regional parliaments could lead to an independent Scotland, or at least a federal system. Not for long can 71 Scottish MPs sit in London as well as in a new assembly in Edinburgh. Northern Ireland's newly-constituted assembly. too, will have to be rethought if peace takes permanent root

Installing mayors in London and the other big cities will lead to wholesale reform of local government nationwide. There is talk of introducing compulsory voting in national and local elections, which might boost the woefully low level of popular participation in local

All this is a daunting programme for any government. So according to the Blair government, they must be pragmatic if they are to stay in office and see it all through.

The Tories have held office for much of this century, the argument runs, because they were usually prepared to change course if the pressure was on. Even Margaret Thatcher, the lady who - she claimed - was not for turning, reversed course many times.

The so-called continuous revolution is about keeping up with the changes as public pressure dictates them. Labour is even murmuring about chang-

ing its name. It means to become the permanent party of government. That will not happen, of course, because all governments get tired and run out of ideas to face

the new challenges. But, with the Conservatives showing no sign of getting their house in order. Labour is set for

a long run. — Gemini News

The author was the founding editor of Gemini News Service, and is now its consultant editor.