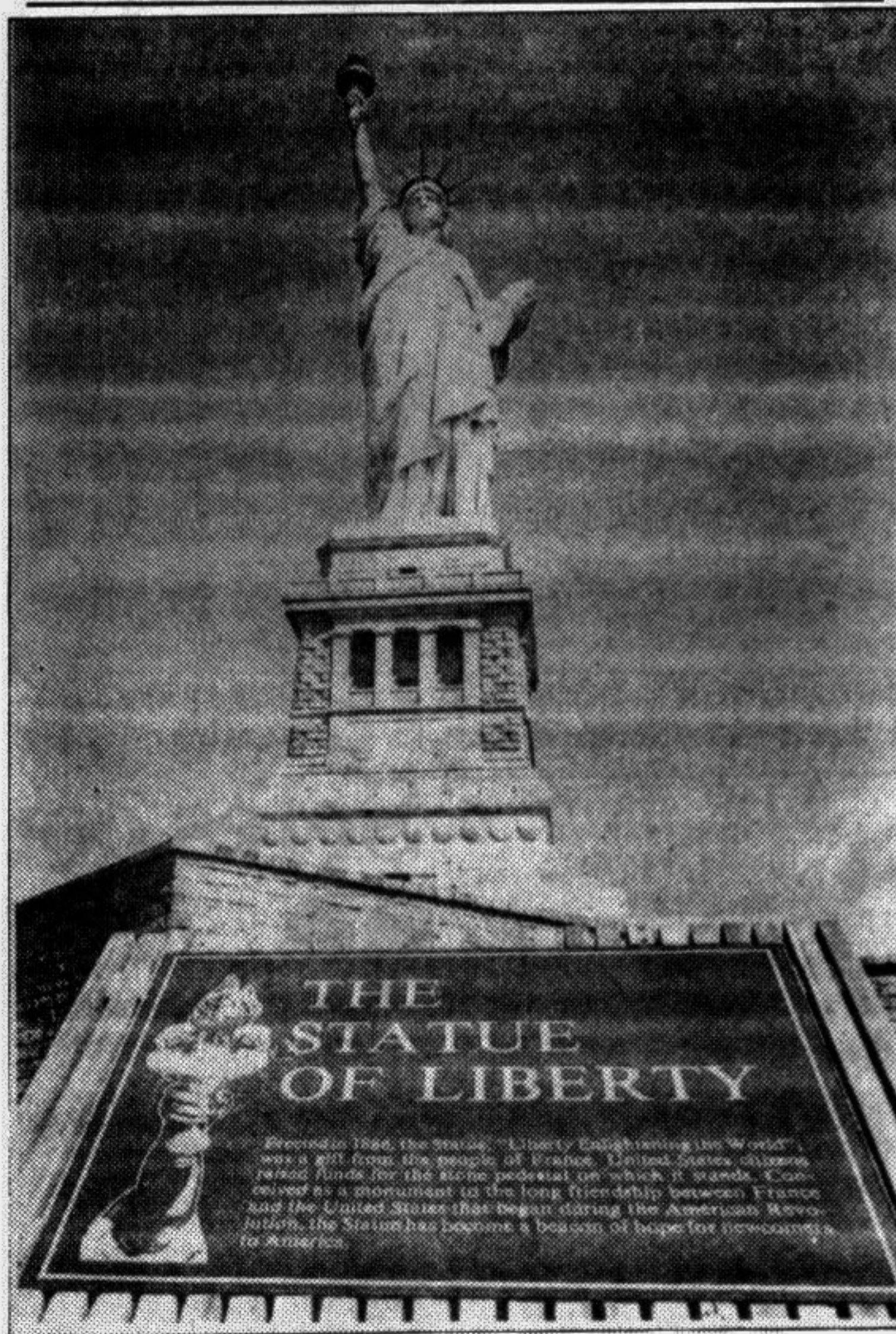


# Visit to the Ellis Island and the Liberty State Park

by Dr. Khalilur Rahman

Many of us in our country who have not yet visited America think that those who are staying there are leading beautiful lives. Reality is different. The immigrants have to work hard to lead even a very normal life in America.



THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

of Gregory Peck, Cicely Tyson, Jay Leno and Barbara Streisand.

America is called the country of immigrants. Everyone knows this history. Perhaps many of us are not aware that the American society has been consistently and meticulously keeping the tracks of all the immigrants through the Ellis Island. The purpose is simple. Just to know one's roots. Through this systematic process, even after thousands of years time, one young American would be able to know who were his forefathers, where they came from and the evolution of his family. Perhaps one day, our future generation will find some names of some Bangladeshi immigrants who would make new history for the USA.

Unfortunately in our own country we even do not have a systematic and effective mechanism for birth registry. Compulsory registration of birth and death is necessary for our future generation and for mak-

ing a proper national history. We, however, do have our own laws for these purposes. The only problem is to implement them adequately and effectively. Newly established Village Council may be given this responsibility. The data on birth and death should finally go to the District authority where computerised system should be introduced for this purpose. All districts centres should then be connected with the national centre. While registering the birth, the village council authority may also collect the information on the forefathers of the child as much as possible. They may also include the past migration history of that particular family.

Living in America sounds good in our country. Many of us in our country who have not yet visited America think that those who are staying there are leading beautiful lives. Reality is different. The immigrants have to work hard to lead even a very normal life in America. Their hard work should, however, be acknowledged. They are trying hard for their own survival there and at the same time they are sending money back home for their families. I, however, observed that by using their skills and acquiring knowledge in computer technology, these Bangladeshi immigrants could perhaps earn more money with less physical labour and thereby could lead better lives.

Every year, American companies recruit thousands of foreigners having expertise in computer technology. They are also given good salary. Moreover, these companies arrange for their visa on their own. Therefore, those of our countrymen who go to America with valid visa, for example under Diversified Visa Programme, should learn various computer programmes before going there. Learning computer programmes in America costs much and is a time consuming matter.

Our students can also get admission in basic computer courses in any college or university in America. These are basically two-year period courses. Once they start their courses in America, after some time they are given temporary work permit and then they can easily maintain themselves there without taking money from back home. After successful completion of these courses, they are likely to be recruited by American companies. I also encountered few Bangladeshi students who went there on long-term tourist visa and got admitted into computer courses. Their visa was later converted into student visa. Now they have temporary work permit and are maintaining themselves on their own without the support of their families from the country.

The Liberty State Park and the Statue of Liberty. The Liberty State Park is magnificent for its view and

# Keeping a Watch on the Centripetal Forces

A Husnain

Bangladesh is in the grip of several types of centripetal forces (CF) which need to be analysed by the experts to enable the country to develop faster. The centripetal forces emanate from the centre and fly outwards. The centripetal force is just the opposite, flowing inwards towards the centre, as during the formation of a tropical cyclone. Other examples may be cited from the areas of politics, leadership, and urban migration, to generate public interest.

The circulation of money is suffering from the CF effect, being concentrated in the metropolis and big cities, depriving the rural economy — the isolated grandeur of individuality grappling with the anonymous materialistic trappings of the cosmopolis. The minute hands of the watch replace the sundial of the country courtyard. Few can get out of this time warp.

Brigid Brophy, in her essay 'The Menace of Nature', calls it the homo artifex's tendency to make things artificial (from the natural). Thus the greenhouse effect has overtaken us before the 20th century is out (this 'scientific' effect has to be read with some discount).

In the villages, the neighbours are an invaluable company, not the target of philanthropy. The human touch is there, and the heart feels without delayed action. While man retains his individuality, the Western cult of ruthless individualism is missing as yet in Sonar Bangla, which is still a little away from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife. But the IT culture will level the morals to 'modern' levels.

In the developed countries, after two centuries of city life, centripetal forces, acting on the affluent society, encourage suburban migration, spilling into rural homes in the countryside. In the horizontal living is preferred to the vertical aloofness of the apartments. The house rent in the cities are not equivalent to a couple of months' monthly wages as found in Dhaka. The high-speed construction boom here of fragile and 'instant' multi-storied buildings awaits a mere earthquake to topple the economics and lengthen the list of bank loan defaulters. With ruthless greed, discipline dilates to the stretching point.

In the developing countries, the urban centripetal forces lure urban migration to the distant horizons, balanced by the centrifugal forces in the rural area. Both these seemingly complementary forces act in tandem (push-pull) and control the bigger cycle of the movement and behaviour pattern of societies in transition.

Several circulatory currents

control these two forces: money, transport and communication. Today's 'successful' families carry a few symbols: a home (may be on mortgage), personal transport (car in the garage from a converted cowshed), and cellphone, thanks to BTB's efficiency.

Mobility and speed is the name of the game. Recognition and identification (on both sides) blur at increasing speed; reinforcing isolation and communication gap in this information Age. The factory workers start a chain of remote services in the industrialised societies. The family is separated from the raw materials and domestic help, as finished products reach the distant consumers in the remotest corners of the country, establishing the boring efficiency of conformity, packaging, canning, and fast distribution; plus the microwave for cooking in minutes instead of in hours. The kitchen, drawing and the living/drawing rooms become 'seamless'; and bedrooms enjoy limited service hours. What is done with the time 'saved'?

Specialisation is freedom from the routine chores of daily life, concentrating on one's own task (the micro bit in a macro system), and enhancing the comforts, and pushing ahead civilisation through newer applications of technology — a sad mechanisation of the natural philosophy of life. The leisure hours, creative or entertaining, are 'enjoyed' with more concentration, sending parts of the society into spins, centrifugal or petal. The toll on mother nature is studied later, now name the greenhouse effect for air pollution only, forgetting the domestic home life. What a waste of huge road space considering one person-driver travelling alone in millions of private cars!

In this dehumanising process, new centrifugal forces start disintegrating the family; that is, the society. The eclipse of civilisation follows. The confucian core of family bondage is disturbed (Singapore is using the sage's philosophy to set things right — perhaps too late). Thus the weeds of mother nature sprout through the cracks of civilisations (the Mayas, the Incas, Angkor, Barabador).

To come to the main theme of this commentary: the political forces working in the developing countries appear to be centripetal in nature, drawing nurture inwards from the huge masses of the poor society for the strengthening of political machines and systems. With strong, dedicated and visionary leadership, the centrifugal forces go out to improve the society and accelerate the development of the country.

Are we well aware of the CF in current local political culture?

GOING to the United States of America (generally called America) for whatsoever reason has become a dream to our young generation since late '70s. This America-dreaming is not only found in our country. It is also visible among the youngsters of the Sub-Continent. America has long been considered a dream-land for them. Perhaps visa restriction to go there has enhanced this dream manifold. Poverty, unemployment are also other contributing factors behind this America dreaming in search of a better life.

Being in the Foreign Service, getting the American visa even on private tour is not difficult for me. But the fact that unless any Government officer is virtually rich, he or she does not usually go on private visit to America. Like most of the Bangladeshis, I am also not a rich man. Still I went to America this summer for the first time on a private tour. There were a few reasons behind taking this decision.

First, like many others in our country, I also dreamt to go to America while I was a college student. Secondly, I thought that I might never be posted in our Missions in North America or might not go there as a member of any official delegation, since in both cases, this depends totally on the decision of the Government. But the reason that in fact compelled me to finally go there was that my uncle, an engineer and his family live in New York. My wife was keen to visit them. My only 5-year-old daughter also joined her mother in finally convincing me to go there. Thanks to the European free market and to one of our well-wishers who managed cheap air tickets for us.

Though it was a private tour, I tried to make use of it from my professional point of view. When I was spending my time in New York, the last week of the 1998 ECOSOC Substantive Session was going on. I must thank our Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN for enabling me to participate in the said session. I should say that I benefited from my even very little participation in that meeting in many ways. Last year, this session was held in Geneva and I was actively involved in it. ECOSOC Substantive Session is held on alternate year in the UN Headquarters in New York and in UN Office in Geneva.

The Ellis Island - A Trajectory of America's Immigrants. Ellis Island and the Liberty State Park are located in New York Harbour. As a part of a package tour one can go to Liberty State Park, Ellis Island and Battery Park in New York City (NYC) from where this package tour originates. The ferry first takes the tourists to the Statue of Liberty is located. From there the ferry goes to the Ellis Island and finally to the Battery Park where there is a beautiful monument erected to

the memories of the American Naval soldiers who sacrificed their lives during the Second World War. There are ferries at every half an hour at all these three places. The journey while on the ferry is also an enjoyable one. This type of package tour is also available from New Jersey. We, however, took ferry from the Battery Park in NYC.

Many tourists take this trip mainly to go to the Liberty State Park to visit the Statue of Liberty. I have seen most of the tourists not getting down at the Ellis Island. They rather preferred to go back to the Battery Park by the same ferry. Personally I was charmed more by the Ellis Island than by the Statue of Liberty.

The Ellis Island stands as a constant reminder of America's immigrant history. Located a few hundred yards north of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, Ellis Island is a monument to the great traditions of freedom and opportunity in America.

America is a rich mosaic of ethnic cultures and traditions — a land made strong by its very diversity. American nation is called a nation of immigrants. Ellis Island offers the immigrants the opportunity to discover their roots. If one goes back far enough on his family tree he can find that ultimately he too, came from some place else. The American Immigrant Wall of Honour at the Ellis Island gives the immigrants the opportunity to not only think about their families' beginnings in America, but to also honour their contribution to the American nation. An inscription on the Wall of Honour makes a great gift for their parents or grandparents and gives special recognition to their families' names at the only National Monument where they can place a name in tribute.

The Ellis Island Immigration Museum tells the story of the largest human migration in modern history. Between 1892 and 1954, 12 million immigrants were processed at the Ellis Island. Today more than 40 per cent, or over 100 million, of all living Americans can trace their roots to an ancestor who came through the Ellis Island. The Museum offers visitors a fascinating look at the total immigrant experience, using innovative displays that feature historic artifacts and photos, interactive devices, computers and taped reminiscences of the immigrants themselves.

A touching collection of artifacts donated to the museum by descendants of the immigrants who brought these treasures from their homes to America. The collection includes priceless family heirlooms, religious articles, family photos, rare and beautiful clothing and jewelry. More than 30 separate galleries are filled with artifacts, historic photos, posters, maps and accompanied by oral history and immigrant music.

# Leprosy Target 2000 May Be Missed

For the past decade, the number of people with leprosy has rapidly, and steadily, declined. But as Gemini News Service reports, efforts to eliminate the disease by the World Health Organisation's target date of 2000 are encountering some stiff obstacles. Mike Crawley writes from London



What is leprosy? - caused by a contagious bacterium - leaves victim with lumps and blotches on the skin - damages nerves in hands, feet, face - nerve damage leads to disabling injuries and deformities - leprosy is curable

Vasey, who is also incoming president of the Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations, is worried about what he calls WHO's "triumphalist attitude" over the dropping prevalence rates. His concern is that it could backfire, prompting policy-makers and funders to believe that leprosy is no longer an issue.

If anti-leprosy work gets put on the back burner, there's a fear that leprosy could stage the same kind of comeback as tuberculosis, which health workers once thought they had conquered.

"It wouldn't take much for leprosy to creep back up to the

# A Brazilian Whisper

by Nikhat Jamal Qaiyum

THE assignment of responsibilities to Annex I (industrialised) countries according to their contribution to climate change has been a critical issue haunting climate negotiations. It was first proposed by Brazil at the Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate (AGBM) meet held in July-August 1997, and was subsequently addressed to at length at the Third Conference of Parties (COP-3) held in Kyoto in December 1997.

The proposal puts "differentiated responsibilities" on large emitters and defines quantitative emission limitation and reduction objectives (QELROS). It limits greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by Annex I countries to the 1990 level in the period 1990 to 2000. This is the "effective emissions reference". The emissions are to decrease regularly from 2000 to 2020, reaching a level 30 per cent lower than 1990 level in 2020. This is the "effective emissions ceiling".

Reduction targets for Annex I countries, for each of the periods — 2001-2005, 2006-2010, 2011-2015 and 2016-2020, is equal to the difference between the effective emissions reference and the ceiling. The calculation criterion is "differentiated responsibilities" as opposed to a "flat rate", fixed to 1990 baseline. It was argued, the flat rate criteria would penalise countries that have maintained relatively low emissions.

The proposal recognises "net anthropogenic emissions" as the difference between human-induced emissions and human-induced removals by sinks of a given GHG in a year. And "effective emissions" in a given period is defined as the increase in global means surface temperature resulting from an increase in the net anthropogenic emissions of a particular set of gases in a year.

Annex I countries to achieve their targets.

In Kyoto, the Brazilian proposal seemed to find support from many quarters, but the very nations who had seconded it, ardently were to rewrite the proposal altogether. A group of negotiators from the US, Japan, European Union (EU), Brazil, China and other developing countries was set up to draft the outline of the programme. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), as it finally emerged, was just a bank for carbon credits.

Under the CDM, the climate change secretariat will establish a special body with functions similar to a stock exchange. But instead of stocks, "carbon credits" will be sold and bought. Annex I countries or private companies from the North will undertake sustainable projects aimed at reducing GHG levels, mostly in developing nations.

When such projects succeed in reducing emissions, the amount of the reduction will be counted as carbon credits. Developing countries can bank their credits at the "carbon credit exchange", which can then be purchased by the North to meet their reduction targets. The purchased carbon credits will be included as emission reductions in the developed countries.

The CDM, therefore, is nothing but an extension of JI. The basic difference being that, under JI, credits are granted for investments in projects only in developed countries. Under CDM, nations have the option of earning credits by financing emission reduction projects in developing countries from the year 2000. Another difference is that under the CDM, even private companies are allowed to invest in projects. Also, the CDM does not define "sustainable" projects that are to be undertaken in the South.

"The Clean Development Fund as has been defined in Kyoto would actually allow de-

