by Md. Asadullah Khan

THE atmospheric scientists' prediction of the apoca-İypse due to global warming that means a gradual rise in worldwide temperatures caused by man-made gases trapping too much heat from the sun is coming true. This otherwise means that the world could be in for dramatic changes in climate accompanied by major disruptions to modern society. Evidences have accumulated and experts have admitted that the earth is about 0.50 C warmer than it was 100 years ago and experts now agree that

nomenon. A draft report currently circulated on the Internet asserts that the global temperature rise can now be blamed, at least in part, on human activity. And this report comes from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a respected UNsponsored body made up of more than 1,500 leading climate experts from 60 nations.

it is no longer a natural phe-

Unless the world takes immediate and drastic steps to reduce the emissions of heattrapping gases, says the panel, the so-called greenhouse effect could drive global temperatures up as much as 40 C by the year 2100 — an increase in heat comparable to the global warming that ended the last Ice Age and with perhaps equally profound effects on climate. Huge swaths of densely populated land could be inundated by rising seas. Entire ecosystems could vanish as rainfall and temperature patterns shift. Droughts, floods and storms could become more severe. Says Michael Oppenheimer, a senior scientist with the Environmental Defense Fund: "I think this is a watershed moment in the public debate on global warm-

The recent scientific consensus is based profoundly on improvements in the complex computer models that climatologists use to test their theories. Climate experts simulate their data on super computers and look at what happens when human-generated gases — carbondioxide from industry and auto exhaust, methane from agriculture, chloroflurocarbons from leaky refrigerators and spray cans — are pumped into the models' virtual atmospheres. The problem encountered until recently was that computer models weren't working very well. When the scientists tried to simulate what they believe has been happening over the past century or so, the results didn't mesh with reality; the models said the world should now be warmer than it actually is. The reason is that the computer models had been overlooking an important factor affecting global temperatures: aerosols, the tiny droplets of chemicals like sulphur dioxide (SO_o) that are produced along with carbondioxide (CO_o) when fossil fuels are

THE presence of arsenic in

This follows the initial

veys, identification, colour-

marking of the affected tube-

filters in the tubewells to min-

tance of the Unicef, and field

tary community service agen-

cies known as the NGOs (non-

governmental organisations).

There are several thousand

in Dhaka.

health hazard.

Nobody disputes possibly the role of poverty and over population in spreading diseases, but since the time scientists first raised alarms about climate change and its impact in the late 1980s, the international community has taken few concretesteps to address the problem.

burifed in cars and power plants. Aerosols actually cool the planet by blocking sunlight and mask the effect of global warming. Says Tom Wigley, a climatologist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Research and a member of the international panel: "We were

looking for the needle in the

wrong haystack". After the scientists, factored in aerosols, their models began looking more like the real world. The improved performance of simulations was demonstrated in 1991 when they successfully predicted temperature changes in the aftermath of the massive Pinatubo eruption in the Philippines. A number of studies added to the scientists' confidence about the fact that they really know what they're talking about — and can also predict what may happen if the greenhouse gases continue to be pumped into the atmosphere unchecked. More specifically true, because the greenhouse gases that warm the earth stay in the atmosphere longer than the aerosols that cool the earth. the earth's average temperature

is likely to continue to warm. Impacts of climate change: Rising global temperatures are expected to raise sea level, and change precipitation and other local climate conditions. Changing regional climate could alter forests, crop yields and water supplies. It could also threaten human health and harm birds, fish and many types of ecosystems. Desert may extend into existing range

Impact on health: One of the effects of the unusual stretch of weather over the past 15 years has been to alert researchers to a new and even more immediate threat of the warming trend: the rapid spread of disease bearing bugs and pests. Climate change whether natural or man-made may already be spreading disease and pestilence, according to a host of new studies, including a major report prepared by the World Health Organisation and other international institutions now being released. On the other hand, climate disruptions may be giving new life to such ancient scourges as yellow fever, meningitis and cholera. Experiences and observations suggest that extreme temperatures can directly cause the loss of life. Moreover several serious diseases appear only in warm areas. Finally, warm temperatures can increase air and water pollution, which in turn harm human health. The most direct impact of climate change would

be the impacts of hotter temperature themselves. Extremely hot temperatures increase the number of people who die in a given day for many reasons. People with heart problem are vulnerable because one's cardiovascular system must work harder to keep the body cool during hot weather. Heat ex-

haustion and some respiratory

problems increase in hotter temperatures. Higher temperatures also increase the concentration of ozone at ground level. The natural layer of ozone in the upper atmosphere blocks harmful ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth's surface; but in the lower atmosphere, ozone is a harmful pollutant. Ozone damages lung, tissue and causes particular problems in people with asthma and other lung diseases. Even modest exposure to ozone can cause healthy individuals to experience chest pains, nausea and pulmonary congestion.

Statistics on mortality and hospital admission show that death rates increase during extremely hot days, particularly among very old and very young people in cities. Reports have it that in July 1995, a heat wave killed more than 700 people in Chicago alone. The incidence of cholera epidemic that broke out in Bangladesh in 1993 following heavy monsoons is still fresh in public mind. Some scientists believe that algal blooms could occur more frequently as temperatures warm - particularly in areas with polluted waters - in which case diseases such as cholera that tend to accompany algal blooms could become more frequent. Report circulated in the press quoting AFP in recent times indicate that a deadly virus which killed more than 12,000 people in China in 1982 has been traced in some patients in Calcutta in India. Scientists at the National Institute of Chotera and Enteric Disease detected this B Roto virus during a routine examination of

patients in a city hospital. Global warming may also increase the risk of some infectious diseases, particularly those that only appear in warm areas. Diseases that are spread by mosquitoes and other insects could become more prevalent. Unusual weather such as dry spells in wet areas or torrential rains in normally dry spots tends to favour so-called opportunistic pests — rodents. insects, bacteria, protozoa, viruses - which make life more difficult for the predators that usually control them. Episodes of extreme weather are routinely followed by outbreaks of

plagues, both old and new. In 1994 a long monsoon in northern India followed by 90 consecutive days of 38°C heat drove rats into the cities. In Surat, they caused an outbreak of pneumonic plague. The plague took a heavy toll of lives and ultimately cost India \$ 2 billion. Rising temperatures in recent times allowed "Aedes aegypti" mosquitoes to thrive faster than earlier times. And true, thousands across Southeast Asia have been laid low by this tiny insect — the female striped of this species. This mosquito carries the virus that causes dengue fever - an affliction accompanied by chilling bone pain often leading to comatose situation. While the disease thrived in the tropics for more than two centuries, East Asia's economic woes coupled with warming trends have helped fuel the worst outbreak in years. Since January last more than 31,000 Indonesians contracted the disease; 750 have

An average of 200 new cases were reported in Indonesia every day since January last year. In nearby Thailand, infection rates tripled, while Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam all recorded similarly drastic increases. That means infection rates have been rising for years: the World Health Organisation reports that the incidence of dengue worldwide tripled between 1970 and 1977, in Indonesia the number of reported cases nearly quadrupled over the same period. Officials in the Latin America estimate that dengue now levies the same economic bill as malaria and tuberculosis.

Even in Bangladesh we have got to be alarmed since the advent of air travel has scattered "Aedes aegypti" across the globe and at the same time increased urbanisation has helped the mosquito reproduce. Open sewers in the metropolises which crisscross residential areas including slums furnish a wealth of potential breeding grounds. "The El Nino weather system that has disrupted the annual monsoon rains may have also altered the mosquitoes breeding patterns", say doctors. Of all the infectious diseases humans will have to contend with as the world gets warmer, malaria may be the worst. Malaria is already the world's most widespread mosquito-borne illness. Rising temperatures will not only expand the range of Anopheles mosquitoes, but make them more active biters as well. Paul Epstein, an epidemiologist with the Harvard

School of Public Health, notes that a temperature rise of 2°C would more than double mosquito metabolism. A 2°C rise in global temperatures could also expand malaria's domain from 42 per cent to 60 per cent of the planet. When temperature rises above 40°C, mosquitoes begin to die off, but at those temperatures so do people and the crops on which they live. Humans also make matters worse for themselves by the changes they make in their local environments. Unusually warm waters along with sewage poured in the coasts of Asia and Latin America played an important role in the cholera epidemic that hit Latin America in 1991 and Bangladesh in 1993. No body can possibly deny that the problem was exacerbated by the destruction of pollution-filtering mangroves in the Bay of Bengal and overcrowding in the cities.

The same environment that empower microbes also weaken our defenses against them. Heat, increased ultra-violet radiation resulting from ozone depletion, and pollutants like chlorinated hydrocarbons all suppress the disease-battling immune systems - both for humans and other animals.

One thing was noticeable worldwide: abnormal weather had caused malnutrition weakened animal immune systems and spurred the reproduction of viruses. Epstein, also an author of WHO study notes that once ordinarily benign microbes invade weakened animals, they can become sufficiently deadly to invade healthy populations. The real threat for people, Epstein says, may not be a single disease but a host of emerging microbes raising havoc among a host of creatures. Epstein further asserts that diseases afflicting plants and animals can send ripples through economies and societies no less disastrous than those affecting humans.

There are other schools of thought opposing Epstein's views. John Shales, executive director of the Global Climate Coalition, suggests that when the world is faced with the pressing health problems stemming from overcrowded cities and the collapse of sanitation system, the threat of disease caused by climate change may seem like a minor concern. Nobody disputes possibly the role of poverty and over population in spreading diseases, but since the time scientists first raised alarms about climate change and its impact in the late 1980s, the international community has taken few concrete steps to address the problem. The world is still gambling and in effect gambling too much that the problems in future would not be getting so worse. Let us hope that the bet does not

Syed Mahbub Murshed — A Tribute

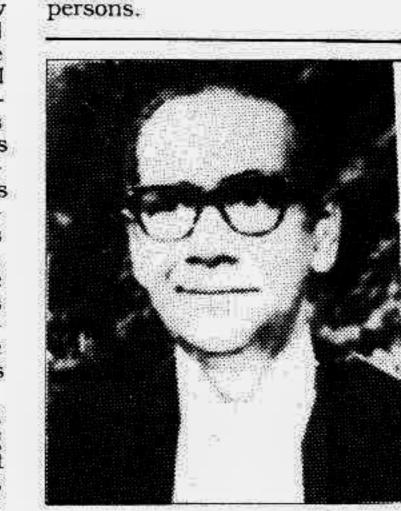
by Justice K M Sobhan

ABINDRANATH has said that it possible to find a **L** person worthy of seeing. but it is not easy to find a worthy place to see him. I realised the truth of it in a wedding in 1938. I was then a student of class ten. I saw the groom, turbaned and donned in a light cream sherwani under a choga; embroidered with real stiver work. Tall and erect, bright-eyed and slightly tanned complexioned - that was the first sight I had of Barrister Syed Mahbub Murshed. I saw him in the worthy place. I had then such an age, when in the rich juvenile imagination, I was trying to find his resemblance with those who always flashed. The first that came was 'Indranath' of Srikanta but Indranath has a few marks on his face. He had a perfect unblemished face. I got it - it was Shibnath of Shish Prasna. Yes. Shibnath has donned the grooms' dress. Or, may be, it is 'Othelo' - tall, dark and handsome but his eyes lacked the hardness of a soldier. His eyes are electrified.

After about four decades, in remembering him I am asking myself why it is not important to talk so much about his looks? It was probably necessary because unknown to mysell I accepted him as my hero who later became my idol in my professional life. I was and still an enveloped with his profound influence. To initiate him would be an audacity because he was an immutable. About two decades after I saw him again, I accepted him as the only person in my professional existence.

In 1943, when I was a student of Calcutta University Law College. I was lucky to be present in the courtroom where a murder trial was on and the counsel for the accused was cross-examining the prosecution witness. Those days little did I understand the pointing questions. A few other barristers, young and old, were sitting in the courtroom — one of whom said "the question indeed are worthy of 'barrister'". The prosecution witness were tumbling. The judgment was delivered. The accused got a clean acquittal. I saw him after this in a few other cases. His questions were equally pointing. The witnesses dared not look at him straight. Still then I was not very sure if I would take up legal profession - but the more I saw him the more I was convinced that if there was any worthy profession it was to become a barrister. I, till then, saw him from a distance.

August, 1946 — in the great Calcutta killings — I had my first chance of getting little close to him. He was then one of the leading barristers of Calcutta High Court — a terribly busy practitioner. A relief committee was organised which was located at ground floor of the Congress Exhibition Road residence of Khan Bahadur Ataur Rahman Khan in Park Circus. The drawing room of late Mr Ismail - a reputed industrialist was used as the office. Within a few days, legal complications cropped up concerning those who were arrested during the riot and concerning property and families of these



was entrusted to contact Syed Mahbub Murshed as I was the only one in the committee who had something to do with legal affairs. I was then a law student waiting to take the law final examination which was postponed because of the riot. After such of hesitation, I picked up courage to meet the legal luminary in his flat but before I could finish, he came down with me to the office. The other members - late Mr Ismail, late Mr. Sayedul Hasan, Poet Golam Quddus and few others who were present - were puzzled over the situation and were eager to know the proper procedure to be followed in the matter. Very briefly and within a short time he clarified the situation and told us what to do. I saw his, that day to frankly discuss with us the problems and give as much time as needed although he could hardly spare that. He helped us voluntarily and ungrudgingly. I witnessed his concern for the affected people - his sympathy and help for the people who lost everything during the riot. In a short time he became a respectable leader. His success went beyond the legal matters.

the Dhaka High Court. In every case, it was wonderful to see how he applied legal principles to fact. His way of looking at facts and the application of law stood out from other, honourable judges. He could fathom

Agri Credit and Fate of Cultivator

Later I saw him as judge of

even a difficult case in the shortest possible time. His interpretation and application of legal principles were subjects of envy. The subordinated staff found a father-figure in him when he became the Chief Justice of the then East Pakistan.

The first blow was struck at the autocratic regime of Ayub Khan by the Dhaka High Court and Chief Justice Murshed was the author. He excelled himself in analysing and setting the constitutional issues that were raised before him. His rich language intermingled with the interpretation of law - it was like the admixture of the Padma and the Jamuna. His superior power of inter-pretation of legal principles and fearless disposition of constitutional matters once prompted Ayub to say: "Pakistan war rightly proud of two things — the cricket team and the judiciary."

A wonder if knowing Syed Mahbub Murshed, Ayub echoed which Shylock: "A Daniel come to judgment Yea, a Daniel". He was the author of most of the constitutional case that settled the rights of the citizens, the human rights and established the supremacy of the rule of

In his area he was uncompromising, unique and fearless in his confrontation with the tyrannical and autocratic regime of Ayub Khan. He was both architect in upholding of rights of the citizens and a terror to the ruling clique. He had thus created a few conspirators who like the creatures of darkness fought against the light of the day, who like the devils of deception fought against the messenger of truth.

He preferred to resign his high office rather than to bow before the authoritarian regime. The loss was entirely that of the nation, of the people and the judiciary. The blow was to be public conscience from which the nation perhaps has not yet recovered.

One gets overwhelmed with emotion in writing about him. The country is deprived of his unrivaled personality, his scholarship which was not only confined only to jurisprudence but pervaded to world literature. music and socio-political philosophy and economics. Whenever the broached a topic get appeared to know more than the others as he just finished talking. He was free with any subject of conversation. His genius lighted up anything he

I pay him my homage with deep sense of gratitude and respect and close it with the works of poet Nirmalendu Goon, "With these reminiscences come the melancholy, dew drops on the pages."

Facing the Arsenic Menace

by Razia Quadir

drinking water . Bangladesh drawn through the hand-pumped tube to drinking contaminated wawells from the underground ter for years. It is a new phesources has alerted the governnomenon not much noticed in ment of Bangladesh to initiate the other parts of the world. an integrated programme esti-Therefore the research literamated to cost around US\$ 32 ture on the topic is scanty, and million with the assistance of the remedial and preventive World Bank and the UN agenmeasures at the field level are cies. The coordination meeting subject to studies, trials and to analyse the outlines on the evaluation. modalities of the draft project The local authorities have will be held on 26-27 January

come with field kits for the testing of water. Once the technical feasibility is assured, the operation and maintenance work can emergency project now under implementation for survey and proceed at the community level, first-aid measures for field surthrough the field technical staff, training courses, and use of local teams. Ms Shahida Azwells, and installation of the far, the UNICEF Country Representative, Bangladesh, said that imize the affects of arsenic as a both the GOB and the UN agencies including the World Bank Side by side, an awareness were seized with the arsenic and publicity programme has problem, the corrective action been initiated with the assisplans were continuously under review. The arsenic programme support services by the volunis handled by the Ministry of LGRD (Local Government and Rural Development), through its Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) while the Ministry of Health, takes care

NGOs, including foreign agencies, operating in Bangladesh in of the medical side. various fields. Their activities Dr Deepak Bhajacharya, have made a visible impact in Chief, Water and Environmenimproving the quality of life in tal Sanitation (WESS), and Grethe villages. The government gory Keast, Senior Advisor, has an NGO Bureau to coordi-WESS (Water and Environmennate the multi-level activities. tal Sanitation, Programme Di-The planners and the execuvision, New York, and who were tive agencies are faced with sevpresent during the interview. eral drawbacks in the fight pointed out that more R&D at against the slow and long-term multi levels (including geologieffects of arsenic poisoning due

cal surveys) were needed to for-

mulate containment projects on the arsenic contamination, as the malady was detected in Bangladesh in the mid '90s, and the government's survey programme on arsenic started in the late '90s under the National Steering Committee.

> The arsenic is present in several localised area of Bangladesh. Since the after effects are detected later in life, longterm preventive routine have to be set into operation for the safeguard of the future generations. The local laboratories have to be restructured modernised and brought up to international standard, to provide the nucleus of a regional and subsequently global service under the UN umbrella.

Meanwhile, after some trials, the Pond Sand Filter (PSF) has ten produced locally and are under field test. The tube wells are being checked, and the unsafe ones marked with colour signs (the water from the Red tubewells are not to be used for drinking). Cheaper kits have to be mass produced. An Austrian scientists has come up with a prototype; assisted by the World Health Organization (WHO). With 4,000,000 existing shallow water tube wells, and several millions to be installed (in different parts of the world), the technological logistics have to be in place to ensure economy of

Training units at the village level is also a large-scale problem. The drinking of surface (pond) water is being encouraged, after boiling and filtering where alternatives are few. Rain harvesting models are under demonstration, along with field training.

But one of the main drawbacks is the lack of speedy communication at the rural level. Written material is not of much use to the common masses due to high illiteracy. A Brochure, prepared with Unicef assistance has been distributed to the field NGOs and government outlets but as Ms Shahida Azfar says a communication campaign on arsenic poisoning is still in the process of being developed

Installation of deep tube well's is not yet a ready solution, as it has been found that after some time the underground water gets contaminated. More investigation has to be carried out, although David G Kinniburgh of the British Geological Survey carried out some investigations and is continuing with the sur-

Since the arsenic menace has also been noted in some other parts of the world (Chile, Mexico, USA, Australia), and since Bangladesh, with the early warning, has done some spade work in the field of arsenic poisoning, it has been decided to hold a broad-based conference on 26-27 January 1999, in Dhaka to coordinate the

scattered efforts, and prepare the draft of an integrated longterm project covering the region, on the assumption that funding to the extent of about 32 million dollars could be tapped in phases from the UN and international donor agencies. which the UNICEF Chief feels pretty optimistic".

get so bigger.

UNICEF assisted DPHE to install about 900,000 tubewells in Bangladesh with the support of bilateral partners, out of the total of 3.5m to 4 million existing tubewells. "The tubewells are not the cause of the arsenic contamination; it is the contamination of underground water at the natural source. Never ever the alluvial soil such as of Bangladesh was associated with arsenic; hence arsenic was not a suspect in the standard testing of pathogens and installation procedure," says Shahida Aztar..

As for Alternative options, the shift to PS Filters requires a totally different way of doing things. A lot of community mobilization is involved. The viability of PSF was tried out in the coastal belt, and rainwater harvesting experiments were also carried out in that area, according to Dr Deepak Bajacharya, Chief, WES Bangladesh

As for Alternative options of using deep tubewells, in 1997 3,000 units were installed About 250 PS Filters were allocated for construction. The number is low, as it requires trained teams at the basic community level with motivation and commitment to do the regular cleaning up of the PSF otherwise maintenance would be neglected.

The global funding and coordination issues have to be ironed out. So far a large amount of the funding will be available for alternative op-tions. US\$ 16 million will be for safe water options, and that will include deep tubewells as well as half of it will be for PSF, rainwater harvest etc.

The focus would be on finding alternative technology, more field tests, and improvement of the communication network. UNICEF, World Bank, WHO, UNFPA, UNDP and the Govt are working together on the arsenic menace on a wider perspective.

The NGOs, Arsenic Asian Network, the Dhaka Community Hospital (DCH), experts from India, such as, Dr Dipankar Chakravarty of School Environment studies, Jadavpur University, Calcutta and other parts of the world would be together at the forthcoming Conference due in January '99. BRAC and the (DCH) are also associated with the project. The international Conference on arsenic is likely to lead to an integrated programme (we hope!) and would lay the base for concerted action on this new natural calamity which has struck one of the most disaster prone area in the deltaic regions

of the world

by Md Abu Sayed Mondal HE objective of establishing Agriculture Bank in the country is to assist the cultivators and boost agricultural production. From the then Pakistani period up till now huge amount of money has been disbursed among the cultivators and the credit programme is still running in the country. The agriculture credit is essential to help the farmers during or after damage of crops by natural calamities like flood, drought etc. There are different types of

credit being disbursed among the farmers like short term. medium term, long term, crop loan, fishery loan, loan for purchasing agricultural tools, machinery, inputs etc. All types of small, medium and large farmers are entitled to take loan from the bank after fulfilling the necessary formalities. Sometimes, taking loan from the banks becomes difficult. The uneducated farmers are cheated by some corrupt bank officials and middlemen who take illegal gratification from the farmers. As a result the farmers are compelled to go to the private money lenders bracing exorbitant interest.

Monitoring: Is there any monitoring or follow up system on the utilisation of the credit taken for a specific purpose? Nothing effective. In many cases it has been observed that the farmers do not use the credit in productive purposes rather they use the money in social purposes like, payment of dowry or to meet up the expenses of son's/daughter's marriage or sometimes even in household consumption. If the loan is not used for productive purposes it may be really difficult to repay it in time.

Repayment: The repayment of agricultural loan is mainly dependent on the production of crops. If the farmers do not

have a good harvest, normally satisfactory and the progress they are not interested or in a position to pay back the money. Even they do not walk near the bank and try to evade meeting the bank personnel. Due to nonpayment of loan in time, the amount becomes bigger by addition of interest in compound rate. In the process, after some years, it becomes really difficult to repay the loan by the poor farmers. Moreover, in rural Bangladesh there prevails a belief government may rebate all the loans some day considering the borrower's incapability. Due to wait-and-see perception of the farmers and increase of loan amount with addition of compound interest, the farmers become eventually discouraged to repay. But on the other hand, loan taken from private source can not be kept unpaid for long time due to pressure from the lenders and in fear of losing property as well as social status in society. Repayment is made or has to be made quickly. The realisation rate in private sector is always higher than in

Dealing with Defaulters: According to reports in the daily newspapers, "banks are hostage to 87 defaulters" in the country These defaulters are very rich. They have borrowed heavily from the banks and just did not pay back the money. Whereas in the rural areas, many certificate cases have been filed against the farmers for nonpayment of bank loans. The poor farmers are willing to repay but they do not have any capacity to pay back the amount. It may be mentioned that in rural areas of the country many farmers have taken crop loan, fishery loan some 15-20 years back, but are yet to repay those. Several notices have been given from the banks but the collection rate is not

public sector.

that has been made through recovery system is not always socially encouraging. It may be mentioned that some of the bank-mortgaged lands have been sold out and the previous owners of those land have either migrated to the city or to other countries.

Considering the number of defaulters and amount of outstanding credit, there must be a huge number of mortgaged plots in the whole country. To whom these will be sold or how, or will it be a wise decision? How to solve this problem? This is a vital question of the social/political leaders and reputed economists of the coun-

Moreover, what action will be taken in case of those famous 87 defaulters who do not have any intention to repay the bank loans? Are they out of the law of the land? Do they provide special privilege to the government or do they have two votes per person? The citizens of the Republic want to see every citizen is treated equally in the eye of law of the land and dealt with accordingly.

To deal with the defaulter farmers it may be suggested that the interest of all outstanding agricultural loans up to Tk 10,000.00 per farmer should be rebated fully and only the capital amount realised in instalments, by which, both the farms and farmers will be saved. In near future interestfree agricultural credit programme should be initiated experimentally with the sanction of Tk 15,000.00 to each interested farmer. Only service charge at the rate of 3 per cent to 5 per cent on the capital amount can be charged. Through this programme, the marginal and medium class farmers are expected to benefit largely.

Racial Hatred in Sweden Alfred de Tavares writes from Stockholm

nationwide poll in Sweden has confirmed what was

always suspected - that under the much flaunted veneer of tolerance Swedish society is predominantly racist. The findings of SIFO

(Swedish Institute for Opinion Research) have come as a rude shock to many in this country who are alarmed at just how widespread racial hatred really is in Sweden. According to the SIFO yearend poll commissioned by the Swedish International Aid Agency, every fourth Swede believes Africans are imbeciles and every tenth Swede feels Africans are of inferior intelligence than the Caucasian white population.

Several thousand Swedes of all ages - social, political and professional groups - were polled by SIFO. According to the poll, among those who maintained that Africans were less intelligent, most were young

students. Only 50 per cent of people interviewed challenged this notion. While almost 50 per cent of conservative and centre parties' members believed that non-Caucasians were "stupider", among the ruling Social Democrats and Communists 30 per cent thought so.

"I am deeply shocked and disturbed by the figures involved though I must declare that the outcome, by itself. comes hardly as a surprise to me," Swedish Discrimination's Ombudsman Margaretha Wadstein told IANS. Although the ombudsman institution was at one time expected to address the problem, it has become progressively farcical due to non-existent resources and serves as a

mere complaint box now. "In my department, we have mountains of complaints from the Africans, and others, about various degrees of discrimination," Wadstein said. "We have

deep prejudices in our country and SIFO's report unhappily confirms their worst form in most clear terms."

"The further away from our land that a person comes from. the greater the prejudice the person is subjected to," Wadstein said. Although laws against discrimination abound, it is a rare case that comes before court and a conviction on such charges is unheard of.

"All of Sweden, and world, has seen on television how I have been abused even on the playfield during international games," said footballer Martin Dahlin, who was adopted from Africa while still a baby. "Once Thomas Ravelli (Swedish goalkeeper) screamed at me while a game was in progress - 'you damned stupid nigger'. Everyone witnessed it, but he was not even censured."

- India Abroad News Service









