

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Michael Jordan, Basketball Megastar
Calls It a Career

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

"I think it is appropriate that the sports fans around America take a day or two to 'ooh' and 'ahh' and hold their breath again and be glad again. In my life, I don't know that I ever saw another athlete with such a remarkable set of qualities of mind, body and spirit as Michael Jordan."

HOW often does the President of the United States call a press conference to extol the virtues of a retiring sportsman? How infrequent it is for *The New York Times* to have excessive praise on the same star — in its lead editorial? All of the above happened on January 13, when basketball megastar, Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls announced his retirement from the game he has made synonymous with his name, Michael is that special.

What made Michael Jordan so great is his ability to single-handedly take over a game and win his team to victory. Physical attributes he had aplenty; but it was his mental toughness that defied odds and made mere mortals out of other superstars. Only last June, in the National Basketball finals, with his team down, Michael Jordan stole the ball from Utah Jazz superstar Karl Malone, drove down the length of the court, faked clear of the guard guarding him and made the winning basket! Michael Jordan has made such heroics so common that sports fans consider it routine Michael Jordan.

The writer's most precious memory of Michael Jordan was in the final of the previous year (1997) against the same Utah Jazz team. He had eaten a bad pizza and fallen sick. Gasping for breath, barely able to walk and supporting himself on the shoulder of teammate Scottie Pippen, for the umpteenth time,

Jordan single-handedly won a crucial game.

Here's part of what impeachment-distracted President Clinton had to say of Michael Jordan: "I think it is appropriate that the sports fans around America take a day or two to 'ooh' and 'ahh' and hold their breath again and be glad again. In my life, I don't know that I ever saw another athlete with such a remarkable set of qualities of mind, body and spirit as Michael Jordan."

Here is what Michael Jordan did in numbers: 29,277 career points, in only thirteen seasons. Most points scored in a National Basketball Association (NBA) finals (246, in 1993 against Phoenix.) Highest number of field goals made in a NBA final series (10/11). An NBA record 72 Chicago Bulls victories (only 10 defeats) in the 1995-96 season. Career high points in a game (69). Highest number of points per game in NBA finals (41 in 1993 against Phoenix). Scored over 50 points in a game 37 times. Highest number of points in a NBA final half (35, against Portland in 1992). Highest career average in the playoffs (33.4 points per game.) Highest career scoring average in the NBA (31.5 points per game.) Highest number of consecutive points scored by an NBA player (23). Highest All Star game scoring average (21.3 points). Six NBA championships, in all of which he was the series Most Valuable Player

(MVP). Additionally, he was the regular season MVP six times, and won ten scoring titles. Finally, he won two Olympic gold medals as a member of the US Olympic Basketball teams in 1984 and 1992 (the "Dream Team.")

Some praised Jordan's ability to soar gracefully over defenders nearly a foot taller. Others talked of his competitiveness, the trait that forced him to work tirelessly at honing skills that were already legendary. But among the all the words of homage for Michael Jordan was one constant theme: he was the greatest basketball player in the history of the game.

"Pound for pound he was the best ever," said Julius Erving, who as Dr. J first brought to the NBA the high-flying wizardry that Jordan took to the next level. While Jordan possessed outstanding athleticism, the consensus was that his quickness, strength and leaping ability were not the only attributes that set him apart. It was his capacity to synthesize those qualities with superior work ethic, an incredible degree of mental toughness, and a matchless desire to win at any cost.

The list of those Jordan conquered in winning titles in the last six full seasons he played is awesome: Magic Johnson,

Larry Bird, Isiah Thomas, Karl Malone, Patrick Ewing, Charles Barkley, and legendary coaches Pat Riley, Chuck Daly and Lenny Wilkens. Jordan's success on the court plus his engaging personality made him a hit with Madison Avenue. His ability to relate to Americans of all ages and color landed him lucrative deals with Nike, McDonald's, Gatorade, Hanes and Coca Cola.

The Air Jordan sneakers helped Nike become the world's leading basketball apparel. Three years ago, the writer's family was lucky to dine in Michael Jordan's restaurant in Chicago. (Michael Jordan's voice greets diners calling for reservations.) The restaurant in full of Jordan's basketball paraphernalia including relics of his ill-fated attempt to play baseball for two years. There were also copies of the science section of *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Tribune*, where scientist tried to come up with theories behind Jordan's gravity-defying moves!

So where in history does this 35-year old megastar belong? Jordan's appeal is not confined to North America or Northern Hemisphere. From the humble platform of a not-so-popular commercial appeal, he transformed him into a global hero and a cultural icon. In a different age and a different time, Michael Jordan is a Muhammad Ali.

Creating Development Synergies

by Dr Berthold Kuhn

Shying away of possible synergy opportunities is a sign of weakness. Weakness of individual actors, but more important weakness of the system which does not provide for an enabling environment to capitalise on synergies.

N OBEL prize winner Amartya Sen, in his public lecture on 18th December 98 in Dhaka, pointed out that freedom and availability of opportunities — market opportunities, social, political and procedural opportunities — are essential requirements for making development possible: development of individuals, communities and nations. Freedom and opportunities can only be guaranteed if development is seen in non-dogmatic terms. Dogmatism prevents development partnerships and creation of development synergies: at personal and institutional level.

Development starts with exploring available opportunities. At the personal level, the exploring of development opportunities requires individual commitment to improve things, to solve problems, to advance and to progress in reaching one's objectives in life. Development is a process and development objectives are more than fixed goals. On the way to reach one's objectives, new dreams and ideas arise and lead to reorientation and discovery of new goals. This is true for individuals and also organisations if their structure allows for the necessary flexibility and innovation. People have different objectives in life, depending on their family background, social environment and culture. Objectives can be of short-term, mid-term and long-term nature.

The confidence in continuously reviewing development strategies and in reaching long-term objectives usually has to do with education and personal environment. The most important value of education is not the accumulation of knowledge

but the belief in progress. The belief in education and progress depends on the ability of society to reward intellectual and physical efforts of individuals and families. Putting efforts in education and reaching one's objectives requires strong personal energies. Combination of energies working in the same directions are called synergies. The challenge in life lies in finding partners, individuals and organisations working towards the same objectives. Society has to provide for an enabling environment to make this possible. The preconditions in Bangladesh are promising as the country has enormous "social capital" which is defined by R Putnam as "the features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitates coordination and co-operation for mutual benefit". Poverty reduction and economic development are objectives which are shared by many people. Still it seems difficult to combine efforts of individuals, organisations and institutions for generating synergies in order to reach these objectives. Many people, organisations and institutions shy away from discovering synergies in reaching their objectives. Reasons for this apart from ideological rivalries and dogmatism, lie in their fear that one may not be able to overcome conflictual short-term individual and institutional interests in reaching mid-term and long-term objectives. Other reasons lie in lack of communication skills and facilities. Communication efforts can solve problems, which arise out of conflictual personal and institutional interests.

This is also true for devel-

opment actors. Small NGOs with committed leadership and strong local identity may be afraid of losing their characteristic features while entering into partnerships with other NGOs, small and bigger ones.

Some bigger NGOs may believe that they can do without identifying synergies with NGOs and may seek to establish territorial exclusivity in providing non-governmental services to poor people of a particular area or region.

Government authorities may shy away of development partnerships with NGOs because they may fear that their democratically legitimated authority as sole representative of the people may get diluted in sharing development responsibilities. Shying away of possible synergy opportunities is a sign of weakness. Weakness of individual actors, but more important weakness of the system which does not provide for an enabling environment to capitalise on synergies. Bangladesh is known throughout the world for its innovative development approaches, outstanding individuals in government administration and non-governmental organisations. It is less known for the ability of people, parties and organisations to capitalise on development synergies and to strike the balance between competition and coordination. The challenge lies in looking at a competitive situation as an opportunity to find partners for development. This is not only true for big business, but also for development and personal lives and applies to politics, in economic development and even in poverty reduction efforts.

The term "good governance" focuses on the responsibilities of governments towards citizens and non-state actors. Capitalising on development synergies requires not only government responsibility, but also responsibilities of non-state actors. This is all the more relevant in a country where NGOs play a prominent role in development management and poverty reduction.

Donor support to NGOs started out of recognition and even enthusiasm for committed development work of individuals and organisations. Many NGOs were founded out of the belief that putting personal energies in existing service delivery institutions, government or other NGOs, would not be a very rewarding exercise. The number of NGOs has tremendously grown and continues to grow. Do all the existing NGOs not provide for an environment which rewards personal development efforts or are all these new NGO founders so egocentric that they do not fit into any existing organisation? The answer probably lies in the middle and has also to do with the supposed bright prospects of avail-

able foreign funding for NGOs in this country.

Donor policies may change and donors may show fatigue in continuing with NGOs if NGOs cannot prove that their many diverse activities have an overall impact on the development of a region, or even the country and if NGOs do not capitalise on synergy potentials while competing over donor support.

NGOs in Bangladesh have largely progressed and grown in size. This is also recognised by the government and institutionalised mechanisms of policy dialogue between government and NGO apex body are on the way, in the form of the Government-NGO Consultative Group. Times have changed and responsibilities grown. Growing NGOs have to continuously redefine their role in connection with smaller NGOs and other development actors.

Understanding their role in development is extremely challenging for NGOs. They change and their environment changes. New actors emerge. Local government bodies may play a more important development role in the future and NGO apex — and network organisation — may assume greater responsibilities.

The creating of apex and network bodies are endeavours to capitalise on the energies on individual NGO efforts. NGO apex and network bodies represent interests of NGOs towards the government and donor agencies. NGOs are diverse in nature and many NGO capitalise on their distinctive characteristics and development approach. This makes the work of NGO apex and network bodies difficult if they truly want to represent the interests of all their members and not function as paternalistic dialogue arm of bigger NGOs.

The competition of good ideas stimulates innovation and increases opportunities for development synergies. Big and small NGOs should not shy away from this. The challenge for NGOs lies in identifying synergy potentials, e.g. making use of ideas of smaller NGOs replicable at larger scale, in cooperation with big NGOs and government. Increased ability in synergising their development efforts will ultimately strengthen NGOs in their relations with government and donors and benefit the poorest.

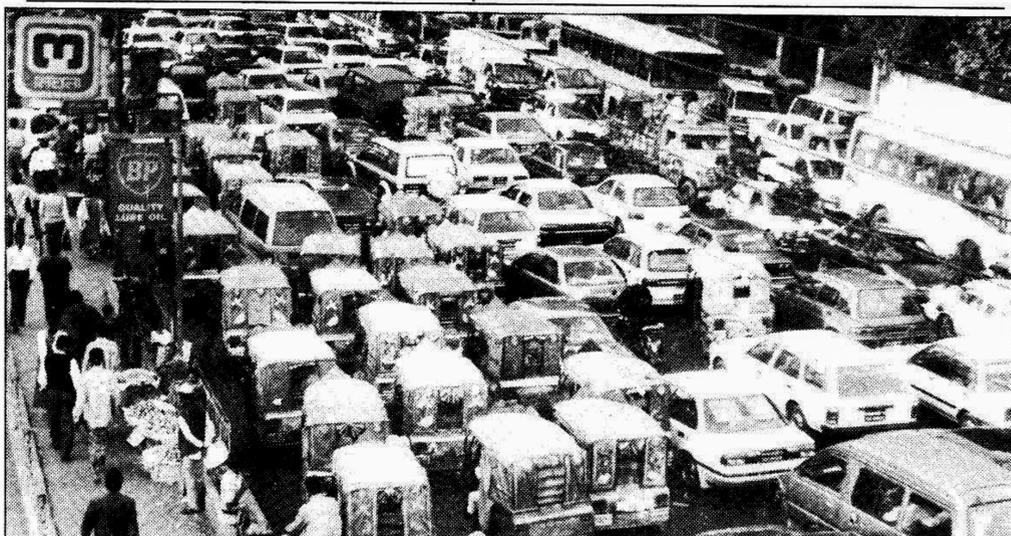
The European Commission-NGO Dialogue Project, in cooperation with the NGO Affairs Bureau and NGO partners, is conducting a national workshops on "Creating Development Synergies" from 1st to 2nd March 1999 at IDB Bhaban, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The author is Team Leader of the European Commission-NGO Dialogue Project. This article only reflects his personal opinion.

Re-Infrastructuring Communications in Bangladesh

by Riaz Osmani

Talking very briefly about Dhaka and how it relates to other big cities, we first and foremost need a subway or underground system linking all residential and commercial areas. This will eliminate traffic jams and air pollution.



The typical (and perennial) Dhaka traffic jam.

—Star Photo by SK Enamul Haq

highways, no matter how multi-laned they were. Having increasing vehicles on those highways will also pose environmental problems (for example to air quality) and widening roads to eternity would take up invaluable land from the farmers. What is more subtle here is that we are also in a chicken versus the egg situation. The scenario I just described where we have a sudden economic boom leading to massive transportation requirements will not even arrive under the current state of Bangladesh's infrastructure. Therefore our country may stay pressured to be underdeveloped for ever.

What is needed is the development of a type of infrastructure that spawns an economic boom, which in return spawns further people movement. The initial development of the infrastructure must then be adequate to meet the much increased demand for movement of people and goods for a long time and this should be a vicious circle. Thus the first item here is the existence of a well networked and utilized railway system. One train carries almost infinitely more passengers than a privately owned car or a small bus.

This is why trains must satisfy the bulk of the transportation needs of our country. Currently, Bangladesh's rail lines are circuitous and mixed gauged. This is absolutely ridiculous. Anyone looking at Bangladesh's railway map will be utterly surprised at the British who built them. Correcting the peculiarity and scarcity of railway lines in a way that will meet Bangladesh's transportation requirements will involve building many bridges and cost a lot of money. Nobody should expect this money to come from the Bangladesh government. Open this sector up to the private/foreign investors and they will build this network on a Build-Own-Operate basis.

The first thing that needs to be accomplished is the elimination of the difference in gauges. One could opt for either the meter gauge or the broad gauge lines. I propose that we go all out and countrywide for broad gauge trains (more com-

fort and space). Now we can have uninterrupted service from Rajshahi or Dinajpur in the northwest to Chittagong in the southeast. 2) Secondly, there should be 3 grades of trains (with separate classes in them as is now). The first grade should be "Inter-Greater-City" or "Auto-Mohanager" providing non-stop services between Dhaka-Chittagong or Khulna-Rangpur. Much of this already exists. These greater cities are usually furthest apart from each other and are situated in the corners of the country except for the capital Dhaka. I expect the first grade trains to be the most luxurious, the fastest and commanding the highest fare. The second grade trains should ply on the same routes but touch all major cities in between the two big cities. For example a second grade train named "Inter-City" or "Auto-Nogor" will ply from Dhaka to Dinajpur but stop in all major cities of Tangail, Bogra, Rangpur etc. The fares could be cheaper but the service still extremely efficient.

The top two grades of trains should ensure that all district cities (Jella shohors) of Bangladesh are connected efficiently. The third grade of trains will require the biggest investment. I am not talking about the few local trains we have plying morbidly across a few lines in Bangladesh. I am talking about each district station acting as a hub for frequent and local commuter trains fanning out into all the sub-district or 'thanas' of Bangladesh and these commuter trains connecting each and every 'thana' of Bangladesh with their respective district station. For example, Comilla and Tangail train stations will be the hub for several lines fanning out from them and netting into one 'thana' after another until the line reaches another district station. The local trains would run on an hourly basis (this will be necessary when Bangladesh becomes a middle income country) and act to connect passengers from 'thana's to district stations to "Inter-City" or "Inter-Greater-City" trains for further long distance journeys.

Each and every thana, city and big city containing a train station and frequent trains traveling between them over a fishnet style rail network is what I envision will provide for the transportation needs of most of the people and goods of the country and spawn immense economic growth by investment and the later facilities thus gained. The rail lines should be built at a considerable height from sea-level so that our annual floods do not hamper train operations. 3) All circuitous patterns must be eliminated. The line between Dhaka and Chittagong must follow through Narayanganj to Comilla and then Chittagong instead of looping across Tongi, Bhairab and Akhaura. This is ridiculous. The same applies to the line between Dhaka and Sylhet. An entirely new straight line for as straight as possible) should be built between Dhaka and Sylhet that does not require reverse-attaching of the engine at Akhaura. If this kind of streamlining is done then Dhaka and Chittagong could be connected non-stop in 3 hours instead of 6 and Dhaka and Sylhet in the same amount of time instead of 7.

This saving in time would be immensely beneficial in the long run for the train companies, for the passengers, and for the economy. Again, a lot of bridges and railroads will have to be built. But foreign investors will be paying for it all for their future profits. So we don't need to worry about our own tax money. Also, as I have said before, these trains must take care of the majority of the transportation needs of the country from every thana to every major city. The environmental damage from the mass of the people relying on trains for transportation would be far less significant than if they relied on motorized vehicles. 4) Foreign investors should be encouraged to build the train engines and wagons in our own country. That way, we will not have to import them. Foreign investors should be free to build the train stations as well, and take care of the facilities. No service runs to the convenience of the public unless they are pressured by competition.

This is where private bus and coach companies come in. If the above mentioned train network can be fiercely competed against by comfortable and efficient buses or coaches, then the public will enjoy low fares and better service all across the board. This is where the existence of western style highways or dual carriage-ways becomes necessary so that the buses and coaches can ply seamlessly. Currently these buses run across treacherous single-laned country roads with pot holes and fast arriving buses and trucks from the opposite direction in danger of face to face collisions. The buses also run the risk of falling into the nearby paddy fields while giving side to a more aggressive driver from behind.

What is worst is the fact that these extremely important arteries run directly through the 'thana' establishments on the way. Thus the highway between Dhaka and Chittagong or Dhaka and Tangail for instance is frequently littered by the bazaars, rickshaws, people and animals residing on a great part of the width of the highway going through one of those thanas. For all these reasons, the private bus companies cannot provide the public with the type of service and safety they wish to provide. Nor is the transportation requirements of goods and people met with any degree of satisfaction.

We therefore must depart from the culture of single-laned country roads to 4-laned dual carriage-ways between all the big cities and 2-laned wide country high-ways between the smaller cities and thanas. Two factors must be kept in mind. First under no circumstances must the roads be single laned. Second, none of these highways (4 or 2 laned) must ever pass directly through a rural or thana establishment. Proper exit and entrance ways must be created on these highways that will enable a vehicle to get off the highway to proceed through another 2-laned road to approach a thana bazaar or establishment. Similarly, the bus or car will be able to proceed along that 2-laned road after the bazaar to proceed to re-enter the

previously left 4-laned highway with a proper and safe entrance to continue the remaining journey.

This is exactly how the highway system in Europe and America works. It ensures constant and fast movement of vehicles along the highways and provide maximum safety since there are no bazaars to go through. Given the shortage of land in our country, I propose that we limit highway width to four lanes and not six as we often see in Europe and America. The 4 lanes must be divided with a concrete divider in the middle completely separating the opposing flows with. Bangladesh drivers do not like to maintain lanes and are primarily responsible for head to head collisions. If the above mentioned rail and road network are built in our country over the next several years employing half the country's rural work force, then we will see a different country after the projects are completed.

Talking very briefly about Dhaka and how it relates to other big cities, we first and foremost need a subway or underground system linking all residential and commercial areas. This will eliminate traffic jams and air pollution. Again foreign investors can Build-Own-Operate all this. To support the underground trains, we can have privately-operated bus systems trespassing all corners of the city (or cities). Buses should be able to comfortably ply through all residential areas. This will involve government procuring land on both sides of very small lanes that go through the "ghinji" residential areas, destruction of those homes and construction of wide neighbourhood roads that will create a major artery from Mirpur Road to Tejgaon Road through Rajabazaar for instance. But only residential complexes will be on both sides of the artery and bus stations will dot those arteries. Buses will run very frequently and go not only from one residential area to another or a commercial area, but also from one subway station to another. This is how we will eliminate the need for the rickshaws, the baby taxis, mishouks, tempos and auto-rickshaws (for mini-buses where people can neither stand nor rest their feet while seated). Standard sized large buses, a comprehensive subway system and metered taxis (as has been recently introduced) will take care of the transportation needs of all citizens of Dhaka and other big cities (Khulna, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Sylhet etc).

If the well integrated transportation system can be complemented by adequate drainage systems, trees, and an overhauled drainage system, Dhaka will become a much better place to live in. Are you still worried about the slums in Dhaka? No problem, employ all the people dwelling in slums in these projects and soon they will have earned enough to move into the upper echelons of the society. I have absolutely no idea if anything I have written today will ever translate into actual appearance. But this is what I have thought would be best to tackle a lot of the problems that our country is facing. I hope somebody will take notice. We will need an aggressive effort on the government's part to attract the investors to build all this, a firm agreement between the political parties that whichever party is in power will assist in the continuation of the projects till completion and there should be much less political instability in general. Otherwise none of this will ever materialize.

The Village Doctor

by Masroor Ahmed Deepak

WHAT really is a Village Doctor you might ask? All of us are very well aware of the normal doctors whom we go to for checkups, diagnosis or even to be prescribed medication in case of problems. These are the doctors who normally practice medicine in the urban areas. Majority of the people unfortunately do not reside in the urban areas in our country. These people live in the rural areas. The rural people go to the normal village doctors in case of trouble. Neither are these so-called doctors licensed to practice nor do they have the least medical qualifications or degrees. Reasons behind their sudden choice of career varies from person to person. Some of them decide to be village doctors if their fathers were somehow involved in this 'noble' profession in the past, some gathered experience by selling drugs and the rest depend on sale-person's tactics, i.e. gathering faith and trust of the patients through baseless and unrealistic lectures. Even for a street considered village doctors. And at the end of the day normal, uneducated and poor people tend to visit these doctors hoping to get healed. Believe it or not, these MBBS-less doctors are tremendously popular as well as loved and respected by all the villagers. Dr. Syeed is one such example.

He was one of those normal people-turned-doctor who learnt the tricks of this trade by experimenting with his patients' fate. Dr. Syeed was not always considered as a proper doctor for humans. His thriving business started way back with animals. Everything from vaccination, medication and remedies were carefully observed by young Syeed. Soon he managed to earn the local respect by proving that his hands were much better than the registered *poshu daktar* (animal doctor). One day he realized that the science he was suddenly gifted with, unfortunately, had its limitations. Therefore he decided to take a change and turned over a new leaf. Young *poshu daktar* Syeed overnight became "Doctor" Syeed (degree less). He managed to obtain a bag and a bicycle which definitely improved his looks and our holy Mohammed's (peace be on him) sunnat, i.e. a beard which drastically enhanced his credibility. Ever since the so-called doctor's business has thrived by the grace of the

almighty. He is happily married with his 2nd wife who happens to be younger than his eldest son, and when it comes to the number of children then no one shall or will beat his amazing reproductive records. Readers out there might inquire about Syeed's medical abilities instead of discussing his personal life. Yes, it is my fault. A person should be analyzed from all angles. The reason why patients still go to this man is because he is gentle, looks decent and kind. All the qualities needed to be a respectable man in the community is actually in this gentleman. As far as being a good citizen is concerned, Dr. Syeed comes at the top. But this is where he starts sliding. The actual number of wrong diagnosis, misinterpreted case histories and completely up-side-down medications will really have his name engraved in gold in the Guinness World of Fame. All his pills, syrups and injections have successfully crossed the expiry dates with ease.

I think that he was the first doctor in the South who was awarded the first only disposable one-time use syringe to treat his patients so many years back. And it is an honor for us all to know that he still uses the same syringe. Fills our heart with joy hearing an excellent achievement as such, doesn't it? To make matters worse his case number of animal fatality has crossed his previous human records as well. Though he started off his career with domestic animals, at the moment he is known as Doctor Death when it comes to them. Statistics will show that more animals have perished in his hands in one year compared to cyclones, floods, droughts and epidemics in the history of Bangladesh. Still Dr. Syeed's practice goes on, quiet profitably I might add. One day his son might take over and the history will continue. At the moment the son who is planning on following his father's footsteps is involved in tailoring. Who knows he might turn out to be a good surgeon one day. The fact is people like them will carry on practicing medicine. The villagers have faith in them. And faith helps to heal in a big way. Where proper doctors fall to earn their patient's trust, the village doctors continuously do so without problems. Sometimes a kind word, an encouraging thought and a gentler stroke on the head can be a boost for the patients. Something that we don't know yet.