

## FOCUS

## Towards a Brighter Millennium

by Major General (Retd) Z A Khan

**E**XASPERATED by commotions and complexities of the fading away millennium, people regardless of their caste, creed and culture are preparing to extend their arms of ovation to the new millennium hoping that it holds promise for all. The past century has presided over a few meaningful endeavours to help people to close their ranks to bring about an ordered change from myriad forces of disorder. Many of those efforts were aborted by those that were designated to make it happen. The theme of the past century was one world for all and unfortunately this core assignment did not receive adequate attention of its major proponent for expedient interest. To a general observer, the dream of a new world for all suffered a major setback due to unabated moral degradation, political divide, ethno-religious dispersion, acculturation and market disorientation.

Towards the end of the century one could notice craving of the people to find panacea to rid the tormented global society of distortion of moral fabric, political chauvinism, cultural aggression and economic disparity. What had held us away from our destination which is one world for all? Although it is not possible to identify all these causes within the brief expanse of this paper an earnest effort will be made to list those that merit a definite mention. While a broad majority of people show inclination to mention preservation of sovereignty and commitment to empowerment on top of the list, a reckonable number would like to radiate their focus on religious and cultural perspective. Besides these, there are yet a few more causes that may impede our march to destination. These, among many others, are:

- Inequality among nations;
- Skewed pattern of development;
- Unskilled or poor governance;
- Social instability;
- Invasive frontier culture;
- Transient political imbricol;
- Religious divide;
- Non-recognition of anti-armament constituency;
- Partisan role of world body;
- Alliances of expediency.

It should be clear to an unclouded mind that some of these causes would entail administrative authority for their redemptive while rest others would require intellectual prowess to overcome the inadequacies. It is imperative now to analyse mankind's performance in the past millennium which is just about ready to bid farewell. It witnessed advent of industrial civilization forcing retreat of feudal aristocracy.

Monarchies fell like house of cards against popular revolution. Two all devouring world wars were fought to make mockeries of our claim of enlightenment of human being. Social movement for ensuring distribution of wealth took roots but ultimately witnessed a downhill slide because of lack of commitment.

Even aggressive dynastic euphoria did not yield much dividend and liberal humanism that prompted bridging of gap among human beings failed. Much desired democracy also failed to flourish everywhere because of assaults on it by money power and street platitudes. Despite captivating scientific and technological advancement like microchip, culture and discovery of galaxies, our march to create a global village which is substantive and attainable remains an utopia. The incumbents are suffering from the apprehension that we shall never find 'one world for all' because 'when the wheels meant for forward movement turn back, they are never the same wheels nor it is the same road, along which they roll.' This should not preclude us from investing further effort to discover a new road to development.

The first project to be undertaken to befittingly welcome the third millennium is to arrive at a concord to delve on the contentious issues that estranged peace and order in the past. Although 'prospects of peace' is more clouded with uncertainty than tinged with optimism, efforts should be made to identify the sensitivities that may make our option for 'peace and harmony' fragile. One may ask which are these sensitivities? These could be: drug production, arms merchandising, apocalyptic debt, momentous population and ever pervading terrorism. Obviating these should get priority in our scheme of things and together we can make it happen provided that we address these situations with conviction, compassion and commitment. Although down to earth efforts were made to chastise the state policy formulation to invest human input in them, many countries did not feel obliged to do so because of diverse state policy. So an express need to find a concord to narrow down the diversity was acutely felt.

Mr M Gorbachev came to centre stage to recommend unity in diversity. While recommending this as the recipe to create one world for all he remarked "We are not abandoning our conviction, our philosophy or our tradition, nor do we recommend anyone to abandon theirs. But neither do we have any intention to be hemmed in by our values. That would result in intellectual impoverishment, for, it would mean rejection

of powerful source of development, the exchange of everything created." Gorbachev's 'Glasnost' had opened the floodgate of interaction between the 'free world' and 'closed society' which was a quantum jump on the path of carving a global village.

One of the factors among many that generated yearning in the leadership and the people during the later half of the 20th century was growth with equity without which creation and sustenance of global village will be an uphill task because "today the world economy has become a single organization and no state regardless of its social system and economic status can normally develop outside it." Fundamental change in the outlook would be necessary to economically develop the nations

planner should be flexible about the local diversities and other incoherences. There should be no reflection of enforcing planner's wish list in a local environment. Refraining from such temptation would be an acid test for experts who are generally inclined to inject their brand of development which are likely to be non-starter in the areas of their current concern.

Another area that merits immediate mention is the good governance free from pulls and punches. Most of the countries would like to be proud partners of the global society but often many of them suffer from the indignity of rejection. This rejection comes from some of the 'more equal' partners of the society because of the disagreement of the 'less equal partners'

economies of the less fortunate countries are on down hill slide and poverty is on upswing as the growth rate of GDP is lower than actual growth of population resulting in low level equilibrium trap. So a concerted effort to check the growth of population would be essential to guard against tipping the environmental balance as the resources of these countries are not only inadequate but also fast depleting. A greater percentage of population of these countries live off the ground and thus cause degradation of land, fresh water and marine resources. To top it all, our strides for development have paradoxically affected environment because of the extensive use of fertilizers and undisciplined exploitation of nature. The cumulative impact of human activities of the nature mentioned above has caused, among others: deforestation, top soil erosion, acidification, depletion of ozone layer and loss of biodiversity. One may apprehend that the situation will become more pronounced with onset of global climatic change, and environmentally induced conflicts are likely to intensify.

We know that 'deforestation, soil erosion, acidification, over exploitation and pollution of water resources undermine a few essential factors of human sustainability like natural support system, reduce natural carrying capacity and increase the competition for nominally renewable yet scarce resources. "Environmental degradation and resource depletion are triggering internal conflict and are likely to assume an ugly face as climate change is likely to exacerbate the situation. To guard against breakdown of stability and distortion of social fabric, a new policy, one focused on human security, must take into account a complex web of social, economic and environmental factors". So a concerted effort of all the countries should be underway at the agies of the world body to share common marine resources, water and minerals proportionate to the land mass and population. Extensive use of goods and articles based on nature should be discouraged through a consensus agreement. Population growth must be checked lest it casts its perilous shadows on the near stagnant economies of the less fortunate countries. It is not unknown that concomitant effects of unchecked growth of population are men-

acing unemployment situation and influx of population to urban areas in search of means of living. These may cause imbalance in the ecosystem and society. So those countries that are already suffering from the classical signs of underdevelopment such as poverty, inequitable distribution of land and wealth, rapid growth of population and huge foreign debt, should receive sustainable support on priority basis from the world body to make the dream of creating a global village come true.

The coming millennium should put emphasis on enabling the nations to preserve their cultural identity which will be a subject of intense aggression due to immense development in information technology. While intermingling and interacting cultural identity of individual nations should be protected, it need be, by formulating a few mandatory regulations at the behest of the world body to guard against any wilful tampering of the trait and traditions, sensitivities and inhibitions of the nations. This step will come to good stead when drudgery and boredom tiptoes in while interacting in identical cultural environment. One should not forget that pride in one's own identity is the prime mover in creative culture. Although it is not possible to chart a set of culture, it is not impossible to deist a nation with richer cultural achievement to circumvent the weaker ones unless the stronger of the two feels obliged to respect the other. It is by no means a one way traffic of communication. While the probable country of cultural aggression should adopt means to insulate the suspect area of acculturation target by local motivation, the culturally richer and economically viable nation should also refrain from exerting any influence on the second fiddle. World bodies would be of substantial help in this regard.

To create a global society, the role of the weapons should be microscoped in the third millennium so that no nation can brow beat the other. The capital thus saved should be diverted to the welfare of the disadvantaged. A world body should be formed to monitor manufacturing and marketing of weapons of destruction. Any nation alleged to be involved should be awarded economic sanctions. All the nations should be made to sign an undertaking that will authorize the body to inspect the facilities available in a country that could produce weapons of destruction. A wing composed of military strategists should be formed as an adjunct of the world body to work out minimum security requirements of all the nations and then through a dialogue with the countries concerned the force configuration of that country should be worked out. The world body should have a rapid deployment force for conflict resolution initially by halting the use of arms and subsequently by diplomatic and political parleys. Manufacturing of offensive weapon must be ceased with iron will and defaulters should be made to be obliged to tell the world the reasons for producing the weapons of aggression. If the arguments are not satisfactory, economic and political sanctions should follow.

In conclusion I would like to point out that sine qua non for a brighter third millennium is concord among nations. Tolerance, respect to democratic values, narrowing down economic inequality through trade liberalisation and conflict resolution through dialogue can be of enormous help to reach that concord. The privileged should accommodate the disadvantaged if we want an exploitation free one world for all. We must resolve to forsake the ills and the wrong of the past so that human values dominate petty national interest and colour of skin is not allowed to shamefully preside over the destiny of human being. Let us put our heart and soul to evolve an impregnable code of life that is based on human dignity and welfare to make the world of third millennium a heaven on earth for our progeny who, I am sure, will acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of their forefathers to enable them all to walk shoulder to shoulder in the brighter, friendlier and poverty free world.

The author is a former Director General of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

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as 'interdependence of nations, divisiveness of their ideologies and the seeming inevitability of resource depletion are likely to diminish efforts for creative changes'. So change in social and political structures should be in offfing to bind the industrialized west and developing third world nations to work hand in gloves. In this instance the west should pursue a policy of sharing their expertise and surplus output to carry the third world to eradicate absolute poverty. Economic fora at global and regional level should be formed to identify means to reduce inequalities among nations.

Existing institutions unfortunately do not focus adequate concern on bridging the gap rather their aim is only to find means to exist while the victim nations would not only like to exist but also to be perceived. So a missionary commitment would be necessary to plan the development at least at regional level if global dimension seems hostage to unavailable means of development as, according to Colalie Bryant and Louise G White, Planning encompasses far more activities than designing these plans and it includes a greater variety of skills than deciding on long range goals. According to Kalman Silvert, this task is actually the heart of development process. The essential measure of political development is the 'relation between range of choice open to a polity and the range it actually explores'. To be able to plan well, the planners should not only attain the ability to use local information well but also be able to operate in their political process. While planning regional level development, the

king's wagon. Political delinquency mars nation's hopes. Delinquency occurs for a variety of reasons. Enticements and cajoling by the benefiting sponsor, lack of commitment of the government and the resultant insularity in the society, poor understanding of local aspiration due to overriding desire to exercise control on the local situation from a stand off distance through local lackys, denial of rights to unbiased information and distortion of value of political and administrative institutions are some of the classical syndromes of poor governance. These are the countries that deserve global attention to bind them with the global family. World at large should discourage outside interference of any form and should not impose economic sanctions to extract political mileage till such nations show symptoms of overcoming poor governance.

Politician's attempts to centralize development planning hardly bore any fruit. Decentralization of planning process and devolution of authority up to grassroots level of governance may help nations to grow. Only this method can convince developed nations to allow wedding of their own fortune with the prosperity of the less fortunate ones. It is thought that only through the participation of developed nations that the world bodies can plan to widen the frontier of the global village.

The new millennium's chief concern is likely to centre around environmental security. Of late there has been discernible shift in the emphasis about security. Most of the

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## Of Diminishing Gap between the Rich and the Poor

by Alif Zabr

**R**ECENTLY I went through an interesting article wherein a Bangladeshi architect teaching in the USA, attempted to draw up the image of the American and his country, with the assistance of foreign philosophers. As a casual writer, I started thinking about my country, Bangladesh, sitting in Dhaka, and tried to use the similar parameters to draw up a pen picture of the Bengalee psyche and Sonar Bangla, as an exercise in contrast. It is not an unusual exercise, judging by the tribulations the young nation has been through nearly three decades, with the 'celebrations' of the Victory Day (December 16) hardly a fortnight behind. Of course the contrast between the 'super' and tiny Bangladesh is facetious, as the two are at the two ends of the string of materialistic democracy (if such a term is recognized); one is probing the planet Mars, and the other trying up to patch up the nickname of 'bottomless basket' she has collected as a dubious international reward. The repair of the empty basket has been going on for decades now, and the contents inside are pretty well known to critical observers.

First let us play with some vital statistics. The US is a vast area, about 70 times bigger physically than Bangladesh. At the other end of the scale is the huge disparity in the density of

the population: about 1000 per sq km in Bangladesh, compared to a mere 27 per sq km in the States. The GNP figures are also wildly contrasting: one is about 70 times the other. The world's richest power is divinely lucky; had the population density of the United States been only one third that of Bangladesh, namely, 300 per sq km, its population would have been around 2.7 billion mouths to feed; thereby starving the NASA misadventures, and skipping the punishment of Iran and Iraq, and so forth. We have to tune in to Nature, it is not the other way round. Economists call it the mobilization of resources. Indonesia's standard would have been different without 3,000 islands to administer, and 200m people breathing on one another's necks in a dozen islands.

Therefore the thinking pattern between an American and a Bangladeshi would be very very different. This disparity needs to be hammered at high official and international levels, because the thinking patterns create huge communication gaps, which mere statistical recognition and economic paper-solutions fail to resolve. Amartya Sen, the Bengali economist and Nobel Laureate, who was in Dhaka recently to receive the honorary doctorate from the Dhaka University, had been stressing how to mea-

sure such disparities by introducing the human factors; and that food autarchy was not enough to sustain a complex and reactive mechanism such as human beings; and when quantity and quality factors were used together during evaluations, the results obtained seem to go awry. The amiable debate between the North and the South at the development aid meetings has so far been beating about the bush in trying to handle and contain the poverty-alleviation exercises, under which the various uplift programmes always happened to leak at the bulges.

The donor agencies are trying to decipher the aphorism 'The East is East, and West is West, and never the twin shall meet'. It is meeting partly by shifting the labour-intensive factories to the South, with very controlled small doses of transfer of technology. The West was so confused that it had to press the panic button and set up a weird organisation called the World Trade Organization (WTO), which got a beating in Seattle recently (harmful works not only in Dhaka, but in Seattle too!).

The vastness of America was solved by the invention of the automobile, the rotating freedom measured in rpm and horse-power, for lonely souls (only 27 of them in a square kilometer). The flywheel effect

in the American individual comes from the rotating wheels of the automobile - getting away is a safety icon. The American tried to increase the population density by going up vertically in the big cities (bigness is an American philosophy of life, although an inferiority complex at the bottom) but he did not like close encounters based on halitosis (space needed for asserting the cult of individuality), and shifted to the suburbs, believing in the wheel of tired life. The cowboy in the American heart is still kicking with the spur (the occasional kicking of the carburetor brings back to him sweet memories).

In the LDCs, the urban migration period lasts for quite some time, depending on the over-population configuration. In fertile Bangladesh (the land, the womb, and the imagination), the human density reaches claustrophobic proportions, and the Bengali mind searches for spaces in various forms. In the flat delta region, the majesty of the rivers move him, physically and mentally, although without a speedometer. It is a way and part of life, and a vast amount of literature has grown up, savouring the nuances of escapism. The trip to town is a mammoth compulsion; the trip back home on the boat is a purgation.

Now the metropolis of

Dhaka is expanding vertically (the same space problem), and the slums are doing the same horizontally; creating tangential human forces and problems which are posing problems for the administrations and the social scientists. The will to live operates equally well on the 20th floor of a luxury flat, or in the tattered hut in the buster; for one it is an option, for the other it is a struggle for survival.

The Locomotion Factor of economics is revealing. Mobility removes the visible and invisible walls, thwarts traditional approach, and dimin-

ishes clannish tribalism (literacy does it faster and cheaper, because the raw material is produced internally in the mind). High-rise living have philosophical and psychological tinges. The feet do not touch the dewy grass; and the rural neighbour's transparent (and inviting) fence is barred by the closed door of the occupant in the flat opposite (the postman rings twice). Compared to the cities, in the villages there are no strangers in the neighbourhood. It changes the behaviour pattern of living; but the city-dwellers have to live together, for better or for worse (nothing to do with matrimony).

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD

Road Division, Naogaon

## Notice Inviting RHD Tender

1. Tender Notice No : 4 NRD/1999-2000.
2. Name of work : Construction of earthwork in road embankment at different km of Borodaupur-Mohadanga-Kusumkunda road under Road Division, Naogaon during the year 1999-2000 in 3 (three) groups.
3. Chargeable head : As per group list.
4. Estimated cost : As per group list.
5. Earnest money : As per group list.
6. Time allowed for completion of work : As per group list.
7. Eligibility of bidders : As per group list.
8. Last date for selling tender documents : 16-01-2000/02-10-1406 Beng during office hours.
9. Last date and time for receiving tenders : 17-01-2000/03-10-1406 Beng up to 12-30 PM.
10. Date and time for opening tenders : 18-01-2000/04-10-1406 Beng at 12-45 PM.
11. Date, time & place of lottery : 26-01-2000 at 11-30 AM; office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Naogaon.
12. Name of offices where tenders will be received : i) Superintending Engineer, RHD Road Circle, Rajshahi.  
ii) Executive Engineer, RHD Road Division, Naogaon/Rajshahi/Nawabganj.
13. Name of offices where tender documents will be sold : i) Executive Engineer, RHD Road Division, Naogaon/Rajshahi/Nawabganj.  
ii) Sub-Divisional Engineer, RHD Road Sub-Division, Naogaon/Patnala/1st Line Workshop Sub-Division, Naogaon.

- NB: 1. Bidding contractor must submit TIN and VAT registration (with ten-digit number) certificate along with tenders otherwise tender will be treated as informal.  
2. These tenders have been called in anticipation of approval of the estimate. Necessary corrections will be made during execution of formal tender on the basis of the approval estimates.

Gr No	Name of work with location	Chargeable head	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Time allowed for completion of work	Eligibility of bidders
1 (one)	Construction of earthwork in road embankment at 1st (p) km of Borodaupur-Mohadanga-Kusumkunda road and starting of the road in construction of 0.60 metre span culvert under Road Division, Naogaon during the year 1999-2000.	-Do-	Tk 3,25,553/00	Tk 6,511/00	45 (forty-five) days	"A" to "E" General category of RHD contractor
2 (two)	Construction of earthwork in road embankment at 1st (p) & 2nd (p) km of Borodaupur-Mohadanga-Kusumkunda road under Road Division, Naogaon during the year 1999-2000.	-Do-	Tk 3,09,047/00	Tk 6,181/00	30 (thirty) days	-Do-
3 (three)	Construction of earthwork in road embankment at 2nd (p) km of Borodaupur-Mohadanga-Kusumkunda road under Road Division, Naogaon during the year 1999-2000.	266 Feeder	Tk 3,38,084/00	Tk 6,762/00	30 (thirty) days	-Do-

DFP-28880-26/12  
G-2198Md Nabinoor Islam Khan  
Executive Engineer, RHD  
Road Division, Naogaon.