TNFORTUNATELY for the

nation, controversy sur-

rounding the recent bud-

get has seemingly surpassed all

proportions. The incumbent

and one ex-finance ministers

have engaged in a quarrel in

which each questioned the oth-

er's qualification as regards

to his already huge inherent de-

privations by, among others,

be so unkind to each other.

Trade

volume of default-loans in the

minister, it is behaving prag-

about the country's economy vis

a vis globalisation. In a few post

budget speeches the minister

also hurled terse replies to one

ex-finance minister's terse

The statement cannot be ac-

EARING impairment in

Lindividual results in

facing social isolation and

medical problems as well as

decreased quality of life. Since

long hearing aids have proved

helpful in cases of moderate

deafness and with a few

exceptions, in more severe

cases. Hearing aids amplify

sound to compensate for the

loss of sensitivity to sound, but

the ability of hearing aids to

separate and selectively am-

plify different sound frequen-

cies is limited, however. Speech

perception becomes difficult in

sorineural deafness even with

With rising noise levels in ev-

eryday life specially in cities

and areas under industrializa-

tion, and aging of the popula-

tion, the number of people with

hearing loss will continue to

Implant has proved worth-

while in adults and children

having severe and profound

cases of pre-lingually deaf chil-

dren who have a severe-to-pro-

loss and no memory of speech.

store hearing to normal levels.

rise, unfortunately.

case of severe to profound sen-

everyday life of an

the proposed budget.

matically, not whimsically,

Budget 2000-2001: A Critical Appraisal

It should be most uninteresting on the part of a tax paying citizen to notice that while the government due to inefficient management of the public exchequer during the current fiscal, has already borrowed several thousand crores of taka from the commercial banks, it also seeks to open a permanent provision through the parliament to borrow from the banking system again in the coming fiscal.

by Nitai C Nag

making a budget. Although a typical citizen is almost accustomed to not expect any good news from the rituals that pass in the name of placing national per cent in 1990. In 1996 when budget in the parliament, such the present government asacrid engagements simply add rate was 50 per cent. In 1999. maximum tariff rate fell to 37.5 lowering morale; he is ideally per cent. Also, in the proposed supposed to take lessons from budget tariffs on industrial raw how dignified personalities bematerials and intermediate have. In what follows we try to products have been signifipoint out why reason looks so cantly reduced "despite negative short in supply in the corner revenue implications". One concerned, and also make a few wonders what the present ficomments on certain aspects of nance minister would do about the recent budget. We begin with tariff reduction had he been in issues on trade policy which we charge of the job in the late hope will provide some expla-1980's when rates and slabs etc. nation as to why the otherwise used to be as high as already dignified personalities had to mentioned. In other words, one might think that while the pre-Tariffs on International sent government is carrying forward the same "import lib-In his budget speech the fieralisation" agenda of its preceding one, which in turn innance minister complains that rapid tariff reduction in the herited it from the earlier "aufirst half of the 1990s, rendered tocratic" government, the minsick thousands of industrial ister's complaint is not quite units, which in turn swelled the tenable

Secondly, if thousands of banking sector. Since the pre- industrial units turned sick due sent government is in charge of to faulty trade policy pursued by sorting the problem, said the the government of early 1990's. the present government too should share the same blame since nowhere in the industrial sector there is visible any sign of reversal of the process despite what the finance minister calls his government's pragcriticism of various aspects of matic handling of the matter. The marked sloth of industrial sector growth in the recent years is but a testimony to this

cepted on face value on the following grounds. First, according to public accounts, rapid Thirdly, Bangladesh's external trade did not have to wait. tariff reduction commenced not until the setting in of globalisain the first half of the 1990's but tion, to be made "liberal'. Thus in the second half of the decade although the government of that preceded it. For instance, early 1990's committed for a in 1986, number of tariff slabs few of Bangladesh's traded was lowered to 11 from 24. Maxitems "market access" and "naimum tariff rate, which used to

be over 400 per cent prior to tional treatment" to the exter-1986, was reduced to 150 per nal trading partners, those cent in 1987 and further to 100 commitments assumed relevance only since January, 1995. "Import liberalisation", on the sumed power, maximum tariff other hand, saw its vigorous beginning still a decade earlier. Why? The minister should certainly be aware of the answer. Just at the behest of the leading external donors the government of late 1980's started the process which continues virtu-

ally unabated to this day. So, there is simply no qualitative different as far as management of trade policy is concerned between the current and former governments. The better is it, therefore, for public the more the minister, incumbent and ex-remember the matter while making public speeches on the subject in question.

Agriculture

It is party to the government's credit that foodgrains production has already nearly reached the previously envisaged target production of 25 million metric tons for 2002. Some reports even claim that Bangladesh is now a food surplus country. Reassuring though, such reports need not provide one excessive amount of complacence, for, considering the teeming mouths it still remains but a Herculean task to consolidate a state of surplus. From such reports, we believe, the nation will benefit most to learn what the difference between a time being surplus and one that may be sustainable in the long run, is. Close monitoring of delivery of the public services, such as distribution of credit and fertilisers, and public procurement thus remains crucial. In all these areas, farmers reportedly contimue to suffer deprivation de-

spite, what is now widely believed, the above average efficiency with which the ministry concerned of the present government has so far performed. A budgetary provision of subsidy on fertilisers alone will not be just enough in this re-

Since food does not mean foodgrains alone but also other items such as lentils, milk, sugar, oil, fish, meat, vegetables, fruits, etc, whether budgetary provision bless or curse these subsectors must also be looked into. Excessive stress on foodgrains supply alone has already created, reportedly, significant set-back many of them. The national budget remains silent on this issue.

To make matters worse import duty on milk powder has been proposed to be reduced remarkably. As reason the budget document mentions that domestic milk-based industry should expand to help economic development. This argument. we suppose, is a wrong and totally unacceptable one. In addition to the health risk associated with imported milk powders, domestic milk producers are also substantially losing due to these cheap imports. It may be mentioned here that those nations which sell these powder to us, themselves in general heavily subsidise agricultural sector in general and the dairy sector in particular. Curious citizens thus could suspect the very intention of the government to this regard. We appeal to the government to withdraw this proposal.

Deficit Financing It should be most uninteresting on the part of a tax paying citizen to notice that while the government due to inefficient

management of the public ex-

chequer during the current fiscal, has already borrowed several thousand crores of taka from the commercial, banks, to whom interest and principal will be due soon with all its inflationary implications, it also seeks to open a permanent provision through the parliament to borrow from the banking system again in the coming fiscal to meet its obligations which in turn include projects allegedly of "questionable merit", that is, those which can well be dismantled to the poor

nation's benefit. Also with the external sector's position not being as stable, imports far outstripping exports - the latter in turn having experienced significantly lower growth of late - the apparent public extravagance can hardly have any justification. Management of any likely crisis in the external sector has become particularly difficult now-a-days since the government can no longer exercise free hand to recourse to trade restricting policies committed since it is to reforming the economy. Even devaluation, according to studies, is likely to expand budget deficit.

So, during any likely event of crisis management only the most urgent areas of public expenditure, such as health and education, are to suffer the brunt. Also credit to the private

Already quality of service in the public sector hospitals is simply unspeakable. Publicly run colleges, many giving post graduate level courses, can be found to be running with scores of posts of teachers going vacant for years. The latter is despite "highest" budgetary allocation being made to education sector

Concerned citizens thus are likely to become increasingly disconcerted about the government's management of the economy. In particular, the extent by which (about 39 per cent according to the revised budget) budget deficits exceeded the originally projected figure in a year which the government itself describes as being a good one with above normal rate of economic growth, no necessity of food imports etc must trouble any sensible person.

Saving and Investment

A good news about the econ-

omy is that national saving rate has significantly gone up in the recent past. What role the publicly sponsored saving schemes have played in this regard cannot be resolved off hand. Some empirical studies of course point out high correlation between interest rate and aggregated deposits in banks and other saving schemes. Still. interest rate reduction on saving instruments is theoretically a sound move since the ongoing interest rate on bank loans, which in turn also depends upon rates on various deposits. is too high for starting almost any business. But the pertinent | headquarters. question in this regard is whether reduction of rates on saving instruments will positively affect investment via reduced lending rates. There unfortunately are so many reasons for one to be but cautiously optimistic about the matter. In the first place, the industrial sickness syndrome, which, according to the finance minister himself has set in due to rapid trade liberalisation, is unlikely to be remarkably improved sector could be further upon through this measure alone. One will of course remain curious about whether the very intention of the government in this regard is to realise a higher investment scenario or it wants to economise on its resource considering particularly the fast rising public debt with the government's large scale borrowing from the banking sys-

Woes of World Trade Outsiders

The poor members of the WTO are caught in a vicious cycle, reports Associated Press from Geneva

ENALD Clerisme is the first to admit he doesn't Always understand what's going on at the World Trade Organisation. How can he. when he can't be everywhere at at all.

Clerisme is head of the Haiti delegation to the world's top rule-making body for trade.

He's also the entire delegation. Haiti, with seven million people, is one of many poor countries that lack sufficient representation in an organisation whose decisions influence commerce, consumer prices and jobs around the world.

In contrast to rich and powerful nations whose WTO delegates take limousines to work and have staffs of two dozen or more, representatives from places such as Haiti are poorly equipped to fight for trade rights.

Clerisme (pronounced cleriz-MAY) works from an office above an appliance shop in a shabbier quarter of Geneva about a one mile (1.6 kilometres) from WTO's lakeside

The Haitian delegation doesn't have a care. So while European Union Ambassador Roderick Abbott and other diplomats ride in chauffeurdriven limousines to work. Clerisme takes the bus.

Clerisme scrambles to attend meetings because the WTO has more than 30 different committees, subcommittees and working groups on its schedule, covering subjects from textiles to patents to the environment. Several meetings may take place at once.

"I feel that I don't understand very fully what is going on. Sometimes they will deal with things I don't know anything about." Clerisme said.

With 137 members, the WTO was created in 1995 on the theory that open markets benefit everyone. Its binding decisions determine how trade is conducted between nations and what restrictions countries can impose to protect their own producers.

The dichotomy in WTO representation can overpower its poorest members.

One key issue is the eagerness of large nations to export products at below-market prices to poorer nations. squeezing domestic businesses. "Dumping" goods can help an exporter corner a local market and may sometimes result from production subsidies by gov-

Clerisme says WTO dispute oped country, settlement - where a country can air a complaint and a panel of experts issues a legally binding judgement — could help combat rice dumping, a big is-

sue in Haiti. But Haiti can't use the system because it doesn't have lawyers with enough understanding of international trade circle.

law, he says. Twenty-nine countries mostly in African and the Caribbean - have no permanent representative in Geneva

"The question that arises is how much influence has a small country got over WTO decision-making processes? Very little indeed," said George Williams, who is ambassador for the Caribbean Island of Dominica in London and gets to Geneva for about six days a

The WTO has sparked riots from Geneva to Seattle and protests in other places in part because of the impact economic globalisation has on the world's poor.

For their part, Clerisme and other WTO representatives from developing countries believe free trade can help their people. But the expense of running diplomatic missions in Geneva is a barrier to reaping those

Western diplomats estimate it costs their governments US dollars 300,000 to keep each of

The big nations also have major support in their home capitals, The US Trade Representative in Washington has up to 170 staff and a budget of US dollar 70 million. That's about two-thirds of Haiti's entire yearly export earnings.

Clerisme says he is reluctant to disagree with other countries if he is unable to understand an

"If they ask you to join a consensus, in the end you finish by accepting something that is not in your interests. WTO Director-General Mike

Moore came into office last September promising to help countries that can't afford to have a permanent delegation in Geneva. Moore, who is from New Zealand, describes himself as a Pacific islander who knows the problems of small, isolated nations.

"Many can't afford to subscribe to all the newspapers." Moore said in an interview. Others can't even pay for fax

Moore spoke on a day when a discussion over whether to admit the West African island nation of Cape Verde to the organisation had to be postponed because nobody from the country was able to attend the meeting. Cape Verde, with a popula-

tion of 405,000, is classified with Haiti as a least-devel-

Since his arrival, Moore has but in place training courses and "Geneva Weeks" for delegations with little or no regular representation at the WTO. The WTO even tries to provide newspaper clippings to needy mis-

But for Clerisme it's vicious

Implanting the Bionic Ear

A cochlear implant does not restore a person's hearing to normal. Rather it can provide very useful auditory cues. While the benefits from an implant are not same for everyone, from the experience and case studies, in case of adults, restored detection of everyday sounds in the environment, improved face to face communication, the ability to understand speech through hearing alone, greater confidence to interact and socialize can be expected.

by Kanon K Roy

aged or the hair cells in the cochlea are not developed properly or remain inactive. Hearing aids and other assistive listening devices simply amplify sound. A cochlear implant, on rectly stimulating the surviving auditory nerve fibres in the

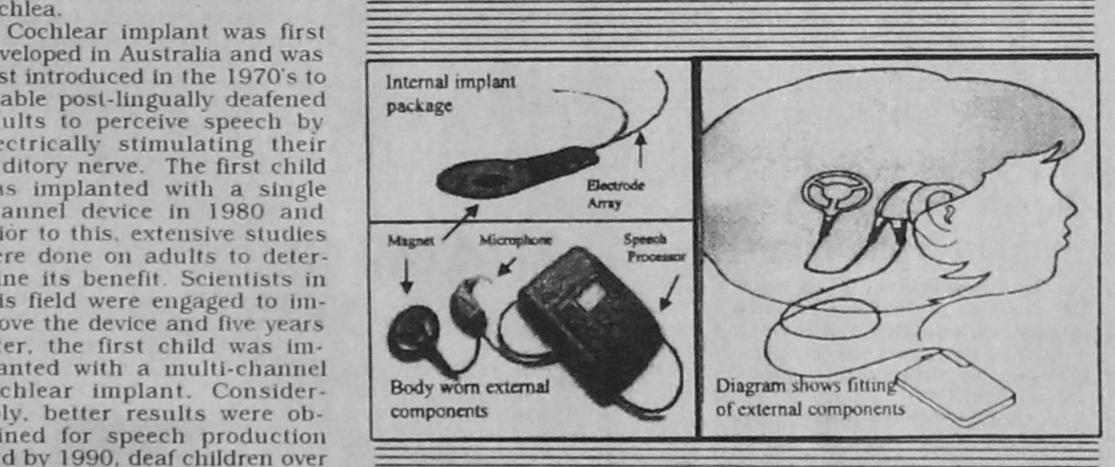
developed in Australia and was first introduced in the 1970's to enable post-lingually deafened Introduction of 'Cochlear adults to perceive speech by electrically stimulating their auditory nerve. The first child was implanted with a single sensorineural hearing loss who channel device in 1980 and get little or no benefit from prior to this, extensive studies hearing aids. Especially in were done on adults to determine its benefit. Scientists in this field were engaged to imfound sensorineural hearing prove the device and five years later, the first child was imhearing aids may not provide planted with a multi-channel adequate benefit even after excochlear implant. Considertensive auditory training. An ably, better results were obacquired hearing loss resulting tained for speech production from meningitis or viral infec- and by 1990, deaf children over tions can leave a child with to- two years of age were considered tal deafness. For this popula- to be candidates for implantation the cochlear implant is an tion. All cochlear implant dealternative to hearing aids, vices have been tested extenwhich practically is not a cure sively before their use on chilfor hearing loss and will not re- dren, not only to determine their benefit for speech and Before discussing about the language perception and procochlear implant we should duction, but to ensure that the know how the ear normally components of the device would

functions. In case of a nor- be completely safe also. Even after the introduction mally functioning ear sound is transmitted as sound waves to of cochlear implant scientists the ear-drum causing the latter were working hard to improve to vibrate which in turn causes the device. Normally functionthe three tiny bones in the ing cochlea mechanically sorts middle ear to vibrate. The the sounds according to their sound vibrations continue frequency and based on this through the middle ear bones fact multiple electrodes came and across a tiny membrane to into consideration and accordthe fluid in the snail-shaped ingly multi-channel implant inner ear called cochlea. The (22 channel) was introduced the movement of fluid in the result of which was significochlea causes the movement of cantly improved. Development numerous hair cells merged of newest speech coding strategy into the fluid. The movement of along with latest 24-channel the hair cells converts the fluid implant has been proved spemovement into electrical en- cially worthy in the case of preergy which is then transmitted lingually deaf children for their to the auditory nerve thearing speech and language developnerve) by the hair cells. The ment. However, in the case of a electrical unpulses after being cochlear implant rehabilitatransmitted to the brain tion measures i.e., mapping and through auditory nerve are in- acute auditory training are far terpreted as sound information tors toward success and realistic expectation from an implant In the case of sensormenral respirat or parents of respirat the clinicians to advise the drills in the temporal bone to deafness the inner ear is dam- is also important.

There are several brands of cochlear implant in use all over the world; for example, Nucleus', 'Clarion', 'Combi 40/40+ etc. But the most widely used brand is 'Nucleus' manuthe other hand, is an electronic factured by Cochlear Ltd. But agement of patients. the help of most powerful device designed to provide use- the basic components of all hearing aids available now. ful sound information by di- brands are almost same which are described below briefly

may gain from the device. A team of specialists' i.e., audiologist, otologists, speech pathologists, neurologists, social workers and educationalists will have input into the man-

tion is " who can be benefited to 3 days. from cochlear implant?" The



Components of Cochlear Implant: Multi-channel cochlear implant consists of 2 main components:

1) The implant package and electrode array (or receiverstimulator), and 2) The speech processor and

headset.

The receiver-stimulator contains the electronic circuits that control the flow of electrical pulses into the ear, an antenna that receives the radiofrequency signal from the external coil and a magnate that holds the external coil in place. the package that join to elec- intact, trodes. The 22- or 24-electrode array is inserted into the snail shaped cochlea and the whole receiver stimulator package is placed under the skin of the patient behind the ear during im-

Candidacy for Cochlear Implant: To determine the suit- Surgery is needed to insert the ability of each prospective can- electrode array into the cochlea didate, patient has to face the and to anchor the receiverpre-operative selection proce- stimulator package in the temdure. A number of assessments poral bone in the skull. After are required for this and the re- raising the skin from the skull sults of these tests also allow behind the ear the surgeon candidates on the benefit they have access to the cochlea and

answer is the same as the summary of the selection criteria of a probable candidate, which are as follows: i) The candidate will be at

least 12 months of age or older at the time of surgery. ii) The candidate must have little or no hearing in both the

iii) The candidate must gain little or no benefit from hearing iv) The ears must be free of

v) The inner ear must be properly formed and the audi-There are wire leads attached to tory (hearing) nerve must be vi) The candidate must be

> medically suitable to undergo an operation. In addition the candidate and/or his family must have realistic expectations from and

be aware of the device. Implantation Surgery:

then making a small hole in the wall of the cochlea, he gently guides the electrode array into the shell-like cochlea. Once the array is fixed in place, the wound is closed. Typically the surgery takes 2 to 3 hours and The plain and simple ques- the hospital stay is normally 2

Fitting of External Components and Rehabilitation Measures: The headset and speech processor are normally fitted 4. 6 weeks after the surgery in case of adults. The audiologist sorts out soft and comfortable listening levels for each of the electrodes and uses this information to create a MAP or programme and the fitting process generally continues over several days. In case of children, the fitting procedure continues over a 3-month period. Young children are typically monitored 2 to 3 times a week in the first month and 1 or 2 times a week in next 2 months to obtain a stable MAP. Hearing speech with the implant for the first time may appear somewhat unnatural but over days and weeks it begins to sound familiar. People who have no experience of hearing before require longer time to adjust to new sounds. In case of children who never had hearing before, the initial reaction to sound varies. Some may not show response to sound at first. Other children may show surprise, fear, inquisitiveness, or even happiness. Performance usually continues to improve over time with extensive

auditory and speech training. Follow-up is also very important and for adults weekly adjustment of MAP and communication therapy are done for the first month after fitting. The treatment focuses on auditory training, speech reading, telephone use, music and communication strategies. In case of children, after the initial 3 months period, they are examined every 3 months for the first year and every 6 months for second and third year. Thereafter the child is examined annually.

Realistic Expectations after a Cochlear Implant: A cochlear implant does not restore a perit can provide very useful auditory cues. While the benefits CARE School, Dhaka

from an implant are not same for everyone, from the experience and case studies, in case of adults, restored detection of everyday sounds in the environment, improved face to face communication, the ability to understand speech through hearing alone, greater confi dence to interact and socialize can be expected. In case of chil dren the result is almost the same, although progress may be a lot slower. Clinical data show that 60 per cent of children learn to recognize speech with out the aid of lip-reading and improvements in the speech and language skills do occur.

Cost of Implantation: No doubt, cost of cochlear implantation including post surgery rehabilitation measures is very high, although it varies from country to country and place to place. Of course the cost of implantation is the major part of the programme which stands at approximately 54,000 Australian dollars in Australia. The cost has been sufficiently lowered in India where it goes up to 5 lacs (Nucleus 22) to 8 lacs (Nucleus 24) Indian rupees. In India the implantation has been introduced a couple of years earlier in collaboration with Cochlear Ltd., Australia (manufacturer of 'Nucleus,' the most widely used brand) and implant programme for children has been recently introduced in two centers — Madras ENT Research Foundation. Chennai, and Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai. In a country like Bangladesh

where the common people cannot afford such costly technology, it becomes difficult to introduce such programmes, apparently. It may appear ambitious to expect that steps may be taken by the government or health and welfare sectors for massive hearing screening programmes for all new born babies, and to provide candidates fit for cochlear implant among them with that device at their own cost. But time has come to think about this community, at least to provide them with possible subsidies for such surgeries or implants and thus rehabilitating them in society with meaningful lives. Government as well as interested promoters from private sectors may come forward and help introduce such programmes and technologies in our country, may be in collaboration with the donors, aid agencies, especially WHO and the concerned manufactures and companies of the Cochlear Implant device.

The author is a Joint Comson's hearing to normal. Rather missioner of Taxes and Member. Executive Committee, III-

All is Not Well

by Abul M Ahmad

THE lopsided way in which ing food products from coun-Officially it is being pointed out cides. High and new technolothat we should not follow the example of Nigeria, who fretted factors, which the developing away the natural energy re- countries should study caresources due to mismanagement. fully for long-term planning greed and corruption. But is any attention being drawn to the way Bangkok rose and fell, as and infrastructure, while the also oil-rich Indonesia, and very base or foundation is tiger S Korea (even Malaysia faulty, due to the influx of black and Hong Kong were not money in this business of polispared)?

What are the lessons to be learnt by our planning agencies, corruption and politicization, so that the ministries may be briefed well in advance? When a high, and the compensation has problem becomes visible, it is casy to criticise. We have to foresee and warn, in cases when the adverse effects start to show up after several years.

Such patterns are visible in Dhaka too, but the regimes are too power drunk with opportunistic approach through background godfathers, making hay while the sun shines. Now comes the warning (DS June 26) that the Motifheel commercial area, the concrete jungle of high-rise buildings, if facing danger due to tilting of the land. as the operation (for several years) of a large number of deep tube wells in the area are disturbing and unbalancing the underground water tables, weakening the surface structure of the soil, which might cause buildings to tilt. If it happens, there is no remedy to save the buildings, and the economic loss would be astronomical.

overuse of synthetic and chemit - too old to deliver!). cal lertilisers and pesticides? Japan is very careful in import- Bangla.

Bangladesh is 'developing' tries which use high doses of I is a cause of concern. man-made fertilisers and pestigies have their compensation

> In politics also, we talk of building up a superb structure tics, and open use of muscle power and illegal arms. With the political systems loss is to be borne by the taxisivers. This is happening right now. but the policy makers are

The quality of the future governors of the country is being tarnished as the high ethics of tertiary education at all the three levels is being severely eroded mainly due to politi cization and lowering of professional standards. The corrective steps are vague, vacillating, and without any sense of direction. Is there no body to guide our education?

The public faith in the current political culture is evaporating, and the politicians are not responding, except with the stereotyped harangues. The accumulated feedback will hit them at a time when they cannot recover. Bangladesh has passed through several political vacuums, and another one is in the making. It is good if it will We boast about the high pro- cleanse up the dirty system (a duction of agricultural prod- symbolical omen: the WASA ucts, but have we made studies underground pipes are bursting: on the long-term effects of the and the DCC drains are clogged;

All is not well in sonar







