

Poor nation's aid-offer the rich 'can't refuse'

Aid is supposed to be something rich countries give to the poor. But Cuba, a developing country, is offering needy American students free places in a new medical school in Havana. Cuba is not just cocking a snook at Uncle Sam. By maintaining a successful health system, reports Tom Fawthrop of Gemini News Service from Havana, it is challenging global economic models.

LATIN American countries that once feared Havana as the launching pad of revolution against the oligarchies of the region are now welcoming Cuban doctors and medical missions with open arms. And if a black congressman has his way, the United States may well join the ranks of these countries.

Honduras is the latest covert. This Central American country was until recently one of the few states left that had no diplomatic ties with Cuba. All that changed after the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, and the humanitarian aid provided by 108 doctors from Cuba.

Now, a main street in the capital Tegucigalpa has been renamed 'Cuba Solidarity Street'.

But emergency aid is not enough for Havana, which is critical of short-term aid from western countries without a longer-term concern for the prevailing malnutrition and lack of access to medical care in the developing world.

With such long-term goals in mind, Cuban President Fidel Castro last year offered Spanish-speaking countries of the region a brand new medical school in Havana.

The setting up of the Latin American Medical School is part of Castro's long-cherished dream to showcase the island nation as a world medical power. It is the world's first special university campus totally dedicated to free medical scholarships for the developing world or poor students from wealthy countries.

Critics of Castro's socialist regime scoff at any such notion. The United States government and Cuban dissidents in the US claim that only foreign patients enjoy the full benefits of an economically-stressed health system, while ordinary citizens have to search on the black market for imported medicines.

Ignoring such criticism, the Cuban delegation at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York in September caused a stir by announcing that the doors of the Latin American Medical School would also be opened to poor students from the US -- a

country that has imposed crippling economic sanctions against Cuba.

As many as 250 places have been set aside for African Americans, and another 250 scholarships for members of other minorities, including Hispanics and indigenous Indians.

The school's recruitment philosophy requires that students from wealthy countries such as Brazil, Chile and the US should come from the poorest regions, where ordinary people have little or no access to affordable medical care -- especially regions with large ethnic minority populations.

Erwin Wanchafilo, a second year student in Havana from the Mapoche Indian people of Chile told Gemini News Service, "Where I come from we have no doctors at all, only one paramedic. The health situation is very bad. In Chile the privatised medicine is dominant, so Cuba is my only chance to study medicine."

In Chile you need a lot of money to study medicine," fellow-Chilean Leonardo Frotz added. The Cubans teach moral values for the medical profession that do not exist in my country. I want to go back to work for changes in our health system."

Currently the school is hosting 3,329 students from 43 ethnic groups and 20 nations.

This means having to cope with students with often widely-differing academic standards. Cuban translator Olga Perez is worried that "many students are coming from bad educational systems; some even have problems with spelling and sentence structure."

"For the first six months we have to upgrade their all-round secondary education before they even begin their medical studies."

However, Eloisa Le Riverend from Cuba's prestigious Finlay Institute, a medical research centre that discovered the Meningitis B vaccine, insists that medical standards cannot be compromised out of political solidarity. "Unless they reach the same standard as Cuban medical doctors, we cannot pass them," he says.

The health of nations

1992 - '95	doctors/ 100,000 population	nurses/ 100,000 population	Public spending on tertiary students as % of all levels of education
HIGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT			
US	245	878	25.2
SWEDEN	299	1,048	27.2
MEDIUM HUMAN DEVELOPMENT			
CUBA	518	752	14.9
MALAYSIA	43	160	25.5
LOW HUMAN DEVELOPMENT			
NEPAL	5	5	19.0
MAURITANIA	356	1,020	21.2

In the case of the US, black American Congressman Bennie Thompson from Mississippi, representing one of the poorest districts in the country, has eagerly embraced Castro's offer. Havana has further challenged Washington by offering to send a number of Cuban doctors to the state of Mississippi where doctors are in short supply.

This unprecedented offer from a poor country to provide free medical education to citizens from the world's richest nation is an embarrassing reminder to Washington that, for all its super-power wealth, 43 million US citizens still do not enjoy any health insurance, or have routine access to health-care.

And while many Cubans lack consumer goods, Castro argues that the wealth of this Caribbean nation is represented by its 66,000 doctors, its outstanding primary health care system, and its scientific achievements in coming up with new advances in vaccines, neurology, biotechnology, and other fields.

Many critics complain that while the government finances such grandiose schemes and is currently fielding some 2,000 doctors in more than 50 countries around the globe, Cubans at home lack medicines, and their hospital services survive thanks only to donations from abroad.

The health budget for this year includes 17.5 million US dollars from European and Latin American non-governmental organisations, and is supported by substantial donations of medicine and aid from international solidarity groups.

But Cubans say the costs of Havana's international health campaign is not that great in financial terms. Whereas western governments offer mostly financial aid, Cuba provides human resources from its abundant national pool of health experts and doctors.

At the new medical school, the financial burden of feeding and clothing the students over a six-year period is certainly taking a chunk out of the health budget; but as Leonardo Mauricio, and English teacher, sees it, "this is our solidarity with the people worse off than ourselves."

With even highly-skilled brain surgeons receiving only 550 pesos a month (about 26 US dollars), and schools and hospitals always short to books and equipment, critics argue that Havana cannot afford its grand solidarity campaigns.

Mauricio disagrees: "Solidarity does not mean much from a rich country -- real solidarity comes from sharing the little you have with those who have even less."

Havana has even started to approach some western government with a view to providing financial backing for future Cuban humanitarian missions.

Castro told the visiting US congressman that it would be hard for Washington to oppose the Cuban offer. "It would be a trial for them. Morally, could they refuse?"

Even if the next US president permits Mississippi students to travel to Havana for medical training, health authorities in the US could thwart the Cuban aid

plan by refusing to accept doctor's diplomas issued in Havana.

While Cuba trumpets its claim that its comprehensive free health system is much fairer than the US system, Washington points to a number of Cuban doctors who have recently defected from humanitarian missions abroad -- two from Zimbabwe and a few from Zambia, Venezuela.

The Cuban success remains an inspiration to many leaders from the developing world, who are concerned that globalisation and free markets have failed to protect the public health and education.

Cuba, operating on a shoe-string budget, has shown that this is not a fait accompli.

One country's health model, in other words, is posing a fundamental challenge to free market domination of healthcare and medicine -- and bucking the world trend in the bargain.

-- Gemini News

The empire strikes back

By A Husnain

Democracy could not as yet behave as the great leveller as proposed in theories; and the concept has to come out of the text books and attach itself to poverty lines to turn the same into seamless boundaries -- the very basic goal of the UN system. The latter is under continuing strain, a leadership and resources of the developed member states and creaking, trying to avoid the now visible crack points.

LONDON is truly turning into a Commonwealth centre, with the current residency of 40 per cent immigrants, and the Britons becoming a minority ten years hence. The micro-image is imitating the macro-image of the former glory of the British Empire, which ruled one-fifth of the world at one time; and the sun never set in the Empire. London bridge may not be falling down, but the tune is that the white population in London will be surrounded by rice and spicy curry, kabab paratha, lassi, sutki (dried fish), and noodles. Bangladeshis, settled in London, dominate the scene, with three boroughs under their control.

Nowadays when we talk so casually about the one world or the Global Village concept, we forget the background and historical role of the commonwealth concept which laid the foundation for the undercurrent culture which led to the use of the expression citizen of the world. True, the information technology revolution has now been acting as a catalyst. International business is now migrating to e-commerce, m-commerce, and Internet processing, and the pocket cellphone has condensed into a pocket telephone, computer, business, storage and entertainment centre. Man is truly free today individually, and physical migration will play a secondary role in the new millennium, as the SOHO (small office, home office) concept takes more concrete shape.

Suburban (and, subsequently, rural) living is the style of the future, when Internet, e-mail, telephone, fax, and video-conferencing will affect the global passenger transportation business. In the developing countries, urban migration is causing nightmares in cities such as Dhaka; while the labour-oriented factories are shifting to the LDCs, as the artificially maintained high materialistic standard of

living in the West is revealing signs of strain in the economy; with looming signs of marginalization, as seen in Europe, Japan, S Korea, Australia, New Zealand and others.

Isolated USA is still holding out as a super power, but this enforced imbalance cannot last long, as, to cite an analogy, water seeks its own level for stabilization, independent of time, space, location and temperature. The liquidity factor in each area or situation has to be analysed afresh with new tools of the philosophy of life, beyond the meaning attached to the term by the economists.

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London reminds us that a new global commonwealth vision has to be established for the balanced survival of the future generations, together with the will to live, amidst phensidyl, AIDS, HIVES, terrorism, lawlessness and human exploitation. The targets for the rising and declining nations may be different, but the commonality in approach is always there is sought morally. Equalization is not defeat, and the reduction of the gaps are not shameful; as the common denominators forge a greater link than the divergences pointed out at the contingency levels. After all, each human being is 99.9 per cent similar to the other seven billion souls, as per latest genetic findings inside the DNA. With a single Supreme Creator, there is hardly option left.

Newsboys and those Entertainment TV addicts

By Alan Vittachi

THE Asian financial crisis notwithstanding, Japan still boasts of the highest number of newspaper readers worldwide. And given the erratic but continuing economic rebound, the country is unlikely to relinquish that status soon.

Japanese readers snap up, daily, a staggering 72.2 million copies. Modern presses here print 121 "general interest" broadsheets or tabloids.

A new survey but the influential Nihon Shinbun Kyokai (Japanese Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association) reveals that 557 out of every thousand residents get a paper.

Most Japanese households subscribe to what is known here as "sets": morning and evening editions of the same paper -- although there's been a slight decline of "sets", subscribed to by offices and "single-person households."

In readership, the English come second with 317 copies, adds the NSK report: The Japanese Press 2000. Germans follow at 303 and Americans are at 202 copies. Thais came in with 109.

The data, in any case, tell about disparity in purchasing power. A newspaper subscription doesn't stretch Japanese budgets. But it says that for an average household in Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam or Indonesia.

Japanese per capita income in US\$32,350, the UNDP's Human Development Report 2000 says. It is US\$1,050 for a Filipino.

But there's more to that than shekels. Newspapers, after all, are not just another commodity.

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classes. But what if people can't afford to buy a newspaper? Worse, what if they don't read?

Many Asians can read -- but don't. They're dubbed "a-literates." And what if our "a-literates" prefer to watch entertainment TV?

Can a country of "a-literates", hooked on entertainment, remain so? Will they discern thoughtfully the quality of leaders they're periodically asked to cast votes for?

Japanese men, the NSK survey found, spend almost 29 minutes scanning the papers. Women read less: 23 minutes. Eight out of 10 men read daily. Seven of the women did.

Investigative reporting, by the press in Tokyo, reflects the wide

freedoms guaranteed by the Japanese constitution and laws.

Japanese papers meticulously document waste, for example, in public works contracts. Big advertisers, like Mitsubishi Motors and Snow Brand are getting their scandals of unrecalled defective cars or tainted milk, laundered in Tokyo headlines.

The press' structure also reflects Japan's global economic reach and its position at the forefront of communication technology.

Japanese papers and news agencies have 622 correspondents stationed abroad. Almost a third (206) are in Asia.

Newspapers and agencies are, meanwhile, wedging their foot into digital data broadcasting. This fusion of telecom and broadcasting starts December. This will be "the dominant infrastructure" in the decades ahead.

Some problems resemble those of other Asian countries. There's growing concern over personal data protection and reporting of public opinion polls, specially those on elections.

Irked by surveys that cut into

its political base, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party launched a "mass media monitoring system". Journalists suspect that's a bid to gag the press.

Tokyo is looking at a longer list of people an aggressive press may have trampled on: women, the elderly, the disabled, victims of "social" (i.e., ethnic) discrimination.

There's also a growing flood of complaints on invasion of privacy. The old bitter Spanish complaint -- "It is better to appear in hell than in your newspapers" -- apparently resonates in Manila and Tokyo.

Speaking through NSK, Japanese papers argue for voluntary self-regulation, and upgrading of professional standards. That's the only democratic option, NSK editorial director Motoyoshi Torii argues.

Japanese newsboys -- about 51,000 in a nationwide force of almost half a million -- are disappearing. Full time agents are moving to the forefront instead. Cyberspace papers are not far behind.

-- (DEPTnews)

Government of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Meherpur

Notice Inviting Tenders

No. 06(E/M)2000-2001

- Sealed tenders in Bangladesh Form No. 2911 are hereby invited from the valid enlisted E/M contractor/firm of PWD ABC/BC licence from Licensing Board of Bangladesh according to their financial limit for the undermentioned work & will be received by the undersigned & all the Executive Engineers under PWD Circle, Jessore upto 12-00 Noon of 15-11-2000 & will be opened on the same day at 12-15 PM in presence of the intending contractor who may like to remain present. Each tender shall be in a sealed cover with the name of work superscribed on it. The tender form will be sold upto 5-00 PM till 14-11-2000.
- Name of : Construction of Shishu Paribar of Mujibnagar Complex in the dist. of Meherpur (S.H. Internal E/I works of Dormitory Bhaban).
- Estimated : Tk. 5,52,220/- only.
- Earnest : Tk. 11,045/- only.
- The intending tenderers/firms shall have to enclose the following documents duly attested by 1st class gazetted officer with the tender failing which the tender will be summarily rejected:
 - VAT registration certificate.
 - Copy of up-to-date renewal of enlistment.
 - TIN certificate.
- Tender documents consisting of Bangladesh Form No. 2911, schedule of items, additional terms & conditions etc. can be seen & obtained from the office of the undersigned & all the Executive Engineers under PWD Circle, Jessore during the office hours.
- In case of quoting same lowest rate by more than one tenderer/firm then the lowest tenderer will be selected through lottery to be held on 27-11-2000 at 11-30 AM in the office of the undersigned.

Executive Engineer
Meherpur PWD Division
Meherpur

DFP-26303-30/10
C-1937

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Agricultural Services Innovation & Reform Project
Agriculture Extension Directorate
Khamarbari, Farmgate
Dhaka-1215

Notice for Contractual Appointment

Applications are invited from bonafide Bangladeshi nationals with the educational qualifications and experiences as mentioned against post for appointment to the undermentioned posts on purely temporary basis for contractual appointment in Soil Testing & Fertility Management Component of Agricultural Services Innovation & Reform Project (ASIRP) under Agriculture Extension Directorate.

Sl No	Name of post	Number of posts	Age	Gross salary	Duration of service	Educational qualification and experience
1.	Soil Analyst.	01 (one).	23-35 years.	Tk 10,640/-	12 months from date of appointment (duration may be extended if necessary).	MSc Ag Science/Agriculture Chemistry/MSc (Soil Science) and at least 5 (five) years practical experience in laboratory analytical work.
2.	Soil Fertility Specialist.	02 (two).	23-35 years.	Tk 10,640/-	--do--	MSc Ag Science/Agriculture Chemistry/MSc (Soil Science) and at least 5 (five) years practical experience in fertiliser recommendation as soil analysis, preparation and application and agriculture extension work.
3.	Consultant (Part-time).	01 (one).	25-40 years.	Tk 10,640/-	--do--	MSc Ag Science/Agriculture Chemistry/MSc (Soil Science) and at least 7 (seven) years practical experience in agriculture extension work.

Terms and Conditions

- Application mentioning name of candidate, father's/husband's name, permanent and present address, date of birth and age, educational qualifications and experience, nationality will have to be submitted directly by mail by 20.11.2000 to the Project Director, ASIRP, Middle Building, 3rd Floor, Room No # 401, Agriculture Extension Directorate, Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka during office hours.
- Character certificate issued by class I gazetted officer, citizenship certificate regarding permanent resident of Bangladesh from chairman of union parishad/chairman of pourashava, 2 copies of passport size attested photographs, attested copies of certificates of educational qualifications and experience will have to be enclosed with application.
- The age limit of candidate should be within the age limit as mentioned against each post on 20.11.2000.
- Quota fixed as per government regulations will be followed.
- For the candidates of freedom fighter/dependent of freedom fighter/off spring certificate signed by the chairman of the Freedom Fighters Central Command Council and certificate signed by the Chief Advisor of MuktiJoddha Sangsad will have to be enclosed with the application.
- For tribal candidates certificates from respective local government council/tribes head/chairman of union parishad will have to be enclosed.
- Candidates in service in government/semi-government establishment can apply through appropriate authority.
- The existing regulations for contractual appointment, the code of conduct regarding it and other regulations will be applicable.
- Erroneous and incomplete applications and applications received late will be considered as rejected. Original copies of certificates of educational qualifications and other certificates will have to be produced at the time of viva voce test or written test.
- No TADA will be given for appearing at the viva voce or written test.

Md Nasir Uddin Bhuiyan
Project Director
ASIRP

DFP-26213-29/10
C-1931

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer
Local Government Engineering Department
Dist: Sherpur

Memo No:- LGED/EE/SHER/2000/2368

Dated: 23-10-2000

Notice Inviting Tender

No 05/2000-2001

- The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a loan from Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) towards the cost of Rural Development Project-21: Infrastructure Greater Rangpur, Dinajpur, Mymensingh, Jamalpur districts and to apply a part of the proceeds of this loan to eligible payments.
- Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), District Sherpur invites sealed tender for the following works listed below from the pre-qualified contractors/firm under RDP-21 of LGED for the financial year 2000-2001.

Sl No	Group Code No	Name of the Schemes	Price of Tender Schedule	Work Completion Time	Eligibility of Contractor
01.	SHER/UP-Jhin/200004/2000-2001	Construction of Hatibanda Union Parishad Building under Jhainagati Upazila.	1000.00	120 days.	Pre-qualified contractors under RDP-21 (TRIDP) according to financial capacity.
02.	SHER/UP-Srib/200005/2000-2001	Construction of Singabaruna Union Parishad Building under Sribordi Upazila.	1000.00	120 days.	--Do--

- Tender documents could be purchased from the office of the (a) Divisional Commissioner, Dhaka, (b) Project Director, RDP-21, LGED Bhaban, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207, (c) Deputy Commissioner, Sherpur, (d) Deputy Project Director, RDP-21 Regional Office, Rangpur/Mymensingh, (e) Executive Engineer, LGED Districts Rangpur/Gabandha/Nilphamari/Lalmonirhat/Kurigram/Dinajpur/Thakurgaon/Panchagarh/Mymensingh/Jamalpur/Netrokona/Kishoreganj, (f) Upazila Engineer, Jhenigati/Sribordi and office of the undersigned, District Sherpur up to 14-11-2000 during office hours. Tender will be received up to 1.00 PM on 15-11-2000 and will be opened at 1.30 PM on the same day in presence of the tenderer or their authorized representative (if they are intended to be present) in the office mentioned above.
- The tender documents those are stated below and should be read in conjunction with any addenda issued in accordance with clause 12.
 - Tender Notice.
 - Instruction to tenderers.
 - Conditions of contract.
 - Contract data.
 - Specifications.
 - Tender form.
 - Bill of quantities/Activity schedule.
 - Form of agreement.
 - Drawings.
- The tender is expected to examine carefully the contents of the tender documents. Failure to comply with the requirements of tender submission will be at the tenderers own risk. Pursuant of Clause-27, tenders which are not substantially responsive to the requirements of the tender documents will be rejected.
- The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender or all tenders without assigning any reasons thereof.

Md Rezaul Karim
Executive Engineer
LGED, Sherpur.

DFP-26109-29/10
C-1929