

# Dependency development, or developing dependency

FAZLUL ALAM

OUR development strategy seems to be reasonable, only if there is a parameter for 'reasonableness'. I am not saying this in sarcasm or anything, but in earnestness at a juncture of history when 'reason' itself has been on trial for over half a century. The Third World countries are all independent now, and by the lessons of history, the post-colonial era is becoming colonial once again in explicit response to the ideology of the West that has glorified itself combining modernity aided by the technological progress.

The desire of the Third World countries to develop themselves has been well exploited by this 'West'. Since the poor is always subjugated and used by the rich, the exploitation of the Third World countries by the West has never been much difficult, except that in certain cases, it has taken longer to establish the system due to 'erroneous' influence of socialist knowledge. Nevertheless, the success was always glimpsed at the horizon. Now that the stage is clear, and only

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one scriptwriter is to decide the dialogues and actions, only the fools would waste time to write the next episode.

This reminds me of the chapter when 'slavery' was abolished with much heralded concern for human dignity, and the slave-owners were amply compensated for their 'losses'. In the House of Lords of the British Parliament, the voices, the loudest ones in favour of the abolition, were of those who had reaped greater monetary benefits with the compensation than they would by managing the slaves. The 'slaves' became freemen (or freewomen!) only to be chained and trapped as 'indentured labour' and later as the 'sub-humans' according to the theory of the Eugenics.

On a finer analysis, the colonised countries were given freedom (or they earned their 'independence')

only to be chained again in the web of the intense desire to become 'modern' like the West or the old colonial powers by any means, beg, borrow or steal.

We have been proved as 'good for nothing that can be good for us'. We have no capacity to do any goody good, no desire to learn from the West, no respect for the laws borrowed from them, and so on. But we have been awarded full marks in corruption (we need Transparency International to inform us this), quibbles (hartsals for nothing significant), inefficiency (we sleep off at the office), ignorance (we need Amnesty International about prisoner of conscience or human rights), arrogance (we argue with the West in English language), and so on. Only in some issues we are balanced. We have opened the door for dumping the rubbish of the West

and opened our shores for flushing their toilets; we spend all our foreign exchanges in obtaining luxury, outdated and outmoded designer products; we feel obliged to engage village belles for pittance to produce their garments; we encourage the bright youngsters to spend their parental fortune to learn ICT to meet the demands of the West for 'software export' (which may turn out to be transcription service at a ridiculously low rate); we create a large 'middle class' at par with those of the West even when the per capita income pushes us downward in the league table of the poorest countries, etc.

Our development strategy adds new dimensions of development almost daily, and we are expected to respond to action call for sustainability of all development works at our cost without any exist-

ing elbow space for manoeuvring the revenue budget. We have been encouraged to remain religious and even to become fundamentalist as long as this helps us to avoid 'satanic influence' of a different political faith and as long as it does not harm our relations with the West.

We are at the mercy of the West for our survival. If we do not tow the line with the West, we may be penalised.

Enough of the sad, morbid picture of ourselves; but who are these 'ourselves'? How come that a land of glory is fast becoming a site for disaster from all viewpoints? How come that the people who rose to die for the motherland have become corrupt, meek, complacent, spineless and ready to turn themselves as slaves elsewhere (even in the ME and the NICs)? Who do we blame for this?

In the post-reason era, there cannot be an answer with certainty. What we can only suppose is that there can be nothing wrong with ourselves. Only that we have been driven to this state of affairs by the turn of events, not just in Bangladesh, but worldwide. We are pawns in the global games for power, dominance, profits, selfishness and everything that are devoid of any goodwill for mankind on earth. We have been made to lose grips on solving our problems by living within our means for fear of hardship all around. Still, that could have been the right state at least for the unreasonable reason that a few would not have become stinking rich with the riches of our land depriving the rest of the population. Development strategies are definitely making us dependent for the benefit of the developers.

Maybe we are learning how to develop dependency for ourselves, and call the present strategies as Dependency Development.

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**All health information to keep you up to date**

## World of heart diseases

**Cardiovascular diseases** include acute myocardial infarction, arteriosclerosis, arterial hypertension, atherosclerosis, cardiomyopathies, cerebrovascular disease, Chagas' disease, coronary heart disease, heart failure, high blood pressure, hypertension, ischaemic heart disease, myocardial infarction, peripheral vascular disease, rheumatic heart disease, stroke, and thrombosis.

**Usual risk factors for a heart attack are** -- smoking, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, unhealthy lifestyle and diet, stress

**Diagnostic checks and tests:** There are several effective investigations and techniques for heart disease. The most common are:

Physical examination -- pulse, blood pressure, listening your heart, looking for any swelling and checking the veins in your neck.

Blood test -- usually to check for anaemia and kidney problems, which are related to heart disease.

X-ray chest -- though very simple but can provide lot of useful information (both heart and lung)

ECG -- Instrument used for recording the electrical currents produced by the heart muscle during various phases of contraction.

Echocardiogram -- This is much the same as the ultrasound scans used to check during pregnancy in women. This is helpful as the doctor can observe the heart beating and check different areas of heart problems.

Exercise test -- helps out the doctors to decide how well the heart manages with exercise.

Cardiac catheterisation -- This is to determine the rate of blood flow in the pulmonary artery and the aorta.

Angiocardiograph -- also known as cinefluorocopy.

**Did you know**  
Sitting puts 40 percent more pressure on the disks of lower spine than standing?

**Next: It's about DNA**

# Privacy fear continues

SAGAR CHAUDHURY

GROWING numbers of people in Britain, in both the public and the private sectors, are beginning to have the uneasy feeling that the Government seems to be bent upon waging war on the right to privacy of the country's citizens and residents. First, there was the proposed expansion of the controversial Regulation of Investigative Powers Act which generated so much indignation and protest among people from all walks of life that the Government was forced to beat a hasty retreat. That was followed by the revelation that although the Government had shelved plans for the so-called 'Snoopers Charter', albeit for the time being, a number of official bodies like the police, the security services, Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise are already engaged in systematically spying on the e-mails and telephone conversations of thousands of people without their knowledge. In the wake of these revelations, now come the Home Secretary David Blunket's latest plans for introducing a 'universal Identity Card scheme for everybody lawfully resident in Britain.' Mr Blunket believes that the proposed identity cards -- which, when introduced, may be called 'entitlement cards' -- could play a crucial role in the fight against illegal immigration as a practical deterrent to the black economy that acts as a powerful magnet for bogus asylum seekers. Introduction of these cards will also reduce welfare benefits fraud costing the country billions of pounds every year. Speaking on the issue, the Home Secretary said: "We need to look at how entitlement cards could help tackle illegal working which defrauds all of us who pay taxes and which is a major pull factor to the trafficking gangs

encouraging people to risk life and limb every night hanging on to trains getting into Britain."

The new ID card may be a 'supersmart card' containing detailed information about the holder including a photograph and other 'biometric' security features like fingerprints, iris scans and 'facial recognition technology' which measures the facial features of an adult that do not alter during a person's lifetime, such as the distance between the eyes, and can be scanned from a photograph. This card could replace a variety of documents currently in use in the UK, like driving licences, National Insurance numbercards, NHS (National Health Service) numbers, eventually passports as well.

And public support for some kind of national ID card has been indeed growing since the September 11 terror attacks in New York. But opposition to the idea among various cross-sections of people, including both Tory MPs and Labour backbenchers as well as civil liberties groups, is also quite strong. One of the initial arguments against the ID card scheme is that its introduction could mean huge rises in the costs of passports and driving licences. Each costs around £30 currently, but introducing the advanced 'smart cards' could push this amount to around £70 to help meet the massive expenses of the scheme -- at a rough estimate, up to £3 billion -- and to provide cards for people with low incomes or on

additional jails -- one in South-West London and another in Lincolnshire in Eastern England. But the Home Secretary himself is doubtful that building new jails will solve the problem. "We have had an increase from 40,000 to 71,000 over the last seven years in the number of prison places," he told an international crime conference held in London recently, "and a fat lot of use it has been in reducing crime and disorder."

**Dubious honours**  
KUTUBUDDIN Shikdar, hailing from Bangladesh, is a qualified Muslim cleric and also a practising barrister who opened a place of worship for fellow believers called the Bow Central Mosque in East London in 1998. The building, a leasehold property, which houses the mosque used to be a pub and a lot of money was needed for its refurbishment. So Shikdar urged worshippers to make donations towards this purpose and soon around £75,000 was raised. After the refurbishment was complete, he informed the worshippers that a clause in the lease of the property would allow them to purchase its freehold from its "non-Muslim owners" for the price of £430,000. He devised a plan whereby the worshippers would be able to buy "prayer plots" for the price of £300 each in order to raise this huge sum. Some of the worshippers, however, were suspicious and decided to check the ownership and the market value of the property. To their utter shock and dismay, they found that the real owner of the property was none other than Shikdar himself, and a valuation of the property done through independent surveyors also revealed that it was worth no more than one-fourth of the amount claimed by Shikdar. This naturally caused a huge uproar among the Muslim community of East London and a 50-member strong body called the Bow Central Mosque Action Committee (BCMAC) was set up to try to reclaim the mosque from Shikdar. Their efforts are yet to bear fruit while Shikdar denies all allegations against him, claiming that he is the victim of a "character assassination" plot hatched by people who are jealous of his success. Meanwhile, the outrage of the mosque-goers and the BCMAC has been further compounded by the fact that Kutubuddin Shikdar has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list this year for "services rendered to the Muslim community." Angry locals in the Bow area, however, claim that in reality Shikdar has "done a disservice to the very people he is meant to have served." A Government spokesperson, while declining to comment on Shikdar, said that when individuals are nominated for the award, research is conducted to ascertain their eligibility before the Prime Minister recommends them. But the BCMAC is "appalled at the poor quality of the research" done by Government officials before recommending the award for Shikdar.

and friends are proud of him for refusing the MBE. Said one of them: "He (John) is an activist and a musician who cannot be bought off."

## LONDON LETTER

Moreover, the ID card will also play an important role in preventing 'identity theft', safeguarding people against criminals stealing their personal details to open false bank accounts for money laundering or to obtain goods without their knowledge. The Home Office has, however, made it clear that it is not in favour of a system whereby people will be required to carry their cards at all times. But, while the new ID card may not be strictly compulsory in this sense, it will be so in practice because everyone seeking to gain access to benefits such as medical care, education and social security will have to present it before the relevant services or departments.

So far, Mr Blunket's proposal seems a good, even obvious, idea. Identity cards would surely be the answer to all kinds of unlawful activities and undesirable scams.

benefits at a discount. The Chancellor Mr Gordon Brown has already refused to spend taxpayers' cash on the ID scheme; therefore, people who do not belong to the low income category and thus cannot claim income support or other benefits -- that is, people belonging to the middle to upper middle classes -- will have to bear the brunt of the total cost of the scheme if they wish to own cars or require passports.

Civil liberties campaigners and MPs launched an attack on the proposal as soon as the Home Secretary revealed it. The director of one campaign group said: "This plan exposes the fact that the Government does not trust its citizens..."

It wants 60 million of us to register our identity so it can .... decide whether we are entitled to the ser-

vice we have already paid our taxes for." A veteran Labour MP, who is a member of the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, has expressed the fear that it might eventually be made compulsory to carry the cards -- a move which would "antagonise law-abiding citizens" and hoped public outcry would sink the plan. "If the Government insists," he said, "it will carry the day but I think there will be quite a lot of opposition from all parties." A minister in the last Tory Government led by John Major said that the idea of ID cards "has been hawked round Whitehall for years" but it was rejected in the mid-90s because of technological as well as civil rights problems. Speaking of his (former) Government's stand on

**Overcrowding in prisons**

THE Labour Government's 1997 pledge to be 'tough on crime, tough on causes of crime' is proving to be 'tougher' on jails all over the country. In fact, Home Office sources admit that the prison system has reached near breaking point as jails have become so overcrowded, with prison population soaring to an all-time high of 71,480, that inmates are being shifted to cells in police stations. But housing convicts in police cells means that police officers are likely to be taken off their normal crime prevention duties at a time when street crime is rising and also means that prisoners will have no access to activities and programmes designed to stop them re-offending after their release.

This emergency use of police cells as 'overflow' jails has triggered criticism from many quarters. A spokesperson for the Prison Reform Trust said: "This shows the prison system at an absolute crisis." A Tory Home Affairs spokesperson accused the Home Office of being "ostriches with their heads in the sand" who have failed to plan adequately for a soaring prison population. "They have clearly been deceived by their own rhetoric into thinking," he said, "they are bringing crime under control." Cherie Blair (née Booth), wife of prime Minister Tony Blair, has also called for fewer offenders to be sent to prison, adding that there were too many people in jail, particularly on short sentences. Mrs Blair, a successful human rights lawyer highly rated by her fellow professionals, has been known more than once in the past to take a stand against the decisions and policies of the Government led by her husband. Her latest remarks about overcrowding in British prisons, which she made in the Longford Lecture -- a series of lectures named after the late prison reformer Lord Longford -- has put her once more at the centre of the growing political controversy over rising crime. The basis of Mrs Blair's opinion is research she recently carried out in a number of jails in London and Liverpool together with staff from the Prison Reform Trust. Speaking at the lecture, she said that the key to beating crime "lies in developing a broader human rights culture based on compassion, understanding and respect," adding: "We need to tackle the vulnerabilities that lead people to commit crimes."

Meanwhile, in a desperate attempt to stem the crisis the Prison Service is planning to provide 2,320 extra jail spaces by May next year by erecting prefabricated cell blocks at existing sites and by building two

additional jails -- one in South-West London and another in Lincolnshire in Eastern England. But the Home Secretary himself is doubtful that building new jails will solve the problem. "We have had an increase from 40,000 to 71,000 over the last seven years in the number of prison places," he told an international crime conference held in London recently, "and a fat lot of use it has been in reducing crime and disorder."

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