

ADP fund utilisation  
chaos

Call it a resource wasting plan!

WITH almost religious regularity, annual development programmes (ADPs) are shot in their feet. They have been non-starters in most parts and almost invariably very poor finishers. The way their anomalies and contradictions are coming to light, both through official and unofficial analytical studies, leaves us wondering whether an ADP is a development blueprint or an engine of wasting scarce resources.

The parliamentary standing committee on planning ministry has confirmed some long held impressions among experts. Scrutinising the spending pattern of the ADP, FY 2003-04 it has found out that the last quarter of a financial year is marked by a flurry of development activism. As many as 23 ministries spent 40-77 percent of their respective allocations in the last quarter, the remainder being thinly distributed over the previous nine months of a year. Such delayed and concentric expenditure of money in bulk over an unwieldy set of projects can only open the door to corruption and misuse of funds. The quality of projects is suspect and while financial targets may have been shown as implemented, physical targets are far from fulfilled.

What is also tragic is that as many as 11 ministries failed to utilise 29 to 79 percent of their allocations.

The misuse of funds and their non-utilisation make a sad commentary on the state of affairs we have allowed to continue by way of ADP mismanagement. The procedures remain, or shall we say are kept, cluttered. As for the hectic pace of utilisation in the last quarter, the planning ministry's explanation is a study in deliberate nonchalance. The funds were not released in the first quarter and the second quarter was taken up by preparatory process leaving the last three years for the mad horse of project spendings to gallop. An interesting footnote to the strange tale is this: Since the bills got paid in the last quarter development activism perforce heavily concentrated in that period! Is this a plan?

We have so far known political influence-peddling behind project selection and siting, revision of projects, complicated procurement procedures, slow pace of donor fund release to be reasons for under implementation of ADPs. But now it seems that there are organic deficiencies, rather fundamental structural drawbacks. The ministries hardly have any implementation machinery and the planning ministry's supervision has been sloppy. We can suggest two anti-dotes: first, the procedures will have to be streamlined across the board by a task force of planners and experts. Secondly, each ministry should have a designated implementation apparatus. Thirdly, the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the planning commission which currently supervises 10 percent of the total number of projects should be well-manned and activated so as to monitor and evaluate the whole lot of projects on an ADP.

## Violence against children

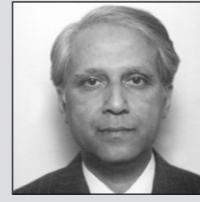
Are we doing enough to protect them?

THE statistics revealed by Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum last week, just ahead of the Child Rights Week being observed nationally, is both sad and shocking to say the least. It states that in the first six months of this year, 166 children were killed and -- this is even more deplorable -- almost an equal number of children, 163 to be precise, were raped. That's not all, 18 more children were killed after being raped. What on earth is happening to us? Such appalling revelation makes us wonder where exactly are we heading as a nation? Is this what a civil, independent nation wants to hear after so many years of being liberated?

We certainly hope not, but the most crucial question that is being posed to us right now is -- should we accept it as the sad and cruel part of reality? Let's analyse the probabilities. It is by now certain that lack of good governance and accountability in the police force have put the lives of the most vulnerable members of the society into grave risk. Otherwise how could so many innocent children become victims of such brutal and heinous acts of violence? Secondly, it only reflects the diabolical mindset of those who commit such unpardonable crimes. And ultimately failure to catch the criminals and lack of accountability in that has only contributed in the increasing rate of such mindless acts.

Those working to ensure child rights in the country have already raised alarm that the level of violence against children has been awfully rising of late. There are laws to protect them, and very strict ones at that, but whether that are being able to keep the children safe is a question that needs serious attention. Speakers and activists would give eloquent speeches at various functions organised to observe Child Rights Week, but the children want assurance of their safety. Can they provide that? We always say that children are the future of a nation; nurturing and protecting them should be our prime concern for a better and prosperous future. But are we doing enough to perform our duty?

## Meeting challenges within the RMG industry



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

competition in quota free markets, but then measures can be taken to expand our presence in non-quota items. We have to evolve and implement strategies that will not only reduce the impact but will also take us forward. This has to be done in a bi-partisan spirit, not only between different political parties but also between those in the textile, RMG and knitwear industries. In this fight for survival, there also has to be cooperation between the employers and those employed.

I believe that our RMG industry

productivity is still way behind their colleagues in Malaysia, Hong Kong and according to some experts even Mexico. Bangladeshi workers, according to a report published recently, 'take longer time to complete stitching a basic shirt.' The suitable remedial measure might be to give appropriate training to the floor workers and their supervisors. We already employ a large number of expatriates in the middle management categories. However, the training that is being provided through supervision and counsel-

will allow the boat to cross the turbulent sea ahead.

Similarly, the cost reduction effort will have to move faster on the issue of infrastructures. We have been talking about it a lot. However, there still remains substantive areas which need focused improvement, particularly after the recent disastrous floods. Road, river and air transports, residual development of the Chittagong Port, power supply matrix and information and communication technologies are still far from satisfactory.

fees paid to middlemen. Some consultants have also pointed out that cost could also be reduced through maintenance of smaller inventories.

In this context, it would be worthwhile to note that although some effort has been undertaken to gain control of the marketing mechanism, yet a lot of profit is lost by the industry due to intermediary intervention. We need to overcome this by building up our own marketing capabilities.

The onus for this largely rests

ments, with their own personnel (including interpreters) and necessary communication facilities, need to be set up urgently by the different associations to deal with this question more professionally.

This initiative will ensure 'extension' of market diversification. However, at the same time, on the second track, there will also have to be coordinated and serious efforts geared towards product diversification strategy. We have to try to move from just basic shirts to higher end items like jackets, suits and ladies top coats. This will not be an easy task as it will involve keeping up with latest trends in fashion design. Nevertheless, if India, Indonesia and Turkey can slowly graduate into higher categories, so can we. It will mean having more fashion institutes and consultants. I am sure that the EU will be more than happy to assist in this regard. It will involve market research, design development and keeping up with the latest regulations, but that is exactly what the association display centres can do.

One cannot however conclude without referring also to the significant factor of good governance, without which all efforts are bound to suffer. This not only means reducing the cost of doing business but also more efficient and speedy implementation of decision-making through e-governance. We must not forget that the RMG industry has sustained itself largely through the initiative of the private sector. The government needs to understand that this industry is changing the lives of millions of families.

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Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

## POST BREAKFAST

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can stay afloat if we take the following proactive measures aimed at not only making our products more price competitive but also improving our forward linkages. We will also have to go beyond our current production orientation of just CMT. Such a strategy will involve the following:

Both in the USA as well as in the EU, the price factor will determine our presence. We have to trim our low prices even further. This can be achieved partially by reducing costs, not only in the marginal area of CMT operations but also in overhead components like expenditure on administration, transportation, port management and reduction of lead time.

A key element will be labour productivity. Over the years Bangladeshi RMG workers have enhanced their skills, but their

ling is mostly informal and not institutional in character. The government or even the private sector needs to formalise this through the establishment of training institutes where the latest principles of CMT operations and craftsmanship can be demonstrated.

The aspect of labour productivity should also include further training of workers involved in the backward linkage mechanism of the industry. I am referring here to those associated in the spinning and weaving mills and in the dyeing and processing units at the time of manufacturing fabric. In this regard, it would be useful to take hints from China and Thailand. This improvement of labour productivity will also have to focus on better training and efficiency for the management staff. Having the right kind of helmsmen

with the private sector. The government can also be a facilitator Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, like their counterparts in South Korea, India and Malaysia, should try through their respective commodity associations, to open up display centres of their products all over the USA, the expanded EU, in the Far East and South East Asia, Japan, the second largest economy, needs to be focussed upon particularly. Consumers must know that we produce.

Criticism also holds true with regard to poor turn-arounds in cargo clearance at Chittagong Port arising out of congestion, poor administration and customs management. Unfortunately, these factors have consequential effect on FOB prices. It is vital that automation and use of computer management is expanded to improve efficiency. We must take lessons from Singapore and Hong Kong.

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I know that most of our Diplomatic Missions are supposed to have display centres of our exportable products. However, the quality and range of products displayed there are far from satisfactory. This is partially because of space constraint within the mission and also because of resource constraint. Separate establish-

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The inefficient use of container

transportation by railway is adding cost on to products because of the associated long queues. This management of carrying capacity has to be improved drastically given the anticipated rise in potential value.

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found with regard to increased cost resulting out of avoidable interest charges, bank commissions and

democracy being a prerequisite for permanent membership of the UNSC. The USSR was never a democracy. The USSR's democracy looks more like a dictatorship. China has never been nor is currently a democracy.

Let us not forget that for over twenty years until 1971, the tiny dictatorship of Taiwan (Formosa) was a permanent member of UN Security Council representing China. The exercising of the veto in the United Nations Security Council is inherently an anti-democratic process.

We have repeatedly seen the permanent members abuse this privilege to help themselves and their friends. Their behaviour is not going to improve; in fact, it is getting worse and more blatantly partisan.

Ideally, the veto should be abolished in the UNSC and a two-thirds majority of the nations in the

General Assembly should be necessary for binding resolutions.

## Muslim nations must demand a veto in the UNSC

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

A NOTHER catastrophe is about to befall the Muslims of the world and no Muslim nation seems to realise it. Muslims certainly are not doing anything about it. With much fanfare Japan, Germany, India and Brazil have kicked off their campaign for the veto-wielding permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Only India's candidature makes sense. No Muslim country has applied. Since Muslims have not applied, the UN is not going to offer them the veto power on a silver platter. Such life and death issues are too complicated for the comprehension of the permanently-asleep so-called Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) representing the world's permanently "sleeping giant" (Muslims). The IOC is blissfully unaware of the disastrous consequence the veto-expansion in the UN Security Council will have on the world's Muslims!

Four Muslim countries should have applied and would have been excellent candidates: Indonesia, Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan. All four have the advantage of being traditional US allies, and would presumably have the US's blessing. Indonesia, a burgeoning democracy, which recently had a change of government through elections, is the world's most populous Muslim nation (220 million), with a population four-times that of permanent UNSC members Russia, Britain or France. Astalwart member of NATO and a democracy, Turkey has been a staunch ally of the US through thick and thin. Egypt is America's favourite Arab

country which receives over 2 billion dollar of US aid annually. Egypt has the additional advantage of being located in Africa, a continent that is not represented among the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. All the current permanent members of the UNSC belong to the nuclear club. If that is a criterion, Pakistan qualifies. As permanent members, India and Pakistan can fight over Kashmir with vetoes in the UNSC.

members of the UN Security Council: the US, the UK, France, Russia and China. Four of the five represent predominantly Christian nations; China represents Buddhist/Confucian nations. The US, UK and France have always promoted the interests of the Jews and Israel. Russia (and increasingly the US, UK and France as well) has always promoted the interests of India, in Kashmir and elsewhere.

sanctions against Israel. Iraq did not even receive compensation for the Israeli aggression. When Iraq committed aggression against Kuwait in 1990, not only were the Iraqis driven out of Kuwait by a coalition, UNSC enacted punitive sanctions that lasted over twelve years and destroyed the country's infrastructure, and resulted in the deaths of millions of Iraqi civilian men, women and children, according to UN's own reports. It is

dhists/Confucians (China and Japan) and one (India) will represent the Hindus. Israel will then be backed by seven nations -- the US, the UK, France, India, Japan, Brazil and Germany. Once again, the world's second largest religious block, the Muslims, will be shut out of the backing of a single veto-exercising member of the UNSC. What astonishes the writer is that the Muslim world is so naïve and dumb about it! They are so

Nations Security Council is inherently an anti-democratic process. We have repeatedly seen the permanent members abuse this privilege to help themselves and their friends. Their behaviour is not going to improve; in fact, it is getting worse and more blatantly partisan. Ideally, the veto should be abolished in the UNSC and a two-thirds majority of the nations in the General Assembly should be necessary for binding resolutions. If the undemocratic veto is to exist at all in the United Nations Security Council, it should be exercised by four nations representing the world's four major religions: the US (Christianity), Indonesia, Turkey, Egypt or Pakistan (Muslims), China (Buddhists/Confucian) and India (Hindus). If the Muslims do not get a UNSC veto, after they suffer many more crippling and unjust sanctions at the hands of the UNSC, one day they will have to leave the UN. Action now by Muslim nations will save them much grief later.

meek and accepting of the punishment coming their way! They are too afraid to demand a share of the UNSC power that should be theirs for the asking because of the 1.3 billion Muslims they represent. Currently, three permanent UNSC members back; none back the Muslims. If the four new applicants are successful, seven permanent members of the UNSC will support Israel; none will support the Muslims. The world's 16 million Jews will have the backing of the seven permanent UNSC members, and the world's 1.3 billion Muslims will have none! If these facts do not get the attention of the world's Muslims, nothing will!

Let us not hear the bull about

Notice that none of the five permanent members ever protected the interest of the people representing the world's second largest religion, the Muslims. No wonder that 90 percent of the punitive UN sanctions are against Muslim nations, whereas, there are no punitive UN sanctions against the number one violator of UN resolutions, Israel!

United Nations Security Council sanctions have always been selective, and generally against the Muslims. When Israeli planes bombed and destroyed Iraq's nuclear facilities stealthily without declaring war in 1981, violating Jordan's air space in the process, the UNSC enacted no punitive

therefore no surprise that while Muslim Iran is being threatened with UN sanctions if it pursues the nuclear option, no questions are being asked of Jewish Israel for doing the same. When President Clinton came to the aid of the Bosnian Muslims (1995) and the Kosovar Muslims (1999) facing annihilation by the Serbs, he had to bypass UNSC because of the certain vetoes by Russia, the Serbs' ally.

What happens if the four new candidates do become permanent members? Out of nine permanent members, six will represent the Christians (the US, the UK, France, Russia, Brazil, Germany), two will represent the Bud-

the big rogue nations? Like the earlier League of Nations after the first world war (1914-18), the life-span of UN is ebbing away, drop by drop since the first Iraq war. Its impotency is pathetic to watch. It has its own Security Council, but its definition and modalities are warped. Why the smaller members should continue to be the asking for the UN is valid. The UN's democracy looks more like a dictatorship. China has never been nor is currently a democracy.

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attack

I very strongly condemn the heinous grenade attack on an AL rally on 21-8-04 that killed 19 people including AL leader Ily Raham and injured over 200 others. The motive of this attack was to assassinate Sheikh Hasina. Those who do not recognise Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign country, want to make Bangladesh a vassal state of outside powers and want to project Bangladesh internationally as a failed country must be behind this ghastly attack. They are the enemies of the country. So not only democracy but also the existence of Bangladesh is at stake.

Time is fast running out. Therefore, I humbly request both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina to work together and unite the 140 million people of Bangladesh irrespective of party affiliation as one nation like that of 1971 and wipe out the enemies from the soil of Bangladesh.

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Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

## Beslan tragedy

Hostage-taking is increasing, specially in the war-scarred areas. The latest Beslan tragedy is a case in point. The whole world became numbed with horror when an extremist group took more than a thousand people, mostly children, hostage for pressing home their demands. The innocent children in that school of Beslan were the victims of this barbaric act.

The world must find a way out of this.

## ABM Shafiqul Islam

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## Kundan Lal, Saigal

Under the heading 'ALL-TIME GREATS', the 'Cultural Correspondent' wrote in The Daily Star of July 21, 200