

Organisation for rural development

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RURAL development has become the fundamental objective before us, particularly in developing countries, as without it we cannot make any headway towards progress. Progress, according to third world countries, means fundamental change in the outlook towards life.

Change in outlook can only be effected when transformation of our rural society takes place through active pursuance of development programmes. Without giving a new look to rural economy, we cannot achieve any worthwhile progress. In fact, in developing societies, it is the village which sustains national economy.

Each activity for development has its own requirements with respect to type of organisation and administration. Different blends of authoritative and facilitative administration are needed by each. Variation of styles of administration to meet these various needs are seldom adequately recognised and honoured for the welfare of the society.

In general, a predominance of facilitative organisation and administration favours greater participation by field personnel of individual or unified programme components as well as by rural people. We can say that the style of organisation, administration and feasible types of programme coordination are intimately interdependent. The more facilitative the structure of organisation and administration the more feasible and effective coordination by consultation can be.

Basically, rural development requires formulation of policies and their implementation and that is hardly possible if a nation does not have efficient and strong organisational set-up. In a society with a loosely knit social fabric the task in hand becomes very hard. We need to remember that the success of any plan depends on having well-knit efficient organisations at different tiers of national life.

All developing nations are seized with developmental activities and engaged in a bid to give a new shape to the rural economy. It needs sound organisation in which people can feel a sense of participation. Creating that sense of participation is vital along with setting up and development of an organisation. A strong organisation is the main criteria for development. Efficient and sound organisation can deliver goods to the people at various levels. Institutions ought to be developed to intervene, lead, guide and assist the rural population in this

behalf.

In rural development people are beset with problems -- poverty, ill-health, illiteracy, insufficient housing etc. The programme of rural development should contain the principles of organisation of self-help for the rural population, coordination of the various rural social services organisations, utilisation of all available resources -- men and materials etc -- to the fullest extent for all-round rural welfare. The people should be organised from the bottom to achieve self-reliance.

Building a sound organisational and administrative structure is a painstaking job. The organisations that operate in different tiers of the society should be so developed and strengthened that it can catch the imagination of the

work through the links to the bottom, not because the links are inadequately specified but because they do not tend to behave as links. The existence of a gap between the "leaders/officials" and the led in developing societies cannot be overlooked.

This is a situation which needs to be taken into account for any programme of rural development. The sooner the gap between "leaders/officials" and the led is narrowed, and a spirit of active long-term cooperation between them is aroused, the better and more encouraging would be the picture of the rural areas.

Bangladesh has gone through various phases of political transition during the last four decades. The rural,

are the same as they had been before.

The principle objective of rural development should be the creation of a spirit of self-discipline and organisation, self-help and self-reliance, sacrifices and social services amongst the masses. What is lacking in our country is a systematic procedure for operation of the programmes, compilation analysis, documentation, decision evaluation and monitoring etc. Accordingly, we need a working method, a procedure for bringing all the existing know-how to bear upon formulating a rural development programme.

What is needed is a comprehensive approach to rural development, which will incorporate various components dealing with different aspects of rural well being, and for coordinating the planning and implementation. So, a planning and monitoring unit should be created. It should be manned by the economic cadre officials at upazila level to formulate policies/programmes/projects as well as monitor the development works at grass root level.

The spurt in developmental activities can come only when people are organisationally mobilised at grass-root level through people-oriented administration. Development cannot be imposed from above. It is indigenous to each society and builds primarily on its own resources. The ongoing rural development projects should draw lessons and concentrate on institution building rather than on other project related activities. The people's participation has to be an essential ingredient in such effort. All such efforts have to be integrated into the changed indigenous system and should be accepted by the same.

Rural development will not take place without fundamental changes in the present approach to development as well as administration and government activities. An attempt has to be made to organising the rural people (villagers), and make them more responsive to their needs and conscious about their capabilities.

There is no doubt that a rethinking is necessary about the role and responsibilities of the existing local organisation/local government bodies if they are to play an effective role in rural development. Besides, new thought has also to be given to the present administrative structure and governmental system, which require changes in their perception and outlook, responsibilities and present role in rural development.

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masses. It means that the organisations shall have to work in close cooperation with different units and the people.

In fact the people/masses associated with them shall have to work as dedicated organisers, keeping the interest of the people uppermost. An effective organiser is he who can understand the people be able to go deep into their problems, that is, their hopes and aspirations, and tries to solve them through his personal as well as organisational improvement. Here, decentralisation of administration is absolutely necessary to fulfil the ultimate objective of rural development.

It has been repeatedly confirmed that administration from top does not

social and political institutions also underwent the same transformation, because with the political changes the past ideas of approach towards rural development programmes also changed.

The present inherited colonial organisation and administrative tiers failed to achieve meaningful rural development objectives, and it is impossible to implement future rural development programmes with the same structure. Administrative reform is need of the hour to change the lot of the rural population. Non-government organisations have been working to change the lot of the rural people since independence, but the rural problems

ADP cut

Poor implementation the Achilles' heels

IT is a sad commentary on the efficiency of the state machineries, particularly those that are involved in implementing the development projects that nearly 10 percent of the total ADP outlay may have to be slashed because of failure to implement the projects. We understand that the cut will be made from the foreign component of the allocation. And this despite the fact that the Prime Minister had advised the relevant ministries at the very beginning of the financial year to do everything necessary for quicker implementation of projects.

This holds an unsettling prediction of the future of the current fiscal's ADP - one is not sure how much of the annual development project will ultimately get implemented by the end of the current fiscal year. The cut is all the more undesirable when one considers the success of the last fiscal's annual development programmes where more than 90 percent of the plan was implemented, although a third of the expenditure was made in the very last month.

The ADP is increasingly driven by local funds, which is as it should be; and as the statistics illustrate, use of local funds have increased by 44 percent as compared to last year. One of the reasons perhaps has to do with the fact that the development partners' attaching more and more conditions to loans. If there has been 23 percent decline in the utilisation of foreign funds we must evaluate whether that was due donor conditionality alone. Very interestingly, whereas the government is contemplating cutting around 20 percent of the foreign funds, there is demand for an extra 6000 crore, that different ministries want but from local source only, and which the government has declined to provide.

There are several things that the planning ministry must clarify. Given that by the end of the first half of the current fiscal year only 27 percent of the plan has been implemented, can the plan be accomplished, even as altered?

Very interesting too is the fact that 80 percent of the ADP layout is meant for procurement only, and it is, therefore, difficult to rationalise the shortfall when the government has brought in changes in public purchase procedures to make procurement easier despite the criticism it had to face, given the propensity to corruption and proclivity to favour party men in awarding contracts

Given that at every ECNEC meeting the PM reviews the progress of ADP implementation of various ministries, the state of implementation should have been better. In this regard we feel that the Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation Division (IMED) of the Planning Ministry should be revitalised and that project directors of the ministries be accorded more financial powers along with setting up and strengthening of the implementation cells in the relevant ministries. We also notice a tendency to rush to complete projects at the very fag end of the financial year. For example, in the last fiscal the government implemented 32 per cent of the ADP in the very last month. The rush to finish inevitably results in unnecessary wastage of resources and poor quality of work. This must be curbed.

BRTA's special school bus service

Dependability is the issue

THE Bangladesh Road Transport Authority's (BRTA) special school bus service is a welcome initiative, if embryonic at this stage. In a city where the severe traffic congestion causes not only delays but also exasperation and stress, a project to ease the plight of school going commuters is encouraging. However, its success will depend on cooperation from both the authorities and the users.

The authorities have to expand the project, providing more vehicles (already in the pipeline), increasing routes and running the service smoothly and in a manner that is most beneficial for passengers. While delays due to traffic are beyond anyone's control, more vehicles will mean fewer stops and thus fewer delays. Security is a key concern. While guardians may initially be accompanying their wards, the buses are for transporting children and the ultimate responsibility for their safety will lie with the authorities who must ensure it. This includes the barring of anyone except for the schoolchildren and, for now, their guardians, from boarding the buses. Some are currently going half empty due to lack of awareness about the service, but this will hopefully change and the precedent of not taking on board outsiders should be set now. Finally, greater awareness about the service must be created through media and other campaigns. Not only do guardians have to know about the initiative, but they also need to be motivated.

From the passengers' perspective, a common concern is that those who own cars will not send their children to school by bus. Many of those who used the service on the first day were, in fact, public transport users. This defeats the purpose of the project, which is to reduce the number of cars plying the streets. This realisation must dawn upon guardians. Everyone has a role to play in reducing the city's traffic. For children, there is the added incentive of going to school in the company of their peers and making new friends. The authorities have set the wheels rolling; maintenance and improvements are expected to follow. It is now up to the people to make the best use of the service -- once they are convinced about its efficiency and safety.

A sudden policy shift

M.J. AKBAR

THE British Raj was the high noon of bureaucracy. The British sepoys might have won the day from Plassey to Seringapatnam and Alwaye, but it was the pre-1857 "writer" and post-1857 Indian Civil Service Sahib who converted a day into two centuries. No army can preserve victory; that is the responsibility of the civilian servant of the state.

Every empire becomes a fiefdom of the bureaucracy. The qatibs, or scribes (equivalent to the writers who are remembered in Calcutta's seat of government, Writers' Building), were so powerful that they successfully resisted the new technology called printing for fear that it would replace their work. The price was eventually paid by Ottoman society, for it could not benefit from the information revolution wrought by the printing press. Nearby Europe used printing to disseminate knowledge down the class stratifications, generating the industrial revolution that made Europe master of the world by the 19th century.

A bureaucracy prefers a single source of authority, and unfettered freedom to create and implement policy in the name of that authority. Bureaucrats constituted the Viceroy's Council when the British Raj had unchallenged power. There are rules of course, and a good officer is scrupulous in adherence because confusion is anathema to his profession. This is where democracy becomes a bit of a problem.

Democracy devised a check: policy was the prerogative of the elected. The

bureaucrat had responsibility without the power to offer or devise a solution. He could take his revenge through deviation, delay or prevarication but he could not supersede the minister. Nor could the minister behave like an autocrat. There is always accountability, internal and external. Policy in theory travels from minister to cabinet; and cabinet is a discordant chorus rather than an inspiring solo.

What do we make of, then, a bureaucrat being nominated to announce a major policy shift in one of the most sensitive problems facing the Indian state, Kashmir? On Friday it was Home

Kashmir, was not informed that such a proposition was on the verge of implementation.

Normally, such an important swivel should have been announced by Home Minister P.C. Chidambaram, or even Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. There is only reason why they did not. They were using Pillai to test the waters of public and political opinion before the ship of state could be turned towards a different direction.

There is only question to ask, and it surely must be wandering through General Singh's thoughts: have the twin threats of terrorism, much of it

If the new policy towards Pakistan is being floated on the fiction of possible peace, or even as a diversionary tactic, it will extract a terrible price on UPA if another Mumbai or Kargil happens.

Secretary G.K. Pillai who told a seminar, to which media had been invited, that government plans to cut paramilitary forces in the valley by 25% in one year, and offer unilaterally multiple-entry, six-month travel permits (not Indian passports, but specially designed permits that might leave the nationality question vague) to Kashmiris to cross the Line of Control into Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

This in effect allows anyone in Kashmir to go to Pakistan since there will be no restrictions by Pakistan on further movement. The army chief, General V.K. Singh, who is the principal effective guarantor of security in

Pakistan-funded and inspired, and intrusions by elements of the Pak army reduced by 25%? Other questions emerge from this. What evidence do we have of any change in Pakistan's covert policies towards India?

Relations, bolstered by back-channel talks, between India and Pakistan were improving until the terrorist attack on Mumbai. Delhi demanded that the sponsors of this terrible carnage, sitting pretty in Lahore, be held to account. Pakistan snubbed the thought. It has done nothing.

Should we conclude, therefore, that the UPA government has decided to forget Mumbai and resume the pre-

Mumbai equation with Pakistan? The UPA may be entirely rational in conceding defeat in the stand-off against Islamabad, but confession and clarity before the Indian people would help.

Or is this the start of an effort to change the primary subject of national discourse from corruption and food-price inflation? Rising prices, particularly when coupled with unemployment, are the most serious danger that any government can face. Even Arab dictators and monarchs are discovering that the people might learn to live with autocracy but they will not tolerate a government that cannot guarantee price security of essential food. In our country, anger against corruption has been supplemented by rage against the tyranny of onion prices.

The bureaucratic British Raj began by provoking a terrible famine in Bengal, between 1765 and 1770, that is estimated to have taken the lives of one-third of the population. The British left in 1947 after another catastrophic Bengal famine which destroyed the fictions of good governance that colonisation had created. Democracy does not have much tolerance for fiction. If the new policy towards Pakistan is being floated on the fiction of possible peace, or even as a diversionary tactic, it will extract a terrible price on UPA if another Mumbai or Kargil happens.

Bureaucrats do not lose their jobs. Politicians do.

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