

Agro-based Economy And Village Development-II

By Principal Shafiqur Rahman

IN our first Five-Year Plan a sum of 315 crores or roughly 8% of the total public allocation has been provided for Housing and Physical Planning (vide First Five Year Plan 1973-78 p-32) and in the Annual Development Plan of 1977-78, a sum of Taka 104 crores out of 1278 crores or roughly 8% has been provided for Housing and Physical Planning and Taka 12.5 crores has been provided for Cyclone Reconstructions work (vide Annual Development Budget of 1977-78 The speech of Dr. M.N. Huda p-1).

Here we may make a mention of the number of Households as given by the Bangladesh Population Census of 1974 Bulletin 2-II. The number of households was 1,26,75,968 in 1973 and variation over 1960, has been stated to be 32%. There is no statistics before us to show how many of these households have strong and cyclone proof construction how many have very weak and bamboo construction. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the latter type constitutes about 95% of the total households of our rural areas which are destroyed or damaged periodically by natural calamities, too frequent in Bangladesh. So in the list of reconstruction of the Rural Bangladesh, Housing and Physical Planning occupy a very top place and any amount of public sector allocation for this purpose is probably bound to be drops in a wide ocean.

EDUCATION: The Statistics found in the Report of Population Census of 1974 and the Report of the Bangladesh National Commission on Education reveals the following:

- A. (1). Percentage of literacy of population of 5 and over — 22
Male — 29.9
Female — 13.7
(Vide Census 1974 p-II)
- (2) I. Number of students from classes I-V in 1974 about 72 lacs.
II. From Class IV-X — 18,59,000
III. From College — 5 lac
IV. (a) General Universities — 25 thousand
(b) Engineering — 2,100
(c) Agricultural University — 2,800
V. Engineering College — 1,800
VI. Polytechnic Institute — 11,100
(Vide Report of the Bangladesh Education Commission Parishista p-32,33)

B. Population left out in the shadow of illiteracy. The total population above the age of 5 from 5.9 13,685,550 (Vide Census 1974 p-134,135) According to the statistics supplied by the National Education Commission the number of students from Class

IV, is 72 lacs. So out of a total number of boys and girls of that age of about 137 lacs about (137.72-65) 65 lacs or roughly 45% are left out altogether from the pale of Education.

Secondly upto Class X (Matriculation stage), this number of 72 lacs from Class IV is reduced to about 18 lacs. So the number of drop outs is (72.18-53.1) 53.1 lacs. We do not know for certain what these huge dropped out boys and girls from Education do. Most of them surely revert to illiteracy and increase the number of farmers whose number is already too large in the country-side.

Sanitation: In 1975-76, there were 8637 medical graduates in the country. So there is only one medical graduate for every ten thousand people and regarding hospital beds, these were to be 17348 beds upto 1975-76, the actual in 1974-75 was 15747. (Vide Arthanaitik Shamiksha 1975-6 p-174,175). But by a careful study it is found that a vast majority of villages do not get the help of medical graduates as the latter mostly prefer urban areas and of late have been leaving the country in search of better jobs abroad. About medical care in villages there is little to be said.

Water supply, Drainage and Public Health: Public Health in rural areas is intimately connected with water supply, prevention of epidemics and drainage. Most of the villages have no provision for pure drinking water and there is practically no provision for clearance of drainage and filth in any village and so the condition of public health in rural areas is bad-awfully bad.

Improved agriculture—I have already spoken above of the use of chemical fertilisers in our agriculture which has shown increase in recent years. So also the case with use of power tillers, deep tube wells and shallow tube wells. Thus there were 80 power pumps in the then East Pakistan while in 1972-73 the number was 32,394 under B.A.D.C. The area irrigated in 1972-73 was 12,30,468 acres. (Vide Bangladesh Agriculture in Statistics, Nov. 1973 p-57). Agriculture in the country needs an elaborate treatment for which I have no space here. Apart from mechanisation and improved agriculture with better seeds, more manures and fertilisers, plant protection, better credit facilities for the farmers, the most urgent problem of agriculture is its organisation, whether it should be peasant proprietorship, Co-operative farming or State farming. I was in favour of State farming some time ago to meet the most urgent problem of our farming in the countryside viz the existence of subdivision and

fragmentation of agricultural land. Now on account of our recent experiences the scope of any scheme of Nationalisation seems to be very limited at least for some years. The scope of co-operative farming is also not very wide though I accepted it as an ideal and I built much hope on it. At least for some time these two types shall have limited possibilities for reasons best known to us. So agricultural improvement may be tried on existing type i.e. Peasant proprietorship and diversion of larger and larger numbers to other professions.

Industry—While speaking of industry and rural development we mostly speak of agro-based industries like Jute and Cottage industries. Heavy and medium industries in our country are mostly urban and I have already written in a previous article that about 50 out of 70 such industries have not yet reached the level of production of 1968-69. But whether we should pay more attention to industries than agriculture as in the previous regime to attain higher growth rate need not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that the existence of cheap labour in the country makes Bangladesh eminently suitable for fast industrialisation (and so industry needs as much attention as agriculture) and development of more areas for industries and their urbanisation, and resuscitation of scores of cottage industries scattered all throughout the country which are mostly disorganised pose problems which need immediate attention of our planners and administrators. It will not do if we merely speak of the golden days of our moribund cottage industries like silk and Muslin but how we can modernise them and make them suitable both for internal consumption and export should get top priority in any pattern of rural development.

COMMUNICATION: It is very difficult to find out the actual mileage of roads and water transports in the villages. Most of the national and local highways run through numerous villages. The extent of water ways is about 41 thousand miles which may be increased to eight thousand miles. But whatever roads are there in the rural areas are mostly muddy and remain unfit for traffic (specially for motor traffic) during rainy season. Communication problem of the rural areas is probably most important to be solved on a priority basis.

BIG NATIONAL PROBLEMS: Big national problems of irrigation, flood control, roads and highways, irrigation and water ways affect our countryside directly or indirectly. This reminds me of an idealistic high official of (Continued on page 6)

BIRTH CENTENARY OF

Reza Shah The Great

— Syed Eqbal Rizvi

Reza Shah the great founder of Pahlavi Dynasty belonged to a traditionally military family of Bavand Clan from the upper Mazandaran region of Savad Kuh. He was born in a small village called Al-Asht on 24 Safar 1243 corresponding to 15 March 1878. The enduring nature of Iranian monarchy over a period of two and a half millennia has little relevance to the rise and fall of Kings in Europe during the feudal period. Though the history of Iran is long and complex its shape is determined by the rise and fall of successive dynasties with intervals of chaos and confusion.

to break the hold of superstition over their people. The West, which had come to Iran and the East in search of gold and grandeur had already shaken the foundations of the oriental oligarchy in the country. Reza Khan like other young Iranians of his group, wanted above all to educate himself. His desire turned to determination once he realized how the ruling classes of Iran had gone to great lengths to keep the people illiterate and superstitious. Each day, at the end of the army duties he sat patiently in his barracks learning to read and write with the help of one of his more for

those of a warring political storm in Iran caught between the rival claims of the two mighty colonial powers then dominating Asia, Russia and Britain the short sighted Qajar Monarchs Mohammad Shah (1834-47), Nassereddin Shah (1847-96) and Muzaffareddin Shah (1896-1907) had either lost in battle or traded away, piece by piece large portions of Iranian Territory and several integral elements of national sovereignty.

The seeming anachronism of a monarch leading a popular revolution can also be explained by the specific traits of Iranian civilisation. Monarchy has been the most ancient and consistent institution in the civilisation of Iran. The resilient character of the Iranian civilisation is an exceptional example in Western Asia of a nation which refused to lose its identity even when it accepted an extraneous religion.

A noted international personality has rightly noted that in the origin of Iranians there is a power who will swallow and devour the conquerors of Iran and digest all their thoughts. That power will always resist and eliminate those external forces. During the past 2500 years of its chequered history, Iran was occupied by so many forces but Iranians extruded those elements in such a way that now the Banner of Sovereignty and Nationalism pulsates in the life and living of Iranians who are pledged bound to keep them ever aloft.

During the state of a bankrupt dependent economy and impeded territorial integrity, the 1919 coup took place in Iran. Six years later in 1925 the man who had played a determining role in bringing about the change was chosen the new monarch. In his 18 years in power, Reza Shah achieved a great deal toward building of modern Iran. His first major accomplishment was to establish a strong centralised authority on the ruins of warlordism and to the detriment of future foreign intrigues in Iran. A modern Army was set up acting as a significant lever of social change. Social chaos and social insecurity gave way to social order.

Reza Shah the Great's enlightened historical vision enabled him to recognise the determining role governments were to play in the development scenario of the Third World. During his reign the Central Government played a very active role in all spheres of the Iranian economy particularly in the development of



This view is supported by the nature of Ferdowsi's national epic the Shah-Nama. Following the tradition, Reza Khan joined the Persian Cossack Brigade as soon as he was fourteen. The Brigade had been created in 1879 the year after his birth by Nassereddin Shah, the Qajar Monarch after the failure of British, French and Austrian military experts to set up a European style fighting force in Iran. The young Reza Khan belonged to a generation of new nationalists which had made up its mind

fortunate educated friends. From the beginning he aimed at a successful military career and his entire education and outlook were to be moulded by the needs of the Army. He succeeded step by step during his twenty seven years in the Brigade and when his son, the present Monarch was born he held the rank of Colonel and was a member of the High Command of the Brigade.

The years of Reza Khan's advance in the hierarchy of command within the Brigade were

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