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Keeping Pace With Technology

If it is really true that, in the not so far off future, only a handful of people will be needed to run the industries and the administration, we must now ask ourselves if we should not be preparing ourselves for this possibility. For, in line with many poor developing countries, we have such an acute shortage of the kind of experts we shall be needing that we should begin preparing for such an eventuality now. Moreover, as there are other concerns relating to this too, it is high time we take action for we are also lacking in the up-to-date hardware we need. This is quite apart from the fact that such a scenario conjures up in our minds a life of dominance by those countries that are technically superior. In other words, we must take steps now for "capacity building" so that our own "home-grown" experts will be able to run the country in future.

If we are to be able to achieve such objectives, we must stay abreast of all the latest developments within the computer industry. This must include the latest in hardware for, should we be unable to import the latest generation of computers or impart up-to-the-minute training to our experts, we have lost the race before it has begun. However there are certain other problems and obstacles that need attending before we can embark on a project of this kind. As things now stand, our experts are finding it increasingly difficult to procure new machinery due to their high cost, thanks to the high rate of taxation.

To continue to keep the cost of new machines beyond the purchasing power of the ordinary educated citizen is to continue to follow the "head in the sands" policy that has kept us behind and which will, in the long run, do us no good for we could easily end up the technological slaves of others.

As this type of technology goes further beyond our reach, poor countries like ours could find themselves increasingly dominated from afar by technically advanced states. Losing control of one's own destiny is not a state we would like to see having fought twice for our freedom from dominance but, as it is a possibility to contend with, it is wise to consider this now.

The current trend of "globalisation" may also give states the means for a new kind of dominance, besides trade, for it may give them an opportunity to also control our political life. What this means is that we must train our experts for such an eventuality. This means they must be not only technically capable but also economically and politically astute. In other words the developing world must take more than a passing interest in this new technology.

There are many aspects of computer and information technology that need to come under the closer scrutiny of governments of poor developing countries, specially the effect of advances in the technology on its workforce. As the need for people to go abroad in search of work increases, we must now ensure that we have a new type of worker, one who is literate, numerate and flexible. This is more important for, as we understand it, most of the new jobs that will be available, will call for this kind of worker of whom we have very few.