

Political Clamps on South Asian Trade

Campus and the Police

Three things happened on Tuesday. First, Dhaka University was re-opened after 47 days of unscheduled closure, but without any guarantee that peace and security would be maintained on the campus. This led the student community and others to approach the event with as much hope as apprehension. Secondly, the Prime Minister, Khaleda Zia, met members of the Dhaka University Academic Atmosphere Council (DUAAC) including leaders of all major student organisations. The Prime Minister's assurance that the government was determined to solve all problems related to the university including the still-deteriorating law and order situation, gave us some ground to be optimistic.

The third event, unfortunately, was of a wholly negative character. According to reports published in this and other papers, some 50 students and teachers were injured during a police raid on the Jagannath Hall late at night. The police claimed they were looking for suspects in the Dr Milon murder case; students said the police went from room to room and indiscriminately baton-charged inmates. The Provost of the hall, Dr Paresh Chandra Mandal, termed the police action "brutal and unspeakable". He alleged indiscriminate use of force by police, and said he and seven fellow teachers resident at the hall would resign in protest.

With the Provost's statement, it is now clear that the incident was serious indeed. Under provisions of the university's autonomy, police cannot enter a hall of residence without the Provost's permission. But here we have a situation where the Provost himself was manhandled by police, who forced their way into the hall in the face of protests from hall authorities as well as elected office-bearers of the hall students union.

The incident naturally raises question about what kind of liaison exists between the university authorities and police deployed on the campus to preserve law and order. Since the Provost of Jagannath Hall did not give permission for the police to enter the hall, we have little choice but to term the incident a clear violation of the university's autonomy. In addition, the police's failure to capture any alleged terrorists can only lead us to conclude that either they acted on faulty intelligence, or that their action was poorly planned, causing serious injury and indignity to students and teachers, but no harm to the intended targets.

The day's incidents raise a whole set of new questions, at a time when we are still struggling to find satisfactory answers to old riddles. It is not at all clear who instructed the police to ignore their obligation of seeking university permission before going ahead with the raid; more seriously, it is puzzling that the police, which is under the direct control of the home ministry, should undertake such a venture on the very day the university re-opened. We needed a few days of peace and dialogue among the various parties to stabilise the situation, but instead we are left holding yet another live bomb in our hands. The logic behind taking such an action at such a delicate moment in time escapes us completely. Coming as it did within hours of the Prime Minister's meeting with the DUAAC, the question also arises as to whether the police action had the necessary political authority behind it.

The entire episode, therefore, deserves a thorough investigation, for the sake of peace on the campus as well as public trust in the police, not to mention the credibility of the government's repeatedly stated intention to bring back a congenial atmosphere to the campus.

The incident should also serve as a warning to both the police and the university authorities to maintain a close and mutually-trusted working relationship. At the same time, students aggrieved at the incident should show the kind of patience and maturity we expect of them, and allow the authorities time. The university has already announced new dates for BA Hons and Masters examinations, and it is absolutely vital that the correct atmosphere is maintained to allow the exams to go ahead. That, in the final analysis, is what tax-payers' money is spent for — education.

Roaming Elephants and Good Old Days

A report from Chittagong appeared in the Daily Star under the headline "Wild elephants create panic in rubber gardens." A leader of the Rubber Plantation Owners' Association has been quoted as saying that a large number of wild elephants are roaming the plantation areas of Fashiakhali in Lama upazila of Bandarban district. They are destroying the gardens and have also killed a plantation worker.

The story rather than terrifying us sows so many seeds of wild hopes in our hearts. Could it be that the lost forests are back in the Hill Tracts and elsewhere inviting in all the elephants that had migrated to foreign land back to their ancestral pasture? Elephants have throughout the history of this land, as indeed all over Asia, stood for prosperity. The very mental picture of bands of elephants roaming the forests speaks of an ambience in peace with itself — man and wildlife living in perfect and a fecund fetching. For the elephant is the most intelligent, gregarious, man-friendly and fair of all land animals. If in intelligence it comes next to man, in the other respects man, as a whole, falls behind the pachyderms as a whole by miles. This good neighbour of man in the olden golden days was a close acquaintance of Bengalees so much so that Bengalees became the best veterinarians specialising in the treatment of elephants. Bengalee doctors were supposed to be attending all the war elephants in the many battles fought over 25 centuries in the subcontinent. One would not be surprised to hear that some of these crossed the Alps into Italy with the elephants of Hannibal.

Elephants go on rampage only when they have been wronged badly. And then some of them, from time to time turn into a 'rogue'. The herd, of course, takes care of culprits of such abnormal psychology.

We, however, sympathise with the rubber planters and thank them for helping bring to us many sweet memories in which this sweetest of animals was a jolly good partner.

A strong wind of economic change is blowing across the Indian subcontinent. Both Pakistan and India are busy liberalising their trade systems.

The Nawaz Sharif Cabinet has just abolished foreign exchange controls in order to step up trade with Europe, the USA and the Middle East. Meanwhile, India has taken big steps to liberalise trade, slashing red-tape in the hope of luring foreign investors.

Sadly, however, Indo-Pakistan trade may be largely unaffected by the new wind of change.

As a Pakistan watcher says, "It's a matter of regret but Indo-Pakistan trade has no prospects of reaching higher levels as it is limited to commodities. Strictly regulated by the two governments, trade cannot prosper unless it is left to the business people and the Chambers of Commerce."

Other analysts say that "it is politicians and their policies which restrict trade expansion between the two countries. Political prejudices and judgements continue to guide policymakers."

It has been argued that the grouping of South Asian nations called SAARC (South

Prakash Chandra writes from New Delhi

The main restraint on trade between India and Pakistan (which could otherwise be expected to boom) continues to lie in political pressures and fears

Business India of Bombay, three powerful lobbies in Pakistan stoutly oppose any liberalisation of Indo-Pakistan trade. They are politicians, local industrialists and bureaucrats.

Says Ms Rohini Bhushan, secretary of the Indo-Pak Business Committee of the Punjab, Haryana, Delhi Chamber of Commerce: "India's exports would have been much higher if Pakistan's private sector was allowed to import freely from India. In April 1988, the list of commodities had only 42 items. This was increased to some 517 items in July 1989. Still, there is no tremendous expansion."

India, one of the world's largest tea producers, only sells 5,000 tons of tea to Pakistan, which imports 90,000 tons in all annually. Pakistanis admit that Indian tea is cheaper and of better

quality than the leaves supplied by China, Kenya and Argentina.

Business India lists possible areas of cooperation between the two countries. It says one area is cotton. Indian production of cotton tends to fluctuate from year to year and it has been suggested that India could import cotton from Pakistan in bad years and export it in good ones.

Iron and steel form another possible area. India has one of the largest reserves of iron ore in the world and yet it supplies only 10 percent of Pakistan's imports. India could export iron ore and import metallurgical coking coal from Pakistan since that country's supplies have a lower ash content.

Perhaps, the most promising possibilities lie in technology transfer. Indeed India could assist Pakistan across a wide range from small-scale to large-scale industries. Pakistan's capabilities are limited in such elementary items as motors, pumps, boosters, hand tools etc.

Another very promising area is that of textile machinery which Indian producers have offered at prices 70 per-

cent less than European and Japanese producers.

Mr. W. N. Talwar, chairman of the Indo-Pakistan Business Committee in Delhi, agrees that Indo-Pakistan trade can only improve if there is a solution at the political level.

Pakistan businessmen worry about the possibility that India might swamp Pakistan with its economic power. Privately, Pakistani journalists and analysts say that the Big Brother complex is very much alive there. Despite its poverty and big numbers, New Delhi continues to have superiority in terms of its industrialisation and technological know-how.

Smaller countries feel threatened, and several members of SAARC feel it safer to deal with the West. There is a big push towards West Germany, the USA and Japan for trade and economic cooperation.

In this respect, India presents a contradictory picture. Because of its sheer size and technological, progress New Delhi is seen not as a friend but as a powerful and potentially overwhelming rival.

— Depthnews Asia

De-nationalisation: Some Views

by Muhammad Ayenuddin

During the long nine years of the Ershad regime, if anything was highly debated upon, it was the policy of de-nationalisation. The successful implementation of the policy could have brought new life in the nation's economy. It could have rejuvenated the weak economy and could have made the nation happy and prosperous. But assuming some opportunists, having vested interest, who were any way connected with the policy of de-nationalisation, cleverly put some impossible conditions at the time of de-nationalisation as a result of which, the de-nationalised industries have not been able to produce any desirable result. Not only this, it has created in the people's mind a wrong conception that de-nationalisation is rather harmful. Here I shall try to discuss some points about the industrial policy of the government and point out the reason as to why de-nationalised textile mills, which are the most prominent among other industries, fail to produce any impact on the national economy.

There were in fact, no mills and factories in East Bengal before 1947. After the creation of Pakistan, 68 Jute Mills, 53 Textile Mills, and many other industrial units were established in the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), sponsored by private enterprises and that left a lasting effect on the national economy. In the primary stage, for want of capital, experience

and sponsorship, they were lagging behind, but in the decade of 60s they showed good performance.

After the creation of Bangladesh in 1972, the then government nationalised all the privately sponsored cotton mills, sugar mills, jute mills, banks and insurance companies in the name of socialist economy. Experienced Pakistani mill owners, visualising the possible effect, did wind up their business but the Bangladesh mill owners did not do such a thing. On the other hand they thought, that within the independent Bangladesh their scope of business would be enlarged. But their expectation did not materialise. The Bangladeshi businessmen were mostly affected by the nationalisation of mills. The real businessmen were thrown on the street at a time when their realistic approach was most needed for the economic reconstruction of the newly born nation. As a result the back bone of the country's economy was broken. In order to infuse life into the invalid economy, however, the Government decided to return the industrial units to the real Bangladeshi owners. This policy, in short, is known as de-nationalisation policy.

De-nationalisation is doubtlessly a very strong blow to the touts and selfish persons connected with mills and facto-

Sl. No.	Name of Mills	Liability at the time of Nationalisation	Liability at the time of De-nationalisation
1.	Atlantic Cotton Mills	—	5,80,000/-
2.	Goaland Textile Mills	40,00,000/-	3,98,00,000/-
3.	Couehata Cotton Mills	12,30,000/-	10,75,15,000/-
4.	H. Rahman Textile Mills	—	13,74,00,000/-
5.	Kuashita Textile Mills	89,47,000/-	13,97,56,107/-
6.	Kaashem Textile Mills	55,00,000/-	3,10,00,000/-
7.	Raj Textile Mills	40,85,000/-	4,77,35,000/-

ries. Although they could not say anything against the order of de-nationalisation as it was the decision of Martial Law authority yet they created such difficulties and complexities through administrative barriers that the purpose for which it was introduced came to a big failure. It can be stated as an example that when suddenly the mills and the factories were nationalised, the Govt. did not accept the liabilities, but keeping the factories in its control for long ten years, when the mills were again returned to the Bangladeshi owners the Govt. demanded that the liability created during the nationalised period should be borne by the owner and an undertaking to this effect would have to be given. Although this is illogical and unfair, yet the owners agreed to it only to get back their own properties. In the state of nationalisation, the industries had acquired liability of such a

huge amount that it was impossible to repay even the interest, what to speak of the capital. As an example I am showing in the following list the difference between the liability of some mills immediately before nationalisation and at the time of de-nationalisation.

- a. Employment of unexperienced and unskilled persons.
- b. The boundless nepotism and corruption of the officers in the nationalised industries.
- c. The interference of the party in power in the administration of the mills and factories.
- d. Over employment for political reason.
- e. Unusual pay rise without any reference to production.
- f. Purchase of machinery and spare parts tacking

Some mills and factories have achieved a steady progress after de-nationalisation and have contributed to the economy of the country also by creating new avenues of employment. But there are many mills which could not stand erect for the heavy burden of liability on them. Some of them have stopped production and reduced the number of labourers. There are some owners who are shifting their capital and machineries on many pretexts, knowing, it full well that they would never be able to repay the loan under present condition. This has put the country in a bad shape. I would suggest the following so that the de-nationalised industries can play their desired role in the economy of the country.

a. Arrangement should be made to prepare separate block head account of the liability of the de-nationalised industries created during the nationalisation period and the repayment of the liability money should be stopped for 15 years and no interest should be charged

b. Within that 15 years the owners of the mills be allowed to repay principal loan on easy instalments after exempting all interest accrued thereon.

c. Because of inexperienced and unskilled workers, most of the machineries of all textile mills have become useless in these ten years; these should be replaced by new ones and money needed therefore should be found out on easy interest.

d. For the reason of devaluing currency 65 times the rate of exchange has become very unfavourable for the industries. Proper steps should be taken to keep the exchange rate at an easy and permissible limit.

e. Surety must be given so that yarn and cloth may not be pushed into Bangladesh through its 22-hundred-mile long border.

I would hope that if the above mentioned opportunities are given to the de-nationalised industries, then the mill owners will be able to expand their units and would be able to assist the national economy creating more opportunities of employment. In the process we should be able not only to meet our own demand, we shall also be able to export more textile goods abroad and thus earn considerable amount of foreign exchange.

Fourteen will Climb the Eiger for the World

Hezekiah Wepukhulu writes from Nairobi

JAMES Kagambi made history two years ago when he became the first African to scale the highest North American peak, Mount Denali (20,320 ft) in Alaska. Now the 31-year-old instructor at the National Outdoor Leadership School in Kenya is to climb the Eiger in the Swiss Alps.

He will become the first black African to participate in the Climb for the World adventure in support of the United Nations.

Twelve climbers representing all the five continents will converge on the Eiger on September 21. Two from each continent have been chosen. Africa will be represented by Kagambi and Ed February, an archaeologist from South Africa. All continents except Africa will be represented by a man and a woman.

A blind climber will also attempt the ascent of the West flank of the Eiger on behalf of disabled people. Each pair of climbers will carry a "Lantern for World Peace," which they will receive from UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

The Climb for the World exercise is one of a series of aid activities taking place in many of the 195 member

Climbers from all the continents are about to meet atop the Eiger mountain in Switzerland as part of a worldwide UN fund-raising exercise known as Climb for the World. One of the 14 will be a Kenyan who has already made history as the first African to climb the highest peak in North America.

countries of the United Nations between September 14 and 23. People are asked to make designated climbs and the money raised will go to such projects as recultivating Mozambique, providing clean water in Cambodia and soil conservation in the Bolivian Andes.

The Eiger climbers will reach the summit from routes covering the main compass points, including the notorious North Face.

The summit meeting on the Eiger on September 23 is arranged to coincide with the UN International Day of Peace and Switzerland's 700th anniversary.

Climb for the World was initiated by Edwin Drummond, its international climb direc-

tor, and Michael Hollingworth, the British national climb director. The idea they mooted, which now crystallises around the term "World Aid," has already gathered momentum and its supporters envisage it as an annual event, with the centrepiece climb rotating between the continents.

The global patron is Canadian Maurice Strong, president of the World Federation of UN Associations, who is also general secretary of the massive UN international environmental conference taking place next year in Brazil.

Kagambi is excited about making it to the Eiger summit. He says with a broad smile: "I feel like being on top of the world already." Kagambi's base, the National Outdoor Leader-



TOP AFRICAN James Kagambi on the peak of Mt Denali moment at Naru Moru are 65 American climbers. He was born in 1960, the

last of a family of nine, in Nyeri district, Central Province. He was a schoolteacher until he caught the climbing bug in 1978, leading a group of scouts to Mount Elgon in Western Kenya. He was then the school's chief scout and sports captain.

In 1983 he began technical climbing on rocks. Since that time he has climbed Mount Kenya more than 100 times and Mount Kilimanjaro three times, apart from rock climbing at the Hill's Gate at Naivasha and the Split Rock and Wind River Mountains in the United States.

In the US he took an advanced mountaineering instructor course in wilderness first aid at the National Outdoor Leadership School, which has branches in South America, Mexico as well as Kenya.

He says: "I like adventures and enjoy walks on rocks and mountain peaks. More Africans should be encouraged to take up mountaineering not only as a hobby, but as a way of keeping themselves physically fit."

— GEMINI NEWS
HEZEKIAH WEPUKHULU is one of the most experienced African sports writers. He is currently editor of the magazine 'Africa Sport.'

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Sub-standard boulders in road construction

Sir, Currently a few foreign contractors are constructing roads in Bangladesh that are being financed by donor agencies like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The contracts are being executed under fairly stringent conditions and are being supervised by competent consultants appointed by the Roads & Highways Department.

northern region is alleged to be using boulders that do not comply with the specifications needed for the purpose. The boulders are said to be from a quarry called Bisnakhandi in Sunamganj district, prices of which are well below those of standard Bholaganj boulders. The crushed boulders from Bisnakhandi (30 mm downgraded) are being sold in Nawapara currently at Tk 24.00 per cft. The contractors must be buying these delivered to their sites at Tk 26.00 per cft. The equivalent product from Bholaganj (which is the only product that meets the specifications) will, however, not cost less than Tk 27.00 or so at Nawapara.

It is earnestly requested that the relevant authorities

take note of this allegation and take immediate measures to rectify the matter, if it is so.

A Conscious Citizen

Role of teachers

Sir, Recently two senior Professors of a certain national university have been dismissed from service on charge of some unethical acts done by them.

The teachers can play an important role in redressing this situation by influencing and motivating the students toward the correct path. They can effectively contribute in removing political racism which is prevailing among different students' political fronts.

M. Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor, Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka-1207.

Civic amenities in Pallabi

Sir, I want to draw the attention of the authorities to the manifold problems due to unconstructed roads, inadequate drainage system and insufficient lighting by the residents of Road No. 6 Block A

F/G Pallabi. Despite repeated requests to Municipal Corporation we didn't get any positive respond whatsoever, as yet.

The citizens of Pallabi eastern side face lots of trouble whenever they get out of their houses. Some local people complained that all the manholes there were without cover. While they walk on, consequently there is maximum chance of falling into the ditch. It is assumed that manhole covers are stolen due to insufficient lighting system. In monsoon rain water simply doubles the hazard on and around the street.

As a citizen of the country I on behalf of the locality pray that immediate step be taken before the situation gets worse.

Anonymous