dustries, the products of

which are in high demand.

These industries should be

primarily import-substituting

and only those industries in

Dhaka, Saturday, December 7, 1991

### For a Better UN

On being sworn in on Tuesday as the UN Secretary-General from January 1, Boutros Boutros Ghali said all the right things during his speech at the General Assembly, using ideas and expressions which vibrate with some freshness, without of course giving too much away. For instance, the Egyptian technocrat has promised to follow "an active, preventive diplomacy, with a view to monitoring developments of crisis, and devising adequate means to defuse them and prevent their escalation." One wonders if the use of the so-called preventive diplomacy could have stopped Iraq from invading Kuwait or, to refer to an on-going crisis, defuse the rising tension between New Delhi and Islamabad over Kashmir, which can still touch off the fourth Indo-Pakistan shooting war. One implication of Dr Ghali's prescription for peace may well be that the world body would, on its own, take a hand in resolving a developing crisis, without a specific resolution of the Security Council or a request from a member state backing its action.

Time is ripe for new approach to the peace-making role of the United Nations. With the end of the cold war and resolution of pressing problems in such areas as Namibia, Western Sahara, El Salvador and Cambodia, Dr Ghali has certainly a rare opportunity of building on the achievements of his distinguished predecessor, Dr Javier Perez de Cuellar and capitalising on a new credibility earned by the world body. Here, two facts must be recognised by the new chief. The United Nations indeed has a breathing time to take a hard look at the way it has functioned all these decades and to decide how, when and where it should start reforming itself. Now 69 unlikely to serve more than one five-year term in one of the world's most demanding jobs, Dr Ghali will be racing against time to fulfil the expectations raised during his speech on Tuesday.

Whether the world body is overhauled or reformed, the effectiveness of the first African head of the United Nations would largely depend on what he is able to do to create a new framework for development for the poorest nations of the world. This is the second challenge facing the world body — and its new chief today. Dr Ghali is perfectly justified in saying that "if there is no development without democracy, there can also be no democracy without development." Yet, one wonders if the United Nations and its various specialised agencies have been able to help the new democracies in the way they should, not just in the field of aid and assistance but also in trade and investment. True, the obstacle to change is posed more by the richest nations than by the United Nations. The question is, can the world body play a stronger role than in the past in bringing about a change in the approach of the industrialised countries? If Dr Ghali wants to use "preventing diplomacy" to defuse a political crisis, he should certainly try out the same quiet, behind-the-scene approach in ensuring that the developing world gets an euitable deal on issues in which it felt let down, again and again, in the past. After all, preventing three fourths of the humanity from falling deeper and deeper into poverty and degradation offers a much bigger challenge than defusing a political crisis that threatens to turn into a shooting war. Herein lies a major task facing Dr Ghali — and a new United Nations.

### Literature and the People

The state minister for cultural affairs, Jahanara Begum, recently made 25 lakh takas available to the Bangla Academy for a venture that is both noble and practical. The Academy will utilise the fund to publish collected works of Kazi Nazrul Islam at cost price, bringing the genius of the rebel poet within the reach of a greater number of people than was previously the case. The vital importance of making literature accessible to the masses does not need any emphasising; this is also crucial for Bangladesh where, despite a low rate of literacy, the people remain one of the world's most literature-hungry.

High cost of good quality prose and poetry has been one of the reasons why a large segment of the reading population at the lower end of the income scale has shifted towards the cheaper. but dubious variety of publications that have been flooding the market in recent years. Most of these books and magazines have very little originality in the way of thought and style to offer, and many rely on exploiting man's more primitive instinct and tastes. But even that would have been quite fine, had there also existed quality books and journals at competitive prices to provide the general readership with an affordable choice.

Given the situation, this highly commendable initiative undertaken by the Bangla Academy. instead of being a shining exception, should become the rule. This venture is limited only to the works of Nazrul, but the horizons of Bengali literature is vast, and the Academy has a monumental task in whetting the boundless appetite the people of this country have for literary knowledge.

Greats from the past like Rabindranath, Michael Modhusudan, Sarat Chandra and others would be natural follow-ups. But the Academy should pay particular attention to writers and poets from the more recent past, whose works are inextricably linked to the extraordinary history of struggles for freedom of Bangladesh. But perhaps the greatest attention ought to be paid to contemporary writers, not only to make people aware of the riches being produced, but also to give hope to the future generation of authors and poets. It is a task the Academy, we believe, is well-equipped, intellectually and administratively, to undertake, provided the necessary funds were made available by the ministry of cultural affairs.

# For a Rapid Growth of the Manufacturing Sector

by Kazi Farhad Jalal

HE Asian-Pacific region has emerged as the most dynamic part of the world economy with manufactured production and exports acting as the engine of growth. During the recent years, most of the economies of the region have been pursuing a variety of industrial restructuring measures in order to sustain this dynamism and promote greater competitiveness in manufacturing production. In Asia Pacific, industrial restructuring has come to be seen as a dynamic and multifaceted process, occurring in response to capital and technology flows. and changes in relative prices. Economies which fail to respond appropriately to these changes, will also fail to remain competitive, both domestically and internationally. Several events have added an urgency to the pace and timing of industrial restructuring in the region. The increased interdependence and globalization of the world economy through rapid growth in trade. investment and technology flows have reinforced the process.

The rise of Japan and the NIEs as industrial powers with high domestic wage rates and considerable current account surplus has led them to relocate many of their labour-intensive manufacturing in other parts of Asia. This process of industrial restructuring has allowed the ASEAN-4 to set up manufacturing capabilities in a wide range of products. India. China and the market-oriented transitional economies are also poised to enter a new phase of manufactured growth.

Given this shifting pattern of production structure and

expansion in trade and investment flows. Bangladesh has to pursue a vigorous industrial restructuring programme not only to create and sustain a competitive manufacturing sector but also to benefit from the region's growth impulses. Although the problems of Bangladesh are many, the situation is better than many other LDCs; and today's NIEs faced similar predicaments twenty-thirty years ago. However, the favourable conditions like an open world market and large-scale external aid do not exist any more. Therefore, Bangladesh has to follow the "flying geese" pattern of development by exploiting the opportunities that

growth was most pronounced in the early seventies, rising from 14.2 per cent a year during 1970-1973 to 31.4 per cent a year during 1975-1980. Development constraints and other factors reduced its growth rate to only 2 per cent during 1980-1985 Deregulation measures and other favourable conditions

trial output. Manufacturing

In developing a appropriate industrialization and restructuring strategy, it may be use-

helped the sector to grow by

6.4 per cent in 1987 but since

then floods and cyclone have

resulted in negative growth

did not do much to stimulate these industries, apart from protecting the "infant" ones. but did not stand in their way either. Instead, government policy focused on providing essential facilities by expanding and improving infrastructure, health-care and education, and by adopting a stable macro-economic policy Monetary expansion and inflation were curbed, boosting savings necessary for investment in the manufacturing sector. The end of external aid in duced a radical shift towards export-oriented industrialization under a strong and committed government. Incentives

Another way of capital and technology attraction was through FDI in the form of joint ventures and originally with minority foreign owner ship. Links were established between the rural and industrial sectors and between small-scale and large-scale industries. General trading companies were set up to establish extensive overseas networks and to handle a broad range of goods. New industries like electronics were set up, originally producing labour-intensive parts and components and later complete products through "learning by doing" and diversifying and improving existing products.

When the economy was be-

The Republic of Korea probably offers the best example of an industrialization strategy from which lessons may be drawn for an LDC like Bangladesh. The immediate goals of the new government after the Korean war were oriented towards reconstruction and price stabilization.

are now generated in the re-

Despite wide variations among the least developed countries. Bangladesh shares some common characteristics with them which have contributed to its least developed status. It has few natural resources of any significance and its agriculture accounts for 47 per cent of GDP and provides bulk of the employment. However, the ability of agriculture to generate additional employment is extremely limited. This implies that the manufacturing sector must grow sufficiently to absorb a growing labour force, earn foreign exchange and generate the surplus needed for capital formation. The manufacturing sector contributes about 60 per cent of the value of indus-

Accra.

HILLA LIMANN

(NDPC).

Former President

**多**从(1)

sional appearances at his

People's National Party meet-

ings, nothing was heard of him

in those ten years, even when

he was personally attacked by

Rawlings and other functionar-

ies of the ruling National

Defence Provisional Council

legations that he was party to

the very coup d'etat that dis-

lodged him from power. He

made no response when

Rawlings told a meeting of

Neither did he react to al-

ful to examine the factors that allowed NIEs to reach their current status and generate high levels of industrial growth. The Republic of Korea probably offers the best example of an industrialization strategy from which lessons may be drawn for an LDC like Bangladesh. The immediate goals of the new government after the Korean war were oriented towards reconstruction and price stabilization. It set up an industrial base with external aid under an importsubstituting strategy using heavy barriers against imports.

Initial industrialization process was launched by the private sector entrepreneurs with emphasis on small-scale and labour-intensive production of low-quality, low-priced consumer goods. The government

for these industries were offered in the form of tax exemptions, customs rebates. casy access to foreign ex change and credit at low interest rates. The old labour intensive industries like textiles. footwear, garments and food processing were now made export-oriented. Private sector was induced to follow government "administrative guidance" but was left free to operate its daily activities as long as it followed government directives. Business had a say in government decisions, however, and worked in close cooperation with the government. Capital was raised through increased savings and heavy borrowing abroad Although loans contributed to a mounting debt-problem, they were used in an efficient way.

coming too big and complex to be efficiently controlled. many public enterprises were privatized and the economy deregulated. Private business was more and more able to per form without extensive government guidance. Government policy is presently focused on improving competition, education, promotion of productivity and R&D. stimulation of SMI, deregulation of the financial system, and promotion of FDI e.g. through allowing 100% foreign ownership and liberalization of trade.

In the light of the experiences of Republic of Korea and other NIEs, the industrialization and restructuring policies of Bangladesh should consist of several elements. It should promote small and medium sized and labour-intensive in-

which Bangladesh has a competitive advantage, like garments, electronics, food processing should be export-oriented. Promotion in this respect should concentrate on building necessary facilities these industries need to develop themselves, and special incentives be given to stimulate this development of industries whether they are importsubstituting or export-oriented. Government in this process could be most helpful by refraining from too much interference in business. It should instead allow the private sector to develop by eliminating obstacles that thwart their development. In this respect, the government should adopt a vigorous plan of deregulation. Furthermore, the government should refrain from undertaking commercial activities itself and privatize existing public commercial activities. Is should provide guidance to business community by singling out strategic industries, market development, technology transfer, etc. and develop an atmosphere of trust and mutual cooperation with the private sector. Bangladesh should also pursue vigorously a strategy to attract FDI with special incentives. FDI should be primarily export-oriented and labour-intensive although a mix with higher capital-intensive industries may be appropriate in some cases. The author is the Director

of the Division for Industries and Human Settlement. ESCAP, Bangkok.

# Limann of Ghana Takes the Political Comeback Trail

Kabral Blay-Amihere writes from Accra

As Ghana heads for a return to multi-partyism and civilian rule, former president Hilla

Limann is emerging again as a political factor to reckon with. His growing popularity is

causing concern for the military ruler Jerry Rawlings. Gemini News Service reports how

the end of self-imposed silence by Limann has led to an upsurge of political activity in

ORMER President Hilla Limann of Ghana is emerging from years of self-imposed isolation to steal the political limelight.

Limann, a career diplomat. was blamed for his country's economic ills and corruption in his government when he was overthrown in December 1981 by the present military ruler, Flight-Lieutenant Jerry

Rawlings. Most of the problems the Limann regime faced from 1979 to 1981 were inherited from Ghana's past — more than eight years of military rule, which had included a fourmonth military junta headed by Rawlings.

Many Chanaians seemed to agree with Rawlings that Limann was simply inept. Even Limann's respect for the 1979 constitution and resultant restraint was interpreted as a sign of incompetence and lack of strength.

Many thought his political career had been buried when Rawlings overthrew him in 1981, but almost ten years later, the very people, like Rawlings, who had written him off now admit that he has suddenly become a political force to reckon with.

There is even talk that he could win a presidential election. By maintaining almost total silence for a decade he seems to have won over many Ghanaians. Apart from a 1986 magazine interview and occadiplomats that Limann and his minister for presidential affairs, J. Nabilla, had planned to

assassinate him. All that changed last July when Rawlings carried his attacks to faraway Paris, launching a tirade on Limann at a press conference there.

Rawlings, whose regime banned multi-party politics, alleged that most elections in Ghana have been based on fraud and quoted Limann as telling him that he had won the 1979 elections by fraud. Rawlings also spoke of massive corruption under Limann.

When the Paris attack was broadcast in Ghana Limann broke his silence, called Rawlings a liar, and became an instant hero. Ghana's free press publicised a letter from Limann and praised him for courage in setting the record straight. Nobody ever talks back or criticises Rawlings. The Limann "show", as Ghanaians called his letter. was just about the first time anybody in Ghana had stood up to the military ruler.

Since then Limann was never been out of the news. His popularity has surged Crowds rush out to hail him when he makes a public ap-

Some political observers say the new love between Limann and the Ghanaian public is more a show of resentment against Rawlings and a disapproval of the government structural adjustment programme which has led to massive retrenchment and the high cost of living.

Another reason for Limann's popularity is growing evidence that his years in political limbo have increased his awareness and commitment to political work, particularly to the pioneering contribution and ideals of the first president of

Ghana. Kwame Nkrumah. Whatever it is, Limann is exploiting the situation to his advantage, His latest political move has been to join one of the political groupings, known as Our Heritage. This has worried the government as well as

the old guard of Nkrumah's party, the Convention People's Party (CPP).

Limann's membetship of the Heritage has destroyed a secret government plan to use the CPP as the vehicle to keep itself in power when the ban on party politics is lifted.

Some of the old guard followers of Nkrumah do not like Limann claiming to be a Nkrumaist. A letter campaign in the state-owned media argues that Limann is no Nkrumaist. Ironically, the letter campaign is seem as an admission of the growing popularity of Limann.

With the Heritage as his platform, Limann is attracting huge crowds. The government, for its part, tries to extol its practical achievements, such as providing electricity to many parts of Ghana.

Some diplomatic observers are impressed by the organised crowds Rawlings pulls in at gatherings of chiefs, but those who know only too well the psychology of the Ghanaian public recall the dismal per-

formance of another politician, the charismatic KA Gbedemagh, who drew huge crowds in national elections in 1969 and yet finished last

There is discussion of once taboo subjects now in the independent media, which has suddenly discovered a voice, a signal that the government is losing its grip.

A member of what is called the Danquah-Busia Group. which is fighting for a return to constitutional rule in Ghana, argues: "It is a no-win situation for the PNDC, (Rawlings' party) even if they claim they have sent lights to many parts of the country. The military can indeed be blamed for the late extension of lights to many parts of Ghana.

Rawlings may have an advantage as the man in power, but word is going round that if he calls an election, diverse political groups will unite to

defeat his government. Limann may not be the most charismatic leader Ghana ever produced, but for the moment his growing influence on the Ghanaian politics can not be played down. For his part, he says he has got "so much to say at the right time. My lips are not sealed as they

KABRAL BLAY-AMIHERE is an Accra-based freelance journalist and was the recipient in 1990 of a Nieman Fellowship.

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.

#### **Garment workers**

Sir, According to your front page analysis of the garment industry (29 Nov), the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) contends that "there is a deep-rooted conspiracy to destroy the booming industry". But leaders of the Bangladesh Garment Workers' and Employees' Unity Council says that this theory "has been invented to hide the injustices done to the poor workers."

Your analysis claims that "it is difficult to say who is right and who is wrong." As a former teacher of logic it doesn't seem difficult at all to me. Not a single shred of evidence has been offered to support the conspiracy theory. But your analysis mentions the many complaints of the workers, all of which were verified by a survey of 1000 women garment workers carried out by the Commission for Justice and Peace.

Since 43% of national export earnings comes from readymade garments, it is not in the national interest to support the labour laws. Even the rapidly growing number of underage girl children working in the factories has been ignored. The BGMEA justifies it on the basis of poverty and the need to keep these girls from being corrupted in the slums. But what they fail to mention is

that there are thousands of girls of legal working age who would be happy to have these jobs. Why are they not being employed in place of illegal child workers? While we deplore the incidents of violence and destruction by workers. we feel that the abuse of child workers and other abuses of labour laws should be investigated and corrected. Bangladesh was one of the earliest countries to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, it has an international obligation to protect its children.

Farther Timm

#### English

Sir, Finding a proper place for English in our national life has proved to be an extremely volatile issue. Whatever prejudice against that language we may have in the backdrop of our independence and cultural heritage, there is no denying the fact that an adequate knowledge of English gives an edge to those able to use the language of global communication, finance and academy. To some Asian countries which were previously under the British sway like us, the language issue also presented a dilemma as to the extent of encouragement that should be given to English at the expense of local languages. We learn that on this issue three

different approaches were adopted by the governments of Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore with mixed results. Outlines of these approaches are indicated below in the hope that it may prove to be of interest in the context of the burgeoning controversy currently raging in our country on

In Malaysia, after that country gained independence from Britain in 1957, English remained the language of the government and in part of the immigrant Chinese and Indian minorities who dominated the economy and the professions. The fact that members of both groups rarely bothered to learn the language of the economically less well-off Malay majority contributed to rising racial tensions. After race riots in 1969. Mahathir Mohammad, an ardent nationalist, who is the present Prime Minister. suggested the propagation of Malay as one of the keys to ending the Malay's status as second class citizens in their

own country. Today Malaysia faces competition from foreign investment of high-tech industries in Thailand and Indonesia where wages are low. Result: English is back in vogue.

If government activism at one point torpedoed English in Malaysia, inaction is having a similar effect in laissez-faire Hong Kong. English is nominally taught in schools. Where both teachers and students have Cantonese as their first language, instruction is actually done in a Cantonese-English mix. Result: many students are not good at either Chinese or English.

Well-ordered Singapore followed a determined and

successful English language policy. English is the medium of instruction in schools and the common working language of the multi-racial city state This policy, however, faced certain pitfalls. "The possibility of our children losing their Asian cultural values is very real," 'warns its Education Minister, "We do not wish to be a pseudo-Western society.' The government has accordingly decreed that 27% of every school's curriculum must be taught in the so-called mother tongue - Mandarin for Chinese, Malay for Malays and

Tamil for most Indians. In our quest to find the proper place for English in the face of vexing cultural and political questions, a partial answer may be to avoid Malaysia's initial chauvinism as well as Hong Kong's vacillation and try like Singapore to set clear goals backed by strong policy. ASM Nurunnabi Dhanmandi RA, Dhaka.

#### "Hasina's SOS"

Sir, Thanks to M. Zahidul Hoque for his well written letter under the caption "Hasina's SOS" published in your esteemed daily on December 5.

Endorsing the view of the writer I would like to ask Sheikh Hasina, had she been in power and someone had written this sort of so called SOS to foreign missions and donor agencies then what would have been the punishment for such offender? Let us not be funny and take politics as a pastime. In my opinion absence of democracy in the political parties have given rise to the process "politician by succession".

M Saleem Ullah, Advocate. Motifheel C/A, Dhaka.

## OPINION

# Let's Not Flag or Fail

democratic system of govern- follow. ment came to the fore.

legislator has the responsibility Khaleda Zia and her party in of reflecting the hopes and power to run the country. The aspirations of the constituents problems facing the country who have placed their faith in are stupendous. It is more so, him. In the present day world, when we have to grapple with in large parts of Africa, South the problems, such as three-East Asia, South Asia, Middle fourths of the people live East and in most of the Latin below the poverty line, and American countries the demo- similarly three-fourths of the cratic process falls and then people being illiterate. The rises again. The history of government of Begum Khaleda Pakistan and Bangladesh also Zia bas been in office for only shows the above mentioned about eight months. This weakness. It is, therefore, all period is much too short to the more necessary that both judge the performance of a the people and their elected government. It is, however, representatives should care- necessary that the government fully nurture the seed of takes into confidence the democracy in this country.

came into power in the fourth dialogue between the people week of March, 1982, in his and the government, so that first address to the nation national aspirations are taken said, "The contemptible selfishness, inefficiency, favouritism, unending corruption and bickering of those in power made the government a total failure. People today do not have any confidence in it." General Ershad further stated that his own desire was to stay out of politics. In the course of events, all these promises were set at naught.

It was a great fortune for this country to have Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed as the Actg. President for 10 months. The trust reposed in further. him for holding a fair election was fulfilled by him with complete devotion. His austerity,

In the old Athenian city simplicity and transparent state, the people used to gov- fairness earned the love and ern themselves directly. With affection of all his countrymen the passage of time this was no The Actg. President set up a longer possible and as such the great precedent for other to

The people with great con-The politically elected fidence, have put Begum people whom it seeks to serve. General Ershad when he There must be a continuing care of.

> The abject poverty on the one hand, and on the other immense wealth in the hands of a very few, cannot be ignored or overlooked. In a society which is characterised by such inequality of wealth. democracy finds it difficult to function. It would, therefore, be necessary for this government to tackle this problem on a priority basis.

We have lost many many years in the quest of democracy. Let us not be delayed any

> Shahabuddin Mahtab Dhanmandi, Dhaka.