## Garment Industry

With the conclusion of the three-day Bangladesh Apparel and Textile (BAT) Expo '92 in the city yesterday, the readymade garment sector has further advanced its case in the world market. Buyers from as far countries as Canada and Germany, Australia and Sweden, among others, have shown keen interest in various garment products of Bangladesh. Already Bangladesh has to its credit an impressive record both in terms of the volume exported and its quality. Today Bangladesh is the seventh largest exporter of readymade apparel to the US, 10th largest to the EC countries, ninth largest to Canada and, remarkably enough, the largest shirt exporter to the EC countries. What is still more important is the fact that the garment sector's share in the country's total export earning is as high as 44 per cent.

If the achievement so far is quite impressive. the projected performance in the years ahead is rosier still. In the coming fiscal year, the sector stands to earn no less than Tk 5,700 crore and. the news of all news, 60 per cent of which will simply turn into profit -provided that the industry uses indigenous raw materials, fabrics in particular. A few of the factories have proved that it is possible to solely rely on indigenous raw materials without compromising with the quality of the products.

That the factories use local raw materials and still retain quality is important. For, the textile industry, which has so far failed to gain its past glory, has now a golden chance before it to wrest the initiative from the foreign mills now dominating the world market. The two sectors simply stand to be complementary to each other. There is no scope for neglecting either of the two, for as an allied industry each one depends on the other for its growth. In this respect, therefore, a broader policy covering both sectors needs to be formulated soon for not only lessening the dependence on import of fabrics but also boosting our not-so-well textile industry.

Behind all the success already made possible and yet more to be done so, the single most deciding factor, however, is cheap labour. No scope for denying the fact. Involved in the garment industry are as many as 5,50,000 employees -4,50,000 of them being directly employed and the rest 1,00,000 indirectly. Of this huge army of workers, 90 per cent are women. Now the question is: how do they fare? Do they receive a minimum reasonable share of the booming profit, or enjoy working and other facilities as provided by the labour law? The answer needless to say, is a big 'no'. According to a book titled Bangladesh Poshak Shilpe Nari Sramik, published by Bangladesh Manobadhikar Samonnoy Parishad, compared to eight other countries' labour. Bangladesh's is the cheapest. The sewing charge for a shirt in Bangladesh compared to those of other countries too is abnormally cheaper. Even the service condition and security are also dismal.

All this doubtlessly points to the neglect the workers are subjected to. Therefore, the need for improving the facilities at garment factories and implementation of uniform service rules and code of conduct both for employees and the employers cannot be overemphasised. No industry can thrive for long keeping its most vital resource i.e. the workforce starved. The mounting discontent may one day explode with irresistible force bringing down the whole edifice. There is yet another point that needs to be considered at this moment. The point is that to make a shirt Bangladesh takes the longest time - 25 minutes on an average compared to 14 minutes for the US. Slowest of all, a Bangladeshi worker certainly needs to improve the quality of her life and the employer should be the guarantor of such a life. Only then the garment industry will enjoy a sustainable growth.

## **US and Myanmar**

Among many mixed signals received here over the implementation of the recently-signed agreement on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees, a heartening statement comes from William B Milam, the US ambassador to Bangladesh reiterating his country's support to Dhaka on this issue. He is right in seeing the agreement as anything but perfect and is certainly justified in suggesting that "international options should be opened up" if the present bilateral Dhaka-Yangon accord does not work. It is taken for granted - Mr Milam has also made the point - that Bangladesh can count on support from the United States if the Rohingya issue eventually goes before the UN Security Council.

It will certainly hurt the interest of both Myanmar and Bangladesh if the present accord fails. This country does not want it to fail. So, at this stage, we would rather not speculate on our course of future action, beyond expressing our appreciation for the commitment of support from Washington.

At this moment, what is equally important for the United States is to strengthen international support in favour of the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar and for the transfer of power from the military junta to a democraticallyelected government of Aung Sang Suu Kyi. Here, too, there are mixed signals coming from Yangon, with an impression rapidly gaining ground that military authorities in Myanmar may well be more flexible than in the past, perhaps even exploring ways for coming to terms with the realities in their strife-torn country. What the junta may well need is pressure, a strong pressure, from countries like the United States, Japan and members of the ASEAN countries. Here is an opportunity for Washington for playing a role in the creation of a new, progressive and democratic Myanmar.

# Interview with OIC Secretary General Working for Greater Unity of Islamic States

HE Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference His Excellency Hamid Al Gabid was on a visit to Bangladesh at the end of last month to see for himself the extent of Rohingya refugee problem and to discuss with the government as to what OIC could do towards its solutions. During his visit Gabid spoke at length to Mahfuz Anam, Executive Editor of The Daily Star about the mission of his organisation, the problems he was facing and how he saw the future of the Islamic countries in a unipolar world:

Daily Star (DS) - Now that you have visited the Rohingya refugee camps, what do you think of the extent of the problem and what can OIC do to help Bangladesh in solving

Secretary General Dr Hamid Al Gabid (HG) - We are shocked at the extent and level of atrocity meted out to the Rohingya refugees. We are convinced that it is the result of the policy that Myanmar is following towards its ethnic and religious minorities. We believe therefore that the real and permanent solution of the Rohingya problems lies inside Myanmar - through the changes of the government policies.

We welcome the recent accord reached between Bangladesh and Myanmar. But the important thing now is to make sure that the accord is properly implemented. We think for the refugees to return home certain pre-conditions need to exist. The first thing that needs to be done is to create a sense of security and confidence that those who return will be safe.

DS - What can OIC do to

HG - OIC will do everything to create international public opinion in favour of a just and peaceful solution to this prob-

lem. It will also extend practical assistance wherever it can. However we believe that direct involvement of an international body such as the OIC will not be helpful. OIC enjoys confidence of Muslim countries but not of a country like Myanmar. So our capacity to be useful is limited. I do not think political intervention by a body such as the OIC will be helpful at this stage. However a body such as the UN and its Specialized Agencies can offer effective help, as they are doing. But the best method is bilateral negotiations.

DS - One of the primary goals of OIC is to promote economic and social development of the Islamic countries. How far have you succeeded in promoting that goal?

HG- I must tell you frankly that OIC's major problem is limited financial resources. It is our biggest weakness and I hope that member countries will help to solve it. I think it amounts to very little to create a very useful organisation and then to run it without adequate

DS - So what do you intend to do about it?

HG- What can I do except appeal to our members. As you well know that more than fifty per cent of our members do not clear their dues. Bangladesh is among the minority of countries that clears its contribution in time. In fact most Asian members are up to date. But unfortunately more than half our members do not clear their contribution which is putting tremendous pressure on the capacity of the Organisation to effectively implement its mandate. In the Dakar (Capital of Senegal) Summit we adopted a plan which allows members to regularise all their past dues by paying only 50 per cent.

DS - Any success? HG - Too soon to say. We are also studying the possibility of providing loan from the Islamic Development Bank to fund our development projects. But it is still at a exploratory stage.

DS - Another Important goal of OIC is to foster closer unity among the Islamic countries. How far have you suc-

ceeded in that direction? HG- About unity among the Islamic countries, we cannot say that there is always unity. There are some difficulties based on historical and political reasons. We are trying to overcome them and some day I hope we will succeed. One encouraging factor is the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. You must

DS - By far the largest number of Muslims live in Asia. Within that region, the largest share is in South Asia. So is there any plan of the OIC to

set up a regional bureau here? HO- Not only are the largest number of Muslims from here, but also the Asian members of OIC are the most active. So we would like to have bureau here - and why only one, I think we need several in this region. But it all depends on resources and we



Dr Gabid, a Nigerian, has a Ph D in Islamic Banking. He served as the Executive Director of the Islamic Development Bank, as Under Secretary of the Ministry of Planning before becoming Prime Minister of Nigeria in 1982, in which capacity he served till 1987. He was awarded King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam. He became Secretary General of OIC on January 1, 1989.

remember though they were Islamic countries, many countries subscribed to the ideo! ogy and the world view of the Eastern Bloc countries. This created division among the Islamic countries. With the fall of socialism that divisive factor has disappeared. Now we hope the Islamic countries can come closer. The emergence of new Islamic states from the old Soviet Union is also a very encouraging factor. We hope these new States will bring a new dynamism to the OIC.

do not have much of it. OIC has only one office outside its headquarters and that is in New York, for the United Nations. Compared to bodies such as the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) and the Arab League (both of which are regional bodies) who have offices in practically all parts of the world, an international body such as the OIC is very poorly represented globally.

DS - Will it be right to say that financial problems.

HG- Are blocking us from carrying out our mandate.

DS - We have been hearing about the formation of an Islamic Common Market for a long time. What is happening

HG- It is a good idea but will be a long time in coming. The Islamic countries are at different levels of development and they are dispersed throughout the world. These two factors prevent them from forming trade blocs. But the idea must be kept alive and some day it will come. As you know we have COMSEC, located in Turkey which deals with trade links with some Islamic countries. This may develop further in the future For the moment some Islamic countries are parts of their own regional economic bodies - such Malaysia and Indonesia being parts of ASEAN.

DS - We have also heard about the information programme of the Islamic coun tries. What is it?

HG- Mr Mohsin, who was formerly your Foreign Secretary, is looking after it. I ask him to reply.

Mohsin - In the recent Cairo meeting of the Ministers of Information of the OIC countries, it was decided to formulate a Cultural Strategy for the Islamic countries. In this regard studies will be undertaken to see what can be done. To promote the world wide knowledge of our cultural heritage we propose to introduce a television programme called ISLAMVISION. There are also studies going on about information strategy for Islamic countries.

DS - This may be a bit of a delicate question for you to an swer but I will ask it anyway. It often felt that absence of democracy in many Islamic countries prevents them from forging closer unity. What is your view on it?

HG-You are right it is a bit delicate for me to answer Form of government is the internal matter of a country and OIC does not involve itself with internal matters. We work

pelled from the official opposi

tion Conservative Party (CP)

after making a parliamentary

speech in support of talks

neo-Naxi Afrikaner Weeerstand

Beweging Piet Rudolph

stepped down from his posi-

tion a week after the referen-

dum, citing dissatisfaction

with leader Eugene Terrebi-

anche's autocratic leadership.

folk hero in right-wing circles,

favours the right going into

Codesa to make a public stand

for their policies and then - if

their policies are rejected -

walking out to launch an

running high and a split is

imminent. The CP was the

main force that urged de Klerk

to test his reform at the polls.

They became prominent after

their victory in the

Potchesstroom by-election.

forcing de Klerk to call the

whether it should accept the

bait or not, and decided to

participate only after a stormy

The CP was unsure as to

In the CP tensions are also

armed struggle.

referendum.

Rudolph, something of a

Secretary-general of the

"with other races."

closely with all countries and what form of government they have is the choice of the people of the country concerned.

DS - It has been written in the western media that with the end of the Cold War ideological battle between capitalism and socialism, there will be a revival of the ideological battle between the Islamic countries and the West. What

do you think? HG- If there is cultural aggression on us we will of course resist. But I do not think that such a scenario is inevitable, or even likely. think there is a lot of scope for co-operation between the West

and the Islamic countries. DS - Given the unipolar world which we now have, the role of a body such as the OIC has become far more important than before. Is the OIC ready to play such a role?

HC- You are very right. The roles of international organisations such as the OIC have become more important before. But to play an effective role we need far greater unity among our members - unity among the Islamic bloc will have to become much stronger.

DS - Any sign of such unity coming about? HG- Not yet, but it will

DS - What are some of your personal goals. What would you like to achieve as the head of

HO- I would like to work to bring about greater unity among the Islamic countries. My second goal is to foster closer economic ties among our members. I would also like to see OfC doing something for the Muslims who live as minorities in other countries for their economic betterment and cultural advancement. would also to work for a greater understanding be tween the Muslim and the non Muslim world and bring about greater tolerance about our cultural and religious differences.

DS - Thank you, your Excellency, for your time.

# De Klerk Toughens his Line in Multi-party Talks

Mondli Makhanya writes from Johannesburg

As Nelson Mandela faces the break-up of his marriage to Winnie, he finds negotiations

towards a new South African constitution getting tougher. Since President de Klerk won a

OR South Africa's constitutional negotiation process, the overwhelming Yes vote in March's white referendum was a signal to fly, but the process is now stuck in a crisis.

Ongoing violence in the townships is fast becoming the major obstacle to negotiations, as chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Movement demands that the Zulu King be represented at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa)

Furthermore, the government of President F W de Klerk, buoyed by the backing it received from white voters in the referendum, is taking a much harder line. The African National Congress (ANC) is finding it much more difficult to get its proposals accepted at Codesa.

After the referendum, the government announced its proposals for an interim executive to rule the country in the transition period and oversee the elections for a constitution-making body.

It wants transitional coun cils, which it had earlier proposed would run the country in this period, to have only advisory powers that the president could overrule. The ANC and its allies are demanding executive powers and control of public broadcasting, the security force and the

economy. The government also insists that such an interim authority cannot be installed before the township violence - which claims on an average 10 lives a day - is halted. The ANC says such an interim authority is the very body that will help

quell the violence. The government has also rejected an ANC call for an international monitoring force to

big Yes in the white referendum his government is taking a harder line in the talks. Meantime, he paid a visit to Nigeria where the unbelievable happened.



THE UNLIKELY COUPLE Presidents Babangida and de Klerk swayed to the tune of Reach Out and Touch Somebody New

observe the violence. An ANC demand for an international force has been given greater impetus by a recent rampage through an ANC-supporting squatter camp by members of the 32 Battalion, which comprises Angolans who helped the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the Namibian bush

The government is closing in with Buthelezi on the Zulu King issue, with de Klerk agreeing with the Inkatha leader that he will see to it that the King is admitted to Codesa

The ANC is now seeking to draw in the Pan Africanist



Congress (PAC) with which it convened the Patriotic Front (PF) last year. The PF floundered when the ANC backtracked on an agreement that the "multi-party conference" as Codesa was then referred to - should be held in a neutral country under a neutral chair-

Both parties will be reconvening the PF. The two could unite on the demand for an international body to supervise the transition, and this would make the PAC participation at Codesa more acceptable.

The PAC is beginning to feel that it could be sidelined and fare badly in elections if it does not take part in the electoral

process. Pressure has also been exerted on it from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the frontline states - the countries which house its main offices and military

Nigerian President and OAU chairman Ibrahim Babangida even arranged the first bilateral meeting between the PAC and the government in mid-April in a bid to satisfy the PAC insistence on meeting in a neutral venue.

The right-wing movement is also fearing marginalisation. Uaving been trounced at the referendum, pressures are strong on the right-wing to join the negotiations. It is now clear they do not have the support of the majority of the white population and their capacity to wage an armed struggle has been severely hampered.

Sections of the movement want to go into talks and argue there for "self-determination" for white people. The more militant section, realising that constitutional avenues are now closed, are preparing for an armed struggle.

A bomb exploded at a Johannesburg funfair. A group calling itself the White Wolves claimed responsibility, boasting that such attacks would continue until whites won "self-determination."

Tensions have already

claimed their first casualties. A member of parliament was excollapsed. The personal high ambitions of the dictators and

the autocrat had caused seri-

ous sufferings to the common

people in many countries of

the world. These autocrats

killed many innocent people to

retain themselves in power.

But the regime of the autocrats

finally collapse, Mr Najibullah's

case being the latest one. We

hope that leaders in the third

world countries will take

Meanwhile, we would

warmly appreciate initiative

and move by the United Na-

tions in resolving the Afghan

crisis. We sincerely hope that

peace and stability will soon be

established in Afghanistan.

personally wish to find Kabul

lesson from Najibullah's ulti-

along with their vested groups

speed up the reform process.

Mandela."

Klerk's "double agenda," nor of

causes meeting. Now party members admit they should not have fallen for de Klerk's

It is widely anticipated that more liberal members of the party will walk out and go to Codesa, and its 71-year-old leader Andries Treunicht will retire from politics. The end of the party would then be in

Amid all these fragmentations, brazen talk of the Third Freedom Struggle abounds in right-wing circles. This refers to the war that the Afrikaner republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal unsuccessfully waged against the British empire at the turn of the century.

Nobody underestimates the right's ability to wage terror campaigns, but it is unlikely to derail the negotiation process.

The right's emotional appeal seems to have fizzled and de Klerk seems to have the bulk of the Afrikaners behind him. He is riding on a crest, having neutralised the right and strengthened his position against the left opponents at Codesa.

All that is left now is for him and his party to fare well in elections for the constitution-making body, expected before the year's end. He has already started forays into the black areas to promote his

In between, de Klerk has made a breakthrough in black Africa by making a successful trip to Nigeria, as CAMERON DUODU reports here form Lagos.

THE unimaginable happened. President Ibrahim Babangida and his wife. Maryam, linked arms with President de Klerk, and swayed to music to the words of Diana Ross and the Supremes; Reach Out and Touch Somebody New.

As the words echoed around the banqueting hall of the Sheraton Hotel in Nigeria's new capital, Abuja, other Nigerians linked arms with South Africans and swayed in

Nigeria, one of the most implacable enemies of the white minority regime in Pretoria, had publicly embraced its former foe. Babangida said he had invited de Klerk to encourage him to

In his speech Babangida likened the efforts of de Klerk to those of the black heroes who "blazed the trial in the long march to racial harmony. including Chief Alber Lithuli, Steve Biko, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Robert Sobukwe, Oliver Tambo and the "indomitable Nelson

It was as if the speech writers had never heard of Nelson Mandela's denunciation of de

the existence of arms of de Klerk's government that have been pumping money and resources into inciting Inkatha to wage war on supporters of the ANC.

The talks did not produce any concrete results, such as the establishment of diplomatic relations or the opening of formal commercial links But the door is now open for informal contracts: De Klerk was accompanied by the heads of top South African business organisations.

Nigeria is chair of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and at the next summit it could be put on the defen-

sive for inviting de Klerk. The shock waves that occur when the "devil" comes to dinner are rocking Babangida's people and their fellow Africans. As a portent of the turmoil in Nigerian foreign relations, the PAC, which was supposed to arrive here for talks with de Klerk, failed to show up - despite receiving Nigerian support in the past.

- GEMINI NEWS

MONDLI MAKHANYA is on the staff of the Weekly Mail of Johannesburg, CAMERON DUODU is a freelance Ghanaian journalist.

### Holier than thou

Str. We have a saying in the sub-continent that before you peek into your neighbour's backyard peek into your own. The self-appointed policeman of the world was apparently so busy peeking into his neighbour's backyard, he forgot all about his own. The race riots in the major cities of the USA is ample proof. Whither human rights, and justice, for which America is famous? Racism is put to shame, at this blatant display in the land of honey and gold' and equal opportu-

P Haque DOHS, Dhaka Cantt.

Radio, TV, FDC

Sir, Since my boyhood, whatever the radio and BTV dramas and BFDC-produced films I enjoyed, a considerable number of those depicted: an

innocent boy comes to Dhaka and marriage, even I could not passes his times in troubles. Then either he gets a job in a big company and subsequently the company owner's daughter falls in love with him which ends in marriage, or he starts studying and emerges as an excellent student in his class. Subsequently, a very rich man's daughter, who happens to be his class-mate falls in love with him, which is also shown ending in a happy marriage. I find all these as subjective

presentation by the mass media. The producers of this sort of dramas and films do not have any objective perception. I am a student of Dhaka University and in my circle, I am known to be a good student. In my department, there have been many rich men's daughters. Keeping aside love

from a rural village. In the create a good friendship with early days of this Dhaka life, he any one of them in these long five years. see, love is rather highly commercial. The students get

> cost-benefit analysis. I have not seen or heard even a single example which runs parallel to those radio, TV and cinema presentations.

involved in love after thorough

Therefore, I request the producers to objectively observe life in general and particularly in academies and present this objectivity to the public so that the succeeding entrants to Dhaka do not have such a subjective perception. Md Abdur Rouf

Department of International Relations, DU Fate of dictator

Sir. At long last, Mr Naifbu

M Zahidul Hague llah's reign in Afghanistan has

Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka

in our SAARC forum.

mate fate.