

Need for a SAARC Chamber

The proposal of the Indian Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham) for formation of an independent chamber of commerce for the SAARC region merits fullest consideration of the government and trade bodies in South Asia.

Formation of a SAARC chamber of commerce would open up opportunities for the leaders of trade and industry in the region to come together. Political leaders lay down policies. Leaders of trade and industry can see quicker the practical aspects of the policy measures in their actual application.

Countries in the SAARC region have embarked on a programme of structural reforms. Components of the reform package in each individual country contain elements which are common to the region as a whole.

Assocham also speaks of improving the bargaining position of countries in the SAARC region in global market. This could probably be achieved through a harmonized and coordinated export marketing strategy for products, such as jute manufactures and tea, where the region as a whole has the advantage of being a major supplier in the world market.

Impasse at ZIA

With the sealing off of the office of the Dhaka Customs Agents Association (DCAA) at Zia International Airport by the Bangladesh Biman and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), an impasse in import and export has been created. The hardest hit is the export of vegetables and fish.

All this is however because of lack of co-operation between the DCAA and the CAA. Sure enough, they have their own line of reasoning and are locked in a tug of war putting the country's interests in danger. While the CAA claims that the DCAA was asked to vacate a building in the Biman's cargo complex only to meet a stubborn defiance, the other party lays the blame solely at the CAA's door.

Maybe both sides have their points, but the essential truth is that exporters are incurring losses to the tune of crores of Taka and that for no fault of their own. It is the absence of simple formalities of clearing and forwarding done by the customs official that has been responsible for no movement of goods on a flight.

The fact is that both the DCAA and the CAA have been party to the breach of contract and therefore must be ready to share the responsibilities for the loss. A settlement of the crisis at the court is time-consuming and therefore undesirable.

New Year Thoughts : Celebrations Spontaneous

As in the previous years, this year also scholars talked and wrote about the origin of the Bengali era. This year's discussions were the most serious and sustained because they were accompanied by a related debate on whether or not to treat the coming year, 1400, as the last of the old century or the first of the new.

Equally interesting is the fact that two standard dictionaries, both bearing the name of Oxford, have given two different meanings to the term century. This shows that either view is tenable and it is all a question of which interpretation appeals to you.

Like the average American school boy who knows that history's most important event is the discovery of America by Columbus, the average Bengalee will have no hesitation in claiming that the most momentous event for Bengal during this fourteenth century is the emergence of Bangladesh.

The art of printing originated in China, with the purpose of propagating Buddhism through religious literatures and pictures. Buddha's portraits were carved into wood for block printing as early as 650 AD, and the oldest book, Itiraka Sutra, dates back to 868 AD.

Later, in the 15th century, Johann Gutenberg printed the Bible using movable types in Europe. After invention of movable types by Gutenberg, printing activities spread all over the world at a tremendous speed. Printing came in use in Italy in 1465, France (1470), Spain (1474), England (1477), Denmark (1482), Sweden (1483), Portugal (1495), Russia (1553), America (1640), and in India, September 6, 1556.

Since then we have come a long way improving the art, expanding its utility and modernising the technique. Of late we have been holding congresses and meetings of experts and entrepreneurs, exchanging information and views and determining processes and practices towards further improvement.

The first World Print Congress (WPC) was held in Singapore in 1978. The 2nd WPC, attended by over 400 international delegates, was held in San Francisco from October 19 to 23, 1981. It was hosted by the Printing Industries of America, Inc. and was sponsored by six big printing organisations.

To the Editor...

BTV and society Sir, We were watching a drama telecast by BTV last week. It was a social one about the tragic effect of misunderstanding, quarrel and divorce of a husband and a wife on a child.

Share of assets Sir, As a part of the SAARC meetings, Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina while having a talk with the Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif has raised an important issue pertaining to the division of assets. It is sincerely expected that Pakistan will take necessary steps to divide assets and disburse the genuine share to Bangladesh as soon as possible.

Munira Khan Green Road, Dhaka

As for the greatest genius, in fact, the greatest man who has had a most pervasive influence in shaping the mind of the Bengalee race, an influence which will prove secretly and mysteriously potent for centuries to come, the consensus of opinion is in favour of Rabindranath. The poet is not the maker of a nation in the political sense, but in a profounder sense, in the cultural sense, he is the grand maker.

In our celebrations of the past few days, we have remembered the greatest sons of Bengal who lived and did their life's work during this century and in this roll call to honour statesmen took their seats along with poets, writers, artists, scientists and freedom fighters.

According to one view — and the view has not been seriously challenged the most creative phase of Bengal is over; in fact was terminated even before India won her freedom. Indeed, the pre-eminence which Bengal and Bengalees enjoyed throughout the nineteenth century, roughly corresponding to the thirteenth century of the Bengali era, gradually faded out during the first quarter of the next century.

If this is a fact then one is permitted to raise a relevant question: was it not all plotted by the British, and by Lord Curzon in particular? Lord Curzon was the master-mind behind the first Bengal Partition in the early years of the century. When the Partition could not be sustained politically, came the second operation in the form of shifting the capital from Calcutta to Delhi, situated in a more quiescent part of the empire. This was an act which was nothing short of hitting slow and painful.

With the Partition remaining a fact, the two segments of the former Bengal are now busy finding out ways and means of making good the loss. Pakistanis suffered from a deep-seated fear and anxiety in their attitude to East Bengalees whom they renamed East Pakistanis. No such fear and anxiety troubled their minds in respect of their portion of the former Punjab.

What I am offering is but a tentative view of a complicated chapter of Indian history. It seems to me that Bengal losing her Metropolitan role and being reduced to a mere provincial role in the context of all-India progress and politics is mysteriously related to Bengal losing her creative energy. What ensued is a sagging of the spirit. The Second Partition, that of 1947, was a blow from which recovery was

It is a pity that the Dhaka Declaration of the SAARC Summit held out no positive hope in this direction. In the weeks preceding the summit, communal animity in West Bengal and in Bangladesh was put to the severest test. It goes to the credit of the peoples and the governments concerned that a holocaust was averted. As for Bangladesh, the communal elements took the fullest advantage of the Babri mosque incident but they got no support from the bulk of the people. The climate in which the Summit was held was not particularly auspicious. But the climate in which it ended was perceptively improved.

The New Year came in this improved climate of Indo-Bangladesh relations. In the celebrations here and there, there has been a separateness which is physical and spatial, and an oneness which is emotional, tinged with memory which happens to be a shared memory. The clan which marked the celebrations in the city was, to say the least, unprecedented. According to some observers, it was unbelievable. Was it only for the year 1400? For the well-known fact that Rabindranath, by the sheer magic of that poem, had prepared the whole Bengali race, to receive the year, had left us, those of us who are living in the year, in a mood of expectancy? Also, in a mood to voice a grateful people's reply to a poet's question — was it after all a question or a plea? — To his readers? Hardly a function was held, here in Bangladesh, without that poem being recited, without Tagore being the object of a special homage.

The celebrations have been organised by every conceivable group: political, cultural, groups strongly knit or loosely gathered; groups that only meet in their morning constitutional, that sometimes breakfast together; by individuals in their homes where friends have met and have partaken of a cultural feast. It is as if a nation felt a call from somewhere to respond to something which lay deep in the nation's psyche. I will carry in my memory, of all the much publicised and grandiose functions, the one, held in the morning of the second day of the new year, one that bore all the marks of spontaneity, with an assorted audience of morning walkers in the open, under a cloud-laden sky. Beginning with a most engaging disorder, the function went on for a couple of hours with renowned artists rubbing shoulders with fledgling amateurs. And wonder of wonders, a vintage song from Chandidas rendered by Sohrab Hossain! I thought that with that song from Chandidas, was vindicated the one thousand years' heritage of the Bengalee culture.

ADVANCEMENT IN PRINTING INDUSTRY

Flashes from the Fifth World Print Congress

by Rathindra Nath Sanyal

credit of preparing the first types of an Indian script, the Lingua Malabar (Tamil script). More than a century later, the government brought out a weekly called Gazeta de Goa.

In 1674-75, the second attempt by an enterprising Gujarati named Bhimjee Pareka, was taken for a printing project, but it failed due to lack of competent technicians. In 1805, an edition of the Bhagavadgita was printed by a wooden press at Miraj. This is perhaps one of the oldest instances of block printing in India.

The third attempt to establish a printing press is credited to the Danish missionary Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, who came to India in 1706, and established a foundry of Malabar types and in 1713 they printed 32 books in the Malabar language.

PRINTING IN BENGAL (1778-1860): In 1772, the East India Company realised the necessity of learning Bengali. The task of preparing books for this purpose was assigned to Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, a civil servant of the company, who compiled a grammar of Bengali in 1778 at Hooghly. The types of Bengali characters were cast by Charles Wilkins, a master craftsman who grew to be a pioneer in the art of preparing types of both Bengali and Devnagari alphabets. He taught the art to Panchanan Karmakar, an Indian blacksmith. Wilkins was appointed in 1800 as the first librarian to the Indian office and was knighted in 1833. He died in 1836.

The Bengali Gazette was the first weekly newspaper in this sub-continent which first appeared from Calcutta on January 27, 1780. According to the name of the editor, James Hickey, this paper was called Hickey's Gazette. Hickey was arrested repeatedly for making virulent attacks against the then Governor General, and the paper was ultimately shut down by the government.

offset. With the introduction of electronically etched cylinders in the photogravure system, the quality and speed of production have increased with a cut in the cost.

Automation has also captured the field of finishing department. With the introduction of sophisticated machine in the binding section, workers safety has been ensured. Computer control finishing system has improved the efficiency tremendously in the web-offset press.

With the advancement of technology in printing, the basic structure of the industry has changed dramatically. The wave has also touched the third world countries partially or fully, with or without total technical support. Due to lack of adequate technical personnel, in cases, some projects had failed. We have to understand that trained man behind the machine is a must.

By the end of 18th century, Calcutta boasted a number of printing establishments.

Revolution in the Printing Industry

During the last two decades, a tremendous revolution in printing industry has been brought about by electronics, optics and computers. The computerised composition systems, desk top publication (DTP), phototypesetter (PTS), digitised typesets, auto page makers, colour scanner, graphic cameras, enlarger, plate-maker, multi colour web-fed and sheet-fed offset printer have come into use. As a result, the accuracy and productivity have increased with reduced cost and time. The traditional pre-press steps such as typesetting, paste up, camera, processing and plate making have been reduced by computer to a more accurate plate system. Digital data are directly sent from a workstation to expose simultaneously, via a spark discharge system.

Waterless web-offset printing is a new concept under consideration in western world and such machine is expected to be introduced there by June 1993. In this system, silicon coated plate will be used to derive high resolution with very close continuous-tone possible. With the improvements in quality of photopolymer plates, web-fed letterpress and flexography are competing with

house to start low-cost wire editions from various regional centers in the coming 10 years. The International Press Telecommunication Council has set up a committee for worldwide format standardization and simplification through the use of satellites. The networks between computers and printing units will continue to occupy a significant position.

With the modernisation of the newspaper industry, job description of employees will be changed. A technician must require to have the wide knowledge of all the three pre-press areas.

The work of journalists too is overlapping production tasks and no longer ends behind the typewriter. Work sequences and organisational structure will also be changed. Gravure technology is resurging and making headway and will soon make gravure printed daily newspapers a possibility, if the high cylinder costs can be reduced. Gravure printing is gaining popularity day by day.

Media by the year 2001

There had been two specific areas of emerging technology during the last 10 years. The revolutionary impact of the microprocessor, the personal computers (PCs), and advanced software have catapulted the printing industry into hitherto unforeseen arenas.

By now pre-press is witnessing some of the greatest and most revolutionary changes in the field. Digital video cameras and high definition television (HDTV) will lead to the passing out of film in the newspaper industry in the coming years.

A few big electronic companies have recently launched their still video camera systems. Colour retouching will use voice recognition systems. The operators will give verbal commands for colour corrections.

Transmission of data will become more and more fool-proof and cheaper and it will be possible for a publishing house to start low-cost wire editions from various regional centers in the coming 10 years. The International Press Telecommunication Council has set up a committee for worldwide format standardization and simplification through the use of satellites. The networks between computers and printing units will continue to occupy a significant position.

With the modernisation of the newspaper industry, job description of employees will be changed. A technician must require to have the wide knowledge of all the three pre-press areas. The work of journalists too is overlapping production tasks and no longer ends behind the typewriter. Work sequences and organisational structure will also be changed. Gravure technology is resurging and making headway and will soon make gravure printed daily newspapers a possibility, if the high cylinder costs can be reduced. Gravure printing is gaining popularity day by day.

However, when there is a need for high speed printing with colours, it will also require for capital investment in sophisticated machinery. The large publication houses will purchase new generation machines, but it may prove difficult for smaller groups to compete. And, at the same time the entry barrier for newcomers may become harder. But still, the printing industry as well as the media, hopefully, bear with the advancement by 2001.

The writer, Production Manager of The Daily Star, attended the 5th World Print Congress in Delhi.

OPINION

The UNO

Simply put, without the critical and detailed knowledge of all chapters of the United Nations Charter, in the past in the columns of an English daily, I made, for a number of reasons, very brief comments on the role of the United Nations in the world's political, economic, social and military affairs. I made the point that economically, socially, and even politically, the UNO's performances have been commendable. My remarks were published in early 1991 when the Gulf crisis was moving towards a full-blown war between two very unequal parties.

In spite of my knowledge of and regards for the greatest political leaders and statesmen of the world, I made the remarks that the business of the UN is to prevent and not to participate in any war even under the extreme provocations. If we ignore this, then the dream of 'the Parliament of men and the Federation of the World will be shattered', for ever.

But the Western powers, under the leadership of the USA, used the UNO as an instrument of war to invade Iraq and to destroy it. The consequences of the war were nothing sort of tragedies. So my humble suggestion is that it will be a far better choice to keep the UNO busy about other things instead of using it as an instrument of war and involving it in military conflicts. There should be other types of organization like the NATO to participate in the conflicts which have been breaking out after the chaotic decline of Socialism in Eastern Europe for reasons which are not well-understood by the politicians of the capitalist countries.

May I conclude by saying that socialism has come to stay and it cannot be destroyed. Societies change over time. Even the so-called capitalist countries have a good element of socialism in their economic and social planning process to promote their overall welfare. That is why all economic plans particularly of the developing countries, are said to support mixed economics. Capitalism and Socialism — these two words should not be taken as dogmas, because there are so many variants of the two and societies keep on changing.

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