Dhaka, Wednesday, April 21, 1993

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. In a recent meeting of Assocham, held in Calcutta, the leaders of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) from Bangladesh supported the idea, and stressed the need for the formation of such a body. An independent and separate SAARC chamber of commerce and industry can contribute significantly in forging an alliance of countries of the region in such matters. But care must be taken that only the genuine trade and industry representative bodies are brought in this chamber, and that no one is allowed to exploit such bodies for narrow ends.

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. They have more intimate knowledge and experience of how markets respond to policy prescriptions. Coordinated active cooperation of leaders of trade and industry in SAARC countries can thus ease the process of implementation of policy measures aimed at achieving deeper economic collaboration in the region. The recent agreement on SAARC Preserential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) provides a case in point where active and coordinated cooperation of the leaders of trade and industry could help expedite its implementation. Drawing up lists of products on which preferential rates of tariff in intra-regional trade would apply could very well be an item on the top of the agenda for the next round of SAPTA negotiations. A list of products eligible for special tariff concessions to be extended to the least developed member countries needs also to be agreed upon. The process of negotiations on such matters is usually lengthy, laborious and could even turn out to be irksome. On the other hand, if a SAARC chamber of commerce and industry comes into being, then pooling its knowledge of import regime and tariff structure in each country, it could do an exercise on its own and, hopefully come up with an agreed list of products on which concessions could be allowed. This could speed up the pace of official level negotiations and render it easier for the political leaders to come to a consensus

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, in such areas as trade liberalisation, financial market deregulation, exchange rate management, tariff rationalisation, and privatisation. Trade and industry are very much involved in the end results of the ongoing reforms in the region. A body like the proposed SAARC chamber of commerce could provide a forum for the leaders of trade and industry in the region to compare notes and exchange ideas. Such a process would help them reach better understanding of reforms and could also assist policy harmonization at national level. Such a body would also prove useful in identifying investment opportunities in the region.

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. One report appearing in a vernacular daily estimated on Saturday a total loss of Tk three crore just in a couple of days. Of this vegetables alone account for Tk one and a half crore. If the stalemate continues, the loss will have to be counted not only on account of the rotten vegetables and fish but also in terms of markets for those goods abroad

going other competitors' way. All this is however because of lack of co-opera--tion 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. They charge that the CAA sealed their office at dead of night, Friday, without prior notice. Requisite papers and documents are in the sealed office and they have stopped working in protest. The other complaint the DCAA makes against the CAA is that the latter has asked it to move to another building fixing, unilaterally, a rent of Tk 36,000 per month. The rent, according to DCAA, is abnormally high and, for the as-

sociation, impossible to bear.

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. Now who will be responsible for this irresponsible and potentially dangerous action? Importers of the perishable items in foreign countries have made frantic telephone calls to know the actual position. They will not enjoy being told of the uncertainties in sending the specific items. Already some of them have threatened to look for alternative sources for those daily necessities. For the exporters of the non-conventional goods, this may prove to be a telling blow. It is impossible to believe that the authorities concerned are unaware of the impacts of this senseless wrangles between them.

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. Better it would be, if the concerned ministries looked into the matter and restored peace.

momentous event for Bengal during this fourteenth century is the emergence of Bangladesh. Equally the man who has most profoundly influenced the course of events in this part of the world is Shaikh Mulibur Rahman. Some of the Shaikh's most avowed detractors in recent days have paid him this tribute.

S in the previous years, this year also scholars

the origin of the Bengali era.

This year's discussions were

the most serious and sustained

because they were accompant-

ed 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. The debate goes

on, in spite of the fact that the

first view has been officially

endorsed. We have to take

cognizance of the fact that in

West Bengal the other view

appears to have found favour.

While we are celebrating the

last year of the fourteenth.

they are welcoming the advent

of the fifteenth century. So, as

things stand now, the Bangla-

speaking world has failed to

adopt a common view in

respect of the definition of a

century and subtle

mathematical arguments have

been advanced in support of

both the views. This is going to

be matter of historical cu-

riosity for the future genera-

fact that two standard dic-

tionaries, both bearing the

name of Oxford, have given two

different meaning to the term

century. This shows that ei-

ther view is tenable and it is all

a question of which interpre-

school boy who knows that his-

tory's most important event is

the discovery of America by

Columbus, the average

Bengalee will have no hesita-

tion in claiming that the most

Like the average American

tation appeals to you.

Equally interesting is the

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

According to one view -

and the view has not been se-

fighters.

riously 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 ninetcenth century, roughly corresponding to the thirteenth century of the Bengali era, gradually faded out during the first quarter of the

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

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. Pakistant rulers suffered from a deep-scated 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. With East Bengal now vell estab-

lished as independent

Bangladesh, and West Bengal

as a small, border state of fed-

PASSING CLOUDS Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

Bengal below the belt. And it achieved its end. With the political centre of gravity removed from Bengal, our political leaders gradually withdrew from the arena of all-India politics, with our Subhas Boses losing the game to leaders from northern and western India, our Fazlul Hug's losing the battle similarly to leaders from UP and Bombay.

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-Indian progress and politics is mysteriously related to Bengal losing her creative energy. What ensured is a sagging of the spirit. The Second Partition, that of 1947, was a blow from which recovery was

eral India, and with no hangover of Pakistani fear and suspicton, the ground has been cleared for a fresh and mutually beneficial relationship to be established between Bangladesh and West Bengal, within the orbit of Indo-Bangladesh relationship. New Delhi suffers from no such fear complex as haunted Islamabad, and West Bengal has every reason to be happy in India, Bangladesh being no paradise on earth. Both will keep the hard political realities in mind, and both will fulfil their creative potentials independently. At the same time, as both share a common cultural and literary heritage, there should be no bar to an acceptable free flow of books, journals and other items of art and culture, not to speak of an un-

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 amity 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. All the seven leaders made their contribution to the creating of this climate. A reticent Narasimha Rao left an impression of goodwill, and a hint that standing irritants in the path of better relationship

will be removed. 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 a 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,

offset. With the introduction of

electronically etched cylinders

in the photogravure system,

the quality and speed of pro-

duction have increased with a

tured the field of finishing de-

partment. With the introduc-

tion of sophisticated machine

in the binding section, work-

ers safety has been ensured.

Computer control finishing

system has improved the effi-

ciency tremendously in the

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

With the advancement of

Automation has also cap-

cut in the cost.

web-offset press.

New Year Thoughts: Celebrations Spontaneous 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 constitutionals, that sometimes breakfast together; by individuals in their homes where friends have met and have partaken of a cultural least. It is as if a nation lelt a call from somewhere to respond to something which lay deep in the nation's psyche. I will earry 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 morn ing 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 artistes 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 Candidas, 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

RINTING industry is also called a knowledge industry' or 'information processing industry." It plays an important role in the development of a nation as well as the society. It is necessary to develop printing industry to remove illiteracy and ignorance from the It is the printed words that have developed and transformed the society in many directions.

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, Hiraka 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 longway 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.

One such latest meet was the Fifth World Print Congress held in New Delhi, India, from February 28 to March 4, 1993. The theme of the congress was Print Communication — A Global Vision. The congress had covered a wide range of topics on contemporary issues of printing technologies.

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. The theme was "Universal Solutions." In 1985 the 3rd WPC was held in Hong Kong and was attended by 580 delegates. In Rio de Janerio, Brazil, the 4th WPC was held from May 6 to 10, 1989 and was attended by 789 delegates from 34 countries.

The 5th WPC, the latest one, was sponsored by the International Confederation for Printing and Allied Industries (Intergraf). It was hosted by the All India Federation of Master Printers (AIFMP), with support from the Indian Newspapers Society (INS) and the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference (AINEC).

The speakers at the 5th WPC were C R Irani, MD and Editor-in-Chief of the Statesman; D N Malhotra Publisher; Robert W. Hallman. Technologist: Goro Fukuoka, Chairman, the Japan Federation of Printing Industries; J Michael Adams, Drexel University, Philadelphia; Jagadish Parikh, Director, Technova Groups; KK Puri, Teacher George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology. Toronto: Michael Stevenson, Heidelberg; Rory J Cowan, R R Donnelley and Sons Company, USA; John Wicker, Alga; Homayoun Amighi, Afga, USA and Erling Dessau, Resident Representative of the UN in

Printing in the Indian Subcontinent

The first attempt on printing started in the Indian subcontinent at Goa in 1562. The king of Portugal dispatched a printing press and technicians, to Abyssinia via the Cape route, bypassing India. But the patriarch accompanying the press halted en route at Goa. There he died on December 22, 1562. Later this press never went to Abyssinia and was installed in Goa. One of the technician who accompanied the press, was Joao de Bustamante, a Spaniard, who became the pioneer of the art of printing, and another was Joao Gonsalves, an expert blacksmith, to whom went the

credit of preparing the first Lingua Malabar (Tamil script). government brought out a weekly called Gazeta de Goa. In 1674-75, the second at-

tempt by an enterprising Gujrati named Bhimjee Pareka, was taken for a printing project, but it failed due to lack of competent technicians. In Bhagvadgita was printed by a wooden press at Miraj. This is perhaps one of the oldest instances of block printing in

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 pioncer 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

sub-continent which first apto the name of the editor, paper was called Hickey's Governor General, and the paby the government.

types of an Indian script, the More than a century later, the

1805, an edition of the

The Bengal Gazette was the first weekly newspaper in this peared from Calcutta on January 27, 1780. According James Hugustus Hickey, this Gazette. Hickey was arrested repeatedly for making virulent attacks against the then per was ultimately shut down

The Hastings era was less troublesome for the press Hastings abolished censorship in 1818.

hindered flow of human traffic.

In 1875, was published the Indian Statesman. And the Statesman became the first Indian newspaper to switch over to Linotype from traditional hand compose and they also installed the rotary press in 1908, possibly the first rotary press in the East.

The Jugantar was the first Bengali newspaper and it was the mouthpiece of the Bengal revolution against the British.

By the end of 18th century, Calculta 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 typelonts, auto page makers, colour scanner, graphic cameras, enlarger, plate-maker, multi colour webfed and sheet-fed offset printer have come into use. As a result, the accuracy and productivity have increased with reduced cost and time. The trad tional pre-press steps such as type setting, 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 continuoustone possible.

With the improvements in quality of photopolymer plates, web-fed letterpress and flexography are competing with

pointed out that Indians in the

World Bank have a dominating

voice in fixing policies for

Bangladesh and the conflict of

interest this involved. But they

have failed to understand what

practical effects this is having

on our lives. By removal of tar-

iffs and other protective

mechanisms our industrialists

are being forced out of pro-

duction. Many farmers includ-

ing jute growers cannot face

the 'unfair' trade practices.

Smuggling is becoming ram-

pant and our position is being

reduced to a market for goods

of neighbouring countries. In

times of heavy rains the 'water

gates' in neighbouring coun-

tries are opened and we have

to face disastrous floods. In the

dry season untlateral with-

drawal of water force us into

destitution. To add to this the

World Bank is now pressuriz-

ing donors to cut aid to

Bangladesh. It is not difficult

for us to know who would gain

from such a cut. When will our

leaders open their eyes to this

flagrant manipulation of our

national interests?

of adequate technical personnel, in cases, some projects had failed. We have to understand that trained man behind the machine is a must. 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 unforescen are-

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 com-

panies have recently launched their still video camera systems. Colour retouching will use voice recognition systems. The operators will give verbal commands for colour correc-

Transmission of data will become more and more foolproof and cheaper and it will 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

be possible for a publishing

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. The requirement of faster, up-to-the-moment and reliable news communication links is being met through revolutionary innovations in the

telecommunications field 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.

quences of the war were

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 par-

Inspite 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 consenothing 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 wellunderstood 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.

Dr. M. T. Haq Retired Senior UNIDO Adviser. Pallabi, Mirpur, Dhaka.

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. But two scenes of the drama shocked us profoundly where some hired musclemen with arms got away with whatever they wanted and nothing happened afterwards to them.

In my opinion, BTV showed a very irresponsible attitude toward the society by allowing some criminal acts to go unpunished. Nobody in no way should get the idea of going scotfree after committing a crime and that law and order and justice simply do not pre-

Green Road, Dhaka

Munira Khan

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 assests. It is sincerely expected that Pakistan will take necessary steps to divide assests and disburse the genuine share to Bangladesh as soon as possible. M Zahidul Hague

Asstt Prof. BAI, Dhaka "Letter writer's

Sir, Congratulation to Nazia Chowdhury for her write up "Letter Writer's Right" published in The Daily Star on April 07, 1993. However, some

of the observations are as un-

right"

Asstt. Prof. M Zahidul Haque has the writer's right, what about the 'reader's rights?' The Editors of different newspapers, by publishing the letter written by Asstt. Prof Haque "On the same subject/theme" which often would not have any "substance" for the nation, have overlooked the point that democratic

There has been enough about Asstt. Prof. Haque and

rights are circumscribed for

now it is upto the editors of the newspapers to follow democratic journalism or not. Meanwhile, the space for the letters in every newspaper has been reduced, and disgusted ones may even say it would be better if it is eliminated and then "we shall not have to read such write-ups."

Andrew D'Costa 46 Hemendra Das Road Dhaka-1100

Why cut aid to Bangladesh? Sir, The Asian Development

Bank President who recently visited Bangladesh greatly appreciated the present government's economic management efforts and said it has succceded in achieving economic stability in a very short period. Why then is the World Bank recommending to donors that aid to Bangladesh should be cut once again when they meet in Paris soon? It is amazing that our officials have not seen through this perverse recommendation of the World Bank.

M A Majid Mohakhali, Dhaka

It is, however, occasionally