Dhaka, Monday, June 28, 1993

For Better Paper **Products**

A strong plea by the Managing Director of the Karnaphuli Paper Mills (KPM), published in the media on Saturday, calling upon the government to study the whole range of problems facing the plant deserves our support. In immediate terms, the priority lies in the introduction of cost-cutting measures, without which the prices of KPM products would go up by 11 per cent. Such steps may well involve redeployment or forced retirement of a section of the employees. If this is so, we commend the head of the organisation, AKM Ishaq for taking a bold position. If executives in all other public sector bodies would be as forthright as Ishaq, especially on the question of reducing operating expenses, the country's industrialisation programme would not have been in a shambles.

Significantly enough, KPM would still make a profit of Taka 1.10 crore in the current fiscal year, despite the increased operating cost. How this compares with the profit/loss situation of the corresponding period last year or with the projection for the next year is unclear. What worries us most is the estimated 11 per cent increase in all KPM products at a time when all our educational materials, especially text books, should be available within the existing price range, if not at a cheaper rate, to promote the country's drive

against illiteracy The key issue facing KPM centres on a carefully-planned programme for modernisation of this all-important paper-making factory. Set up in 1953 as one of the first prestige projects of the erstwhile Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), the plant is still being run, by and large, by out-dated equipment. Thise being so, its products are hardly likely to compare favourably with what we see in the export market in the same field from other countries. We have been left behind in the field of technology. On the subject, another pertinent point made by a KPM official is that we may be better off if the mills use imported pulp, instead of the locally-produced one, both in cost and quality. With the country's foreign exchange reserve in a particularly healthy position, the decision to import foreign pulp should not cause any undue financial concern.

What is important - indeed, a matter of urgency - is to take a careful look at the KPM, evaluate all the suggestions made by Ishaq and his officials and move as fast as possible in putting them into effect.

In doing so, the authorities must indeed extend their study to the Khulna Newsprint Factory which, in many ways, faces much worse problems than KPM. These problems range from some questions raised about the availability of Gewa wood to the cost of production, from the poor quality of its product which makes it virtually unusable both in domestic and foreign markets to periodic — and often totally arbitrary — increases in its price. The position has become an untenable one. The government should either find a buyer for the plant in the private sector, perhaps in collaboration with a foreign entrepreneur, or let the media import newsprint from outside, as is done by several other South Asian countries. If the newsprint factory in Khulna needs a shake-up, it must also face competition. Whether or not the imported newsprint will turn out to be too expensive for the local media or a programme for the modernisation of the factory too costly remains to be seen. We cannot just sit on the problem and, from time to time, ask the media to pay for the newsprint at increased rate. This is what we call, in simple language, passing the buck.

Kurds on the Offensive

Kurdish separatists, fighting their own battle against Turkey and Iraq, in what looks like a losing game, have gone on the offensive, totally in a wrong way and in wrong places. Over the weekend, they carried out terrorist attacks on scores of Turkish establishments in as many as 28 west European cities, mostly in Germany, taking many non-Turkish hostages and causing a wave of panic throughout the region. For many cities, it was the beginning of a nightmare. It is not the first time that rebels with a cause, devious or legitimate, have turned to terrorism to draw the attention of the world to their fight. The method is counter-productive. We have said so in the past. We repeat our position in unmistakable term.

However, we also see the need for giving Kurds who live primarily in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, a better socio-political deal than what these unfortunate victims of history and geography have received from the countries concerned, especially Turkey and Iraq. For instance, some 10 million Kurds living in Turkey were prohibited from using Kurdish language from 1983 until 1991. Since then, the ban has been relaxed marginally. The language cannot yet be used in broadcasts or in schools. In the armed conflict that has been going on, more than 6,000 people, mostly Kurds, have been killed.

Until March, the head of the Kurdistan Workers Party, Abdullah Ocalan stopped talking about a separate state for his people and switched to a call for autonomy within the Turkish federation. Recent reports suggest that Ocalan's position has hardened again, perhaps under the influence of Syria, an arch enemy of Turkey. It is important that Kurds do not fall victims to the in-fighting among countries. But it is equally important that Ankara opens a line of communication with Ocalan, instead of trying to suppress what seems to the international community as legitimate demands of an ethnic minority caught in a wrong country, at the wrong time of history.

India Seeks Links with ASEAN

An Asian NIC Enters Big League

size of \$42 billion. At Paris meeting, OECD countries appear to have shown particular concern at any possibility of a dramatic rise in unemployment which could affect 36 million workers in the OECD by year-end. Unemployment rate in the EEC is said to be 12 per cent. Some pundits read early signs of economic recovery in the fall in US unemployment rate from 7 per cent in April to 6.9 per cent in May '93 - said to be the lowest in 12 years. Japan's annual rate of uhemployment last year was reported at 2.2 per cent - the rate of 2.4 per cent for December '92 being seen as

the highest in 43 months. OECD meetings, of course. are important occasions. These meetings often provide clue to the way the global economy is moving and are followed up by economists with keen interest However, there is a specific reason also why I brought it up in these columns. This concerns - what appears as an imminent and significant change in the membership of this august forum - namely, admission of a country from Asia, other than Japan, into OECD. Mexico also, it seems, is going to make it.

As an agency report has it, at the Paris meeting, the ministers discussed at length the future role of the OECD in a changing and increasingly interdependent world. They also took the first step towards expanding the Organisation's membership by the giving the green signal for opening talks with Mexico on terms and conditions for its entry as a full OECD member. What is important for us to note, is the fact that the ministers also welcomed the positive turn events have taken at South Korea's participation in OECD activi ties, which, they said, paved the way for its early member-

package contains cuts in bank lending rates, provisions for special loans and other emer gency measures to boost the economy. The programme calls for special loans of about 1.3 billion dollars to small and medium-size enterprises, an increase in the level of support for exports on deferred payment basis from two to three billion dollars and around seven hundred million dollars in loans to buy locally made

ALONG MY WAY

S B Chaudhuri

ship. So — one of Asia's newly emerging economic power houses is going to make the

big league! Japan is often viewed as Asia's 'Dragon' in economic performance. Now, alongwith Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, South Korea has come to be known as the four 'Little Dragons' — that have come of age.

Interestingly enough, South Korea also has launched an economic stimulus programme of its own - to fuel faster growth. The growth rate of this particular Little Dragon's economy had fallen off after measures were adopted to curb inflation and arrest rising trade deficit. The stimulus machinery. Regulations on business activities, particularly financial transactions on overseas markets, would also be

Western worlds eyes are increasingly turning towards the Asia-Pacific Rim countries. Some even say that the centre of global economic growth is shifting to this region. In East Asia, three other countries namely - Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia - are said to have joined the four Little Dragons, to fuel the engine of growth. Collectively, they have earned a new appellation — the Super Seven.

The global economic landscape is in a state of flux. In the changing scenario, the

West perhaps sees an opportunity to bury calls for North South dialogue on the persist ing demand for a new international economic order.

MONG the countries comprising the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). India appears to be the first to formalise links with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). As the avail able reports have it, ASEAN and India recently agreed on a series of specific measures for establishing bilateral economic relations. These measures include joint marketing of common products, setting up of joint ventures for third-country exports, cooperation in the fields of construction, tourism. technology and creation of a

joint business council. The agreement places India on more or less a similar footing with the European Economic Community, USA. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan,

as sectoral partners of ASEAN. The joint business council, it is said, will provide an institutional mechanism for expanding cooperation between the two sides in major areas such as trade, investment and tourism. In the field of tech nology, computer and software development, processing of primary products, power gen-

construction, could provide areas for cooperation. The agreement would also allow for exchange of information on such matters as financial "deregulation and eapital market development. Besides, India is said to have agreed to create a fund and place it at the disposal of the ASEAN Secretariat, for developing programmes and projects in the fields of tourism, management and administration. trade and investment, computer technology, solar energy and environmental protection.

eration, transportation and

Establishment of closer formal links with ASEAN might, some day, ease the process of India's association with the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) which was formally launched in January this year. Not that AFTA has already started moving fast, roaring along. Rather, its tariff reduction programme will spread over a period of fifteen years, in a staggered pattern, with the member countries reducing their tariff at different speeds.

AFTA may not have moved on to the fast land rightaway. However, it's a reality. Already, there are talks of the North American Free Trade Association - NAFTA - establishing formal trade links with AFTA. True, membership of AFTA is now confined among the ASEAN countries. Yet, some day it may open its doors to other countries in Asia, especially those who had had established formal links with ASEAN earlier. May be, our policy makers will give it some thought

Customs Deal a Telling Blow to Drug Smugglers by Terry Kirby

HEN the car and passenger ferry from Cherbourg in France docks twice a day at the seaport of Southampton on the south coast of England, those leaving the ship with a few extra wine bottles among their luggage are no longer faced with an agonising choice.

ARLIER this mon

th, ministers of the 24

nation Organization for

Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD) met in

Paris to consider the global

economic situation. At times

called the Capitalism's club.

OECD comprises of nineteen

free economy countries of

Europe, including Turkey, the

United States of America.

Canada, Australia, New Zealand

In the June Paris meeting,

OECD member countries

committed themselves to a

concerted 'strategy to revive

global growth. At the end of

their two-day talks, the OECD

ministers also agreed to make

intensive efforts to continue

trade liberalisations, with a

successful conclusion to the

Uruguay Round talks as the

first priority. In monetary and

fiscal policy area, OECD coun-

tries would continue to exploit

possible opportunities to lower

interest rates without sacrific-

ing the objectives of price sta

bility and medium term budget

consolidation. Structural re-

form policies, including labour

market policies, they said

would aim for vigorous, com-

petitive and efficient develop-

ment of OECD economies, us-

ing opportunities offered by

technological progress and in-

have launched special eco-

nomic stimulus packages to

revive their economies. Much

has been talked about the US

\$31 billion programme. Japan

has announced a stimulus

package of \$115 billion while

the European Economic Com-

munity's programme takes the

Most of the QECD countries

ternational competition.

and Japan.

Formerly, passengers entering the United Kingdom with purchases of goods over the permitted limits and no which import duties were liable had to decide whether to pass through the Red Channel and declare them or chance the Green Channel and risk discovery.

But since 1 January 1993, the abolition of physical and fiscal frontier controls in the European Community (EC) has meant the end of the Red and Green Channels at ports of entry into the UK. Where there was onee a battery of whiteshirted and braided Her Majesty's Customs & Excise (HMC&E) Officers, searching a few cars and casting a searching eye upon the remainder, there is now only a single official, watching the vehicles or passengers roll past. But appearances can be deceptive.

Tight Controls

Although HMC&E always recognised that "chance" seizures of drugs accounted for only a small proportion of confiscations, Britain's tight border controls acted as a powerful deterrent to the professional trafficker. January 1993 changed that by abolishing

those mechanisms with the result that the borders are open for traffickers as well as innocent travellers.

Customs & Excise have therefore devoted considerable efforts to developing intelligence-based means of stopping traffickers in the new era. 'We are looking to 1993 as a great challenge; we feel very confident and ready to face anything we are likely to encounter," says Roy Crossley, collector (head) of HMC&E for the Dover area, another southern port which handles much of the ferry traffic with mainland Europe.

The Customs officer at Southampton is therefore the visible tip of an enormous local, national and international effort to ensure that open borders do not mean open markets in cocaine, heroin or cannabis.

Single File

At Southampton — and variations on the system are in place elsewhere and will also operate at Dover for the Channel Tunnel —the procedure is this: the cars or passengers are guided into single file and slowed to a crawl past the officer, whose nickname is "the puller".

instructions to stop a particular car or type of car or passenger; they could simply use their own judgement if they spot a person or car fitting the known "profile" of a trafficker. Those chosen are searched by other offices. The United Kingdom operates these "light touch" checks after consulta-

tion with the rest of he EC. The key to successful antidrugs policies is good intelligence. The already extensive intelligence network responsible for the bulk of Customs seizures has been expanded in anticipation of the abolition of borders so that the information the "puller" carries in his head could stem from across the Channel or the other side of the world.

Last October, HMC&E and its 11 equivalents in he EC began a computerised Information exchange that will eventually have more than 300 terminals at ports and border

Common Code

This will enable Customs officers manning a frontier posts on, say, the borders between Greece and Turkey - notorious entry points for lorries carrying smuggled heroin from the India/Pakistan/Afghanistan area - to "talk" instantly to their British colleagues in a common code language.

This was established through the auspices of MAG '92, He — or she — may have the mutual assistance group of the 12 Customs organisations of the EC. These contacts will be improved immeasurably by the creation within the next year or so of the European Drugs Unit (EDU), which will act as a central drugs intelligence gathering organisation.

The model for the EDU is the UK's National Drugs Intelligence Unit, now the drugs wing of the much larger National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS), where British police, who have internal responsibility for anti-drugs work, and HMC&E, who tackle large scale importations, liaise

on investigations. Germany and Netherlands have similar bod ies, but others do not; equally, in some countries, Customs officers have either a limited or non-existent role in anti-drugs work, which can cause practical problems.

"Once every EC country has their version of NCIS and they all liaise through he EDU, the system will be able to operate even better than it does now," says head of the drugs policy division of HMC&E Dennies

Maintaining Contacts

The best example of the good working relationship between the UK police and Customs & Excise are the 33 Drugs Liaison officers (DLOs) both police and Customs officers - resident around the world who maintain contacts with local counterparts, develop informants and channel

intelligence back to London. The information is then passed to where it is most needed — whether it is the "puller" at Southampton being alerted to look for a particular license plate or car model, of to another Customs service.

This data is effective on a European wide-basis - information from Latin American DLOs, for instance, has led to shipments of Colombian cocaine bound for the Netherlands and the EC market being intercepted.

Another recent development is the Anti-Drugs Alliance, set up between HMC&E and the various umbrella organisations involved in the shipping and freight industries. This encourages companies to provide advance details of passenger lists or freight being carried. "Commercial bodies are anxious to join to prevent their ships and lorries being used as vehicles for trafficking," says Mr Walton.

Although Customs no longer has responsibilities for frontier fiscal controls, imports still have to pay Value Added Tax. collected by HMC&E after an audit of the goods. This now occurs at special inland depots, at the location of the importer or as a purely paper ex-

New Procedure

Because of the potential for large-scale drugs traffickers to exploit the opportunities the new procedure creates, it is in this area that HMC&E are hoping their intelligence will be most effective.

But drugs are a worldwide problem, and Britain's HMC&E is also involved in a range of international initiatives, which

include the financial and chemical action task forces of the G7 group of leading Western economies, the worldwide Customs Cooperation Council and the United Nations 1988 Vienna Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

There is no question that all this is necessary to prevent Britain and the rest of the EC being swamped with drugs. It is a well-known fact that the Latin American cocaine barons are now targeting western Europe with considerable

In January, HMC&E announced that drugs with a street value of £545.7 million were seized during 1992, the last year of full frontier controls. Cocaine seizures alone reached 2250 kg, a rise of 112% over 1991. "We cannot afford to be complacent," comments Paymaster General and minister responsible for HMC&E Sir John Cope.

He continues: "Our law enforcement efforts through import controls, joint Customs/police operations and shared intelligence are a match for the drugs smugglers. The single market does not mean the end of Customs controls and the effectiveness of anti-smuggling controls will be maintained. I am confident an intelligence-based strategy is in play".

The writer is Crime Correspondent, "The Independent" and "The Independent on Sunday"

Democracy and Communication

Needed Understanding among Segments of Society

by Shahabuddin Mahtab

HE continued advances in communication technology in each decade have reduced the mother earth to a global village. In this perspective, Andre Malraux referring to the present day democracies says, "I am certain that in three hundred years, historians will say, that in our times, we were attempting to accommodate democracies, as they have evolved in the old direct de-mocracy in Athens, a phenomenon that disappeared two thousand years ago is finally coming back."

We do not now meet people face to face in the same way as was done centuries ago. In the context of Bangladesh, people participate in the business of government through their elected representatives in the parliament and the other representative bodies at the lower levels. The voice of the people is heard through the print and electronic media (provided it is free), public meetings and seminars, trade unions, service

associations, employers' associations, signed petitions etc. etc. Freedom to express one's feelings either as an individual or as a group in a non-violent way is the very basis of a democratic and free society.

A democratic society further demands that there should also be a free flow of observations and information as well as communications at all levels of the society irrespective of one's economic position in life. This also presupposes that we have a literate population, where at least the 'basic needs' (Dal Bhat) of every person are met.

We have to work through a situation where three-fourths of our people are illiterate and four-fifths remain hungry. Democratic ideas and practices do not grow easily in a highly structured society, as has been seen for the last two decades. The access to resources and the means of production are important; access to the communication media is also so. The way is long and

the terrain is difficult. Bringing in the voiceless people to the communication and decision making process is an urgent imperative, which we cannot ignore or delay. We have to work through our present limitations, if we hope to achieve our economic salvation

through a process of evolution,

orderliness an transparency.

The freely elected parliament is in its place for over . two years now. The nation has opted to have a parliamentary form of government and this is accountable to the people, for its action and inaction. It is also the highest forum of the nation, where national issues. problems, difficulties, crisis etc. have to be discussed and debated. Our MPs represent their constituents and they have to voice their feelings. hopes and aspirations. In all crisis situations the nation expects that the parliament, as the supreme body, plays its designated role of guiding the nation. The government has to take the parliament into confidence, whenever it is seized with serious problems and issues. In a democracy, both the government and the opposition parties have an equal role to play. The government of the day may be the opposition party of tomorrow. The wisdom of the parliamentarians can only lead to the good of the country. This is more so as Bangladesh continues to be nearly at the bottom rung of the poor nations. The billions of dollars that we have received during the last two decades have been unable to make a dent in our poverty sit-

The industrial strikes, hartals are matters that are best discussed and debated on the floors of the House. The government has to take the nation and the parliament into confidence, whenever unpleasant

unpopular and hard decisions are required to be taken in the greater national interest. An organised group of trade unions or service associations cannot hold the country hostage for their own parochial interests.

The MPs and the cabinet members are the trustees of the nation. The most important task for the parliamentarians and the government is in attending the parliament whenever, and how long are the sessions. It has to be a priority and the discussions have to be meaningful and purpose-

The parliament sessions are valuable, but it is also costly for the nation. It is for the parliament to take in hand the important, urgent and serious matters affecting the nation. Discussions relating to local and non-issues, minor and unimportant matters do not lead us to the welfare of the nation. Hartals and public meetings held to discuss con-

troversial issues which do not relate to the welfare of the people, sap the vitality of a na-

What we need now is 'glasnost' (casy consultative discussions) at all levels and tiers of the society.

The government, the employers and the SKOP have taken an adversary position in the matter of wages and compensations. The situation could have been eased if there was a continuous communication and transparency between all the three parties. The issue involved here is all-pervasive, and the parliament has an important role to play here.

It should be the endeavour for all of us, that we can reach a stage where there is an easy flow of communication and understanding among all segments of the society. We can ill afford to follow the path of confrontation which can only lead us to our own destruction. . We are already late in the day.

Sports — TV

Sir, In the field of sports we do not get enough encouragement from the authorities. Constructing stadium here and there and sending out third rate team to play and face defeat are not enough. Catch the participants young and train them well under a good coach in the field of football, cricket, tennis and badminton. There is just no reason why our boys and girls cannot do well in these games if adequate opportunities are provided to them. If they vigorously practice under a good coach for a couple of years they will go up the ladder in no time. Sri Lanka,

Iraq and Saudi Arabia have set examples.

BTV can play a very important and educative role. In tennis, important events like French Open and Wimbledon should have been shown.

French Open had an exciting finish. Wimbledon has just started. Instead of showing trashes on TV they should high-light some of the important events of Wimbledon and next cricket test between England and Australia. Let our boys watch and learn.

A M F Quadtr Dhaka-1207.

Titas gas bill

Sir, Titas gas distribution

authority installed gas meters in various localities of Dhaka in 1986-87 but the consumers were instructed to pay gas bill on a flat rate based on one burner or two burner and so on. The gas authority would adjust the actual bill based on meter reading subsequently. I received two gas bills

based on meter reading and in both the cases the bill amount was less than the actual flat rate bill paid so for. I stopped payment tor several months tor adjustment of the bill amount so far paid and resumed payment as usual sub-

sequently. But Titas gas authority do not contain entry of those two meter bills and thus I am a defaulter as per their

Under the above backdrop, isn't it essential to clarify the actual position so as to avoid probable harassment by Titas authority?

120/1 Maghbazar, Dhaka.

Sadiq Alee

National Square

Sir, National Square in the old air port area may be converted to an "Industrial Park" for electronic industries. This will create thousands of jobs,

contribute to the much publicized "poverty alleviation" and promote "economic development" of the nation.

It is earnestly hoped that the present government, members of the parliament and national policy makers will ponder over

Gulshan, Dhaka

Z. Alam

Bosnians are human beings, too

Sir, it has been very terrible for us to see that Bosnians being ruthlessly killed, but still the world bodies, regrettably. haven't reached to any point to

stop the bloody fight. They are all being finished,

and the UN appears totally failed in their job to protect those unarmed people. We have lost our confidence in the United Nations.

Some days ago, a western Prime Minister allegedly said that no Muslim country could rise in Europe. But we request the western countries to help those people, not as they are Muslims, but because they are also human beings like all of us. Please help stop the unethi-

Zabar and Pesh,