## The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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### **Unbridling Newsprint** Market

The present crisis of newsprint may not itself be critical but it is indicative of something really ominous. This ominousness stems from the fact that a general callousness is manifestly responsible for the sudden drop in the production of the country's premier newsprint mill. For long one month. - from November 17 to December 15, Khulna Newspaper Mill (KNM) had the supply line of its main raw material, geoa logs, snapped and the problem was further accentuated by the shortage of electricity. Reports are contradictory about the cause of the failure in geoa collection: one version has it that the loggers refused to go to the Sunderbans because of the fear of robbers; another version says it is the low wage the contractors offer to the loggers that acted as a positive disincentive for the workers to collect woods. Although the mill authority pay Tk 285 for 100 cft log, the contractors offer just Tk 32 for that amount.

We do not know which version is correct but we can say either of these can be a dangerous drift from the commitment that is necessary for industries to succeed. The mill authority is said to have filed 15 cases against robbery in the Sunderbans and its vicinity without being successful in moving the law enforcing agency of the area into action. So the same endemic problem of management and law and order situation is taking its toll.

Evidently, each one's contribution is responsible for an intractable chaos to reign in the industrial sector. Once things have gone out of control, it is the consumers who are penalised. Sometimes arbitrary price rise even does not save the day for the factory or industry concerned. In this case, the Khulna Newspaper Mill's problem is only typical of how an industry with so much potential is gradually brought to the verge of ruination. The time-to-time leap in the newsprint's price has not been able to arrest its slide downwards. It is still running at a loss. Theoretically though, it should not have. We are already witness to what mismanagement can do to an industry that is more than viable. Reading and writing materials should ideally be less costly compared to the price tag of other items. Admittedly, reading and writing materials here are not particularly cheap. The monopoly enjoyed by the KNM has gone abegging.

If KNM fails as an industrial venture with generous and cheap supply of geoa logs, certainly we run the risk of repeating the reversal almost in all other sectors. Already another increase in price of newsprint has been under consideration. Again, without raising the efficiency of the mill or taking the defaulters to task, the easy-to-do method has been thought of. This is exactly how corruption and mismanagement get rewarded. If this is how local industries' interests have to be protected, we humbly register our protest. We shudder to think of the terrible prospect when geoa trees will be in short supply. One silver-lining however, is the use of jute pulp, the decision for which has already been arrived at by the ministries concerned. But there is no cause for jubilation unless its advantage has been put to good

Meanwhile, there is no point barring the import of newsprint, particularly when its production and supply are erratic and uncertain. Let the mill survive on its own. That it will be receiving subsidies and yet fail to provide the consumers with the required amount of good quality newsprint, and importantly, at prices comparable to those in the international market is unacceptable. This calls for import of newsprint and making its market free of all restrictions.

## Morillon's Suggestions

French General Morillon of Bosnia fame gave Dhaka newsmen the other day the benefit of his first hand knowledge about the UN peace-keeping operation in war-torn former Yugoslavia. And because he went the extra-mile with his humanitarian efforts, undaunted by insuperable adversities, which won him worldwide limelight, his crystallised opinions can be credited with an unquestionable authenticity.

He has proferred a four-fold suggestion for revitalising the UN peace-keeping operations based on his deductions in the test case of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Keeping peace in a war zone cannot be likened to spreading an olive branch, it has to have an enforcement mandate. This is all the more necessary when humanitarian aid is to be reached to endangered people and they have to be rescued to safety as well.

The firm political commitment of the international community that is being pictured here relates to a minimal will to set up a UN Trusteeship on a temporary basis, for a hot-spot. This is quite practicable but requires the underpinnings of efficient military capabilities to match the powerful arsenal of a formidable aggressor. The least that the world community could do to ease the plight of the Bosnian victims was to have an effective UN Trusteeship operate in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's pet idea of a rapid deployment force at his disposal to move to a trouble-spot on a short notice has received support from French General Morillon. At present UN forces commissioned from different countries in pursuance of a Security Council resolution take over three months to reach their destination.

The UN's peace-keeping role has vastly increased in recent times and, in some respects, it has also come under fire to the extent that in the case of Somalia the UN force has earned the sobriquet of an 'occupation force.' The divergence of opinion on a peace-keeping mission, as had clearly occurred in Somalia, has to be checkmated. We believe that 'preventive diplomacy' that the UN Secretary General had advocated to head off an impending crisis anywhere in the world, could also be of some use to prevent open differences from developing on the ground, as these have, in the case of some UN peace missions.

General Morillon's proposal for a declaration on the rights of communities like the universal declaration of human rights strikes a responsive chord in us. The way human rights are being violated today on religious and ethnic grounds, the subject of community rights doubtless deserves a special treatment. But it will be only adding to the long list of declarations unless we have evolved a collective political will to turn a new leaf in international life.

A on Islamic Common Market was held in Dhaka during December 18-20, 1993. Now-a-days, the surge of interest in economic integration can hardly be overlooked in view of the growing importance of economic blocs world wide. Thus the initiators of the seminar deserve a round of appreciation.

However, mainly for two reasons, the proposed market appears to portray a divergence from the conventional wisdom of economic union or common market. First, a common market could possibly be termed as an extreme form of economic integration which, to reach, requires many layers to be crossed. To start with, it involves adoption of a common tariff structure for members to deal with non-members. It also stands for free mobility of goods and services but ultimately, after a careful post-mortem on the gains and losses, ends up with free mobility of factors of production (e.g. labour, capital) across the member-countries. The achievement of a common

market by a single stroke is considered to be very difficult. Those evidenced in the present world are reflective of initial stages like Customs Union, Free Trade Area etc. that might tend to graduate to common market of economic union in due course. And second, there are many regional cooperation arrangements already in existence among Muslim countries e.g. Gulf Co-operation Council, Union of Central African States Magreb Union etc. Any extension of those should hinge on the success of the existing ones. Available empirical studies tend

to show that these unions could

LMOST half of all Viet-

nam-born immigrants

at nearby Cabramatta. Just about all shops and services at Cabramatta are operated by Vietnamese. The streets are crowded with non-Europeans. The large shopping area looks like a vast Asian complex.

✓ Who come to Sydney live

Vietnam-born Nghiep Nguyen is a 53-year-old immigrant now prominent Cabramatta citizen. After fleeing Vietnam 13 years ago, he arrived in Australia with his wife and three children with no possessions and no money.

But he worked and studied long hours. Mr Nguyen obtained two diplomas from the University of Western Sydney.

Today, he is an elected member of the local city council, and is an environmental health and building consultant. He is a representative of the Asian community on various government health boards. He has published several books to help Asians understand Australia's health and legal sys-

But Mr Nguyen's adjustment may be an exception rather than the rule. Many Vietnamese are well aware of mounting incidents of racial discrimination against them, of unlawful police harassment, and of a community that is apathetic to their problems and is generally unaware of their needs.

# N international seminar

the size of the market, a priori, a 50-nation market appears unmanageable. What is more important, however, is that the member-countries are widely dispersed geographically and the lack of geographical proximity is likely to raise transport cost to outweigh the initial cost advantage from production.

#### many cases, worth pursuing. The Gains From

hardly become effective and in

**Economic Integration** International economics teach us that any form of economic integration ushers in two types of benefits for the participating countries. The first one is static in nature and is called Trade Creation and Trade Diversion Effects. The former implies the incremental benefits in terms of enhanced producer and consumer surpluses. These positive production and consumption effects emanate mainly from relocation of productive units to the least cost production points across the bloc. The latter goes to imply negative benefits from formation of union or free trade area. If for example, the membercountries are relatively high cost producers as compared to the non-members, then such conglomeration of countries may lead to higher cost production and consumption of goods and services within the bloc and hence would divert trade from least cost sources to high cost sources. While trade creation enhances welfare, trade diversion tends to reduce it. Besides the static effects, there are also long-run dynamic effects to be reaped out of integration. These are, for example, economies of scale, technological upliftment, development of research etc.

that usually go up as a result of wider market from integration.

However, the magnitude of the perceived gains (both static and dynamic) is positively correlated with a volley of factors. Some of them are: (i) size of the economic bloc; (ii) geographical proximity among member countries; (iii) complementarity in production structure; (iv) diversity of the economies; (v) preunion level of tariffs imposed by member-countries on imports of member country goods and services; (vi) the elasticity of demand and supply of the traded products and services; and (viii) the pre-union level of trade among the member-nations. Any thought on the feasibility of a Common Market should, therefore, be backed by an assessment of these factors. The Islamic Economies

As far as the size of the proposed market is concerned, it stands at 50. Although the size of the gains depends on the size of the market, a priori, a 50-nation market appears unmanageable. What is more impor tant, however, is that the member-countries are widely dispersed geographically and the lack of geographical proximity is likely to raise transport cost to outweigh the initial cost advantage from production.

Intra-trade of OIC membercountries constitutes about 11% of their global trade which appears to be gradually falling.

complementarities on the part of member country economies as well as lack of close trading links and regional arrangements. Over four-fifths of the exports of a large number of the countries in Islamic Ummah comprise primary commodities and fuel. Countries such as Algeria, Chad, Gabon, Mali. Niger, Uganda etc. depend almost totally on primary exports. About half of the countries depend on the export of at best three primary commodities. For a large number of countries, the

manufacturing sector con-

tributes to less than 12% of

GDP. Due to heavy reliance on

few primary commodities for

exports and as a result of a nar-

row base of manufactured

goods, most of the trade is di-

rected to outside Muslim coun-

tries. The developed countries

Such a low share of intra-trade

essentially reflects a lack of

An Uncommon Common Market

by Abdul Bayes

As far as the size of the proposed market is concerned, it stands at 50. Although the size of the gains depends on

account for larger flow of trade than the intra flows. Coming on to the elasticities of supply of products, most of the Muslim countries tend to depict inelasticity of supply mainly attributable to the under-development of social and economic infrastructures. Only a few of them (mainly the of rich countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Brunei, Malaysia etc.) tend to display a good supply response but their total

share in intra trade is small. On

the other hand, the demand

elasticity is suppressed due to lack of higher per capita income. Out of 44 Muslim countries (excluding Palestine and Central Asia), 19 could be dubbed, using the World Bank status, as the "least developed" countries with a per capita GNP (1991) of US \$ 170-520, and where, half of those (including Bangladesh) fell below US \$300. Many of these least developed countries experienced negative growth rates of per capita GNP during the period 1980-91 and a few of them witnessed a growth rate of 2% on average. The "other low income" coun-

tries such as Pakistan, Egypt, Niger and Indonesia averaged a GNP of US \$500 and a growth rate of 3%. There are 11 "middle income" and 7 "upper middle" income countries with a mean per capita GNP of US \$5000 and US \$15000. The major determinant of demand elasticity i.e. the rate of growth of per capita GNP tended to show a negative sign for half of the countries over the period 1980-91. The fall in the growth rate of per capita GNP applies for all strata of countries.

#### The Future Agenda

The above snap-shot preview, quite obviously, would lead us to take a dim view of the efficacy of the proposed Islamic Common Market in the short and medium terms. Given the underdeveloped socio-economic

common market would divert more trade than it would create and thus may cause the total welfare of the whole Ummah to fall. However, materialisation of the objective of Islamic Common Market in the long run would depend on a number of factors. First, it would be better at the beginning to be content with modest objectives of strengthening cooperation in different spheres. This calls for, inter alia, a diversion of surpluses of the rich Muslim countries to the investment need of the poorer ones. A ring of mutual trust needs to be evoked by a siphoning off substantial loanable funds to the development of backward regions. Second, the initial attempt should be to look for regional or sub-regional free trade area among countries. For example, Bangladesh could explore the possibility of a free trade area with Maldives, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia. But excepting Bangladesh and Maldives, others have already joined ASEAN that includes non-Muslim countries also.

and political structure in major-

ity of the Islamic countries, it appears that formation of a

This implies that to promote growth and welfare of people through trade and investment, the theory of exchange and specialisation should be the prime concern rather than religion. A market is a market where buyers and sellers haggle for the determination of price, not of caste, creed and religion. On that account, for the moment, Bangladesh should carefully see whether the proposed SAPTA could yield any dividend.

The writer is a profesor of economics, Jahangirnagar Uni-

# Boat People Down Under, but Not out

Some Australians, for example, resent the fact that Vietnamese tend to live in certain areas. They see it as a trend towards the creation of ghetto-like enclaves.

One such concentration is at Cabramatta. About 10,000 Vietnamese have moved into Cabramatta since 1986. Almost 5,000 Australians have moved

An investigation undertaken earlier this year by the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research found discrimination against the Vietnamese community is widespread and is increasing.

The bureau surveyed almost 400 Vietnamese households in the Pacific coast sub-tropical city of Brisbane. The survey found that race discrimination. against Vietnamese is practised by other Australians on the street and in the workplace, and particularly against those whose command of English is

A notorious case involved two Sydney policemen who dragged an innocent Vietnamese man out of his car. bashed his head against the car and verbally abused him for no

Still, most Vietnamese families in Australia have fared reasonably well in a material Vincent W Stove writes from Sydney

Discrimination against the Vietnamese is widespread and increasing

sense. At least 60 per cent of them are buying or have already bought their own homes. Most families have at least one car.

Material gains have been made despite the enormous unemployment problem among Vietnamese - exacerbated by the country's economic recession, the tendency of many employers to give preference to Europeans (despite anti-discrimination laws) and language difficulties

Unemployment rates in all categories among Vietnamese are double the rates for other Asian immigrants. They are four times higher than among the Australianborn.

Some 65 per cent of young Vietnamese are unemployed. The rate would be higher if it were not for the fact that many of them work within the Vietnamese communities in small factories, shops and restaurants.

Most unemployed Vietnamese are in two age groups - those aged between 15 and 24 and those between 40 and 65. Prospects for those in the older group obtaining steady long-term jobs are not

Vietnamese are usually at the bottom of the employment ladder and have a greater unemployment rate than all other groups in Australia except the indigenous Aborigines. But they consider they are better off here than in Vietnam and that their future prospects, especially those of their children, are

About 155,000 Vietnamese are now in Australia. Some 120,000 of them arrived as refugees.

Just about all the refugees suffered some sort of trauma, extreme hardship, persecution or long periods of terror in Vietnam. Many fled the country as boat people and spent years in refugee camps before arriving in Australia.

As a result of this, most have made a greater commitment to Australia than other Asian immigrants. In excess of 50 per cent of them have applied for (it is not compulsory) and have been granted Australian citizen-

Arrivals from Vietnam dropped to a 15-year low of 5,651 in '92, down from nearly 10,000 the previous year. Elderly Vietnamese find it

difficult to assimilate in Australia. They are more subject to depression and stresses than their children. A recent survey found that

29 per cent of Vietnamese in the 60 to 85 age bracket suffered from some form of psychological distress. Around 10 per cent of them believed they would be happier if they returned to Vietnam.

The lack of financial independence also contributed to their unhappiness: they had to rely on their children for accommodation, food and even pocket money.

The lack of English language skills, the loss of friends of their own age, social isolation and homesickness all added to make their lives less rewarding and less enjoyable than they had expected or had experienced in Vietnam. A report of the survey stated:

'If traditional kinship ties between parents in Vietnam and children in Australia can be maintained across vast geographical distances, then perhaps immigration may not be the best option for some older parents.

Yet, in spite of enormous problems of adjustment, most Vietnamese have made the transition.

And they are still coming. although in much reduced numbers. So the word has obviously not gone back to Vietnam warning others not to come.

Depthnews Asia

#### OPINION

#### Business out of Garbage S M Zakaria

The idea (report and editorial in The Daily Star on 4th and 5th January, respectively) of transferring the responsibilities of cleaning the metropolis — at least partially - is a pragmatic and welcome one. The developed countries are already doing this. Dhaka is one of the dirtiest cities in the world - its environment is being polluted seriously everyday by tons of garbage, motor-vehicle smoke, industrial smoke and effluent ing cargo flights etc. This is reetc. While the whole world has ally good news. been crying for arresting such pollution, we have been turning back to the issue. We live below poverty line and are deprived of bare necessities of nourishment. Most of the people even the capital dwellers — are naturally weak in resisting diseases. Unfortunately, this weak resistance is being worsened by the environmental pollution that is being caused every day.

One can hardly move through the city streets — not to talk of the narrow lanes and by lanes - without suspending his/her breath or putting a handkerchief on nose. And what about the poor streetman, or the slum dweller?

Many elements are related to

specially by the mismanaged or

unmanaged garbage situation.

the issue of maintenance and improvement of national health. Environmental pollution is one very important among them and we must get rid of this as fast and as far as possible. The government effort has so far been found very poor at this. Is it because the allegation that people on the government pay-roll if not get incentive in terms of money and other benefits to their demand, works remain undone or half-done? Piles of money are being spent, but the city continues to remain dirty to the detriment of public health. And this piling of dirt inside also sends bad odour outside; doesn't it indirectly hamper foreign investment, tourism

etc.? Now, who makes the dirt? The public; then let a few members of the public do the cleaning. Not free, of course. Rather, against incentive - let the whole work be part of a business. This is how the damn garbage is being done away with elsewhere in the developed world. Though formed late, the idea of handing the city cleaning responsibilities over to the private businessmen sparks the hope that we may find a chance to breathe a fresher air some time in future. It is the task of the government to create new

business avenues and show the avenues to the private entrepreneurs as a hen calls her babies and points to a new found food stuff so they can jump upon it. Our Finance Minister, Mr M Saifur Rahman is adept in it - some time ago he suggested the banks to create their own insurance subsidiaries and the other day he incited the businessmen to end monopoly of Biman, by charter-

I wish to take part in the good thinking about city cleaning by putting the following proposals for consideration of all concerned:

1) The cleaning works may be divided into two parts - internal cleaning and external cleaning. Cleaning of katcha bazars, supermarkets, hospitals, government buildings may constitute 'internal cleaning' and cleaning of roads and streets and other public places may constitute 'external clean-

2) Separate authorities of hospitals, government and private office buildings may call tenders from private cleaning firms (to be established in future) for internal cleaning and the municipal corporations may call tenders for internal cleaning of katcha bazars and su permarkets and for external cleaning of roads, streets and

other public places.

3) The cleaning work being gradually vested with private companies, the employees (municipal) engaged in this work may lose jobs. The government may take initiative to employ them elsewhere, or they may be given the opportunity of a golden handshake, or the future cleaning firms may be required to absorb these employees in their brigade of cleaners as a mandatory requirement.

4) The would-be private

cleaning firms may be encouraged and given the opportunity and necessary assistance to recycle, where possible, the garbage for beneficial uses. This will greatly reduce the dumping-ground problem and enhance interest of the businessmen and help create a "business out of garbage" phe-

What is important is if things are linked to business and personal initiative, works tend to get done efficiently Therefore, government's current tendency to give a break to business and personal potential is a welcome venture, indeed.

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

#### Japan today

Sir. It does not matter as to who controlled the Diet in the past or who is the present Prime Minister of Japan. The land of the rising sun and the rising yen continues to rise higher and higher in all fields especially in science and technology, international trade and commerce and she has no match in the world today. But surprisingly enough, she is being neglected and overlooked in the global affairs.

After the collapse of the giant Soviet Union the balance of power of the world has been abruptly and adversely affected. The USA, UK and France have set up a 'new world order'. But the so called 'new world order' has created a disorder all over the world and Palestine. Kashmir, Somalia, Bosnia Afghanistan, Ireland, Mexico, Georgia and Arakan continue to bleed unabated and the problems like Indo-Bangladesh Ganges river water sharing plight of the refugees, poverty, hunger and disease hang over our head like sword of

Damocles. The power of the world has become totally imbalanced today. London and Paris are no longer world powers politically, economically and militarily but they obtrude upon international senses unnecessarily and unpleasantly.

Time has come to change and to replace the so-called 'new world order' consisted of USA, UK and France with a revised and pristine world order comprised of countries like the USA, Japan, China etc. consistent with the requirements of time.

Japan is already meeting 12

percent of the annual budget expenditure of the UNO whereas the UK and France are making pittance contribu-

Japan is both a friend and rival of the USA. We are confident that Japan's inclusion in the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member would help resolve many global conflicts in a free, fair, impartial and peaceful way.

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203

#### Bangladeshi cabbies in US

Sir, Bangladeshis driving taxis in New York have lately become vulnerable to the scoundrels forcing them off the streets at night.

Crimes, particularly murder, rape, robbery, and assault have been increasing steadily in the US since last decade securing the country's record of the world's highest crime rate. This trend of rising vio-

grants can be as much disheartening to the residents having American dream as to the rest of the unipolar world. The human rights oriented policy of the US government barring discrimination does

not restrict measures for its

residents to be eligible for so-

against aggression.

cial protection of some kind

lence in the land of immi-

As of now, despite serious offenses against them, those Bangladeshis are trying to make a living as taxi drivers in their 'dreamland' even though a number of them could have become presidents or ministers or ambassadors or teachers or other professionals in their motherland.

Regardless of national origin of the drivers, cab is one of the most convenient and efficient means of rapid transit transports in urban America apart from the gaining popularity of high-speed railway competing against highway network as well as skyjamming air routes in the state of space-shuttles.

M Rahman Zila School Road, Mymensingh

National drug policy

Sir, It is a matter of regret

that Bangladesh National Drug and Medicine Policy is yet in a state of doldrums which has triggered off racketeering in drugs and medicines following loopholes in the Drug Act of 1982, hatched during Ershad's time. The main lacuna and loophole in this Act is that about 1700 items of medicine have been banned on the plea that these are harmful. Had it been really so, why these did not produce a gross adverse effect during the preceding periods when also these were in vogue?

Since the enforcement of this ban, many unscrupulous medicine and drug traders have covertly started selling these medicines, at exorbitant prices to the retailers, who in turn sell them at a much higher rate to the consumers. There might be some stray cases of harmful effects of some medicines if taken in higher doses, but in correct doses these are still considered as curatives.

This ban has also resulted in smuggling of these medicines from neighbouring countries only because these banned medicines often are badly needed and believably prescribed by doctors here.

facturing companies, including the multinational ones, are producing medicines, tablets, injections etc. but their quality control is yet a doubtful element, although, to some ex-

Our pharmaceutical manu-

tent; multinational companies have maintained a minimal degree and semblance of quality

The Director General of Health Services, with the assistance of expert and qualified quality control officers should carry out in-depth and intensive quality control of locally produced medicines in respect of potency, ingredients and composition and if found standard, only then these should be released to the market. The mushroom growth of unauthentic medicine and drug manufacturing companies most likely producing spurious drugs should rather be banned under the relevant law. The Bangladesh Trading Corpn should also be strictly moni-

Pricing is another important factor and its jurisdiction and determination should be left with the Health Ministry. The manufacturing companies should submit the cost of production to the Govt who should fix the wholesale and retail price and the consumers should not pay beyond MRP (maximum retail price) which must be printed on each packet, bottle, blister, strip etc. The chemists and druggists should display a price list in their shops.

We fail to understand why. despite this issue being discussed in various fora, seminars, etc and numerous reports, editorials and letters published in newspapers, no action has been taken to update a National Drug and Medicine Policy, particularly when our Finance Minister (about two/three months back) and the Deputy Leader of the House have appreciated the need to do away with all restrictions and bans on medicine, retaining however the quality control and price factor with the Govt? How it can be Health for All by the Year 2000' which is only six years away?

N H Suft Dhaka