

The Eye-opening US Trade Show

The fact that there has been an unbroken chain of annual US trade shows in Dhaka since 1992 is proof enough of a sustained interest on the part of US business houses in the market potential of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has trade surplus with the USA. The US imported \$ 832 million worth of goods from Bangladesh in the calendar year 1992 as against her exports to Bangladesh valued at \$ 188 million.

The US trade deficit with Bangladesh could have reached \$ 1 billion in 1993 mainly because of garment imports from Bangladesh. Notably the bilateral trade has not been of the conventional nature of business transactions, strictly speaking.

Thus while the Bangladesh side of the trade has been markedly private sector-operated that on the US side, namely her imports, happened to be at the state-to-state level. From this standpoint the US trade shows in Dhaka have recorded a significant contribution by bringing US business houses in touch with their counterparts in the Bangladesh private sector.

All this is greeted as a positive development. But as our market is being prized open; however modestly, by the US trading houses, would it the US investors perhaps attach a similar value to our market for the sake of making new investments here?

But the US investment in Bangladesh in cumulative terms amounts to only \$30 million. One should think, the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation could be relied upon to generate insurance support for any fresh US investment in Bangladesh.

In a way of course, the \$ 3.5 billion that the USAID has provided in bilateral assistance to Bangladesh to-date constitutes that country's investment in Bangladesh. But the point we wish to make is that the humanitarian approach coupled with the angle to help strengthen democracy in Bangladesh should mature further along give-and-take lines with a solid foundation laid through investments and technology sharing.

Going beyond the trade show which gave us so much food for thought, we are for more of it here in Dhaka. Bangladesh should also stage trade exhibitions on a reciprocal basis abroad, whenever and wherever she can. These fairs are a useful part of a growing world-wide economic culture. They fling open doors to many uncharted possibilities.

Good Luck Cricketers

Two consecutive days' cricket fete has given everyone something to savour. For the cricket-minder, it is a wondrous thing — if not the ultimate — ever to happen to this nation with hardly any sporting glory to its credit at the top level of international competition.

Those foreign visits were not particularly indicative of the national side's maturity but the experiences gained in the process have richly contributed to putting up a brave performance against Pakistan this time. Hopefully, the exposure to the cricketing stars has immensely helped our team's preparations for the more competitive occasion in Kenya where Bangladesh will vie for one of the three places to move as a qualifier to the next Cricket World Cup.

However, the danger of being overreliant about the success of our football is not a distant memory and therefore its lesson as well should not be missed in cricket. The consistency of a good performance is what favours cricket more than any other sports. Clearly, the investment made in this kingly game has already started paying dividends. Along with hockey, cricket appears to be pointing to brighter prospects and hence these two games deserve as much patronage as is possible within our means.

TECHNOLOGICAL development has contributed to almost inconceivable changes in the structure of the global commonwealth and subsequently in the problems that need to be solved by the peoples of the world.

Whether these problems involve security, the environment, poverty in developing countries, or the depletion of natural resources, all require global solutions and global cooperation.

The United Nations was created in October 1945 in order to solve such problems, and the approaching occasion of its 50th anniversary presents an opportunity to strengthen its capacity to do so.

Presently the specialised United Nations agencies — with the exception of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) — are limited to an advisory role. The governments of member nations cannot be forced to implement UN resolutions.

As a result, the world today is effectively a political anarchy.

The dramatic change in UN peacemaking activities, with the deployment of peacekeeping forces to former Yugoslavia and Somalia and the organisation of elections in Cambodia, clearly illustrates how reforms are needed in implementing UN resolutions.

In the past, the United Nations usually deployed peacekeepers to supervise cease-fires only if it was invited to do so by all parties to a conflict.

That role is useful but not always sufficient. If the police could protect a victim from a criminal only if both sides agreed, it would be powerless.

The need for changes in response to the United Nations more active role in peacemaking is mirrored in other areas of the organisation.

A global hierarchy must be established with the same structures found in a well-governed nation. For example, you will find three major financial institutions in any well-governed country: a Central Bank, a Development Bank and a Treasury or Ministry of Finance.

In the United Nations, the IMF is comparable to a Central Bank and should be transformed into a World Central Bank. The World Bank is a development bank, and a World Treasury should be established to collect revenue to finance its operations.

Similarly the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) should be transformed into a World Ministry of Agriculture, the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) into a World Ministry of Industry, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) into a World Ministry of Social Affairs, and so on.

The question that arises is; which level of government should be called upon to address a given problem?

The answer lies in what can be called the "theory of the optimum level of decision making," or what some have called "subsidiarity". There must be agreement on the interests involved must be attained, and at the lowest possible level.

The lower that level, the more democratic is the decision-making. But if a decision affects others, they must be involved or conflict may result.

For example, if industrial waste from one country contaminates another's drinking water, both countries must agree on how to eliminate the contamination and how to pay for it. If the two countries cannot agree, even with the help of mediation, conflicts can be submitted to the International Court of Justice.

If a national government ignores the judgement, economic sanctions can be applied, and if they are not effective, military intervention would be the last resort.

The UN system can be transformed by changing the competence of existing specialised agencies and creating a few new ones: a World Treasury, a World Police, an Ocean Agency and a Space Agency.

World Government, Not United Nations

As the United Nations approaches its 50th anniversary, 1969 Nobel Prize Winner for economic science Jan Tinbergen argues in this special report from Rotterdam for Inter Press Service that the times demand a World Government.

contributions from member nations, which is now done separately by each agency.

This would eliminate duplication, reduce the cost of collection, and facilitate the dispersal of available funds to areas where they are needed most urgently.

The World Police would continue the activities of the blue helmets on a permanent basis. This would reduce the time needed to act and so more effectively discourage nations or political groups from aggression.

The World Ocean Agency would supervise the use of ocean resources, such as fishing and ocean mining, and would control ocean pollution and other abuses.

Similarly, the World Space Agency would supervise the use or abuse of outer space: aviation, pollution, emission of radio and television waves, observation of the agricultural situation by satellites, or military activities.

While many alternatives and better examples for a system of world government are possible, what is most important is that we believe in the possibility of a world government. Without it we have no future.

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Should Capital Punishment Continue?

by Mostafa Ameen

years back is no more an acceptable proposition. And this is not only applicable in case of capital punishment but also to many acts in our social and personal life.

Even fifty years before, in rural Bangladesh, use of gramophone music was feared a good enough cause for declaring a person an outcaste. Society has changed and so is the attitude.

On 27th of July 1993 most of our national dailies gave wide coverage to the execution of Munir. In some dailies it was rather the only story with details of episodes and events with a taste of melodrama.

Vis-a-vis the trend of change in attitude, I have a strong conviction that one hundred years from now when someone will read the minute details of the execution ceremony of Munir, he/she will not consider us to be great.

I have no personal sympathy for Munir. He has performed a heinous act. He has killed a person whom he made his partner for life. He must suffer for his barbarous act. No question about suffering. But do Rimas come back if we take the lives of Munirs? Life for life and teeth for teeth is a philosophy of vengeance. Munir has taken a life and so he does not have the right to live is a strong logic.

Killing someone is insanity as no sane person will do that. An individual can be insane but as a society can we behave in the same way?

Law has also inconsistencies in the treatment of crimes. If someone destroys the eye of another person the eye of the convict is not damaged. For causing physical injury no one is damaged or injured physically. Imprisonment is considered to be sufficient punishment. Only in case of murder, life is considered to be the compensation and rightful punishment. If damage of an eye is compensated by imprisonment, why damage of a life cannot be compensated by imprisonment? Length of imprisonment is de-

pendent on the nature and seriousness of crime. For murder, section 302 of the Penal Code says "whoever commits murder shall be punished with death or transportation for life and shall also be liable for fine". Section 303 says "whoever, being under sentence of transportation for life, commits murder, shall be punished with death". If death is awarded for the first murder under section 302, there is no scope for the implementation of section 303; it simply becomes frustrated. If death is the punishment for the second murder under section 303, logically death cannot be the punishment for the first murder under section 302. There exists a clear contradiction of law.

Those who may argue in favour of death sentence shall, in addition to the traditional notions of life for life, talk about the demonstrative effect: If taking life is paid by giving life, people shall feel restrained in taking life. The fear of punishment has definitely a psychological impact on the offenders. But statistically it is not proved that murder has been low in a country where death penalty exists in comparison with a country where death penalty has been abolished. Even in the same country, in certain states, where death penalty prevails, the rate of murder is not less than that of other states where the penalty has been abolished. I am referring to the United States. In the United States death penalty has been abolished in a good number of states. In other states the debate is on in favour of abolition. The abolitionists argue in the above line.

In Europe and other democratic societies, death penalty is gradually being abolished by legislative acts. Human rights organisations are also working for achieving this objective.

If death punishment is abolished there is no reason to think that people will go around

killing others. As to the argument of demonstrative effect we can say that the death of Dr Iqbal could not save the life of Rima.

If death sentence is there, the same is also abused for political purposes. The abuse is very significant in the third world. Acts against the government are sometimes treated as acts against the state and opponents are often put to death. The provision of death sentence in the Penal Code makes the job easy.

Human issues are also relevant. Judges are human beings. They have their own values and attitude towards life. The values again differ from man to man. For instance, in the case referred earlier, the District Judge sentenced Khuku to death but the High Court set her free. This is very usual in the judicial system. The judgements of the subordinate courts are changed by the superior courts.

The question of advocacy is also very important and relevant. A good Advocate can quote sharp arguments and cite good precedences while, a weak Advocate cannot do that. It is a well accepted fact that Advocates have a vital role to play in a trial. Munir came from a rich background. He deployed our best legal practitioners to plead his case. Khuku also did the same. But what about a poor rickshawpuller who has been charged with murder? Can he employ a real good Advocate to save his neck? Normally no. If an accused fails to employ an Advocate, government does provide and Advocate. How serious and competent a government Advocate is, remains a real question. No one can rule out the possibility that if the Judge would have been different, Advocates would have been different, the judgement could have been different. That is applicable for all cases. When we are talking in terms of life,

sector superseded that of the preceding year by only 0.4%. The report further says, "The production of edible oil, steel, cement, cotton wear, cigarette, sugar, cotton yarn and newspaper fell by 71.4 per cent, 33.7 per cent, 23.9 per cent, 22.2 per cent, 9.9 per cent, 4.1 per cent, 3.8 per cent and 1.6 per cent respectively."

VOA reporter Ziaur Rahman said that reserve of foreign exchange had increased to a record volume. If he had taken the trouble of asking any bank over his ISD phone he would have been told that "it is because of total lack of investment in the country which is alarming and has been causing headache to all the banks."

An editor of another daily wrote in his column on 7th January: "The economy was not moving. Business has come to a standstill, industry is almost buckled on its knees and there seems to be no letup. I have not come across a single industrialist who has spoken well of the condition of his industry."

The large and small industries, trade and commerce, are all gasping. The handloom industry has come to a standstill. We have come to the painful conclusion that the government is neither capable nor can it trust its disbursement officers to give the full amount to the poor loanee. They should therefore, try to work out arrangement with Grameen Bank or BRAC to see if they can help. One million handloom workers need immediate relief." His observations have not been contradicted by any quarter.

I am a Bangladeshi resident

in New York. Being involved in the welfare of the community, we are aware of who is who in our community in the US including those in the VOA.

Everyone has a right to have own opinion. But it is unfortunate and unacceptable if it is misused in his professional duties, particularly through a neutral and powerful foreign media like the VOA. We expect VOA to be absolutely honest and pragmatic in its analysis, like the BBC.

Ashraf Ahmed Brooklyn, New York, N.Y. USA

Rickshaws

Sir, A letter from Ms. Lechner of the German Cultural Centre and the endorsement of her views in another letter on the rickshaws of Dhaka recalls to my mind a news item in a Bengali newspaper few days earlier. In that news we come to know that Prof. Wahhajuddin of BUET undertook a study and developed a modified version of rickshaw powered by rechargeable battery. The news informed that the vehicle would cost Tk 30,000 and would run at 15 km/hr/200km by consuming 1 kw-hr electricity. Studies for further development (financed by a Canadian Research Centre) could not be pursued due to the negative attitude of a secretary who found no merit in research work. Ms. Lechner's objection to mechanisation can be overcome by eliminating the use of petrol/diesel engine in favour of electric (rechargeable) motor.

Rickshaws are environment-friendly but its development by retaining the main virtues is essential.

MA Haq Green Road, Dhaka

To the Editor

Arambag-Segunbagicha canal

Sir, Kindly allow me to draw the urgent attention of the authorities concerned, in particular, and nation as a whole, to the misdeeds being perpetrated by some interested elements, specially on Arambag-Segunbagicha canal.

The Dhaka WASA, is building roads and box culverts to save the Dhaka city from the regular geographical hazards, that bedevil the city life of the tax payers. But it is failing to work smoothly, because a large number of unauthorised buildings and illegal occupants are obstructing the work of the WASA.

Some have even built mosques on Government khas lands, obstructing the work of WASA. These illegal occupants are using Islam and mosques, purely for their gain and purposes.

The Mayor of the city had condemned these activities as un-Islamic. The poor tax payers money is being wasted and squandered by the WASA by paying huge compensation money to the private land and building-owners, whose dwellings have been very questionably acquired by the ADC (LA). Instead of smashing the illegal occupants, the ADC (LA) and the WASA are following the path of 'least resistance' thereby rather directly stabilising the anti-social elements inhabiting on the banks of the canals.

We request the Mayor, the DC, DLR, and the WASA to demolish, with an iron hand, the nests of corruption on both sides of the canals. Let us not commercialise Islam any way. The perpetrators need to be

Translation of 'Dahuk'

Sir, The translation of 'Dahuk' which appeared in The Daily Star on 3rd December last was read by many of us with excitement. But alas! it was difficult for us to relate the translation to the original, nor could we, frankly speaking, comprehend the idiom the translator, Mr. Choudhury Abdus Sattar has followed. I don't pretend to be an authority on English nor can I lay claim to any superior knowledge of English grammar. But I had the impression that most of the passages in the translation were gibberish.

The translator may have congratulated himself upon being able to offer an English rendering of a well-known Bengali poem. But what he has offered us is so bizarre a product that it is difficult to believe that any one well-versed in English could have been capable of it.

I apologise for my language, but can any reader defend the following:

Might be I know thee And thy physics having well complexion That is painted with a wonderful brush But what about 'well' as an adjective qualifying complexion?

The translator also contains such expressions as 'bees of day', 'dice of slyness', 'the moon goes demolishing', 'I wonder whether the translator

It's always too late

Sir, Months before the announcement of City Corporation elections, the aspirant mayors and ward commissioners had reserved the walls of buildings in the cities with inscription "Site for....."

With a week after filing of nomination papers of the candidates, all the walls of buildings facing roads, streets and lanes assumed an ugly look with indiscriminate writings and posters pasted on them. Even inner walls of outer verandahs and corridors were not spared. None dared to protest for fear of being assaulted and abused by the 'supporters'. Had the government issued necessary instructions just prior to filing of nomination papers, this could have been prevented to some extent. But it was not done so.

Now, when only a few days have been left for polling, the Election Commissioner has requested the Dhaka metropolitan and the City Corpn. to remove camps on roads and pavements and erase the writings of the candidates, which is bound to fail. He has also expressed hope that 'good sense' will prevail and the political parties will instruct their nom-

ees not to violate the rules. At least the Dhaka metropolitan Police must be finding themselves between the devil and the deep sea. When the Election Commissioner slumbered away the time we can't expect to perform magic by the DMP or the candidates as the task of erasing wall writings and removing posters is time consuming.

I am not only afraid, but sure that it will take long time in demonstrating 'good sense' by the aspirant mayors and commissioners. Perhaps the Election Commissioner has tried to show his conviction that 'it's never too late', but our experiences have made us believe that 'it's always too late'.

K R Zuhumi Khulna

VOA special report

Sir, I would like to draw your kind attention to the special report of VOA broadcast on the new year's day over its Bangla service and published in your esteemed daily on January 4.

I am confused when I compare the VOA report and the Bangladesh Bank report of 1992-93 published in all papers on the 6th. VOA reporter comments that during last year, economic progress in Bangladesh was 'hopeful' — new industries were set up, more job opportunities were created and both export and import trade had enhanced. But according to Bangladesh Bank report, deficit in trade balance went up to 1848 million US dollar i.e. deficit increased by 289 million US dollar. Growth in the industrial

sector superseded that of the preceding year by only 0.4%. The report further says, "The production of edible oil, steel, cement, cotton wear, cigarette, sugar, cotton yarn and newspaper fell by 71.4 per cent, 33.7 per cent, 23.9 per cent, 22.2 per cent, 9.9 per cent, 4.1 per cent, 3.8 per cent and 1.6 per cent respectively."

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