Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

## Trade with India

Dhaka, Monday, May 9, 1994

The visit of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BNCCI) delegation from India provided an opportunity for closer interaction between business leaders of the two countries. This was also an occasion for Bangladesh side to the dialogue to voice its growing concern at the huge deficit in trade with India.

Despite the reforms being carried out, the Indian market still needs larger measures for opening up for ensuring higher access for imports. This applies not only to the level of tariffs but also to quantitative limitations on imports. In contrast, Bangladesh has eliminated most of its quantitative restrictions on imports. Its tariff levels also are one of the lowest in the region. Naturally, exporters in Bangladesh find themselves in a disadvantageous situation in their efforts to penetrate the Indian market.

It's not that Bangladesh alone faces an adverse situation in trade with India. Recently, Sri Lanka also asked India to lift import duties on agricultural and manufactured goods in a bid to reduce the trade imbalance between the two countries Needless to add, Sri Lanka also faces a huge deficit in its trade with India. Understandably, Sri Lanka as well is seeking greater access to the vast Indian market.

Regional trade imbalances arise largely because of India's strengths as a producer of goods and as a trading nation. India's industries turn out a wide variety of manufactured goods and market these at competitive prices. For exports to the countries in the region, geographical proximity lends a special competitive advantage to the Indian goods by way of lower freights and quicker delivery. Most countries in the region, therefore, tend to import their requirements from India in preference to goods produced further afield. In return, these countries naturally expect improved

The South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) provides a framework for India to accord special considerations to its trading partners in the region. However, the work on making SAPTA operational just limps along. The agreement is yet to yield concrete results. Nor will it be quite fair to blame India exclusively for the lagging pace of SAPTA.

access for their products in the Indian market.

Meanwhile, bilateral efforts have to continue to redress the trade imbalance. On the occasion of the fourth session of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission held in Dhaka last year, business leaders from the two countries had agreed to form a joint task force to identify new products for diversification of trade between the two countries. The task force was to have met every six months and put up a report on ways to expand economic cooperation between the two sides. The next meeting of the task force is just about due now. Let us hope that it would come up with workable new ideas this time.

The BNCCI delegation is said to have offered help to the local entrepreneurs in locating appropriate technologies which could be put to use for setting up small and medium industries in Bangladesh based on indigenous resources and talents. The team also talked of joint ventures. Setting up trade-creating joint ventures based on local resources, linked to suitable buy-back arrangements, could well be one way of diversifying and promoting exports to India.

## An Unspeakable Crime

It was a sexual aberration of the worst type. We find it extremely painful, mind-bogglingly shocking and utterly outrageous to know that there is a direct connection between the bestial crime and a students' hall of Dhaka University. But however ill at ease we may be in accepting the news that has been carried in a leading vernacular daily, the reality is too stark to be dismissed lightly. In the brief story the daily is explicit enough how university students - even though only a handful of them - can stoop as low as to bring the entire highest seat of learning to disrepute through a shameful act of sexual perversion.

Sexual predilection is one thing and enticing an unsuspecting girl to a room of male hostel with the false promise of helping her get admitted to Preliminary (MA) class is a completely different thing. Yet this is what a few students of Zahurul Huq Hall, according to the report, managed to do the other day. Not only did the sex maniacs lure the girl into a one-seat room on the second floor of the hall but also gang-raped her after making her drink water mixed with sleeping tablets. When the victim was finally released by their captors at about 8 pm, she made vain attempts to walk out of the hall gate. She collapsed near the gate. Other students present there helped her to get admission into a clinic.

Language is but a poor tool to express our revulsion and condemnation at this dastardly act. We believe the university teachers and the saner sections of students will feel the same way as we do. But the hall authority's immediate response is even more bewildering. Instead of taking any measure against the culprits, the authority has opted for the easiest of solutions. It has decided not to allow girl students into the hall. Well, how long is this ban going to remain enforced? Perhaps as long as this nauseating incident will be fresh in mind. In the mean time the perverted students will be looking for other preys for satisfying their carnal desire.

True, nothing can compensate for what the girl has lost at Zahurul Huq Hall. She has known the blackest day of her life. And all because of her over anxiousness and lack of caution. All through her life she will bear the scar — mental one more than the physical one. But how come the teachers and students can allow the shameful incident to pass without a protest? Why must not they direct their anger towards the criminals and prove the quality that is associated with university education? It may concern just a single human soul, but in a way the whole community will have to be a party to the guilt unless the crime is allowed to go unpunished. Can we expect the whole university to become one in protesting the rape on the girl and do justice not so much to the poor girl but to themselves?

## Fisheries Management Policies Need New Direction

report from this newspaper's correspondent in Jessore speaks of acute scarcity of fish in his area. There is nothing much remarkable in this. The story is more or less the same all over the country. It is simply a

matter of supply and demand. Fish production in the country in mid-sixties was eight lakh tonnes. Nearly thirty years later, the output touches just about nine and a half lakh tonnes. The population has more than doubled in the meantime. Naturally, per capita availability of fish has come down to barely 21 grams per day from more than 32 grams then. Fish just is not plentiful in supply.

All the same, there is another reason why the report from Jessore attracts notice. It also speaks of another lagging effort to augment fish production in the country. It says that a total of thirty large waterbodies in the region had been taken up for intensive pisciculture under the aid-financed Fisheries Development and Management Project, to raise production. The report says that the project continues to fail to attain its objectives, with the actual yield far below production target.

There has been reports of failures elsewhere earlier also. A programme to stock major floodplains with fish to increase the total yield was reported to have gone awry. Net catch from the floodplains stocked with fish under a World Bank funded 50-million dollar project is said to have fallen short of the fingerlings released in the area, by nearly ten per cent! The flasco has been blamed on high rate of species mortality and escapement. Nonetheless, it is a disappointment worthy of note.

Then there is the case of a multi-million dollar fisheries development project turning sour. Funded by the Asian

be established within the next

Archbishop Andrea Cordero

Lanza di Montezemolo, a

Vatican adviser in Jerusalem.

and Shmuel, Hadas, a former

Israeli ambassador to Spain.

had been designated as the

first ambassadors of these two

fice in Jaffa, an Arab-domi-

nated suburb in Tel Aviv. while

retaining its non-diplomatic

office in Jerusalem as a cha-

nnel to West Bank Palestinians.

which was signed last Decem-

ber, paved the way for formal

diplomatic relations between

the two states. The accord was

the outcome of 17 months of

secret negotiations, further

boosted by the success of the

United States-sponsored peace

process that culminated in the

Jewish leaders have for

years urged the 73-year-old

Polish Pope John Paul II to

establish ties with Israel and to

The Vatican and Israel

however, have long been at

odds over Jerusalem. While the

Vatican wanted multilateral

control of the city, Israel clai-

ms it as its eternal and un-

has softened its positions, in-

sisting only on international

guarantees of free access to

places of worship. As part of

the new accord between the

states, the Vatican has recog-

nized Israel's right to exist

The agreement also called

for progress on the Palestinian

question and guarantees for

Jerusalem as a city sacred to

the three major monotheistic

religions — Judaism, Chris-

It appears that only when

within secure borders."

tianity, and Islam.

In recent years, the Vatican

Gaza-Jericho accord.

visit their country,

divided capital.

The Vatican-Israeli accord.

The Vatican will open an of-

three to four months.

countries.

major step towards

the establishment of

Development Bank, this aquaculture project is said to have been designed to raise carp variety of fish in natural waterbodies such as haors and beels. Presumably to ensure safer growth of the newly inducted fish stocks, a poisonous chemical was reportedly used to kill off predatory breeds in the project area. Not surprisingly, these waterbodies also happened to be the natural habitat of dozens of other species of perfectly harmless but edible fish. The poison is killing them off too! It is also being feared that the poison might destroy the biomass of the project area. This venture into aquaculture would then end up altering entire ecosystems.

To be sure, these are instances of slippage only. There would be other ventures which are doing better. In the first three years of the current decade of the nineties, fish output has risen annually by more than 3.5 per cent on average, in other words, at a rate higher than the population growth. In the decade of the eighties, fish catch increased at an average rate of 3 per cent a year — from 6.5 lakh tonnes in 1980 to 8.5 lakh tonnes in 1990. During this period also, fish output rose at a faster pace than the annual growth of population at 2.17 per cent between 1981 and 1991 However, it was a different story altogether during the preceding two decades Production had stagnated around 8 lakh tonnes annually in the decade of the sixties. Even worse, fish output had dropped to 6.5 lakh tonnes in 1980 from 8 lakh tonnes in 1970. Even if this sharp reversal is attributed to natural calamities like the drought of the late seventies, the fact remains that over a period of three decades, the availability of fish per capita has declined. So has the contribution of the

share of this sector in the GDP came to 4.91 per cent at current prices and 5.22 per cent at constant prices in 1972-73. At the opening of the decade of the nineties, the share of fisheries sector in GDP stood at 3.30 per cent at current prices and 2.70 per cent at constant prices in 1990-91.

Substantially incremental efforts would thus be needed to raise the yield of fish to a level that would match per capita availability even in the sixties. The Fourth Five Year Plan (FFYP) had set the production target at 12 lakh tonnes per annum. The authorities plan to raise the annual output by an additional 3 lakh tonnes by the year 1995 to meet the target. This is going to be an uphill task considering the present rate of growth.

main rivers and sedimentation may have a lot to do with it. However, increased irrigation also has reduced availability of waterbodies for the fish to survive while indiscriminate construction of embankments has robbed the species of spawning grounds. Relentless encroachment of wetlands and even open waters, by human habitat and crops, has aggravated the situation further. The trend of ever shrinking aquatic habitat inland seems irreversible

Nonetheless, experts say that efficient fisheries management coupled with intensive fish farming can raise the inland output substantially in the medium term. As the expanse of open waters available for inland fishing continues to recede, societal problems

## ALONG MY WAY

## S B Chaudhuri

Besides, the FFYP target itself is modest compared to our present and future needs Experts say that we would need to produce at least 15 lakh tonnes by the year 2000. Thus, even if the FFYP bench marks are met, the country would be required to raise an additional yield of one lakh tonnes annually on average for the next five years beginning 1995. Given the existing performance lags, such a target looks just unattainable.

Shrinkage of inland fishing grounds would continue to limit efforts at increasing the output. According to a report recently published in this newspaper, the aquatic habitat came to around 4 million hectares two decades back Now, it's only about 2.4 million hectares. Withdrawal of water in the upper reaches of the

arising from loss of livelihood of fishermen will grow more acute. Increasing recourse to intensive fish farming in close waterbodies will deepen the crisis. Fishermen depend for their catch on nearby open waterbodies. They tend to regard these fishing grounds almost as a communal resource. As these open waters shrink or are taken over for controlled aquaculture, many of the fishermen would lose their vocation. Policies for efficient management of inland fisheries need to take the societal aspects of aquaculture into

consideration. Creation of some form of property rights for the fishermen in inland waterbodies could ease the looming societal crisis. Long-term lease of state-owned open water fishing grounds could be one way

of tackling the issue. Likewise, closed water aquaculture projects built by the state could be privatized and farmed out on long-term lease or transferred outright to fishermen's communities.

There is yet another com-

pelling reason for the creation of property rights for the fishermen over inland fishing grounds - be it open waters or closed waterbodies. Catching fish with utter disregard to breeding cycles or landing undersized fish, lead to a fast depletion of stocks. Yet, the present policies for leasing out state-owned waterbodies actually seem to encourage overfishing. The fisherman has no incentive to conserve fish stocks. He knows that he may not have access to the same waters next season. He hardly has any reason to let the fish grow. Fish that he spares would probably be caught by someone else anyway. Fisheries management policies should aim at creating an environment for sustainable fishing Creation of property rights for the fisherman could just do that. A sense of ownership of fishing grounds would provide him with an incentive to protect the species. Secure in his knowledge that overfishing by others is not going to decimate fish stocks, he would feel encouraged to invest for a richer harvest next time around.

HILE we worry about our inland fisheries, the world agonizes over dwindling fish stocks in the sea. Of our total annual catch, marine fish accounts for only about 25 per cent. However. global fishing subsists largely on the harvest from the sea. The world's yield from sea fishing is on the decline. Global catch of marine fish reached a record level of 86 million tonnes in 1989. Since

. . . .

falling. Experts blame the declining harvest on drastic overuse of ocean fisheries. Overfishing has depleted most of the world's major sea fishing grounds. The limit to sustainable yield has either been reached or exceeded in most of the natural marine fisheries.

then, the output had been

Global concern at the thinning out of marine fish resources provides the main point of focus at the ongoing talks at the United Nations for tuning up some of the provisions of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The idea is to tighten measures for the conservation, of endangered stocks. The Law of the Sea created areas called exclusive economic zones' allowing countries to exercise certain jurisdictions, including regulation of fishing and exploitation of mineral wealth up to 200 nautical miles offshore. The 12-year-old global treaty has since been ratified by the required minimum number of nations and will now enter into force next November.

At the UN talks, some

countries have called for a stronger international regime to manage marine fisheries to stave off extinction of stocks and to ensure sustainable harvesting. However, some also consider such regulation an antithesis of free enterprise in this instance, the freedom of nations to roam the seas at will, catching fish without restraint. Global fish stocks should remain open to allcomers, they say, and the nations should be free to send their fishing fleets around the world. The UN Convention has also been called the Law of the Sea Treaty, which yields the acronym LOST. These proponents of free enterprise in global fishing would love to see the LOST get lost in the sea!

# Israel, Vatican Set to Forge Diplomatic Ties

diplomatic relations between Israel and the Vatican was taken recently with the these conditions are met will the Vatican agree to extend exchange of special representatives between the two states. full diplomatic recognitions to Formal ties are expected to

> However, elements of the accord concerning the future of the holy city worry Arab politicians.

> fisheries sector to GDP. The

Adnan Omran, assistant secretary general of the Arab League, said the future of Jerusalem should be considered only within the framework of United Nations resolu-

UN Resolution Nos. 242 and 338 call upon Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories occupied in 1967 while Resolution No. 465 stipulates that all settlements in the occupied territories are illegal, including those in an around Jerusalem.

The Vatican-Israel accord known as the Fundamental Agreement, contains 14 points which, among other things. profess a joint Roman Catholic Jewish commitment on certain issues. However, the status of Jerusalem has not been made clear, according to Khaled Mohamed Khaled, deputy head of the Palestine section of the Arab League.

Mr Khaled noted the regular violations attributed to Israeli troops within the holy city as clear proof that the country would not honour its promise to guarantee full rights of worship to the three religions.

He also recalled how the Israelis once dug under the Al-Aqsa mosque in search of the remains of King Solomon.

Fears have also been expressed that the agreement with the Vatican and the international acceptance it implies may be used by Israel to delay further implementation of the Gaza-Jericho accord. According to Mr Khaled,

this could be avoided if Israel was made to feel that recognition is premised on the condi-

Mounir B Abboud writes from Beirut The Vatican has softened its position, insisting only

on international guarantees of free access to places of worship in Jerusalem tion that the country responds

to international demands to respect Palestinian rights and pulls out of occupied Arab territories.

Some analysts say that a comprehensive peace settlement between the Arabs and Israel could provide a framework for regional economic cooperation. But some, if not all Arab countries, are still reluctant to accept this possibil-

Multilateral negotiations that have been going on included talks on what others consider as ingredients of an integrated Middle East market - refugees, environment, water resources, energy development and disarmament

Some Arab writers took the daring step of supporting an integrated Middle East market as an "inevitable consequence of political peace."

The Arab press said recently that peace in the Middle East cannot be fully realized unless the principle of a common market embracing all nations in the region, including Israel, is accepted. It believes that Israel would not withdraw from any Arab country until a clear peace agreement is reached, including open borders, free trade and diplomatic relations.

Some Arab analysts are wary that the present concern over a common Middle East market may overshadow the central issue, which is settlement of the Palestinian question.

The ongoing multilateral negotiations might reach a conclusion on economic matters before the five-year transition period of Palestinian self rule is over.

Discussions on economic

cooperation between Israel

and the Arabs at this stage,

they say, would undermine the

Wajed, and appears to have

stumbled upon the truth that

the AL chief has more often

than not failed to exercise the

kind of authority she was ex-

pected to when she took over

the presidency of the party in

1981. I happen to be one of

those who believe that there

have been major flaws in the

leadership Hasina has exer-

cised over the years. But, then,

if one expects politicians to be

perfect - or something close

to that - one is really not be-

ing able to take human nature

as well as political realities

into account. Let me just say

that in the kind of politics

that has defined Bangladesh

since the assassination of

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman in 1975, leadership of

the secular and liberal sort has

been a difficult proposition.

Given that difficulty, one will

surely sympathise with Sheikh

Hasina insofar as her political

arguments. He finds it ironic

that, contrary to Hasina's ex-

pectations, the people of

Bangladesh did prefer a

Bangabandhu's daughter. Was

that truly the irony? The issue

is a lot deeper than that, for

the very important reason that

it was not the people of

Bangladesh who shut the door

on the possibility of a Hasina

administration. One ought to

bear in mind the fact that the

February 1991 elections gave

the Awami League 38 per cent

of the total number of votes

cast, while the BNP walked

home with 32 per cent. Had a

system of proportional repre-

sentation been at work in the

have been different from the

one we know. Now add to that

country, today's reality might

wife'

Let me get back to Anam's

conduct is concerned.

general's

should be built on political stability first between the Arabs and Israel if it is to be viable and durable, they add. Arab analysts also say that a

current bilateral negotiations

on the Palestinian issue. A

Middle East open market

Middle East market would provide a great opportunity for Israel to penetrate Arab eco-

the world. Israel's military superiority would be enhanced by economic domination, according to the Lebanese press. This view was expressed in the course of a media campaign in Lebanon and Jordan

nomies and capture one of the

largest consumer markets in

against Kuwait's decision to relax its anti-Israel boycott. Kuwait said the ban had been lifted on foreign companies that did business with Israel.

Depthnews Asia

## **OPINION**

### The Third View I have in recent times been

by Syed Badrul Ahsan

taking good, and pretty natural, interest in what Mr fact the subtle rigging that Mahfuz Anam has had to say went into the electoral exerabout the quality of political leadership in the country at into the whole process of what this point in historical time. I went wrong with the ballot can quite understand the counting, maybe one could dismay that has worked in him come up with interesting conowing to what is obviously the absence of the kind of politics one would like to see emerge large numbers of voters being in Bangladesh. And that unable to cast their votes owpolitics ought to be of the ing to a curious absence of liberal as well as the libtheir names on the voters' eralising kind. But, while I lists. These are facts that one truly appreciate the motivation must take into account before behind Mr Anam's reflections leaping to the conclusion that on the state of things in the the nation rejected the Awami land, I would like to say that the ideas he has thrown the pear mystifying that the AL lost way of his readers through his all the JS seats in Dhaka? write-up (Re 'Our Leaders are Letting Us Down) in the May 5 ther: how was it that the AL issue of The Daily Star somelost in particular pockets? how do not convince many. Because it was unpopular? Or was there something more to The learned editor has attempted an analysis of the the phenomenon? leadership of Sheikh Hasina

At one stage in his discourse, Mr Anam reminds us that Sheikh Hasina has 'a party to lead, and an electorate to win over if she ever wants to govern this country'. Well, the lady has been leading her party in a manner that is without question courageous. The fact that she has, in this age of political obscurantism that has been much patronised by those who have successively governed the country since the fall of constitutional authority in 1975, waged war on a number of fronts testifies to her political intrepidity. There have been times when she has faltered, when she could have done with less of the abrasive, agree. But give Hasina credit for what she has done over the past thirteen years. She has brought the rump BAKSAL elements back to the Awami League fold. She has held the party together despite the Kamal Hossain incident. And let us not forget that at a time when much of the press (and notably the English language press) is committed to finding flaws in her politics and even her private trips abroad, she has survived - and survived

And pray why should Sheikh Hasina 'tear a leaf out of Benazir Bhutto's life'? Ms Bhutto has been, both in 1988-90 and at present, in power through making compromises with the military. She has needed to compromise, for the basic cause that without the military she cannot imagine a rise to power. There is too the truth that the Pakistan constitution makes it imperative that Ms Bhutto work under Golam Ishaq Khan or anyone else. Where the issue is one of Sheikh Hasina's leadership, it

would be impolitic to suggest that the AL chief compromise with the forces that put an end to her father's life. The history cise. If one were to inquire of the Awami League has been one of relentless struggle against the forces arrayed against constitutional rule. Should Hasina effect a deparclusions. Moreover, there re- ture from that tradition, only mains that unalterable fact of because she needs to ascend to power? I do not think Anam is putting things in perspective when he emphasises the psychological baggage that Sheikh Hasina carries'. Much more than psychology, or the purely personal, is at issue here. One would do well not to League in 1991. Doesn't it ap- let go of this aspect of the matter. It is not enough to say that the AL is in the dock. And it is Stretch the thought a little fur- not the AL's behaviour that people are talking about. The talk is about the tragic way in which Parliament has been brought to near-emasculation by people other than those in Hasina's party. "We don't know. Let us see what AL does." That statement suffices. People do look upon the AL to provide leadership. They do not say that expectations and putting a party in the dock amount to the same thing!

> 'Allow me to bring this monologue to an end through raising one last point. Mahfuz Anam says that 'nothing new has been offered by the AL to the people as a programme'. Is that really the case? Anyone who has had the time and the inclination to go through the organisational activities of the party cannot fail to note the policy perceptions of the AL leadership on the economy, foreign policy, defence, et al And all that has come the way of the people despite the truth that the Awami League has also been carrying on a battle for the righting of national history. You will surely agree with me. Sir, when I tell you that a political party requires tremendous will to fight on more than one front at a time. That the AL has done that is commendable, and that despite the fact of whether one chooses to support its politics or not.

The Mandela-De Klerk analogy is certainly the stuff of political idealism Unfortunately, in a country where political assassination stays beyond judicial and moral inquiry by force of constitutional amendments, that kind of idealism cannot be enter-

And Sheik Hasina may have disappointed us a times. don't think she has let the millions of patriotic souls inhabiting the land down.

tained.

(The author is an eminent journalist and is the Assistant Editor of The Morning Sun)

#### Grameen Bank advertisement

Sir, For many years I have followed Grameen Bank's contribution to development in Bangladesh with pride and admiration. I am therefore greatly alarmed and dismayed to note their elaborate advertisement in The Daily Star on the 27th April 1994, on a

headhunting spree. What on earth do they plan to do with innumerable PhDs (and that too "in any subjects either recently qualified..." for what is basically development work)? What does the Grameen Trust have to do with marketing? And all these MBAs? For poverty alleviation?

As a Bangladeshi working in an international organisation, I find it demeaning that the Grameen Bank/Trust should be soliciting "persons who have worked with international organisations in Bangladesh". Why? Are we to assume that working for national organisations like the Grameen Bank count for nothing and are simply not good enough for Grameen Trust?

It is an altogether tasteless

advertisement and speaks volumes for our innate biases.

Shahed Islam 13/1 Shamoli, Dhaka

Richard M Nixon Sir, I followed with interest the write-ups of S A M S Kibria and Syed Badrul Ahsan on the late Richard Milhous Nixon. Mr Ahsan's contention that

the Soviets pleaded with the Indian leadership to show mercy and save what was left of Pakistan after its eastern wing became Bangladesh is highly controversial and debat-The Indo-Soviet political

axis would have turned West Pakistan into a cluster of client republics for that would have given the USSR a firm hold on NWFP and allowed her to have access to the warm waters of Baluchistan - a desire entertained since the time the Czars ruled Russia. As for India her primary political desire to see Pakistan cease to exist as a nation-state would have been fulfilled.

When the war over Bangladesh broke out, Indians not only bombed Karachi and other places but also advanced and occupied five thousand

square miles of West Pakistan. It was in this context the USA under the Nixon-Kissinger combine, cautioned India and made it explicitly clear that they were more than concerned in preserving the geographical territory of West Pakistan and under no circumstances would allow its obliter-

The Shah of Iran who at that time was policing the Gulf area and was a political factor to be reckoned with, also made it abundantly clear that the preservation of Pakistan's geo-political sovereignty was directly linked with Iran's in-

After it became evident that the US, Iran, China and some other states were determined to uphold West Pakistan's political and geographical status Mrs Gandhi announced a unilateral cease-fire on the western flank. Seen in today's context.

Pakistan's existence has been a blessing or lest the whole of South Asia (India likes to call it an Indian sub-continent) would have been reeling under Indian hegemonism.

Robert Kader

Mehdibagh, Chittagong