

Trade with India

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

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-ambition and lack of caution. All through her life she will bear the scar — mental one more than the physical one.

Fisheries Management Policies Need New Direction

A 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.

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.

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.

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

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 introduced fish stocks, a poisonous chemical was reportedly used to kill off predatory breeds in the project area.

To be sure, there 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.

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.

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.

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 benchmarks 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.

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

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.

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

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.

Discussions on economic cooperation between Israel and the Arabs at this stage, they say, would undermine the

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 compelling 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.

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then, the output had been 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.

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.

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.

While 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

nomies and capture one of the largest consumer markets in 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 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.

Discussions on economic cooperation between Israel and the Arabs at this stage, they say, would undermine the

current bilateral negotiations on the Palestinian issue. A Middle East open market 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 Middle East market would provide a great opportunity for Israel to penetrate Arab economies and capture one of the largest consumer markets in the world. Israel's military superiority would be enhanced by economic domination, according to the Lebanese press.

ALONG MY WAY

S B Chaudhuri

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OPINION

The Third View

by Syed Badrul Ahsan

I have in recent times been taking good, and pretty natural, interest in what Mr Mahfuz Anam has had to say about the quality of political leadership in the country at this point in historical time.

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.

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

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

fact the subtle rigging that went into the electoral exercise. If one were to inquire into the whole process of what went wrong with the ballot counting, maybe one could come up with interesting conclusions. Moreover, there remains that unalterable fact of large numbers of voters being unable to cast their votes owing to a curious absence of their names on the voters' lists.

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.

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.

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

Israel, Vatican Set to Forge Diplomatic Ties

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

these conditions are met will the Vatican agree to extend full diplomatic recognitions to Israel.

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

The Vatican-Israeli accord, which was signed last December, 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 Gaza-Jericho accord.

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

According to Mr Khaled, this could be avoided if Israel was made to feel that recognition is premised on the conditions

tion that the country responds to international demands to respect Palestinian rights and pulls out of occupied Arab territories.

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.

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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.

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 hegemony.

To the Editor...

Grameen Bank advertisement

Sir, For many years I have followed Grameen Bank's contribution to development in Bangladesh with pride and admiration.

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 debatable.

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.

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advertisement and speaks volumes for our innate biases. Shahed Islam 13/1 Shamoli, Dhaka

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To the Editor...

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.

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