

SOS from Shrimp Exporters

The Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association has sent out an SOS to the Commerce Ministry, to help it out with shipping of its consignments to the buyers in the US, Japan and Europe. The SOS concerns the frozen shrimp exporters from the Khulna area who use the Mongla Port for their exports. About 70 containers of frozen shrimp, worth Tk 30 crore, are waiting to be shipped to Singapore and Colombo, from where the shrimp containers are to be transhipped to their final destinations.

The normal procedure is that, given Mongla Port's limited facilities, feeder ships are used to send containers to Singapore and Colombo. The Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) uses two feeder vessels every month on which these shrimp exporters of the Khulna region are heavily dependent. The last vessel to leave the port was on 26 June '94. Since then there has been no feeder ships available. The BSC has informed that one of their vessels is stuck at Singapore for repairs, and there is no date as to when the other feeder vessel will be available. Meanwhile 70 containers full of shrimp are lying at Mongla Port, running the risk of going rotten because of the erratic electricity supply in the area. The delay is also exposing the exporters to the risk of order cancellation by the buyers.

There are several questions that we would like to raise. First, why the BSC not make alternative arrangements once its vessel went out of order? Secondly, how come that the BSC cannot give any date for the arrival of its second vessel. Are we to understand that, in this age of instant communication, BSC cannot keep track of its vessels' movements? Thirdly, what was the commerce ministry's role in helping the frozen shrimp exports? Why no special arrangements were made to ship to containers from Chittagong?

What it all means is that when the chips are down our business community, the shrimp exporters in this instance, get no help from the government and the BSC. Several aspects of shrimp export have to be kept in mind. It is a perishable item and that it is meant for eating. Even the slightest fall in quality control will cause a great damage to our export, and irreparable loss of credibility to our businessmen. In a competitive world of shrimp export it is difficult to make an entry, in any market, especially in the markets of US, Japan and Europe. There are many other countries also exporting shrimp into the same markets. One fiasco and our market will be lost. Does not our government or, for that matter, the BSC know it? Doesn't their behaviour amount to almost negating the effort of our exporters?

Authorities, we are sure, will have a thousand excuses, as they usually do, for their action, better still, for the lack of it. We are not interested in them. We want action, and we want it fast. We urge the commerce ministry and the BSC to do whatever necessary to ship out the 70 containers now stuck at Mongla. Immediately after that, we want the authorities to sit with all concerned and work out a durable solution to this problem. We offer our shrimp exporters all the help from this newspaper.

Infecting a Neighbour with a Nightmare

First it was for Tanzania to bear the brunt. The burden was unprecedented in the annals of mankind. Some 300,000 Tutsis crossed into Tanzania from Rwanda in just 24 hours. Now it is the turn of Zaire to be infected with a nightmare from across the border. Nearly 500,000 Rwandan refugees, many of them armed and all of them Hutus, have in the last few days crossed the Zairean eastern borders creating not only food and shelter and sanitation problem of an unknown magnitude but also engendering racial tension threatening to explode any day. Ironically it was the same danger that the refugees were fleeing from — a Tutsi tribal retribution.

We in Bangladesh are not quite unfamiliar with such a situation. But even we, with a record of nine million refugees crossing into the neighbouring state and millions of slain sons and daughters, shudder at the thought of the way five hundred thousand Tutsis were butchered in a matter of weeks.

No one would know better than us the supreme need at such situations for actions supportive of the means of existence of a vast multitude of uprooted people as also of establishing a just peace and a stable secure outcome. The western powers have for the umpteenth time proved their ineffectiveness in containing societal convulsions involving murder of hundreds of thousands, as long as these do not step on their toes. And the United Nations' best performance has so far been, of necessity, no better than a preacher's. The big and vastly diverse world is increasingly becoming smaller but only in terms falling into the palms of technological-economical superpowers. In human development and security terms it is perhaps in a shape worse than when Dr Livingstone and Mungo Park opened the Dark Continent for at best a dubious civilisation.

The humanitarian-aid needs of the region far outstrip in urgency all other preoccupations the nations of the world may have at the moment. The question of logistics remains a tough one but not beyond resolute handling by those who can help. The weight of this problem is for the present keeping in the shadow the heroes of a people — almost wiped out in a swift sharp sweep — that helped the Tutsis to rise like the phoenix. The Hutus are on the refugee trail for fear of a genocidal retribution. But heroes cannot be murderers and victors do not kill a whole people — premises proven beyond doubt by the victorious Bengali people in December 1971. The Hutus, who form the majority in Rwanda need to be reassured and mentally rehabilitated. This is an important goal that will need time to achieve.

The Korean way of economic success continues to be the most fascinating and the most demanding way for developing countries to emulate. On a number of counts, the Korean economy tends to represent most of the developing countries of today and hence stands very close to their realities. It is indeed, like others a small country with higher population density, scanty arable lands, a very small domestic market and a history of massive Import Substitution (IS) and state intervention. On the other hand, the Korean model of development seems unique in the sense that the models of the present day developed countries can hardly represent Korea's way. For example, unlike the 18th and 19th century model of England, Korea had no scope to utilize the raw materials from overseas to manufacture industrial products and then sell them to raw material exporting countries. Second, while in the case of 18th and 19th century France, Japan and England, agricultural sector generated substantial surplus accumulation to finance industrial and social overhead investments, Korea was deprived of such capital supplies from agricultural sector. Third, while many of the present day developed countries to start with, Korea started its journey towards economic growth with a very poor base of natural resources. And, lastly, Korean model also differs from the Middle East countries' model in that while revenues from oil fuelled the development of Middle East countries, Korea was a net importer of oil.

A plethora of research do exist to depict the Korean export-led growth as a child of a free market system and liberal policies and thus compare it with that of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. However, the recent work by Yun Hwan Kim of the Asian Development Bank on "The Role of the Government in Export Expansion in the Republic of Korea" does appear as anti-thesis to show that the edifice of an export-led growth in Korea was in fact built by the direct state intervention and to go a bit more, by direct supervision of the state. Like many other developing countries, in the 1950s, Korea tipped IS over EO strategy as a way life. The IS strategy was duly respected by protection to local industries via various trade restrictions and by an exchange rate unfriendly to exports. During this period, Korea experienced a growth rate of exports by only 10 per cent annum and an average growth rate of real GNP by about 4 per cent. The share of exports to GNP at a minuscule of about 3 per cent could hardly play any significant role in economic growth in the 1950s.

In 1961, with the establishment of a military rule, Korea stepped into systematic and long term development planning with a major shift from IS to EO strategy. Needless to mention, the Korean policymakers were educated and influenced by the EO success stories of its neighbour country Japan. There was also a political necessity to go for EO that current literature on

THE signing of the Gaza-Jericho peace agreement has introduced a new perspective to the Persian Gulf region that stresses the importance of economic prosperity over political and ethnic considerations.

This could explain why Israel, which is in a position of strength and has the absolute support of the United States (the sole superpower in control of international affairs), entered into such an agreement.

Israel has gained certain advantages from the accord. Among these were: 1) it transferred the burden of suppressing the Intifada the the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) during the five-year autonomy period; 2) the PLO has officially recognized the existence of the state of Israel and has promised to amend its charter that calls for armed struggle against Zionism; 3) the PLO will be enlisted against anti-Israeli groups such as the Hamas and Hizbullah; and 4) the focus of the Palestinian-Israeli struggle has been shifted to the conflict between the PLO and Palestinians in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya and elsewhere.

However, these advantages are not enough reason for Israel to ratify a peace treaty. Israel's ultimate aim appears to be to merge into the regional economic network, which it could only do by removing the lone political obstacle — the Palestinian issue. The dispute hinders normalization of international, commercial and industrial relations between Israel and neighbouring Arab countries. For Israel, the treaty is an experiment that can be nullified after five years if it discovers that it does not serve its long-range goals.

Israel, under the accord, retains its firm control over all important areas such as foreign affairs, defence, security and borders. It is also responsible for Israeli settlements in Gaza and Jericho and their relocation to other vital areas such as Jerusalem.

As for refugees and border control, Israel will continue to govern these up to the third year of the five-year autonomy period.

The full implications of the Gaza-Jericho agreement can best be understood by analyzing the provisions on economic cooperation and development programme contained in the appendices, which are an integral part of the agreement.

The third appendix provides a detailed list of areas for bilateral Israeli-Palestinian economic development cooperation. It provides for the creation of a joint committee to study the following:

- All means to exploit and develop water resources in the West Bank and Gaza, and determine a formula for the permanent allocation of water rights to each party;
- The construction of transportation routes, railways and communication between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, and neighbouring countries;
- The establishment of easy access free trade zones in Gaza and Israel;
- The promotion of joint Palestinian-Israeli industrial projects in the field of textile, food, pharmaceutical and electronics;
- The construction of a Gaza seaport, a petrochemical

products complex, and an information bank; and

- All other means to serve the advancement of local and regional trade.

The fourth appendix defines the protocol for the Palestinian-Israeli regional development programme in which both parties will urge the Group of seven (G7) industrialized nations, some Arab nations, Arab regional organizations and international agencies to participate in development programmes not only in the West Bank and Gaza but in Middle East as a whole.

The protocol specified development projects for water, electricity, transportation and communications as well as regional development for the Middle East.

Certain facts could be gleaned from all these.

First, funding these projects will require billions of dollars which cannot be raised by Israel or the PLO without assistance from the G7 nations and their financial institutions, and from some Arab countries.

The projects imply the inclusion of Jordan into the Palestinian Israeli bilateral cooperation scheme. By signing this accord, Israel has, thus, managed to amalgamate itself into the Jordan-Gaza economic framework.

Not only will Gaza's deteriorating economy be virtually dependent on Israel, but Israel could also strengthen its link with Jordan through a Palestinian-Jordanian-Israeli economic union.

Moreover, Israel has succeeded in transferring the burden of financing the development of Gaza and the West Bank to the World Bank.

The final result is that the price of peace manifested in this agreement is Israel's victory in possibly breaking the Arab boycott and initiating the Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli economic union.

Israel could further attempt to take advantage of billions of dollars of foreign aid and investment to give a powerful boost to an economy, suffering from a high balance of payments deficit.

Simultaneously, it could create for itself one of the largest consumer markets in the world, including Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Syria and some Gulf countries.

The success of this market will be founded on the old formula of cheap Arab labour, financial investment from the Gulf, plus Israeli technological expertise.

This economic group may not be what the US keen to create for the region. In addition to the above, the group includes the former Baghdad Pact countries composed of Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and Iran.

Whatever would be scope of future economic groupings, one thing is bound to emerge — the dominance of Israeli-technological know-how.

Middle East radical states and organizations strongly resented what they called "Israeli penetration of the Gulf region."

by Abdul Bayes

Korea could hardly reveal. Posed with a threat from communist N Korea the Korean policy makers opened the flood gate of foreign direct investment, mainly for export, with the hope that any attack on Korea would be seriously dealt with by foreigners to save their investments there.

Role of Government

The role of the Korean Government in the overall massive export growth could be summarized as follows: (a) operating and developing economic infrastructure which could not be left to private sector; (b) developing and stimulating human resources and people's aspirations; (c) presenting medium and long term targets for economic development; (d) promoting strategic industries and (e) enhancing the productivity of the economy via boosting R&D efforts, modernizing production technology and disseminating information on domestic and foreign economies.

One may argue that all of the functions mentioned above are, more or less, performed by some other countries (although with varying degrees) but met with very little success as far as exports are concerned. Kim argues that, since the early 1960s when the First Five-Year Economic Development Plan started, Government provided visible financial and tax incentive (until early 1980s) and invisible moral supports. As to the former, exporters were offered bank credit at lower interest rates than other commercial loans

"climate" of Schumpeter in which entrepreneurs generally receive high social prestige as well as high income rates.

The "Export First" strategy was communicated by the Government to the Society But communication might not lead to compliance in a society riddled with rigid, routinized and procedural type behavior of the bureaucrats. President Park knew it and immediately embarked on various institutional reforms to combat bureaucratic hassles. One institutional produce was the birth of the Export Promotion Conference comprising economic ministers, major economic institutions and leading businessmen. It used to be held every month and was chaired by the President himself. All problems used to be aired in the conference and the president would like to see that the next meeting had started with newer problems, if any.

Interventionist

President Park, according to Yun Hwan Kim, did hardly sit back and let market forces do the needful. Rather, he was actively and pervasively interventionist... preferred a pragmatic non-ideological mixture of market and non-market forces to laissez faire. When market worked, fine; when they did not, the government showed no hesitation to intervene by means that ranged from a friendly phone call to public ownership. Implementation by any possible means was the characteristic, prevailing feature of policy in Korea.

The above is the story of a country that raised its export ratio from 1.4 per cent of GNP in 1962 to about 24 per cent in 1975 and about 27 per cent in 1990s. The trade ratio (export/GNP plus import/GNP) increased from 14 per cent to 55 per cent and to 60 per cent during the same period of time. The country from others but produced a model of its own the country is South Korea.

The writer is a professor of economics, Jangrangnagar University.

Without naming Oman, the state-run radio of Iran remarked: "It is amazing that countries without diplomatic relations with the Zionist regime are welcoming those occupiers whose hands are drenched with the blood of innocent Palestinians."

It said that since Syria and Lebanon are boycotting these multilateral talks, it was even more amazing that other Arab countries, were meeting with the Israelis on Arab ground.

Oman maintained friendly ties with Iran throughout the latter's eight-year war with Iraq (1980-88) when all other Gulf states backed Baghdad.

It did not sever relations with Baghdad when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, although it opened its military facilities to the US-led coalition that forced Iraqi troops out of Kuwait the following year.

Oman has also welcome Jordan's King Hussein and PLO leader Arafat, who remains ostracized by other Arab states for having shown sympathy to Iraq during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

Oman, which has been under Sultan Qaboos' rule for the past 24 years, has consistently followed discreet and independent policies that were often at odds with Arab consensus.

Observers attached significance to the fact that the water conference coincided with a state visit to Oman by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, a leading Arab proponent of peace with Israel. The visit constituted a real boost to Sultan Qaboos in the face of attacks from radical Arab and Iranian forces.

Both Egypt and Oman have been active in efforts to settle the ongoing conflict in Yemen, which they fear could spill over and affect other countries in the region.

— Depthnews Asia

PLO-Israeli Peace Accord Introduces New Perspective to the Persian Gulf Region

Mounir B Abboud writes from Beirut

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To the Editor...

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.

Of being a good teacher

Sir, A teacher naturally, always try to be a good teacher by strengthening improving his teaching style and standard. But when a teacher becomes a real good teacher in the classroom, he starts facing a great many problems. For instance, his average colleagues would not like his popularity of being a good teacher and may try to degrade his reputation and popularity. In the university level institutions, the problem is much more complicated. A good teacher often becomes a prey to the polite politics of his colleagues. Often the senior colleagues who are responsible for allocating classes to the departmental teachers would give less or no classes to the good teacher on the fear that the students might question their teaching quality in relation to the good teacher's competency. And this would definitely lower their popularity among the students who they often use in realizing their narrow ends.

Still a good teacher remains a good teacher — always alert and attentive to retaining his teaching standard and moral values.

A good teacher, in addition to his teaching duties, has the sacred responsibility of perpetuating knowledge and moral values among the people and establishing truth in the society. He always uses his voice and pen in establishing truth and justice in every sphere of the social life. A good teacher is a patriot and always thinks for ensuring welfare of his country and nation.

The prime task of a good teacher is to help his students become truly educated persons. His heart fills with joy when he finds his students coming out successful in all the exams. The heart of a good teacher bleeds when he witnesses the educated persons of his society behaving irrationally and impolitely. A good teacher offers universal prayer to the Creator urging Him to show the light of education to

all those who are suffering from the curse of ignorance.

A Teacher Dhaka

Caretaker government

Sir, To give democracy a firm root in our political arena, I think the next general election must be held under a caretaker government. Because our political parties are not yet free from narrow outlook and there is lack of transparency in their activities. Our democracy is still crippled by establishment. To free it from administrative influence and subservience to the ruling party a free and fair election is necessary. This will give our democracy its actual credibility.

However, when fair and free election was held under a caretaker government in 1991, then the chief of one party alleged that the election was not fair and free enough. Today mainly that party with other opposition parties are demanding a caretaker government. It seems really funny. But it is not for the opposition parties that we urge the next general election to be held under a caretaker government. It is for optimum utilisation of our voting right and for ensuring fair and free democratic system in our society. Magura

by-election was not a happy episode. However, exaggerated opposition claim may be, after the Magura by-election it also became more clear that fair and free election under a ruling party government may not be possible.

Why the ruling party is not listening to this national demand, also is not clear to us. After all it was they who got the majority in JS through an election held under a caretaker government in 1991. Since, there is no real barrier in holding the next election under a caretaker government, we hope, the ruling party should realise this truth and adhere to the popular demand of the people also to give democracy a firmer root in the country.

Priyatosh Gupta Deptt of Finance and Banking, University of Dhaka

Citizenship of Golam Azam

Sir, At last the court restored the citizenship of Golam Azam, the chief of Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh. To many people of our country it is not a good news at all. It rather came as a shock to them, for it holds no consistency with their expectation.

In our political context, the very name of Golam Azam is a stigma, carrying hatred. He gained a notorious epithet for

his activities in 1971. What he did then as the founder of 'Al-Badar' and 'Al-Shaams' is still too hair-raising for the people to forget. Practically, as a politician, his role in our crucial days of independence movement was so shameful and despicable that many claim he should be tried as a war-criminal.

Now that the court has pronounced verdict for his citizenship it has naturally enraged many individuals and organisations. However, I don't want to say anything about the verdict of the court, it has done its job. But I can't help saying that freedom-loving people will never manage to forgive him even if he begs pardon now, realising his past misdeeds.

Binoy Barman Godenail, Narayanganj

We are fed up

Sir, We are fed up, tired, exhausted and have become lifeless with constant red-tapism, negligence of duty, inefficiency and corruption of some of our public servants in government offices and public sector corporations, frequent traffic jams on the roads, price hike of essential goods and commodities, accidents on roads/highways/ railways/ riverways, housing problem, sanitation hazards, water,

scarcity, erratic electric supply, lack of medical care in government hospitals, mud slinging allegation and counter allegations and accusations and counter accusations by our different political parties, call for hartals and strikes, demand and against holding general elections under caretaker government and no care taker government, mosquito menace, violence in colleges and universities, inordinate delays in the disposal of civil and criminal cases in the courts, unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water by India and its adverse effect, system loss in electricity and water supply, misuse of government transports by some officials, abuse of power by some public leaders and bureaucrats, boycott of Jatiya Sangsad, wastage of public money, creation of new problems one after another on the one hand and the constant cacophony on the other. But nobody cares to solve the garbage of the stinking problems.

We do not want to hear the meaningless crow-cries any more. We want to hear the bird sing the message of peace and love and dance to the rhythm of life. Would our public leaders, both in the ruling and opposition parties, kindly listen and respond to the voice of the millions?

O H Kabir Dhaka