Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali Dhaka, Sunday, December 11, 1994

## **Transport Workers'** Excesses

On Friday Narayanganj witnessed one of the frenzied outbursts of transport workers' temper. The hour-long clashes between rival groups of such workers left one of them dead and 15 injured. Such casualties apart, at least 15 vehicles were damaged by them. As a natural consequence bus service remained suspended for hours after the ugly incident. This is in fact the second such incident to have taken place within a week. Earlier truck workers and ferry employees at Aricha Ghat battled over a dispute about the boarding of a truck on a ferry vessel.

The Aricha Ghat incident escalated to an omi nous proportion and continued for almost a day. Mercifully though no fatality was reported except injuries to four of the combatants. But during the long 17 hours of insanity at the meeting point of communication arteries between the country's north, west and south, thousands of people stranded as they were - had to go through a terrible experience. Besides, truck-loads of perishable goods went rotten causing severe loss to its owners.

The two incidents serve as a pointer to the extremely vulnerable nature of our transportation system. Entrenched and organised groups in the sector, as in other areas, have turned into a oneeved devil. Never do they consider that they could be on the wrong side before putting their full weight behind anything one of their member or members have done. Even if it means taking the law into their own hands, they go the whole hog for it. So in the face of threats from such collective whims and irrationality, it is the unorganised common people who have to bear the brunt. Their rights and privileges are continually undermined.

However, it is time that such organised and frenzied interferences with the normal flow of life were brought to an end. The transport workers' supremely arrogant and irritable manners in conducting their business seem to be responsible for most of the tragic incidents. They can ill afford to be so rough and violent.

The problem basically lies in their lack of orientation and training. One reason for the loss of mutual respect between the passengers and the transport workers is evidently the authority's callous approach to the public transport service together with the absence of discipline. So, attention should be given to enforce some sort of discipline in the sector. Let the workers not disrupt communications and life on each and every pretext.

## **Tab on Human Rights**

On the Human Rights Day, yesterday, we could legitimately celebrate a growing public awareness of the importance of public rights.

Some aggrieved teenager girls, assisted by women's rights bodies and legal aid groups, have already sensitised us about the evil of orthodoxy. What is noteworthy is that they were aided to come into the open seeking a legal remedy. In one or two other instances, law and order people moved against acts of outrage and the courts delivered exemplary punishment to the offenders. A tather, lately sought justice at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka alleging death of his son in police custody. Citizens have even moved to the highest court for its ruling on constitutional points of variegated nature.

Democracy has brought in its wake this kind of a consciousness of popular rights. Thanks are also due to the emergence of several citizens' rights groups in the country and our growing connection with the highway of international information network via satellite or cable television. Our own print media did the job well to enhance the awareness of the inalienable human rights.

However, it is worth remembering that human rights are a much-talked-about subject all over the world, not by virtue of their realisation but because of their violation. Right through the maze of impingements on human rights that have occurred over time, we can go back to a lead definition of these rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 by the UN: "Faith in the dignity and worth" of all people in societies.

We pride ourselves on the facts that we are a homogeneous people and that Bangladesh stands out as an example in communal harmony. If the majority happens to be numerically an overwhelming factor in a society, the religious and ethnic minorities in it tend to have a special kind of sensibility that need to be respected with an extra bit of care and caution. A country's democratic, pluralistic and cultural credentials are nowhere more tested than in the stout defence and effective protection of the rights of minority communities living in it.

Let's constantly monitor how they are doing and feeling so that they do not fall victim to neglect caused by complacence, miscommunication or any unwitting indulgence to vested quarters.

## Taj-struck

Frustrated romance has led to taking one's own life, sometimes to even a two-some suicide by pact. A third person, thrown off balance through unrequited love ending in rejection, may have also taken his or her life. But has anyone ever heard of somebody attempting to commit suicide out of a positive appreciation for others' romance or love?

Strange are the ways in which human passion, emotion, sentiment or shall we say, sheer ingenuity can express themselves. Thirty-year-old Australian tourist Sonaj Bideh, a woman in a trance of profound inspiration, drawn from the legendary love between emperor Shah Jahan and his wife Mumtaz Mahal, tried to jump from atop one of the minarets of the Taj. Seeing that the firemen below spread a safety net she relented

and gave out her motivation. Psychiatrists may be at their wit's end trying to explain why she chose go to such an extreme length in what appears to be a case of excessive empathy or shared passion. Profound love can evoke both exaltation as well as pathos which combine so ideally in the Taj Mahal which is both a marvel of architecture and a mausoleum of grief and sadness. The woman tourist has written another memorable tribute to the Taj, no less significant perhaps than that paid by Lady Curzon who is said to have told the Viceroy as they were absorbing the beauty of it that she was prepared to die the next moment if only she knew a mau-

soleum like The Taj would be built on her grave.

# Industrial Policy of South Korea: A Lesson for Bangladesh

by AKN Ahmed

Korean experience indicates that the government can effectively intervene in the economy while the attempt by the authorities not to intervene and turn all decision making over to the market can backfire not only economically but politically as well.

treatment in the form of financial, technical and administra

ER capita GNP of South

Korea in 1960 was al-

most the same as that

of Bangladesh. Since then

South Korea has made

enormous progress. Its per

capita income was placed at

US\$ 7000 in 1993. This was

thrice that of Turkey and very

close to that of Portugal and

Greece. According to a recent

OECD study South Korea's for-

eign trade constituted 56 per

cent of GNP. Its export stood

at \$65 billion per year in

1993, 55 per cent of which

was made to OECD countries.

During the past 30 years its

average annual GDP growth has

been of the order of 8.4 per

cent and its per capita income

has grown at the rate of 7 per

cent per annum. The share of

manufacturing in GDP has dou-

bled to the peak of one third

in 1987 and within manufac-

turing the share of heavy in-

dustry which includes chemi-

cal, iron and steel, metals, ma-

chinery and transportation

equipment increased from

about one fourth in 1961 to

two-thirds in 1992. South Ko-

rea is now soaring high like a

skylark and very soon she will

be admitted as a member of

markable growth possible? It

has now been established that

this has been possible due to

aggressive industrial policy fol-

lowed by its government in

close co-operation with busi-

ness and industries under

strict surveillance of the gov-

ernment. The following were

the main elements of the in-

hammered in official docu-

ments that the market mech-

anism cannot be entirely

trusted to increase competi-

tive advantages of industries

and hence branches likely to

enjoy high productivity growth

and/or income elastic demand

were to be promoted by fo-

cused industrial policy as

promising strategic industries

in order to catch up with the

West. Consequent to this pol-

icy, hand-picked specific in-

dustries were given special

OUR years ago we were a nation united, a nation

ntually setting out to realise

the unfulfilled tasks that mi-

llions of martyrs have dreamt

about Bangladesh and above all

pledged to begin anew towards

a journey of hope and tran-

Yes, in 1991 we ousted au-

tocracy and pledged to uphold

democracy as well as its prac-

But, what is our state now?

Two small traders wanted

to expand their business. They

talked with the residents of

their village promising them of

fortune if they invested with

them. They agreed and put in

their life-savings in their jour-

One-week later, the two

traders bought paddy sheafs

(dhaner shish) and left for the

market across a river assured

their purchase would reach its

destination safely. The rice

paddy seller hired a boat

(nouka), but the two could not

agree on the price or the way

the operation was to be carried

conflict forgetting the vil-

lagers' fortune were in their

hands. The boat owner wanted

to carry the cargo in two

rounds explaining that other-

wise his boat could be dam-

aged with the heavy load, but

the other side wanted it at one

go to save carrying cost. As

they argued the boat was

loaded and again unloaded to

make their point, and finally

the boat capsized along with

most of the cargo. The two

The two got locked in a

The following incident may

help to describe it.

nev for a good life.

looking forward to eve-

1. A theme was continuously

dustrial policy of South Korea:

What has made this re-

OECD.

tive support. 2. Like Japan, government in South Korea picked up winners for giving specialised treatment. In other words, only those entrepreneurs who had the will and capacity to start and operate successful industrial ventures were selected and given push to go forward and achieve the goals set out by the government in its industrial policy. All others who wanted to make gains only by rent seeking methods were left out. h. course of time this policy became almost an operational concept permeating the entire spectrum of the

3. Corrective feedback to the selection process was provided by ongoing broad reporting of activities of priority firms to the government. This enabled the economic bureaucracy to have access to detailed business information which proved essential for effective industrial policy. It was completely different from the practices followed in other countries where after giving sanction, bureaucracy goes to sleep at the switch.

4. Creative destruction of obsolescent firms was assured by the government by prompt and quick moves helped by its acquired business information in order to weed out inefficient production techniques or inefficiently managed units before they became "white

elephants". 5. Because of the patronage and support provided, individual conglomerate firms were amenable to the discipline of the government. This was further helped by the fact that the apex organisations were engaged on both sides of the dialogue between government and individual/business units.

6. Intense efforts were de-

voted to acquiring technology For this reason, direct foreign investment was strictly regulated. While foreign technologies were banned in sectors in which domestic counterparts were available, firms were en couraged to practice reverse engineering along with licensing and purchase of technologies not available at home - all under the government guid-

7. There was a consistent emphasis on gaining economies of scale. This goal was reflected in many mergers of small firms initiated or subsidised by the government "Small is beautiful" was neither accepted as theology nor preached as a gospel. In a similar way, there was an ongoing campaign to restrict entry and control capacity expansion in various sectors to curtail excessive competition in the form of big savings in investment and price wars in industries with decreasing

8. Within the generally ex pansionary macro-economic environment credit allocation was aggressively practiced. The banking system was nationalised early on giving the state effective control over all important financial flows and tight control over disposal of foreign exchange was maintained. The so-called "policy loans" with subsidised interest rates and/or priority rationing accounted for half of bank credits in the 60's and 70's.

9. The economic bureaucracy itself was an essential player in the game. It was embedded in the society itself in the sense that it could act autonomously for the public good as it saw fit without being completely taken over by patronage, rent seeking and private greed.

10. Finally, the institutional basis for the South Korean

miracle was invented over a relatively short period of time Chacbols, trading companies, the planning bureaucracy and the macro-economic policy mix emerged in the early 60's in a creative burst to form creative mass that forces change and kept going by striking bar gain between peak organisa tions to restrain rent seeking with rapid output growth and the state's power to punish recalcitrant in the background

What lessons can we draw in Bangladesh from the rapid industrial growth of South Korea? We can draw the following

First, we should disabuse our mind of the myth that the Korean miracle has taken place simply because private sector enterprise has been let loose. The truth is just the opposite of this. Rapid industrial growth has taken place there because of the lead given by the government, its selective intervention in the economy and its meaningful partnership with business and industry. There is now belated recognition and grudging admiration of this fact even by the World Bank.

Second, we should find ways to forge a meaningful partnership between politicians, businessmen and bureaucracy to devise, apply and enforce a growth-oriented industrial policy. The present adversarial relationship between these key players should give way to a new coalition of these three important segments of the society. Given the present state of our bureaucracy and its entrenched position and the stranglehold of losers in our industrial field this is going to be a very difficult task. The key players are unlikely to jump unless they are pushed very hard.

Third, a system for picking

up only winners and discarding losers should be accepted as an operation concept by all segments of the society.

Fourth, the Korean success

story should be understood

against the backdrop of a series of specific factors some of which are historical, cultural and fortuitous They are: Japanese occupation of the country, exposure of Korean people to Japanese management method. America's interest in the 50's and 60's in Korean economy for strategic reasons, strong dictatorial government since 1960 fully committed to fast economic growth, high level of growth in eastern economies in the 60's followed by large infusion of American dollars in the Viet nam war, prevalence of a fairly high educational and health standards, significant land reforms in 1948 and an egalitar ian income distribution pat tern to begin with, base level social and economic condi tions which have ensured rea sonable share for wage earners in national income despite the suppression of trade union rights for many years, the Confucian ethic of frugal habits and hard work, remarkable ability of policy planners to quickly adapt their policies to the rapidly changing circum stances and endogenously ori ented industrial class, less concerned in salting away their funds abroad but more interested to keep at bay intrusion of foreign capital, the policy of export promotion but supported by intensive import substitution goods, less dependence on foreign direct investment and more on foreign commercial borrowing when it was needed and the extreme care exercised in financial sector liberalisation with the goals of retaining some control on interest rate and directed

Fifth South Korea, like Japan and Taiwan could gain her initial advantage in the world market by combining almost overnight America's invention of training for full productivity with wage costs that were still those of a pre-industrial country But this technique is working no more. The comparative advantage that now counts is the application of knowledge. This means that developing countries can no longer expect to base their development merely on low wages and uneducated labour force. They too must learn to base it on applying knowledge.

Fortunately for South Korea this is not difficult because of her universal education and pragmatic content of her education system. Unfortunately for Bangladesh, this is however going to be difficult. We have stood still too long while the world has moved and we have neglected education very badly all these years. Even now we seem not capable to move faster to keep pace with the

In short, Korean experience indicates that the government can effectively intervene in the economy while the attempt by the authorities not to intervene and turn all decision making over to the market can backfire not only economically but politically as well. Furthermore, response to big government should not be: "No government but more disciplined government" and response to failed private enterprise should not be: "No private enterprise but more disciplined private enterprise" Above all, to quote Luis Pasteur. "Chance offers itself only to those who are ready".

Shall we draw the right lesson from Korean experience for our industrial growth and stop noisy fiddling around the edges of the problem?

The writer is the former Governor of Bangladesh Bank. He has also served as Bangladesh Ambassador to Japan and South Korea.

# In Fool's Paradise?

by Nadeem Qadir

Maybe our two leaders are not seeking the truth or cannot reach the truth because they are not meeting the electorate independently. They read reports in newspapers of 'big rally', 'massive turnout in rally' and listen to whispers that "your popularity is as strong as ever" or in the other case it was "growing". But, it is time they followed Khalifa Harun-ar-Rashid and found out the truth.

quickly gave explanations to the traders and the villagers, but refused to pay compensation as it was an "accident". The villagers' hopes of good fortune was trampled.

The way our two top politicians are going about may have good reasons as far as they think, but it is costing those who voted them and the nation as a whole, a well-known fact.

Those who understand and many who "are not supposed to understand," and most importantly non-partisan, do think opposition's demand for a constitutional amendment seeking elections under a nonpartisan interim government was good and help stop "vote

They also do not like street agitations that cause disruptions to their daily lives now being propagated by the opposition and hope that Sheikh Hasina will take "benevolent" steps to gain more support, instead of antagonism. They are asking why the premier was so adamant because "uncompromising" (aposheen) could be good in some cases and not so good in others, where farsightedness and benevolence could earn laurels.

Masud Rana, a young salesman, said, "Because of the strikes we have to work on Fridays and sit home during the stoppages". "We have only work now and no fun," he said, echoing many of his colleagues.

The question in his mind is if both leaders say they love Bangladesh and do not crave for power, then why they are not for a moment thinking of people like him. He hates mission Friday matinees, but has no choice now. Maybe our two leaders are

not seeking the truth or cannot reach the truth because they are not meeting the electorate independently. They read reports in newspapers of "big rally", "massive turnout in rally" and listen to whispers that "your popularity is as strong as ever" or in the other case it was "growing". But, it is time they followed Khalifa Harun-ar-Rashid and found out the truth. The adjectives used in describing their rallies as well as the whispers could be deceiving. Hopefully the press will do away with the adjectives as they know the facts of head counting.

Why count heads? We are all well-aware that if not 75 per

cent, at least 50 per cent enjoy pocketing cash in return for chanting slogans at such rallies. If not 50 per cent, at least 25 per cent of the turnout go to rallies either to see a national leader or they were just passersby. May be 25 per cent is all they count on, but many of them could also change their mind by the time they got to the polling booths.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) is considered the backbone of Begum Zia's ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party, while the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) is also known as strength for Sheikh Hasina's opposition Awami League.

These two groups are youths and usually termed as the "future generation". It is not essential in democratic political groups that they would not raise their views and impress upon their leaders, instead of aiming guns at each other. The leaders might not agree to settle the current dispute, they might have their problems and can they ignore demand of their student fronts?

It is expected that without any dialogue, be it failed

Commonwealth-brokered or one attempted by top businessmen, the student wings can once again play a glorious role (if they cannot abandon politics in favour of education) like they did in all major campaigns of the country by telling their leaders "we do not want to fight, we want to study and we want you to take miracle The students activists have

to set new trends, not follow everything that is old, decaying and unhealthy. Because they have failed to do so far, the TIME magazine in its issue of December 5, 1994, failed to find one Bangladeshi to name in its "roster of young leaders for the new millennium".

Both the JCD and BCL know that as they bickered, anti-liberation forces and anti-democratic forces made headway. It is amazing to see one political party proudly holding rallies on the blood-soaked soil of the martyrs of the 1971 independence war.

Begum Zia, who strode to power in 1991, with a popular campaign slogan which when translated into English from Bengali loosely reads: "Party is

greater than a person and country greater than party.' She said in Khulna, home of Royal Bengal Tigers, in September. "parliamentary democracy has been established to make the government accountable to the people" and she would fight on to institutionalise that.

Sheikh Hasina has repeatedly said she had lost her family in the bloody 1975 coup and she had nothing to lose, but fight for the happiness and basic rights of Bangladeshis. "No bullet or bomb can stop me in my campaign for democracy." she said in an interview during a whistle-stop campaign in September.

democracy. All they need to take is a pragmatic and farsighted step (everyone believes it would need a miracle) to announce one line each. Begum Zia's announcement: "I love my country and for the

Well, they both love their

country, its people and

sake of the good of the people I will work to end the dispute by holding elections under a non-partisan interim government". Sheikh Hasina's announcement: "I love my country and I

have decided to withdraw all street agitations whether government accepts my democratic demands or not".

Most would say I am wondering in a fool's paradise. Well if our leader's can fool us, I have the right to seek paradise in that.

The writer is a Special Correspondent with Agence France-Presse (AFP), Dhaka.

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.

# 'No more hartal

Sir. I am writing to express my appreciation to Munira 'Khan for her write-up 'No more hartal please' which was published in your daily on

November 18, 1994. I have found Ms Khan's opinion to be absolutely true, unbiased and timely. I encourage her to keep up her writing on the subject so that people in general can realise what our politicians are doing to the nation and what will happen in the future if the present trend

continues.

I, however, am slightly confused: I would like to ask Ms Khan and the authorities in charge that if the law enforcement people fail to maintain law and order properly. how can we, peace-loving people, cast our votes according to our own choice? Should we give thought to this? What we see nowadays is that our votes are cast by someone else. It is even more shameful that in some places citizens cannot

even enter the election booth as it has been captured by armed mastans of some party and the law enforcers stand by and watch these activities helplessly.

I look forward to hearing Munira Khan's thoughts on how we can solve this problem which needs a great deal of effort from political leaders to motivate the general populace to come forward collectively to protest against mastans and hoodlums. Will the politicians do their bit?

Hanif Rahman ICDDR,B, Dhaka

## Wrong diagnosis

Sir, Pathology plays a very important role in diagnosing a disease. The report must be correct, otherwise proper treatment would be hampered. But in our country we notice negligence and we cannot always rely on reports supplied by pathological centers. Report varies even when portions of the same specimen are given

to more than one pathological laboratory. Sometimes germs of disease are found which the person had not contacted.

A similar case was reported in The Daily Star's November 26, 1994 issue. A resident of Gandaria, in Dhaka was reported to be HIV positive by a pathological centre at Elephant Road in Dhaka, but afterwards blood test by the National AIDS Committee and the Infectious Disease Hospital clearly showed that he was not injected with the deadly disease. One can just imagine the mental sufferings of persons who are the victims of wrong diagnosis!

So, it is essential that persons who are engaged in that profession should be more careful and precise. Nur Jahan 💊

East Nasirabad, Chittagong

### OIC summit and Bosnia

Sir, During World War I and World War II the USA saved France, the UK and former USSR (now Russia) from the wrath of foreign aggression.

After World War II the world was divided into two main blocs. The western block consisted mainly of the USA. the UK. France and West Germany and the eastern bloc consisted mainly of former

USSR and East European communist countries. One super power, the USA, which headed NATO and the other super power, the USSR, which headed Warsaw Pact countries faced each other with great hostility, enmity and rancour.

The western European countries especially Germany. France, and the UK lived under extreme fear and trepidation of the fast growing power and strength of the former USSR and the communist countries. Washington provided all possible help and assistance, economic, military, diplomatic and moral support to Bonn, Paris, and London to save them from the gargantuan ambition and great threat of Moscow. Bonn, Paris and London were 'friends in need are friends indeed of Washington.

For over 45 years the USA looked after the welfare of the UK, France and West Germany and many other countries on the one hand and on the other hand the cold war between the USSR and the USA intensified day by day.

However, the USA won the race and the USSR lost.

Surprisingly after the USSR fell apart, the communist world collapsed and the cold war ended, the UK and France have changed their faces. They feel that there is no necessity at all for the presence of the

USA in Europe any more. So when the Bosnian holocaust started by the Serbs and

the USA tried to stop it, both the UK and France opposed each and every advice and proposal of Washington. And Russia supported the Serbs clandestinely.

Today once again the future of Europe appears to be bleak. The UK, France and Russia would have to expiate their errors and crimes one day due to inhuman slaughter of thousands of Muslims and fluid situation in Bosnia.

The OIC summit is going to be held in Casablanca, Morocco on December 13-14, 1994. We would request all the members of the OIC to kindly scrutinise, examine and consider the crucial Bosnian problem very seriously and pending peaceful solution of the Bosnian issue as per UN Security Council resolution and the international peace plan on Bosnia as per contact group comprised of the USA, the UK, Russia, France and Germany, the supply of oil to the UK. France and Russia may be totally stopped and trade relations with these three countries suspended with immediate effect.

We also suggest that the OIC may pass a resolution urging the UN Security Council to lift the economic sanction against Iraq from 1st January 1995.

We would specially request

Prime Minister Mohammad Mohathir of Malaysia and Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to kindly take initiative in these matters. O H Kabir

Dhaka-1203

### A domestic solution? Sir. Certainly the FBCCI at-

tempt to resolve the prevailing political enigma deserves a higher appreciation and respect than the Commonwealth brokered 'talks' did. Because it comes from within the responsible countrymen. To avoid a fuzzy future of this poor nation we - especially the political parties - must set an explicit proof of our positive willingness. But the news of the BNP's assumed indifference towards the new initiative disheartens us. Only the reactionary forces would be gainful from such obstinacy.

· If, by our own efforts, we become able to reach an acceptable solution, then what can be more profound than this? I think, there is no parallel to such efforts. Therefore, we request the senior leaders of the BNP to reconsider its decision and join the expected meeting before the situation exacerbates.

Kamrul Hasan Lalkhan Bazar, Chittagong