Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali Dhaka, Friday, February 17, 1995

Child Labour

The top US Labour Department official Andrew Samet's Dhaka mission, we are glad to say, has helped clear the air on the child labour issue. Set against the possibility of a revival of the Harkin's Bill ban on countries exporting goods to the USA using child labour, his two-day trip, it must be said, ended on a refreshing note. The flexibility in the US approach is being felt both through words and, we dare say, deeds.

In the first place, it was nice of him to assure his Dhaka audience, at the end of the visit, that his mission was neither intended to be investigative nor recommendatory. Nor was it designed to impose any sanctions, he made it clear, allaying unnecessary fears of a sweeping clamp-down.

The transparently gradualistic approach taken by the USA on the subject is a welcome development. It is being manifested on two levels; one being global and the other country-specific; but the emphasis quite clearly on a synthesis between the two.

Andrew Samet dropped a hint that the USA was going to take the issue of child labour to the World Trade Organisation, which has only recently replaced the unwieldy GATT in the wake of the Uruguay Round of global trade negotiations. This is good thinking on the part of the USA in that the issue will be seen through a global prism and that a universally applicable principle is likely to be adopted as a result of this. We appreciate the democratic concept a multilateral consensus on the issue; but our expectation is that in emphasising humaneness through the required application of the high labour standards of the West the other human face to it tainted by the outright loss of jobs in acute poverty conditions needs to be sympathetically looked at. It is good to see this is not being lost sight of as the current approach of the USA indicates.

Bangladesh stands committed to the elimination of child labour as a signatory to the Delhi Declaration. Accordingly, the BGMEA which accounts for 60 per cent of the country's garments exports to the USA, is getting ready to phase out child labour by July 1,1997. It is to get into a firm arrangement with two local NGOs for grooming up ten thousand 12-14-yr olds through a process of part-time work in garment industries and schooling outside the factories. Our belief is, this nucleus programme succeeding, we can replicate it extensively to get past the present worries on child labour without its development as human resource.

Eliminating Source of Arms

The unearthing of two arms factories in the city on Tuesday is a clear indication that clandestine manufacture of weapons is related to their indiscriminate uses we find nowadays. However, until recently the local manufacturing source remained more or less out of focus. The idea was that our criminal gangs would rely on illegally imported weapons and vigilance at the country's entry points would suffice together with raids on cache of arms. That notion is no longer valid.

In fact, the uncovering of two arms factories could just be a tip of the iceberg. It is unbelievable that the ingenuity of our Zingira people has not yet caught up with the foreign brands of those lethal weapons — if not entirely in fire-power and quality at least in look. That the lethal types of arms are finding their way in an increasing number into the hands of the anti-social goons says it

Already society is in the grip of a sense of perpetual insecurity because of the murderous mood of the arms-wielding criminals. Spotting even one or two of the arms factories sends a chilling message to the common people. The special branches of our law-enforcing agencies have a lot to do in this matter. Their primary duty here should be to eliminate the local source through constant vigilance. Unless the threat is nipped in the bud, it can endanger our social as well as national secu-

Making any concession to criminality does not pay. We are instead paying a high price for turning a blind eye to the arms-wielding students and thugs. To free society from lawlessness we are being a witness to now. one of the tasks for the law enforcers should be to stop the supply of the deadly weapons at their sources - both local and foreign. Will the home ministry take up the challenge and ask the police to flush out the manufacturers of illegal weapons?

Workers Deserve Better

Four trade unions and federations of the jute and textile industries observed yet another round of their strike and other agitational programmes. During the 96-hour programme two persons were killed and scores wounded. Almost a repeat of the incident that took place during the 72hour strike programme last month. As the workers are growing more militant, the police and the BDR men are too becoming repressive. This is not a good sign. Obviously their colleagues' death has made the workers of the sector all the more resolute. Their planned programmes after the Eid to be coincided with the political agitations of the opposition parties give an indication of a worse scenario.

Here the point is why things are left to pile up without even making an attempt to address them in time? This government has time again done this to invite troubles for itself and the country. The workers claimed that they even appealed to the government to sit with them before beginning the latest round of their programme. If the workers have offered talks and the government has not responded to this adequately then this will be worth going into for fixing responsibility.

We do not say all the demands made by the workers have merit. But certainly there are some genuine ones which can surely be taken care of. In an earlier editorial we made it clear where the workers stand unjustified in their claims and where reforms should be brought about. The government should consciously avoid adopting any high-handed attitude. Instead it must keep the option for negotiations open. There is no point antagonising the workers who toil for the cause of creating the country's wealth. Likewise, the workers should try not to lose public sympathy. The ministry makes things difficult for itself by sometimes proving allergic to discussions. We do not believe the workers will be completely unreasonable and not see the government's view-point. The government must move fast to avert any further deterioration in the crisis.

The Problems They Face

The bureaucrats, whether in the home ministry or in foreign office, are out to damage India's image in their pet game of tit-for-tat. It is comical that anyone from anywhere can roam all over the country but when it comes to the Pakistanis (lately the Bangladeshis also) the visa given is for three cities.

slamabad on Kashmir, it will be because of Indian public opinion, which the Benazir Bhutto government is trying to alienate. There is very little

conference on peace

and cooperation on

South Asia tends to de-

generate in polemics by Indi-

ans and the Pakistanis against

each other. This one did not.

Weighing on the minds of

participants was probably the

no-contact situation between

the countries. The Netaji Re-

search Institute, which brou-

ght them together in Calcutta.

provided them - acdemicians.

economists, journalist and

political leaders - with an

opportunity to have their

earnest effort to find a com-

mon ground. And they came to

the conclusion that if they

wanted to raise any structure

of relationship, the contacts in

the different fields would pro-

vide the brick and mortar. The

Bangladeshis, also attending

the conference, gave a helping

hand. None imagined that the

task would be easy because of

the lowest point that relation's

between India and Pakistan

had touched. But all were de-

termined to chip in his or her

both New Delhi and Islamabad

had stalled the travel of

Pakistani participants. New

Delhi, because the Indian High

Commission at Islamabad did

not either give visas — for ex-

ample, Sherry Rehman, editor

of Herald magazine from

Karachi — or issued them a few

hours before the last flight

from Pakistan. (Asma Jahangir

of the Pakistan Human Rights

Comission and Razia Bhatty.

editor of the Newsline from

Karachi, fall in this category).

thorities used all methods to

pressurise the Pakistani invi-

nor appreciate Pakistan's pol-

icy of keeping the peoples of

the two countries distant. If

ever New Delhi accommodates

TANDING on the ru-ins

devastated

I can neither understand

tees not to attend.

At the Islamabad end, the au-

The conference knew that

effort to begin a fresh.

Indeed, there was an

grievances off the chest.

one can do about it. But New Delhi's policy is beyond my comprehension. What does it prove by imitating Islamabad, except that the Indian government becomes as cussed as that of Pakistan. India is an open society and this is its asset. This is what impresses the Pakistanis when they visit the country. The bureaucrats, whether in the home ministry or in foreign office, are out to damage India's image in their pet game of titfor-tat. It is comical that anyone from anywhere can roam all over the country but when it comes to the Pakistanis (lately the Bangladeshis also) the visa given is for three ci-

I recall how well Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Bhartiya Janata Party leader, went down in Pakistan when he, as foreign minister in the Janata government (1977-79), liberalised visa for its nationals. He even was prepared to soften the borders. Morarii Desai, then the prime minister, did not like the proposal on the ground that spies from Pakistan would flood India, as if they came with the travelling documents.

Against the backdrop of visas, the conference discussed the flow of labour from one country to another in the subcontinent. Zareen Nagvi, a lecturer from the Lahore University of management

a national hero, said: "We have

to restore the true face of Rus-

sia. ... We have to revive the

this restoration of the "glory"

of the army that now domi-

nates the psyche of the Rus-

catch this 'straw' with inspira-

tions from his military advis-

Colonial War

a "colonial war" has been ac-

cepted by all right-thinking

people except some western

vested interests who have been

trying to prop up Veltsin as a

great 'reformist' and a 'demo-

cratic hero' to serve their

motive. Depending on his

continuation in power, these

vested interests are investing

billions of dollars in Russian

economy. So when it was

reported sometime back that

Yeltsin was "sick" and people

began to question his

"competence" to handle the

Chechnya operation, US Vice

President Al-Gore had to rush

That the war in Chechnya is

ers. But can he survive?

sciences, pointed out how the Indians and the Bangladeshis stole into and accepted low wages — and ignomity — for employment. The same holds good for the Bangladeshis as for India is concerned. New Delhi is seeking a police solution to a humane problem. No barbed wire or the barricade can stop the Bangladeshis coming to India because they are willing to encounter any danger to earn their livelihood. The best way out is to issue them work permits for a fixed

period.

ready meeting in London and devising means how to bypass the governments and politicians. It was estimated that the illegal trade between India and Pakistan was to the tune of \$1 billion and between India and Bangladesh \$3 billion. Hasan said that his meeting with Finance Minister Manmohan Singh revealed that New Delhi would allow / Pakistan capital to be invested in India or vice-versa, apart from the joint ventures the two could

The session on Kashmir

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

How to effect economic cooperation also came up for a long discussion. Dr Mubashir Hasan, a former minister in the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto government, admitted that the Pakistan government, because of cussedness, was not taking advantage of Indian markets, although it has been accorded a preferential nation treatment. He said Pakistan had plenty of sugar and fertilisers to export to India and, in turn import from it wheat nd cement. But Pakistan dragged its feet, he said. (Some 400 items have been identified by New Delhi and Islamabad for trade purposes).

A professor from Calcutta said that the businessmen of India and Pakistan were al-

began with a speech by Yasin Malik, leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front. He reiterated the demand for independence and suggested a tripartite meeting among India, Pakistan and Kashmir to sort out the modalities to form the proposed sovereign state. He promised that the state would be secular, with Kashmiri Pandits constituting an integral part of the Kashmiris. enjoying the same rights as the other people would do. His voice broke when he talked about the atrocities and humiliations committed by the security forces in the valley.

The proposal by Ved Bashin, editor of Kashmir Times from Kammu, was to go back to the original instrument

of accession in 1947 when the state's maharaja gave India only three subjects, defence, foreign affairs and communications. He wanted Jammu and Kashmir to be a federal structure, with porus border between the Indian part of the state and the one under Pakistan. A G Noorani, a lawyer from Bombay, also proposed an autonomous states for both parts of Kashmir. Pakistan guaranteeing that the auton omy of the Indian side of the state was not violated and India doing the same thing for the Pakistani side.

There was such a heated discussion that Rehman Sobhan, chairman for the Centre for Policy Dialogue. Dhaka, intervened to say that India appreared oblivious of the pressure that the Big Powers would exert on it to relent on Kashmir if it did not do voluntarily. Some one explained to him that India was all right as long as it opened the markets to America and followed the economic liberalisation programme. The situation might change if Washingtorf did not have its way in the economic field it might then change on Kashmir.

Talking about Kashmir, am reminded of an interview with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He told me that support to the right of self-determination did not mean that "we shall export revolution. This position does not exist and it will not exist in the future also." However, Bhutto gave (July 14, 1972) a solemn pledge" on behalf of the people of Pakistan that as

soon as "the people of Kashmir launched their freedom struggle" the people of Pakistan would "go all out in support and assistance they would not hesitate to shed their blood for the people of Kashmir."

I asked Bhutto if he would accept a Trieste-type solution for Kashmir. The Trieste Agreement (October 20, 1954) provided for the partitioning of the Free Territory of Trieste between Italy and Yuguslavia along the existing demarcation line between the two, with minor changes; the agreement also guaranteed facilities of free travel between the two sides. Bhutto said: "I have was hinking partly of Trieste." He refused to say more, exhcept: I have given you a peep into my mind. If I say too much on it, or if we go too much into it, here also we have our Jana Sanghites, who will start say-

ing 'betrayal' and such things ... The participants were keen on silencing the gun in the valley. Yasin said he had already ordered ceasefire unilaterally But it was apparent that he had no control over other militant outfits. Ved suggested that if the security forces were to break the bunkers and withdraw to the barracks, militants would autonatically respond. Yasin told the conference that there was no let up in violence and the talk about the lessening of militancy was meant to hoodwink Indian opinion. The question that remained unanswered was how to bell the cat, how to make India and Pakistan understand that the way out was conciliation, not confrontation. Since even casual contacts have been snapped, the conference felt that the peoples on both sides have to assert themselves and not allow political charltans and their henchmen in the bureaucracy to thwart any effort, however modest.

Chechnya: Yeltsin Waging a "Colonial War"

by A M M Shahabuddin

Whatever propaganda might be orchestrated on behalf of the Russian army's action in Grozny, the holocaust is unpardonable. It shows that Yeltsin is changing his 'cloak' of a 'reformist' and 'democrat' to a typical 'colonialist' in the guise of a rank nationalist.

Chechen capital of Grozny, killing some thirty thousand or so innocent men. women and children by indiscriminate bombing, turning the whole city into a burnt-out graveyard, and rendering hundreds of thousands of people homeless refugees in their own land, the Russian might have celebrated their 'victory' by flying their flag on the Chechen presidential palace. Russian President, pet of his western allies, has done it at last to strengthen his shaky position. But the signals coming out from Grozny indicate that all is not well with the Yeltsian front. So far Chechens have proved to be a hard nut to crack. The Checken's have turned the tide of the war by boldly resisting the Russian onslaught, thereby holding the capital even after two months' constant battering by the Russian army and air force. Although Yeltsin boldly declared recently that "the military phase of restoring the Russian Constitution in Chechnya is now practically over". the Russians don't believe him as the bombing of the city still continues to teach the "Chechen criminals" a hard

Yeltsin might have forgotten that mere occupation of the presidential palace in Grozny won't be able to crush the spirit of the Chechens to fight to the last to establish their independence on a solid foundation. Chechen President has already vowed to fight against the invading Russian army as a guerilla leader. This shows the

high morale of the Chechens. The resistance is increasing every day. Thus what happened to the mighty Soviet army in Afghanistan is going to be repeated in Chechnya. In fact, the Russian army has jumped in a quicksand waiting for a more humiliating end. They

have now met real Tartars. A New Role for Yeltsin

Whatever propaganda might be orchestrated on behalf of the Russian army's action in Grozny, the holocaust is unpardonable. It shows that Yeltsin is changing his 'cloak' of a 'reformist' and 'democrat' to a typical 'colonialist' in the guise of a rank nationalist. He knows well it is the only way

out for him to push up his to Moscow to visit him person sagging popularity and emerge ally and later he issued a clean as a national hero. A public chit saying he was doing 'fine' But fine he is not. Even opinion poll last year showed Isrestia recently questioned in that 67 per cent Russians are its headlines of a write-up on opposed to his policy. His the Russian situation: "Who Chechnya operation will prove runs the country? Yeltsin, a mis-adventure for him. The (Prime Minister) Cher-nomyrdin, or (Army Chief) Gen Russians are already fed up with his economic reforms Korzakov?" It is therefore, a rendering them to beggars bepity that US Secretary of State fore the world. With the run-Warren Christopher had to isaway galloping inflation, the sue a statement supporting Russian economy is in a sham-Russian action in Chechnya bles. The rouble has nosedived and the US State Department to an all-time low, losing all its tried to wash off its hands by purchasing power. Now one ust expressing its "great con-US dollar is worth over 3,000 cern, and reminding the roubles! So Yeltsin wants to Russian government of their divert people's attention to a responsibility to protect the glorified 'utopia' through eyeinnocent non-combatants". Incateining gimmicks. What his deed, the Russian army is folformer Vice-President Alexanlowing the US advice in toto! der Rutskoi said in February 1992, he is now acting on that.

Thus the US and some western powers have rather Rutskoi, projecting himself as shamelessly supported Russia's right to hold the 'integrity' of the country. But these western powers can't obliterate glory of the Russian army." It's history by a mere stroke of pen. They may blur it for sometime by creating smokescreen before the world opinsian Generals, particularly after ion. The world has witnessed. being badly mauled by the thanks to the modern elec-Afghan freedom-fighters. And a tronic media, what hell the drowning Yeltsin is trying to Russian army has created in

> Chechnya. It is, however, heartening to note that some sane voices are being raised in the western world against Russian invasion of Chechnya and the atrocities committed there by their army on the innocent people. Former US Secretary of State Dr Kissinger told the world, addressing a seminar in Oslo recently, that "the war in Chechnya is a colonial war." He further said: "Chechnya is not a part of Russia proper but an area conquered by Czarist Russia in the middle of the last century," adding, "it is difficult to regard Chechnya as a Russian territory when you witness the way the Russian forces bomb their own cities." What more the world powers

and that "glass house at Manhattan, called the United Nations, want to initiate action to save an independent country from the aggression of a colonial power? What that Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) has to say about their mysterious silence?

Thus history bears the witness that Chechnya was never a part of Russia but was forcibly annexed by the imperialist Czarists in the mid-19th century. With the demise of communism in the former Soviet Union and disintegration of the Soviet empire in Eastern and Central Europe (thanks to Michael Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika), there emerged as many as 14 new independent Republics in Central Asia. This created a pig tremor creating on unprecedented upsurge throughout the former Soviet Union, of which Russia is the biggest Republic, to establish independent identity of those subjugated nafree from colonial tions. shackles.

UN Role: What Shape?

On this burning issue of Chechnya, the UN should adopt a clear-cut policy, as dictated by its Charter. It has a number of glaring precedents to guide its policy on Chechnya. It shouldn't, therefore, follow a dual-policy of running with the hares and hunting with the hounds. The UN General Assembly has stressed on several occasions on the importance of the realization of the peoples' right to selfdetermination and of the speedy granting of independence to colonial countries. It has also reaffirmed the "legitimacy" of the struggle of the people for independence and "liberation from colonial and foreign domination and occupation by all available means, including armed struggle." The UN role in Namibia (former South West Africa) in the seventies and

eighties is a commendable example of its unique success in granting independence to a colonial territory from a much reluctant colonial power. The only difference between Namibia and Chechnya is that while the former was placed by the late League of Nations as a Trust Territory to then government of South Africa which tried to grab it defying all UN decisions, the latter was forcibly occupied by the Czarist rulers, in mid-19th century, later inherited by the Soviet Union under communist rule in the early 20th century and lately grabbed by a socalled reformist Russia. Therefore, the UN can take a rightful stand vis-a-vis Chechnya to support its struggle to

establish its universally recog-

nised right to self-determina-

centuries- old colonial rule. Chechnya has already de-

tion and independence from

clared its independence from Russia and was conducting its affairs independently for the last three years. During the last two months of ruthless Russian onslaught, the Chechens have shown their determination to carry on their struggle to the last. It has already spilled over its frontiers into two neighbouring states -Dagestan and Ingushetia. where Chechen refugees are taking shelter in thousands.

Bangladesh has a parallel case. The people here know how their country emerged as a sovereign state through a bloody struggle against mighty occupation forces. UN came forward with humanitarian aid to help thousands of refugees that took shelter in our neighbouring country — India. Let UN adopt similar steps to rescue the fleeing Chechen refugees. Let UN prove its credibility to the peoples of the world which have expressed doubt about its (dubious and questionable) role on some occasions in the past.

The writer is a retired UN

Buchwald's COLUMN



INCE the O. J. trial will be going on for such a long time. I decided to hire my own legal expert to sit in my living room and discuss the case with me. I did this because I don't trust any of the TV commentators, and it's nice to have your own lawyer to explain the intricacies of the trial.

John Kasper is one of the top criminal lawyers in the country. He usually charges \$500 an hour but agreed to cut his fee to \$450 because I was a pro bono case.

We were watching the defense cross-examine a male prosecution witness. "Why are they asking him if he ever pushed his grand-

mother down the stairs in her wheelchair?" "They have to destroy the person's credibility," John said, "and the only way they can do that is to put him on trial in-

stead of O. J. "That seems unfair," I told John, "All the witness is trying to do is be a good citizen and testify about what he found in O.

J.'s car. As far as the defense is concerned anyone who appears on behalf of the prosecution is a war criminal. That's why they ask questions such as how many quarts of alcohol he consumes on the job, where he buys his marijuana, and why he only goes to movies with call girls. The defense must persuade the jury that the witness is a pervert and a menace to

I said. "How do you think these tactics are playing with the

"I don't think that O.J.'s lawyers have persuaded them up until now. On the other hand, the defense has yet to bring up the witness' habit of wearing Victoria's Secret lingerie under his police uniform."

"Does he?" "No. The judge will strike the question from the record, but that would be after the jury heard it, which is the defense's intent."

"Is the prosecution equally determined to destroy someone's reputation for life?"

Almost the same. In order to be successful, lawyers have to keep shooting the other side's witnesses in the groin.

I asked John if he ever felt bad when he threw so much mud at the other side's witnesses.

"Of course not. When witnesses agree to tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth, they're asking for

How do you think the trial is really going?" I wanted to

John replied. "I believe that the defense is doing a good job of distracting the jury from the facts of the case. What they really want to do is get Judge Ito so mad that he'll say something to cause a mistrial. But that may not happen for a while. The only reason the state has been polite to those testi fying is that they are all state witnesses. Once the defense witnesses take stand, the district attorney will dump DNA evidence all over them. That's the way the justice cookie crum

By arrangement with Los Angeles Times Syndicate and UNB

BAU incident

Sir, The recent happenings on the campus of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) is indeed unfortunate and unexpected. An innocent school student Gaziur Rahman was killed during an armed clash between the students and the employees of BAU on February 7.

Incidentally, on February 7 I went to BAU with our Principal M Q Zaman, Prof Md Shadat Ulla and Scientific Officer Chowdhury Abdulla-Al-Farooq on some academic business. In fact, on that morning the campus was calm and quiet. One of our colleagues, Dr Abdul Halim, a senior Professor of the Dept of Agricultural Extension informed us that the normal classes were going on and he along with his colleagues took even practical classes. The campus was

peaceful. Well, as we had also witnessed, the students were agitated when it was reported that some unruly employees

have beaten two students of BAU while they were returning back to the campus from their respective homes by rickshaw. These two students were actually unaware about the tense situation prevailing on the campus.

Meanwhile the Vice Chancellor, Dr Shah Mohammad Faruk and the teachers of BAU took all possible measures to stop violences of both the sides. In one stage the teachers went down to the streets for persuading and preventing the angry mob from encounters.

Around 3 pm, when we are also in the VC's residence. Vice Chancellor Dr Faruk tried his level best to locate any injured student or employee for arranging treatments. A number of teachers went to the students hall and reported that the students were peacefully staying in their halls. The employees had also left the place of their blockade. Then around 4:30 we left the campus.

Now it is sincerely expected that the students and employees will remove all the hostilities and develop familytype relationship since BAU campus is a single family of teachers, students and employees. At the same time it is honestly hoped that the university authority will take strong measures so that this sort of unfortunate incident may not happen again in the future. They will also take immediate steps to start postponed examinations at BAU and BAI centres.

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor BAI. Dhaka-1207

What's in a colour? Sir. Colour of a human is

only skin deep, but its impact was no less powerful than the blizzard; power that dominated centuries of earthly life with all terrors imaginable until recently has changed its course late this century toning down

segregation in the one last domain - apartheid.

With her first ever freely elected president. South Africa has virtually recreated the history of Chengis Khan, has reminded of the saga of Mahatma Gandhi, has retrieved the dream-come-true of Martin Luther King, and has updated a lesson for battling Bosnia and the like.

The South African episode of racism that outlived the ferocity of Zionism and Gestapo horrors has mostly revised The

So much so, multiracial happy days just begun to conceive new outcomes in the African society, as elsewhere nowadays, developed by the spirit of Human Rights ought to be gaining popularity world over through the rest of this century, for better hopefully.

M Rahman Zila School Road, Mymensingh