Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Monday, February 20, 1995

Chittagong Stock Exchange

Seldom does anything happen — positive, that is - as quickly as the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) was formed. In fact within months of the subject being considered, and literally within weeks of it reaching the Finance Minister's table, the idea got all the legal, and organisational form that it needed. What now remains is for it to become a reality as a regularly operating institution. That is expected to take six months. Several people need to be commended. From those who thought about it, to those who had the vision to take it up as a viable proposition, to those who gave it the proper momentum, to finally the policy makers who, instead of sitting on new ideas, as is their habit, grabbed it and pushed to fruition - all deserve our grateful thanks. A special word of praise must be reserved for our Finance Minister, but for whose 'go-getting' mentality. CSE would not have seen the light of day as fast as it did. Thanks are also due to the SEC which approved it in record time, and to the initiators who made it all come true. Only if other initiatives would move just as fast then our country would do so much better in every sphere of our development.

The question is, will a second stock exchange (SE) be good for our stock market? We think, yes. A second stock exchange in the port city will help to bring many newcomers to the bourse, drawing more funds to the capital market. especially the hundreds of small investors located in Chittagong. There are some misgivings as to whether we are ready for two stock exchanges, and as to whether it will dilute the funds now flowing to the DSE. Whatever may be its birth pangs, we believe that the move is a positive one, and one which is good for our growth. With more and more foreign companies willing to invest in Bangladesh, a second SE will add momentum to that force. A port city, usually becomes a commercial centre. Karachi, Bombay are only two of many such examples. In the case of Chittagong many of its business leaders were forced to move to Dhaka, due to lack of opportunities there. The new SE will help to give a big boost to the economy of the port city and indirectly help DSE, through competition to modernise and become more efficient. We hope that the CSE will evade the pitfalls of DSE, and set itself up as a modern body, ready and willing to match their infrastructure facilities and performance with SEs in the region and outside. Good luck and godspeed to CSE.

That Misanthropic Fringe

A mother was forced to watch as gunmen bound and executed all of her four sons - all Shi'ite Muslims in Karachi on Saturday.

One thought there was a limit to variations man can play on what he calls brutality. The worked up frenzy that allows man to stoop to lowest depths of beastly cruelty has its source, however, in a limited few human aberrations: racism, communalism, fundamentalism. The first has no sanction other than from certain social defects, at times under written by state at others opposed by it. Communalism is born of social tension between communities of people which the better developed minds of these groups perpetually endeavour to beat and come out of. Only the third fundamentalism — claiming divine sanction, continues to stonewall to the supreme social values of reason and tolerance, kindness and co-operation. It is militancy turned on its own people to work till even a single soul is left out of enslavement to dogma or it itself is snuffed out. How far can fundamentalism go in its total rejection of people's rights to belief and practice and be themselves? There seems to be no last answer to this. How could the Karachi killers do that to the mother, let alone the brothers?

Karachi is being certainly Beirutised at a time when Beirut is collecting itself together, socially, politically and commercially. There was hope even for Beirut. For fundamentalism was not the major malady that visited it. While we sympathise with the plight of that great city, we should be well-advised to mind our home developments in the matter of that selfsame misanthropic fundamentalist fringe. As if communalist divisiveness was not enough, intra-communal tension is being fanned here by a section claiming themselves to be Muslims and clamouring for death to others who also say, perhaps with more conviction and knowledge, that they too are Muslims.

We had laid three million lives at the altar of the same devil. The occupation army elements of Pakistan could go ahead with the genocide in the belief that they were saving a religion by punishing its enemies. Now we wouldn't want to witness a harking back to that.

We Sympathise

There has been 350 cases of mugging in the last 15 days in Dhaka, says a news report. This is very evidently a case of Eid spree. This could be let to pass but for the fact that these muggings were accompanied by as many as 270 cases of stabbing. Even sadder is the fact that the number of culprits caught is next to nothing. There are even very few prosecutions against this huge

number of dastardly crimes .

Yes, people must try to be understanding. Dhaka doesn't have, although the capital and a most pampered city, an infinite number of policemen. Of the thousands we have, there are very many serious jobs they must mind - like providing protection to the ministers and assorted big brass and securing marriages and other social functions against crowding etc. so on and so forth. But the shopping arcades and plazas where the muggings are routinely taking place are not countless either. If police took the matter with any amount of seriousness, say five per cent of that which they demonstrate at the time of customs raid on some of these so called markets the problem would have been cut to a size we could ignore. Why is police looking the other way?

Is it the same police that waged a frontal jihad against muggers, matching shot with shot? What has happened in the meantime? Prices have gone crazy. Rice price is now exactly double the peak hit in 1975 — Tk 9 for a kg — which was put as one of the justifications of the assassination of Bangabandhu. Prices must have hit very badly the average policeman's family budget. He is not being able to put his mind to his job. And the thought of how to get past this fortune-costing Eid-festival, with honour as befits a law enforcer, must be gnawing at his mind every moment of the pre-Eid month. Whom shall we sympathise with! The stabbed victims or the poor policemen? Both?

US and China: A Trade War that Really Isn't

While asserting its resolve to crack down on product piracy, China also asks for time to develop its laws and

refine the enforcement mechanism for copyright protection. The United States, on the other hand, wants

trade disputants in a global scenario keep getting into forces" to close down such pirating factories. holes repeatedly? Only in May

TOP digging when you

get into one and once

out of it, never go near

another - states the first Law

of Holes. Yet, how is it that

last year, seeking to establish a

linkage between trade privile-

ges and human-rights record.

America got into a hole in its

trade dispute with China. It

was only after delinking human

rights from trade that

America could extricate itself

from the hole it had dug for it-

Now again is the season for

Sino-American trade negotia-

tions. This time, it is China

who has got into a hole for ap-

parently being tardy in hauling

up all the persons living in its

land who have been accused of

thievery of American copy-

rights. Why all these violations

of the tenets of the obscure

Law of Holes? 'Ah well, in the

world of commerce, we all are

sinners," so said a perceptive

but candid trade negotiator

once. May be, that explains it

of American products by some

of its producers. Two years

ago, the United States had

threatened trade sanctions

against China for violation of its

intellectual property rights.

China then promised to frame

laws for protection of copy-

rights, patents, designs and

the like. The United States let

it go at that. However, the

Americans have been com-

plaining of late of China's laxity

in enforcing its laws on pro-

tection of intellectual property

rights. It was said that some

29 factories located in south-

ern China were churning out

illegal reproductions of Ameri-

can-made movies, compact

disks, computer software and

other products and were ex-

porting these to other coun-

tries in Asia. The United States

had wanted the Chinese gov-

ernment to create "strike

N applying the sunset rules

to restrict the right of

China's sin is illegal copying

There has been no denial of the fact that there is rampant pirating by some Chinese establishments of foreign designs, software, music and movies. China claims of significant progress in curbing such activities. While asserting its resolve to crack down on product piracy. China also asks for time to develop its laws and refine the enforcement mechanism for copyright protection. In short, China wants more time to solve the problem through its own legal framework. The United States. on the other hand, wants prompt and definitive action on this front.

prompt and definitive action on this front.

To a large measure, trade considerations seem to be prompting the professed impatience on United States' part. China is the world's 10th largest trading nation. Its total foreign trade last year came to. some \$225 billion. And the United States is perhaps China's fastest growing export market. However, US-China trade also suffers from severe imbalance. Trade between the two countries neared \$50 billion last year with the US deficit approaching \$30 billion. The United States aims to cut down this trade deficit fast.

Thus it is that the United States wants China not only to stop piracy of intellectual property but also to open up the Chinese market to legitimate exports of US movies. music, software, consumer goods - perhaps cigarettes too. It is to be remembered that threats of trade sanctions in the past did succeed in prying open the Japanese. South Korean and Thai market to US cigarettes - pushing antismoking banners aside. Any

way. China balked at these demands, saying that these hardly bere any reference to the protection of intellectual property rights.

The two sides broke of talks about the dispute in mid-December. The United States announced its resolve to proceed under its own trade laws and take retaliatory measures against China. The US authorities had reckoned that the pirate factories in China cost the American manufacturers somewhere around one billion dollars in lost revenue each year. Under its trade laws, the

the US trade laws to provide an opportunity to the Ameri can importers of these products to argue that the proposed trade sanction would cause extensive harm to businesses and consumers in the United States.

A fresh round of negotiation opened with China also. However, after nine days of talks these too broke down on January 28 without any agreement. China, it was said, did not also respond to an American offer to continue talks. The escalating series of confrontations between the United

ALONG MY WAY

S B Chaudhuri

United States could impose punitive duties on Chinese goods of a similar value exported to America as a retaliatory action. The US administration had then set a December 30 deadline for China to agree to stricter enforcement of measures to protect intellectual property rights or face punitive tariffs on its exports to America. On December 31, the United States issued a target list of Chinese products of export value of \$2.8 billion and indicated that goods worth roughly one billion dollar (mainly textiles, apparel, toys and electronics, the four areas that account for the bulk of Chinese sales to the USAl would be identified from among these, for punitive tariffs unless the dispute was settled by February 4. This 30-day

comment period is allowed by

States and China thus seemed to have moved a step closer to a trade war.

Promptly on the expiry of the February 4 deadline, the United States announced that 100 per cent tariffs on some \$1.08 worth of goods from China will go into effect automatically on February 26 unless the dispute was resolved during the three-week interregnum. Apparently defiantly, China responded next day that it would impose 100 per cent tariffs, effective February 26. on imports from the United States of a wide-range of goods, including game cards, cosmetics, alcoholic beverages, roll films and electronics. The copyright war was on, it

Yet, behind all the sound and fury, there lurked a sense of unreality. Would the United

States and China really launch a trade war? United States' biggest ever trade sanction against any country and presumably the same for China too. In itself, a trade sanction

would obviously hurt China more whose merchandise exports to the United States are roughly three-times the imports from that country: However, that is not all. Just a few months back, a high level US business delegation visited China and wrapped up deals worth billions of dollars in American exports. These deals might go sour if a trade war ensues. In fact, Beijing has already suspended talks on one such deal - for the US automakers setting up joint ventures in China to build cars and minivans. A full-scale trade war against China could also impact America's broader East Asian commercial policy. The US move would draw outrage from East Asia generally and particularly hurt Hong Kong and Taiwan who are indirect beneficiaries of China's exports to the United States. Thus, the rhetorics, blusters and full media treatment notwithstanding, both sides perhaps

sustained. And so it happened that attitudes softened only after two days of swashbuckling and both sides agreed on February 6 to sit down again to talk. Accordingly, negotiations resumed last week, about ten days ahead of the February 26 deadline. Expectations are that the talks this time will produce a formula acceptable to both sides. It isn't really a trade war then. Well, not one yet, at any rate.

knew at the outset that a trade

war could not really be

There are other indications to signal the US desire to stay involved with China. While

copyright talks resume in Beijing on February 15. another top level 'commercial erigagement mission, led by the US Secretary of Energy, is visiting China. The February 18-25 mission plans to sign \$4 billion to \$8 billion in deals with China in energy field. The possibility of a trade-off here looms large. Perhaps China will sign real big deals with the US energy mission. In return, the United States will allow China more leeway to find solution to the copyright problem on its own terms.

ESPITE the wrangle.

both China and the United States were among the 35 countries who signed late last year a new treaty under the aegis of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) to simplify and improve international protection of trademarks. Then again, with the World Trade Organization - WTO. the new arbiter in international disputes - in place, the United States' policy of aggressive unilateralism in the present instance looks incongruous. Fact is. China is not a member of the WTO. The global treaty on rights of intellectual properties (TRIPS) reached in the Uruguay Round. is an extensive agreement on protection of patents, copyright. performers' rights, trademarks, industrial designs microchip layout designs. trade secrets and the like. TRIPS allows developing countries 5 to 10 years extra time to implement the accord. China wanted to join WTO as a developing country. As a developing member-country of WTO, China could have legitimately asked for extra time to secure protection of intellectual property rights. Alas, China lailed to make it to WTO despite intense efforts last De-

Confining Women in the Halls

by Hameeda Hossain

The principle of necessity needs to be taken into account when framing any rules. If the government and, in fact, society as a whole, has begun to emphasise the value of women's education, practical measures must be taken to ensure that women can take full and equal advantage of facilities.

movement of women students. the University of Dhaka has totally overlooked the fact that in 1922 these regulations applied equally to men. In the last 73 years, male students have exercised full freedom of movement. No questions have been asked from nor any permissions 'required for them. Even when some of the resort to violence and harassment and threaten peace on the campus the university authorities, as we see, are unwilling to confine them.

Nor, in fact, do these rules apply to women students of Jahangirnagar University. Dhaka Medical College and BUET. The reason could be that regulations in these institutions were established later and therefore did not need to carry over any obsolete conditions. Therefore there is little justification for prolonging such discrimination against women students residing in the halls of Dhaka University.

As they as ter the twenty first century efforts should be made to equip women to face the competitive editor of a ruthless market. For this they need equal access to educational facilities for self development. This would conform with the objectives of the administration and particularly the Head of the Government who has gone on record in recognising the need to involve women in national development.

A very simple request from women students living in the University halls to waive the sunset rules which would allow them equal access to the library and other cultural institutions has been blown out of proportion. The demands were made several years ago and instead of placing them within the framework of constitutional right as well as the principle of necessity, the university authorities have taken recourse to irrelevant grounds of protection and security. A committee under the chairpersonship of Dr Sufia Ahmed, (recently appointed National Professor and has supported women's legal rights), has been asked to gauge public opinion. Why the public should be consulted with matters concerning the students in difficult to understand. However, it is hoped that the committee will rely on commonsense to examine the inappropriateness of applying a rule made in 1922 to the con-

ditions which prevail in 1995. Let us examine the case made out by the women residents in Dhaka University halls. The sunset rules first introduced under the Proctorial Rules 1922 crept into the 1973 University Ordinance. probably because no one looked at its irrelevance. Even as late as 1986 the University

tained restrictions calling for: "Women students' attendance in the residential halls by 7 pm before the bell announces the closing of the hall. "Written permission from guardians to be verified by the provosts before students can

Calendar, however, has main-

go out of the halls. "Time limit for visits from relatives such as parents, brothers, sisters, husband. Girl students from other halls are also not allowed to visit their

friends inside the halls. "Written permission from a local guardian before women students [in groups of three] can be allowed to participate in cultural activity or enter-

tainment.

"Written permission from local guardians before students can participate in radio programmes during the day time; radio to provide full security if the programme is held at

Even before the Government of Bangladesh ratified the UN Convention for Eliminating all forms of Discrimination against Women, under which they are obliged to remove existing disparities particularly in educational opportunities, the 1972 Constitution guaranteed equal rights under clause 28 (1). These guarantees are justifiable and not a matter of political rhetoric alone. By locking girls within the bleak walls of their halls they are being deprived of use of library as well as other opportunities for participation in cultural and educational events. Unequal access will further aggravate gender discrimination in competitive situations starting from university examinations, foreign scholarships, jobs and so on. These conditions also create disparities between women

ir idents of university halls, and those who stay outside and are tree to move about.

The principle of necessity needs to be taken into account when framing any rules. If the government and, in fact, society as a whole, has begun to emphasise the value of women's education, practical measures must be taken to ensure that women can take full and equal advantage of facilities. Education is not imparted merely through lectures. It is equally important for students to read widely, to take part in cultural life, to exchange ideas with their peers.

Enforcement of a few of these rules creates practical problems. Women students are expected to obtain written permission from their local guardians each time they expect to leave their halls. Is it acceptable for her too go out without permission and alone in order to obtain a letter from her guardian? And if the guardian lives in Dhanmandi. Demra or Mirpur, who will finance here travel expenses to obtain permission? If these conditions are enforced in the interest of the student, it may be just as effective to use a sign in register to inform the university about the student's whereabouts, in case of need.

Some of the conditions can best be described as humiliating to women and therefore deplorable. Ringing of attendance bells to ensure that everyone is locked within four walls in reminiscent of prison conditions. A residential hall is a place which young women who lack local housing use in order to gain a higher education. Should the University follow systems of checking attendance which are disrespectful and encourage guilt and stealth?

Reluctance to accede to students' demands are probably being rationalised by University authorities on pleas of women's security under unstable social conditions, and the apportioning of University responsibility. Several fallacies are inherent in this line of reasoning. It is true that rule of law is far from desirable but

this does not mean that we should incarcerate the innocent. Instead of taking measures against those who violate social and legal norms the University seeks to confine the orderly citizens within a restricted space. If that restricted space is the University itself, who can honestly say that the campus is a safe area. An increase in campus vio lence, use of lethal weapons, and also sexual harassment, have failed to induce the authorities to take measures to create an orderly environment for ordinary law abiding students. Women students are particularly vulnerable to such violence within the campus. What security has the University offered these students in all these years? Except to close down halls forcing young women to leave with bag and baggage at short notice? Or, when a procession of women students on campus was attacked in post election violence the University pretended to look the other way. refusing to protect the girls or to take any judicial steps

Institutions are expected to guarantee security and rule of law to its citizens within its precincts. If the University has been unable or unwilling to enforce this within its own boundaries, should, it prescribe restraining conditions on women outside the campus? There is little reason to assume that a guardian's signature is likely to prevent any mishap. All it can do is absolve the University authorities of responsibility should anything happen to a woman student.

against the known perpetra-

tors of violence.

There is an element of hypocrisy in the system of requiring guardian's permission. By and large the women entering the university are over 18 years, the prescribed age of consent, when they are free to vote and to marry according to their choice. Given the long drawn out university education, most girls are in their early twenties. Yet in the matter of seeing a film in the early evening, of attending a cultural event, they are not expected to be discerning.

The demands of the women students to lift conditions for guardian's permission and to keep the halls open to conform with closing hours of the

library are very reasonable. They should have been acceded to by the University authorities without resort to strikes. It is to be hoped that the Committee set up by the University which includes several women professors who are known to have raised issues of gender equality and non-discrimination will be able to apply their theoretical positions to the practical demands of the students.

The writer is a prominent human rights activist associated with Ain-O-Salish Kendro

Buchwald's COLUMN



So Much for Welfare

HESE are some of the things Congress believes about welfare but won't admit to: Most welfare mothers live like Ivana Trump and spend all their money as Elizabeth Arden.

Teen-age mothers should not have children, but if they do, the money to take care of them should come out of their trust There is no such thing as a promiscuous welfare father.

When it comes to welfare, it is the mother who should take all the political heat. It is immoral and disgusting to hand out condoms in

schools because, while it might prevent pregnancies, the programme is financed by Planned Parenthood.

This country cannot abort unwanted children just because it does not want to educate or feed them.

The answer to teen-age pregnancy is for young mothers to go out and sell real estate. The American people are more angry at welfare mothers than they are at the Serbs, and with good reason. The Serbs

aren't taking our tax dollars. The only way for Congress to solve the problem of illegit-

imate children is to build more maximum-security prisons. Poor people do not have political action committees like the National Rifle Association, so Congress is not afraid of

them. Congress needs welfare people badly so if can beat a dead

If welfare mothers played professional baseball, they could afford to take care of their children. The more money you put into welfare, the less money you

have to spend on Star Wars. The worst part of being poor is you can only afford a carafe of cheap wine in a good restaurant.

The difference between cheating the welfare agencies and the Defense Department is about \$50 billion. US babies who are born without any visible means of

support should be sent to Mexico. Every time you build a day-care centre, you are taking money away from Newt Gingrich's PAC Welfare mothers who say that they can't find work do not

know about the government's astronaut programme.

By arrangement with Los Angeles Times Syndicate and UNB

"Unforgivable neglect of city traffic"

Sir, The report "Unforgivable neglect of city traffic" by Mahfuz Anam appearing in your daily, on 12 February is well studied and timely. thank him for his such effort to point out various lapses of law enforcing agencies. I feel it would have been better if he added one or two more

aspects of traffic management. I fully agree, the situation has become so grim that, unless to one time is not valuable or, having protection and escort jeep like VVIP's are using, one should not come out on the road with a transport. I

fully agree with the recommendations of Mr Anam, but would like to add the following which may also help ease the traffic tangle of Dhaka city:

(a) Traffic police must stand on a pedestal (it used to be in the earlier day's and still in vogue in Dhaka Cantt also in major cities of India (Calcutta) to control).
(b) On all road intersections

"Go round islet" must be constructed. This is less expensive but makes the traffic even glowing, rather than standstill by traffic light. Such standstillness accumulates more vehicles and creates more tangles.

dicular to it. In the latter case, more usable road space is occupied in parking as well as while coming out from the parking state. (d) A 3" to 4" high divider

may be placed all along the wider roads to make an exclusive rickshaw lane. Only this way rickshaws can be made orderly. At present even though such space is available but it remains unutilized or utilized other than by traffic. Only, one-third of the road is now shared by all types of vehicles and mainly the highlane.

(e) Mr Anam's suggestion (a) if should be double i.e 100 (c) Parking should be alyards as 50 yards in perhaps lowed at an oblique to the too small space to keep clear footpath rather than perpenance at intersections.

Free flow of traffic saves istan than in Bangladesh. An power in Bangladesh than in wastage of public and private resources. I hope concerned agencies would ponder on this. and take immediate steps to implement the suggestions to save the above mentioned resources, for many of us time is one of them.

A R Choudhury Uttara, Dhaka

'Strong Taka'

Sir, Taka is too strong. Strong Taka is not good for the health of Bangladesh export to world market. Recently I observed that certain items imported to the United States are cheaper in China and Pak-

importer in Chicago asked me to check price of 100 per cent Flour Sack Kitchen Towl in Bangladesh. They want to see if they can buy it from Bangladesh. Presently they are importing those items from China, Pakistan and Eastonia. But the price is 30 per cent

cheaper in those countries than in Bangladesh. The importer asked me what is the reason for such high price. For several other items. I checked the price with importers, every one has the same opinion I tried to find out the rea

following: 1) Taka is too

strong. A dollar has less buying

son and I came up with the

Price of cotton is high; 3) Labour cost is higher than in our competitor countries (but is it true? The most likely reason perhaps is. Taka is too strong compared to other currencies.

our competitor countries; 2)

In order to be competitive in world market we have to devalue our currency so that world market finds us competitive in price. This is the responsibility of our central bank which is Bangladesh Bank to keep a careful eye on cur rency values.

Ekram Belal New York. USA