### Dhaka, Wednesday, April 26, 1995 **Economic Diplomacy**

The Foreign Ministry has made a small beginning at the headquarters to address country's economic interests overseas. It has set up a trade and investment promotion (TIP) wing. pending an outcome of the 'Morshed Committee's on-going work to start providing an economic thrust to its overall functioning which obviously brooked no delay. We hail it as the 'first step' that has to be always made in 'a journey of a thousand miles,' as the famous Chinese adage goes.

The rock-bed of our economic interests has so far been procurement of foreign aid. The new emphasis on trade and investment, let's both celebrate and face it, is a big shift in the developmental thought-process. Aid-minded as we have been all these years, it is the ERD rather than the foreign ministry which has exercised authority regarding international assistance.

Granted, our dependence on foreign aid is whittled down by some 40 per cent now in terms of development financing. Yet it will be daydreaming to hope we shall be able to do entirely without external assistance in the future, nor is it desirable in an inter-dependent world that we did it. Having underscored this stark reality, we advise avoiding any under-current of conflict that has sometimes featured in the relationship between the ERD and the desks in the foreign office having to do with economic development organisations or donor countries

The trade and investment promotion division in the Foreign Ministry would not only have to work hand in gloves with other relevant desks in the foreign office, which ideally should have been amalgamated, but have also to depend on spontaneous cooperation from commerce and industries ministries, the last-named for the sake of help from the Board of Investment with a focus around the EPZs. Then comes its opening a vigorous new front with the chamber bodies in the private sector.

The TIP wing's role as a facilitator of right contacts between the private sector in Bangladesh and those in other countries can hardly be overemphasised.

With such logistical preparations properly conceived and duly made, our Foreign Ministry will be in a position to gear up our, missions abroad to the task of advancing the country's trade and investment interests. Could we perhaps have a computerised trade and investment analysis cell in the TIP wing?

#### Mindlessness

An eminent American educator believes that a large-scale process of "dumbing down of the American public is taking place." As part of this, he feels, the percentage of newspaper readers has come down in a year from 58 to 45. An Associate Press report on the phenomenon published in The Daily Star mentions many another indicator to the same.

The alarm was rung by a regular deluge in the media, specially movies and the TV, of featurelength films and shows championing dimness. The infection threatens to spread even to the radio and one wonders how would radio extol stupidity. It has been suggested that the Republican controlled Senate cut support to National Public Radio for the crime of running programmes too intellectual and elitist

The problem surfaced in a tell-tale manner with the film 'Forrest Gump' hitting the box-office with exceptional impact. The American public took its nitwit lead man as almost their personal hero - a national hero to tally the popularity indices. For some time, however, the question of how far these creations are going to breed a stupidity craze in the people or are results of a society already deep in the dumbness slough may remain open. When 'Forrest Gump' not only delights the ordinary American but rakes in a whole range of haloed Oscars, the disease has evidently advanced far into the bastion of the top people. Indeed a trickle-down process is seemingly in operation in the idiocy game. For the makers of these impossible eulogies to mindlessness are far from morons themselves. They are on the look-out for people's vulnerabilities. Sex was one and violence another. Both had long hit saturation exploitation with the result that sheer sex and/or violence would hardly anymore hit the jackpot. Now comes this singing paeans to stupidity. It is quite true that media obsession with sex and violence has had a big hand in changing the average man's attitude towards those as well as his overall conduct manifesting his persona. Calling this change bad or good depends on individual, group or social taste.

With the phenomenon occurring in the trendsetting United States the whole human family is going to be injured badly. A dose of sex by itself is rather inconsequential socially as well as in personality terms. It is not the same with violence which takes at least two ,- one of them an unwilling victim. And the perpetrator is then a victim twice over. Spread of violence eats up society. And now this - worshipping mindlessness. This is indeed potentially the worst crime against civilisation and humanity. It is well that this has been challenged on its home ground.

### **Eternal Triangle**

It is said that there was a silent fight going on between two pilots of the national carrier over indulgences originating in a stewardess they both fly with frequently. And it is said the two came literally to blows recently during a regular Sylhet flight. Although press reports do not say whether the incident took place with the prize standing between the contenders and waiting to reward the emergent winner - it is thought the fight was a result of pent-up rages savaging each other in uneasy slumber and day dreams.

Nothing's amiss really. Quite a healthy threesome it seems. The eternal triangle. And how wonderfully this triangle thing hides in it an endless series of smaller and smaller triangles. Man is a pairing animal condemned to being bashed by the sharp edges of a triangle. Come to think of it — it takes two to make one angle and in a triangle only three make up three angles. No wonder characters involved land in gushes and spurts of alternating pleasure and pain. All this is in the geometry of things.

But the pilots and their friend should rather stand abreast to make a straight line while on a flight. Or they must shun company on the flying machine — flying must be a separation time for them.

#### OR more than three decades. Art Buchwald has been my most favourite columnist. I am really happy that I can now read his

columns is The Daily Star. The just concluded great extravaganza in "wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen" under the title of "World Summit for Social Development" with poverty alleviation as one of its major objectives reminded me of one of the Art Buchwald pieces I read many years ago although that was written in a vastly different contest. In fact, any encounter with most poverty alleviation" projects or the news of vet another seminar or workshop on the same topic has the same ef

fect on me. America's war in Vietnam was coming to an end. Art Buchwald observed that Americans had been fighting there to ensure that the Vietnamese did not become communist. He quoted the sum of money amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars already spent in pursuit of this objective. He then demonstrated by calculations that with the same amount, every Vietnamese family could have been provided with a good house, a car, a television and a refrigerator. And if only were done, he concluded, "The Vietnamese would have never become communist!"

Almost the same sort of logic. I discovered, could be validly applied in case of many "poverty alleviation" or "rural development" projects that I used to come across during my days in the Bangladesh Planning Commission. These were largely designed by various donor agencies. Major part of the funding, not always as grant, would have been provided by them. These projects would have even upto threefourths of the total investment earmarked for technical assistance (salary, various allowances, travel etc. of expatriate "experts"), logistics (airconditioned vehicles etc), supervision (periodic visits by donor agency headquarters staff, preferably in winter months), training (workshops and seminars, and visits abroad by Bangladeshi project officials to study "poverty" issues), and administrative costs. One could not help wondering/who are the targeted beneficiaries of the project — the Bangladeshi poor or the experts, consul;

tants, suppliers and so on. It would appear to me that following Art Buchwald logic, it could be justifiably argued that instead of spending the money on all these overheads, if the total amount was just divided among the members of the target group the impact on poverty would be as good or

# In the Name of the Poor

Overnight, "poverty" assumed the status of big business. Experts and aid agency officials from Washington, New York, London, Geneva, Paris and such other cities began to fly in and out of Dhaka in droves. Quite a few stayed on and bravely faced the rigours of Bangladesh life for a tax free income of about twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars a year. Bangladeshi experts and officials also were not overlooked. .

even better.

Yet, any suggestion for trimming the overhead cost and thus increasing the amount actually going to the poor would have met with fierce resistance on the part of the donor agency bureaucrats. Those making such proposals would be accused of delaying and obstructing development assistance to the poor.

Beginning from the early

eighties. "poverty alleviation" became the most trendy and lucrative area of operation for the international development set. Hordes of experts on "poverty alleviation" and related areas appeared on the scene. This was to meet the demand generated by the sudden awakening of almost every bilateral or multilateral aid agency to the fact that they are expected to do something for the third world poor. Even World Bank which till then would not normally deign to look at anything unless it involved major foreign procurement or massive construction started setting up task forces. hiring consultants and creating new positions to formulate poverty alleviation projects. Agencies of the UN family redoubled their efforts in activities they perform best - providing technical assistance for studies, organising workshops. seminars and symposiums to write papers and monograms. and talk on poverty alleviation. A great deal of this newly found enthusiasm was due to a genuine desire on the part of the taxpayers in donor countries to see that their tax money really benefits the

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personages showing them in-

augurating a seminar here, delivering an address in a conference there.

Even private sector joined. After all, scenes of poverty on the TV do tug at the heart strings and brings in money to the organisations claiming to help the poor. How much of it actually goes to the poor is another matter

Here I cannot check the temptation of citing the case of one agency named "The Hunger Project" as recounted in the book "Lords of Poverty" by Graham Hancock, The sources cited by the author are impeccable and includes National Charities Information Bureau. New York.

poor in the third world countries? How many starving children could be fed for the amount spent on an expert or official as air fare between

Dhaka and Copenhagen? Copenhagen conference has been lauded as the biggest ever gathering of heads of government (although quite a few of those who really matter are not there). They were supported and served by a mighty horde of international and national bureaucrats and hangers-on. NGOs were also represented in truly impressive numbers. No one seems to know exactly how many actually joined this grand show The figures I have come across

## Another Voice

#### Kazi Fazlur Rahman

According to this report, The Hunger Project raised donations totalling \$6,981,005 in 1985. Out of this, \$ 210,775 i.e. about three per cent was passed on as grants to other organisations involved in relief work in hungry countries. All the rest was spent in the US under such headings as enrollment and committee activities". "communication, information and education services", "publications", "management and general" and "fundraising". Telephone expenses for the year approached half a million dollars. In 1984 The Hunger Project's British office raised £192.658 from public donations of which £7,048 i.e. just a little above (hree per cent went to the Third World. The report however does not say what happened even to these meagre amounts when the same reached the third

world countries. It may sound irreverent. but someone has to ask the question - how much of all the money being raised and spent in the name of the poor has really benefitted the poor? How much of these sums has gone to support "experts", bureaucrats of both international and national varieties and functionaries of non-government agencies in a life style which very few of them could have

aspired to achieve but for the

in various press reports range from eight thousand to twenty-

five thousand. There was quite an interesting press report which could be taken as a rough indicator of the scale of this extravaganza. According to it, the operators of various callgirl agencies in Copenhagen were frantically trying to recruit extra four thousand ladies from places as far away as Moscow in order to cope with the sudden conference induced surge in demand for their services.

And there is the small matter of the cost of the conference. A report cited a sum of twenty-five million dollars. It must have been the figure for the organisers i.e. the UN How much more has to be added as the total for all participating governments and hosts of non-governmental agencies, both national and transnational? The Bangladesh government delegation was reported to have 45 members. NGO representatives from Bangladesh perhaps could be half as many. How many members of these contingents could actually make any contribution to the proceedings?

What would the poor of the world in whose name the conference was held are going to get out of it? Of course, there

any conflict, there is no reason

to believe it will behave differ-

ently in "regional contingen-

cies". The new Doctrine hints

at this when it claims "the de-

terrent effect of nuclear

weapons extends to enemy

calculations concerning con-

ventional conflict." The de-

ployment of such nuclear

weapons into regions during a

But it is not yet clear if it contains anything not to be found somewhere in other grand declarations adopted in conferences held in exotic places like Arusha, Alma-Ata, Lima, Nairobi, Caracas, Cancun, Rio, New Delhi, Cairo, Mar del Plata and so on, and bearing their names. What is this latest of the declarations going to add to the UN charter, convention on the rights of the children and many such others? How many of the commitments made under all these earlier declarations and conventions have actually been discharged by the signatories? Rather, from some reports, it appears that it was quite a struggle to stop some of the rich countries backsliding

is a Copenhagen Declaration

from earlier commitments. An important qualification for a good civil servant in the UN family and also experts engaged by them is the ability to turn out mellifluous phrases which must sound lofty yet

vague enough not to displease any country, particularly those holding the purse strings. They also have to develop an expertise in reshuffling these phrases into a different order to come out for each conference with something of a distinctive appearance. Yet they must have been hard put to cobble together a document which does not look like another example of UN syndrome - a fascination and preoccupation with the process rather than the result.

The members of the Development Set on Poverty Alleviation must have toiled very hard for the Copenhagen conference. They must be already planning the next conference, and even the ones after that. In the words of Ross Coggins in his poem "The Development Set" some of them could now be muttering:

"Just pray to God the Biblical promise is true

The poor ye shall always have with you.

On a serious note, let us pray that the Copenhagen Declaration meets a better fate than the most of the preceding UN-sponsored declarations. Let us hope that all the money spent in Copenhagen in the name of the poor does indeed benefit them lest someone finds out that the Art Buchwald approach would have served the poor better.

### Bureaucratic Mystique in South Asia A K M Jalaluddin

### What the CSPs were Taught-IV

number of distinguished persons drawn from all walks of life. Pakistani and foreigner, were invited regularly to give us 'extension lectures. We heard A K Brohi (who was in the forefront of the legal battle against Ayub Khan's autocratic rule). Justice Anwarul Huq. Quasim Rizavi (CSP 1950), and some foreign academics as "extension

Of these, some lectures shine in my memory for a variety of reasons. Masudur Rauf (CSP 1954). West Pakistan's Information Secretary, gave us a resume of his department. Government's objective was to ensure the flow of news and information that was positive and constructive and help build the national character. So far so good. But during the question-

and-answer session it appeared that his department had also some intelligence work to do. For instance, his department employed a number of informers and agents in various media-related agencies and was in receipt of their regular reports.

Haqqani, the intellectual from the Punjab, simply felt outraged. "Mr\_Secretary," he asked stridently, "what kind of national character you are attempting to build by employing informers and agents who spy on their unsuspecting colleagues or neighbours? Surely trust and faith are very important values to be upheld for the cohesion, progress and survival of any society. If you were deliberately destroying those values, you will have no nation worth the name to build its character." Haqqani, the idealist orated with a great deal of

passion and conviction. "Don't take this intelligence business so seriously," Rauf pleaded. "After all, we don't have thousands of them in the eight corners of the globe. Just a handful of them. And this sort of thing has always been done in the past."

"One wrong does not right

another wrong," Haqqani thundered, with the whole class applauding, to indicate their support for Haggani's idealistic stance. Rauf meekly interjected, "We shall see what you do when you are senior enough to occupy positions of this kind." "I shall never do anything that is

morally wrong," Haqqani declared with all probationers supporting him visibly, audibly, with all their youthful idealism.

Rauf retreated by saying that his department would have to continue its work as before but would omit "building the national character" as one of its objectives, at least in public fora.

The day belonged to Haggani. No. others disputed. It was the youthful idealism of all fifty probationers that triumphed.

I H Usmani (ICS 1942) was an exceptional person. A brilliant physicist, having acquired a Ph D from Cambridge under the supervision of the famous scientist Rutherford, he was lured by the prospects of the heaven-born service and joined the ICS in 1942. After a stint in the field (he was Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet, 1953) and Director of Industries, Punjab, he was appointed to head Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission in 1959.

Usmani had a powerful presence and a gift of the gab. His passionate theme was that the idea to think of the country's development without development of science and technology was simply stupid. Atomic age had opened up floodgates of unlimited power (All natural resources had their limitations). "We must acquire the technology to use atomic

power for peaceful purposes." After taking the lethargic Director to task for his absence. Usmani made a passionate plea that the CSP/PFS probationers ought to appreciate properly the significance of atomic power.

"And, remember, gentlemen, the scientists who are engaged in research in my organization are very talented indeed. They have chosen a less glamourous profession working quietly on the lab benches at times late into the night."

The police constable is an uneducated person. So he may not salute the scientist. But surely you are educated and you should salute the creative scientists. "As you are supposedly educated you should be able to distinguish the grain from the chaff." Usmani's first love was science. "Salute the scientists, because your future lies in science," Usmani declared in very emphatic terms,

### Lessons for the NPT

#### US Nuclear Doctrine Bodes III for a policy of being prepared to use nuclear weapons first, in

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) are meeting in New York to decide whether to extend the Treaty indefinitely or to impose strict time limits and conditions. If the first option wins out, all five nuclear weapons nations (the United States. Russia. China. France and Britain) will be free to keep their arsenals in tact. leaving the rest of the world with only the hope that someday they will disarm. A Third World view of current US

that any such hope is illusory. Describing the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the CIA's then-Director told Congress in 1993 that "We have slain a large dragon, but now we live in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes." To confront this new threat, the US military insists - just as it insisted during the Cold War - on the importance of nuclear weapons, the continuing willingness to threaten to use them, and the capability to use them. All that has changed are

strategic doctrine suggests

the targets. In 1998, the US Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations, produced under the Joint Chiefs of Staff to set out the conditions for the "planning and employment of US nuclear forces." identified the key role of America's nuclear arsenal as deterrence. There is of course nothing new about this. But since the US and Russia have agreed not to target their nuclear weapons at each other, who exactly is to be deterred? Who is the threat?

According to the Doctrine. what most worries US strategists is proliferation leading

Zia Mian writes from Islamabad Signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty would do well to consider current US strategic doctrine when they vote this week. While that doctrine targets proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as the chief threat to the US, the doctrine itself could become self-fulfilling

prophecy. not just to one "regional crisis" involving weapons of mass destruction but to "regional contingencies" and "the spectrum of potential conflicts."

"Our focus now is ... any potentially hostile country that has or is seeking weapons of mass destruction," noted the head of the US Strategic Command that same year. In other words, countries trying to acquire such weapons now fall into the same category as those that have them.

While the US government has not publicly identified these countries, the Strategic Command has proposed creating new lists of targets for US nuclear and conventional weapons including "countries or organizations or groups that would pose a significant proliferation risk,." In his annual report to Congress in 1993, then Secretary of Defense Les Aspin said there were 20 countries which had or were developing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, and the means to deliver them. And the Office of Technology Assessment of the US Congress, in a report on proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, named 14 countries — virtually all in the third world - including Iran. Iraq. Libya, and North Korea:

China, Taiwan and Syria (which are believed to be working on biological and chemical weapons); Egypt Myanmar (Burma) and Vietnam (which are suspected of chemical weapons programs); Israel (whose nuclear program is well known); Algeria (which is suspected of having a secret stuclear weapons program); India and Pakistan.

According to the Doctrine, the new problem in fighting a nuclear war against such countries is how to avoid destroying entire cities. The answer lies in a new generation of nuclear weapons now being designed that have a smaller explosive power. Once the typical nuclear weapon the US and the former USSR developed was meant for a massive, unrestricted nuclear war, where casualties didn't matter; now, the new low-yield nuclear weapons, or mini-nukes, are meant to offer "a credible option to counter the employment of nuclear weapons by third world nations." The Joint Chiefs of Staff specifically refer to "a selective capability of being able to use lower yield weapons" as a "useful alternative" in what they call" regional contingencies."

Since the US has always had

#### crisis" when combined with the means and resolve to use them" can allow the US a "flexible application of responses," the Doctrine de-Having conjured up enemies everywhere, it is no surprise that the US military has offered up, once again, a policy of nuclear deterrence. But if the US thinks this way, it will only encourage others to think in the same way. That irony is one that NPT signatories would do well to consider.

Dr. Zia Mian, PNS commentator based in Islamabad. is a Research Fellow at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute and a columnisi with Islamabad's English-language Newspaper "The News."

# An Appeal

### In Connection with the 50th Anniversary of the Victory over Fascism

HE heads of member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States address the peoples of their countries and the world community in connection with the 50th anniversary of the great victory over fascism.

May 9, 1945, will remain in the history of mankind as the most memorable and important date of the 20th century: the day of victory of good and freedom, the day of final liber ation of peoples from the threat of fascist enslavement.

The heroic actions of the Soviet army, partisans and underground combatants, the determined and devoted work of our people at the home front, their selfless courage, determination and fraternity all formed the foundation of this great victory.

The troops of Allies, antifascist movements and efforts of the peoples of all countries of anti-Hitler coalition made an important contribution to the struggle against fascism. \

The victory has become the most vivid demonstration

the omnipotence of collective spirit, selflessness of peoples and heroism of individuals, defending and protecting their right for freedom and human dignity, as well as the ability of the peoples of the world to unite in the face of a deadly danger.

The victory has demonstrated the possibility of, and the need for, interaction among the members of the world community in ensuring international security and preventing a new world war.

We shall never forget the great sacrifices made for the sake of peace, freedom and democracy. On behalf of our compatriots we call upon the peoples of the Commonwealth member States and the world community to revere the memory of those who perished, carefully saving what this memory is embodied in and paying tribute to those creators of the victory who are

Striving to consolidate uni versal peace we solemnly confirm the inflexible will of our

peoples to bring about the deepening of comprehensive cooperation both within the Commonwealth and with all countries for the sake of peace and prosperity.

We call upon all people to multiply their efforts to confront new threats to peaceful existence of our planet, to eliminate the existing and prevent potential conflicts a tragic development of which can become a new challenge to the ideals of humanity and progress and is fraught with new troubles, destructions and bloodshed.

Conscious of our sacred debt to the heroes of the great victory, both perished and alive, we call upon all peoples of the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the world community to unite their efforts and will in order to save future generations from the scourge and horrors of new

Released by the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Hangladesh.

# Ghastly bomb blast in

USA Sir. The name 'Oklahoma' sounds like Japanese but in fact it is a peaceful small state

in the USA.

In the backdrop of terrible poisonous gas explosions oneafter another in Tokyo subway and Yokohama in Japan wherein several people were killed and about 5,500 wounded the bomb explosion in the ninestorey Federal building at Oklahoma, USA is a matter of grave concern for the peace loving people all over the

It appears that some men with fetid brain and monstrous plans are turning out to be the greatest enemies of the human beings through the acts of terrorism and violence.

Terrorism is growing fast all over the world for various reasons. After the end of the World War II the Israelis invented terrorism and out of it created the state of Israel. In Europe, America and

many other parts of the world terrorism has grown up step by step from teddyism to hippies' life to drug addiction to acts of terrorism. Moral degradation, manufacture and sale of encouraging terrorism. We strongly condemn terrorism but at the same time

arms and deadly weapons are

believe that victory over terrorism cannot be attained only by force. But through love and affection, upgrading the moral character of the people. doing away with the differences between the 'haves' and 'have nots' and implementing the universal declaration of human rights in letter and spirit.

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203