

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...

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.

Granted, our dependence on foreign aid is whittled down by some 40 per cent now in terms of development financing. Yet it will be day-dreaming to hope we shall be able to do entirely without external assistance in the future.

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...

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.

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.

The alarm was rung by a regular deluge in the media, specially movies and the TV, of feature-length films and shows championing dimness. The infection threatens to spread even to the radio and one wonders how would radio extol stupidity.

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.

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.

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 peacocks 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.

With the phenomenon occurring in the trend-setting 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.

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.

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.

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.

FOR more than three decades, Art Buchwald has been my most favourite columnist. I am really happy that I can now read his columns in 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 context.

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.

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.

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 even better.

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.

Lessons for the NPT US Nuclear Doctrine Bodes Ill for Global Disarmament

Zia Mian writes from Islamabad

THE 170 signatories to the 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.

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 nuclear 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.

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 1993, 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.

According to the Doctrine, what most worries US strategists is proliferation leading to the development of nuclear weapons by a large number of countries.

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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.

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 call-girl 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?

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

There is a Copenhagen Declaration. 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.

There is a Copenhagen Declaration. 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.

There is a Copenhagen Declaration. 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.

There is a Copenhagen Declaration. 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.

There is a Copenhagen Declaration. 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.

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.

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.

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.

Another Voice

Kazi Fazlur Rahman



Bureaucratic Mystique in South Asia

A K M Jalaluddin

What the CSPs were Taught-IV

Salute the Scientist

A 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 Haq, Quasim Rizavi (CSP 1950), and some foreign academics as 'extension speakers'.

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 Haqqani'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 probations supporting him visibly, audibly, with all their youthful idealism.

An Appeal

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

THE 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 liberation 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 of 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.

Revised by the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Bangladesh.