Dhaka, Tuesday, September 5, 1995

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

## On to a World of Better **Partnership**

All the world's eyes are now set on the proceedings of the Fourth World Conference on Women that got off to a colourful start in Beijing yesterday. Most of informed mankind must be looking at this biggest international meet so far on women, and of women, with an ticipation. For the nations have many miles to go before the gross imbalance weighing down human progress and fulfilment of life for each human individual, namely the gender gap, is thoroughly eliminated.

There are those that have only disdain for what UN and the women are up to. And they have a presence there in Beijing too if only to prevent the big congregation from enshrining something foolish, that could foul up the set ways of man. And throughout history forces of status quo have called set ways as God's ways.

The big rally is all about challenging and denting the status quo that has structured inequality and injustice, deprivation and discrimination into the phenomenon of human organisation, from society and government to family. And, more dangerously, it has spawned two opposed and warped worldviews. While one part of mankind, justifying its conduct by its worldview, is suppressing the other, the suppressed, by its worldview of accepted degradation, is effecting a drag mankind is not cut to cope with even as a whole. Poschatey felichho jarey, shey tomarey poschatey tanichhey as Tagore had said in a different context.

The conference cannot remove even a minuscule part of that. But it can hopefully pronounce declarations which would function as a fountainhead of national actions in narrowing the gender gap through empowering women legally and socially. The conference's outcome, while not expected to be spectacular, should rather be solid and enough to dare stragglers to catch up with it.

As lack of liberty has been the undoing of lofty socialistic endeavours, democracy too stands to be as hopelessly undone by the idea and practice of gender-based inequality. From Beijing, let world women initiate a march away from these and on to a world of true partnership between the sexes and across all other barriers that divide man from man. Or shall we say, person from person?

#### Why Flout Norms?

The 32-hour hartal, called by the opposition political parties and observed generally on a nationwide scale, has left in its trail some extremely thought-provoking impressions. Of these, at least two stand out in bold relief: the official electronic media underplaying the event and then topping it off with a slanted version, and the picketers' highly tendentious interference with the delivery of essential services to the citizens.

The right to authentic information assumes critical importance in anxiety-ridden conditions. It is in a period of abnormal happenings that people look for reliable information to comprehend a situation properly. But on Saturday night when people were glued to their TV sets to know the details of the first day's strike it was until the very end of the news bulletin that they had to wait to get that sketchy picture of it. The item didn't even deserve to be in the headlines in the first place. Why? These are neither the Pakistan days nor are we being ruled by any autocracy that such aberrations will have to be put up with.

Then consider the fact that information cannot be tailor-made or rationed out to people when they have such a ready access to the cable or satellite networks and the foreign radio channels almost round the clock.

It defies our understanding as to why our people should not be in a position to keep faith with the news bulletins of their own electronic media. Unless the government remedies the situation by ensuring appropriate coverage and credibility of the electronic media's news casts it will be the worst loser unnecessarily distancing itself more and more from the people.

The picketers' excesses were outrageous, to say the least. They set ablaze or damaged clearly identifiable vehicles of major newspapers, misbehaved with the identity card-carrying journalists and the vehicle drivers on duty, stopped an ambulance or two and blocked movement of obvious-looking patients to hospitals. The strike organizers' exemption list was evidently not making any abiding or percolatory sense on the picketers in the streets.

So, we say to the leaders, rein them in or

earn outright public displeasure.

## **Matter of Few Lakhs Only**

A Bangla daily in a front-page report yesterday stated to the effect that the Ministry of Forests and Environment has given the effluent-spawning industries one last chance to mend their ways. The owners of the units will have to do the conservation of the waste products and then remove these to safer grounds in two years' time. Within the same time-frame, they will put in place an effective system for the future safe disposal of effluents. According to a survey carried out in 1986, as many as 905 industrial units were detected to be the worst polluters.

These industries having circumvented legal action for nearly a decade since being identified as violators of environmental standards have been asked to behave on pain of punishment. Actually, there is no dearth of laws against pollution as such; only that these are archaic having toothless penal provisions like negligible fines to impose on the recalcitrant party. These have to be made into deterrent laws containing not only provisions for cancellation of licences but also those for other forms of punishment.

Poor inspection capabilities of the authorities concerned and lack of public consciousness about industrial pollution near their dwelling-places have contributed no less to the insensitivity of the owners of the industries to carry on as they pleased. Let there be a quick turn-around in the situation. After all, individual units worth crores of Taka need but spend only a few lakhs to clean up on environment.

# Apology: Salute to Japan

Arshad-uz Zaman writes from Istanbul

While watching Prime Minister Murayama offering public apology people of Bangladesh recall the events of 1971 when Pakistan army committed unspeakable atrocities on the defenceless civilian population.

Since her defeat half a century ago, Japan has devoted her talent and energies in building an economy that is acknowledged by all as the number one Economic Superpower. She has become an important aid giving nation of the world. In the mid sixties when I was serving in Japan, she staged the Olympics extravaganza and became the first Asian nation to do so. I used to know an extraordinary Japanese gentleman in his eighties named Mr Shoriki. Before the Second World War he was a business and industrial tycoon. The victorious Americans had stripped him of everything. He had not

HE nationally televis-

ed apology by Japan-

ese Prime Minister

Tomichi Murayama has

elevated the Government and

people of Japan to new

heights. In international rela-

tions this is an event that de-

serves to receive universal

To mark the Fiftieth

Anniversary of the end of the

Second World War, Prime

Minister Murayama issued a

public statement concerning

Japan's role and said, in the

hope that no such mistake be

made in the future. I express

here once again my feelings

of deep remorse and state my

her surrender to the Allied

Forces. Japan commemo-

rated the Fiftieth Anniversary

of the first ever atomic strike

on her cities of Hiroshima

and Nagasaki. That trauma

more to do with her mili-

taristic past with Asian na-

tions although she was the

first Asian nation to defeat an

European nation — Russia —

in 1904. There was a whole

military culture which grew

up in Japan. By her official

apology she is not only saying

good bye to that past but

taking an unprecedented

straight and look down. If you

can't see your feet from

there, you are in trouble. If

you can't see the floor, you

should go visit an optician.

This middle-age transforma-

tion from the hour glass look

(half-an-hour for men) to the

bobbin of a textile mill begins

as innocuously as a child's

balloon. Gradually it bloats

from innocent-looking balls

(tennis to handball) to finally

take the configuration of flat

sade against extra fat is on as

soon as the first symptoms

show; the notches of the belt

going up is an early forecast

of heavy fat-fall. People take

different measures, often

desperate ones. Some project

their shoulders to put the

Others tighten their belt to

belly in the background.

appear like the end of an

egg-plant (brinjal to many).

Still others sit tight as stand-

ing would be an unsightly ex-

position. Some breathe in

In some cases, the cru-

tyres (bicycle to truck).

NE way to find out

whether you are fatte-

ning is to stand up

bold step into the future.

Japan's official apology has

still haunts the Japanese.

A week before the date of

commendation.

heartfelt apology'.

only rebuilt his economic empire but in order to beat the Americans in their own game, had started the American game 'Baseball' and put his son Toru Shoriki in charge. Baseball is a thriving game in today's Japan. I do not know of another nation better organized with greater will power than the Japanese.

Japan has tendered her apology without any apparent systematic pressure mounted from different quarters. Since the end of the Second World War Jews have carried on a systematic campaign around the world of hunting down Nazis. The spiriting away of Adolf Eichman from Argentina, where he had taken refuge, his trial in Israel and finally execution is one of such examples. Compared to Nazi atrocities. which have been well publicized. Japanese misdeeds are really hardly known or documented. Seen in this light the significance of the apology of Japan can be better appreciated.

On the morning of 30 May 1981 the Annual Foreign Ministers Conference of the Organisation of Islamic Conference was about to be-

gin in Baghdad. I was in the office of Habib Chatti, the Secretary General, discussing the forthcoming meeting. was his deputy in charge of the Political Department. His Press Secretary came in and handed over a message. Chatti read it and passed on

to me. I read that President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh had been assassinated. Chatti asked for my views. I told him that we should immediately contact

President Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea, who was the Chairman of the Islamic Peace Committee, composed of eight Islamic Heads of States including President Zia The Islamic Peace Committee had been set up to find a solution to the Iranlrak war. I had recommended to President Zia to cultivate friendship with Toure and a solid friendship had grown. Chatti spoke im-

little every day. Swimming

playing some sort of racquet

game (squash maybe a bit

strenuous), free-hand exer-

cises with or without music

mediately on the telephone with Toure and he broke down in tears. He asked Chatti to convene immediately in Dhaka, a memorial meeting in honour of President Zia. Chatti and got busy contacting the eight Heads of States. In the afternoon Chatti told me that President Zia-ul-Hug of Pakistan had vetoed the meeting saying that people of Bangladesh would drag him to the National Memorial and he would have to offer apologies. President Toure was extremely upset but his later at

tempts proved futile. While watching Prime Minister Murayama offering public apology people of Bangladesh recall the events of 1971 when Pakistan army committed unspeakable atrocities on the defenceless civilian population. I was the Director of Public Relations of the Government of East Pakistan through that period

Target small patches of your

planned foute. Cover patch by

patch. Look around and you

will discover pleasant sur-

of things that Pakistan takes courage in both hands and comes forward and offers an unconditional apology? The apology of Prime Minister Murayama has

and am a witness to many

horrible events. Several of my

friends were picked up by

the army never to return.

Would it not be in the fitness

opened a new and hopeful page in human history. It is surprising that there are voices saying that the apology does not go far enough. Nations ' g and small have skeletons in their cupboards. They will not need to go very far in history to discover those skeletons. Is it not in order that the Serbians, who in the name of ethnic cleansing are merrily maining. killing and driving away from their homes the hapless Bosnian Muslims, offer apology? And there are self righteous nations strutting through the stage of the world, who should look into the mirror.

Japan is a powerful nation. She has made peace her vocation. And now she has set a splendid example by going before the world and offer a public apology. The world would be far better place if others were to follow this magnificent example.

you stop and wander. You'll

# Can You See Your Toes?

and hold on. This has built-in futile arguments.risks involved as sudden, unnatural narrowing of the

Some of us blame it on our wives even though Bua may be churning out the delicacies. Your Bhabi is spoiling me, dosto. Such a good cook: Takes after my mother. While you ponder how his mother could pass on all the good traits to his wife while

he inherited nothing, your

friend may have put on an ex-

waist many make the

trousers abide the law of

gravity.

tra pound. Many of us like to feel good by ascribing our job status for the mid-body crisis. I have to sit on a chair all day. you know. Some of us go to the extent of attributing genetics as the case. Agrey Bhai, I am telling you, my dad was lut. So what? Your dad was also a high court judge! And, you ended up an eight-paash businessman. But, these are

Once we discover that blaming others is not helping us, we take to other mea

sures such as dieting loften confused with starving) and

by Chintito

exercise: or the commonest of them all: surrender. Ja hoibar hoibo, khaiya loi.

Dieting itself has many forms. Eating less, devouring vegetables (the bhaaji on the table), lots of fish, no eggs, no meat no fulk, no sugar: maybe a little ice-cream. It's difficult, this restriction on victuals. But, it does one a world of good. Exercising without controlling your food intake is fruitless. (Sorry for the pun).

Physicians advise that at

or a simple walk should meet the doctor's orders. But never ever sit before a TV to watch one of those exercise programmes. Even if you manage to ignore the engrossing music, you are too busy looking at the girls. And, my my! Have they dieted? Have they exercised? Have they dressed? I am already sweating. Phew!

Walking, I believe, is the best way to exercise, meditate and refresh, both physically and mentally. Take a

Of course, you tummy will plus-40, one should sweat a long walk and forget the distance you have to cover

also sweat.

not vanish overnight. Thank heavens for that. If it did. your darwan might stop you at the door with the "kaarey chailen. Sir" routine. But coupled with a sensible nonfat diet (always consult a doc-



prises you thought never existed, although you drove by that same route almost every day of the year. You'll locate an old building that will rekindle you childhood memories. You'll perceive the air in its true aura. You'll detect details that will make

tor before you embark on one), it will make you feel healthier. Then you also have to cut down on smoking and boozing, if you are still indulging in such outdated fads. And, you will have done yourself and your family perhaps the best thing ever.

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

#### City problems

Sir, Dhaka could be a very beautiful city if there was no traffic jam. The problem is not beyond solution. Some people very candidly comment that if rickshaws could be eliminated from the city then all its traffic problems would be solved. Maybe, that is true, but partly; and for a very temporary period. This is the time to seek a permanent and longterm solution to the problem. The Daily Star has taken step to focus on the problem under it's "Save Dhaka" campaign. It is really commendable. I do not know whether there is any similar example in the world that a news paper arranges an active campaign against a problem of such kind.

The problem has not yet reached the unsolvable stage. If our engineers, architects and other experts on the matter can get enough support, they can give us a solution. Now the problem is of financial support. If a broadbased programme can be structured to solve the problem then a solution to the financial problem will automatically be solved. For example, take the case of Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge. No problem is a problem in real sense if we have a strong will to solve it.

We should also start thinking about expanding the Dhaka City and decentralization of its commercial areas. Dhaka is expanding but mostly the expansion is taking place in and for the residential areas. If the commercial and government set ups could be placed in a planned way in different locations of the city then I think it would help solve the problem. The problem cannot be solved in a day but we must take the programme to solve it.

An overbridge is being constructed in front of the Mouchak Market but I think that this kind of short-term solution may not work. Moreover, all the overbridges are mostly used by the vendors and beggars keeping little space for passengers to pass through. Overbridges also cannot reduce traffic jam, it only ensures safe road

crossing for the pedestrians. Slow-moving, obsolete and defective vehicles should be replaced by newer and comparatively better one. Some buses and minibuses plying through the streets of the city cannot at all get fitness certificate but these are still on the roads.

All those problems should be identified and solved sitting together and keeping up an honest intention to do it. Otherwise, the problem will be multiplied in course of time and may go beyond our capacity to solve, both technically and financially.

Kazi Nasim Ahmed Malibagh. Dhaka.

### Drug trafficking

Sir. Eliadah McCord, an American lady sentenced for life for drug trafficking, is again on the news.

Eliadah, according to defence plea, is a poor innocent tourist who fell victim to international drug mafia. But a mystery still remains

as to why this lady was not charged with smuggling and how a close confidant of former attorney general was chosen as her advocate and who actually are financing her costly litigation and inspiring press publication depicting her as a 'martyr'.

Drug is eating into the vitals of the human society and drug trafficking is worse than man slaughter. While at the same time drug mafia has been operating throughout the world and in some countries they have even their own army and agents in the government and other insti-

I would appeal to the government to cause an enquiry. to unearth the modus operandi of the international drug mafia in Bangladesh particularly in the dramatics with one of the carriers of drug picked up by mafia and caught red handed while on operation. Abul Ehsan

18/2. Azimpur, Dhaka

#### Agriculture Colleges

Sir. Once again for the troubles in Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), Mymensingh the on-going annual examinations in the country's three Agriculture Collèges had been put off suddenly. The examinees were agitated when the BAU authority asked the Principals of the Agri colleges to suspend the examinations. This has become almost a frequent incident. Session jam in BAU is a rou-

tine matter. Moreover, the Agri colleges are facing many problems in running their academic activities as affiliated colleges of BAU. Actually, in higher technical education like engineering, medical, agriculture etc.: it is illogical to run academic activities under a University as affiliated institutions.

Under these circumstances, we would fervently call upon the government to take some pragmatic steps for solving the academic problems of the Agri colleges.

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor BAI. Dhaka.

#### Madhovkunda waterfall

Sir, Although I live nearly fifteen miles away from Madhovkunda; the largest natural waterfall of the country, I visited the place recently after a gap of four years. It was really frustrating to see that no step has sofar been taken up by the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation to extend the minimum facilities usually expected at a place like that. It has been learnt that the number of visitors coming from different corners of the country has been increasing everyday although they hardly even find a suitable place to sit. There is a lot of scope to beautify this gift of nature to a great extent.

Holiday resorts could be constructed in the neighbouring areas of Tea Estates to attract both local and foreign visitors. With proper investment BPC can develop Madhovkunda as one of the best tourist spots in the country.

Motius Samad Chowdhury Phultala Tea Estate. Sylhet.

#### Reform in result! Sir, This refers to your ed-

itorial, 'Educational Mariagement' (Aug 26.). You have rightly pointed to the hasty and unilateral decisions of the authorities in reforming syllabus/systems without taking note of maladjustments and maladies caused by such decisions. The introduction of com-

puter in publishing results of SSC/HSC examinations did lots of harm to many an innocent examinee. Cases of suicides (out of frustration caused by wrong results) have been reported introduction of computer seems to do nothing in bettering result situation system; nor does it bring about any extra efficiency unless examiners themselves examine the answer scripts with more efficiency. Needless to mention that the result sheet and mark sheets of last SSC ex-

amination have not reached

the respective schools as yet,

though results have been published almost a month ago. All these do not speak well of hasty and unilateral introduction of socalled modern system.

My humble appeal to those who are at the helm of affairs in introducing reform or change, is that please do not hurry and be arbitrary because these decisions affect millions whose future is liable to be jeopardised, if the decisions are found not to be foolproof.

Every decision must be discussed, analysed and okayed by parliament before execution, that is what is called democratic culture. But then, half of the elec torate are unrepresented for the last half year and i means a hay-day for the arbitrary decision makers!

S Siddique Hossain Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

### State of English

Sir. I read with interest Mr Asadullah Khan's illuminating article "Decline in the teaching and learning of English language: How can this be arrested" published in your esteemed daily on 26.8.95. After going through the

article, I lost no time in having a look at the English text book for the students of SSC classes and I was appalled to see that the book, from beginning to end has been written in a style and language that more often than not lacks grace, clarity and coherence not to speak of the fact that the topics chosen and structures displayed are clumsy and faulty. Let me mention here in passing that my two children are studying in Class IX and Class X in a school in Dhaka and so long l remained satisfied that their needs and aspirations in regard to text books at least were being looked after carefully and fudiciously by the Textbook Board authorities headed by veteran educationists of the country. The revelations have been really shocking to me and I wish my kids were better not be-

The thought that is getting uppermost in my mind is that if this is a textbook to be read by the young learners for learning English? I wonder if there is none in the Education Ministry to take care of things that are so appallingly bad.

ing taught in this fashion.

Let us hope that the Textbook Board authorities would wake up from their deep slumber and look at the state of education which is going from bad to worse.

Mustafa Khalid 54. Purana Paltan, Dhaka.

# Buchwald's COLUMN Where have All the

#### Children Gone? HIS summer many parents were bewildered about why their children preferred to spend their

vacations with strangers instead of their own flesh and blood. Carolyn List Ehler said while we were standing in the supermarket line the other day, "I don't understand it. We raised them from babies, sat up nights worrying about

them, sacrificed our pensions to put them through college, and they don't want to spend a weekend with us." A voung girl standing behind us heard the conversation and said. "What you don't understand is that the reason kids prefer to go to their triends' vacation places is they

will be at home. They don't get bawled out." Carolyn became upset. "I don't give my children flak when they come home. I bake brownies for them and let them sleep until 11 o'clock.

know they will be treated so much better there than they

The young lady said. "And you don't tell them what they should be doing with their lives?"

"Every parent tells children what they should be doing with their life. "And you don't ever bring up the subject of grades, and

how nice it would be if they made their beds and didn't leave all the dirty dishes in the sink?"

"Maybe, but what's the big deal about that?" "Nothing, except I'm staying with my friend Sophie and her mother doesn't say a word to me when I come down to breakfast after getting home at 3 in the morning. She may be peeved at Sophie, but as far as I'm concerned, she treats me like Shirley Temple.

Carolyn said. "I can see why you like it better at Sophie's, but after all the pain and agony parents should have some visiting\*rights to a daughter before she goes back to school. The girl said. "Parents don't have rights — they have

privileges. It is your privilege to pack her up for school, make sure she has enough new clothes, check her bank account and, if you are lucky, get her to stay home on her last night instead of spending it with the gang at Gloria

I didn't want to get into it, but I suggested to Carolyn, "Why don't you invite some strangers to stay with you and get from your guests all the nourishment you were hoping to get from your daughter?"

"That's a good idea. It will teach Cynthia a lesson." She turned to the young girl in line and said. "How would you like to be our guest for Labor Day?"

"I'd love to, but I already promised to stay with the Bramhalls while their daughter is visiting her best friend Sarah Newman in Jackson Hole.

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