Dhaka, Wednesday, October 11, 1995

Welcome Back to **Business**

The normalisation of manpower trade with Malaysia, marked by an actual arrival of 33 Bangladeshi workers in that country, gives us a good deal of relief. This is not so much because some of our unemployed have got themselves jobs as it is for the removal of a shadow that had been cast not long ago on our bilateral relations. We prize our ties with Malaysia. And because we know it is requited in full measure from their side that we want to see these develop from strength to strength but with dignity as its unmistakable hall-mark.

Malaysia has been the single largest importer of our manpower, numbering well over two lakhs, a figure which is outstripped only by the Middle East or Arab countries, taken together. Given the depth of her economy, Kuala Lumpur's intake could indeed be so much more in the future. Unfortunately, this perfectly given, decent and steady allurement of Malaysia fostered a greedy set who fell head over heels to milk the cow by incredibly hurtful means. Result: Some 40,000 Bangladeshi workers landed in remote jungles of that country, according to newspaper reports; but the figure has since been put at 10,000 by the government. Even ten thousand illegal immigrants condemned to a hopeless confinement in never-never forests get our hackles up, not to speak of those jailed and numerous others sent back home unceremoniously.

Those handful who deal in lust and human misery did hurt our national sensibilities much the same way that this must have appeared as an insult to intelligence to our friends in Malaysia.

Both sides could regard that nightmarish chapter as closed only if they have made sure that the officially authorised single channel they are now using in place of the private recruiting agencies, would work flawlessly. For our part, we must proceed in the faith that active demand in Malaysia for our manpower will remain unaffected, regardless of a ban on private recruiting agencies, and keep our side of the bargain impervious to any form of corruption.

Shifting Aricha Ghat

Arichaghat Relocation Resistance Committee formed to resist any move by the government to shift the ferry ghat gave a dress rehearsal of its show of strength on Monday. For long three hours the committee staged a sit-in on the Dhaka-Aricha highway, bringing the busy traffic to a halt. It plans to disrupt the road and river communication if the government does not abandon the relocation plan. An action programme accompanied by threats of further violent demonstration has become a trend of realising demands. The resistance committee too could not think of anything better.

However, involved in this matter is the interest of thousands of passengers who use the ferry service daily. The interest of the travelling people and that of the local people may be at variance with each other. But in no circumstances should the pressure, exerted by the local vested interest groups, be allowed to get the better of the judgment relating to the convenience of passengers and the efficiency of the ferry service. If the shifting of ferry ghats on both sides of the Padma provides better navigability, shortens distance and thus it takes less time to cross the river, there is no

point resisting the move. A committee instituted earlier by the government has submitted a report suggesting relocation of both Aricha and Nagarbari ghats a few kilometers downstream. If there is no complaint appropriately made against the committee's study or its competence, such disruptive moves should be viewed as illegal and appropriate measures taken. In case there are genuine causes for complaint, a further study of comprehensive and in depth nature would be called for. Otherwise, the government could hardly be faulted here. But then, the government should have anticipated such a reaction to the shifting move and could win over the affected people at the ghats through intense public relations work and even by promising some compensatory benefits to them.

Godspeed to CSE

The country's share market gets a shot in the arm with the opening of Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) on October 16. However, as preparation for the formal opening the CSE starts its operation today. This welcome move comes quite appropriately to make Chittagong, the most important city after Dhaka, privileged enough to have a second centre for stock business.

As one of the principal commercial and financial hubs of the country Chittagong is expected to get a fair share of industrial investment. Indeed Chittagong promises to open up more than Dhaka to foreign investment. Already it houses more multinational companies than any other cities of the country. On that score the stock business there is bound to be buoyant for a long time to come.

As an indicator of financial and industrial health, the CSE, however, will, in the long run, rely on Chittagong port. The port must expand and develop size and capacity to attract investors to the Chittagong Export Processing Zone. Let the CSE prosper with time.

Rural-Urban Linkage: Basis of Economic Growth

We cannot imitate past patterns although highly successful elsewhere. Let us evolve our own unique patterns and agro-industrial linkages can be one of our own strategies of growth and development.

prevailing majority opinion seems to hold the view that since income is low and the market is small, it may not be the major source of sustainable economic growth. We have to expand manufacturing production for export in order to expand the income and demand base within the country first. At a later stage perhaps, ruralurban linkages might be exploited to enhance the tile fabrics. domestic base for economic Not by Paddy Alone growth. As explained in this

AN the rural-urban linkages be the major

source of economic

growth in our country? The

article. I beg to differ from

this conclusion. Paddy production by the vear 2000 should be around 30 million tons. If this output is subjected to modern processing, then at the processing capacity of 100 tons of paddy per day for each rice mill, 1,000 such mills would be required in the country which will not only increase the quantity of edible rice extracted from paddy, but also give rise to the possibility of 300 solvent extraction plants to produce over 300,000 tons of cooking oil presently imported from abroad. At the same time, quality of rice produced would also be far superior. It would also make available over half a million tons of bran cake as excellent animal feed ingredient. If we can simultaneously promote maize cultivation, then 500 feed plants can be established for a total output of 5 million tons of both poultry and cattle feed. The inevitable expansion of the livestock sector would call for investment in dairy

plants, poultry hatcheries

T is really astounding

that when we are

failing to keep track of

our glorious past, written in

sacrifices and blood, our

for distortion of the history.

The situation would not have

deteriorated to that extent if

the academicians and "public

officers", kept themselves

aloof from petty party

politics for selfish aggran-

disement, engaged them-

selves in the persuit of truth,

maintenance of law and

order, without fear or favour.

affection or ill-will. It is high

time that the new generation

is told what happened in the

territory called 'Bangladesh',

at least during the last 60

The recently-held 75th

anniversary of Dhaka

University can be an eye

opener for that; if the teach-

ers and Vice-Chancellor of

the university came forward

to discharge the historic re-

sponsibility and conducted

celebrations in an educational

and cultural fervour. Alas, in-

stead of festivity of that na-

ture, it turned into political

acrobatics on which dis-

heartening reports and

comments have since ap-

peared in the press. We did

not expect that, particularly

as one of 1961 batch of

Dhaka University, when the

drive towards independence

of Bangalees was gaining

momentum. Many of our

batchmates — who are in the

higher echelons of politics

and bureaucracy - will cor-

roborate to this fact and may

make a pause, as to why the

university has become a hot

bed of power politics, which

was not so during their time.

We leave this issue for them

to decide, as the policy mak-

and processing centres and several other related industries. Maize can also be the basis for production of corn syrup - an excellent sugar substitute as well as corn starch - an essential raw material for finishing of tex-

Agriculture cannot grow by paddy alone. We have to develop an intensive irrigated agriculture with diversified cropping patterns. This would then open up enormous possibilities for rapid expansion of agro-processing. Then take the case of fishery sector where we are presently concentrated in frozen sea foods only. Fish canning as well as fish meal as an important ingredient of animal feed can account for another 1,000 new industrial units. Also leather industry will be boosted with the expanded livestock sector induced by the large feed production industry.

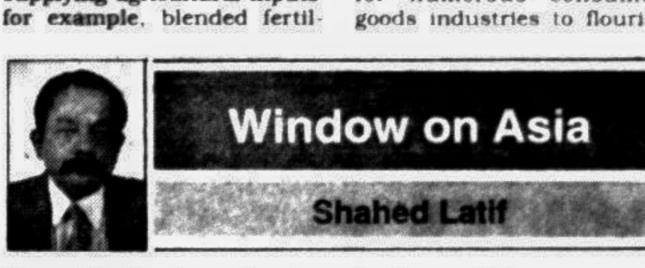
Among other rural-urban linkages sericulture has great potentials. An important NGO is deeply involved in this task and it is expected that it could be a billion dollar industry given the labour intensive nature of silk and related enterprises. On the other hand, grameen check has already established itself as an important export product with possibilities of yet another billion dollar industry

with the involvement of over 200,000 weaving families.

With expanded agro-processing covering thousands of manufacturing units, metal industries including foundries and forges as well as engineering goods industries should also find rapidly expanding markets to develop into a significant production sector. In addition. supplying agricultural inputs

stock and fishery sector should be fully exploited; (iti) apart from agriculture, possibilities of weaving, sericulture within the rural econfrom agriculture and agro-

omy are also substantial, and lastly. (iv) the population of 140 million, mostly rural and enjoying rising income levels processing would create a large and substantial market for numerous consumers goods industries to flourish



izer, agricultural machineries and equipment, quality seeds, agro-chemicals of several kinds would constitute another area of rapid growth.

Through Agro-industrial

Development

Rural-urban linkages through agro-industrial development and intensive irrigated agriculture in particular would be an original Bangladesh style of rapid economic growth which is feasible because of several factors: (i) the fertile soil

where three crops can be

grown with the help of irriga-

tion; (ii) simultaneously, the

potentials of developing live-

I am not denying the prospects of the much advocated export-led manufacturing growth but opportunities within the domestic economy are also by no means small. An increase of one thousand taka per capita in terms of disposable income and after taking into account multiplier effects, would be capable of enlarging the size of the domestic market for goods and services by atleast 4 to 5 billion dollars per an-

in the country.

Also, it is not correct to suggest that the size of the

num. This is an enormous

size by any standard and must

we shut our eyes at home for

the gains far away?

may be small at the per capita level but after we count 140 million population the small would get enormously bit at the end of the market count. In addition, it is not the total but the size of the increase in demand which will critically determine the prospects of manufacturing growth for meeting the domestic demand only. If on a per capita basis there is demand for an extra pair of clothes, shoes etc., or creation of new demand for housing and durables on a family basis, then hundreds of new factories are likely to be established all over the country.

domestic market is small. It

Inflow of Foreign

Investment In this connection, it may be noted that huge inflow of foreign investment in China first and then India is geared to the huge expansion of domestic markets only. The story of foreign investors seeking cheap labour in order to manufacture for export have been repeated times without number in countries of east and southeast Asia. A similar repetition in South Asia may not come with the same intensity since labour intensity in such manufacturing process are declining; and there are lags in relocation. It takes time for an industry to keep on moving from place to place.

The surest way to attract foreign investment is expanding domestic market. And, that market in

Bangladesh can expand very rapidly if we can effectively establish the linkage between rural agriculture growth on the one hand and the induced growth of agro-processing in the thana and district towns of the country. It must be strongly noted by development thinkers and planners of the country that no two country have followed the same path of growth and development. Although the overall approach might have been market friendly, there were considerable difference in the details of each growth path so much so that in the ultimate analysis each country must follow its own unique policies and programmes. The institutional developments were also different, each responding to a different set of conditions prevailing in a country. Take for example Grameen Bank it is an unique institutional arrangement suited to the conditions prevailing in Bangladesh and its replication in other countries would vary as well. Similarly, in matters of particular industrial strategy, we must look for our own path of future achievements and it ought to differ from what had been attained in the immediate past in countries of southeast and East Asia.

We can never imitate past patterns although highly successful in other countries. Let us evolve our own unique patterns and the agro-industrial linkages I have suggested could be one of those our very own strategies of growth and development.

to head the non-party and

Erosion of Political Heritage

by Muhammad Quamrul Islam

We leave this issue for them to decide, as the policy makers of the poor country and parentally, even if their children reside outside the country

leaders, whether in political or academic arena, seem to ers of the poor country and be totally unconcerned about parentally, even if their chilit! There is mutual acrimony dren reside outside the and one is accusing the other

Let us have a sojourn with

history. We will have to start from the British rule in the subcontinent. There may be variety of reasons as to why they introduced Reforms in their Indian colony. One of it might be the impact of liberalism of the 19th century. The first Parliamentary Reforms Bill was adopted in 1832 in England, which is known as 'Magna Carta'. Later on, voting rights were added in 1867 to make the elections more democratic and representative. Consequently, through representation of the People Act, 1918 universal suffrage of women was established. Due to continuous fight of the people, within and outside the British Parliament, universal suffrage and democratic institutions have got permanent footing in England. These changes might have flowed down to India, and electoral practice was introduced in the subcontinent as well. The particular mention may be made here of India Act, 1935. Alternatively, they did it for their farsightedness, not viewing the matter, purely on

Whatever might be the motive behind to introduce Administrative Reforms in India by the British, we have got a tradition of election, as a result. It even encompassed the rural population through elections to Union Board and District Board etc. According to an analyst, election was freer then, as compared to

present time. Over and above, the political culture of middle-class was more democratic, for the above men tioned liberalistic ideas in them. An instance can be cited that the president of National Congress used to be elected, by votes of general members. Also, general members used to elect committee members at different levels. Netaji Subhash Bose was elected president of the Congress, defeating the candidate supported by

Ghandhiji. The position was somewhat different with the Muslim League. Mr Jinnah was the absolute leader and no body dared to speak against him in the organisation. Even, when he changed the Lahore Resolution, 1940, for Pakistan which provided for 'States', by deleting the 's', in Delhi council meeting of 1946, no body seemed to raise any voice substantially against him. After the death of Jinnah and Mr Liaquat Ali, the successor to the party leadership did not break from the authoritative control of their political organisation. Still then, the liberalistic political culture, of British times, held its sway, after the establishment of Pakistan in law and order, to rule this . 1947.

The East Pakistan Awami Muslim League, grew out of the 'political workers rally.' was established in 1949 with Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, elected as the president. It demanded full regional autonomy for the then East Bengal on the basis of Lahore Resolution, abrogation of the "Zamindari Polity", establishment of co-operative

BTV is for the benefit of gen-

eral BTV viewers and cer-

tainly not indented to reduce

viewership or be Anglophobic

and joint agrarian system under the supervision of the dominion, etc. It raised a movement against the Nurul Amin government and the ruling Muslim League. The first general election was held in the East Bengal in 1954, when Muslim League was in power. Out of 237 Muslim seats, the Jukta Front won 223 seats; only 10 candidates from the Muslim League were elected. At that time we did not hear about vote dacoity, stealing of ballot papers, media coup etc., which are now commonplace terms in electoral contests. Muslim League did try to influence in other ways. But, that could not stop the landslide victory of Jukta Front, due to the influence of democratic political culture prevailing then, and neutral-

The democratic practice got a big jolt, when Ayub Khan proclaimed Martial Law against the backdrop of Shahed Ali killing in 1958. Open politics was banned till 1962. General Ayub Khan framed a new constitution in '62, which included establishment of presidential form of government and procedures for election of 40,000 'basic democrats' in both the provinces for presidential election to establish indirect democracy. Nine leaders including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ataur Rahman Khan and Nurul Amin gave a statement demanding cancellation of such constitution. Movement for democratisation, election as the basis of adult franchise

ity of government officers

and staff.

tutional government progressed step by step. Then, came the six-point demand. put forward by Sheikh Mujib, which laid the basis in 1966 for final move towards independence. Mass uprising of 1969 shook the formidable base of the Ayub regime. General Yahya Khan promulgated Martial Law and deposing Ayub took power on December 7, 1970 was fixed for national elections. Awami League secured 167 seats out of 169 in National Assembly and 305 out of 310 seats in the Provincial Assembly. After traversing the course of history, Bangladesh emerged in December 1971 as sovereign and independent state, for which 30 lakh valiant fighters embraced martyrdom and 3 lakh women suffered physical

The Constitution of the peoples Republic Bangladesh was made effective from December 16. 1972, and twelve amendments have been incorporated so far. After the August tragedy of 1975, fall of Khondaker Mustaq, who made Indemnity Ordinance. 1975, General Ziaur Rahman assumed power. The Political Parties Regulation, 1976, issued under Martial Law, changed the democratic political culture followed so far. particularly including front organisations, such as students, labourer, etc. Election Commission, its bureaucracy and field-level officers lost confidence of the voters. Malpractices virtually made election a farce. This led to mass-uprising 1990, which installed Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed as Acting President,

neutral government, for conducting a free, fair and impartial election. Accordingly, parliament election was held in 1991 and through twelfth amendment Khaleda Zia became the Prime Minister under Parliamentary form of Government. Unfortunately, electoral malpractices, as was alleged during Zia-Ershad regime, once again reported under the BNP rule of Khaleda Zia. So, the mainstream opposition parties have launched movement for a neutral care-taker government to be formulated to hold the for next general election. But, no agreed formula has been reached, between the position and the opposition, although about 19 months have passed by and parliament has become basically 'one-party parliament'.

As the political parties appear to deviate from the traditional democratic values of our country, people do not find materialisation of their aspirations and demands in their programme of actions. It becomes a politics devoid of people, a power struggle among the few, in the name of the people. People abhor such Politics! Can't we expect a qualitative change in politics, matching the need of the hour, domestic and international, particularly the newly-industrialised countries of South-East Asia? How long Bangladesh will remain at the bottom-end of South Asia, or the global economy? Leaders cannot avoid the responsibility to answer these questions. Let election to sixth parliament be meaningful to people and economy, for which preparation is needed right now.

The writer Economist and Advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court.

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.

BTV: Bangla dubbed **English serial**

Sir, This refers to Arif Jamal's write-up "Are the BTV Authorities Anglophobes?" published in The Daily Star on 29 September. Mr Arif Jamal has been outright one sided in generalising that BTV's telecast of Bangla dubbed English serial will not appeal to general viewers just because, Mr Jamal likes the programmes to be in English.

Let's face it. It is a worldwide trend; it has happened and happening in many many countries like Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Spain, Germany etc; where English programmes are dubbed in native language as English serials have much lower

viewership compared to programmes in local language. Now that BTV has taken

an innovative step in the right direction for majority of the viewers who have been demanding for telecasting English programmes in Bangla, it was downright very unprofessional of Mr Jamal to pre-judje and lamblast BTV's decision even before the telecast of the programme. This only goes to show how biased Mr Jamal's article is because he decided to take his personal stand and reflect it on a national newspaper even before the launch of the Bangla dubbed telecast from 1st October '95 by BTV where the general BTV viewers could see it and make an opinion of their own. This landmark move by

rather it is to increase viewership which I am sure it will. Moreover, it is also targeted to dedicated and loyal viewers of BTV who do not have access or choices of other TV programmes as we do in the city.

In All fairness, Mr Jamal should first see the series for sometime till the shock of seeing Bangla dubbed English programmes wears off and form an opinion on facts and research on increased or decreased viewership before lamblasting BTV. I am sure Mr Jamal, after seeing the Bangla dubbed English programmes will change his mind. If not for the sake of the entertainment of millions of Bangladeshi people whose only understanding is Bangla and whose access to TV programmes is only BTV, it's a great step forward. Keep it

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up BTV.

Yasmin's final humiliation

expressed regarding the hu-

Sir, Much dismay has been

and establishment of consti-

miliation of a man who was stripped of his clothes during the hartal. While I share the outrage felt by the general public, we women are humiliated every time we set foot on the streets of Dhaka, not to mention other parts of Bangladesh. Men stare at us as if we had no clothes on regardless of what we wear. We are verbally harassed and all too often physically assaulted. Many of us, especially as little girls, are not even safe with male relatives. How many thousands (perhaps millions) of wives in this country with dependent children have been abused and abandoned or killed by their husbands? How ironic that we can go on and on talking negatively about western values and take pride in our eastern values! What kind of values allow women to be treated in such a deplorable manner? Much has been written about

Yasmin. Her final humiliation

came in death. According to

an article in The Daily Star dated Sept 18, "SI did the inquest on Yasmin's body by taking off her salwar and checking the organs with the help of a stick before the eyes of onlookers." Even in death she was tripped of all dignity. Shame!

S Sarkar New Bailey Road, Dhaka

Trade and tourism

Sir, Having a common border Bangladesh and Myanmar maintain friendly and historical ties, trade and commerce between them have been continuing for centuries. The two close neighbours have been successful in solving the complex 2,50,000 Rohingya refugees problem in an atmosphere of goodwill, sincerity and mutual understanding and the repatriation of the entire Rohingyas is now nearing completion.

The long awaited Bangladesh-Myanmar border trade. which was opened with effect from 5th September this year ushered in a new era of friendship and economic cooperation between the two

South Asian countries. It may be mentioned here that many foreign tourists coming to Bangladesh visit Cox's Bazar for two-three days. Most of them while staying in the longest sea beach of the world go to Ramu Buddhist temples and bordering panoramic Teknaf town

opposite Mangdu, Myanmar

on sight-seeing tours.

We would request the Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka to kindly open a Consulate the Cox's Bazar which would not only facilitate Bangladeshis to visit Mangdu but this would also attract a large number of foreign tourists to make a short trip to Mongdu and help promote tourism to the mutual benefit of both Bangladesh and Myanmar.

We are confident that trade and tourism between Bangladesh and Myanmar would yield substantial economic progress and prosperity for the people of two neighbours like many countries in Europe and America.

O H Kabir Dhaka