Dhaka, Monday, August 31, 1998

Manpower Business Code

Often enough there is news in the press about young people from Bangladesh being returned from some Arab countries or being caught in Malaysia or Japan for illegal entry. The ghastliest of these described several thousand young men roaming the jungles between Malaysia and Thailand - unable to enter either. On the home front there have been many exposure stories of the malpractices resorted to by the adam beparies or manpower export agents. Ambitious and hardpressed adolescents, mostly semi-literate and unskilled, go to these agents in search of an El dorado. While many, 300,000 according to government statistics, land in some foreign countries with some real or fictitious jobs, many times that figure are robbed of all they could begin their life with.

At long last government is going to clear up the Augean stables. The Daily Star reported yesterday that a stringent code of conduct is being formulated providing for payment of compensation to affected people by the recruiting agencies failing them. There are very many strange ways in which these agencies defraud and fail the multitude that want to go abroad in search of employment. The recruiting agencies, numbering about 500, do a multi-billion taka business fleecing their clients and yet mostly not delivering on the money they have had. The government 'code of conduct' is perhaps going to address some of the more standard modes of cheating and fraud by these agents.

This is a good step but obviously very late in the day. And it is evident the government action is going to bring under control and accountability only those operating above the surface. While wishing the government every success in their disciplining move in the manpower export sector, we point to the need of unearthing the other adam beparies who do a pretty big business and land their clients into inordinately more trouble abroad than do the regular agents. The problem in its entirety is bigger than the 'code of conduct' can redress. But this is certainly a good thing to begin with.

And it is good that the parliamentary committee on labour and manpower has been seized of the problem and the 'code of conduct' move actually emerged from a meeting of the committee recently. This comes to us as an assurance that things are going to move at last in this vital sector which earns for the nation so much in foreign exchange and provides employment for so many.

A Welcome Move

Coordination is a perennial problem in the implementation of any government decision in our country. Rarely government's own agencies put their efforts together to pull off a work opportunely. The first day of this week however saw a welcome reversal in this trend. With all the relevant departments pooling their energy and efficiency, the authorities were finally able to persuade the people living in the cluster of slums behind Sonargaon Hotel at the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue Saturday last to end their unauthorised occu-pation. For long the beeline of these bustees stood in stark contrast to the rather shiny skyline there.

The donkey's years between government decision and implementation about freeing the government-owned land from illegal occupancy allowed strong vested interests to strike roots. The bustees were a den of criminals aside from the innocent poor folks living in them. To say nothing of the organised group of criminals who ran the 'slum government' there, anti-socials ranging from drug dealers to muggers, all used to consider the place as a safe harbour. The drive is likely to serve as a boost for law and order around that area.

There were other reasons for which their evacuation became absolutely necessary. The whole area was already under flood waters and living had become difficult and hazardous for the slum-dwellers even before the government machinery moved in to do their job. So, when the Rajuk and DCC men came with the orders for the motely population to pull up the stakes and move to the place designated for them it was actually a news of relief. The evacuees have been relocated on a government land at Mirpur equipped with the basic utilities. Mere dumping of these people would have made our messy urban reality even worse. There were odd incidents of local resistance but on the whole the removal operation was done fairly professionally. We look forward to more such concerted efforts from our city managers in the problem areas.

Repatriation Made Thorny

Myanmar's self-imposed moratorium since July 1995 on the last leg of Rohingya refugee repatriation from Bangladesh has spawned new complications for the process to be resumed any time soon. Seldom has the tail-end of a task proved more problematic than the main burden of it: with 2,50,877 ethnic Arakanese refugees having returned to Myanmar between 1992-95 we are in a soup now with only 21,500 of them left in our

Nayapara and Kutupalong camps.

The cases pend with the Myanmar authorities through a rigmarole of re-verification of a previously agreed upon list. Whole families are stranded in our camps because of objections raised to entry of any particular member of these with the result that children have become adults and the refugees have had a boom of 30,116 new-borns to-date. Stickler for records as the military regime in Myanmar is proving to be and the hard customer it has all along been on the repatriation question getting the regime to accept the new faces poses a challenge of its own to Bangladesh authorities. The UNHCR which has been a key catalytic player in the whole business of refugee repatriation-cum-rehabilitation seems caught in a state of suspension at the present moment. Understandably, the UN-HCR is opposed to any fragmented repatriation of any family because it is antithetical to the humanitarian norm of voluntary return of refugees to their homeland.

The gridlock has also stiffened from the fact that some vested interests have fomented religious sentiments to stall any further repatriation.

But all concerned must now give the matter a push and get the process over with swiftly in order that further complications are not bred into the unfinished agenda.

Bringing about an Interface

There was a touch of. Grand Vision in everything that came up in commemoration such as the pyramidical transformation of the Louvre. The vision was obviously refracted through the prism of the nation's past which had been in the same way studded with grandiose features.

incidence that I had been in Paris in the fall of 1989. Had I not, I would have never appreciated the full significance of the remarkable time that it was: neither would I have known how the soul of France was so emotionally linked to the cataclysmic events of the bicentennial commemoration which was still in progress in the great city. The whole ambiance, the city's historic landmarks as well as the prevailing mood both inside the country and far beyond its frontier in Eastern Europe where autocracies reminiscent of tion. Louis VI were crumbling constantly reminded me during my brief stay that I was in France

T was little more than a co-

of French Revolution. During my earlier trips to Paris, apart from its history it seldom appeared to me anything other than an exotic place of great tourist attractions frequented by at least twenty million visitors a year and innumerable connoisseurs of arts and cultures. But in the early September of 1989, Paris throbbing with the fervour of celebration well after the festival's peak a month earlier marking the fall of Bastille pointed to the extent of pride and nostalgia with which the French would like to preserve their heritage of revolution even though the revolution itself had a chequered history of

Strangely, the revolution that produced the first Declaration of the Rights of Man had to be swallowed up by counter revolution and within years it practically died down when Napoleon — himself a child of

the revolution — seized power. installed himself as new emperor and the French people were brought back under the . rules of the society's higher echelon. For the revolution, the last nail in the coffin was driven when after the fall of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna restored the effete royal houses in Europe which again succumbed to the forces of reac-

Yet neither the counter revolution nor Napoleon could send the French people back to their old places where they were on the eve of the revolution. It had gained much that it set out to gain. No other force could bring back the serfdom again and even the Bourbon kings. None could take back the land which had been distributed among the peasantry. It was impossible to rob the French people of their passionate memory of those tumultuous days when the underdog cast off his yoke and velled to the world to the best of his energy the creed of the revolution. These were all fait accompli.

Two centuries later in the fall of 1989 the blood of the French was still afire with the fever of its memory. Their vein tingled and a flaming mood took possession of them. The eternal flame of the revolution glowed on - both in the 'city of lights' and in the hearts of the millions of proud inheritors of the legacy. To celebrate the centenary of the great revolution

the Eiffel Tower was erected in 1889 by the French who now built another marvelous landmark — the Grand Arche at La Defense diagonally facing the historic Arche de Troimphe. There was a touch of. Grand Vision in everything that came up in commemoration such as the pyramidical transformation of the Louvre. The vision was obviously refracted through the prism of the nation's past which had been in the same way

studded with grandiose features.

and the designs of the both were blatantly imperialistic.

Eventually the English outmaneuvered the French and won the struggle. Since then the English in India assumed an image of enemy while the French had been enjoying that of enemy's enemy and thus a friend. But in fact both were equally unscrupulous in their scramble for taking possession of the sub-continent.

We escaped a French colonial rule and only learnt of their singsong French language.



of their revolutions, ideals and lofty mottos abruptly ended there and hardly crossed the border of their verdant beautiful country. They very much wanted liberty for themselves but did not demur in taking others'. Almost about the same period when the revolution was brewing up in France their men in India and elsewhere were squabbling with the English to gain control over the orient's vast wealth and subjugate its people. There was intense rivalry between them to grab the

disintegrating Mughal empire

a liberal culture and superior intellect. France produced the stalwarts who broke the old taboos and set new standards in accelerating civilisational progress. But their colonial subjects especially those in Indo-China and Algeria knew to their backbone what the French colonial rule was and how difficult it was to throw off the shackles of French colonial

Even after the Second World War when a rapid decolonisation process had started few were so obstinate like the French in holding back their colonial possession. They had to be virtually hounded out of Indo China only after they could be completely routed in the historic battle of Dienbienphu in 1954. Taking no lessions from the national liberal struggles the world over, they embarked on another costly war in Algeria in which as many as five hundred thousands were killed on both sides. Ironically, the authors of equality and fraternity among men created a separate privileged class in Algeria for European settlers and pushed the sons of the soil to a position of serfdom.

After centuries of rivalry between the English and the French their interests converged with surprising precision even at a much later stage whether it was in their post-First World War Arab politics or the naked aggression of Suez Canal in 1956. It had been the same old face of imperialism under different garbs. When the Arab revolts succeeded, of course aided by the allies during First World War, and the Arab nationalists were awaiting their self rule both English and French promptly arrived in the scene with the League of Nation mandate to impose their control over a vast tract of Arab territory now freed from Turkish subjugation.

The French got mandate over Syria where they quickly set out to divide the country on various lines only to prolong

their authority. They strangulated this small but beautiful Mediterranean country by splitting it into five separate states on religious, ethnic, and parochial lines. But a fiercely nationalistic Syria foiled all French contrivances and put up a heroic struggle against the mandate. However the Syrians could never forget their Lebanon Mountains on the western seacoasts where the French succeeded in creating a new state called Lebanon. The Syrians bitterly remember the dirty tricks the French played with their great ancient nation.

France always prided on being a land of asylum welcoming the haunted soldiers of democracy and liberty. Her magnanimity is however far from reality particularly for the North African Arabs who were imported in planeload in the sixties for labour short industries of France. Now in the name of cultural assimilation they are subjected to some of the harshest immigration rules. French arrogance and selfishness were equally palpable when in defiance of the CTBT France carried out a series of nuclear tests in 1996 in South Pacific polluting its virgin islands with radioactive fallouts.

In the fall of 1989 in a buoyant atmosphere of Paris awash with glittering lights I felt greatly disturbed at the extent of contradictions a great nation could be subjected to. And I sadly observed that the lilting words of liberté, egalité and fraternité would continue to ring hollow unless the paradoxes were removed from the conduct of their promoters.

How Relevant is the Non-Aligned Movement Now?

HIRTY-six year after the When President Joseph Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, President Gamal Abdel Naser of Egypt and Prime Minister Non-Aligned Movement Jawharlal Nehru of India took initiatives to form a movement in the early sixties to stay away from the power blocs in a bi-polar world, the meaning of the non-alignment was different. nations are agog with promises (NAM) took place in Jakarta in

■ (NAM) was founded by the leaders of the third world countries, a sea-change has taken place in the world scenario and to the extent that 1992 as the first summit in the the very reasons for which the era after the cold war, the leadnon-aligned nations came ers grappled with the question together to form the movement of the much-talked about role of have disappeared in a way in the Movement in the changing the present-day world. circumstances. While they had When President Joseph Broz taken into account the major

Tito of Yugoslavia, President Gamal Abdel Naser of Egypt and Prime Minister Jawharlal Nehru of India took initiatives to form a movement in the early sixties to stay away from the power blocs in a bi-polar world, the meaning of the nonalignment was different.

Over the years, the movement had grown stronger as more and more nations attracted to it and the membership has swelled from initial 25 to 107 now. However, there is no denying that the question of relevance of the movement and what exactly should its role be came for introspection when the power bloc games collapsed with the dismantling of one of the super-powers - the Soviet Union and subsequently the WARSAW pact led by it as a logical corollary to the develop-

The other super power — the United States — remains in the

scene of a unipolar world and the change had an immediate impact on the role of the nonalignment and the movement. When the tenth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement

Movement as they felt the Movement remains relevant as before although with a new dimension and priority. And now, when the 12th summit is held in the city of Durban in South Africa, once again the question that will dominate the proceedings of the conference will certainly be the relevance, role and priority of the movement in basic terms while other issues of common

changes which had altered the

global scenario, the leaders had

resolved to carry forward the

political, economic and social interest will obviously figure prominently in the deliberations. What effective role in the NAM can play currently in the global scene, particularly when the cohesion among the members of the group has waned in some forms and the rhetoric about the power bloc rivalry is no more a strong subject to discuss about? How the NAM can keep its members under a bond

of firm commitment as the very

catchy terminology of "non-

alignment" is no longer ex-

pected to arose significance an emotion that it used to generate in the cold war era?

Then, evidently, its role is now of more economic and social matters but the question is that, can the grouping provide the much-needed direction or assistance in these fields when the Movement itself is based on essentially political ideologies? How can the NAM remain relevant and strong as a force when the pattern of international be-

themselves to these issues which are very close to the heart of the NAM since they cannot turn a blind eye to the questions which are so pertinent to the functioning of the

movement. Hopefully, they will find an swers to these questions and spare no efforts to evolve and explore avenues so as to turn the NAM which was so assiduously developed over the last 36 years meaningful and helpful

MATTERS ## E AROUND US Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury

haviour is going through changes for a variety of reasons and where ritualistic dema gogue may appear somewhat meaningless? There are other questions and issues as well about the NAM as it prepares for the 12th summit in Durban within a couple of days.

In effect, the process of the summit has already begun with the senior officials preparing the ground for the foreign ministers who are meeting for the conference of their leaders. Certainly, the leaders will address

for the nations which consti-

The Durban summit of the NAM faces both challenges and promises as, indeed, it has been the case during the 36-year history of this amorphous loose alliance of the largely third world countries. The primary challenge is certainly to turn a ceremonial summit into some thing of a dynamo - a power house of new and newer ideas which the organisation itself will put into effect. The member states which are the third world

and expectations, and it is necessary to give a guideline to these thoughts and imaginations by the NAM so that it can survive meaningfully with its member-nations. Other innocuous forums like

the Commonwealth, Organisa tion of the Islamic Conference (OIC) or even the SAARC in our region have definite policies and priorities with established headquarters and secretariat and these help them make their presence felt. The NAM lacks it for obvious reasons since the movement had stemmed from international political milieu that existed at that time threatening the security of those who were not aligned to power blocs As such, the NAM has a difficult task before it to keep the pot boiling as far as its presence is concerned and indeed, the success of the Movement lies in accomplishing the task of making itself strongly felt among the

members. The movement, therefore, has to convince its members that it has a definite role to play even though such a role is different in nature in the qualitatively different a world marked by the collapse of the East-West rivalry. And fortunately, this challenge is achievable for the NAM since it has a heavy agenda before it and effective

pursuance of these objectives can succeed in keeping the flag of the NAM in changing situa-

The South-South cooperation, the meaningful bargaining of the North-South Dialogue, new strategies to bring about economic and social welfare for the member-nations. harmonisation of their positions as far as possible also on the political matters so as to enable bigger concentration on economic matters and highest priority on poverty alleviation form the core of the new priorities for the NAM along with several other areas.

The crises and problems that afflict the third world countries economically, socially and the like have to be at the top of the

new strategies. The Non-Aligned Movement was born in Bandung and it has come a long way even though the history is not all of a success. The NAM itself has complexities and the task is now more difficult. But a forum for these countries which are on line with the "G-77" is necessary to voice their grievances and problems from time to time tough the power bloc rivalry is non-existent.

The NAM role is now in essence for the welfare and betterment of the vast multitude living in the member-states while it can continue a political role that can also benefit the members keeping in mind their fundamental interests. The NAM can remain relevant only

in this way.

Hate the (corrupt) politicians — Not politics

Sir, I have read with interest the article — Hate the (corrupt) Politicians — not Politics published in The Daily Star issue of 25th instant. I congratulate you and the writer for this courageous piece of work. The article truly reflects the views and sentiment of most of the sensible, educated and patriotic

people of the country. The article should serve as an eye-opener to the present lot of politicians as to how they are rated by the society. The present trend of politics has led the country to the brink of disaster. Education, economy, administration, law and order, and national discipline are in shambles. The situation has come to such a pass that either the people have to abandon the present set of politicians or the politicians have to abandon the present trend of politics if they want to be in business for the good of the nation.

I would suggest you to go one step beyond. The Daily Star may conduct a gallop poll among the cross section of its readers as to how they view the politicians of our country and publish it.

Khaled Abdullah Hassan Dhaka

Problems with Ten Taka note

Sir, Recently, the government has released new Ten-Taka note with the picture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on it. It is a welcome decision. The new note looks very attractive. But unfortunately, we are facing problems while exchanging this note. Some people write comments on it which consequently creates such problems. It also humiliates the motto behind printing the father of the nation's photograph on it.

Recently, Bangladesh Bank has ordered not to temper the note by any means and termed it as an offence. And it is known from newspaper reports that, if anybody denies to receive the tempered Ten-Taka note, he or she could be handed to the po-

Now we are in a dilemma Nobody is willing to take a tempered note, on the other hand. we are afraid about police. Then where do we go?

S M Enayetur Raheem Hon's in Applied Statistics ISRT. DU

Incidents at JU

Sir. What has happened at Jahangirnagar University (JU) is absolutely condemnable. It is matter of shame for us who are studying at university level Three students were violated allegedly by some armed cadres of an influential political party We don't know specifically that influential party. Following the incidents, general students demanded punitive actions against those involve in this act. The acting VC formed a probe body to investigate the

At this point, the government-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) unit of JU called on an indefinite strike in support of their demand for punishment of those culprits. But I don't understand how the authority will work if the university remains closed. They are demanding punishment of the culprits and creating a chaotic situation together, so that the probe body cannot

work properly. We think, nobody will be identified if the investigation is delayed. Isn't it an irony on the part of the BCL? The general people might not think other-

A student of Dhaka University

America strikes back

Sir, "America strikes back." That is the world news headline. There is "compelling evidence" that apparently need not be shared with the "international community". It should be enough that we have been told; no question needs to be asked. But questions to remain.

Can we be certain, the strikes were not the urgently needed diversionary ploy for domestic consumption when the President is deeply plagued with a sex scandal? Or is it genuinely preemptive strike? It does not require extraor-

dinary imagination to conceive

the most likely scenario to follow. Most likely, there will be retaliatory attack by the victims provoking counter attack; the cycle may repeat on and on. While that scenario unites majority public opinion in the US.

will it eliminate "terrorism"? Of course, attacks on US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salam are despicable and stand to be condemned by all including by those who are driven to despair. And the US has retaliated presumably in self defence. But it would be a folly to label US retaliation as a hostile act towards Muslims or Islam. Only Pan Islamists and Pan Arabists will find profit in that propaganda. If Pan Arabism proved a valid or effective force in real politick, the Palestine issue would have been honourably settled without outside

In reality, the US action is more a thinly disguised transgression with bad fallout. It should be resisted in the interest of a just and more humane world order, equitable code of conduct in international affairs, and a modicum of sanctity of international law.

While the world community sits back and ponders, there is no need to further escalate and intimidate; there is very reason to practice moderation and not flaunt arrogant unilateral judgement. As stated by the US itself, the fight against terrorism is going to be a long haul; it is also going to demand courage especially from those who are powerful to remove other tyrannies and injustices on peoples denied dignity and selfdetermination starting for example in the Middle East itself. Having said that, two questions

come to mind of any observer. First, firing cruise missiles and destroying civil or military installations on mere suspicion. Is it an act of supreme selfdefence or is it yet another language of State terror? Does the US not stoop to the rank of the terrorists it wants to wage war against?

Second, who will account for the loss of innocent civilian lives? Or shall we accept it as a

necessary collateral damage? Are civilian lives in Sudan and Afghanistan of so little concern or value and therefore cynically expendable?

If mere "suspicion" can trigger punishment, what is the message of this doctrine to international law? As the only super power and a staunch defender of international law, the US has extraordinary responsibility, the US is expected to behave with abundant restraint commensurate with its pro-

A Concerned World Citizen

fessed moral authority.

SOF(LOOD)

Sir. The floods now raging almost throughout the length and breadth of Bangladesh including the capital's posh diplomatic enclave and are expected to worsen with each sunrise till September 1998, as ap-

pears in the print media. The moot question of donor involvement has of late arisen and also, the 64 million dollar question, raised by those who apprehend corruption involving such massive relief opera tions. Already we find that there is a yawning gap of:

 Approximately 9.5 lakh metric tons shortage of food grains now, vide DS of 20.8.98 quoting Mr Kibria. the Foreign Minister, this quantity is bound to increase once the flood recedes and the true picture is revealed.

2. Logistics: is the 64 million dollars question raised as above, which in other words are the lack of hovercrafts which can travel both on land and water, seacrafts etc. once used by the American Sea Angels during the 1991 cyclone in the Chittagong division? • SOFA could have automati-

cally triggered the floodgates of not only relief and rehabilitations from USA but also from the other western countries through the electronic media. The stranded poor and helpless Salimuddins and Kalimuddins i.e. the daily wage earners now dieting silently and unsung. would have been the beneficia-

I, now appeal to those socalled patriotic intellectuals of both progressive and not-soprogressives to crawl on all fours and beg their foreign masters. Let's hope and pray this deluge will at least open-the eyes of our so-called intellectuals all

bugged up with vainglorious historical past and cannot differentiate between pragmatism and partisan, meaningless collective rhetorics, bereft of real-

Salahuddin Y Jamal Firozshah, Chittagong

"Non-fat fresh milk"

fat fresh milk" published in the DS by Mr Serajul Haq. The points mentioned by Mr Haq are very important and need urgent attention by the milk producers/distributors of our coun-

Sir. I refer to the letter "Non-

As a doctor I have to pre scribe many aged patients to take non-fat fresh milk regularly to maintain their health. Most of these patients complained to me that they are not getting this product in the market. Only imported tinned dry non-fat milk is available at times but the price is very high which is not within the reach of most of the patients. In order to maintain the health of a large section of the aged people it is necessary to provide them with

"non-fat fresh milk". People of our country are more health conscious now-adays. They need proper food and medicine to keep them fit and healthy so that they do not be-

come burden of society. I therefore request the Health, Food and the Commerce Ministries to look into this matter and take appropriate action.

Dr F Karim Road No 2, House No 23 Banani, Dhaka

US foreign policy image

Sir. Many non-US people won't understand the US policy of official missile attack of suspected strongholds in foreign sovereign countries such as Sudan and Afghanistan (DS, Aug

Suppose it were the other way round, that is, attack by a foreign country at suspected bases located in the USA or US territory? How the Americans and the US government would have taken it? Has the US declared war on these two countries? Or is it a diversion of zipper diplomacy? The puzzling

US policy may be clarified to global satisfaction, otherwise the supporters of the great United States of America will continue to decline rapidly.

US foreign policy had been lousy traditionally, and it is steadfastly constant in its chronic bungling (including its attitude towards the Muslim world). As it is, the US powerrattling stance is none too palatable. Might is not right in

The UN has been made impotent, and the Security Council has been Americanised. What is left of any world forum? Are we all going to become hotdogs and burgers for cannibal snack?

A Bangladeshi Citizen Dhaka.

Knowing Syed Ali Ashraf

Sir. Thanks to Fayza Haq for her article on Prof Syed Ali Ashraf published in the DS on He was one of

the most brilliant products of the Department of English of Dhaka University who also proved his worth in Cambridge. It is unfortunate that very few in Bangladesh know about him. It is interesting that he had a vast knowledge and authority over not only English language and literature but also Bengali I had the opportunity to meet this great scholar on several occasions. On one such occasion l was surprised to see his knowledge of Bengali literature when he was speaking about the poems of Amiyo Chakrovorty. I am personally indebted to him for his valuable comments and advice on my translation of the book Sayings of Muhammad (SM) by Allama Abdullah Suhrawardy from English to

Syed Ali Ahraf devoted himself for the development of an education system combining Islamic thoughts with modern concepts. As a man of Sufitrend, he also devoted himself to other religious activities. And deep in his heart he was a non-communal man

Bengali.

Asjadul Kibria Gabtali North Masdair Narayanganj-1400