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It's a welcome strategy

Concerted lobbying for zero-tariff access

HE expiration of multi-fibre agreement (MFA) has already started denuding apparel export from RMG producing LDCs in the quota-free regime. This, in turn, has led to employment loss of up to 30 percent in the sector while more than 40 percent of the garment manufacturing units have shuttered down or their production kept on hold.

In the unsheltered, highly competitive export world, the garment manufacturing countries, among the LDCs, which are deficient in local value addition, critically dependent as they are on imported raw material without having the foundational backward linkages, have to face competition on two fronts: first, from within the fold of developing countries like China and Mexico whose local value addition to their products enable them to price their merchandise competitively vis-a-vis the rest; secondly, the tariffs in the importing countries are discriminatory between export of goods from an LDC and that from a developed country like France.

Set against this backdrop, the leaders of apparel exporters' associations of Bangladesh, Laos, Cambodia, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka have issued the Dhaka Declaration affirming their collective resolve to lobby for the passage of the Tariff Relief Assistance for Developing Economies (Trade) Act, 2005 through the US Congress and Senate. The enactment of the law is to ensure preferential market access to products from the LDCs. Overall, the merit of the legislation lies in enhancing the competitiveness of RMG from LDCs as against those from the larger economies in the region. As a result, new investment will be made in the sector increasing opportunities for employment.

Joint efforts and unified stances on securing the rights for LDCs have much better chances of succeeding than individual country-based approaches made with a cacophony. Commonality of interests and purposes dictate a common platform which is what the Dhaka Declaration has created. Within their Asia-Pacific fold, the LDCs have formed a seven-member committee to adopt a year-long plan for lobbying with the US caucuses for the passage of the bill on preferential treatment.

It may not be quite a cakewalk for the LDCs in the face of a strong US textiles lobby trying to resist the legislation on the ground that it could lead to employment losses in the USA. The LDCs are often advised by US officials not to put all their eggs in the RMG basket but to diversify their exports to take fuller advantage of quota-free regime. Our lobby will have to be forceful enough to win the LDC case in Washington.

Luxury car splurge

Waning signs

VER since the resignation of former state minister for energy over his controversial use of a luxury vehicle, there has been a marked drop in the visibility of such exclusive transports on the secretariat premises. Nevertheless, what is the guarantee that once the controversy generated by the latest incident dies down, the use of such plush vehicles will not be resurrected?

The government functionaries have been using vehicles drawn from three different sources. One is obviously the government transport pool, the other two sources are the various corporations and projects under different ministries. Apparently the pool transports are in short supply. We wonder why. The second thing to note is that while the cars belonging to corporations and projects were detailed for ministers, state ministers and other top functionaries of the government, the fuel costs, salaries of drivers and maintenance costs would be borne by the lending corporations and projects. And, even though each transport is entitled to 300 litres of fuel per month, sometimes the projects end up paying bills for up to 100 litres. The extra cars are often put to private use which strictly is a breach of official conduct, according to rules. Where has the government's expenditure control gone? Indeed, the issue is financial discipline at the heartland of government. Few people were aware of the extent to which government, corporation or project vehicles have been misused. But now we are faced with an expose that can hardly be overlooked.

A breath of fresh air

performance.

rating as our victory against the

Aussies at the Sofia Gardens on

Saturday. Not even the pounding

we got from the Englishmen on

Tuesday can dilute the Cardiff

It was a performance that

verged on the unbelievable,

shocking to only the pessimists

but a welcome surprise to those

who nourished a bright future of

our cricket in their hearts, yet

hesitant to express, given the run



SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN ndc, psc (Retd)

MIDST a gloomy and sultry atmosphere, implacable heat and grim forecast bordering on the didactic, on the future of Bangladeshi politics by ambassador plenipotentiaries of foreign countries here, the only bit of good news was the humbling of the world champions of cricket at the hands of the cricketing minnows -- Bangladesh. It was indeed a breath of fresh air; all Bangladeshis, at home and abroad, must have derived immense pleasure in the victory. It was as if the nation was coagulated as one, a phenomenon that is hardly noticeable in the most fractious political environment that exits today in the country.

And it is the breath of fresh air that motivates me to venture out of the dreary tracks of politics and security, on something so refreshing and mentally invigoof poor performance of our team. What was most noticeable was the professional elan with which the team went about their business, for a change, and what surprised all, according to an Australian commentator was, "the relative ease world cricket's least-equipped batting line-up chased down a total of 250." Against the best-equipped bowling line-up in the world, one night add.

Many considered Bangladesh cricket all but dead, its epitaph was in the process of being written, to be inscribed on the headstones that the critics and detractors of our cricket were

and no body can grudge or blame them, following the victory against Australia, heaping praises on a team they were not willing to bet their money on even the previous day. Victory has many fathers indeed!

busy carving. Not many people at

home (of course with some hon-

ourable exceptions) put much

hope, either in the capability or in

the future of our cricket. It is

surprising to see the change of

mood at home following the win

against Australia, which was in

marked contrast to what was

being said only few days ago,

flaying the team for the dismal

results in the recent England

tour. It was amusing to see our

media going utterly overboard,

And not very long ago, the British press, in their usual imperious manner, suggested that it was waste of time for a cricket team like Bangladesh, that hardly can account for a second string English county side, to be afforded the time and space of an English summer, whose character as well as duration remains as unpredictable as the performance of our cricket team

matches, and suggested that the Australians wrap up the game in a day and take the rest four days off as unscheduled holiday. We did better than what was predicted and drew the admiration of the locals. Regrettably the gen-

The win was no fluke, seeing

the way the Bangladesh cricket-

ers played, even the most

zealous Aussie supporter would

have to concede the fact that his

team was totally outplayed by the

Bangladeshi lads. One cannot

help but recall a most cynical and

insidious comment made by an

Australian cricketer during our

last visit there. He was not pre-

pared to credit the Bangladesh

team with the ability to survive

more than a day in the test

tleman was not alive to see his team being outplayed in all departments of the game on Saturday

We hope that our performance in Cardiff will be enough to shut once and for all the mouths of the critics, some of who were given to speak once too often and out of turn. One often wonders why is it that some the very reputable cricketers were after our mem-

virulent critic of Bangladesh cricket, when asked by a TV commentator for his comments on the Bangladesh-Australia result.

But today we shall not waste our time on the critics and detractors but speak of how vindicated those whose confidence in the team's ability was unwavering, and, in spite of all the adverse situation, persisted with their efforts that resulted in the Cardiff victory. Just stop and ponder for a second! We have the scalp of

bership of the ICC, rather than

helping us graduate from the

level that they were once in, to

the level that they are in now?

Perhaps the person writing to

The Daily Star not long ago had

hit the nail on the head. It is the

fear of the prospect of defeat of

their teams in our hands that may

be compelling them to call for our

suspension. There is much merit

onstrated by the sheepish grin on

the face of one Mr. Warne, a

in his rationale, eminently dem-

three major teams in one-day cricket to boast about. It is time to thank those that

helped us to endure the difficult

period. They must feel as much vindicated as those in Bangladesh who thought that it was a matter of time before we redeemed ourselves from the morass that the initial years of international cricket cast us in. inevitably. We wanted too much and too quickly of our cricketers, some of whom were indeed very

For the cricketers the win has made their future task more difficult because expectations have been raised. But we all must be patient. We are as vet not fully up to the standards of the top rung teams. No doubt, given the time we will come up to their level. But we know that the top teams can be beaten. And this confidence must motivate our players in the future matches to make winning a habit rather than an exception.

Not very long ago we used to lose with all the teams. Recently we are beating some of the teams. It would not be very long, we hope, that we would be beating all the cricketing teams, and more often, though may not be alwavs.

That is what we look forward to.

Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan is Editor, Defense and Strategic Affairs, the Daily Star

Validating the media's use of anonymous sources

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ourselves from the morass that the initial years of international cricket cast us in, inevitably. We

wanted too much and too quickly of our cricketers, some of whom were indeed very raw.

RON CHEPESIUK

was surprised as anyone when Mark Felt, Watergate's Deep Throat, stepped out of he shadows and revealed his identity. My own choice for Deep Throat was Alexander Haig, President Richard Nixon's White House Chief of Staff, but given how well the secret was kept. several other Watergate era figures were also good candidates.

In the days following the revelation, media attention focused on the question of whether Felt was an American hero or traitor. A parade of former disgraced Nixon aides joined the media circus, and in the spirit of Captain Louis Renault, the character in the classic movie, Casablanca, played by Claude Rains, expressed their "shock" that a high ranking member of the Nixon administration (Felt was the number two man at the FBI) would become a snitch and feed

the media information about it. Former Nixon aides like Charles Colson, a hatchet man and dirty trickster for "Tricky Dick" Nixon who now claims to be "born again," told NBC's popular morning "Today Show that "I never thought anybody in such a position of sensitivity in the U.S. Justice administration would breach confidence." Pat Buchanan, another Nixon flunky who has been a perennial presidential candidate, said this of Felt: "There is nothing heroic about breaking the law, sneaking around garages, putting stuff from an investigation out to a

Buchanan reflected a classic example of the rats coming out of the woodwork to attack the messenger. The rats who had been lying low in disgrace until the godfather of all anonymous sources gave them an opportunity to revise history, expressed indignation that Deep Throat went to the media and not through official channels with his information about government misconduct Give history a break! As Wil-

liam Ruckelhaus, a Deputy

is a textbook lesson for all journalists who aspire to dig for the truth. Deep Throat did not give Woodward and Bernstein information. All he did was confirm information that the young journalists uncovered through hard work and great reporting. They pounded the pavement, so to speak, and found information by knocking on doors, hunting down low level bureaucrats, spending hours on the phone

Janet Cooke? (Washington Post) Jack Kelly (USA Today, the U.S.'s largest circulating newspaper), Jason Blair (the New York Times)-- has brought the vital journalistic technique

The recent Newsweek magazine story about the alleged flushing of the Koran down the toilet at GITMO is the latest example of sloppy and lazy investigative reporting. I'm not sure that Newsweek's story about the incident was totally

four American newspapers don't allow their reporters to quote anonymous sources, while other newspapers have policies in place that limit the practice. The newspapers that do allow the use of anonymous sources were mainly located in

large cities or operated bureaus in Washington DC or overseas. I know from my experience teaching journalism workshops in Bangladesh as a Fulbright Scholar in 2003 and talking with local colleagues that the use of

unless the source is willing to let the reporter use his name. As Newsweek should have done, we should verify what one anonymous source tells us by using other sources to corroborate, no matter how tight the deadline is. We can let our editors know the names of the anonymous source and the reason why he or she wants anonymity. The editor, moreover, can let the newspaper's readership know its policy on the use of anonymous sources.

What the public may not know is that newspapers are often forced to use anonymous sources by the policies of not their newspapers but of official channels, which force reporters to use anonymous sources. The Bush administration has been known for holding so called "background" news conferences where attribution is not allowed as it tries to spin the news. An American reporter can go to any U.S. Embassy and try to get a State Department official to go on record in

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source to get the information

Despite the many challenges in using anonymous sources, the Fourth Estate needs them if it is going to report on what goes on in democracy. Imagine what the course of American history might have been if two reporters didn't use an anonymous source to get the information that spoke truth to power and exposed the dirty deeds of a corrupt presidential administration.

INSIDE AMERICA

Attorney General in the Nixon administration. explained to David Broder, a respected American newspaper columnist: "If you see the White House and the head of the FBI (L. Patrick Gray, Deep Throat's boss) interfering

publishing it in the Washington *Post* under their byline. No other newspaper wanted to touch the story until it no longer could be suppressed by Nixon and had become the basis of the very public Watergate hearings.

magazine documented the story was. Newsweek used just one anonymous source to support a controversial and explosive claim. The source told Newsweek that a soon-to-bereleased Pentagon report

inaccurate, but the way the

anonymous sources is a way of professional life for local journalists. They would simply not get much useful information without them. I also know that

an interview. Good luck. giving anonymity to source, whether in Bangladesh or the

into question and evaluating the information they found, bit by tiny bit, before

Rules do not per se guarantee sound and proper use of vehicles in the public sector. Regulations are as good as their application, but if there be any loopholes in them, they must be plugged in the light of the experience with unregulated use of government transports.

(newspaper)." Fortunately, Americans still have some journalists who are able to separate fact from spin. They correctly pointed out that the vociferous utterances of Nixon lackeys like Colson and

with the investigation, what are you going to do? If you go public with the charges, who is going to believe you?'

So Felt is an American hero and the memory of what he did for the country should be honoured as such. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the dogged reporters who broke the story of the American Century, are also heroes. In this age of media Nixon-hating Washington Post mergers, tabloid TV and superficial reporting, it's doubtful whether Woodward and Bernstein would have been given the time or the company support to undertake such an

investigation.

Woodward's and Bernstein's use of an anonymous source has been vindicated by an investigation that, in essence, protected the U.S. Constitution. It's chilling to think what the Nixon administration might have tried if he had gotten away with covering up the break in of the Democratic headquarters at

the Watergate office building. Yet, in the three decades since the Watergate scandal, the use of the anonymous source in journalism has not faired so well. Indeed, sloppy and often downright dishonest reporting, as exemplified through the work of now dis-

But how they got the Big Story

would support his contention that guards at Guantanamo had flushed a copy of the Koran down the toilet. But then the source backtracked, telling Newsweek that he was no longer sure he had read about the alleged incident in the still tobe-released report. Relving on a single source meant the end of the investigation and the beginning of embarrassment for Newsweek.

The fact is many American newspapers never permit the use of anonymous sources. Early this month (June), a survey conducted by the Associcredited iournalists, such as ated Press revealed that one in

U.S., is often justified, given that some sources put themselves in danger when they give reporters information.

might have been if two report-Still I think we iournalists can ers didn't use an anonymous do much more to protect the integrity of the use of anonythat spoke truth to power and mous sources. For instance, we exposed the dirty deeds of a can work harder to get the corrupt presidential administrasource to go on the record. We can question whether the quality of the information is compel-

ling enough to justify the use of

anonymous sources. We can

also scrutinise the motives of

sources who desire anonymity

to make sure we are not being

manipulated. We should not

use information that attacks or

disparages another individual

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

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TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Politics is a funny game!

The recent developments in our country's politics are really funny. It is very clear now that a politician can do anything for himself. At present the definition of politics is "Do only for yourself and give up the wife if necessary". General Ershad is a 'role model' of modern politics! He has amply proved the changed definition of politics! Sadat Shahriar Dept. of EEE, RUET

Railway authority: Please punish the culprits

On June 5,2005 3.50 PM the computer monitor display at the ticket counter at Kamlapur railway station was showing "No Seats" on Dhaka-Chittagong bound "SUBARNA EXPRESS" which was scheduled to leave for Chittagong at 4.30PM that day. I was waiting in front of the counter hoping to find someone who would return his tickets due to cancellation of journey. Luckily, I got

was standing at the counter, I reckoned that more than 50 people, looking for tickets, had to go back without it.

counter that all tickets had been However, inside the train, I sold. found one 60 seats compartment "DHA"(bogie no. 5010) entirely empty. The attendant informed me that probably it was a mistake due to a computer software glitch. I was also told that everyday, there were some seats in each compartment that remained empty, though the monitor display showed "No

Seats". Now, if each seat cost 165Tk. the total loss adds up to Tk. 9900 per day! I ask, who will take the responsibility for this national loss? Is the railway authority and related ministry, concerned about this? Does the authority want to show "SUBARNA EXPRESS" as a losing venture to clear the way for reprivatisation of the train? Raihan

Computer Engineering

Department, CUET, Chittagong

one at the eleventh hour. While I Of coaching centres The number of coaching centres in our country has increased rapidly like 'mushroom' Most of the coaching centres try to influence the I was informed from the ticket

students claiming to be the best. The HSC exam will be over very soon. At this times these coaching centres try to attract the students through various leaflets. And the students, influenced by these, get admission spending a large sum of money. I am sure many of them later regret going there. This is because the coaching centres are no longer dependable. Everybody should be aware of this. Syed Ashek Ahmed

Dept. of EEE. RUET

Monkey business and cell phone operators

The cell phone operators in Bangladesh want everything -no licensing fees, high call rate, poor service and lower contribution to the national treasury and no accountability. It's a dream scenario for any business in any country.

The Finance Minister is right in

saving that the overall cost of owning a cell phone should remain the same as overall tax per user remains the same. The new tax burden will fall fully on the users, not on the phone companies, and even then the cell phone operators are throwing their hands in the air as if all hell has broken loose. He has statistics to back that too. That is not that case. The question of affordability lies with the cell phone operators. The overall cost of cell phone

operation in Bangladesh should be lower than other countries. Most of the developed nations and South Asian countries auction off the cell phone licenses to the highest bidders. Even then their call rates are lower and service quality is higher than those available in Bangladesh. Since there is no license fee in Bangladesh, which by the way should be imposed, start-up cost for these operators are significantly lower than rest of the world Then million-dollar question is why our call rates are higher than

in India and Pakistan? Sherif Saeed Lawrenceville. NJ

Bangla movies

Bangla cinemas are hitting all time low. Western culture has seeped into our movie industry so much so that the movies have turned into mere pornography. Some days ago, while watching a movie that had an eminent Bangladeshi actress as its heroine, I was awestruck by some of the scenes. The language in some songs was so vulgar and the dresses were so exposing and provocative that it would be difficult for anyone with good taste to watch it. How can such an eminent artist feature in such obnoxious scenes? Hard to imagine our actors being part of campaign against vulgar films! A worried teenager On e-mail

Car for ministers

It is not new and unusual for our lawmakers to cash in on the situation. Frankly speaking, our lawmakers are not accountable and liable to us. Before the general election they spend a lot of black money and after the victory their main target is to get the money back in any way. But as representatives of the people mandated to power they should refrain from such acts. What they are doing now and what their predecessors did in the past with the public is in no way acceptable. But we are powerless, as we have elected them for running this country and enact laws for us. After going to power they are misusing it and doing things for their personal welfare. People should be cautious and vigilant and demand proper investigation of and exemplary punishment to the culprits.

Bazlur Rahman On e-mail

On Doha round

I feel that globalisation is making the developing countries poorer. The rich countries in the one hand are taking the advantage, without sacrificing for the developed or

the country: and the thing which under-developed countries and the poorer are not getting any confounds me is that this party advantage, on the other hand. In which conducted one party elecsuch a situation. Bangladesh tion while in power, and the vote should find other partners for business co-operation, such as the ASEAN countries. We should build up stronger relations with the countries like China, Japan etc. Only dependence on the western countries will not benefit us

in the long run. Engr. Md. Ariful Islam Ramdebpur, Baghil, Tangail

Lack of noble intentions

It is frequently heard from almost all the political parties that every leader and every party who is running for political office should gain the job through proper and acceptable way, but they are not doing anything to make this way smooth, despite having the opportunity.

The government which is in power now is very indifferent to any kind of reformation in this respect, but it claims to be the innovator of multiparty politics in

rigging in Dhaka 10 by- election, is not unknown to any conscious citizen. Now lets talk about the other major party. It is now foaming in its mouth chanting about the reformations in the Caretaker government and the election commission. The Caretaker government claim by the Awami League deserves to be considered, given the link of the likely

Chief of the next Caretaker government, with the BNP. But what did the Awami League do while in power to empower the Election Commission to hold free and fair elections?

Both the parties remain quite oblivious of the rectification of the institutions when they are in power. Areader

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