

International Concern for Rohingyas

With one definite date for the start of the repatriation of the Rohingyas Muslims lapsed and yet another schedule eluding all along, the issue seems to have been left uncared. But not quite. The urgency for the Bangladesh side is indeed very great. For Myanmar, however, the issue appears to be no more pressing. The Yangon military junta have been taking advantage of the quiet diplomacy Bangladesh has adopted to come to a solution to the problem.

Against such a background, the five-day visit by Bernard de Reidmatten, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) should be considered a move towards the right direction. The fact that recent developments in the refugee camps have not always been very happy ought to have prompted the visit by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR. He has, however, expressed his satisfaction over the management of the camps by the Bangladesh government. An appreciation such as this certainly has its merits so far as the case for Bangladesh is concerned.

What, however, counts most of all is Reidmatten's suggestion that the involvement of the UNHCR in the process of Rohingyas' rehabilitation could be really helpful. Myanmar government's refusal to accept the UN body overseeing the repatriation process was rightly seen with deep suspicion. On all counts, it has now become clear that the bilateral agreement reached between Bangladesh and Myanmar has failed to deliver the expected results. It is time that the international community exerted the kind of pressure necessary for the military government in Yangon to create the right environment for smooth return of the Rohingyas.

Dubbed as a 'fact-finding mission', Reidmatten's on-the-spot visit should provide with enough insight into the influx of the Rohingyas into Bangladesh for him to take up the issue with the relevant international fora. A Swedish citizen, he may find, at the same time, enough reason to brief the European nations of the real situation. Sure enough, the firing by the police on the refugees was the worst to happen but the pressure on the camp sites, and indeed the whole of Bangladesh soil, has been overmuch — socially, economically and environmentally. Considering the means of Bangladesh to cope with this extra burden, an early solution to the problem is most desirable. Reidmatten should be the right man to press for such an expedient settlement of the issue.

In this connection, the recent inclusion of Myanmar in the fold of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) should shed light on the criterion for membership of the largest international grouping after the UN. The host country along with other nations supporting its inclusion have argued that once in the fold, they can better persuade the government of Yangon to behave either in its relation to its people, including the opposition, or to its neighbours. As chairman of the NAM, Indonesia should now prove that it has been working in that direction through putting pressure on the junta in Yangon. But to our mind, an easy passage into the NAM has not given much cause for the Yangon government to go for any soul-searching and thus mend its behaviour.

At the same time, we feel that the members of the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) can — and indeed ought to — play a vital role through creating pressure on the military regime in forcing it to go on its words, if not more. Trade interests, including big arms deal specially by one of its big neighbours, have not been helping the cause. Such practices have to be avoided if the regime is made to behave. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the international community's concern has been overplayed at times. Compared to the plight of the Rohingyas, the Bosnian Muslims are surely faring much worse. But this does not mean that the Rohingyas have to be ignored in a way they are being done. Maintenance of such double standards helps erode the respectability of international bodies.

TV for Rajshahi

First 15 minutes, then 20, and then a half day. Those have been the durations of three hartals held in rapid successions in Rajshahi in recent weeks. Judging by the increasing length of the hartals, it would seem the people in the country's third largest city have been getting pretty impatient with the authorities' indifference to their demands. Their demand is not, on the face of it, an unjustified one. They would like a television station to be established in the Rajshahi division.

Fair enough? Perhaps, but one can well wonder if the people of Rajshahi know what they are letting themselves in for. This must be one of those rare occasions when people anywhere have actually demanded the right to be tortured by BTV programmes. A television station for Rajshahi would not mean separate programmes or an independent editorial or programming policy for that station, but rather a relay of Bangladesh Television menu served up from Rampura, Dhaka. If the people of Rajshahi have been having trouble in receiving BTV programmes in their areas, then they probably are not aware of the pain and frustration they have been spared so far. Perhaps it is because of this that they are so eager to 'enjoy' what others have suffered for so long.

Having said that, we would still not like to see Rajshahi denied, even out of sheer mercy, what it considers to be its right. If the people want BTV, it is because BTV is the only thing available for the average household without the means to buy into the satellite television network, and therefore that is the only thing they can and will want. The government has indeed promised to set up a station at Natore, not far from the divisional headquarters, but the people of Rajshahi evidently feel that a conspiracy is being hatched to have the station shifted to some place else. Just why the people of Rajshahi feel there is such a conspiracy is not clear. But what is clear is that they would like to see the government keep its word, and keep it fast. The decision to set up a TV station at Natore was taken early in January during a cabinet meeting at the Uttara Ganobhaban in the same north-western town. Evidently, there has not been any move in the following seven months to implement that decision, thus raising popular anxiety about missing out. The justice of Rajshahi's demand is undeniable, and the government has a duty to live up to its word.

UN Security Council and Iraq

Can a Zero Level Nuclear Capability be Ensured?

SOME time ago there was a cartoon in an international newspaper on President Saddam Hussein. In the cartoon top part of Saddam's head was cut and lifted up like the lid of a kettle and the UN inspectors were desperately peeping into his head for something — apparently something on nuclear bomb. This cartoon amply describes what the UN Security Council was up to and what it ultimately finds — probably nothing.

Saddam's madness and partly Kuwait's tactless behaviour with Saddam on more aid/debt and Rumetia oil field led to Iraq's aggression on Kuwait. This was, however, successfully overturned by allied military action — Operation Desert Storm — led by the US. The initial objective was to free Kuwait but as it always happens at the end of every war the victors — the allied forces — imposed almost impossible ceasefire conditions on Iraq, though some of them had nothing to do with aggression of Kuwait.

The most important post-war objective of allied power was to destroy Iraq's military power and nuclear capabilities, if any. There were conflicting reports about Iraq's nuclear capabilities. Some reports said Iraq was 15-20 years away from testing nuclear bomb while others assumed it to be only couple of months away. However, UN Security Council ceasefire resolution 687 stipulated destruction of all nuclear capabilities of Iraq.

The UN inspectors made

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several visits to Iraq and physically destroyed some scud missiles and missiles launchers. In their effort to visit suspected nuclear sites, UN inspectors faced several "stand offs". The latest "stand off" and UN inspectors' determination to visit Government Ministry Buildings in Baghdad created almost a warlike situation. Some of the allied powers under US leadership were about to bomb the suspected places in Iraq. This was later avoided. Apparently the allied power decided not to go for any confrontation with Baghdad at a time when they were probably not logistically prepared for this. May be the US election and Bush's own position in the election campaign had something to do with it.

The latest UN inspection team reportedly visited several suspected places in Iraq. The leader of 14th UN inspection team Maurizio Ziffero, on completion of the inspection said Iraqi nuclear programme was reduced harmless by allied bombing during Gulf War and subsequent actions by the UN inspection teams. He emphatically said, "It (nuclear programme) stands at Zero now." His categorical statements put him at odds with his colleague, David Kay, the leader of an earlier team, who said Mr. Ziffero's statement was imprudent — all the suspected sites were not fully investigated and there were indications that

program, there was nothing wrong if it is seen in the context of Israel's nuclear capabilities. It is a well-known fact that Israel has nuclear bombs. Other day Israel reportedly threatened Iraq with Neutron bomb attack if Iraq launched scud missiles on Israel.

No body supports Saddam's madness but any rudimentary efforts on alleged nuclear bomb making should also be judged in the light of a country's right to have 'minimum deterrent' — an argument used by some allied nuclear powers to uphold their decisions not to reduce their nuclear arsenals when the superpowers made some cuts in their nuclear

Baghdad regime continued its efforts to build underground nuclear reactors. The world gets baffled by such opposing statements from responsible experts of the world body. One suspects political motives in the entire exercise even at experts' level. Let the UN Security Council look at this seriously and come out with its own decision. It involves the fate of not Saddam but of a nation.

Even if Iraq had some rudimentary form of nuclear

chemical weapons because of the fear of allied powers' nuclear retaliation. This fear might even make conventional forces redundant.

As it appears Iraq probably had marginal nuclear research programme. But, nonetheless, the nation faced severe sovereignty damage. Before proceeding on to the next step on Iraqi nuclear issue the UN Security Council may like to reassess the purpose and the effectiveness of the entire exercise.

If one goes by the report of the latest UN inspection team, Iraq's nuclear capabilities now stand at "zero", but can UN Security Council ensure "zero" level nuclear capability of Iraq even at a distant future and even under someone other than President Saddam Hussein? UN can destroy buildings, papers and present equipments, but can it destroy the brains of the nuclear experts of Iraq? Can it stop some nuclear powers supplying technologies and equipments to Iraq and for that matter to other nuclear hungry nations? A time may come and it does not seem to be far away when hawks would go around with nuclear technologies. Many ill-paid nuclear brains of the former Soviet Union are in the region.

Another action by the Security Council on "no-fly" Zone and policing of the Iraqi air below 32nd parallel by some

allied powers are fraught with grave danger. Majority of the Iraqi population is Shiite. Is Saddam persecuting all Shiites? No body supports persecution of anyone or any group of people and only law should take its own course to punish wrong-doers. However, Security Council should seriously investigate why Saddam is not acting against all Shiites but only against those Shiites and some army deserters in the marshy land neighbouring Iran. It is one thing to try to oust Saddam but quite a different thing to curb-out a region of a sovereign country on some pretext probably with the aim of installing some form of rebel administration in the southern marshy land. The allied powers now having one-track mind of ousting Saddam, and the countries in the region must seriously assess the political and strategic outcome of this.

Allied powers may replace Saddam but there are many Saddams in Iraq and around. Dictators aside, Saddams and Gaddafis are not born as such; international politics and region's political animosities produce them. Only sensible solution of regional problems and international political atmosphere devoid of hatred, domination, subjugation, hegemony, double standard etc. can stop rise of Saddams and Gaddafis. Let the UN — the World Body — be run by the sovereign members of the world for which immediate restructuring is needed with expanded Security Council with no veto powers.

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

Muslehuddin Ahmad

sovereign country's Nuclear Programme that is probably still on paper? The argument of nuclear weapons in wrong hands are no longer valid after the collapse of Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, it is a world of double standard. The nuclear powers ever busy in piling up their own nuclear weapons and also augmenting the destructive powers of nuclear arsenals are preaching 'nuclear non-proliferation'. It is not going to work. The world will never be safe with nuclear weapons in some hands. Either none or all should have them — the very fear of nuclear retaliation may be the real deterrent. As it seems Iraq did not use

System-loss Reduction is a Must for Stable Electric Supply

by Saimum Saleh

SYSTEM-LOSS, the most undesirable and most discussed about loss in the energy sector of Bangladesh may have various reasons. However, some are discussed here towards probable solution of the problem. A remedy to present system-loss problem should be the common goal for both the Electricity Authority and the electricity consumers, not accusing each other for the loss.

System losses are of two kinds: 1) Technical loss and 2) Non-technical loss. The technical losses may again be of different kinds, out of which two are important: 1) Line losses and 2) Losses due to faulty metering. The Non-technical losses are also of different kinds, out of which two are important: 1) Theft of electricity and 2) Wrong information about meter reading.

Line Losses

Line losses are mainly transmission, transformation and distribution system losses. These losses may be minimised by at least periodical checking, maintaining highest possible power factor and lowest possible voltage loss in the whole system.

Outdoor metering (attached to pole/tower) for all types of consumers (including employees of electricity department) will also decrease distribution loss to some extent, because the total length of service drops for different types of consumers is a considerable amount in comparison with the rest of distribution line length. Besides, the cost, security and maintenance of the service drops (33KV, 11KV and 0.4KV) may be borne by the consumers, because distribution line is the last common system for all and each service drop is in the individual interest of the consumer concerned. However, metering at the end of service drop (at open space) just at the entrance of the premises may also be considered for some consumers, if required.

Faulty Metering

Faulty metering is grossly assumed as the main reason of difference between the recorded and the actual energy

flow through a metering point. Electrical or mechanical fault in the meter itself and associated circuit elements, wrong calculation of energy by the meter reader, wrong wiring of meter and associated circuits, wrong gear ratio of the meter etc cause faulty metering.

Installation of properly calibrated meter, proper CTs and PTs (where applicable), correct wiring, periodical check-up of meter accuracy, energy recording by trained personnel, etc. are to be done for minimising the possibility of faulty metering.

Manpower demand for this purpose may be met partially by temporary appointment of university/college students during academic vacations and holidays giving them proper training and some remuneration.

Theft/Pilferage of Electricity

The major reason of system-loss in our country is believed to be the theft of electricity. Mainly theft occurs in two ways — without metering and in the metering system.

Theft without metering occurs when illegal connection is established to take electrical energy from the distribution lines, without energy meter. Proper checking of the distribution lines, imposing high rate of fine and on the spot police action may discourage this unfair means. Theft in the metering system may happen in different ways: Theft inside and outside meter cover and besides these two, direct connection by-passing the meter is also possible in the present system of consumer metering. In the present system of indoor metering, ample scopes are there to take illegal connections (from any point between meter and service drop) by a legal consumer or by his neighbours to avail of free electricity.

For preventing theft in the metering system, the following measures may be taken: 1) Outdoor type metering (at the starting point or the ending point of service drop) may be introduced. This includes: a) the meter, itself housed in a meter box (raintight and departmentally sealed); b) A circuit

breaker of allowable current rating, which can be operated from outside the metering box (just by opening a padlock) by the consumer, such that, any increase in load above the sanctioned limit puts off the breaker creating inconvenience to the consumer. Meter must not be replaced/opened without presence of a responsible personnel of the department. 2) The potential link should be inside the meter cover, not in the terminal box. Anti-reverse/forward counting register system should be present in all types of consumer meters. 3) The meter wiring must be made correct. 4) Periodical checking for meter correctness and anti-theft measures must be maintained by properly trained and responsible personnel. To need more manpower requirement, university/college students may be engaged after required training in exchange of some remuneration during their vacations. (Honest and dedicated service is expected from a student against a small amount of remuneration). However, teams consisting those students may be led by a trained and responsible person from the department.

Wrong Meter Reading

Sometimes intentional unfair means, sometimes lack of training of meter reading personnel and, sometimes, wrong multiplying factor may give rise to wrong meter reading/energy recording, for which the following measures may be taken: 1) Sudden visits by responsible officers at metering points. 2) Signature by both the meter reader and the consumer on meter reading in the register with date. 3) Proper training of meter reading personnel. 4) Introduction of punishment for wrong report about energy recording. 5) Use of computer for storage of energy recording/information in addition to ledger recording for both urban and rural areas/zones.

Some Proposals

For improving the present system loss situation, some curatives as proposed below may be given a thought:

- 1) Public motivation against system loss and its bad impact on the total economy of the country (necessary advices to the people through TV, Radio and newspaper).
- 2) Proper and adequate protection by law enforcing agencies to the departmental teams working against system-loss.
- 3) Inclusion of young, energetic and fearless student community in fighting system-loss. (Resistance to unfair means by both influential consumers and departmental criminals will be easy).
- 4) Postponement of all new supply connection and new system-loss areas, until the ills are cured.
- 5) Rejection of all proposed ADP programmes in high system-loss areas.
- 6) Raising secret vigilance teams and co-ordination of Anti-corruption Department with them.
- 7) Rechecking of self-billing-system metering by departmental personnel and introduction of high rate fine for delayed payment of monthwise bills. If this is not possible, self-billing-system must be withdrawn.
- 8) Advising political and government leaders not to promise any electrical extension for any high system-loss area during their public meetings without discussing with electricity department.
- 9) Maintaining step by step jurisdictional metering to countercheck areawise system-loss for calculation of difference between the energy recorded in all the meters of that area and actual energy consumed by that area. Special squad may be engaged to find out the reasons for any high difference and take remedial measures.
- 10) After every periodical check, rain protected paper sealing must be used at the metering points while the lead/padlock seal should be also checked.
- 11) On site meter test equipment must be provided with each meter inspection team.
- 12) Motivation of local influential people to co-operate with the Electricity authority (not to create problem) towards proper metering, collection of bills etc.

13) Good remuneration/awards should be announced openly and be given secretly to those who will co-operate/guide the anti-theft/anti-unfair means/anti-bribe operations.

14) The higher authority of the Electricity department must appreciate anti system-loss efforts and successes of junior officers and staff in deed (not in words) and must not refrain them from their duties/efforts under any undue pressure from the defaulter consumers.

15) Law should be enforced on workers' union of Electricity departments to refrain them from advocating on behalf of defaulter staff and officers.

16) Proper energy recording and payment of electricity billing (according to departmental laws) must be strictly maintained for the employees of electricity departments.

17) No connection should be given to any consumer without any meter. During absence of meter due to theft, the bill must be made according to maximum connected load or circuit-breaker rating (of that consumer), whichever is higher. This will increase carelessness of the consumer against meter theft.

18) Proper metering and strict billing system should be maintained for all Govt, semi-Govt, autonomous offices and their allied industries and installations. Government should ensure their co-operation with the Electricity department in this regard.

More Saving Less Load-shedding

For saving electricity and less load-shedding requirement thereof, the following steps may be considered:

- 1) Imposing very high rate tariff for the peak load hours (by using two-part tariff meter for all consumers) and public motivation in this regard by TV, Radio and newspapers etc.
- 2) Banning all kinds of commercial signboard illumination and neon signs during peak hours.

Strangely enough, when the drivers come to this point, they turn in to Ben Hux and Massalas. They speed like crazy mad and the stamped can hardly be tolerated.

While one is glad that there are no oppressive traffic jams, one would like the area to be properly patrolled to ensure safety.

G D H
Banani, Dhaka

Containing corruption

Sir, A saying goes, "It is easier to check the first desire, than to satisfy those follow it." It is true that a man who may now find himself satisfied with whatever he has, may soon fall prey to the greed of having more. This may be owing to various reasons the prime one might be his neighbour.

In fact it is a thing of vital importance that when an individual is capable of checking his first desire of having

3) Imposing special tax for use of electric heaters and air coolers/conditioners, payable with monthly electricity bills.

4) Power factor correcting capacitor banks may compulsorily be installed by industry owners, at their expense, according to the load pattern.

5) Management body of low voltage distribution system may be ordered not to construct long extension line to connect a few consumers where selling of electricity is not economic in comparison to cost of construction and power distribution. (Sometimes influential persons compel Electricity department to construct long distribution line to connect uneconomic load for their personal benefit). Specially in rural areas, this sort of extension creates opportunities of electricity pilferage and line loss becomes high.

6) General expansion of power system network should be minimised or stopped when total electricity demand of the country remains more than its total generation.

7) Use of emergency power supply/emergency lighting equipment may be encouraged by decreasing tax rates on them (load-shedding will not be unbearable to the consumers using those equipment even if, unfortunately, it occurred).

8) Unfortunately, switches of lights and fans of Govt, semi-Govt and autonomous offices are very often seen to be turned on despite absence of any person using those things. This is a direct misuse of electricity as well as public money. This must be stopped by taking proper measures.

CONCLUSION: System loss has become a national problem in the Electricity sector, which is exerting threat to our future national economy. Causes of system loss must have to be eliminated for our future existence by endless effort, moral upgradation and, indeed, love for the country. Electricity department and the consumers must co-operate each other to solve this problem for a better and stable supply of electricity through the future.

The writer is an electrical engineer

To the Editor...

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.

Independent Audit Department

Sir, Bangladesh Audit Department is undoubtedly the most sacred trust of the government for safeguarding the financial interest of the people. Hence, its importance and impact on the national economy cannot be exaggerated.

Audit may be defined as an intelligent and objective scrutiny of books of accounts kept by government, semi-Govt, autonomous offices and commercial enterprises with a view to ascertaining correct position of revenues and expenditures. The functions of

audit may be seen as the most important role in financial control of the government.

Bangladesh is a very poor country. Its scanty resources should be properly utilised within the budgetary limit fixed by the government so that the development plans may be implemented as early as possible.

For this reason, a powerful and independent Audit Department is necessary. The purpose of audit is to see whether the expenditure incurred is authorised by the competent authority as per budget provision; whether the expenditure is genuine and

prima facie. It is also the function of audit to see the executive orders for the sanction of expenditures as incurred in the light of the financial rules and regulations in accordance with the provisions of GFR 10.

If independent and intelligent audit is conducted by Audit parties guided by the principle of honesty, then the Departments having unrestricted powers for expenditure shall be very cautious in respect of unnecessary expenditure. Because, they will have to show the records and books of accounts to the Audit party. As such there shall be a check and balance for safe-guarding the financial interest of the country. It will produce the much needed economic prosperity for the people. Because the money from the public exchequer shall be utilised for the productive and genuine purposes.

As regards revenue audit, the Audit Deptt. shall see whether the revenue is collected as per Govt. policy and

the same is brought to Govt. account. The revenue realised shall at once be deposited into the govt. treasury or Bangladesh Bank to facilitate the procedure and ensure safeguard thereof.

If the above conditions are fulfilled, then Audit Department as an independent organisation will be able to control the public finance for the greater national interest.

Hossain Shahid
Dhaka

Road dividers

Sir, There is no road dividers in the road leading from Shahbagh to the High Court. As a consequence the buses, vans, minibuses, rickshaws, baby-taxis, and pushcarts create a quixotic conglomeration of traffic that our police force can hardly handle.

There are repeated fears of collision and actual accidents often take place which affect, obviously, all classes of people in Dhaka.

While one is glad that there are no oppressive traffic jams, one would like the area to be properly patrolled to ensure safety.

G D H
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In fact it is a thing of vital importance that when an individual is capable of checking his first desire of having

something, he invariably saves himself from the burden of shouldering the additional burdens which were to follow in the long run.

And an increase in the sense of want, is likely to expand the range of corruption. Because when a want is felt, a urge is invariably created to fulfil it by whatever means, fair or foul, which is sure to breed corruption.

To-day, when we look around, we find to our utter surprise and dismay a sense of competition in those, who rather belong to lower income group, to have costly amenities of life obviously not within their reach by honest means.

It is therefore, very much desirable that an individual should think in terms of remaining content and satisfied with whatever he has, or he can expect to have within his financial capability, so that the range of corruption may be contained.

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