

A Crisis for OPEC

In its 32-year history, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has faced many crises...

There are signs that it may be different this time. The new crisis triggered off by the threat of Ecuador to withdraw from the organisation...

The main problem is that while the oil prices remain unpredictable and are often in decline, the restraint on the quantity of petroleum that a member can produce is dictated by OPEC...

The restraint put on output of members in the hope that this is the only way to stabilise the price, is often resented and sometimes violated by more powerful members...

A Latin American country, Ecuador sees no justification in being part of this confusion or for being involved in political quarrels among Arab states...

One cannot suggest that OPEC is on its deathbed. Here, one must admit that the establishment of OPEC in 1970 was designed to put a halt to the unbridled consumption of oil by energy-scarce industrialised countries...

It is hard to predict the consequences of a decline or collapse of OPEC. However unpopular the cartel may be with some countries, the organisation has brought some discipline to the market...

No Short-cut

In what must have been a record, the Dinajpur Medical College (DMC) stopped holding classes just 20 days after beginning life as an institution of higher, specialised learning...

By all accounts, the college had been started up even before it had acquired the minimum infrastructure needed for such a highly specialised institution...

Unfortunately, what has happened in Dinajpur, leaves no guarantee that the same practice would not be repeated elsewhere — setting up universities when resources allocated probably could not operate a decent higher secondary college etc.

Proper infrastructure and related facilities are vital for the functioning of any educational institution, but they are crucial for specialised schools like a medical college. In addition, medical students see further studies abroad as necessary for advancement in the field of medicine...

IN April 1970, exactly one year before the final struggle for liberation of Bangladesh, I happened to be in Tokyo, sitting at a Ginza cafe with two other Bengali diplomats posted there...

Both countries, Japan and Bangladesh are small and overpopulated but the great advantage that we both possess is that people are so homogeneous...

The similarities do not end there; Japan had been strongly influenced by its giant neighbour China while our location vis-a-vis India puts us in a similar situation...

According to press reports, they are seeking the help of China and Sri Lanka in a bid to revive their sinking fortunes...

Top police sources say an attempt is being made to establish an underground route to China along the river Godavari and through Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar states and Nepal...

Mr KS Rathod, Director-General of Madhya Pradesh Police, laments the poor public cooperation to check Naxalite activities in the state...

The Naxalite uprising — the first violent mass movement in post-independence India — was started in Naxalbari, a cluster of villages in West Bengal. Hence, the name Naxalites...

No Short-cut

THE Philippine capital city has long been dubbed the 'Wild, Wild East' because of Filipinos' penchant for guns. But these days, Manila is fast earning the reputation of being Asia's 'Kidnap Capital'...

In the past few months, metro dailies, here have run screaming headline stories about a string of kidnapping cases in which almost all of the victims were wealthy Chinese Filipinos...

Huge ransoms have been paid. The family of 15-year-old Mark Anthony Li, for instance, reportedly bought back his freedom for US\$1 million two days after he was abducted...

But the crime is becoming rampant even outside Manila. Said President Fidel Ramos, after a spate of kidnappings was also reported in the southern island of Mindanao: 'This is too much.'

Similar yet so Different

flood; and they suffer from earthquake instead. On the positive side, Japanese are extremely hard-working, industrious people...

Decisive Difference After two decades, sitting at the same cafe at Ginza, the question that repeatedly came to my mind was simply two words; what happened? We are similar yet so different...

Epitomising how little of lasting value it achieved is the plight of the Naxalbari region itself which, in terms of development or land reforms, is no different from any of the surrounding areas in Darjeeling district except, perhaps, for the busts of Lenin and Stalin scattered around the place...

Landowners still rule the roost. It came as no surprise that the 25th anniversary of the movement went almost unnoticed in Naxalbari. Barely a hundred people took part in the procession, organised by now much-splintered revolutionary groups...

Indeed, the Naxalite movement has degenerated. In Bihar State's Palamou district, where they were once dreading in the mid-Eighties, they have now resorted to the smuggling of forest produce, loot and extortion. Official statistics attribute 70 per cent of road holdups, dacoities, snatching of arms, attacks on police outposts and other crimes to Naxalites in this drought-prone district...

The Naxalites' influence is on the wane at the grassroots. This follows disenchantment in the rank and file with the 'vested interests' of village leaders, intercaste feuds and large-scale police action...

No Short-cut

Many more go unreported. Families of kidnap victims often avoid the police and just pay up, but not only because they fear for their loved one. These days, the feeling is the police may be the bad guy, too...

Executive Michael Barnes was abducted by what the military said was a breakaway faction of the communist New People's Army (NPA). But when he was rescued weeks later, 14 of the alleged kidnapers were killed, fuelling suspicions of a rub-out to cover up the involvement of some military officers...

The current rash of kidnappings stand out for their business-like efficiency. A victim is selected, picked up and a ransom demand — often for five million pesos (US\$200,000) — quickly delivered. A compromise is struck, say, US\$120,000 — and the victim is released within a few days...

In case a victim's family denies having that much cash, the kidnapers usually recite the family's bank account numbers, when they made their last deposit and current total balance. For Chinese Filipinos, their current travails is the dark side of the prosperity they have enjoyed for the past 30 years...

Industrial power beating the American and European rivals in the technology-intensive industries such as automobile, electronics and a wide variety of consumer durables. It was a later day legend. But the strategic planning must have gone ahead within the inner sanctuary of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) in co-operation with the leaders of the industries, all in the private sector...

WINDOW ON ASIA Shahan Latif

There will be one single uniform answer — hard work. We are homogeneous but not united. Japanese are homogeneous like us but they are also unanimous in their vision as Japanese. They have no controversy on the basic national aspirations while we have no consensus at the national level on what we wish to achieve through what means and by what terminal date...

Not the Lack of Leadership In discussions about our downhill regress, one thing will be one single uniform answer — hard work. We are homogeneous but not united. Japanese are homogeneous like us but they are also unanimous in their vision as Japanese...

Jagan Nath writes from New Delhi In the 60-odd hamlets in Naxalbari — the birthplace of the Naxalites — poverty and oppression are still fixed features of the landscape. Landowners still rule the roost...

of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh bears the hallmark to LTTE expertise in jungle warfare. 'Hence,' advocates the Madhya Pradesh Chronicle newspaper of Bhopal, 'every effort should be made to modernise the state police both in the matter of training and equipment.'

Mr Rathod has suggested that air surveillance could become necessary to locate the jungle hideouts of the Naxalites so that they could be attacked and the insurgents could be hounded out. According to the Chronicle, the police chief complains that the local people do not cooperate with the police in at least partially connected with the police image in the area...

No Short-cut

Another Naxalite, KB Poul, admits frankly, 'The system cannot be changed by executing a few people.' Still another reason for the movement's failure is that the radicals cut themselves off from the very people they were meant to help...

Analysts say that today, even die-hard Naxalites are forced to admit that with communism having been rolled back in Eastern Europe and numerous schisms erupting within the ranks of Indian revolutionaries, they are up against severe odds. Even China, the ideological patron of the movement, has long since lost interest in fomenting a copycat revolution in India...

No wonder, some veteran Naxalites have even renounced their faith in the armed struggle. Kadam Mallick, a trusted aide of Charu Mazumdar, has gone back to farming and judging by the deities displayed in his home, he has also gone back to God that communism tried so hard to kill...

He disclosed that the police was being revamped to meet the Naxalite challenge. The government is determined to curb the Naxalite menace with an iron hand,' he warned. Similar steps are also being taken in the states of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. — Depthnews Asia

that always recur is the frequent assertion of the lack of the right leadership to lead the nation on the path of development. If we look at Japan, however, role of such leaders is nominal. In fact there are instances of Japanese prime ministers going out of office on account of corruption or extramarital affairs...

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Japanese society and economy are governed through consensus. They take time to decide and therefore work for long hours in the office. But once a decision through consensus has been arrived at, there is no turning back. They work and work until they succeed. Napoleon perhaps did not know that impossible is a word not written in the Japanese dictionary...

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Executing a few people. Still another reason for the movement's failure is that the radicals cut themselves off from the very people they were meant to help. Charu Mazumdar, a top Naxalite leader who died in prison in 1972, insisted that Naxalites depend solely on guerrilla warfare, ignoring the indispensable need to build a mass movement...

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and a half crore, You have kept us as Bengalis — not made the proper men out of us.' Yes, that is perhaps the truth. We have not been able to emerge as hard working diligent individuals of a unified community with a deep sense of commitment and purpose.

Short-term Unity It is not true that we were never united. On a particular issue, times without number we have found ourselves together — struggling to achieve our freedom of language, our political liberation and restoration of democracy. Unfortunately, times without number, we have also found ourselves tearing apart the unity, once the immediate objectives have been achieved...

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Manila: Asia's 'Kidnap Capital'?

A rash of kidnappings of prosperous business—often Chinese Filipinos — is plaguing Manila, endangering the government's efforts to improve the economy. The crime has proved so lucrative even some police and military officers are now suspected of involvement. Ramon Isberto of IPS reports from Manila.

decades, are said to be fleeing to safer havens abroad.

The public's distrust of the police has also hit an all-time high. Many of the suspected perpetrators are police or military personnel—including several generals. Officials now fear the crime wave may have a chilling effect on the government's efforts to attract foreign investors, particularly from Taiwan and Japan.

Prospective investors always ask about two things when they come here," says Trade and Industry Secretary Rizalino Navarro. "The first is infrastructure. Will they get the electric power they need. The second is peace and order."

About 30 abduction cases have been reported in the first half of this year, says Police Deputy Director Raul Imperial. Many more go unreported. Families of kidnap victims often avoid the police and just pay up, but not only because they fear for their loved one. These days, the feeling is the police may be the bad guy, too...

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To the Editor...

A green square

Sir, Environment, Forests, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al-Noman while addressing a seminar on 'Post-UNCED Situation and Environment of Bangladesh' in the city recently said that a National Council of Environment would be constituted soon to preserve and maintain environment and ecological balance in the country...

We warmly welcome the decision and we would like to suggest the government to allot some land in Dhaka for establishing a 'Green Square' where all the offices of different environmental institutions and societies including the office of the National Council of Environment may be commissioned.

Travellers cheques

Sir, I have gone through the informative report on travellers cheques shortage at local banks in Dhaka, by Tou-

fique Imrose Khalidi of your daily recently. Mr Khalidi has described every point very precisely regarding the foreign currency released as per rules and regulations of the central bank. Most of the people in our country are unaware of the merits of travellers cheques. Pleasure seekers of tourists from Bangladesh are very few. Majority of the young people who go abroad (i.e. Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore) are job seekers. People of this category are not aware of the benefits offered by TC's. TC's are not of one time use as mentioned by Mr Khalidi. There is no time limit for them. A person can encash the TC whenever he/she wishes to. So what is the benefit of buying TC's instead of cash? If someone loses cash money it is gone forever whereas TC's are refundable. Moreover, if TC's are stolen no one else can encash them as the countersignature below must match the signature on top of the TC. Customers may think that TC encashment is cumbersome or time consuming as they had to stand in the queue or sometime pay some sort of commission to the encashing bank. But they should also realize that it is the protection they are availing of in return. The same amount is being re-

placed within the shortest possible time. And in many countries the exchange rate for TC's is higher than that of cash. Back in 1980 I was quite amazed to see TC's being accepted in departmental stores in Switzerland. Even many small shops in countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand do accept TC's in exchange of payment for goods purchased or services performed. So what the banks need to do to promote the sale of TC's is to make aware the clientele about the privilege of their 'products,' not only by advertising boldly but also by

adopting innovative marketing techniques (not gimmicks). This is possible if the employee concerned, whether he is a clerk or a manager has the opportunity of contributing his skills, talents, ideas in implementing new techniques and measures; if not, at least suggest measures to improve the existing situation. Even a junior staff might have such creativity that would help the company to boost high up in the sky. This is how every staff will be able to participate somehow in the decision making process. Kazi Anson Sakhowat Institute of Business Administration, DU