

Energising Power Generation

A new national energy policy in the process of getting finalised by February next is coming at a time when the whole world is concerned more than ever before not only about the depletion of various energy sources but also the environmental degradation caused by the existing pattern of natural fuel use.

There is, however, no reason for confusing the extractable stock with the projected total reserve estimated at about 12 trillion cubic feet. Only the amount ready so far for extraction has the capacity to sustain the country for another 19 years.

We can, therefore, reasonably hope that the new energy policy will have clear-cut provisions for averting future crises of such order. In an energy-starved country like ours, it is highly important that the use of our available gas were most judicious and economic.

The energy crunch is felt more because of lack of attention to other sources of natural energy as well as alternative energy. Sure enough, on the immediate count the import of fuel may prove cheaper than exploration of domestic sources, but in the long term, the reverse is true.

Then it is foolish to rely on one source of natural bounty. However big the reserve may be, it will dry up even after most economic use. Today, nations not only in the West but also in Asia are looking for pollution-free alternative energy sources.

Bio-gas plant is yet another area, the potential of which has not been adequately explored. The establishment of a few such plants has proved houseful they can be in villages not yet covered by the Rural Electrification Board.

Not by Punishment Alone

A Ghior-bound minibus from Gabtoli plunged 25 feet from a Dhamrai bridge on Tuesday killing 16. All of the 40 surviving passengers, removed to various hospitals, are in a critical condition.

What kind of a minibus was it to have been able to accommodate close to sixty passengers and may be more? This is more than double the capacity of a minibus. The crime of overloading always comes compounded with the other, and perhaps more dangerous, crime of speeding and rash driving.

Over the last week we have been witnessing a gruesome spurt in casualty figures of road mishaps. It is true that the police organisation — responsible as they are for road-worthiness of both the vehicles and their drivers and for the conduct of both of these on road — is not up to the size of the challenge posed by the nation's traffic situation.

Where then is the way out? We do not believe that they are all of them thugs among the public transport owners or the transport workers' unions. Let us try to building up moral pressure both on the owners of trucks and buses and also on the body of drivers and other transport workers to coax them into owning their part of the responsibility of ensuring travel in one-piece.

In Bosnia, the world is witnessing not only the making of history but the careful fabrication of a myth which will eventually be passed off as a balanced and scholarly interpretation of history.

The authors of this story took as their theme 'humanitarian concern' in the certain knowledge that once this banner has been seized by them it could not convincingly be used even by the dying children of their opponents, the Bosnian Muslims.

It was thought that the humanitarian theme could be used as an umbrella. It could cover military sanctions against both sides; and such sanctions would be made to appear fair and even-handed for the short time the Serbs and Croats would need to make their contribution to the cleansing of Europe.

At the same time, it was felt that the Western leaders should be seen piously to be exerting themselves on behalf of a just peace without antagonising domestic electorates while brokering the future map of an increasingly para-

disincentive. Even domestic investors are very apprehensive to invest in a volatile atmosphere vitiated by hartal, terrorism, hijacking, murder, doctory and cheating of different brands. To invite any type of investment, domestic or foreign, satisfactory atmosphere is a must.

But Bangladesh must satisfy some preconditions before the envisaged breakthrough or take-off occurs. Investors at home and abroad and experts have been claiming that in spite of remarkable structural reforms, Bangladesh is still not getting attention of private foreign investment mainly for existing law and order situation, poor infrastructure, bureaucratic stronghold, labour problem, poor functioning of financial institutions and low recovery rate.

To the Editor

Sir, Kashmir crisis. Sir, Both India and Pakistan shall commit a grave mistake if they allow a third party to intervene in Kashmir. The landlocked valley of Kashmir has no viability to be an independent entity, as its dependence on mainland for passage to sea can hardly be established unless both India and Pakistan ensure her passage to sea water.

Sir, It is high time the Subcontinent leadership faced the realities — the sub-human level and the mass poverty of the people. The united effort of the entire region must be devoted to fighting poverty, disease and malnutrition rather than allowing it to become a market for the sale of military hardware.

Sick tea industries. Sir, It was disclosed by Dr Shamsul Huda, Managing Director, Bangladesh Krishi Bank during his last visit in Srimongol that a considerable amount of loan would be provided to support 48 sick tea industries under the Interest Free Block Account for five years. It is expected that the sick tea indus-

The Ursa Gambit

by S Alam Rashid

The execution of the Ursa (Latin word for bear) gambit has been remarkably successful, considering its intricacy of purpose. Yeltsin had to agree to give military support to the Serbs and, if the occasion demanded, to the Croats, in their rebellion against the Muslim-majority State of Bosnia.

The Serbs and Croats were proving embarrassingly inept in their use of greatly superior fire-power, secure supply lines, more-than-adequate supplies of men and materiel, implicit Western support and openly sympathetic neighbours.

Britain had decided long before 1992 that it would have to join the European Community but that it would only do so on its own terms. It would be the dominant power in Europe despite the economic strength of Germany because it would have American support.

done it again. A confused American administration retreated from yet another major foreign policy decision. The recent American embroilment in the Balkans can be traced back to the Oxford-educated Rhodes Scholar who, as head of the US administration, allowed himself to be persuaded by Britain's special understanding of Balkan affairs.

Since the inspiration for both the European Community and communism was economic, it was felt that the conflict between liberal democracy and communism would be economically resolved once it has been revealed to the communists that American wheat has replaced the semantics of communist philosophy.

Central Asia not only contains important natural resources but also an Islamic population on either side of the border between the former USSR and China. The borders between this vast region and the Near East, the Middle East and parts of South Asia are political and ethnic, not ideological; whereas the borders of this region with both the former USSR and China have always been at least latently ideological.

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Muslim-majority states (Bosnia and Albania) in the heart of Europe. It was also felt that while a little xenophobia and racism could be blamed on rising unemployment, it would be awkward openly to apply 'the final solution' to the Islamic problem in either Central Asia or Central Europe.

The purpose of the Ursa Gambit was manifold: it should strengthen the position of Boris Yeltsin at the cost of the hardline party rump; it should assure Yeltsin of the support of the armed forces; it should unify Russian opinion; it should cast Yeltsin as the upholder of an independent Russian foreign policy; it should eradicate Islam from the map of Europe; it should confuse and intimidate the Muslim world; it should strengthen the bargaining position of Israel in its dealings with the Muslim world; it should make available the resources of Central Asia to non-Muslim markets by minimising the influence of other Muslim states; it should achieve all this without soiling the image of the West as the keeper of the universal conscience.

The execution of the gambit has been remarkably successful, considering its intricacy of purpose. Yeltsin had to agree to give military support to the Serbs and, if the occasion demanded, to the Croats, in their rebellion against the Muslim-

majority State of Bosnia. Any hesitation was dispelled by assurances that the European Community would guarantee not only its own military impotence but that of the UN, NATO, the OIC and the US.

The gambit bore the stamp of genius and Yeltsin was quick to recognise in it the many advantages for himself and, through him, for Russia. He would rally the Russian people in the name of Orthodox Christianity. He would lead them, after 70 years of godless communism, in an act of atonement. A crusade (that ritual cleansing of the lapsed Christian in the blood of others) in support of their Slavic co-religionists, the Serbs, would purge the guilty Russian soul and entrust it to him. The military, recently defeated in the field by the Muslim Mujahideen of Afghanistan, would be eager to meet the raw, untested, ill-equipped Bosnian militia. It would also like to march in step with public opinion. Parliament, recognising the importance of both public and military support, would support the crusader. He would comply, Russia needed more wheat, not the good opinion of moralists; Russia needed him and he needed more time. Here was a cheap way to achieve the Russian dream.

Events have proved Yeltsin largely correct. At the UN, a remarkably strident Russia has declared that it would not tolerate any interference with Serbian military superiority in Bosnia. By so doing, it has provoked the West with a valuable excuse for doing nothing moral as morality has no value in the Russian market-place. Russia has, in apparent defiance of so-called UN sanctions and embargoes, continued to supply arms to the Serbs and Croats. In reply, the West has chosen to give precedence to the right of its man in Moscow to continued political life over the Bosnians' right to life itself. The progenitors of the Ursa Gambit, going modestly about their business in Whitehall, do not seek public recognition; but they deserve it nonetheless.

The author is a prominent businessman, and an occasional contributor to this paper.

Law and Order: Preconditions for Take-off

by Suraiya Jahan Chandonna

suggesting ways to tackle these situations. In such a void people are conjecturing about how to bring social peace. But everybody agrees that campus violence is the most threatening law and order issue.

But where would we get the Hercules to clear this Aegean stable? It is a very difficult task, but, of course, not an impossible one. Political parties and leaders should be persuaded to disband their cadres and deposit the arms, whatever. If peaceful method fails, government should not hesitate even to use its army in clearing the country of illegal arms.

OPINION

Pollution and Environment

by Syed Tasleem Hussain

Pollution Free Environment — Political Slogan or a Necessity? The answer to this question is very simple in the global context. The world recently witnessed an incident which clearly proves that even the minimum of concessions is not available when 'environmental hazards' are used as political slogans.

Let Clinton-Zemin summit in Seattle set ping-pong table in right direction for Washington-Beijing friendship.

Oh Kabir Dhaka

A protest

Sir, It is very painful to know that Bangladesh soldiers are going to guard Kuwait-Iraq border. I protest it vehemently. We must not forget that during the flood of 1988 in Bangladesh, Iraq not only helped us with various necessary items but also sent helicopters to carry relief materials from one place to another.

Saleha Ahmed Baridhara, Dhaka

The big hope in this darkness is that our people are generally law-abiding. If the government really wants to en-

sure peace and stability, the people will spontaneously come forward with extended hands of cooperation and assistance. But now the common people are very frustrated. They allege that even the police are not sincere in quickly bringing crime to punishment.

Actually our police force is not less efficient than any others'. Given the correct climate, leadership and incentives including quick punishment and reward, they can quickly bring all crimes to book and the country can be a land of peace. Really the leadership stands a very good chance to perform the gigantic job and win the hearts of the people for all time to come.

It is almost certain that if law and order improves, the economic growth will definitely take a momentum. Our estimation is that mere stabilisation of law and order situation will push the growth to

The US President is reported to have discussed human rights abuses, nuclear proliferation, free market economy and world trade and the Chinese President has listened, smiled and invited Bill Clinton to visit China, which the latter said had hoped for since he was a child.

Although the USA and China have different social systems, after former Soviet Union, it is only China which the USA is careful about and reckons seriously as a strong rival.

In the changing world, we are confident that the cooperation and understanding between the two countries would grow in the years to come to the mutual benefit of the two countries and also for the welfare of the peoples of the American and Asian continents at large.

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being that, while the football case can be lauded, applauded and globally recognized as one of genius, the tanneries' environmental pollution case can only be addressed as a cruelty (to use the softest of applicable terms) of murderous proportions to the Hazaribagh adjoining areas' citizenry.

The Directorate of Environmental Pollution Control (DEPC) which incidentally still exists, classified the following categories of industries as polluting the environment, tanneries (176 units); paper and pulp (5 units); sugar mills (16 units); distilleries (3 units); iron and steel mills (57 units); textile industries (298 units); fertilizer industries (92 units); insecticide and pesticide industries (25 units); chemical industries (23 units); jute industries (92 units); cement factories (3 units); rubber and plastic industries (34 units) and pharmaceutical industries (166 units).

It is frightening to note that the above statistics are of 1986! Many more industries in these fields have come up since then, but has the ministry of industry imposed the requirement of waste treatment plants in the new industries they sanctioned? A gazette notification on June 5, 1986 by the Local Govt. Division of Ministry of LGRD clearly requested that the Ministry of Industries should (1) have those industries which pollute environment but do not have protective measures to incorporate such measures in 3 years time; and (2) not to allow new industries categorised as 'pollution prone to environment' industries to be set up without adoption of pollution control measures.

That gazette notification has

met the same fate as many others. Ecological imbalance continues to be created due to discharge of industrial wastes into air and water bodies: Diseased fish and huge wastage of agricultural lands are some of the results besides the cruel impact upon human beings and their surrounding habitats. Some questions naturally arise, such as: 1. With a democratic government in power does this critical sector still deserve to remain a slogan only? 2. How come this government, which advocates transparency and accountability, is yet not taking measures to ask, rather demand, those industrial financing institutions including the Ministry of Industries to account for allowing pollution potential industries to be set up without proper waste treatment plants incorporated in the project feasibility profiles? With a dynamic new minister in-charge now, of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, we can only keep our fingers crossed and hope that he will do the needful. The contention that the problems are financially grotesque in size can no longer hold a candle as far as public sentiments are concerned. If we can ask for big financing from World Bank and its allied organs for other projects we can also put proper emphasis on this sector. No doubt the task is onerous but not impossible. This government, democratically elected, must deliver. They have the great advantage that pollution-free environment is now an international concern — all it needs now are proper and, of course, dedicated fulltime hankering after the donors to come forward more positively in this sector in addition to using local funds as far as possible.