

Biogas Has the Answer

State Minister for Science and Technology Prof M A Mannan has made it clear in his inaugural speech at a three-day SAARC seminar in the city that he favours production of biogas. His contention is that the country can generate biogas equivalent to 1.5 million tons of gasoline — a quantity almost equal to the annual production of Eastern Refinery. The other striking feature highlighted by the state minister is the disposal of nearly 1,000 tons of garbage which remains a constant headache for Dhaka City Corporation. According to the minister, can produce 75,000 cubic metres of biogas and 700 tons of organic fertilizer through processing at the biogas plants.

The state minister has basically taken into account the dung available in the country — 80 per cent of the total yield by 22 million cattle-head, to be precise. Cow-dung is not a waste anyway. It has a wide application — ranging from household use to a high degree of efficacy as an organic manure. Why the minister is so reliant on dung as an ingredient of biogas? If the dung is put to use for production of biogas, its effectiveness as fertilizer is sure to get reduced. We would rather do better if we thought of using human waste to generate biogas. Hundreds of tons of human excreta are left in the open, creating serious health hazards all around us. If we can collect the waste, it will not only help us produce biogas of an enormous quantity but also enable us to solve the crucial problem of human waste disposal. In a country of high-density population, this seems to be a natural choice for addressing both the problems of energy and waste disposal by a single stroke.

As for garbage disposal in Dhaka and other cities, biogas plants are likely to be the right answer as well. Wherever people live, they are sure to throw away a whole lot of substances — a substantial portion of which is organic. So the total amount of garbage the country produces must be of a huge order. If 70 to 80 per cent of that can be processed through biogas plants, our need for both energy and fertilizer will have been perhaps more than met. The question remains, however, as to whether the existing technology is enough and we can develop a method for collection of the garbage. So far China and India have made satisfactory progress in developing biogas technology. A biogas plant was opened in Faridpur in our country. That plant is using human waste. With further development of the technology, we may perhaps be able to set up biogas plants that will cater for an entire village.

To do this all, we need a suitable energy policy in the first place.

A Happy Departure

It was most fascinating to hear the Prime Minister say for once that all's not well in her socio-economic idyll at least in one case. Opening a three-day international seminar on "Quality Assurance in Higher Education" in the city on Tuesday she owned that Bangladesh had some problem in that area. The overall progress of a nation depended on its standard of education, she said implying we were none-too-happily-placed in the matter and should, therefore, strive for a quick turn-around in the situation.

It is understandable that in the presence of educational leaders from neighbouring countries she could not deliberate on that gross and grisly beast of violence stomping all over our gardens of Academe and eating up the best part of our intellectual potential and fouling up the educational atmosphere beyond any easy repair or recovery. Nor is this, as we understand, strictly on the agenda of the seminar which is devoted to a broad exchange of opinions between the chairpersons of the UGCs of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on the one hand and between them and the experts of Canada-based Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on the other. Campus violence of our unbridled type is for us to solve so that we have an almost lonely furrow to plough there. Even so, how other university authorities are dealing with matters of campus discipline can be of some interest to us.

The PhD fellowship programmes under the auspices of the UGC have enriched our faculties but while research in specific instances has been promoted under the doctoral programmes we are lacking in broader and open-ended research facilities in our country for people eager to plumb new depths of knowledge. Since university education as a sub-sector has 15 per cent of the budgetary allocation for the education sector as whole, higher education is evidently ill-placed to accommodate any vigorous research. Something about this must be done, and soon.

For Peace in Karachi

Let us hope this is not the beginning of the end. A thousand gunmen opened fire on a Karachi police station on Tuesday. There is little consolation in that they withdrew after showering shots for a spell. For, in other stray incidents, on the same day, two police officers were killed. And very very brutally. More things are at stake in Karachi than were even perhaps in Beirut. A Karachi burning and bleeding for too long can set off a chain-reaction of disaffection shaking the roots of Pakistan and getting far beyond the powers of the talk of Islamic bond to take effect. That myth had been fatally mauled in 1971 and now it is not even being invoked as Muslims slay Muslims on the roads and lanes of Karachi.

We are not ignorant of the predicament of the Muhajirs — refugees who even in more than four decades' time could not be integrated into the ethnic and cultural milieu of the bhumi putra who speak Sindhi or Punjabi unlike the Urdu-speaking Muhajirs. The blame belongs to more than one quarter and a plurality of factors. Now time has come to stop first the processes and attitudes that deliberately contributed to the perpetuation of the build-up of strife shot through with mutual hatred. The government must not anymore try to use the Muhajirs as pawns in any power game. On the part of MQM, they must start shunning militancy — as we have already counselled in these columns.

If the parleying parties fail to bring peace to Karachi, Pakistan will be enmeshed in a deeper soup. How we want to see Karachi hale and hearty.

A CROSS a broad spectrum of the Pakistani intelligentsia and masses, Imran Khan is considered a hero. His Handsome looks, his deeds for the country in the cricket field, his iron self-discipline in maintaining his athletic physique well into middle age, his single-minded struggle to establish a world class cancer cure hospital in Pakistan, etc have all combined to make him an all-Pakistani superstar. Who can ever forget the sight of Imran Khan clutching the 1992 Cricket World Cup, a fairy tale feat of high impossible permutations and combinations?

The world loves an underdog and we came back from a near hopeless position to achieve the ultimate prize. Pakistanis will cherish this as one of our proudest moments and who better could be representative of the country on the media images flashing across the world than the proud visage of our genuine home-grown real life hero.

The victory was a combined team effort but Imran Khan forgot to mention Javed Miandad, Wasim Akram, Inzamam, Raameez Raja, Mushtaq, etc. in his victory speech in supercession to his own dreams and ambitions of the Cancer Hospital.

How many times have we seen damsels going into distress over our cricket captain pounding in to send red thunderbolts hurtling towards quivering opposing batsmen? The combination of the Imran Khan physique and the "suggestive" gesture in the rubbing of the cricket ball on his white flannels to maintain the shine was too much for our clergy to pass unnoticed. Happily for the well being of Pakistan's cricket, the uproar was only a storm in a teacup and Imran kept taking wickets and leading his team to victory.

There can be no doubt that Imran was also the inspiration for our current great fast bowling pair, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis. His imperious attitude may have damaged the careers of some independent-minded young cricketers over the years but in Imran's defence one must say that the strict team discipline he enforced, presently

denying the fact that machines will be increasingly used in our government offices in order to enhance efficiency, reduce repetitive work and bring about greater comfort and ease in the work atmosphere. (There are of course some who oppose use of machines in the office because they are said to reduce employment. Such a position is not tenable because machines not only contribute directly to employment generation, they also affect productivity indirectly through efficiency increase).

However, use of machines in government offices is beset with a number of serious problems. Firstly, despite the rules, hardly an office in Bangladesh maintains a proper and easily retrievable inventory of machines with necessary details such as date of purchase, origin, model, accessories, warranty, repair and maintenance requirements, etc. properly recorded and updated. It is also seldom that senior officers inspect inventory registers even if these exist. Such slackness obviously provides miscreants with ample scope to pilfer parts and accessories or to arrange condemnation of the machine long before it is due.

Secondly, maintenance is extremely poor. There is generally no one specifically earmarked for the task, and

even if there is, more often than not, he hardly knows anything about the machine, let alone its maintenance. If he has learnt a bit of maintenance, it is because he has a knack for it, not because he was trained for it. Sometimes, you can even find out only from the memory of some individual when a particular machine was last repaired or subjected to a maintenance drill. And above all, there is the overriding attitude of neglect to anything owned by the government. Consequently, machines in government offices generally have a shorter life than their counterparts in private offices.

The Born-again Muslim

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sadly lacking, made a major contribution to our success. A bevy of women of the Emma Sergeant and Zeenat Aman-kind seemed to surround Imran wherever he went, film stars, models etc but they were all American, British, Indian, etc. gossip never associated Imran with any Pakistani female. Imran has always carried himself with dignity, the cheap theatricals of others would have been hard put to avoid public approbation. Pakistanis remained proud of Imran's manly conquests — forgiving his playboy image as one would a favourite errant Prince and Prince indeed he certainly can claim to be, by dint of achievement and merit, buoyed by his good looks.

Imran's dream about a Cancer Hospital named after his late mother (who was afflicted with the disease) was a natural progression after his retirement from cricket. A passing hiccup was the post-World Cup disagreement about division of cash gifts etc with Imran maintaining that the entire team had agreed that all collective gifts would go to the SKMT, not so said some of the team's senior players, who wanted to divide the spoils. The campaign for collecting money for the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust (SKMT) Cancer Hospital was brilliantly organised, the initial response emanating from the school children level throughout the country. Instead of promises only, we saw reality in the form of the hospital taking shape before our eyes, the fulfillment of a single-minded dream. Cheering crowds welcomed him in every town and city with open arms and liberal cheque books, the spare change kept coming in. The adulation of the masses in any country is always something to see, in Pakistan the well of emotion was too deep to ignore as a passing fancy for any old circus. In a country

where our heroes, mainly political figures, were increasingly seen to be having feet of clay, Imran Khan stood proud and tall, the crowds loved it and kept up a tremendous drumbeat of approval. This overwhelming hero-worship translating into political support may have surprised both the major political parties but they were quick to recognize political potential and, searching probes were made through intermediaries about his political preferences and availability. Pasban was in the forefront in conducting his appearances for collection of donations for SKMT, building up support for Imran's posi-

ble future political career without Imran really participating, even seeming to be oblivious of the full implications. A well researched book, a couple of focussed documentaries a biography etc all helped to deepen the political image build-up process. When Imran started to write articles in the newspapers all hell broke loose. To detractors jealous of his rapport with the masses, he was viewed as a potential threat, likely to become an alternate force in politics. Those who have read through Imran Khan's articles in some depth will hardly find fault with his views as a large portion of Pakistan's populace subscribe to the same. It may not be "Mein Kampf" but it serves as a basic document for a political launch-off because substantive issues dealing with individuals and society have been addressed. Imran has taken on the "Brown Sahibs" who had forgotten their own culture and

adopted that of the West, his views on dress appreciation were deeply satisfying to Pakistanis very keen to go back to one's roots and shun the pervasive decadent culture of the West. Imran's fulminations about corruption and hypocrisy in politics ran like sweet nectar down the throat of most Pakistanis fed up with the corrupt, nepotism-oriented politics in vogue in Pakistan today.

For almost anything that concerned Pakistanis on a day-to-day basis, Imran had something to say (except perhaps about Kashmir). For a short period of time he must have been the most well-read columnist in

tential was also recognized by the much respected former spymaster and visionary Lt Gen (Retd) Hameed Gul. A nof so subtle push for Imran as a possible political force was initiated. Maulana Abdul Sattar Edhi among other respected notables was contacted for good measure but this ran into complications when Editor Salahuddin of Takbeer was assassinated. Edhi decided that he was next on the list and in any case the ideas were beyond his capacity to fathom and absorb. He promptly abandoned ship rather publicly and he pushed off to London, blowing the lid off the "covert operations" and embarrassing all around. Government's media managers spoke darkly about a "conspiracy" involving retired army and police officers, etc. Frankly, this disclosure may have been good because while Hameed Gul is sincere about his nationalist feelings, some elements with more sinister motives had certainly infiltrated the campaign with the intention of capturing power on the shoulders of people like Hameed Gul, Imran Khan, Maulana Edhi, etc. Those who had manipulated Moeen Qureshi into office were rumoured to be among those engaged in funding "the cause" and providing crucial logistics support. Ms. Benazir's regime started to give Imran the status of an Opposition leader in their normal fulminations in the govt-controlled media against perceived enemies. SKMT's advertisements asking for donations were banned from PTV and GOP's "dirty tricks" (DT's) department went into high gear to tarnish this idol-image in the public eye. Whenever any government tries character assassination, the measure and esteem of the "victim" goes up.

Then Imran went and got married to Jemima, Sir James Goldsmith's oldest daughter. Governments pro-

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

Pakistan, given than his articles were appearing in many newspapers. But there were discordant notes, the conservative demeanour of his articles went against the grain of the westernised image he once festered. Having discovered Islam he seemed to become one of its most fervent propagators.

Given his playboy-image track record, the true Believers could not believe the Born-Again Muslim metamorphosis. A large number of skeptics were women who voiced their doubts at this miraculous 180 degree turnaround. This negation was most pronounced among those he seemed to jactantly (and generally) target and criticise as modern "Brown Sahibs" and their aping of western dress and culture. Having been used to fake sincerity, Pakistanis are desperate to believe in their leaders. Imran Khan does indeed seem to be the long-promised political Messiah. Imran's crowd pulling po-

the purpose may be held accountable for maintenance. In every option, the supervision function remains, and the management will be required to choose from these three options depending on the ground situation. Compulsory training of officials in the use, maintenance and repair of machines should begin with the foundation training course, followed by refresher courses after two years. The Computer Council should be activated for this purpose. New replacement procedures based on proper appraisal of the existing conditions for different machines may also be laid down in a circular. Similarly, the present condemnation process should be reviewed in order to simplify and rationalize the same. A "do's and don'ts" etiquette code on office telephone use is long overdue, and this should be made a part of training. The government procurement for machines will have to be suitably amended to take into explicit consideration compatibility and availability of spare parts and repair services. Again, the services of the Computer Council should be sought in this regard. Finally, a small Secretaries' Committee should be immediately set up to suggest an overall machine policy for the government in the light of rapid developments taking place throughout the world.

Use of Machines in Government Offices

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chines are easily and often brutalized and rendered useless, sometimes beyond repair, owing to their mishandling by untrained personnel.

Fourthly, government offices generally oscillate between two extremes in replacing machines. Either these are too frequently replaced, often with ulterior motives, or not at all, even

so long as there is an open bid, the machine is technically fit and its price is the lowest. Such a simplistic approach can and does cause serious problems. For example, diskettes from the computer of the head office cannot be easily used in the computer of the branch office because of lack of compatibility between the two. No one simply bothers to take cognizance of this point. Similarly, machines go out of order permanently only because there are no spare parts or repair facilities. All these lapses ultimately cost government the proverbial

either the line is perpetually engaged or officials hang up on you before even you have opened your mouth.

Sixthly, in purchasing machines for government, there is no explicit consideration of factors such as compatibility and availability of spares and repair facilities. Consequently, anything and everything may be purchased

Making Government Work

by Analyst

long after the machines have been rendered completely useless. The second extreme takes place because the so-called condemnation process is lengthy and arbitrary. Fifthly, in the use of certain office machines the minimum of etiquette is lacking. The telephone is a case in point. Long and useless talks, too many private calls, too much of formality and protocol, rude behavior, etc. by officials have indeed turned this wonderful machine into an unpleasant and ineffective medium of communication particularly for members of the public.

These problems are obviously not insoluble. Record keeping is simply a matter of enforcing the existing rules. A little initiative from the head of the office can make all the difference. Regarding maintenance of machines, there are three alternative solutions to choose from. First, maintenance services may be procured from the market through open tender. Second, the machines themselves may be hired from the market, with the rentier taking responsibility for repair. Third, specific persons in the organization trained for

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An undiplomatic diplomat

Sir, A diplomat is he who has got complete control over his emotions which he does not exhibit even under the gravest provocation. An outsider does not have any access to his feelings — others believe in what he says for he does not lie except for the sake of his country. If he lies for himself he is not a diplomat, he could be some other — a rat. That reminds me of a few riddles. To quote one — what is the difference between a diplomat and a woman? Answer: A diplomat is he who says yes to every-

thing, if he says no he is no diplomat, whereas a woman is she who says no to everything, if she says yes she is no woman. The other day I was shocked to see a CD (career diplomat) on Zee TV programme (few days after the last SAARC meet at New Delhi) lashing out at Bangladesh. He said Bangladesh was helped by his country during its War of Independence and now Bangladesh is out to show its anti-Indian prance. He, thereafter, mentioned that in his country there is a saying that when you send some one a basketful of mangoes as a gift, do send along with it a basketful of boulders to enable him to hit back. Since he mentioned anti-Indian feelings — he could have specified a little more; or should we conclude that Bangladesh asking for its legitimate share of Ganges water, not accepting C grade Indian machinery — imply to anti-Indian feelings? Such utterances were least expected from a high dignitary as he was, more so because he was a diplomat and that too a CD. Had it come from a politician it would not have been that

conspicuous. Sugar coated, I would rather say honey coated, should be the tongue of a diplomat. There are many fora through which he could give vent to his feelings in a dignified and diplomatic way — for he is an honourable man.

Although St James' Palace Diplomacy is no longer in vogue these days, it has its charm which continues to cast its spell. One could overcome with kindness. Grace has no parallel even today. Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew is still an outstanding example of diplomacy — to kill one in one's own humour.

Abu M Faiz Dhaka-1205

Buying and selling

Sir, Having read some of the reviews/commentaries on Moudud's book, it appears the formidable gentleman is quite adept in merchandising — he can sell himself; and later, busy himself back; more than once. Some political party might be looking for a bargain import. It is time for some political trafficking.

MMA Dhaka

To the Editor...

Mystery of UN failure

Sir, It is gathered from Copenhagen UN summit that during the last 35 years the world's rich countries have given US \$ 1,400,000,000,000 to the poor countries. But yet the global poverty has spread unexpectedly and the gap between the haves and the have-nots, North and South, is growing beyond proportion.

Then what's wrong? US \$ 1.4 trillion may sound like a lot of money, but it is a tiny fraction of what the world spent during the same period on weapons used in 'immoral' wars and conflicts against humanity and mankind.

A recent study in Bangladesh found that three-fourths of foreign aid the country has received since independence, went back to donors to pay for experts, consultants and equipment. We, thus, believe the similar picture will be observed in all the poor countries receiving aids from donor countries. In Copenhagen summit, Dr. Muhammad Yunus, chairman of Grameen Bank of Bangladesh rightly said "large number of people are sup-

posed to benefit. But most often, it is the people who prepare and implement the 'Aid Projects' who benefit".

It is a fact that the aid money from the donor countries is peanuts compared to the losses the developing nations suffer due to international trade restrictions, depressed commodity prices for their exports, debt repayment and capital flight which are practically unfair, unethical and inhuman factors helping nurture sustainable poverty among the poor nations.

In a word, major portion of the aid fund is misused and dissipated in various unnecessary and unfair steps in the pipelines from donors to the recipients. Moreover, in many cases, distribution of the insignificant remaining amount also involves many malpractices. Thus all these doubtful and artificial attempts, without real human and moral approach, appear to be just fun with the poverty and other crucial social problems. So any such attempts could never achieve significant success. Today many people term these types of aids from rich countries to poor nations as a kind of exploitation and immoral approaches.

Now many people have started realising that the essence of morality and humanity has to be accrued to any type of aids and activities aiming at solving most of the crucial social problems of the contemporary world like poverty, exploitation, AIDS, violation of human rights, environment pollution, oppression on woman, terrorism, drug abuses, smoking, etc.

With a view to initiating a unified package-deal and integrated attempt to solve the abovementioned social problems throughout the world, an educationist, Dr. Abu Obaidul Huque, Professor and Director of Bangladesh Institute for Advancement of Science and Technology Teaching (IASTT) sent a proposal to the United Nations entitled "A Proposal for Moral Development Approach: A New World Order for Peace". Through press media it is observed that this proposal to the UN on moral development programme is gaining popularity. We are in full agreement with the argument of Dr. Huque that morality is the key to curb today's pervading problems mentioned above. We appeal to the UN and its member states to take up this timely

benevolent universal moral development programme to ensure durable peace, prosperity, discipline and justice in all the societies on the globe.

It is believed that the mystery of failure of UN endeavour in many cases is lack of its moral and human approach. We further hope that the United Nations will arrange a summit on this moral issue in near future.

Sayeeda Akhter Swatee President, Dhaka University Moral Revival Forum

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paganda machine went into over-drive, particularly because Goldsmith happened to be an extremely rich Jew and

Pakistan took a tumble as confusion persisted. When it became clear that before marriage Jemima had embraced Islam and there was nothing wrong in any case in marrying someone who believed in the Book, Imran's loyalists took heart and re-surrendered. The dark hints of a Zionist plot started to fade away and Imran's "betrayal" at not marrying a Pakistani began to be seen differently. The contradictions came mainly into focus because his deeds were wrongly taken to be not in consonance with his writings. As the seeming ambiguity resolved itself, the furore has died down. The masses now await Imran's arrival in Pakistan along with his newly-wed bride in tow with some fervour.

In retrospect, maybe Imran should have been more circumspect in his articles so as not to give the perception of being anti-west, he could have thus avoided the charge of not practising what he preached. Another area of some concern is the Indian connection, those Pakistanis familiar with the Godrej family at various international forums speak of their open contempt and hatred, Imran could have exercised some discretion in being so publicly chummy with Ms. Parmeshwar. In the particular charged atmosphere in the Sub-continent where Kashmiris are daily dying fighting for their lives while Muslims are being persecuted and exterminated from Bombay, Imran could have put his friendly Indian connections on the back-burner.

The charge of stubborn arrogance does rear its head from time to time but it is also true that the discipline he enforced in return was priceless in the search for excellence. Imran's Karma is that he cannot escape the public eye and thus may well be forced into the mainstream political process despite his denials or even his intentions. The test of his mettle will come in facing up to criticism without losing his cool.