

## Wake-up Call

The nine trillion cubic feet gas we now have will last us 20 years. In that two decades' time our gas-based power generation is destined to lag behind demand by well over 3000 megawatts. The prospect for an amplitude of hydroelectric power remains a rather distant regional dream. On the periphery, only a 250 mw coal power plant is on the drawing board to be constructed at the Barapukuria coal mine site.

The magnitude of current dependence on hydrocarbons can be gauged from the fact that five out of our nine trillion cubic feet gas is earmarked for electricity generation. So, from the point of view of power generation, to say nothing of the compelling domestic and industrial uses of gas, we have to do all we can to strike new hydrocarbon reserves in the near future. We, therefore, greet the preliminary reports of a new gas find at Shahbazpur in Bhola, the first-ever in the south-west region of the country. We are keeping our finger crossed though, over the nature of the success and the size of the reserve. The experts of Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration company (BAPEX) are expected to enlighten us on the same in due course.

Nonetheless, we regard this as an occasion to remind all concerned about the necessity of expediting the process of exploration of hydrocarbons in the country. What needs to be realised by us is that the challenge entails a whopping investment of 261.654 billion dollars by 2005 alone. And, by all indications, the 'non-committal MOUs' we signed with 10 foreign private companies several months ago are far from being launched. The one-year testing-time for thrashing out the basic details is to end in December. The 'power cell' designed to scrutinise proposals and set rules for the generation, distribution, purchase and sale of electricity in the private sector remains a non-starter — still hunting for consultants. Not before 1997 can we expect to see a comprehensive agreement in place.

This sloth on our part is unforgivable. The recently-announced and evidently much-delayed draft energy policy is a little consolation for the investment opportunities that slipped through our fingers with the Euro money conference in 1994.

## Post-flood Indifference

How is the northern region of the country faring in this post-flood period? A report published in a Bangla daily describes the situation there as very serious. People without subsistence in the villages are entering towns in batches looking for either work or alms. Nilphamari district is particularly smarting under this localised migration syndrome. These poor people have not decided to make a long journey to Dhaka or other cities but want to eke out a living in the nearby towns.

As the report estimates, about 65 per cent of the district's population are landless farm labourers. Of the five lakh people languishing in extreme poverty, many have been forced to look for an opportunity in the towns. The phenomenon of joblessness at this time of the year has been made still more acute by the spates of floods. We warned through this column of the miseries people are now suffering. The government's post-flood rehabilitation and relief programmes have evidently been far from adequate.

Test relief works, which are undertaken to give the poor both work and food, more or less prove useful in reducing hardship of flood-victims. But reportedly, the government has not begun any such programme there. This is an interim measure to help the poor tide over their critical period. Apart from test relief, other exigency measures must be taken to save the people with no means from complete ruin. Credit facilities can be one of them. Then, of course, long-term measures such as establishment of small agro-industries can be thought of.

## Rocky Road to UN Reform

Demands are increasingly growing for reform of the United Nations. But the idea has run into a snag over the question of expanding the Security Council. The US takes a tough stand on the inclusion of Germany and Japan as permanent members of the SC, without which it has vowed to oppose any enlargement of the most powerful organ of the UN.

This sounds rather obstinate. In the eye of other countries more logical perhaps would be the demand for the inclusion of representatives from Asia, Africa or Latin America. The enlargement of the elite club with two more veto powers will serve the cause of the more equal among nations. What about the less privileged and the poor in the comity of nations? To get their voice through, these nations must need their own representations. Otherwise, the meaning and purpose of the UN in a radically changed world will get lost.

Both Japan and Germany as economic powerhouses will fatten the UN purse. But then it should not be the only criterion for membership of the SC. There ought to be other considerations such as the size of population, regional representation and socio-economic development. That is how a balance between wealth and aspiration for development can be struck.

# Early General Elections in Turkey

**Tansu Ciller was teaching in the US and is reported to have substantial property there. The fact that she has a Green Card from the US, is also used against her in a country, where strident nationalism has many votaries.**

WITH the approval by the Turkish Parliament of the coalition Government led by prime Minister Tansu Ciller, the country is poised for early general elections. This is the 52nd Government since the founding of the Republic in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, founder of modern Turkey.

This latest turn of events has come about with astonishing speed and in a totally unexpected way. Turkey has been ruled for the last four years by a coalition of centre right True Path Party (DYP) and centre left Republican People's Party (CHP). Following general elections in October 1991, DYP led by the veteran politician Suleyman Demirel (now President) obtained 182 seats in a parliament of 450 members. Motherland Party (ANAP) founded by late President Turgut Ozal with 100 seats came second and is now led by Mesut Yilmaz, who is the leader of the Opposition. These two parties, both centre right are two sides of the same coin and there is a great deal of hand-wringing among their supporters for merging the two. The junior partner in the coalition CHP with 59 seats is led by Deniz Baykal, who has been in politics after a brief stint as Professor. The fourth party Welfare Party (RP) with its 38 seats is what goes by the nomenclature of Fundamentalist party. RP leader Necmettin Erbakan is a well known personality and his party is the great unknown in the forthcoming elections.

General elections were due in Turkey in October

1996. Tansu Ciller, the Prime Minister for the last two years and a half has been a strong proponent of not advancing the date of elections because of a heavy unfinished agenda. Yilmaz, the leader of the Opposition has been campaigning for long for early general elections. Less than two months ago, the coalition Government of Tansu Ciller collapsed, when her partner Baykal quit because the coalition was unable to deliver on the promised democratization agenda. Baykal, elected recently as the president of CHP was eyeing undoubtedly the next elections since coalition with the centre right party was damaging his party's image. After the fall of the coalition, Ciller made a futile attempt to form a minority government with support of smaller parties, which proved a non-starter. Within less than 24 hours the old DYP-CHP coalition appeared like magic and Ciller and Baykal took fresh vow of repairing the political marriage. They took a decision to hold new general elections on 24 December next, fully 10 months ahead of schedule.

The new coalition has rushed through parliament other democratization measures over which the partners have had wranglings for more than four years. Turkish Parliament softened considerably the notorious article 8, which gave almost unlimited powers of arrest to the authorities. Similarly the Turk-

ish courts freed two Kurdish former MPs, jailed on charges of separatist activities. These measures were also taken with an eye on the next December vote in the European Parliament in Strasbourg in France. The vote is about whether to open the door for Turkey to join the European Customs Union on 1 January 1996. This is the essential first step for Turkey before becoming full member of the powerful European Union (EU). Turkey has been trying to join this body for the last 30 years.



## The Horizon This Week

Arshad-uz Zaman

Should the European Parliament vote in favour of Turkey in the middle of December, the two coalition partners will use it in their election campaign. Ciller has warned the Europeans that failure to admit Turkey will strengthen the hands of the fundamentalist RP, which describes EU as 'the club of the Satans'.

Anticipating early general elections virtually all the 13 parties have been in the field for several months. Turkey's voters traditionally give an edge to the right. Three important parties are contesting in the right. They are DYP, ANAP and RP. Tansu Ciller, the first lady Prime Minister of this Muslim

country, has weathered successfully challenges from within her own party from the old guard for the last two and a half years. This Economics professor turned politician, appears poised for a strong campaign. She has assembled all the tools of modern media for this task. She is making a strong appeal on women and appears to be making some headway. She has, however, been plagued by charges of corruption particularly levelled against her husband Ozer Ciller. Land speculation is the

and the widow of Ozal has become one of the severest critics of Yilmaz. In the upcoming race Yilmaz's only hope will rest on beating Ciller at the polls. Alternatively he may just fade away.

The other right wing party is RP. Secularism is one of the strongest pillars of the Republican Turkey established by Ataturk. Although RP and Erbakan has never directly challenged secularism nor Ataturk's sweeping modernization reforms, in practice a great deal has changed in the Turkish society. RP shook the Turkish establishment by her impressive victories in the last Municipal polls by capturing such a big prize as Istanbul. Apprehensions of RP closing down bars, red-light districts and the like in the vast metropolis like Istanbul have been proved unfounded. The question that is being repeatedly asked is-will RP repeat her feat of the Municipal polls of two years ago? From the way the campaign is developing, it appears that DYP and RP consider each other the strongest rivals for the favour of right-wing voters.

Deniz Baykal took over the leadership of centre right CHP less than two months ago. In the 1991 polls, the impressive result was helped by the Kurdish votes of south eastern Turkey, who hoped to find in the CHP, their mouthpiece. That hope has been totally dashed and the Kurds formed their own party, which was banned and

the Kurdish MPs jailed. Baykal has the unenviable task of reconverting the Kurdish voters, who live largely in the snow bound areas of south east. More than 200,000 Turkish Security forces have been waging a murderous war in that region for more than 11 years and there are daily losses of lives in two digit figures and the total has climbed to 12,000. The efforts of Baykal to assemble the centre left under one banner is hampered by Democratic Left Party (DSP) led by Bulent Ecevit, whose personal popularity is much higher than that of his party. Ecevit was Prime Minister in the mid seventies and sent Turkish troops to northern Cyprus inhabited by Turks. The troops are still there after 20 years.

This general political picture points to one conclusion. In all probability the next parliament will produce a coalition government. Fortunately for Turkey, the people have become fairly used to coalition government, which has smoothly administered the country for the last four years. On the top of the pyramid sits President Suleyman Demirel, whose political career spans 35 years.

Turkey, which was on the periphery of Europe, has reached centre stage following the collapse of the Soviet Union four years ago. In a region torn by violence, where oil politics finds its sharpest expression, Turkey has remained a factor of great stability. Whatever be the outcome of the December polls, Turkey's stabilizing influence in the region is likely to continue.

# The Decision at Washington

**There may be something in the inference that the Clinton administration is unhappy over the position India has adopted on the nuclear issue. At one meeting, a US representative is reported to have threatened to inflict on New Delhi 'the pain of punishment' for its stand**

shining armour, riding a horse. The role was redundant in the past because it was based on the assumption of another war, which was never to be. It is still more redundant today when there is the talk about complete destruction of nuclear weapons. So why should America be harking back the days of the cold war and talking in terms of 'stronger' relationship?

One assessment is that America wants to pressurise India on Kashmir, as Robin Raphael, assistant secretary of State for South Asia, tried to do a few months ago by questioning the very accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India. However attractive the argument, it does not jell because it can mean a war between India and Pakistan — a situation which America would avoid, not encourage. And even at the height of the cold war, the US was careful not to give the impression that relations with Pakistan were at the expense of India.

There is a suspicion that Washington has not liked New Delhi's 'close relations' with Tehran. True, the trade is expanding between the two. Iran, suspicious of the West, wants Indian technicians and scientists. But the friendship between Tehran and Islamabad has not gone sour. A few months ago, Iran voted with Pakistan on Kashmir at the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Last year, the two countries had joint military exercises, which are taking place again later this year.

There may be something in the inference that the Clinton administration is unhappy over the position India has adopted on the nuclear issue. At one meeting, a US representative is reported to have threatened to inflict on New Delhi 'the pain of punishment' for its stand. But the pressure on such points

can be counter-productive. It may create jingoistic feelings, particularly when India is not known to be pro-America.

In fact, the slogan raised by the Bharatiya Janata Party that politics is not separate from economics may catch attention. That may affect the liberalisation programme, which has benefited only the top 20 per cent Indians. There is groundswell of opinion against the multinationals which are seen linked with

Raphel made no secret of it at the hearings before Senate foreign relations sub-committee. She said: 'It (Pakistan) has been an important source for moderation in a troubled part of the world where religious extremism can threaten stability in the region and beyond.'

It looks as if Pakistan suspects that. The Benazir Bhutto government, for domestic consumption, had to hail the resumption of arms

The worst scenario in the wake of US arms is likely to be in the subcontinent. Indian foreign minister Pranab Mukherjee has already said that 'all necessary measures would be taken to offset its effect on India's security.' That means that the arms race has already begun. Washington's leverage with India has been always limited; it will lessen further. The deployment of surface-to-surface Prithivi missile, stopped at the instance of America, may begin.

Events in the subcontinent can take a turn for the worse, although India and Pakistan should realise what a war between the two would mean. Both have the bomb. Does it matter whether it is thrown on Lahore first or Delhi? No such nuclear bomb has been invented as would confine the fallout to the enemy's territory alone.

It is a pity that when the

conflicts all over the world are decreasing and the enemies of yesterday are shaking hands, India and Pakistan are going further apart. There is something basically wrong with them because no two countries are so similar in the world. That is the reason why many foreigners say that Kashmir is the effect, not the cause.

The battering that the India-US relationship will take may make many wonder if democracies can ever get along well. Washington's record with the dictatorships is good but not with the countries which are open. After the cold war, it looked as if America had come to appreciate India with all its contradictions. This was not true. New Delhi can be faulted at many points. But the posterity will blame Washington more because only once did it come closer to New Delhi since independence. That was when China had attacked India. But then it was America's expression of hostility against China, not friendship for India.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

Washington. Any pressure on India may be misconstrued. In fact, the resumption of US arms has come at a time when a strong case is building up in India against the World Bank, the IMF and their benefactor, America, for having led New Delhi up to the garden path on liberalisation.

America must have assessed all this. The State Department had before it a report submitted by a team of 14 persons sponsored by the Asia Society. It had called upon America to 'benefit' from the fact that India's middle class alone was nearly 200 million people and was growing 5 per cent every year. Still, America seems to have preferred Pakistan, which is of 'strategic importance', to India, which is of 'economic importance'.

Washington's real target is Islamabad; New Delhi is incidental. America wants Pakistan to be a frontline state once again as it was during the cold war. Washington will expect it to counter the anti-US movements (euphuistically called the fundamentalist uprisings) in the Islamic countries. Robin

supply as its victory (it is really Raphael's victory). Islamabad was guarded in its reaction because it felt that it had not secured what it had desired. The F-16s have been denied to it once and for all.

Benazir Bhutto has unfrozen a situation which looked like lasting for ever. The army is bound to be happy because it required the hardware — particularly the missiles — badly. All this may strengthen her position internally. But if the past is any guide, no Pakistani ruler, who has been in trouble at home, has been bailed out politically by the US.

Al though Benazir Bhutto spoke about the possibility of restoring warmth in Pakistan-US relations, yet it is difficult to imagine any worthwhile change at the people's level. Anti-US feeling in Pakistan is quite strong and wide. Apart from other things, the common belief is that Zionism, which is considered inimical to Islam, is showing 'its teeth' at the behest of America. Peace agreement between Israel and Palestine is regarded as unequal and Washington is again blamed for it.

## To the Editor...

### Name of a political party

Sir, I am at a loss to understand why the political party which brought independence to this country does not change its name from a mixture of Urdu and English to Bengali — which is our mother tongue. It is Awami League.

Deuan Ahmed Kabir  
Srimangal

### Appointment of an organisational head

Sir, Often the government appoints official from other organisation as Chairman/Director-General of some research or educational institution. Well, this is appropriate when no senior and competent officer is available within the organisation to head the office. Normally the officer serving inside an edu-

ational/research organisation should be promoted to the rank of Chairman/Director General/Principal on the basis of the respective incumbent's seniority and performance.

It is the honest and sincere desire and of course professional right of an officer working in an organisation to become its Chief Executive and he/she definitely deserves such lift on the basis of seniority and job-performance. And if an officer from within the organisation is made the Chief Executive, it would be easier to handle the overall management of the office efficiently because the officer is fully familiar with the organisation's atmosphere and activities.

Hence it is sincerely hoped that the concerned authorities will consider the above mentioned factors

while appointing the chief executive of a research, education or any other autonomous organisation.

M Zahidul Haque  
Asstt Prof, BAI, Dhaka-1207.

### Doomed to failure

Sir, We had an opportunity to read a news item in your daily titled, 'Nobel laureate believes — government-controlled economies are doomed to failure' at page 7 on the 16th of October.

The news pointed out that Mr Lucas, the 1995 Nobel prize winner in the field of economics believes through his valuable work under 'rational exceptions' that government-controlled enterprises cannot 'fine tune' their performances due to high costs, increase spending and demand for higher wages etc., by the workers. As a re-

sult, government becomes powerless to incorporate numerous variables to control taxes and price level etc. So, less government intervention should take place in the marketplace.

So, from the above discussion, we can learn that as a developing economy, we should not take the liability of state-controlled enterprises like power sector, telecommunications, gas, transport and other infrastructural sectors which have become losing concerns. Therefore, our government should quickly implement denationalised policy with regard to these sectors to save our economy.

M Ali,  
Rajshahi

## OPINION

# The Importance of Courtesies and Bows

Runa Khan

MAHFUZ Anam seems to have hit our sentiments right on the head, regarding the attitude of our leaders towards the apparent collapse of the country. In the 2nd November issue of The Daily Star, titled 'Making a Mockery of our Anxiety' he inadvertently points out the utter futility of the future of Bangladesh.

One feels our leaders have an innate resemblance to 12-year olds squabbling on who received the first slice of cake at her friend's birthday party. One can hardly credit it as wrong, to feel their attempts at breaking the impasse is an absolute farce.

First of all, we the public, have passed beyond the situation of wanting to know who is right and who is wrong. It is the question of who has the will to stop this erupting volcano of disaster which is threatening our country. Threatening our livelihood, our existence, our capacity of being acknowledged without condescending sniggers.....

The far-sighted amongst us had realised our utter inability of governing ourselves few decades ago. Well-wishers realised it a few years ago. We, the citizens, are realising it today. Our donors, who have tried shutting their eyes will be forced to open them, and will realise it tomorrow. What will our leaders squabble over then? A tidal wave of human dissolution? Ungovernable poverty, Hunger-stricken masses, who can offer nothing — not even themselves (consider the malnutrition situation today)?

Being farcical seems to be an inborn characteristic with

us. Watch the way we fool ourselves with statistics — a budget deficit of only 6% (cushioned by concessional resources), an all high forex reserve (a fall of US\$ 900 million since April — one wonders whether the investors were too scared to invest then, whereas now, a natural upsurge and greed is overtaking them, and hence the sudden fall?), our per capita income of US\$224 (consider, that in the averaging there are industrialists bank defaulters, you and I, and the wave of rickshaw-pullers, the peasants, the millions living below an accountable poverty line, etc.) economic growth of 2.4%, which is good compared to the developed nations (whereas a minimum 6%-8% is required for an underdeveloped country like Bangladesh to reach a sustainable level).....

The exchange of letters between our two respected leaders, smacks of as much honesty and commitment as our statistics! We are living in this country, our daily bread, our lives, our children, our future, our hopes, are at stake here — NOW. Yet ah! the importance of courtesies and bows!

The economic situation of our country, the meagre attempts made towards a solution, and the 'I, Me, Mine' attitude of our leaders, make us aware of the utter fruitlessness of hope. A collapse seems inevitable. The beginning of the end seems very near — give it another few months, and a few more exchanges of letters — it shall surely come.