

Inform the Public

There was a wartime-like power black-out scene in our large cities on Tuesday. It was called load-shedding; but it had better be termed a major power breakdown, perhaps the worst in recent memory.

The phenomenal national losses on account of power failures has been gallingly underlined by the swan song of a disaster. And what we are impatiently looking forward to is an action programme here and now.

Such horrendous mechanical faults in the major power plants on top of the transmission related chinks we know of, and the shrinkage in the power generation capacity of the gas-fuelled units speak volubly of planning, management and maintenance deficiencies. We know that for the last nearly half a decade there was no determined effort nor any sizable project undertaken to increase the generation capacity or to repair or refurbish the distribution network.

Obviously the short, medium and long-term perceptions are there but these have been aired so far only in a piecemeal and disjointed manner hardly making any comprehensive sense, or for that matter, any impression on the mind.

Let the government, inform the public by issuing a full and cohesive statement on the latest power situation, the options to turn a corner and finally the steps proposed by it to overhaul, modernise and expand the generation and distribution networks.

Fertiliser Supply

At a meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, a thorough review of the fertiliser distribution situation was made on Wednesday. It is quite heartening to see the government's concern at the reported problems facing the distribution of fertiliser or its price rise beyond the maximum rate fixed by the government in some places.

All these are admittedly good measures but the fact remains that somewhere something has gone wrong. The ALPP's meeting itself admits that the situation may not be critical yet; but unless the delivery system is further improved, there might be a fertiliser crisis in a number of areas.

Now here is a challenge before this government. During both Ershad's regime and BNP's rule, the dealers faced a lot of troubles — tolls at different stages for mustans being the greatest of all — in lifting their quotas of fertiliser. We do not know if anything similar is at work to frustrate smooth supply of fertiliser at the field level.

Mayor Must Answer

Indeed, by suspending seven of its officials, the DCC and its boss Mayor Mohammad Hanif have admitted the corporation's and his personal failure to fight mosquitoes. This departmental action is hardly an adequate answer for the proliferation of the tiny but a menacing insect.

We remember, Mayor Hanif made mosquito eradication one of his pet agenda when he took office. But after two years on the job he can claim very little success. The mayor could do with some introspection.

In this context we would refer to the meeting of the coordination committee for the city's different service agencies. In that meeting various steps were decided as part of a campaign against mosquito. We like to know why the meeting could not be held earlier and those measures taken beforehand.

Economics of Sonar Bangla: Resistance to Pauperisation

In the fitness of things, the course of politics should take turn in favour of the poor majority, and the government must endeavour to contain the wave of corruption and terrorism, crimes and lawlessness, writes Abdul Khaleque.

AFTER Plassey, East India Company hurried to loot Bengal, the richest and the most prosperous province of India, and to consolidate its foothold by breaking the power of Muslim landed gentry and destroying Bengal's industrial manufactures and crafts which brought enormous wealth in gold from internal and external markets.

The influx of Indian treasure added considerably to British cash capital enabling Britain to set up industries in the wake of inventions such as spinning jenny (1774), steam engine (1768), power loom (1785) etc. which brought about the industrial revolution. A new class of capitalists and robber barons of East India Company pressurized British Parliament to close British market to Indian products, and to open Indian market free to British manufactures.

India, Pakistan and some Asian countries which suffered from colonial subjugation have drawn up programme of resuscitation and restoration of their ancient crafts and skills as an integral part of their Master Plan and scored great success.

At our industrial fairs, we saw recently huge rush into handicraft stalls of Pakistan, Iran and India. Metal, stone, wood, glass, leather, textile items dominated the spectacle. In the handicraft world, the Indian strategy has been to set up import houses abroad at the instance of manufacturers and run in many instances by Indians (associates of manufacturers).

lungi as male undergarment drew Indian attention and India is known to have the monopoly in its export.

Bangladesh will do well to make an economic survey pertaining to the prospect of revival of muslin, wood and ivory works, metal and needle crafts etc. which once made Bengal so famous. Among other things, the cultivation of indigo, cotton and spices may be restored.

Our economic policy has created a mercantile gentry whose tastes are unpredictable unlike those of Zamindars. Rajas, Moharajas and Nawabs whose taste for art, crafts, and manufactures with aesthetic beauty and special elegance was well-known. Although the present century is that of the common man, the racket of ancient and feudal aristocracy has not yet been played out in the capitalist countries and dictatorships.

Most people in Bangladesh do not like to hang on rural life any more and look for earliest opportunity to move out. The rural poor are desperate and have already created urban slums to the worry of municipal administration. One may feel tempted to argue that urbanisation is a sign of progress.

Flashback: Partition Muslim League Opposed Federation

THE Council for Defence and National Security, which President Farooq Khan Leghari has constituted, was never in the scheme of things in Pakistan. The council will, no doubt, have legal and explicit role to the military in the country's governance. But it was never envisaged by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.

In what turned out to be his last speech, he said at the Quetta Staff College on June 14, 1948, that "the executive authority flows from the head of the government of Pakistan, who is the governor-general and, therefore, any command or orders that may come to you cannot come without the sanction of the executive head."

By then the holocaust of partition was over and many people questioned Jinnah whether the division of the sub-continent was a correct decision. "A division had to take place. On both sides, in Hindus and Pakistan, there are sections of people who may not agree with it, who may not like it, but in my judgment there was no other solution and I am sure future history will record its verdict in favour of it..."

But he said he was convinced that "any idea of a United India could never have worked and in my judgment it would have led us to terrific disaster." He added: "May be that view is correct; may be it is not, that remains to be seen."

Moreover, Lord Linlithgow, then the Viceroy, wrote on December 19, 1940: "...broken into separate and independent entities, India would lapse into a welter of contending powers which free institutions would be suppressed and in which no one element would be able to defend itself against external attack."

The Viceroy was, no doubt, opposed to the Pakistan demand. But he felt that Muslim support for it would keep on growing unless there was a concrete alternative. And for him, the idea of federation, which the British had envisaged through the Government of India Act, 1935, was the best answer.

Congress was not opposed to the idea of a federal structure but it did not want the scheme to petrify British rule and vested interests in India. The Indian States' Peoples Conference, a parallel of Congress in Indian states, decided that representatives should be elected and not nominated. Linlithgow conveyed through Ghanashyam Das Birla, an industrialist, who was to be Gandhiji's host in Delhi, a warning to Congress that any attempt to change the composition of the council of

states would encourage a movement for a federation of North-West comprising the Punjab, Sind and the North-West Frontier Province — another form of Pakistan. He said that "some influential men had openly advocated such a proposal in a private session of a Muslim conference in Lucknow a few weeks earlier. (According to Linlithgow, Birla himself suggested that the best

and find themselves "with only one side organised," that is, Congress. In a letter to Amery, secretary of state to India then, Linlithgow said that "the Muslims are now a very substantial and well-organised whole, and they have not the least intention of permitting progress to be made on lines that the Congress and the Hindu parties might be prepared to consider."

There is a letter of Amery, dated January 25, 1941, in Linlithgow's papers, says "Jinnah and his Pakistanis are beginning to be almost more of a menace (than Congress) and to have lost all sense of realities..."

If there is to be a Pakistan, Kashmir will obviously have to belong to Hindu India and the Nizam would probably have to clear out bag and baggage. The whole future of his state and dynasty, as in the complementary case of Kashmir, depends on India remaining united and on a basis of compromise between Hindu and Muslim."

After failing in his efforts to get the Congress and League leaders in his advisory committee, Linlithgow tried his best to exploit the differences between the two parties to prevent any devolution of power. However, Churchill, then the British prime minister, was under great pressure from America to associate the Indians with the war effort. He suggested the constitution of an Indian Council of Defence which would represent India at the Peace Conference at the end of the war.

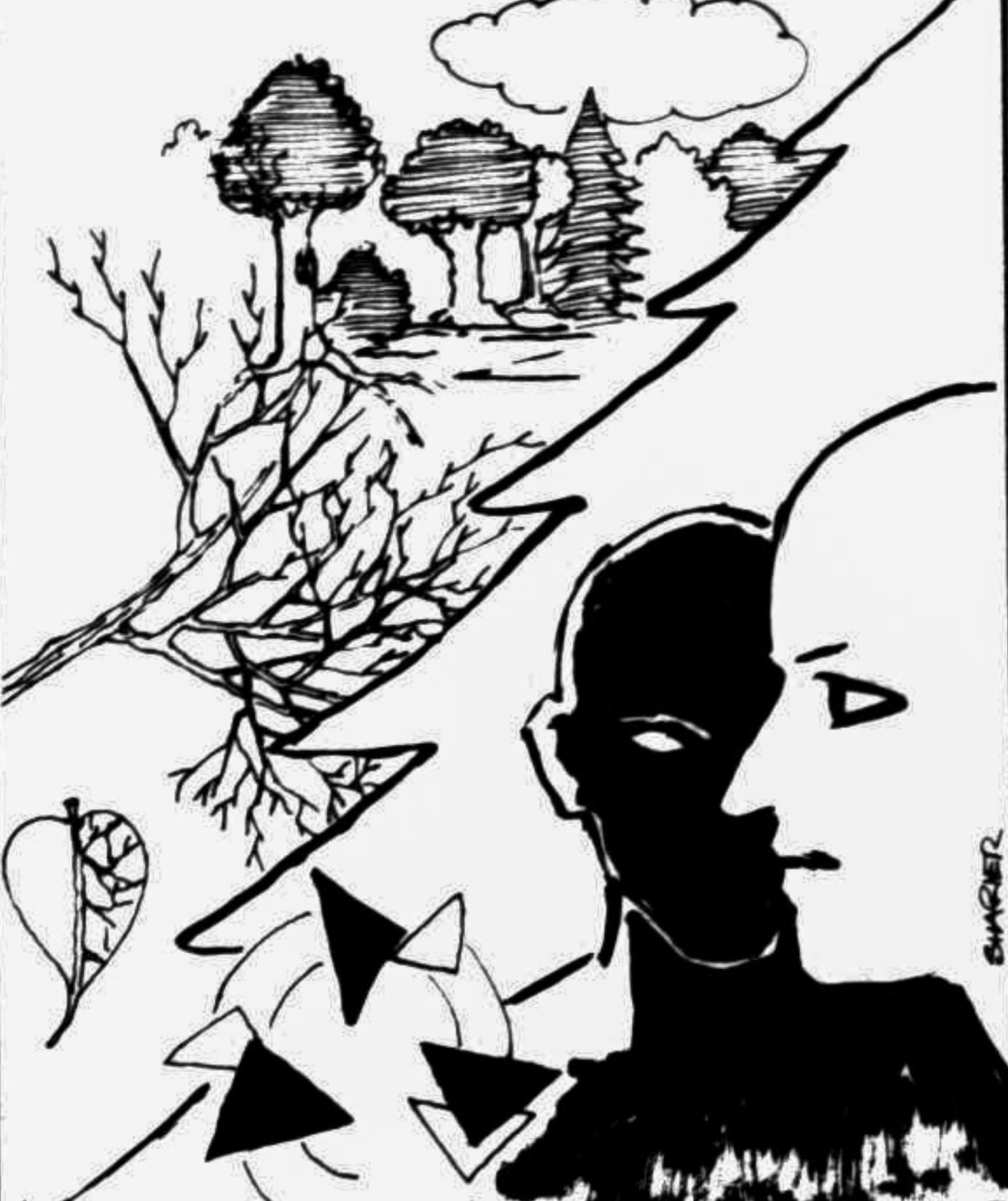
He even wanted to fly to Delhi to disclose it directly to the Indians. But Linlithgow, with the help of Amery, had the project scotched. He did not want his flock, the viceroy's nominated council members, to lose face. It was in February 1942 and it was evident that till then the British government was thinking of an arrangement, however defective in substance, for India to remain as a single entity.

But Whitehall changed its mind very quickly. In about a month (March 29) Stafford Cripps, a cabinet minister, sent by the British government to win over the Indian people's support for the war in exchange for some say in the administration, presented a scheme which looked like sowing the seeds for the partition of India.

While seeking to transfer substantial powers to India, the scheme envisaged that "any province that was not prepared to accept the new constitution" could "retain its existing constitutional position" and that

Dhaka Day by Day Interdependence for Survival

by Raffat Binte Rashid



Some 24 years ago the Royal Botanic Garden Kew, UK had introduced a seed bank to save mother nature. Its main task is to collect seeds of plants from around the world that are on their way to extinction.

Due to merciless economic interference by humans with nature over the past years, 26 species of plants became extinct around the world and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew has re-introduced these species in the wild not merely out of curiosity but for preservation as well.

Professor France, who is the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew since 1988, came to Dhaka to attend the ninth biennial botanical conference which aimed at helping Bangladesh to improve and restore its natural resources in practical ways.

"I took the opportunity to come to Bangladesh to see the Sundarbans, world's biggest mangrove forest. It has a lot of wonderful wild life. In only two days time we've seen 45 different species of birds. We are not only going to help research the reason for the top dying of the Sundarbans but also encourage more organisation eco-tourism in the future," said Sir France.

His visit has helped him to see Bangladesh in a different light "I was pleased to notice that the local participants at the conference were aware of the problem to conserve what is left of their environment, they showed great enthusiasm. I believe that is a start. Moreover the government here is also keen to help resolve ecological problems," France expressed his views.

Professor France, who was born in Suffolk in 1937, was educated at Malvern college and Keble college where he obtained a BA in Botany and a D. Phil. His career began at the New

To the Editor...

of an individual citizen, even indirectly, goes beyond reason and logic, and is built up based partly on faith (as in religion).

There are two approaches: thrust, or persuasion; and there are two target groups: the other political or activist parties, and the 'neutral' or 'nonpolitical' citizens. The resistance or acceptance levels in these two groups are different. In the cultural field (ours has fortunately a homogeneity), this type of conflict is absent or minimal.

To place Bangladesh in the right place or pedestal, the conveners must have national consensus, and not based on one-party initiative. Will Awami League respond to this line of thinking?

A citizen Dhaka

Global science Sir, Most scientists take pride in their objectivity. Curiosity is an essential driving force for all good science. The scientists, researchers and technologists should be encouraged to find ways to reach out to the public and the scientists should open out their world towards non-scientists.

Majority of the Chinese population are enthusiastic and optimistic about science and technology and trust scientific workers and institutions. President of the Chinese Academy of Science believes that a golden age for China's scientific development is coming and great developments will take place as the country continuously improves its scientific and technological conditions.

The Clinton administration announces its own list of broad research areas that relate to national goals. Research opportunities allow undergraduate students to experience "the passion for discovery" that motivates good scientists and that is the ultimate source of the US's success in science and technology. The US scientists communicate to the public how that passion contributes to education and to the generation of newer technologies.

International cooperation is essential for the advancement of science. Regional cooperation should also be encouraged. Mentionable here is Japanese contribution to build up strong research activities in the Asia Pacific region. The Japanese science community was puzzled by US requests for contributions to the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC) after the plan and design had been fixed. Prof Kazi Nakai, an eminent scientist of the KEK National Laboratory of the Tsukuba science city in Japan said that a proper cooperative project could only be established if it had been discussed by all parties at the planning stage. He believes that instead of making a contribution, which covers only a small fraction of the US of European projects, it is much more important for Japan to build a facility in the third region of the globe.

The 14th International Conference on High Energy Accelerators was held in Tsukuba Science City where I had a scope to talk with Prof Kazi Nakai. Many researchers from different countries of the world were working in the centre, but there was nobody from Bangladesh. I asked Mr Nakai the reason, and he replied that neither the Bangladesh government nor the Embassy did try to contact them. Almost all the embassies in Japan have their own science and technology advisers who are responsible for arrangements of those scopes for their fellows. Unfortunately we don't have any. Japan has a key role to play in strengthening Asia Pacific research activities. We need to approach them in the proper way to avail the opportunities.

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