Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka Thursday, June 4, 1998

## The Power Misery

Power hit a record shortage on Tuesday. Production fell by more than 800 megawatts at the beginning of peak hour at 7 pm. In the power-starved last two years production figure had never fallen by over 500 megawatts so far. With the nation's current demand of about 2200 mw, the scenario was little better than hellish. To compound the misery the nation continued in the grip of the worst heat wave in decades.

Against this comes a directive from the Prime Minister to ensure appropriate supply of power all over the country. She personally directed those involved in the job at an unscheduled emergency meeting to moot the tottering power situation. She has more than once expressed her ire and impatience over the ever declining supply of power. A powerful minister lost his job failing to move things up. Have these availed us any reprieve from our inexorable journey through a deepening power crisis? Directives have failed. The repository of all hope, Sangu, has failed. There is no news of the surplus Shikalbaha contributing anything to the national grid. If in BNP's five years a megawatt hadn't been added to the national generation capacity, how much has been added in AL's two years at the helms?

The gist of the present horrible situation is that nothing has been done compared to what the crisis situation had warranted. Why? By strict supervision and an improved efficiency level you can go some way. But not if your installed capacity is being dented all the time by production plants raising ominous hiccups from old-age complications. Nothing will help the situation if production doesn't pick up. How will that happen? From barge-mounted to skid-mounted plants - many things are in the air, never yet materialising into tangible things producing power.

For standard conventional generation plants three years is the standard time from purchase and fabrication to production. But emergencies are emergencies and that's why this talk of non-standard plants. And why has none of these materialised in two years? Perhaps not only the misery but also the long-hurting consequence haven't been well grasped.

Sitting literally on a sea of energy, Bangladesh is being sapped of life by a silly shortfall of power. There can be no greater misfortune for us.

#### Law and Order

A youngman was gunned down barely few paces from his place on his way to the office Monday last. His hubris was he resisted extortionists' bid to extract money from the garments factory he worked for. Assailants reportedly pushed off the spot-less than three hundred yards away from the local police station— cooling their smoking revolvers and tucking them under their waistbelts with all the time and assurance in the world. What made these hardened criminals so carefree and bold? Perhaps the knowledge that law cannot do them any 'wrong'. One cannot blame them. Only few days back the killers arrested on charge of extortionism were freed on bail. The criminals' ability to take on law and institutions alike has naturally sent wrong signal to a society that was never known for its faculty to be aberrant to established norms. People try to stay out of harm's way at the cost of their social responsibility. They forget by leaving a fight for some body else today they are inviting trouble on themselves for tomorrow. This was evident in an incident involving a Daily Star staff the other day. It did not make the headlines because there was not any casualty. Two persons armed with a razor stopped our man on a rickshaw. Argument over the afternoon drama of heist went long enough to attract the notice of the passers-by of an always thickly populated road. Yet nobody bothered. Only timely intervention by a traffic police saved the day for a Daily Star man.

Law and order has been on a course of unabated slide for a long time. We have heard as much of the necessity to arrest the trend as of the many obstacles lying on its way. But nothing has happened to give us any relief. Despite the professed sincerity of the concerned minister one couldn't help feeling there was always this element of unreality about his approach to the problem.

Having said that one also understands it is not the job of law enforcers alone to stamp out crime from every alley and corner of the city. Social resistance has to be mobilised. With crime rate exploding and law enforcers unable to tide over it we suggest local resistance be thought up. One idea could be convening meeting every week between ward commissioners and the responsible residents of the locality to take stock of the law order situation. Sensitising people to their duties can be a good move to start with.

### CSE's Leap Forward

Whilst the country's capital market still licks the wounds of a disreputable state of affairs concerning the Dhaka bourse the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) has kindled fresh hopes for investors. It has introduced state-of-the-art automated screen-based facility enabling on-line trading — crisp to the dot of time — in a maiden, pioneering move of some real import. That is where it is a path-breaker. But even otherwise the CSE has distinguished itself by being the third among 31 South Asian bourses to have caught up with the rest of the world in the field.

The CSE flags off the big leap from floor-trading to computerised trading with the advantages of transparency inherent in the technology and computable on a ready reckoner. The scope for insider trading and manipulated bubbling which have been a festering sore on the DSE operations would

be vastly reduced. This is having a wide area network both within the country as well as globally. Investors from Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet will have ready access to the facility. And it sounds as a frog-leap to a breakthrough when the CSE president says that with the new system in operation technologically the CSE has become globally tradable now. Wider the investors' participation greater would be the transparency in play. And with more transparency being achieved there would be a larger flow of

trade. This is just a portrayal of the possibilities generated by the introduction of automation in the CSE. To realise the full potential of the new system there will be no substitute for a Central Depository System. As the premier bourse of the country the DSE must now wake up to the modernisation imperatives.

Crime and Terrorism on the Increase

# What Task Lies Ahead of the Civil Society to Arrest It?

People may be and are often goaded to commit crimes due to genuine want and to meet their urgent

needs. Economic deprivation, unemployment and want of legitimate source of

income have been regarded as classical motivation.

IX Rotary clubs of Dhaka Sheld a joint meeting, a seminar, on the two subjects of Crime and Terrorism on the 26th May. The guest speakers comprised an eminent lawyer and human rights activist Sigma Huda, a renowned journalist and political thinker Mahfuz Anam, and a retired civil servant and Inspector General of Police Azizul Haq. All excelled in their respective fields and vocations, and viewed the issues from their own perspectives. The speeches delivered and discus-

ing and thought-provoking. The keynote speech presented by the former chief of the law and order authority of the country traced in depth the history, rationale and the widespread growth of crime and terrorism in the land. Profuse statistics in support of his assertions were provided. He elaborated various nature and types of crime as well as the complex motivation of criminals for committing it.

sions ensued were both interest-

In broad perspective, crime may be grouped into several categories. People may be and are often goaded to commit crimes due to genuine want and to meet their urgent needs. Economic deprivation, unemployment and want of legitimate source of income have been regarded as classical motivation since times immemorial.

But these traditional compulsions have been supplemented by many other forms of crime.

These mostly relate to fulfil man's prime but undue desire for greed, lust and aggrandisement, mostly but not necessarily for material gains. Personal som and other forms of terrorvendetta, rivalry in profession ist activities have been the orand business and, above all, the unique Bengali character of not being able to tolerate other's fortune and well-being also

come to play in a big way. Some speakers pointed out the growth and sophistication of economic crimes that pervades all over the world, especially in recent times. Criminals in this category are not from the depraved section of the community but, on the contrary, are affluent and wellplaced in the society. This white-collar crime obviously is of much higher magnitude and is marked by a high degree of dexterity and sophistication. It is generally most harmful for the society and bites deeper than ordinary crimes.

Unfortunately, in our country there is no specific legislation under which these offences as such can be punished. At present, these are dealt with for violation of existing laws and charged for committing specific offences.

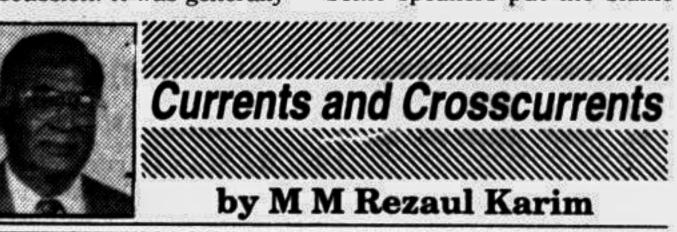
Terrorism, on the other hand, is associated with violent crime and bullies the victim into submission. In the process, blood may or may not spill. But the aggrieved party is cowed down for fear of life, property and honour. This form of dangerous crime has, unfortunately, been on the increase in recent times and has made people's life miserable.

Extortion, blackmail, ran-

der of the day and ordinary people, both in towns and villages, live with a sense of insecurity and fear in varying degrees. This trend developed itself almost from the beginning of our nationhood but has been perceived more in recent months and years.

Talking about terrorism, the issue of violence on educational campuses and the role of students naturally figured out in the discussion. It was generally

tion. In our region also, one has witnessed the glorifying role played by students during the movement against the British to quit India, in the movement leading to the fall of the Ayub regime, in the great Language Movement and, above all, in their noble, selfless and patriotic contributions to the War of Liberation of Bangladesh. Such magnificent roles of students strike great contrast with the so-called students politics of the present day Bangladesh. Some speakers put the blame



accepted that this development was a completely new phenomenon and has degenerated the sombre atmosphere of the seats of learning, with notable exceptions, into vicious dens of unethical politics, terrorism and corruption. The situation has been rendered more complex by encouragement and almost direct association of a section of teachers in the so-

For ages, students have been participating in politics and have been instrumental in changing course of history, specially at critical times of a na-

called students politics.

squarely on politicians many of whom use students for their self-interests and nefarious political designs.

That corruption has been endemic in the society and accepted as a normal phenomenon in day-to-day life has been acknowledged widely. In most government offices, no work, even legitimate work, can be done without greasing one's palms. No bank loans can easily be sanctioned without paying an illegitimate commission. No trucks with cargo can ply on the road without paying on arbitrary toll fixed by and

payable to the police. A police officer's transfer to a desirable post costs him several lacs of taka. Even appointment of a primary school teacher is now a factor of money. These things happened hardly when we were a part of British India and much less when we were of Pakistan. It is sad but true.

The audience paid much heed to the speakers narrating the rapid increase in the crime rate and the diabolic form it has assumed. The macabre story of the 15-year-old Shazneen's murder has introduced a new fright in the minds of even the well-to-do members of the society that no one is safe at home even under the most effective security umbrella one could provide. The many indiscriminate rapes in police custody and in magistrate's courts, including that of baby Tania, have rendered people speechless with awe and disbelief. The uninterrupted and intensified flow of women trafficking has hung our head in shame and

Anyway, the principal speakers came out with cogent and forceful recommendations. All of them were of the opinion that all forms of crime and terrorism must be dealt with firmly. The government party, which had pledged repeatedly to suppress it with iron fist, has not so far succeeded in redeeming its pledge. But the speakers emphasised that the government efforts must be supplemented by combined efforts of the people and organisations in

the country. The specific recommendations included a signature campaign for amassing a million signatures for submitting it to appropriate quarters by high-

lighting the need for curbing the

fast deteriorating law and order

situation in the country. The second suggestion consisted in the procurement of random samples of food products and other essentials from the market and to evaluate if these would conform to the desired standards and specifications. If they cannot, the law should take its own course and punish the offenders. The revision of existing laws about repression of women and children's abuse is a prerequisite for the general and total wellbeing of the people of our soci-

Finally, the many shortcomings that exist in the Penal Code, originally formulated by the British years ago, need to be rectified to suit the needs of present day by making requisite provisions and amendments. The seminar president, however, pledged that necessary measures would be taken to implement these recommendations through the extensive and powerful network of Rotary clubs of Bangladesh and their influential members.

In view of the earnestness in the tone of the seminar president, many would repose their hope in his assurances but would be severely disappointed if these recommendations are sealed and packed off after the seminar is over never to be reopened again.

# Prospects of Arms Control in South Asia

The urgent task is now to initiate immediate bilateral talks between India and Pakistan. All other regional countries want that too. Already the Chairman of SAARC has called on both to enter into informal talks.

O the inevitable has happened. Within two weeks of India's underground nuclear explosions Islamabad responded with retaliatory nuclear tests with vigour and determination declaring that it was not going to 'barter' its national security. Islamabad's actions have not really been a surprise but until the explosions one kept hoping that may be it would avail the windfall economic opportunities offered by the international community. But that did not happen. Islamabad seemed somewhat compelled to conduct its own nuclear explosions because of its disappointment arising out of international community's mild reactions to India's nuclear tests and no offer of security guarantee from the big five.

In any event, thanks to the latest development both India and Pakistan are now nuclear states, and none have declared any moratorium on further testing. Although India's Prime Minister Bajpayee has declared a moratorium on further nuclear tests, it is not plausible in the absence of New Delhi's intransigent stance on the signing of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). There are now speculations that both would conduct more tests in order to acquire nuclear weapons capability. And according to Pentagon both are working on longrange missiles, which has been confirmed by both India and Pakistan, that would allow them to move from just testing nuclear weapons to threatening their neighbours with nuclear

attacks. Although at the present there is no evidence that they are moving toward a nuclear exchange but if both keep pushing to develop the complex systems to produce, make into weapons and then deploy the weapons — the situation would

indeed become dire. As it is, nuclearisation of South Asia has changed the geo-political landscape of the region. This part of the world is the only area where three nuclear states, India, Pakistan and China, with adversarial relations face each other. Another nuclear state, Federa-

tion of Russia, is located only at arm's length. One then should only hope that in the given nuclear landscape the situation does not become desperate. In this context genuine efforts to establish an arms control regime in South Asia by the states concerned as well as the international community must be immediately initiated. Nuclear exchange is no laughing matter, especially if the possessors of this deadly and menacing power suffer from historical paranoid. But what are the chances of getting that kind of regime in South Asia?

Confidence building and arms control measures can be taken only if there is readiness among the national actors. The success of these measures, in reducing East-West tensions and subsequent disarmament between the two have been due to a number of factors, but largely because of the farsighted leadership of the superpowers. They take roots only in a positive environment that emanates from the combination of past experiences and future expectations. Visualisation of confidence building and arms control measures giving rise to a polycentric cooperative security order in South Asia, at present, is thus difficult. The fact of the matter is that there have not been any qualitative changes in South Asian security environment during 1980s

and 1990s as it happened in Europe and East-West relations. On the contrary, the urge for conventional defence build-up and nuclear proclivity continued unabated during this period. Ironically, following the end of cold war, weakening of India's security ties with erstwhile Soviet Union, Pakistan's isolation from the West, and China factor — all contributed to the on going 'mini cold war' in South Asia.

Despite the given suspicious environment, defense build up proclivities and so called ambiguous nuclear activities by India and Pakistan some mea-

However, the efforts continued. Even in the nuclear arena several measures of arms control were proposed by late President Zia ul-Haq. Pakistan was willing to accept any kind of nuclear weapon ban or nonproliferation constraints but made them conditional to India's acceptance. At the global level both ostensibly supported CTBT and fissile material cutoff treaty but both have backed away when the treaties approached reality - India linking them to unsatisfactory progress in global disarmament and Pakistan leading NAM in obstructing the cutoff treaty.



regional and international, were initiated during this period. Several steps to reduce regional tensions were taken. India and Pakistan signed and ratified bilateral agreements on avoidance of airspace violations, notification of military exercises, and establishment of a hotline at the senior level. Regionally, India and Pakistan declared a ban on chemical and biological weapons. Both have signed the Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC). These measures have had very limited success. And no significant progress in either reducing Indo-Pak mutual tensions or laying of any solid foundation for a arms control regime could be achieved

sures of arms control, bilateral, None have signed NPT. Only at the bilateral did they accept a solitary nuclear restraint such as an agreement not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. That too was in the shadow of New Delhi's alleged plan to attack Pakistan's nuclear facility at Kahuta and Islamabad's desperate retaliatory warning.

At the regional level, Nawaz Sharif's 1991 proposal for a five-nation (the US, erstwhile Soviet Union, China, India and Pakistan) conference which was to devise a "regional nonproliferation regime, containing guarantees for non-nuclearweapon states and agreed to by all regional countries" was something thought to be feasible with the decline of cold war. But the proposal was rejected by India on the pretext that the fora did not include adjoining Iran and Kazakstan. However, actual issues at stakes were New Delhi's aspiration to be viewed as major world power and unwillingness to accept China as a guarantor. It is obvious that to have

meaningful arms control measures in South Asia have been difficult, especially in the context of New Delhi's attempts to link any such efforts with extra-regional and global situation. It has been evidenced, even after the creation of a nuclear conflagration following New Delhi's nuclear tests, by Batpayee government's offers of 'no first strike accord with Pakistan and other countries bilaterally or collectively. But in case of Pakistan it has always been purely regional. Islamabad's very recent reiteration of an offer of a 'non-aggression pact which is conditional to Kashmir solution, is the latest evidence.

As such, in view of the 'entrenched' security dilemmas of India and Pakistan even the nuclearisation of the region would most likely not be able to get two antagonists to a negotiating table to initiate technical fixes pending any solution to Kashmir problem. On the contrary, defence analysts in India are talking hawkishly and thinking of have nuclear deterrence in two fronts. Lieutenant General K. Sundarji, former Indian Chief of Army Staff, advocates that a finite deterrent second-strike capability only can stabilize the relationship with both China and Pakistan. But would India really need a nuclear deterrent against China with whom there has been sub-

stantial reduction of tensions recently? China does not want to be a menacing threat to any major country including India. Only issue which could make Beijing unpleasant to New Delhi is its link with Pakistan and therefore in the Kashmir problem although China has recently distanced itself from the issue as well. In that case isn't it sanguine for New Delhi to go for regional arms control measures instead of going for serial production and deployment of ballistic missiles? After all has it not been proved that Islamabad would match any further nuclearisation by India even if they are meant for alleged Chinese threats. But the hawkish line of thinking is indeed dashing the hopes for any meaningful dialogue between the two regional adversaries.

The urgent task is now to

initiate immediate bilateral talks between the two. All other regional countries want that too. Already the Chairman of SAARC has called on both to enter into informal talks. The West, especially the United States has been acting as a catalyst to bring about a regional arms control regime but without much success. The outsiders still have important roles to play but it is the regional actors who will have to think about the possibility of an inadvertent nuclear war, its devastating consequences and take actions accordingly. But the developments in both India and Pakistan indicate that the prospects for arms control regime in South Asia, at present, is minimal. They would most likely go for further nuclearisation and deployment of nuclear weapons before realising the futility of the entire exercise. One only hopes that no inadvertent war takes place before both countries come to their senses.

#### Why Blame Women Only"

Sir, I have read the opinion entitled "Why Blame Women Only" by Dr. Sabrina Rashid published in the DS, on 27th May '98. I appreciate Dr. Sabrina's concern for the deplorable plight of women as far as the child-birth is concern. But the title seems to be unbecoming to me. The very word 'blame' is unwanted in this regard. Dr. Sabrina left no attempt to prove that 'man' is liable for the birth of female children and she presented proofs. By making her argument in such a way she, after all, established that to give birth to a female child in a blameworthy matter which is not correct. So the very title is inappropriate.

In fact, the birth of both male and female children is a blessing of Allah. The parents should be ready to welcome any issue irrespective of its sex. There is essentially no difference between man and woman as human being and both are equal in status and person to Allah.

Md. Mahmudul Hasan 461, Surjasen Hall Dhaka University

#### Ignorance breeds humility

Sir. Although Meer M Ali's letter "Let wisdom and not vanity...." (DS 26 May '98) is a bundle of confusion, in which he tries in vain to conceal the frailty of his argument by a jugglery of words, it is apparent that he has little idea about the functions of the Syndicate, Academic Council, etc. In accordance with Mr Ali's

letter, let us assume the 13

teachers did not want to "obey" the university rules. Going by his letter, that would apparently be demeaning for a teacher. Could the 13 teachers simply not "follow the instructions" of the authorities concerned, which are several notches higher than the Head Mr Ali cites as an example? Also, it is inconceivable, as per the letter, how could one act in good faith" if he was going to flaunt all the "rules and regula-

tions" of a university? As far as "majority" is concerned, if a consensus cannot be arrived at after many rounds of deliberations, what better mechanism is left for the civilised society? That the majority should succumb to the irrational demands of the minority? A sensible minority tries always to mould the majority, if there is such a division, by sound reasoning and discernment.

If the 13 teachers had "followed the instructions", the students of Architecture would not have lost several valuable months and the Chancellor would have been spared the embarrassment.

As for me, when I am obeying the traffic lights, I am following the instructions.

#### Sultana Rokeya BUET, Dhaka Is moral indignation

enough? Sir, It has been more than a month of anguish. Street demonstrations, media stories, press conferences, and other expressions of opinion have followed the murder of Shazneen. A gruesome incident no doubt. A murder most foul

indeed. It has jolted the calm

and composure of many.

Yet, without minimising the gravity of the crime, it is perhaps a time to pause and think again. What lessons are held before the society? What conclusions we are invited to draw? First, the murder of Shazneen is not a gender issue. I suggest it is not for the females only to be agitated. That is a travesty.

It is a part — a significant part but only a part - of the basic phenomenon which gives so little security of life and liberty. Or else why the newspapers of any single day are filled with reports of murder, rape, molestation, disappearances, deaths not due to natural causes. The single incidents collectively form a scenario far more sinister than the trivialised anecdotes that inevitably will soon be off the media pages. It is a very grim picture of the society that has gone wrong. A very deep and wide fault line that will engulf many an isolated array of crimes. It is time to ponder, time to introspect. We should not fail to reckon the forest by counting the trees. The single events are merely a part of a larger mass of default and

delinquency. No amount of police vigilance or efficiency will preempt such incidents. The middle class is justifiably outraged. And calls for very harsh, quick and exemplary justice ring loud. The same middle class has been lulled into making little whimper at the gross financial and political delinquencies which amount to bigger and more pernicious crimes inflicted on the society. When the civil society demands and gets so little accountability for a variety of defaults and delinquent acts, a very wrong signal is sent, a very abnormal and cynical value system is nurtured.

That is at the root of the general decline in social order of which single murders and rapes are merely the tip of the proverbial ice berg. Let us therefore resolve to reinvent and reestablish accountability in the civil society - in marketplace, banks, public offices, streets and homes, including especially at the high places. Unless we put right all that is wrong and only selectively raise a hue and cry, I am afraid we will be chasing the symptom and not the disease.

Dr Zakir Husain 4/4/1-B. Block-A. Lalmatia, Dhaka-1207

#### Curb high-rise buildings

Sir. Multi-storied high-rise apartment buildings to replace the slum areas? In the rural areas, the people are accustomed to live close to the soil (horizontal living, compared to 'vertical' living in multi-storied flats in the big cities.)

The social scientists have compiled considerable studies on such 'artificial' living, due to pressure on horizontal space at the ground level; and such bibliographies are available in libraries or through the Internet. Mental distortions have been observed, and social aberrations are pronounced, due to severe restrictions on the 'elbow room' required for normal daily life, in close association with the soil, the trees and other modes of associations.

Dhaka, notoriously famous for its effusive seminars and workshops, is growing the longterm negative effects of highrise living.

Necessity may be the another of invention, but the step and

foster mothers must be spotted. before future generations inculcate a distorted view of

Besides, high-rise buildings generate considerable traffic of different kinds around them, but the local approving bodies are not being strict, causing social and civic nuisance. Greed should have no part in regulations.

A Husnain Dhaka.

### Creaky bats!

Sir. Watching the second In-

dia-Bangladesh Coca-Cola cricket one-dayer at Bombay on television (May 25), the Bangladeshi batsmen showed themselves in true colour against standard bowling on a bouncing wicket. The bat was not connecting the bat most of the time, and the bad balls could not be hit. The timing of the batsmen was atrocious, the footwork elephantine. The front of the wicket strokes were played across, and nibbling the ball outside the off stump was a standard procedure. There was a reluctance to place the body behind the ball; and middling

the ball was a rarity. The Bangladesh batsmen are badly in need of practice against medium pace, not to speak of fast bowling. They just do not know how to handle a medium pacer on a bouncy wicket. Playing on the front foot appears to be a rare experience for them. They are scared of playing in front of the wicket. The left foot was rarely in line with the ball (for a right hander), and there were huge gaps between the bat and the ball. Even playing a slow spinner like Anil was a torture for them, as he was bowling aggressively up to the batsmen.

and never relenting.

For some strange reason, the batting was made to look very much ordinary and inapt. These weaknesses are revealed when playing a top team like India. With all due respect to Greendge, we need on the home wickets some first-class spinners and a couple of genuine fast bowlers, to wake up the rice and fish eaters (I am one my-

The Indian wicket keeper was kept extremely busy as he had to collect four of the six balls in every over; the other two caressing the pads of the batsman. What happened to the batsmen after winning the toss and electing to bat first?

Nerves? Understood. But why all the batsmen were mesmerised by nothing extraordinary? The Indians did not take the game seriously as they bowled a large percentage of no balls and wide balls. which our bats could not even touch. Such an exhibition of

untouchability is remarkable. One word about the sponsors in holding this series at the peak of the Indian summer. with the midday temperature well over 40°C (and dragging the game to midnight!). Sells more cold drinks than moves the score board or the fielders. In future Bangladesh may think twice before accepting such watery offers, full of sweat and de-

hydration. We have a long way to go to be consistent with the game of cricket, as with the other games and non-games (the Thomas Cup results were blanked out by the local press!). Play cricket. but do not use creaky bats.

(Written before the Indians Batted.)

Dhaka