

## Wake up Power Sector

Chittagong WASA had a taste of consumer bitterness on Tuesday the like of which it must do everything in its power to avert in the future. Livid with anger at 15 straight days of water supply shutdown to several areas of the port city, a 1000-strong agitated crowd stormed the Ctg WASA office demanding an immediate redressal of their grievance. That women among them carried pitchers obviously added an extra bit of poignancy to the demonstrations. Only assurances of an early restoration of supply could calm them.

Now, we are against unruly behaviour in general, but would like to treat the cause-and-effect relationship here with some respect; because quite obviously it has to do with a legitimate civic grievance. What is extremely relevant is the fact that but for the frequent interruptions on the supply of power there would not have been the erratic supply of water we are having to suffer now.

So, the moral of the Chittagong WASA rumpus lands on the doorstep of the PDB, DESA, and above all, the Energy Ministry. It is a wake-up call for the somnolent energy authorities.

If Chittagong has been the unfortunate victim of load-shedding for days together despite being near the heartland of power generation it is evidently Dhaka's turn now to be facing the ordeal along with most parts of the country. Judging by the very high and most frequent incidence of power failures throughout Bangladesh we think the alarm bell is ringing too clearly to ignore anymore. The field situation makes a terrible reading: on Tuesday afternoon the newly built 5th and 6th unit at the country's largest power generation plant in Ghorasal went *kaput* shutting off 420mw of power supply. In the last week Rauzan 2nd unit had to be decommissioned reducing the supply by another 210 mw. The shut-down of these three major units had such a knock-on effect on Tuesday that a supply load worth 700 mw had to be shed by the PDB.

In the Dhaka Metropolitan Area, the load shedding on the night of Tuesday was a crippling 350 mw. To put it in the customary aphorism, the situation is likely to get worse before it gets better. Needless to say, water supply will be affected collateral. Something that the energy ministry and PDB need to be equally wary of is the bad omen for industrial production to go down. What is even worse is that load shedding, and particularly voltage fluctuation beyond a certain band, can damage industrial machinery beyond repair.

## Animal Market Goons

Hit them hard before they strike. Press reports have expressed apprehensions of widespread terrorism centering around stocks of sacrificial animals in the 'haats' meant for them. Before every Eid-ul-Azha a number of places in and around the city are leased out by Dhaka City Corporation for use as temporary 'animal markets'. Seventeen such markets have been authorised by the DCC for the city and reports have it that a ward commissioner has obtained lease for all these markets by using his influence.

The owners of these 'haats' have allegedly started hiring armed cadres and terrorists for helping them to procure sufficient number of animals by coercive methods. The areas of operation for these goons are the surface and riverine routes through which thousands of animals are being transported to these 'haats' of the city. With Eid only four days away their thuggery has picked up pace. It has also been reported that to improve the mobility of these armed goons, engine-driven boats have been made available to them. These cadres are already on the prowl to expand their area of influence and fears were expressed in the reports that blood spilling episodes like in the past may occur this year also. This is an alarming situation and it can not be allowed to go untackled.

Although arrangements are being made to deploy policemen and detectives in and around the animal markets, a strict supervisory surveillance has to be maintained and laws applied ruthlessly without fear or favour. Safety and security of all who will visit these places should be the top concern of the law enforcers.

## An Example Set by PM

It's a noble gesture that comes as a bliss for the country's blind populace, and for that matter, for every citizen who cares for them. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina volunteered to contribute her "corneas" for posthumous transplantation while launching the Begum Fazilatunnessa Eye Care Project on Tuesday. The enthusiasm illustrated by the PM for a noble cause will certainly go a long way to encourage others to follow her example.

The major cause of blindness is cataract, a curable affliction. Bangladesh is agonised with fifteen lakh blind persons representing 1.2 per cent of the total population of the country. Of them, at least sixty per cent suffer due to cataract. This is absolutely curable through surgery if "corneas" are available for transplantation. Bangladesh National Council for the Blind has taken up the initiative to set up nation-wide camps to perform cataract surgeries in alleviating blindness. This should not at all be a tough task on part of physicians if they are assisted by donors willing to part with their corneas when they leave this world. Enabling a blind person to see is nothing short of an angelic feat. On the other hand, persons with corneas of others would feel sublime and lead a life that he or she never dreamt of.

Now that the PM has shown the magnanimous way even the less courageous may feel spirited to emulate her example.

THE crisis in Kosovo appears to have reached the brink. The President of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, seems to thrive on brinksmanship. He should not forget that Bosnia is gone forever and Kosovo is rapidly slipping out of his hands.

The former Yugoslavia started splintering shortly after the death of the last Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito. Armed with extraordinary prestige as the hero of the resistance fighter against Nazi aggression during the Second World War, he fashioned Yugoslavia — a queer ethnic mix of many nationalities of Europe.

It did not survive his death. The Yugoslavia of old is a memory, although not very old. In any case, there is no one to resurrect the ghost of old Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia has been splintering for more than a decade now. Slovenia had a relatively painless separation. Bitter war ensued over Bosnia-Herzegovina. The situation was compounded because in the heart of Europe was emerging a Muslim state. The Bosnians are the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled southern Europe, including Yugoslavia, for nearly six centuries.

In Bosnia, the Serbs of Yugoslavia unleashed their racial hatred against the Turks, who had ruled them for centuries. It turned out to be a murderous, religious war of the

worst kind. The brutalities of the Serbs left a deep scar in the heart of Europe. The International Court of Justice at The Hague in the Netherlands is still trying to lay their hands on the war criminals among the Serbs.

After years of efforts and lot of bloodshed, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke brought about a settlement in Dayton, Ohio in the USA. Fortunately that deal has survived to this day.

The blood in Bosnia did not have time to dry when the world was confronted with a new bullying by Milosevic against Kosovo on the flimsy pretext that Kosovo was a part of Yugoslavia. Ninety per cent of the Kosovars are ethnic Albanians. Of course Milosevic's Serbian forces outnumber and outgun the Kosovars by a very wide margin.

There is no love lost between the Serbs and the Kosovars. The Kosovars have been traumatised by repeated Serbian barbarism of the worst kind. We have witnessed thousands of Kosovars fleeing the snowy mountains of Kosovo and take shelter in neighbouring Macedonia.

The specious pretext used by the Serbs is that Kosovo is a part of Yugoslavia. Yet a nation

is united by voluntary contract and once that is broken there is precious little to hold them together. The Serbs advance the argument that Kosovo is the birth place of Serbian nationalism. Yet memory of such events is growing dimmer by the day.

Kosovars have hardly anything in common with the Serbs. They are of Turkish origin and are Muslims. The Serbs appear to suffer from terrible

Plan, which stopped short of offering independence to the Kosovars but offered a large degree of autonomy.

The Kosovars accepted the Peace Plan and Yugoslavia rejected it. The only major power backing the Serbian position is Russia. Serbs like the Russians are Orthodox Christians. Russia has opposed strenuously and continues to oppose any military solution.

negotiator Richard Holbrooke, acting on behalf of President Bill Clinton and the West, has delivered an ultimatum to Slobodan Milosevic.

In a stark message he has stated that he had come not to negotiate but deliver a message. The message is that either Yugoslavia accept the Peace Plan or face massive military strike. Long talks have been held between Holbrooke and Milosevic and finally it has ended inconclusively.

The West appears ready to unleash military strike. President Bill Clinton went before an American TV audience and explained in great detail the stakes involved. He made out a forceful case for intervention. For he pointed out that the US and the world had to pay a heavy price in Bosnia for long inaction. President Clinton has to carry his Congress with him in a major decision, which is bound to involve US troops, a prospect dreaded by US lawmakers.

Slobodan Milosevic has to face the bitter truth. His Yugoslavia is a vanished dream. His Yugoslavia has splintered irretrievably. His Yugoslavia is waiting for a decent burial. He has also to take account of the forces in presence. On the one hand there is the massive military.

Yugoslavia will do well to bow to the inevitable and spare people of both Serbian and other origin the agony of further bloodshed. Therein lies statesmanship. On the one hand there are Serb forces ready to impose their will on a defiant minority, which has broken all links with Yugoslavia and on the other the massive western forces, whose primary duty is to avoid bloodshed. The sticking point so far appears to be the stationing of NATO forces within Kosovo, if not Yugoslavia. Given the track record of the forces of Milosevic, no other credible measure appears to have any chance of success.

The die is cast. Slobodan Milosevic has to choose peace or utter ruination of his country. On the threshold of the twenty first century in the heart of Europe, it is a grim prospect indeed. Let us hope sanity will prevail.

## The Horizon This Week

Arshad-uz Zaman



inferiority complex because of their past with the Ottoman Empire. Another remarkable feature of the Turks is that they do not lose their identity in foreign soil. They seem to retain their Turkishness although centuries may go by. Turks have not lost their identity although they have lived for centuries in Europe.

In the current phase of the Kosovo crisis, long negotiations have been held in Rambouillet, outside Paris. The meeting has been hosted by France and Britain. They presented a Peace

On the other hand, Yugoslavia is eager to impose a military solution on the tiny minority of Kosovars. She has amassed tanks, artillery and heavy weapons to teach the Kosovars a good lesson. In their plight the Kosovars have no choice but to seek refuge in Macedonia.

Since the Yugoslav leadership will not pay heed to reason, the West led by the USA has amassed considerable weapons, including aircraft for a massive crippling blow to the Yugoslav military establishment. The US

## LETTER FROM AMERICA

### Fences Do Not Make Good Neighbours

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

*Of the three major countries in the subcontinent — Bangladesh, India and Pakistan — none is sure if the other two are happy with their borders. More ominously, they worry whether their neighbour covets their territory. Such explosive mistrust makes for jittery and suspicious neighbours.*

between the US and Canada. There are no fences, real or imagined, separating these two neighbours. There are hundreds of border-crossing locations on land. Immigration officials ask the motorists a few pertinent questions before waving them on. If someone sounds like an American or a Canadian, usually passports are not required.

Indeed, if one flies to the US from Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto, the US immigration formalities are completed on Canadian soil by US Immigration and Naturalization Service personnel! Since there are so many airlines flying between the US and Canada, it makes perfect sense to complete the immigration formalities at the Canadian airports, and then let the passenger go and board tens of different airlines headed for hundreds of US cities. There are no immigration hassles at the destination cities, where all these flights are treated as domestic flights. Can anyone imagine Indian immigration

officials at Dhaka airport, clearing passengers bound for various Indian cities?

American and Canadian professional sports teams do not recognise international boundaries. National Basketball Association (NBA), National (Ice) Hockey League (NHL) and Major League Baseball have teams from both Canada and the US visit each other's home arena to play home and away games. Why is it foolhardy to imagine football clubs from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan forming a single premier league?

Of course things are not as simple as they seem. They never are. Although it has no territorial design on Canada, the United States dominates Canada in every way. It owns most of the Canadian business; 80 per cent of the Canadians live within 150 miles of the US border. Occasionally, Canadians do complain to the Americans about acid rain and the American fishermen's over-

not the Pakistani soldiers gone on a looting and raping spree. After the initial opportunity was squandered, Pakistan's only hope was foreign pressure on its militarily superior neighbour. With the USSR's constant veto in the UN Security Council against the plebiscite in Kashmir, India survived the crucial first years.

There is no such beliefs in the subcontinent, although we have so much in common. Of the three major countries in the subcontinent — Bangladesh, India and Pakistan — none is sure if the other two are happy with their borders. More ominously, they worry whether their neighbour covets their territory. Such explosive mistrust makes for jittery and suspicious neighbours.

It is hard to feel optimistic about the future of India-Pakistan relations. Only less than a year ago, Pakistan matched India's five atomic explosions, "blast for blast." Pakistan's best chance of getting the whole of Kashmir was in the aftermath of partition, when India was not prepared. They would have probably captured Kashmir had

not the Pakistani soldiers gone on a looting and raping spree. After the initial opportunity was squandered, Pakistan's only hope was foreign pressure on its militarily superior neighbour. With the USSR's constant veto in the UN Security Council against the plebiscite in Kashmir, India survived the crucial first years.

After 50 years, no one except Pakistan is interested in revisiting the Kashmir issue. It is unthinkable for Pakistan's mightier neighbour to lapse into unprecedented moral remorse, do the right thing and relinquish a part with its territory, a part that is not already done so. Pakistan

survived the crucial first years. Some day, when the world truly becomes a global village, the people of the future will wonder how the people of the past could have been so primitive; how they could set up artificial barriers to keep the people of the nations apart, and fences to keep neighbours at bay.

## OPINION

### Looking at Cultural Trends

Abul M Ahmad

Those who govern have to filter the advice from the advisors carefully, in public interest. Other interests are subordinately. The expertise, neutrality and moral courage have to be relied upon when basic differences of opinion arise. Sycophancy has to be monitored carefully. In some, there is a tendency to express what the bosses wish to hear.

Later, the field propaganda must be credible to the majority of the citizens, and should not be focused upon one section of the society, regardless of party interest. Vague accusations at generalised opponents with 'conspiracy' and 'anti-national' cooked-up hypotheses and presumptions cease to impress after some time, unless backed up with detailed information, data and evidence.

Here the public is not easily allowed to make its own judgment without coercion. This party of judgment cannot be transferred to any group, as this tool is not transferable. A party to a dispute cannot sit over judgment. Public decisions are always open to public criticism, and have to be tolerated in a decent manner, without getting furious. This is not happening in Bangladesh today. National support and party support are quite different issues.

Spoon-feeding may not be successful in changing quickly basic attitudes. The country-in-danger bogey has been raised. Of course the party can assert the 'conspiracy' is against the party itself, and not against the country — that is perfectly understandable.

A citizen's basic loyalty is to the state, not to a party. But in this 'developing' society, the party comes first, whether in power or in the opposition. The credibility factor of a propaganda campaign is low. Enthusiasm is to be discouraged, as it might misfire — as it does frequently.

The present leadership appears to have unleashed more than the maximum quota of controversies into topical issues, making the situation worse confounded. A confused 'supporter' is unreliable; a point not to be overlooked.

Even granting that relaxation could be tolerated to bridge the gap of couple of decades, there appears to be a tendency to introduce, or reintroduce, certain 'isms' too hurriedly after such gaps.

The new generation, brought up in a topical environment, is more difficult to convert, as they don't 'feel', but have to 'rationalise' any proposal with historical background. History is two-dimensional, while feeling is three-dimensional, hence the hammering has to be carefully planned to soften the resistance. Sufficient time has to be provided for such exercises for self-debate, for arriving at a

personal decision to support a movement or not; or even remain neutral. History reveals that coercion never pays in the long run. Many come with dedicated agenda hurry, and spoil the broth.

Neutrality and dissension have to be respected; it is an individual's right in the restricted sense of personal and individual freedom guaranteed by the UN charter.

This neutral stance is an essential ingredient of social life in the community, and this freedom to choose should not be ignored by the pressure groups, whether for or against a movement.

Unfortunately, in Bangladesh today, neutrality is neither respected nor patronised. The self-seekers and the opportunists set 'popular' trends which erode, and encroach upon, individual liberty, and encourage 'tribalism' politically and socially. Today the citizens are in the grip of political tribalism. This will bring neither peace nor stability.

This is a disturbing trend, and has to be handled carefully, to achieve a minimum level of national consensus, which is lacking today, since 1971. Political handles should not be too long for poking! And, the baton is not a political weapon.

Thus one relevant question arises: how far the 'intellectuals' have free and independent approach and appraisal on different issues, without seeking group conformity under political tutelage? Is it necessary to belong to some camp to be noticed (the musical chair syndrome, a topic frequently discussed in the drawing rooms). What are the trade-offs in lieu of self-liberty and personal freedom from the dictates of regimented or collective thinking? (This is not a revolutionary statement).

That these basic types of questions are being raised in the mind of even a single citizen of the country is not a compliment to the leaders of our society. It means we are still debating at the core or root level.

British India was partitioned; then Pakistan broke up; and now some sections of our society are looking through glass walls. We have to make up our minds and choose the main national priorities without any basic option. It is not a one-party game.

We have been debating and playing deadly games with these options for three decades; and some of these movements are seen as conspiracies and anti-national trends. Why old issues never end and new issues are always cropping up, and some issues are kept pending decade after decade? Such relevant questions cannot be sidetracked. The politicians are the facilitators, not the arbitrators.

## To the Editor...

### Poor politics

Sir, The way the political differences among the different political parties are increasing, I am afraid, it won't take much time to reach a complete breakdown of our national economy and moral and cultural standing. Unfortunately, the vested groups are actually taking advantage of the situation while sufferings of the common and law-abiding citizens are crossing all limits.

I may fervently appeal to all our esteemed political parties to take initiatives for reducing their differences through holding dialogues.

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### Lessons for leaders

Sir, I would like to draw the attention of our Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader to the recent gathering of almost all the world leaders at the funeral of the late King Hussein of Jordan. If our two leading ladies did not watch CNN or BBC then they have missed something even though, I doubt that by watching them they really would have learnt anything.

Well, it was shown that President Clinton arrived at Amman accompanied by three former US presidents in the same plane. Two of these former presidents happened to be from the opposition Republican Party which was trying desperately to impeach Clinton from presidency. The British Prime Minister came in the same plane accompanied by opposition MPs. This only shows that on a common cause they are all together.

Now I ask the PM and the Opposition Leader who cannot come to any consensus about anything what will happen to our children who have to study in this country to make a future for a living? Who will console us, the parents of all these children of this unfortunate nation?

Mohammed Abdullah Mamun  
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### The most innocent programme"

Sir, While announcing the BNP-led opposition alliance's call for 72-hour hartal from February 23-25, BNP SG Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan answered some of the questions asked by the journalists present there.

### Unauthorised constructions</