Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Sunday, October 17, 1999

Loadshedding, Why?

DRIME Minister's personal intercession, voluble I assurances of barge-mounted projects and promised short-circuiting of plant approvals notwithstanding, the daily power generation shortage in the country shows no sign of improving from the 250 megawatt we have known it to be. The current availability gap for Dhaka city alone is estimated between 100 and 150 megawatt. DESA has to switch off the power tap in Dhaka to the extent that the PDB decreases its allocation due to dysfunctional plants. On Friday, this was at its worst as the malfunctioning units at Ghorasal and Rouzan conked out plunging a large part of the metropolis in darkness for hours.

The loadshedding which comes these days without notice nevertheless carries an obligation for the PDB to let the public know the reasons for it and exactly how long it might last. Since power tariffs have been raised from time to time the obligation for the PDB as generator of electricity and the DESA as its supplier increases that much more to keep the people posted about 'a purple patch', as it were.

Only some three weeks back, the metropolis was blissfully free from the type of loadshedding we are having to suffer now. Many people would really like to know what happened to the units at Ghorasal and Rouzan power plants during the brief interregnum to cause such a dearth of power. Except for callous maintenance of the plants we cannot think of anything else.

Our suspicion is that the power authorities somehow think that so long as they maintain steady electric supply to the VIP areas they can wash their hands of their obligations towards the rest of the citizenry. This attitude has led to a pernicious status quo.

Isn't it a fact though, that under some pressing circumstances like when the World Cup Cricket or other major events are staged power failures are scrupulously averted by special measures for fear of public wrath? In times of acute power or water crises security personnel had to guard installations as people concerned took fright of public angst.

So, let's urge the power sector people once again to better their poor maintenance records and stem the system losses which are but reflective of endemic mismanagement and corruption. If they go on failing in their duties complete privatisation would be welcome with competition bringing better rates and better services to the consumers.

IT Opportunities

OVER the last couple of years or so, potential of the IT sector has been a much-belaboured isst , both at the policy-planners' and the end-users' levels. More or less, there has been a consensus that the country must explore the possibilities the information technology presents for phenomenal economic growth. The government has shown a certain level of active interest in this matter by declaring IT a thrust sector, although so far its activism has been largely confined to formation of committees and commissions. In that respect, Professor Muhammad Yunus' observation in the Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Lecture, 1999 on Bangladesh 2010 is not quite apocalyptic, so to speak. What makes his views stand out is that they advocate a participatory tole for the poor in the development effort through IT. In the context of an increasingly expansive information base, his views, extremely optimistic as they seem, are definitely not devoid of logic.

Revolutionary advancement in information technology over the last years, especially introduction of the internet, has brought the countries closer than ever before. Information has become the key exponent of the global market. Unfortunately, we have been quite sluggish to react to the looming opportunities. Most of the area-specific recommendations set forth by Jamilur Reza Commission towards overall development of the IT sector lie unrealised. Overall, the country has not really shown the readiness to meet the challenges of the new era. Neighbouring India already earns about four billion dollars a year from software exports and is contemplating a 100 billion dollar market by the turn of the century. By comparison, with an annual earning of Tk 100 crore, we are cbviously lagging far behind.

The scenario must change. To make sure it does, we must decide whether we really want to make our presence felt in the global IT market. Our decision must entail concrete effort to upgrade the infrastructure. If the government cannot do it by itself, it better engage the private sector. By no means, we should waste the opportunities IT has on offer.

Think of the Students

ISMISSAL of Dr Imam Uddin, an associa Professor at the Orthopedic Department, Un versity of Science and Technology in Chittagong (USTC) gave rise to a chain of inauspicious events. A report in the daily Prothom Alo on Thursday said as a reaction sixty-nine of the teacher's colleagues resigned en masse. This action has not only induced a shutdown of different departments at the institution but subsequently has put to stake

the future of about 800 students there. The fact that a professor has been dismissed may have derogatory implication. But while the resignation of his colleagues may speak of solidarity, it also speaks of their lack of concern for the students, whose future is, without any doubt, their responsibility. They must remember that students

had no role to play in the incident.

It is, however, worth taking into cognizance as to why the reason behind the dismissal has been kept covered. Since the unseated teacher's colleagues are apparently eager to know, the university administration should disclose the reason and, at least for once, listen what they have to say. But despite that, teachers are expected to set aside their discordance with the authority and come to an understanding soon. We expect they should be able to see beyond their personal differences and think about the future of hundreds of students. Educators cannot afford to embark on actions that, one way or the other, go against the interests of those whom they are supposed to educate.

US Rejects the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Finally, the accidents that have taken place in recent weeks in nuclear power plants in Japan and Korea, among others, have heightened fears about the safety of nuclear experiments and arsenals. The possible demise of CTBT makes the scenario even bleaker. A historic opportunity to end five decades of nuclear testing worldwide may have been lost by the action of the US Senate.

1920. The latest action in the US Senate would mean that the treaty would never come into force as US ratification is a legal requirement. It would definitely weaken arms-control efforts around the world and sow doubts about the state of American leadership.

The CTBT is one of the most arsenal and make the nation more vulnerable to nuclear ricomplex treaties ever agreed upon by the international community. It sets out nuclear Frantic efforts to win the disarmament as a principle but vote, including a flurry of lastdiplomatically avoids the poliminute campaigning by President Clinton and other tics of the issue. The treaty, once ratified, would ban all numilitary and civilian leaders clear test explosions, thereby and letters from the heads of state of Britain, France, and constraining the development Germany urging the Senate to of new and more deadly nuclear weapons. The CTBT was negoratify the treaty failed after Democratic Senators said that tiated over almost a three-year period in the Conference on they would not make any more concessions to a small group of Disarmament in Geneva. conservative Republican

Wednesday, the

Republican-controlled

the landmark Compre-hensive

Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). In a

stiff rebuke to the Clinton

administration and a setback

for arms-control efforts. Senate

Republicans rejected the nu-

clear test ban treaty. The mea-

sure fell 19 votes short of the 67

(two-thirds in the US Senate)

needed for ratification. The

Republican opponents of the

treaty argued that the test-ban

treaty's ultimate flaw was that

it would weaken the US nuclear

Senators intent on defeating

particularly significant given

the fact that the last major in-

ternational treaty that was

voted down by the US Congress

was the Versailles Treaty in

The defeat of the CTBT is

vals.

the treaty.

US Senate voted to defeat

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the CTBT in September, 1996. But the treaty cannot come into force until 44 individually named countries ratify it in their own legislatures. These countries include those that are already holding or thought to be holding or de-



Connecting the Dots, Dr. A. R. Chowdhury

arms control.

veloping nuclear capabilities. Once ratification is completed, the treaty calls for the establishment of a global system to detect, locate and identify nuclear explosions. This work is supposed to be carried out by 321 monitoring stations and 16 laboratories throughout the world. The scientists will be able to demand the right to inspect an area if they believe that a nuclear test has been carried out. Since the treaty was opened for signature in late 1996, more than 150 countries including Bangladesh — have

signed the treaty, but it cannot come into force until it is ratified by all 44 countries judged to have nuclear capabilities. Todate, 26 of this group have ratified the treaty.

America's closest European allies - Britain, France and Germany - have ratified the treaty and warned publicly that US failure to follow suit would send a dangerous signal that

Washington is not serious about

Russia and China have signed, but not ratified, the treaty and had been waiting for the US to ratify first. Both India and Pakistan, which carried out tit-for-tat nuclear tests last year, remain opposed to the CTBT, though they have faced massive international pressure to sign. India has publicly argued that the CTBT merely formalises nuclear discrimination, allowing the developed countries to maintain weapons but preventing others from de-

veloping an adequate nuclear deterrent.

Whatever the critics might say, the areaty makes it much harder for the countries with advanced nuclear weapons to produce new and more threatening types of nuclear warheads. And it also helps to prevent nations with smaller arsenals - like India and Pakistan - from making nuclear warheads, which are more easily deliverable by ballistic missiles. The treaty would have certainly helped to block dangerous nuclear competition and new nuclear threats from emerging, thereby enhancing

global security. The failure to ratify the treaty would definitely set back efforts to control the spread of terror weapons worldwide.

Several new developments are likely to occur. First, it would weaken the effectiveness of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, since some key member nations would feel let-down if the treaty faltered due to the US inaction.

Second, failure by the US to honour its commitment to the

test ban treaty would undercut US status as a world leader. with far reaching effects. It is likely that other nations would interpret the US action as its rejection of a more peaceful future. It then becomes likely that some nations may again test a nuclear weapon, setting off a dangerous political and military chain reaction.

Third, it would undermine global efforts to rein in India and Pakistan's dangerous nuclear arms competition. Military and political pressure would build in these two countries to conduct additional nuclear testing. Further testing by either country would accelerate their nuclear arms race thereby increasing uncertainty in the entire region. This week's coup in nuclear-aspirant Pakistan adds more uncertainty to the scenario.

Finally, the accidents that have taken place in recent weeks in nuclear power plants in Japan and Korea, among others, have heightened fears about the safety of nuclear experiments and arsenals. The possible demise of CTBT makes the scenario even bleaker. A historic opportunity to end five decades of nuclear testing worldwide may have been lost by the action of the US Senate.

Generals Smother Democracy in Pakistan, Again

In an era when democracies are flourishing in countries hitherto known as undemocratic or

regimented societies, the developments in Pakistan have come as a severe jolt, for it only reverses

the trend. Pakistan's new rulers will demonstrate wisdom by arranging immediate governance by

civilians instead of seeking to prolong their grip on power on the pretext of "saving the nation from

MATTERS ##

THE army take-over in Pakistan and the subsequent A declaration of state of emergency do not quite come as a total surprise for those who are aware of the role of the military in the country's politics and have watched the development over the last two or three months. Nevertheless. that the sequence of events over the last few days has been dramatic, even melodramatic, is definitely beyond doubt. The army chief, a key figure in the national affairs for the last few months in the context of the domestic situation, was on an official trip to Colombo, which itself was rather unusual at a time which was definitely not normal in Pakistan by all accounts. Then, he was sacked by the prime minister when he was on a flight from Colombo to Karachi and was whisked away by troops in several jeeps from the airport. It was not clear at that time whether the sacked army chief General Pervez Musharraf was taken into custody or he was calling the shots. His daughter was not allowed to see him at the airport. Pakistan television showed that chief of the army intelligence Lieutenant General Khawja Ziauddin, a confidante of Nawaz Sharif who was appointed new army chief, was closeted with the prime minister. Naturally, who would think that things were under control of the dismissed army chief? But within hours, it became clear that he was very much at the centre-stage. Gen. Musharraf addressed the nation at the small hours of the day and announced the dismissal of the Sharif government. Then Pakistan awaited anxiously for his next move as he had neither declared martial law nor dissolved the

national and provincial as-

O quote a saying embla-

L the Pakistan Military

zoned in the Ingall Hall in

ruination or providing an efficient and honest administration". semblies. Finally, after two days, unquestionably a long time under these circumstances, the army has shown its claws. A state of emergency has been declared, constitution suspended, parliament dissolved and Gen. Musharraf declared himself as the supreme leader. But again, this is a strange condition as martial law has not been declared and the supreme leader of the new situation is not the chief martial law administrator but the chief executive. Indeed, the whole thing is

South Asia but also for democ-

racies all over the world. The Pakistan scene as it stands now is not a bolt from the blue but many thought it could have been avoided. After the state department in the United States on September 20 had warned against an army take-over, general belief was that the military might not probably not step in, even though the Sharif government had appeared on a slippery ground for several factors. Nevertheless, the army has eventually taken over to mark another chapter of undemocratic rule in a country where institutionalisation of democracy has often been thwarted by politicians' failure to live up to people's expectations and an overzealous armed forces. Nawaz Sharif's PML party won more than two-thirds majority in the national assembly in last elections. But he faced problems

from unexpected quarters after

coming back to power two and a

half years ago with a massive

AROUND US Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury mandate. While the weak opposition was in no position to threat him politically, the prime minister was at loggerheads with president Faroog Leghari, chief justice and later sad not only for Pakistan and

with the army chief. At times Nawaz seemed vulnerable but he came out successful while al the three had to go. He appointed Gen. Pervez Musharraf to replace gen. Jehangir Keramat The prime minister was accused by his political critics of highhandedness and "dictatorial tendencies under the garb of democracy" but he was firm in the saddle despite occasional troubles.

The Kargil issue suddenly turned the table against him Occupation of several peaks in the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC) initially came as a shot in the arms for the government and the army. But it later backfired as international opinion went against Pakistan and India also launched all-out efforts to regain the peaks. Nawaz had to fly to Washignton on a fleeting visit and agree with president Bill Clinton to pull back the Islamabad-backed "intruders" as India called them and "freedom fighters of Kashmir" as Pakistan described

amidst a national clamour of

total capitulation on the crisis Pakistan officially never accepted that its soldiers were involved in "Kargil" but many died like many Indian soldiers and officers. But those Pakistanis killed or sacrificed lives could not be called as "martyrs' as they were not acknowledged officially by Pakistan. The army was known to be against such a compromise but the political leadership bowed because of international pressure and fearing financial sanctions. Pakistan was in dire need of massive IMF and other loans This was the beginning of a rift between the government and the army and controversy arose as to who had designed the "Kargil" episode. The prime minister sought to distance from the planning but the army chief made it clear that "all were on the board". The looming fears eventually erupted into the sacking of Gen. Musharraf, who must have done all the ground work of a reprisal in face of eventuality before he left for Colombo. This speaks of an army planning for take-over. This time Nawaz's luck seems to have run out and a political leader with sound majority in parliament has

been dismissed and put under

house arrest while the country is on an indefinite period of military rule.

Arguably, Nawaz Sahrif's government was committing excesses and much to the

anger of the opposition leaders. But he was halfway through the five-year term. The opposition was calling for midterm polls after the "Kargil" debacle as the 19 political parties began an orchestrated campaign. A stubborn Nawaz lately agreed for talk with opposition. But what these opposition leaders do after a civilian government has been outsted? Former prime Benazir Bhutto, cricket idolturned politician Imran Khan and others were apparently gleeful over the development while ritualistically calling for early polls. Some even expressed keenness to share power in an possible interim government with the army. The army ignored Benazir's plea for co-operation sensing that it would jeopardise whatever credibility it earned by removing Nawaz by accepting corrupt Benazir and her husband. The approach of most of the opposition leaders in Pakistan in this condition speaks their scant regards for democratic values. They are more concerned about political adversaries personally rather than ethics and greater norms. Admittedly, they will go all-out against Sharif but could they not uncompromisingly demand for 10 room of undemocratic rule!

Here, they have fallen much

short of their expected role and

they might have to pay dearly for this expediency.

Two democratically elected prime ministers æ Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz sharif æ were accused of massive corruption and most Pakistanis believed it. Undoubtedly, politicians queer pitch of democracy when their acts contributes to public commotion. They were not alert about this aspect despite warnings. Former president Farooq Leghari, who now heads a small political party, alleges that both the former prime ministers amassed huge wealth. Why the politicians cannot remain cautious against too much of concentration of power and refrain from temptation of material gains! This has once again come to the fore sharply as evidenced from the unpopularity against democratic governments in Pakistan.

But all said and done, military cannot rule the roost. Nothing has happened in Pakistan that can necessitate dismissal of elected government and suspension of the constitution. It is only normal that the army regime will now hurl abuses and bring corruption and other charges against the politicians particularly those were in power till they toppled the government. But will these solve nation's problems? In an era when democracies are flourishing in countries hitherto known as undemocratic or regimented societies, the developments in Pakistan have come as a severe jolt, for it only reverses the trend. Pakistan's new rulers will demonstrate wisdom by arranging immediate governance by civilians instead of seeking to prolong their grip on power on the pretext of "saving the nation from ruination or providing an efficient and honest administration".

Inevitable Power Play

Anybody who supports a takeover by the Army is not in his (or her) right mind. Pakistan has many external and internal threats that the Armed Forces have to confront, involvement in the governance mode will have debilitating effect on their efficiency and in the performance of their primary mission of defending the integrity and sovereignty of the nation.

ASISEEIT

Academy (PMA), "it is not what happens to you that matters but how you behave while it is happening" (paraphrasing of it would be "it is not the exit that inet, in a recent interview on matters but the manner of it"). BBC has used the words "poten-That Mian Nawaz Sharif was tate" and "imperial", even though she is speaking as a on a sinking ship was quite apparent for some time, he simply woman politically scorned her hastened the process by trying description of him is uncomsomething that had been anticfortably close on both counts, ipated by the military hierarchy, an attempt to sack the infor a "democrat". The former cumbent Chief and put his orig-PM had closed himself to adinal favourite in place. Having, vice except for an inner circle, a got away with it on Sep 29, 1998 bunch of mindless sycophants with JK, fostering Ziauddin as that usually traveled with him the new Chief of the Army on far and wide. Survival seemed the afternoon of Oct 12, 1999 to be the primary mission, to was not only amateurish, it was the exclusion of everything else, simply mind-boggling, particuin particular good governance. larly in the face of clear warn-For the past year many had reings in the print media from peatedly tried to point this out to him, some bluntly, some friend and foe alike that GHQ was braced for it as far back as obliquely, in the face of the flat-Oct 98. Gen Mosharraf, then the tery that surrounded him, none new COAS, had completed the deterrence by his round of post-"shoot" the messenger of bad ings of hand-picked officers tidings. On the other hand, uninto critical three-star slots, like his elder brother, Mian particularly Chief of General Shahbaz Sharif may be more Staff (CGS), and Commanders abrasive, he was "hands-on" in 10 Corps (Pindi), 4 Corps the matter of governance and (Lahore) and 5 Corps (Karachi). Punjab flourished (relatively Mian Nawaz Sharif is a very speaking) in comparison to nice man personally but politiother provinces. Frankly PML cally his personality seems to (N) would be better off in the fuchange from Dr. Jekyll to that

of Mr. Hyde. The last three man is credible about whatever years have shown he learnt no he promises and he delivers. lessons from the previous three The Chief Executive, as the years out in the cold beginning new military ruler is called, 1993. Ms Abida Hussain MNA. has to address several macroand former Minister in his cab-

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi adjectives one can hardly use overhauling the system besides running the day-to-day affairs of government. Before any elections are held the electoral system has to be reformed by bringing in "run-off" elections to ensure a majority vote and also "proportional representation" to ensure that both "women" and "minorities" can have a say in governance. Simieffectively. The tendency was to larly we keep talking about accountability, only an independent body free of personal prejudice and motivation will be able to carry out a thorough process without fear or favour to anyone, politician, bureaucrat or military person. There will be temptation to settle personal scores, those who rise above such selfish vendettas ture as PML (S). At least the will be the "right stuff" leaders

> One of the major problems facing this country besides sectarianism is ethnicity. Fully fifty years into our existence our integrity as a nation has

this nation needs.

been compromised by problems relating to polarization of society not only on these two counts but also much worse on the basis of haves and have-nots, the bad economic situation having further compounded this crisis. To foster national integration we must introduce "national service" for all high school (intermediate) leaving children (excepting those in the highest 25% to continue their studies). Putting them into one big melting pot will not only build unity and cohesiveness but also be of vast intrinsic value to the individual, both personally and as a member of a team.

Before addressing the last macro-issue we must immediately carry out verifiable and meaningful land reforms. These are already on the statute books. Unless we break the hold of the feudals, there is no hope for democracy in Pakistan, thereafter local management at the grassroots level must be

transferred to the elected representatives of the people. Whatever the period of the interim process there is no bar to having Local Bodies elections so as to empower the people and make them participate in the managing of their affairs of government at the local bodies level. Unless we have people's participation, the concept of nationhood as we perceive it will be lost. Without that par-ticipation, the basis of democracy becomes a farce. Look at Mian Nawaz Sharif's PML(N), for 48 hours not a single person protested his unceremonious departure, barely a few hours earlier they were singing his praises in droves. That hypocrisy sums up our political culture, out of sight out of

Unlike the previous Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) whose many changes of decision (the first one, "elections in 90 days") caused the CMLA to be known as "Cancel My Last Announcement", Gen Mosharraf began his new life with a short brief statement to the nation to set at rest rumours. He chose not to announce any course of events till he had consulted with his colleagues and others about the entire ramifications of governing Pakistan, whether outright

as Martial Law or monitoring a caretaker government. A few days do not make a difference when the entire existence of the nation is at stake, also there was a constitutional lacuna here that he has to live with. The declaration of the state of emergency though delayed, was almost a relief. While Martial Law is not mentioned, the country is effectively under military

Anybody who supports a takeover by the Army is not in his (or her) right mind. Pakistan has many external and internal threats that the Armed Forces have to confront, involvement in the governance mode will have debilitating effect on their efficiency and in the performance of their primary mission of defending the integrity and sovereignty of the nation. A small coterie will always believe in total management a la uniform, but the country's (and the Army's) good is always best served by the Armed Forces staying away from running the country on a day to day basis. However, circumstances beyond their control were forced onto the Army, the inevitable power play being triggered by the attempted civilian coup by the former PM (formulated by his incredible "Think Tank" on board the aircraft enroute to Abu Dhabi). When the die was cast, there were no options left except to either act or sit back and see a split in the Army lead to possible civil war.

in the lattor...

Number '32'

Sir. At present, the '32' telephone subscribers are facing serious problems in receiving international calls and other problems like cross-connection, wrong number, no dial tone, limited access to modern

telecommunications etc. Most of the time, as informed to me by my foreign callers, their calls go to wrong number repeatedly for which they are not only sustaining financial loss but also experienc-

ing embarrassing situation. Would the T&T authorities please take some policy-decision to contain the sufferings of the poor '32' telephone users?

M Zahidul Haque Associate Professor, BAI Dhaka-1207

Problems and solutions

issues having relevance to

Sir, Dhaka's three acute and main problems and solutions thereof are as follows for pragmatic and concrete action by the authorities concerned:

 Road traffic jam. Solutions: i) All unauthorised shops, establishments, workshops and godowns on the public road, encroachment and illegal occupation of public roads should be done away with by DCC and DMP

ii) A fixed number of rickshaws with distinct mark and colour on the body of the vehicle should be allowed to ply only in a particular area by DCC and DMP. iii) Buses on different routes should ply from one end to another without waiting more

than two minutes at any stop under DMP's supervision. 2) Electricity loadshedding.

Solution: i) All illegal connections and pilferage in meter reading should be stopped by DESA and DESCO. 3) Insufficient water supply.

Solution: i) Instead of underground water. WASA should supply surface water.

O. H. Kabir 6. Hare Street Wart, Dhaka-1203.

DCC antics Sir. The recent meeting between the PM and the Mayor and his municipal commis-

sioners to find practical solu-

tions to the day to day problems

of the city appears to be a sham

and an embarrassing display of sycophancy, as seen on BTV, and subsequent reports in the

The problem with this regime has been the emphasis on the past and the future, with naive incapability to handle the present, to satisfy the hardened and frustrated residents of Dhaka metropolis (now megapolis), which, as is apparent to everyone, has been allowed to grow uncontrolled, due to lack of will, expertise, and resourc-efulness. We seem to have peculiar notions of licence and freedom, treating the good and

> thereby disproving the very ex-istence of the balancing scales of judgement. The meeting wasted time

talking on future development

the bad on equal footing,

of the city, which has been well publicised in the mass media. Nothing new came out of it. The agenda of the meeting should have contained only one item: daily maintenance of Dhaka. and the bottlenecks arising

thereof. The lack of political will was not discussed in much depth, and there was hardly any criticism of the state of affairs inside and outside the DCC. In the ward where I reside. the positive presence of my (or the Mayor's?) municipal commissioner is not evident to me, judging by the chaos all around (the gripe list was ventilated earlier in the press; all complaints have a common denominator). Most of the problems are not due to absence of rules and regulations, but the

non-implementation of the same. And the DCC is not the only victim, judging by the current mores of the society. A Zabr. Dhaka

Match sticks

Sir. It refers to the letter on carborised match sticks (DS Sep 30). I do not know about 'carborised' sticks, but I read a long time ago that borax is added to the head mixture to stop the after-glow after throwing away the lighted stick, to minimise fire hazard.

Now, some better brands of matches are available in the market which use better quality wood to avoid splitting during the lighting stroke, and the after-glow dies down quickly.

Dhaka