

## Corridor and transit facilities to neighbours

MD SHOFIULLAH

WE have been encountering the question of providing corridor and transit facilities to our neighbours ever since the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state. But this could not be resolved as yet and hence it has come up to the present government. So this is to be considered very deeply and a suitable solution at our advantage should be formulated.

Careful observation of the events of European countries is very interesting. Almost all the countries of Europe have been trying utmost to form an economic community (EEC) and they ultimately formed the EU and European Commission (EC). The latest development is the introduction of a common currency known as Euro and the next is to establish the United States of Europe (USE). Mankind witnessed two Great wars (1914-18 and 1939-45) in the last century due to these countries of Europe. In 1914 Austria attacked Serbia and the extreme nationalist policy encouraged Germany to join the war with Austria. In 1939 again the Nazism encouraged Germany to attack Poland. In both the wars mankind had to sustain immense loss of lives and properties and also experienced infinite sufferings. Supremacy of ethnic groups one over the other and hatred amongst themselves led them to the war engulfing soon the whole of the continent. This in no time involved the countries of the other continents. Forgetting such extreme bitterness within not more than a decade, why did these countries begin to try to be united?

It is mentionable that these nations of Europe in the mediaeval ages conquered almost all the nations of the world and plundered their wealth to amass them in their own countries. With this they built up condign infrastructure for development and they continued this up to the second war when they had to withdraw from many colonies but they never forget to maintain and continue their supremacy by any means. Now is the age of knowledge. These small countries of

Europe have been trying to be united to apply their concerted intellectual efforts to innovate some new technology through research and development and by the application of these technologies they will develop products to sell in the world market. For communication and transportation they have established systems as if the whole of Europe is already a vast unique state. All the nations are connected in a web of continuous road, rail, air, navigational routes tele and satellite communications. If one enters a country in Europe, roaming almost all the countries of the continent is not a problem at all. All the 15 nations in the EU have created unique facilities for communications. One cannot even realize the existence of their geographical boundaries. Euro-Tunnel has

with its immediate neighbour is the spirit of SAARC for its smooth functioning. It is quite usual that Bangladesh will strengthen her relationship with her neighbours, because in any national development the cooperation of the neighbours can contribute much.

Almost three sides of Bangladesh are encircled by India: West Bengal to the west, west Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya to the north, and Tripura and Mizoram to the east. About eleven hundred miles is the stretch of border line with India. Immediately to the north and north east of Bangladesh lie Arunachal, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipure, Tripura, and Mizoram, together popularly known as seven sisters, a vast land about twice the size of Bangladesh. These states are land-locked, uneven and

using our port facilities if corridor facilities are given. Much was heard in this regard during the past regime. But nothing in concrete could be seen. On the other hand, the streams with very strong current from the high mountains of Nepal have potential for generation of huge amount of hydroelectricity which may be used in this region. But the country definitely needs cooperation of the regional countries.

India is the big brother in this region. It is the reality. This greatness of India is not due to her vast size. She had to earn this silently ever since her independence in 1947 through wise planning and working with head, heart and hands (3Hs) as was advised by the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi. Her achievement in science and tech-

India, Nepal or Bhutan but economically beneficial to us also. Therefore by letting this locational advantage to other if we can gain, what is the harm? Rather we will accrue direct benefit from passengers' service and transportation of goods. The indirect bearings will also be observed upon the general people. This will definitely create a congenial environment of brotherly neighbourhood. Besides Nepal and Bhutan for corridor facilities will definitely pay tariff. This will give us a great advantage in foreign currency earning.

It is quite desirable that we consider the dark sides beforehand. Because we are to look before we leap. At the very beginning to facilitate international vehicles to ply we are to adapt our roads for heavy traffic, if necessary we are to reconstruct somewhere so that there is a smooth going. Then the question of wear and tear of the roads must come into consideration. This will also be a very big task for us. We should not lose sight of the chance of criminals entering into our country easily. Moreover we are in the vicinity of golden triangle of smuggling and trafficking. So a conscious circle expresses its concern lest it not become haven of those antisocial elements. Terrorism, murder and antisocial activities would be rampant then, they say. Even the sovereignty of the country may be at stake, some says. Undoubtedly these issues will come up and we are to resolve them with much importance and prudence.

Smuggling, terrorist and antisocial activities we encounter everyday in our day to day life. When corridor and transit facilities will be offered, the parties concerned will also be involved in checking which will facilitate to the bad elements responsible for nefarious activities. It is useless to raise the question of sovereignty under this condition. Now-a-days the case of economic sovereignty gets priority. Besides under such arrangement no complain on the question of sovereignty has so far been heard from the European community. Then why do we raise such question?

What will be gain by offering the transit/corridor facilities to India, Nepal or Bhutan? Like the natural resources of a country, its geographical location is also a wealth it is proved to be economically beneficial to others. If the borrowing country pays a part of its gains to the lending country yet the borrowing country gains by using the territory. Here also our territory has been proved not only to be essential to

hilly. A narrow strip of such almost inaccessible land is the only means of their connection with the main land of India and the alternative is air communication. These states are absolutely bereft of sea-vicinity. So for quick communication and dispensation of transportables, India has been looking for transit facilities through Bangladesh and she also needs the port facilities of Chittagong and Mongla for the same purpose. It is very clear that the transit India looks for is for her economic will being, easy and cheaper transportation of goods. Naturally India is to reciprocate.

Nepal and Bhutan to the north of us are also our neighbours and they are again land-locked and far away from sea. They can never make commerce and trade with the outer world by sea. Nepal is separated from Bangladesh by a narrow strip of Indian land. Nepal has been looking for corridor facilities from India and Bangladesh for long to use our port facilities which would undoubtedly benefit the economy of that country. In a similar manner Bhutan also may be benefited by

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effaced the discreteness of Britain from the main land continent. United Kingdom is no more an island. Starting from any point of UK one can travel through the whole of the continent even bus.

For maintaining their superiority in economic field, in fact, these European countries are determined to adapt themselves to whatever change the advancement of civilization accompanies. To achieve that goal, they are even ready to erase the bitter memories of the history, if necessary. But in this part of the world, we have the same hatred amongst the ethnic groups, religious communities and among the states. One giant step forward from such attitudinal bondage was the formation of SAARC. SAARC was established embodying Seven South Asian Countries in 1985 under the initiative of the late President Ziaur Rahman India, Sri-Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In the meantime SAARC has contributed to the development of this region. That each and every country of this region will consolidate its relation

with its immediate neighbour is the spirit of SAARC for its smooth functioning. It is quite usual that Bangladesh will strengthen her relationship with her neighbours, because in any national development the cooperation of the neighbours can contribute much.

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## WTO: Seattle scars removed in Doha

AMM SHAHABUDDIN

DOHA (Qatar) succeeding headway in putting the de-railed 'WTO train' on the right track after a strenuous and grueling six-day (9-14 November) marathon efforts by the 142 members of the world trade body, thereby launching the much-expected new round of global multilateral trade talks. It was, indeed, a miracle. An almost 'lost case' was salvaged from the 'garbage', so to say, turning a clash of interests into a healthy compromise between the developing and the developed countries. Thus what was considered a day-dream even by leading WTO members, suddenly and rather unexpectedly came true, thanks to the sense of 'flexibility' and give-and-take shown by hitherto warring factions. As a result, the 'Doha Deceleration' or the Doha Round for launching the new trade talk could see the light. It ended well -- to the surprise of many.

It is a harsh reality that the sheer hostility and insistence on several vital trade issues by the developed countries, ignoring the demands of the developing countries, together with the militant street demonstra-

tions against WTO policies, led to the inevitable collapse of the Seattle meeting. That is why Mike Moore, the former PM of New Zealand, and the power-sharing incumbent Director-General of WTO, who will step down in July next year, making room for Supachai, former trade Minister of Thailand, who will take over in August next, raised an alarm signal on the eve of the Doha meeting by saying that "if Doha turned out to be another flop, it could prompt (member) countries to turn their backs on the multilateral trading system, sending them in search of regional trade bouts instead." US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick also warned that "uncertainty looms" over the conference. Indian Commerce Minister said that the developing countries have a mill-stone hanging around their necks, leaving the balance of power in global negotiations very much with the developed countries. So the alarm bell was ringing.

**Danger signal**  
Perhaps, raising of such danger signals before the Doha talks had staved, hit the right chord in the developed countries that now have started apprehending stormy days ahead. They were scared that they were going to lose all the 'eggs' that

they had placed in the 'WTO basket' and Moore's warning that failure of Doha would force the developing countries "to turn their backs to multilateral trading system" worked well. They had already had the bitter taste of Seattle fiasco. So once bitten, they were twice shy. That led to the healthy compromise between the First World and the Third World, so to say. The table was literally turned down-side up to the satisfaction of all. The French delegate called it a "slap in the face of isolationism," while the US Trade Representative Zoellick said, immediately after the new round was launched, that "to-day the members of WTO have sent a powerful signal to the world... we have removed the stain of Seattle."

There was general welcome by the WTO trade ministers for the successful launching of the 'Doha Round' of trade talks, outlining the agenda for the new round of negotiations beginning in January 2002 to help forge a new trade deal by 2005, with the aim of lifting millions from poverty and boosting the tottering world economy which had further nose-dive after the shocking terrorist attacks in the USA, opening a way for a new economic recession. The new series of talks would include cutting of farm subsidies and industrial tariffs and a host of other problems affecting global trade. It would cover different sectors, including agriculture, public health, environment workers' rights, investment and anti-dumping.

**Developing countries' success**  
In this context, the most encouraging is the unprecedented success achieved by the developing countries in the Health Sector, under which WTO granted them a better access to cheap drugs against deadly diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other epidemics, thus allowing them to produce or import generic versions of medicines, generally produced by the developed countries under the WTO patent protection right. Brazil and India will be the most benefited nations, as both of them are well-known as big 'copycat' generic drugs-producers.

In the field of agriculture, where the developing countries had although opposed heavy agricultural export subsidies by developed countries, particularly America, it has been decided to hold negotiations "to phase out" such subsidies. As regards worker's rights and environmental question in the field of industries, where the developing countries had opposed developed countries' demand for their inclusion in the agenda, the Doha conference agreed that the ILO was the "appropriate venue" for discussing the issues. The decision was quite in keeping with the demands of the developing countries.

As regards the environmental question, it has been decided to support EU call for determining the relationship between trade and environment. The negotiations on liberalising

investment policies were, however, put off until after the next WTO ministerial meeting in 2003.

As the 'derailed-train' of WTO has started moving again on the right track much depends on the cooperation and goodwill of the two groups, developing and developed countries, of which the developing countries form three-quarters of the total WTO membership of 142. It would, therefore, be too early to predict or paint rose pictures about the future achievements. It is better not to count the chickens before they are hatched. That the developed countries had learnt the bitter lesson at Seattle meeting in 1999 is quite reflective in their policies shown at Doha meeting. They had already given up their earlier unbending attitude. If necessary they should be ready to bend further to meet the legitimate and genuine demands of the developing countries, so far neglected and overlooked by them willy-nilly.

**One hand washes the other**  
One hand always washes the other, as they say, is now writ large on the walls of the developed countries. They should follow religiously this universal dictum while dealing with the developing world henceforth to maintain the much-needed balance in the global economic development through the newly-launched round of trade talks. It would also help to restore credibility of the WTO to the developing countries which generally consider the world trade body as a 'club of the developed countries,' who had exploited the WTO as an instrument in exploiting the poor nations, by launching rounds after rounds of trade talks in the name of liberalising global economy for the benefit of the poor nations. The fruits of the last Round, known as, 'Uruguay Round' (1987-1994) are yet to be tasted by the developing countries. They are still hanging as illusive before them. Let us hope the new Doha Round (2002-2005) would be able to erase the stains left by the Uruguay Round.

However, to achieve the much-coveted results, the developing countries would have to assert for a bigger role in the decision-making process of the WTO, from which they had been left out in the cold so far. Thailand's former Trade Minister, Supachai, a power-sharing DG of WTO, who will take over from Mike Moore, in August, next year, has raised new hopes in this respect when he had declared on the eve of WTO Doha conference in favour of giving the developing countries "a longed-for-voice" at the "top-table of the global commerce," to ensure them "a place along side the West and Japan" in the new round of global trade talks.

**China's entry: A historic event**  
WTO's Doha conference can be called 'historic,' not only for the successful launching of the new round of trade talks and breaking the hurdles that created the Seattle fiasco, but also for China's entry as a member of the organisation after long 14 years of struggle to get in but

consistently opposed by the West, particularly America, on some plea or other. The 'road blockade' was removed to the satisfaction of all after a 'big deal' reached between China and America, under which China will open its markets to America and America had granted China the PNTR (Permanent Normal Trade Relations) status, replacing the old annual trade reviews and pacts, as demanded by China to be treated at par with other countries. Being the world's most populous country, and a booming economy, China is destined to play a big role in the WTO, giving a louder and stronger voice, in shaping the Asian economy in particular, and the global economy in general. China's presence in the world trade organization will also go a long way in giving a boost to its dream of becoming an Asian economic giant, perhaps a big rival of Japan.

The writer is a retired UN official.

## Canadian policy on gas exports

DAVID PRESTON

THE Canadian gas sector was deregulated in 1987. Exports are now determined by a "Market-Based Procedure" (MBP) rather than by a set number of years of reserves for domestic use. In actual terms Canada has maintained roughly 10 years of reserves despite a dramatic increase in domestic consumption and in exports.

**The impact on gas development of the new policy**

In 1985 the amount of gas produced in Canada was 2Tcf (trillion cubic feet), divided between domestic use 1.27Tcf and export, 750Mcf. This was the same level as the previous twenty years.

Since the new market based system was introduced in 1985, production has more than doubled to 5Tcf with domestic consumption doubling to over 2Tcf and gas exports quadrupling to over 3Tcf. Export revenues are over \$6 billion.

The reason for this is that the market-based system has encouraged the development of new fields. Reserves have grown. Estimates of the ultimate potential of the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin have increased, and this potential is now estimated to be 50 per cent higher than in 1985. Since domestic use and exports have grown, this has meant that the ratio of reserves to production has remained constant at 10, the same as in the USA and UK.

**A brief history serves to explain why Canada adopted MBP**

The modern era of Canadian gas production began in the 1940s with discoveries in Western Canada. The Province of Alberta Government in 1949 announced that there would have to be a supply of gas equal to 50 years of Alberta's consumption before removals of gas would be allowed from the province.

In 1955, the mandatory surplus test was reduced to 30 years.

In 1959, the new Federal Canadian regulator, the National Energy Board, decided to adopt the same basic policy as Alberta.

Gas exports grew steadily but unspectacularly. These policies endured because the gas fields did not require additional capital expenditure to maintain supply. Therefore the gas expansion of the period was based largely on the exploration successes of the late 1940 and early 1950s.

There was little incentive to develop new Canadian supplies as the regulatory system did not encourage exploration and competition which might have raised prices and brought more gas on stream.

Consequently no new export licences were granted and export volumes to the US were stagnant at about 1.0-Tcf annually for over 20

years

**The new policy**

The Canadian Conservative Government, elected in 1984, decided that energy markets could/should function in the same way as other metals and mineral products.

The Government decided that prices should be determinable by buyers and sellers who dealt directly with each other.

The objective was to create an industry that will attract its own supply.

The National Energy Board (NEB) is required by the National Energy Board Act to ensure that natural gas exports will be surplus to "reasonably foreseeable" Canadian requirements before it issues an export licence.

In July 1987, the NEB adopted the new procedure, known as the Market-Based Procedure (MBP), by

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which it makes this assessment.

The basic premise of the MBP is that the market will work to satisfy Canadian requirements for natural gas at fair market prices. For this to be fulfilled, markets must be competitive, there should be no abuse of market power, and all buyers should have access to gas on similar terms and conditions.

An October 1985 Agreement between the Government of Canada and the producing Provinces allowed gas buyers, to directly contract for supplies with producers, marketers and other agents at freely negotiated prices.

Producers have benefited from expanded export and domestic sales and higher revenues. Governments and industries have benefited from lower gas prices.

The pace of technological change and improved knowledge of the producing basin in western Canada indicates that supply can be expected to meet Canadian and export demand for the foreseeable future.

David Preston is the High Commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh. His article is primarily excerpted from the report of the National Energy Board of Canada.

aggressively cutting costs and rapidly expanding export sales. As a result, gas replacement costs in Alberta have been reduced in real terms by about 50 per cent since 1985.

**Gas markets and sales practice**

Prior to price deregulation, most gas was sold by merchant pipelines to local distribution companies (LDCs) under long-term contracts. With the unbundling of pipeline transportation services and establishment of open access, hundreds of buyers and sellers entered the market. Gas is now sold directly by producers, aggregators, and a variety of marketing companies and brokers to LDCs, industrial, commercial and residential consumers.

**Gas transportation sector**

The signatory parties recognized that the pipeline transmission sector of the gas industry would continue to be regulated because of its natural monopoly characteristics. A necessary requirement for establishing a competitive gas market was that open non-discriminatory access be provided to all shippers on inter-provincial gas pipelines.

Canadian natural gas pipelines have expanded considerably since deregulation to accommodate the growth in gas sales, particularly to export markets. Throughputs have increased rapidly while tolls have remained relatively constant, due to economies of scale and partly because the under-utilized capacity in the late 1980s allowed some growth in throughput.


**The benefits**

Overall, the NEB has found that the natural gas industry is efficient and responsive to the demands of the marketplace. The pipeline sector has developed a new range of services which, along with improved storage capability, has greatly enhanced the flexibility and reliability of the delivery system. The gas producing sector has cut costs sharply and has increased production dramatically, despite persistently low wellhead prices.

Subsequent to 1985 no export licences have been denied. Canadian gas buyers have, on average, paid prices equal to, or lower than, the prices paid by US buyers.

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Dr. Rubaiul Murshed

**All health information to keep you up to date**

### Cold and flu

**ARE YOU AT RISK?**

Tick the following boxes if you have these symptoms:

- Do you have a fever?
- Are you tired and lethargic?
- Do you have a headache?
- Do you have a runny or blocked nose?
- Are you sneezing?
- Is your throat sore?
- Do you have a cough?

If you ticked two or more boxes, you may have a cold or flu and should seek medical advice.

Consult your doctor if you are very unwell or develop signs of a secondary infection. Secondary infection occurs after the initial cold or flu. It occurs because the virus has weakened your defences against other germs and they are able to establish and infect your body.

See your doctor if you have:

- a very sore, swollen throat which is persistent after one or two days
- an earache
- coughing up of coloured or bloody phlegm
- painful sinuses
- severe headaches
- shortness of breath
- high fever (over 37.9°C)
- symptoms that are not improving after five to seven days.

**WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?**

Symptoms of cold and flu infections can start less than 24 hours or up to five days after exposure.

**They include:**

- fever
- runny or blocked nose
- lethargy or tiredness
- a cough
- sore throat
- muscle pains
- headaches

**TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR A COUGH**

**Expectorants** may increase the watery content of mucus, stimulate coughing and make mucus easier to cough up.

**Suppressants** sedate the part of the brain that controls the coughing reflex and are ideal for a dry cough.

**Mucolytics** liquify sticky, excessive mucus making it easier to cough up. They are ideal for chesty coughs.

