

Cyprus, Turkey and EU

United we stand--divided we fall?



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

started path with goodwill and of course we would like to achieve result". Kofi Annan characterised his plan as a "victory for all sides".

Turkish Cypriots in the north and the Greek Cypriots in the south will vote separately to determine if they want a united Cyprus or a divided Cyprus. In the event of a positive vote on 24 April, Cyprus will join the power-

swallow the whole of Cyprus in utter disregard of the Agreement of 1960. Through this agreement the British colonial masters agreed to grant independence to the island and Cyprus became a member of the UN. Cyprus became a Federation with rights reserved for the two communities. I was working in the Pakistan Mission to the UN in the sixties and the Turkish Cypriots and the

aegis of the Secretary General Kofi Annan. Sensing that the parties might get bogged down in their own rhetorics, the parties had handed down the last word to Kofi Annan. He was given the authority to put the entire question to referendum. That is what he has done by fixing the date on 24 April.

It is going to be a historic day for the 800,000 inhabitants of the island. They will decide if they wish to remain a "United Republic of Cyprus" and join the powerful European Union or land into total uncertainty through a negative vote. The referendum is also going to snap the umbilical cord between Nicosia and Ankara and Athens. From 1 May 2004 Cyprus may have to learn to live by herself.

What about Turkish membership of the EU, which has been hanging fire since long? Among the EU members France and Germany are acknowledged as leaders. Germany seems to have veered round to support Turkish membership of the EU. France seems to be keeping her cards close to her chest. Turkey has through decades of unflagging campaigning managed to get a number of countries on her side, mainly the Mediterranean ones. In the Helsinki Summit a little over two years ago, Turkey was promised definite membership. Turkey has been pushing hard for a date to start negotiations in view of her membership. Turkey has taken sweeping steps to bring her at par and better with other member states. She has brought about significant changes in her human rights record.

Although EU has been careful not to establish a link between EU membership and troops withdrawal from Cyprus, the unstated fact is that the EU has driven hard to establish that link. Now that Turkey has gone the extra mile by promising withdrawal of troops and thus leaving the settlement in the hands of the islanders, EU will be hard put to find obstacles to Turkish membership of the EU.

Close on the heels of a Cyprus settlement we may witness dramatic inclusion of a first Muslim country in the EU -- so far a Christian club.

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THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

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ful European Union on 1 May 2004. The EU is slated to expand to 25 members with the inclusion of 10 new member states mainly from Eastern Europe. In the event of a negative vote the consequences will be far reaching and difficult to predict at this stage. It would mean that South Cyprus would join the EU and North Cyprus would have an unenviable existence as an adjunct of Turkey. The situation will be further complicated by the fact that 40,000 Turkish troops will be stationed in Northern Cyprus.

In his closing address UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated, "I hope for a reunited Cyprus to accede to the European Union on May 1. The time for negotiations and consultations is over. The time for decision and action has arrived. The choice is not between this settlement and some other magical or mythical solution. The choice is between this settlement and no settlement".

The most remarkable aspect of the Annan Plan is no doubt the Turkish agreement to virtually withdraw her troops from the island. It is worth recalling that those troops went to Northern Cyprus in 1974, when following a military coup in Greece, the Greek Colonels attempted to

Greek Cypriots were at daggers drawn. The reason that the British plan did not work was that both the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots looked to Ankara and Athens and the ties of the mother countries were very strong indeed. The Turkish troops that landed in 1974 in Northern Cyprus by virtue of Turkey's status as a guarantor of 1960 Agreement has been providing security to the ethnic Turks on the island.

Much water has flown down the Mediterranean since then. The most meaningful change has taken place with the arrival of the EU on the scene. The ties between the Turks and the Greeks with their mother countries have consequently slackened. The islanders have fixed their gaze on the vast territory of the EU with lucrative economic prospects. There was a referendum in the recent past on Turkish Cyprus and it turned out into a vote of confidence on Turkish Cypriot President Rauf Denktash, who has all along taken a hard line in negotiations with his Greek counterparts. Indeed he is reported to have rejected the Annan Plan.

Prior to the current negotiations extensive consultations took place in New York under the

Utilising whole jute plant as raw material for pulp and paper

DR. G. MOHIUDDIN

DEMAND for pulp and paper has increased significantly in Bangladesh and other jute and kenaf producing countries. Forest land resource of this country is very limited. With the increase of population, pressure on forest land has increased and resulted in the large scale destruction of forest. With the limited and dwindling forest resources it is not possible to depend on the conventional raw material for pulp and paper.

Background

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) is the major user of fibrous raw material in the country and use bamboo, wood and bagasse for the production of pulp and paper. Private sector paper and board mills are small and rely on imported pulp and waste paper. The paper industry of the country is small compared to present day world standards.

Recently annual plants have become preferred raw material in the world for pulp and paper. Jute/Kenaf is an annual plant. The stem of jute/kenaf consists of two fibrous components, both of which are suitable for paper and paper board products. The bark fibre is about 2.5 mm in length, constitutes 25 to 35 per cent by weight, and shorter core fibre about 0.6 mm in length constitutes 60-65 per cent by weight of the stem. The bark (fibrous material) is suitable for quality paper making and is similar to softwood fibres. Core fibre has strength properties similar to that of hard wood fibres. Jute has been traditionally used for packaging, transport and storage of agricultural products including sacks, bags, carpet backing cloth, etc. But traditional products are facing severe competition due to the emergence of synthetic substitutes.

Extensive research by scientists from various Institutes and pulp and paper mills led to the conclusion that most conventional pulping techniques are suitable for jute/kenaf pulping. Whole jute/kenaf has been successfully tried as a raw material for pulp and paper in Bangladesh, China, India, Thailand and USA.

Ministry of Industry approached IJO in 1995 to look for the availability of suitable enzyme that could be applied to produce pulp and paper.

While preparing the project the problems faced by the BCIC using green jute plant were taken into consideration. The project has been designed incorporating the development and progress made in the different institutes and paper mills, of USA, Canada and Europe.

Although demand for pulp and paper in North America and Europe is stable, the demand in Asia has increased significantly especially in Bangladesh, China, India and

Thailand.

Since January 2001, International Jute Study Group (IJSJG) (Former IJO) has been implementing a project to utilise whole jute as raw material for pulp and paper. The funding of the project has been provided by Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), the Government of France, The European Commission (EC) and the Government of Bangladesh.

Objective of the project

The project aims at developing technology for the use of green jute/kenaf (whole jute plant) as raw material for the production of pulp for paper. In

jute plant farmers were contacted and negotiated for supplying green jute plant. While fixing the price of jute plant normal sale proceed of jute fibre and that of stick were counted together and from this amount cost of normal retting was deducted. After thorough discussion with them (farmers), price of jute plant was fixed at Tk. 1,050/ton (after defoliation).

Chipping, storing and application of fungicide: In the past major problems were in the areas of storing, chipping and use of proper fungicide for long-term storage. This project has taken care of all the aforesaid problems and overcome them successfully.

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The pulp and paper industry normally uses chemical or mechanical methods or a combination of the two to produce pulp of desired character. Chemical pulping accounts for about 75 per cent of the world pulp production. It has the disadvantage of being capital and energy intensive. Mechanical pulping is electrical energy intensive and yields paper with less strength. These disadvantages limit the use of mechanical pulping in many grades of paper.

Optimisation of pulping

In this project BCIC/IJSJG (Bangladesh), CPPRI (India) and CTP (France) have optimised the conditions of pulping in laboratory scale using two main chemical processes (Soda AQ and Kraft). Bleaching of Jute Pulp was also carried out at all these institutes. ISO brightness of 80-81 per cent was obtained using various sequences of bleaching. Similarly mechanical pulping (high yielding) conditions have been optimised at Centre Technique du Papier (CTP, France) and Agrotechnological Research Institute (ATO), The Netherlands.

Large scale and commercial trial

Procurement: For the procurement of jute plant, scientists of IJSJG/BCIC visited several jute-growing areas of Bangladesh. For jute fibre, there are several agencies and local traders. Jute plants are not generally sold in the open market. In order to procure the

Cooking: After the optimization of pulping IJSJG/BCIC scientists conducted one large scale trial for the production of kraft paper (14 MT of dried jute plant which is equivalent to 56 MT of green jute plant) and one commercial trial for the production of writing paper (80 MT of dried jute plant which is equivalent to 320 MT of green jute plant) in April and October respectively.

In the past, globe digester was used for the production of pulp and paper using green jute plant. It may be mentioned here that Phoenix Paper Mill of Thailand has been producing pulp using whole kenaf for the last 23 years in stationary digester. After the visit of IJSJG/BCIC scientist to Phoenix, large scale and commercial trials were conducted in the conventional digester successfully. For the production of writing paper, the conventional chlorine-alkali-hypo chloride sequences were used. After adding necessary adhesives, kraft paper of 75 gsm was made at KPM. Similarly, writing paper of 70 gsm was also produced at KPM using their existing paper machine.

Physical properties of writing paper have also been compared with that

made of bamboo and tropical wood. Physical properties of jute writing paper are superior to paper made from bamboo and tropical wood.

Different elements of cost have been calculated on the basis of present cost figures of KPM, BCIC. The cost estimates did not include the cost element of transportation. This cost element will vary from locational point. Yield of chemical pulping is about 45-48 per cent, which is suitable for writing and printing paper. However, in case of mechanical pulping yield is 85-88 per cent, which is suitable for newsprint. We strongly feel that in order to avoid unnecessary cost of transportation, jute/kenaf-based paper mill should be set up at the vicinity of jute/kenaf growing areas. The cost of making paper from whole jute plant appears to be the same as that of bamboo but cheaper than wood.

The project has also introduced biotechnological measures in the optimised condition of chemical and mechanical pulping. It has been possible to reduce chemical charge and cooking time. In the mechanical process, it has been possible to reduce 30 per cent energy requirement. It is also possible to reduce chemical requirement in various bleaching sequences by 15 and 45 per cent using enzyme and oxygen respectively.

In case of chemical pulping, cost of production can be reduced if a new mill is set up where efficiency of chemical recovery can be improved by 10-12 per cent. Introduction of oxygen / enzyme can also reduce bleaching cost significantly. Application of oxygen / enzyme will make the product cost effective and environment friendly.

UNIDO is in the process of appointing an international consultant for the techno economic feasibility study. A workshop is being planned in the last week of April to disseminate the results of the project.

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