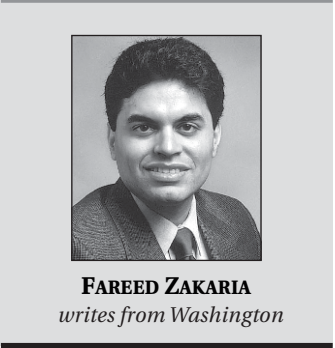


Don't blame the Saudis



LAST week oil prices finally stopped rising, they now hover around \$43 a barrel, a 20-year high. The average American family will spend about\$2,700 on gasoline this year (driving 22,000 miles). That's twice as much as it spent on gas two years ago. These prices are having a predictable consequence. The consumer price index has risen 4.9 percent to date, versus 1.9 percent last year. And last week President Bush's economic adviser, Gregory Mankiw, acknowledged that a \$10 rise in the price of oil probably translates into a half-percentage-point drag on economic growth. For countries like Japan, China and India, the effect is even greater. How did this happen? And can Washington -- or anybody -- do much aboutit?

The answer that flashed on our television screens is instability in the Middle East. Pipeline explosions in Iraq, tensions with Iran and terror attacks in Saudi Arabia all contribute to what analysts call the "security premium" on the price of oil. But that premium might be exaggerated. Oil prices are rising for broader, structural reasons. The world may have to get used to expensive oil.

The largest ingredient in current oil prices has been a massive increase in demand. This year's growth is double what it has been for the past six years (on average). That's because the United States is in recovery, Japan's economy is finally back and Asia -- particularly China and India -- is growing fast. In fact, this year is likely to have the strongest global growth on record in three decades -- unless oil priceschokeit off.

While demand is up, supply can't

year the markets could absorb the loss of Iraqi oil (during the war). This year they can't. Iraq has to stay online. And all these other countries have to stay stable.

There is only one country with significant surplus capacity Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has increased its production repeatedly over the past two years, or else prices would be higher still than they are. And the Saudis are making investments that will increase their surplus capacity by

production in Alaska. John Kerry calls for increased conservation. Bush is correct to argue that some increase in American production is important. In 1973, the United States imported one third of its oil from abroad. Today it imports two thirds. And exploration does not have to be ecologically devastating. Even if the major oilfields that are assumed to exist there were discovered in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, only a few thousand acres of the 19 million-acre refuge would beaffected.

But the more lasting solution to America's oil problem has to come from energy efficiency. American demand is the gorilla fueling high oil prices -- more than instability or the rise of China or anything else. Between 1990 and 2000 the global trade in oil increased by 9.5 billion barrels. Half of that was accounted for by the rise in U.S. imports.

America is consuming more because it is growing more -- but also because over the past two decades, it has become much less efficient in its use of gasoline, the only major industrial country to slide backward. The reason is simple: three letters -- SUV. In 1990 sport utility vehicles made up 5 percent of America's cars. Today they make up 55 percent. They violate all energy-efficiency standards because of an absurd loophole in the law that allows them to be classified as trucks.

Bashing the Saudis is easy these days. Controlling our own wastefulness is more difficult. But make no mistake as to which one will make a difference.

Fareed Zakaria is Editor of Newsweek International.
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Can they keep Bangladesh safe?

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

IS there any iota of doubt that law and order situation in Bangladesh has been deteriorating beyond any imagination? I was shocked at the news of the death and injury of leaders and activists of the Awami League on August 21 while they were attending political meeting.

This is not an isolated incident of grievous nature, which has evoked country wide condemnation. As a spectator from abroad, I have been watching with concern the series of bomb blasts and killings of political opponents and businessmen all over the country. There has been apparently no positive action initiated by the present ruling government of BNP-Jamat alliance to stop the killings of people irrespective of party affiliation. The recent attempt on the life of British High Commissioner in Sylhet is the glaring example of increasing incidents of bomb blasts in the country. A bomb was targeted at the British High Commissioner on May 21 when he was leaving the sacred shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal after offering prayer. Was it not a heinous attempt on the life of British High Commissioner, who happens to be born in Sylhet? In fact, the British High Commissioner being of Bengali origin, we should feel proud of him in Bangladesh. Investigation into this incident suggests that Islamic militant groups had a hand in such bomb blasts.

Providing security to the people belonging to any creed, caste, or colour, according to the constitutional provision, is the responsibility of the government in power. Failure to stop unabated rise of bomb blasts and killings implies that the ruling government has no plan effective enough to seize with the challenging task of apprehending

culprits.

Similar law and order situation existed during the five year rule of Awami League before the election took place in 2001. BNP's election pledge was that law and order in the country would remain a top priority and would be brought under control if BNP was voted to power. Unfortunately, the situation has deteriorated from bad to worse with the assumption of power by BNP in collusion with Jamat-e-Islam. It was the prime responsibility of the

meeting of all political parties to hold open discussion on the situation, and suggestions emerged from the meeting should be immediately implemented in the interest of the country.

Reports published in foreign media suggest that such attacks are on the increase as a result of the present government's leniency towards Islamic militant groups in Bangladesh. Apart from these kinds of attacks, there are recurring reports of hauls of foreign-made arms and ammunition, including

discuss this problem immediately to have peaceful life for the people of both countries. The Indian government's recent proposal of joint operation needs to be studied to take urgent action to stop recurring bomb blasts. Without India's cooperation it might be a difficult task to tackle this growing menace.

The emergence of a militant group in the north-west of the country by the name Jagrata Muslim Janata (JMJ) is another glaring example of growing Islamic militant group. The government's indifferent attitude towards unjustified and illogical demands by militant groups to declare Ahmadiyyas as non-Muslim has also encouraged militants to gather strength.

We may recall in this connection the cancellation of the visit of President Bill Clinton during Awami League regime to national monument in Savar to lay wreath to show honour to the war of liberation as the US security personnel pointed to the risk involved.

As of now, no top leader of a militant group has been arrested nor has any clue been unearthed as to why so many killings are taking place. A large number of intelligence agencies are working in the country. It is amazing to note that no intelligence agency has succeeded in apprehending the leader of any militant group. In view of this growing menace, there is a clear need to overhaul intelligence agencies and to strengthen their operational capacity by providing equipment needed to operate such exercises. Intelligence agency official should be provided with proper training at Interpol and Scotland Yard police headquarters in England.

As a matter of fact, there should be coordination among the agencies. Apart from overhauling, it is felt that law enforcing agencies should be given enough power to arrest culprits on the basis of intelligence reports, and no amount of lobbying in favour of suspected criminals should be entertained by any law enforcing agency. The court will decide the case on the basis of proven evidence. No political element, including the ruling party or official of the law enforcing agencies, will be permitted to intervene in such arrests. There should be provision for cash award for efficiency in apprehending culprits. Disciplinary action leading to jail should be instituted against officials of the law enforcing agencies including Superintendent of Police for negligence of duty or inefficiency in performing duty.

Mohammad Amjad Hossain is a former diplomat.

Integrated pest management in agriculture

Genesis, expansion and benefit

M TARIQUL ISLAM

AGRICULTURE is the backbone of the economy of Bangladesh as it contributes 32 per cent to our GDP. Out of this, 22 per cent comes only from the crop sub-sector, which is the largest sub-sector of agriculture. Bangladesh is still facing the problem of maintaining a sufficient food production level at a sustainable basis in order to feed the increasing population, although there has been an increase in the rice production in recent years, reaching a level of about 26 million metric tons per annum. About 84 per cent of the total population lives in the rural areas and directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture for livelihood. As our cultivable land is decreasing every year, the only possibility is to increase the production per unit area. Reducing the crop damage due to pest attack can make a significant contribution to increase in production.

"Pest" in this scenario is referred to organisms such as, insects, pathogens,

weeds, nematodes, mites, rodents and birds. It is estimated that the annual loss of crops due to insect pests alone is 16 per cent for rice, 11 per cent for wheat, 20 per cent for sugarcane, 25 per cent for vegetables, 15 per cent for jute and 25 per cent for pulse. Our farmers use both traditional and modern methods to control pests. Chemical control (usage of chemical pesticides) in Bangladesh has been the primary method of pest control in the past. Till 1974, the Government promoted the use of pesticides by supplying them to farmers free of cost (100 per cent subsidy). During 1974 this subsidy had been reduced to 50 per cent. By 1979, the subsidy was completely withdrawn and the private sector was allowed to cater to all the pesticide demand throughout the country. In 2003, 3,866 metric tons of active ingredients of pesticides were used in Bangladesh. There are serious negative consequences to the import and usage of chemical pesticides, which are: (a) all these pesticides are imported every year expending hard-earned foreign exchange, (b) indiscriminate and

excessive use of pesticides and the long-term dependency on them threaten the sustainability of agricultural production and (c) usage of chemical pesticides, to manage pests, has harmful effect on humans, animals and plant life and thus is a threat to the overall environment.

Therefore, with a view to overcoming these problems, a need to find an alternative to this reliance on pesticides has become imperative and subsequently, the government has adopted the environment friendly Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach for controlling pests, which at present is considered to be the most appropriate method in this respect. Since then, IPM has been included in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) stating:

In the Fifth Plan Period, the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programme will be intensified and expanded in order to safeguard crops from pests and combat environmental degradation due to pesticide uses. Collaboration among the local government representatives, extension workers and NGOs will be sought to expand IPM programme.

Having created much awareness among the farmers, policy makers, politicians, and the general public of the country, the first national conference on IPM was held on 11 February 1999 at the Central Extension Resources Development Institute (CERDI), Gazipur. As a result, the need for formulating a national policy on IPM was considered.

There are many definitions of IPM, but Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations defines IPM as:

A pest management system that, in the context of the associated environment and the population dynamics of the pest species, utilizes all suitable techniques and methods in as compatible a manner as possible and maintains the pest populations at levels below those causing economic injury.

The IPM activities first started in Bangladesh in 1981 with the introduction of the 1st phase of FAO's inter-country programme (ICP) in rice crop. This has played a very significant role in promoting the IPM concept and approach among the donor community. DAE/UNDP/FAO IPM project, funded by UNDP (United Nations Development Program), started in 1997 and DAE-DANIDA Strengthening Plan Protection Services (SPPS) project, funded by DANIDA (Danish International Development Assistance), started in 1997. One of the main objectives of these two projects was to develop and implement the National IPM Policy. Several workshops and discussion meetings were held at national level on IPM Policy and the two projects helped in preparing the drafts of the National IPM Policy. During this period the two projects also provided IPM training to build the IPM training capacity of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and introduced Farmers' Field Schools (FFS) for training of the farmers on IPM. A number of persons from various NGOs were also given training on IPM. Consequently, a number of IPM projects, executed by different government departments and NGOs, in rice and vegetables came into existence. Through the activities of such projects, a large number of core IPM trainers were developed. A total of 1,137 DAE officials, 300 persons from different NGOs and 829 farmer trainers (FT) were given season-long IMP training through several Training of Trainers (ToT) courses.

After the closure of DAE-UNDP/FAO IPM project in 2001 the SPPS project continued its efforts in full swing in proceeding and facilitating the approval of the IPM Policy. The SPPS project

revised further the draft National IPM Policy as per requirement of the Steering Committee and submitted the 11th draft to the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). The final draft was approved by the Cabinet in April 2002 and subsequently came into gazette notification in May 2002.

The 1st phase of the SPPS project ended in June 2002 and the 2nd phase started from September 2002. One of the objectives of the 2nd phase is to assist the DAE to develop the strategy and action plan for the implementation of IPM Policy. The 2nd phase of the project distributed copies of the Bangla version up to the upazila offices of the 201 upazilas in which the project is operating right now.

The primary objective of the IPM policy is to enable farmers to grow healthy crops in an increased manner and thereby increase their income on a sustainable basis while improving the environment and community health.

IPM training methods in Bangladesh have been designed in such a way that even the illiterate farmers are able to understand and practice because the majority of the farmers in our country cannot read and write.

At present, several organisations/agencies and NGOs are working on IPM but the DANIDA funded 2nd phase of SPPS project is exclusively working on rice and vegetable IPM. The core activity of 2nd phase of SPPS project is to disseminate IPM knowledge through Farmers' Field Schools (FFS). In the 2nd phase of the project of the project the target is to establish a total of 7,800 FFS (4,680 in rice and 3,120 in vegetables) in 201 upazilas of 64 districts and train a total of 195,000 farmers (25 in each FFS) on IPM. In addition, 1,950,000 farmers will be exposed to IPM activities through 7,800 field days. For sustainability of IPM in Bangladesh, the component will also promote the establishment of 7,800 IPM clubs in 201 upazilas and also develop 300 farmer trainers (FT) for expansion of IPM activities through farmer-to-farmer training programme.

The FFS has been proven by the IPM programme in Bangladesh to be a solid and practical mechanism through which new concepts and messages can be conveyed to the farming community where the literacy rate is very low. The FFS, after the end of 14 sessions, are converted to IPM Clubs with the original 25 IPM trained farmers as the club members. The IPM Club concept has proven itself in maintaining the sustainability of the IPM concept amongst the farmer community.

IPM Clubs, with little support from SPPS project, are run by the farmers (FFS graduates) for the farmers in their community. These IPM trained farmers provide IPM services, advice and knowledge to the others. The members of the club meet regularly and discuss field situations, exchange ideas and find solutions to the problems. This is an excellent way of promoting community IPM. The clubs have their own ways of generating funds. They charge a monthly membership fee. The income generating activities range from chicken and duck farming to buying and renting rickshaws, micro credit management, fish culture in rice fields and ponds, to producing and selling healthy seeds etc. Presently, the IPM club is a small new unit in the community but it is a community organisation, which is organised and owned by the community.

It has been clearly understood that DAE/DANIDA funded SPPS project has left a very positive and effective impression in the process of formulating the National IPM Policy and implementing the IPM practice country wide. The awareness of IPM created by the project, amongst the farmers, policy makers,

elites and general public, is of enormous magnitude. It has also played a paramount role in establishing a firm ground and infrastructure that can work efficiently and effectively for the promotion, expansion and sustainability of IPM in Bangladesh.

The results of the impact assessment studies highlight the success of the project. Having gained the IPM knowledge, the rice farmers, have been able to reduce the use of pesticides by about 85-95 per cent with an increase of yield of about 10-16 per cent compared to that of the untrained farmers. Similarly, IPM trained vegetable farmers have been able to reduce the use of pesticides use by about 55-80 per cent with an increase of yield of about 12-19 per cent. A number of studies have shown that the adoption rate is close to 95 per cent and estimated internal rate of return (IRR) on project investments in increased household income is 220 -- 250 per cent year (estimated over 20 years).

Considering the positive impact of IPM knowledge, the Government of Bangladesh has started the process of

implementing the National IPM Policy. Accordingly, the SPPS project is assisting DAE in the preparation of a strategy and action plan for the implementation of the National IPM Policy involving all the stakeholders. It is highly desired that the government will implement the National IPM Policy and take all necessary steps for the expansion of IPM activities throughout the country. Essential measures and careful planning should be adopted to ensure the widespread dissemination of IPM knowledge throughout the country covering all the upazilas. The government may invite other agencies, NGOs and donors to take part in this important programme in a well coordinated manner, ensuring at the same time to make use of the vast experience that the SPPS project already has, so that the poor farmers of Bangladesh can grow healthy crops, reap better income and at the same time keep the degrading environment clean and safe.

M Tariqul Islam is Administrative Officer, DAE-DANIDA SPPS Project.

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