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Solar energy option

The reality is that at present there is acute scarcity of gas. On an average, around 500MW of power cannot be generated due to lack of supply of gas every day. Petro Bangla has requested BPDB not to construct any more gas based power plants. Before 2013 Petro Bangla cannot commit gas supply to any new power station. It may so happen that gas may not be available at all for power generation after 2015 as per newspaper reports.

Coal is stuck up in the question of 'open cut' or 'bore cut'. The national coal policy could not yet be finalized due to this tangle. In Barapukuria 2x125MW capacity steam power stations are now run by Barapukuria coal. Another 1x125MW steam power station is supposed to be built in the same premises with the available Barapukuria coal but it is still uncertain as to when it will come up.

The situation of hydro power in the country is bleak. The only hydro power station in Kaptai (capacity 230 MW) is generating 80-100MW due to low water level in the Karnafuli river catchments area. The river basin is already filled up by silt which requires dredging. Moreover, upstream water flow has been reduced due to reduced rain-

fall, obstacles in the upstream like dams etc. Record shows that during the last 5-6 years with some exception the water level in the Karnafuli river basin was about 8-10ft below the rule curve throughout the year resulting in less power generation.

The nuclear power option is very much complicated comprising many questions like technology, expertise, uranium fuel availability, hazardous waste disposal, environment hazard, cost, IAEA's clearance etc. We should start it immediately but we have to go a long way to derive the fruits.



For wind energy, as it appears from various studies, the cut off speed of wind should be more than 3m/sec which is seldom available continuously throughout the year, even throughout the day. 4x250KW wind power turbines installed in Muhurir char Feni as a pilot project did not prove to be very much viable. Some more wind turbines-- 20x50KW-- have recently been installed in Kutubdia, the result of which is still under examination for future guidance.

Then what option is available for us for power generation? The answer is solar energy. It is the general understanding that solar home systems are particularly suitable for those areas which have no access to conventional electricity. This understanding needs to be changed and it should be encouraged, installed and expanded in the urban areas too i.e. all over the country. Thus, in the long run a remarkable amount of conventional electricity can be saved and transferred to electricity starved areas and load shedding can be avoided.

We should arrange for conventional power by whatever means possible and at the same time we should go strong with solar energy.
Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura, Dhaka

Let there be light

Nowadays load shedding is almost a daily occurrence in cities and suburbs. There is hardly any area which is not affected by it. The industrial units are paralysed by load shedding. Production is hampered due to failure of electricity. In 2008 the average generation of electricity was around 3600-3700 MW whereas the demand was around 5000MW. The whole country is bound to collapse if the present condition of load shedding doesn't improve. Mismanagement, some vested quarters and limited resources are also responsible for this. Our power sector is passing through a crunch time as the demand for electricity outstrips supply, making the problem multidimensional.

The problem has to be solved.
Zafar Akbar
Bangladesh Islami University
Maniknagar
Bishwa Road
Dhaka

Water crisis

Acute water shortage, abominable water pollution, steady fall of ground water level and what not! All the rivers around the city, Buriganga, Shitalakhya and Turag, are dead. All these combined together is posing a threat to our very survival. So, let us work and find an alternate source of fresh water.

To my mind, the river Jamuna in Tangail should be a suitable source of water. Let a water treatment plant be installed in Tangail with pipes laid out right up to Dhaka to carry the treated water.

H. Rahman
Banani, Dhaka

Pay commission

The last caretaker government formed a pay commission. Recently, they submitted their report to the government.

In this report they fixed Tk 4,000 as the lowest amount of basic pay instead of Tk 2,400. The highest salary will be Tk 42,000. The increase for the lowest scale is 66.67%, but, on the other hand, for the highest scale it is 82.1 percent.

Why this discrimination?
Mahfuzur Rahman Manik
Student, IER
Dhaka University

Another menace

A new virus which is the combination of viruses found in humans and swine have created havoc and panic around the world. Though the infection and death are comparatively low, the fear of an outbreak and lack of anti-virus drug is a matter of concern.

The fear of a swine flu outbreak is adding to the miseries of people at the time of the economic slow down. Many peoples ask why such disasters are occurring. The simple answer is that mankind is acting against the teachings of religions.

Mohammad Faruk
Nurjahan Road
Mohammadpur
Dhaka

Mobilise public opinion

This is with reference to Editorial: "Growing Taliban threat to Pakistan," (May 2).

Referring to the operation against the Taliban, former Pakistan Foreign Secretary Najmuddin Shaikh wrote recently in Lahore's Daily Times: "...to be able to continue this operation, the army and the government will need public support and for that the media has to play a far more constructive role than it has been inclined to play so far."

Despite the fact that the Taliban have been brutalising fellow Pakistanis in the areas controlled by them, the press and the pundits with few exceptions have failed to inform the public about the threat the Taliban and their acolytes pose to Pakistan. Like Hitler's willing executioners, who slaughtered thousands of their compatriots while blaming the Jews for their suffering, the Taliban are slaughtering Pakistanis while blaming America and India. This is why the public remains totally indifferent to the daily bombings and beheadings by the Taliban. Pakistan must mobilise public opinion in this protracted fight against the Taliban.
Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Pak-Afghan crisis

I was reading an article by Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury in a Dhaka daily (May 3, 2009). It was written about the importance of keeping Pakistan undivided and maintaining its existence and the negative consequences the countries in the sub-continent can face if Pakistan were to collapse. He very correctly pointed out the fact that the Taliban militants, who are now becoming increasingly dangerous for Pakistan, are basically the creation of the UK and the US (the US scheme to finance and train militants in Pakistan to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, during the 80s). Mr. Gaffar in his article refers to the recent statement of US Secretary of State-- Hillary Clinton-- where she herself has admitted, and rarely have we heard US high officials being so candid and truthful, that the US is to a very large extent responsible for the present sorry state of Pakistan.

Furthermore, he went on to highlight another very important aspect of the situation in Pakistan. He wrote that the intervention of the UK and US armed forces in both Afghanistan and Pakistan is not seen in good light by the people in these countries. They see this emergence of foreign forces, in their regions, as a symbol of imperialism and thus the Taliban is enjoying direct or tacit support among people in these countries as well as the support of a majority portion of the Pakistan army. So, unless the US occupying forces withdraw from

Afghanistan, the democratic forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan will not be able to become strong. And at the same time the withdrawal of US troops will reduce whatever support the Taliban presently enjoys, among the general people in these two countries.

He suggests that the only way this conflict can be overcome is to ensure withdrawal of US troops (as war is not the solution) and undertake huge infrastructure rebuilding and rehabilitation



projects in the war-ravaged areas, under the supervision of the UN, and finally arrange regional peace meetings where the representatives of Taliban have to be invited (the cities the example of the IRA of Ireland here). Otherwise, if Pakistan breaks due to civil war or if US forces occupy Pakistan, then the entire sub-continent's security will be under threat.

Wasif Wahed
One-mail

Dictionary

We use dictionaries to check the correct spellings of the words. But do all dictionaries available in our markets contain correct spellings?

Today I am referring to English to Bengali dictionaries. In my opinion, people in our country use Asutush Dev's dictionary more than others. Our markets are flooded with pirated copies which are full of countless misspelled words. There are some dictionaries in other names and some professors' names are mentioned as their compilers. They are nothing but Dev's dictionary with some simple changes and with mistakes too.

How can students and people learn correct spellings?
Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Optimum use of electricity

The government plan to clip spending (Daily Star, May 01) is very welcome indeed. If implemented, they should have far reaching effects on our nation's health. This, however, is going to take considerable time.

What I intend to talk about is a matter of more immediate and urgent concern. You guessed it right: electricity and water. Everybody is talking about electricity generation. But what about consumption? Can we not exercise economy in the use of electricity? Surely we can if we really want to.

You all know, maximum

load shedding takes place during working hours.

There should be immediate improvement in electricity and water supply if we drastically cut electricity consumption in offices and shops during working hours. This seems difficult but I am sure it is possible.

The first requirement is the government's will to enforce austerity in electricity consumption. A mass awareness move needs to be started in the print and electronic media on the subject immediately. The government should enforce strict discipline in the electricity use in all offices and shops all over the country. The ministers themselves should practise economy before asking others to follow. Supervisors at different levels of govt, non govt and private offices should be specifically tasked to monitor these activities regularly.

I suggest the following austerity moves to save electricity:

1. Do not switch on lights during daylight hours unless absolutely necessary.
2. Move curtains away from the windows to let in natural light.
3. Get used to working in optimum lighting conditions.
4. Switch off lights/fans/ACs which are not necessary.
5. When leaving office, switch off lights/fans/ACs and all other non-essential electrical appliances.
6. Switch off computers when not in use.
7. Do not put ACs at too cold

settings (suggested setting: 25 degrees Celsius).

8. Switch off 50% of the lights in brightly lit shops.

9. Use low energy electric bulbs.

10. Do not use electric heaters/ovens. Use gas ovens/cookers.

11. Ban decorative electric lighting on all official or private occasions.

We should all recognise that the present electric supply situation is desperate. Urgent and serious endeavours are needed to prevent the looming disaster.

Brig. Gen. Shahjahan Hafiz
Gulshan, Dhaka

A tale of two armies

Turkey and Pakistan have got a few similarities and many dissimilarities. Both countries are Muslim majority and powerful armies play vital roles in national affairs. But similarities end here. Turkey with a perennial Kurd problem is heading toward a prosperous goal whereas Pakistan is on an apparent peril. In diverse situations the army in both the countries played their role in curving out the destiny of the nations. The Turkish army, staunchly secular, many a time corrected the course of the statecraft. But in Pakistan every army interference brought misfortune to the state. Failed states not only endanger themselves but the international community as well. Somalia is a burning example.

From these comparisons Bangladesh has many things

to learn. In the past we had several Pakistan style interferences resulting in corruption and sick politics. Only the 1/11 interference was appreciated and brought some good results. Our leaders may ponder over the matter.
M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

Soul searching

Who am I talking to? Is it ears that are lost in thought with miserable possibilities? Or is it like the stone staring at me from the bottom of the tranquil pond? I sip my portion of chilled coke trying to swallow the dry toast-biscuits and wish for the latter. I am an optimist searching for a meaningful life at my early forties. For me the search came quite late as I passed by a long hazardous road that most of the people did not I am identified with dogma, discrimination, suspicion and what not. This summer, the hot sun is stabbing my black skin; trying to make cracks on it; sorry sun! 'blacks do not crack anymore!' I have been there, seen the miseries, often became miser for you and myself too. Look at the other side of the coin, a growth of a sprout is emerging; stout and ordained. No raised eyebrows, no dirty talks and moves can hinder the growth.

On behalf of the community would like to invite people of perspicacity and insight to come forward and break the shackles of discrimination and stigma.
Zaiami Bodrudduza
Uttara, Dhaka

Barack Obama's 100 days



The appraisal of the performance of the US President during his 'first 100 days' in office is another much-hyped gimmick of the American media, and gives little indication of what he might achieve by the time his tenure ends after four years.

Barack Obama has been saddled with problems that might need more than a presidential term to solve, let alone three months! As he himself has candidly admitted, the number of critical issues that appear to be coming to a head all at the same time surprised him. For instance, over two years ago, when

he had first thrown his hat into the ring, the economy had not been much of an issue, but by his inauguration it had become the most critical problem that needed to be immediately dealt with.

The President has gone hammer and tongs to tackle an economic crisis as bad as the Great Depression, staking his own future through measures, which many Americans do not support. The end results of his policies, however, will be visible only after a while, as is also true of the new foreign policy initiatives embarked upon by him.

Thus what is visible at this early stage is the general direction he is expected to embark upon, rather than concrete results. He has, of course, taken specific measures on promises made during the campaign, such as extending the health-care system towards a greater reach and lifting the ban on stem-cell research.

Significantly, one of the earliest bits of legislation signed by him was one empowering working women in the US. The measures taken by him in other spheres such as protection of the ecology, in the face of a hostile corporate lobby, would yield fruits years later. During the past three months Obama has merely laid the groundwork, crossing swords with Republican adversaries in order to press forward his agenda.

However, even his worst critic admits that the new US President, by merely getting elected, has rekindled hope amongst Americans. Despite some opposition to his policies, he has been able to retain his charismatic popularity, with the latest CNN poll indicating a 63 per cent approval rating.
Mohammad Shahidul Islam
A tourism worker

Endangered species

Different species are disappearing from the surface of the earth at an alarming rate. Climate change, human encroachment, deforestation and habitat loss, poaching --all these contribute to the extinction of the animals and plants. For example, tropical forests are shrinking at a quick rate. It is estimated that from 1990 to 2005, the world lost 172 million acres of tropical forests.

The earth is going to lose creatures like Sumatran tiger, giant panda, and Javan rhinoceros--to name a few. As regards the flora and fauna of this land, species such as marsh crocodile, kites and the Royal Bengal Tiger among others face the bleak prospect of extinction.

Perhaps these species will be found only in zoos in near future. Surely this is a clear manifestation of human depravity and limitless greed. We should not ignore the fact that preservation of the biodiversity is a question that concerns the whole planet--namely the earth.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

