

Confusion abounds in Pakistan

Structure of PPP politics is promising ad hoc amounts of money for this, that and the every other cause as special packages. While the fact of the matter is that there are insurgencies going on in Balochistan and in the NWFP's tribal areas, that are now spreading to settled areas. In fact, the rest of Pakistan is no longer safe from the inroads of Islamic extremists.

M.B. NAQVI

THE intensity of the political warfare that is going on between the two largest parties, viz. between the ruling PPP and the second biggest party, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) group continues to be the main news out of Pakistan. The latest in the warfare is that Zardari's counter offensive has astonished many by the shape it has taken. It continues while Nawaz Sharif has gone relatively quieter. The PML (N) does answer but its earlier offensive of some time ago has abated.

Nawaz Sharif has adopted a higher moral ground. He says that partisan warfare will only benefit the third party, meaning the Army. He wants the PPP to complete the five years and says he would not oppose PPP government. But the President Asif Ali Zardari, who is also the PPP chief, continues to hammer Nawaz Sharif with disclosures of big political wrongdoing by many former intelligence officials.

The latest incriminating evidence has come from one former agent by the name

of Khalid Khawaja. This is perhaps the most incriminating of them all. It says that the Khawaja arranged five meetings between Nawaz Sharif and Osama bin Laden. It is the most direct attempt to creating big misunderstanding between Nawaz Sharif and the Americans. The Americans are allergic to Osama bin Laden and would react adversely if someone's links with him are disclosed; the notion that someone has been in contact with OBL on a regular basis and who has been financed, as Khawaja claims, the matter becomes something very serious from American viewpoint. Nawaz has been seen as an alternative ruler of Pakistan.

Khawaja, the former spy, says that various sums of money were given to Nawaz Sharif, both for bringing down the PPP government of Benazir Bhutto in 1990 and after he took over as the Prime Minister for the promise that he would then take Pakistan along Islamic path and make Pakistan a Shariah-enforcing country. Apart from formal denials by his party men, Nawaz Sharif's continued occupation of the high moral ground has said

nothing. Secure in the belief that his popularity graph, especially in Punjab, continues to rise, he is taking all damning accusations in his stride.

Nawaz Sharif has reorganized his party and is going into other provinces where he is not represented. He perhaps hopes for the mid-term election. But all his moves in reorganizing his party seems to be a preparation for fighting an early election. And he has given a call for a 'revolution' in the country.

Nawaz Sharif's side is apparently weak but Jang (media) group's onslaught on President Zardari is claimed to have been inspired earlier by Nawaz Sharif. But that may be a matter of name calling on both sides. No one is quite sure and confusion abounds in both media and public. Most analysts remind the parties the condition of the country is so bad and this is not the time to engage in petty partisan politics, but to no avail.

High inflation, led by food prices, and economic imbalance in the exports and imports plus high fiscal deficit do continue to create a situation in which Pakistan has become a basket case and needs to be bailed out. It is being bailed out by the IMF. It has been stated time without number that the Pakistan economy is deteriorating rather than improving. The government merely promises more expenditures on all counts with the money that is not there. It is relying on Friends of Pakistan group of nations to lend \$ 5 billion for improvement of the situation and to undertake some development.

Structure of PPP politics is promising

ad hoc amounts of money for this, that and the every other cause as special packages. While the fact of the matter is that there are insurgencies going on in Balochistan and in the NWFP's tribal areas, that are now spreading to settled areas. In fact, the rest of Pakistan is no longer safe from the inroads of Islamic extremists. The politics in the two provinces is typical to each of them. Both are restive and unhappy and promise more trouble, despite Pakistan Army's recent victories in Swat and Malakand.

The third party may not necessarily be the Army. It may be the Americans, a growing number of pro-Taliban politicians claim. The Americans are going on affirming their loyalty to Pakistan and Afghanistan and are promising that they would not leave them alone again. But simultaneously they are also demanding Pakistan should shift its Army's focus from India to Taliban and other Islamic extremists. It should redeploy bulk of its Army along the Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Army shows no sign of obliging.

The Americans also insist that Pakistan should 'do more'. Pentagon says, Pakistan did very well in fighting the Swat and Malakand and they hold that this should be the pattern in which the entire Pakistan Army should initiate a new war against the Islamic extremists in real earnest.

Pakistan has failed to comply so far and the matter remains open. Americans are also insisting on joint patrols and joint operations. Pakistan is chary of having



The Taliban in Buner.

American boots on Pakistani ground. This is the Pakistan perception and conduct that is frequently expressed in the media. Many politicians accuse that America is really trying to put its forces in Pakistan so that they remain present and when a real crisis breaks out it can grab-hold of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. But this is a subject on which the Americans are not forthcoming nor are the Pakistan officials.

But the latest development is that the government is going out of its way to please the Americans. The latest pronouncement of the Foreign Minister is that if India thinks that more nuclear tests are needed, let it go ahead and Pakistan would not follow suit. This is directly aimed at pleasing both India and mainly America. Pakistanis would not please the

Indians this way if it had not been for the Americans.

Insofar as Pakistan-American relations are concerned, Pakistan is doing its very best to muddle along. It hates clarity. It does what the Americans want very badly -- and generally belatedly. But it does not fulfil all the American wishes. This is a peculiar situation and one does not know what the rightwing parties in Pakistan would say when the Indians do undertake new nuclear weapons' test. Whether the American wishes are enough to restrain Pakistan would be the question. But there would be a tremendous pressure on Pakistan government to follow the Indian nuclear tests with their own after a short interval. That will be the litmus test.

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Tapping wind power potential for now and future

The Wind Battery Hybrid Power Project (WBHPP) at Kutubdia initiated by Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) and implemented by Pan Asia Power Services Limited, a Bangladeshi enterprise, has been running well since its commissioning in 2007. It supplies 1 MW power daily, enough to meet the needs of Kutubdia upazila sadar.

MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

MOST of the news about the environment, either here in Bangladesh or elsewhere in the world, is distressingly bad. Reports on indiscriminate burning of fossil fuels side by side with disappearance of forests, destruction of wetlands, death of coral reefs and extinction of other natural resources come with frightful frequency. The fact is, our climate and biodiversity are in peril.

A report released by WWF against the backdrop of the Geneva Conference on Climate held in early September this year indicated that warming in the Arctic could affect a quarter of the world's population through flooding and amplify the wider impact of climate change. Air temperature in this region has risen by about twice the global average over the past two decades, and a warming Arctic is much more than a local problem.

Moreover, the combination of thawing Arctic sea ice and melting ice sheets in Greenland and west Antarctica, as well as the Himalayan glacier melting, was likely to raise global sea levels by about 1.2 metres (four feet) by 2100 -- more than previously thought -- according to scientists.

The associated flooding of coastal regions will affect more than a quarter of the world's population, and what is more worrisome is that melting sea ice and the release of pockets of greenhouse gases from thawing permafrost and methane seeping from the depths of the warming Arctic Ocean would also fuel disruption of

atmospheric and ocean currents much further afield. And the most immediately felt change would be on temperature and rainfall pattern throughout the world.

Despite the fact there would be so much water all around due to flooding, shortage of fresh water could create a profound crisis for the whole of humanity. True, we live in a world that is 70 percent water, but things are drying up fast. Only 2.5 percent of the water is fresh and only a fraction of that is accessible. At present, 1.1 billion people lack access to clean drinking water and more than 2.4 billion lack adequate sanitation.

Energy need and climate are daunting problems that are likely to bedevil all developmental programmes in future. All development efforts start with switching on electricity, but in many parts of the world it has not happened yet. About 2.5 billion people have no access to modern energy services, and power demands of developing countries continue to grow up by about 2.5 percent every year.

In the power front, the situation is distressingly bad in Bangladesh. With per capita energy consumption just reaching 220 KGOE (kilogram of oil), Bangladesh is one of the low energy consuming countries in the world. The national grid could so far cover only 35 percent of the population, and only 3 percent people receive piped gas supply. 70 percent of the people live in rural areas, where the situation with every passing year continues to be precarious.

In the 1950s only 2.5 percent lived in urban areas, which has now risen to 30

percent. The population of Dhaka in 1951 was 0.35 million, which has now swelled to more than 10 million. If the increasing demands for power are met by burning fossil fuels more carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases will hit the atmosphere.

This brings into focus the need for developing cheaper and cleaner sources. That will necessitate providing incentives for alternative energy. Mentionably, in India, there has been a boom in wind power because the government has made it easier for entrepreneurs to get their hands on the necessary technology and has then required the national power grid to purchase the electricity that wind systems produce.

The wind power potential in India has been estimated to be 45,000 MW considering the technological advances and the availability of more modern equipment. However, the present capacity is 1080 MW, about one percent of the total need. Harnessing of wind power in Bangladesh, despite the fact that the country has vast potential at least in the coastal belts, is still a distant dream. Some of the largest wind farms in Denmark are along coastlines.

Although Bangladesh has a coastline of 710 km, hardly any effort has been made to tap this natural bounty. Wind energy is the most promising due to its cost effectiveness, and for delivering good quality power. In Bangladesh, several studies have been carried out to assess the wind potentials. But these are in remote spots like Kutubdia, an isolated island off from national grid line, Cox's Bazar, Feni and Narsingdi.

The Wind Battery Hybrid Power Project (WBHPP) at Kutubdia initiated by Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) and implemented by Pan Asia Power Services Limited, a Bangladeshi enterprise, has been running well since its commissioning in 2007. It supplies 1 MW power daily, enough to meet the needs of Kutubdia upazila sadar. This is possibly the first Grid Quality Renewable Energy Project in the country, supplying green



Full potential yet to be exploited.

power at 11KV voltage levels successfully and regularly.

The Pilot Wind Power Project commissioned at Sonagaji, Feni in 2005, has now been abandoned as reports reveal, despite the fact that the project produced 80,326 units of electrical power in just the month of January. 1,23,526 units of power were generated in one and a half years, which was sold to Feni Palli Biddiyut Samity at Tk. 2.05 per unit. Narsingdi Pilot Wind power Project was abandoned in the same way.

The total installed capacity of wind power is more than 1,30,000 MW, out of which Germany has about 30,000 MW and India 12,000 MW. Wind electricity has emerged not only as one of the fastest developing technologies of the world, but is also the cheapest source of grid quality renewable energy. 1 MW grid quality AC power from wind energy costs

about Tk.10 crore (normal grid connected) and Tk.15 crore for hybrid, whereas 1 MW grid quality AC power from Solar PV cell will cost more than Tk.100 crore.

But wind speed does not remain constant, and wind is not available all the time. Because of fluctuations in wind flow and unpredictable availability, wind energy can not be supplied directly to the consumers. It must be supplied either with batteries or with base-load power plants. It is an internationally accepted thumb rule that a site having annual average wind speed of 6 m/s or higher is feasible for harnessing wind electricity with commercial viability. From the studies made in different spots of Bangladesh, we see that generating electrical energy in Bangladesh by harnessing wind power is commercially viable.

More than a decade ago, Denmark

required utilities to purchase any available renewable energy and pay a premium price. Today, the country gets 18 percent of its electricity from wind. Europe accounts for 70 percent of the world's wind power. And this has been possible only because of strong commitment to plug the green technology.

Given that the record in the decade since the Earth Summit is largely painfully slow progress and deepening global environmental crisis, what is needed now is high-level political commitment to sustainable development. People have seen the results that can be achieved when leaders speak publicly on an issue and put the full weight and resources of their administration behind it.

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The urea that suits better our agriculture

The consumption of urea could be reduced to 21,48,000 metric tons, if nimin-coated urea is used with a net savings of 5,37,000 metric tons of urea. The cost price of 5,37,000 metric tons of urea at Tk 12/kg is Tk. 6,444 million, which could be saved. To develop coating on 1 kg urea only 5 grams of nimin is required, which cost Tk. 1.

DR. SYED ANWARUL HAQUE

LOSS of urea in crop production is a serious problem under tropical agriculture. The available results on the investigations indicate that 40-70% of applied urea is lost from the crop fields. Particularly, rice ecosystem favors high losses of applied urea fertilizer.

Urea losses include volatilisation in the form of ammonia, leaching of nitrate, denitrification of nitrate as elemental nitrogen and nitrous oxide, microbial assimilation

of urea and fixation of ammonium by clay. It is now apparent from the mentioned facts that a major portion of applied urea is not available to rice plants and other crops. As a result urea fertilizer use efficiency is reduced to about 30-60%.

Because of poor use efficiency of prilled/granular urea by plants, there is a need for application of additional quantity of urea than it requires. The part of urea fertilizer lost (40%-70%) also causes environmental pollution. Thus, the best

fertilizer practices should be to minimize losses of urea in crop fields, which will both save urea fertilizer from losses and the environment from being polluted.

As such, there was a need for research to improve the efficiency of urea fertilizer. Scientists around the world have been concentrating their efforts on regulating the nitrogen supply to crops by reducing the rate of either hydrolysis or nitrification or both of urea so that the optimum supply of nitrogen can be ensured to match the requirement of crops at different stages of growth.

Slow-release fertilisers constituted urease inhibitors and/or nitrification inhibitors. In this context, slow-release urea forms such as sulphur-coated urea, lac-coated urea and polymer-coated urea have been extensively investigated. However, for reasons of high cost of coating materials and other factors, none of these materials are currently being used in Bangladesh or in any other neighbor-

ing countries of South Asia or elsewhere in the developing countries of the world.

Development and trials

Recently, nimin a self-adhesive concentrated neem extract responsible for inhibition of nitrification in soils has been developed in India. Application of nimin-coated urea reduces loss of N fertilizer through leaching and de-nitrification by 30-35% and increases yield in treated crops up to 25%. Nimin-coated urea has been found easy to use and appears to be cost effective in crop production. It is now being commercial produced in India for use in agriculture.

Under Bangladesh condition, a few experiments were conducted with different crops by the author of the article such as rice, wheat and mustard. The results were very encouraging. So far five experiments were conducted, four at Bangladesh Agricultural University farm-land on Brahmaputra floodplain siltloam soil with wheat (cv. Kanchan) in 2004,

mustard (cv. BINA sarisha-4) in 2004, rice (cv. BRRI dhan 30) in 2006, and rice (cv. BRRI dhan 29) in 2007 and one with rice (cv. BRRI dhan 11) in 2004 on Modhupur red-terrace soil under IFDC project funded by IFAD. The yield increase for different crops ranged from 17-35% for rice, 20% for wheat and 29% for mustard.

Economic benefit and reduction in pollution

Nimin is a reasonably inexpensive biological product (US \$3/kg), which shows great promise for the resource poor farmers of developing countries with an average increase of roughly 20% crop yield. This means 100 kg urea = 80 kg nimin-coated urea. For every 100 kg urea, there will be a saving of 20 kg urea.

The extent of use efficiency of nimin-coated urea can be easily understood from the following calculations. The annual consumption of urea in Bangladesh in 2007-2008 was 26,85,000

metric tons (source: Bangladesh Fertiliser Association). The consumption of urea could be reduced to 21,48,000 metric tons, if nimin-coated urea is used with a net savings of 5,37,000 metric tons of urea.

The cost price of 5,37,000 metric tons of urea at Tk 12/kg is Tk. 6,444 million, which could be saved. To develop coating on 1 kg urea only 5 grams of nimin is required, which cost Tk. 1. The farmers will get substantial economic benefit on use of nimin-coated urea and the nation will be largely benefited economically. Thus there is a need for seriously examining the potential of the use of nimin in Bangladesh agriculture as a coating material of urea, which also ensures environmental safety to a great extent being environment-friendly. It reduces environmental pollution by about 30-35%.

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