

Daylight saving time

Countries in the Equatorial Zone (EqZ) generally do not observe DST because the days and nights are of almost equal length round the year and there is little advantage in moving clocks forward. China, India, and Japan introduced DST but abandoned it due to popular opposition.

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THE magic spell of Daylight Saving Time (DST), also called Summer Time in EU countries, was introduced in Bangladesh for the first time on 19/20 June. The energy minister argued that the DST would help to conserve 250-300Mwh of electricity, but it proved a failure. So DST is a debatable issue.

In the Northern Hemisphere (NH), DST is generally enforced from April-October. In the Southern Hemisphere (SH), the same is done from October-March. In the Sub-Equatorial Zone

(SEZ), the summer morning starts at 5 am and people set out for work at 8am, and the 3 hours spent at home are compensated by DST. The Americans and Europeans introduced DST to shorten the morning to get a longer afternoon to utilise the afternoon sunlight.

DST was first proposed in 1895 by George Vernon Hudson, a New Zealand entomologist, because he collected and studied insects, for which he needed longer afternoon light.

Today, approximately 70 countries use DST, but very few are in the equatorial zone. Countries in the Equatorial Zone (EqZ) generally do not observe DST because the days and nights are of almost equal length round the year and there is little advantage in moving clocks forward.

China, India, and Japan introduced DST but abandoned it due to popular opposition.

In the NH, the day and night are of equal length on 21/22 March, and from then on days become longer. In Bangladesh, the day on May 1 is almost 13 hours long while the night is 11 hours. But in UK or Canada, days are more than 14 hours or so long. The longest day is on June 22/23, and they are equal again on 22/23 September every year. During June/July/August a day is more than 15 hours in London or Toronto. At the EqZone, these variations aren't felt.

Countries above 35° latitude enforce DST not to conserve electricity but to utilise afternoon light for recreation and other purposes, though fuel consumption increases. The US, Canada and West Europe don't have energy shortages, but they have enforced DST through legislation every year.

Only Bangladesh and Pakistan in the EqZone introduced DST for saving energy, but proved a failure.

The economics of energy saving through DST may not be as successful as propagated by the AL government. Electricity use is greatly affected by geography, climate, and economic conditions, making it hard to generalise from single studies. Bangladesh is facing severe energy crisis to the range of 1,200 MWh, and it may not improve in near future. However, DST

may be used to reduce the demand of electricity at night from 7pm to 6am through April to October every year. This will be unpopular because people will have to go to school/work very early. Programmes like marriage ceremonies are generally arranged after evening and our habit is to serve the dinner between 9-10 pm. DST will push the programme beyond midnight.

But DST will be supported wholeheartedly by the private and the public sector employees. After office hours they will have 3 hours or so to go back home after finishing their shopping. Bangladesh Shop Owners' Association complained about loss in business before Eid-ul-Fitr due to DST, and they wanted to keep the shops open till 10 pm by using their own electricity supply. This flimsy argument was ultimately accepted by the government.

It is the other way round in the West. In 1984, Fortune magazine estimated that a twelve-week extension of DST would yield an additional \$30-\$40 million for 7-Eleven Stores, and the EU Golf Association estimated that the extension would increase golf industry revenues by \$200 - \$300 million. A 1999 study estimated that DST increases the revenue of the EU's leisure sector by about 3-4%. The DST increases the total sale of Super Stores like Wal-Mart every year.

Thus, the energy saving measures should specify:

- All shops except medicine, fresh/raw grocery shops shall shut down by 7:00pm;
- All shops shall use energy saving lamps (ESL). Every shop must use 1x60 Watt ESL per square meter. ESL bulbs above 60 Watt should be forbidden for all shops;
- All shops shall remain open on Friday, Saturday and all government holidays

(except 2 Eid holidays) from 10am-10pm.

- All shops shall remain open till 11pm from 15 Ramadan to Eid day;
- All gas and petrol pumps shall burn only 10x40W ESL, or 6 x 4 feet tube lights;
- All restaurants shall shut at 11:30pm.

Anybody breaking the system shall be summarily imprisoned by a non-judicial administration magistrate. Necessary law for such punishment may be enacted for 5 years. When people become used to the system and change their habits, that law may be annulled.

If these measures can be enforced, the demand for electricity across the country may even come down by 1,000 MW at night, thus giving a little respite from load shedding. The day situation will remain critical. If we can enforce the recommendations round the year probably we won't need DST to conserve electricity.

Public safety and crime reduction was on the positive side. In 1995, the U.S. Department of Trade conservatively identified a 0.7% reduction in traffic fatalities during DST, and estimated the real reduction as 2%. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimated a reduction of 1.2%, including a 5% reduction in crashes fatal to pedestrians. In UK it was estimated that it reduced traffic fatalities by 3-4%. In the 1990s, the US Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) found a reduction of violent crime rate during DST by 10% to 13% in Washington DC.

The health benefit can't be underestimated. Europeans and Americans are fond of sunbathing. The sun is the immense source of light, and they can use it in the long afternoons of summer. But the sun occasionally disappears during the cruel winter. So DST is the answer for them. In the lower EqZone, the sun shines round the year and



Is DST working?

we don't need DST for health care.

DST politics is quite interesting, too. US President Woodrow Wilson vetoed the DST bill when it was blocked by the Congress.

British PM Sir Winston Churchill supported DST also. He argued that it enlarged "the opportunities for the pursuit of health and happiness among the millions of European." Robertson Davies, a Canadian journalist and writer, however, detected

Puritanism, eager to push people into bed earlier, and get them up earlier, to make them healthy, wealthy and wise."

Government inefficiency can't be compensated by DST, so innovative ideas and efficient performance are needed to conserve electricity. DST is not the answer in the Lower EqZone.

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Iran will build the bomb after all

Iran's strategy will be to demonstrate flexibility, while at the same time remaining steadfast on its enrichment program. From the developments over the past six years, one cannot but be pessimistic. Iran is unlikely to concede to Western pressures.

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ON October 1, the five Security Council members and Germany (P5+1) -- known as the "six-party" -- met in Geneva with Iran for a fresh round of talks over Iran's nuclear program. Actually, the meeting was called last April, but Iran delayed its acceptance.

The meeting came in the wake of several important developments in Iran: the controversial June elections, which gave a second term to the hardliner Ahmadinejad; the revelation that Iran was building a new uranium enrichment facility near Qom; and long-range ballistic missiles (Shahab-3, 2500 km range) test firing on September 28.

Iran's nuclear program was launched with US assistance in the '50s, but was suspended after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, followed by a break in diplomatic relations in April 1980. After the war with Iraq (1980-88), Iran started uranium enrichment in the US built reactors in the early '90s with the assistance of Russian experts. Since 2003, the West has been at odds with Iran over the program. The IAEA launched investigations after Iran failed to declare sensitive enrichment and reprocessing activities. The West accused Iran, a signatory of the NPT (July 1968), of violating the treaty by not declaring fully all its nuclear activities. The NPT

allows signatories peaceful use of nuclear technology.

To generate nuclear power, uranium has to be enriched by 5%, but to make nuclear devices 90% enriched uranium is needed. Americans fear that Iran will produce weapon-grade uranium and wants it to abandon the enrichment activities and buy the nuclear fuel from the West. That way the US will be able to keep strict control over Iran's nuclear program. Iran must not develop its indigenous technology -- that is the crux of the issue.

Iran has consistently denied any violation and claimed that its program was for the generation of nuclear power for civilian use. The US is not convinced and considers the Islamic Republic too dangerous. The Jewish lobby in America worked aggressively with the US media to raise the bogey of a nuclear Iran, ready to strike Israel. The western media planted lots of deceit and deception into this game. The confrontation took an ugly turn when US President George Bush termed Iran one of an "axis of evil."

Iran has not been cooperating with IAEA. However, IAEA says that Iran still does not have the technology to produce weapon-grade uranium. Mohamed El Baradei, head of IAEA, maintains that there was "no concrete proof" that Iran has an ongoing weapons program. El Baradei said that the threat of Iran developing a bomb has



The threat remains.

been "hyped."

The UN Security Council, led by the US, passed four resolutions imposing sanctions on Iran to contain its uranium enrichment activities. Sanctions were imposed every time the six-party talks failed, with each being more debilitating than the previous one. Despite the sanctions, Iran has not abandoned its nuclear program.

Iran went to Geneva to discuss what it called the "Cooperation for Peace, Justice and Progress." Iran wanted to discuss a wide range of global issues but not its nuclear program. The West is ready to offer lots of sops if Iran abandons its enrichment program. There are indications that Iran may agree to send part of its low-grade uranium abroad for enrichment into medium-grade and

returned for making radioisotopes for medical purposes. What it will do with the remaining part is a big question.

The West is hoping that the current round of talks with Iran will yield results. If Iran does not comply by December this year, the US will push for stronger sanctions. Russia and China are, however, opposed to imposing fresh sanctions as they feel that sanctions do not work. Besides, both have important economic interests in Iran.

Iran feels that its security is threatened because it is surrounded by nuclear weapon states -- Russia, Israel, Pakistan, India and China, US occupation troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and several bases in the Gulf. Ahmadinejad has repeatedly stressed that Iran will not yield to international pressure.

"The Iranian nation will not succumb to bullying, invasion and the violation of its rights," he said. Iran is encouraged when it sees that nuclear proliferation is going on with impunity -- in Israel, Pakistan, India and North Korea.

President Barack Obama, before being elected, had declared that he would engage Iran for talks on major issues of concern. After the six-party talks on October 1, US Undersecretary of State William Burns met separately with the Iranian delegation leader, Saeed Jalili, as a follow-up on Obama's policy. This is the first high-level contact between the two countries in 30 years. It is unlikely that the meeting has softened Iran's position.

Despite the fact that on September 24 President Obama chaired the Security Council meeting, which adopted a resolution calling for a stop to the spread of nuclear arms, and won the Nobel Peace Prize on October 9 -- it is unlikely the current verbal vitriolic between the US and Iran will graduate into meaningful negotiations for cooperation.

The standoff between the West and Iran is based on realpolitik, not on morals or law. The issue involved is whether Iran is a real threat to Israel and US interests in the Gulf and Middle East. While Israel is restless to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, the Sunni sheikdoms of the Gulf and Middle East are seriously alarmed at the prospect of Shia Iran going nuclear. The influence of a nuclear Iran in the Middle East is too mind-boggling to contemplate -- it will simply alter the balance of power in the entire Middle East. Some of the sheikdoms may even be tempted to forge alliance with Israel for protection.

Iran knows that the options for the US or Israel to bomb its nuclear facilities are limited. Iran can change the balance in Iraq and Afghanistan by activating a "Shia insurgency" against its "overstretched" American troops stationed there. Iran also knows that if the US or Israel bombs its nuclear facilities, it will engulf the entire region into a conflagration which will devastate world oil supplies.

The "six-party" talks have put to rest the controversy surrounding Iran's elections and have legitimised Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president. Ahmadinejad has cleverly diverted the attention of his detractors at home and hopes Western pressures will help unify the fractured polity of Iran. Geneva talks have definitely strengthened Ahmadinejad's position. Recent statements from a defiant Ahmadinejad are something to worry about.

The next meeting will be held in Vienna on October 19. It will no doubt be another round of wrangling. Iran's strategy will be to demonstrate flexibility, while at the same time remaining steadfast on its enrichment program. From the developments over the past six years, one cannot but be pessimistic. Iran is unlikely to concede to Western pressures.

Western pressure has actually pushed Iran to quicken its missile development program. It now has missiles of different ranges. Indeed, in modern warfare, missiles are developed to deliver nuclear warheads, not firecrackers. Secret reports suggest that Iran has the technology to assemble the bomb. It is only 90% enriched uranium that it does not have. Since the delivery vehicle is ready, Iran will most certainly build the bomb. It is just a matter of time.

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New passport rules



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BUSINESS Travellers around the world have been puzzled by a bizarre mystery. For months, airport officials have done nothing to make our lives worse. How come? Why are they not doing

their jobs? We feel oddly neglected. Well, the long wait is over. A new set of suitably ridiculous rules developed in the West is expected to shortly spread misery to airports around the world. The new regulations can be summed up thus: from now on, All Passengers Must Look Like B-Movie Librarians.

This is not a joke. There are the four new rules in the West for passport photos and related documents:

- Passengers must push their glasses to the ends of their noses and gaze over them, not through them.
- Passengers must not smile.
- Passengers must pull their hair

back so that it doesn't cover their face or ears.

- Passengers must wear frumpy floral dresses and have their hair in a bun.

Okay, so I made up the last one, but it's only a matter of time before it joins the list. The first three requirements, with minor differences in emphasis, are already in force in the UK, Germany, the United States and Canada, and are expected to spread from West to East over the next few months.

I learned about this when I sent some photos of my son to a consultant and they were rejected.

"We can't accept them. He's smil-

ing," complained the staff member.

I looked at the photo and shook my head, saying: "No, he isn't. He's a teenager. That's not a smile. I would describe it more as a sardonic grimace." This was clearly true but she refused to accept it and told me about the new rules on passport photos.

The regulations have caused lots of problems. Officials have rejected hundreds of thousands of people who have a stray hair over their faces, or wear their glasses where they are supposed to be worn, over their eyes, rather than over their nostrils. The UK authorities rejected 15,000 baby photos before announc-

ing that they may be lenient for passengers aged 12 months or less.

There are other problems too. A UK man named Paul Ashman had his passport photo rejected because it was "too dark". In a letter to the BBC he pointed out that he did not know how to fix this, pointing out a salient fact: "I am black."

Why is this happening? "Digital photo analysis machines get confused by people who smile," the consular official told me. But the following day, a friend of mine told me about Japanese cameras, which not only have the usual face-recognition functions, but a smile-recognition option. You leave it on in

the corner of the room and every time people look happy it snaps a picture.

How come hi-tech multi-million dollar airport photo analysers cannot cope with a stray hair, while Japanese pocket cameras can differentiate between different expressions? It seems suspicious to me. My Japanese friend offered to get a smile-recognition camera for me, but I politely declined.

"I don't think I need one," I said. "Now if you had a camera which can detect a sardonic grimace, that I could use."

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