

Tapping our own resources

It is estimated that Khalashpir coal can generate 1,000 MW of electricity within five years from now if mining lease is awarded to Hosaf-Chinese Consortium immediately under the provisions of Bangladesh Mines and Minerals Rules. The government is planning to generate electricity by imported coal, but the appropriate authority may now consider using Khalashpir coal for power generation.

meters to 35 meters.

Hosaf-Chinese Consortium proposes adopting underground coal-mining method considering the geological and hydro geological settings of the coal deposit, environment and social aspects of the region and depth of the coal seams from surface. The coal seams will be approached by sinking vertical shafts. Underground coal mining methods -- longwall mining, room and pillar mining and longwall top coal caving (LTCC) -- will be utilised con-

This will continue up to the 30th year. The life of the mine has been considered as 30 years, and during this period about 100 million tons of coal will be extracted from seams no. 1, 2 and 4.

The development and production from the rest of the seams can be undertaken after completion of production from first three principal seams and on requirement of the country.

On completion of coal exploration work



A.K.M. SHAMSUDDIN

BA NGLADESH is presently producing 4,000 MW of electricity during peak hours against the demand of 5,500 MW. Thus, the country is facing acute power shortage. The government has plans to raise power production by increasing gas production and importing coal to run gas-based and coal-based power plant.

In August 2006, high-grade bituminous coal to the tune of 490 million tons was discovered in Khalashpir, Rangpur district. There is a bright prospect of generating 1,000 MW of electricity by utilising Khalashpir coal.

Hosaf-Chinese Consortium had carried out a techno-economic feasibility study of the Khalashpir deposit during 2004-2006 under an Exploration License Contract with the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD).

They conducted high-resolution 2D (over 12.25 sq. km.) and 3D seismic survey (over 3.0 sq. km.) and drilled fourteen exploration bore holes covering an area of 12.25 sq. km. during 2004-2006. It may be mentioned here that 3D seismic survey was conducted for the first time in Bangladesh in coal exploration work. A total

of 5,028 shot holes were drilled under 2D/3D seismic survey. 3D seismic survey was conducted in the Central Zone of the coal basin to have better and precise pictures of the structural features including faults.

On the basis of 45.5 line kilometer (LKM) seismic survey and 17-exploration bore holes (3-by GSB and 14-by Hosaf), Hosaf-Chinese Consortium discovered a total reserve of 491.95 million tons of very high quality bituminous coal spreading over eight coal seams ranging in depth from 245 meters to 480 meters from the surface and covering an area of 7.5 sq.km area. The average calorific value of coal has been found as 12,500 BTU/lb, having average ash content = 13.3%, average volatile matter content = 26.72%, average fixed carbon content = 59.97% and average sulphur content = 0.67%.

The principal coal seams nos. 1, 2 and 4, containing a measured reserve of 297.57 million tons, have been identified by Hosaf-Chinese Consortium for mining. This includes about 26.70 million tons of coking coal in seams 2 and 4. Coking coal is used in the manufacture of steel. The thickness of principal coal seams 1, 2 and 4 varies from 5

sidering geological parameters and thickness of the coal seams.

The coal-bearing Gondwana Formation in Khalashpir is overlaid by the Surma Formation, which will act as a barrier to arrest the water flow from water-bearing Dupi Tila Formation to Gondwana Formation. Therefore, the Khalashpir coal mine will not probably encounter water flow in the coal faces. This formation between Dupi Tila and Gondwana is missing in Barapukuria coal mine, as a result the Barapukuria mine encounters water flow in coal faces.

Roughly 1sq. km. area of land will need to be acquired for 2 shafts and construction/installation of surface facilities. These are mostly agricultural land and a small portion of villages. About 5,000 people will be affected and will need to be rehabilitated.

The development of Khalashpir coal mine will take four years and initial coal production of 1 million tons will start from the 5th year, and 2 million tons will be produced from the 7th year when 500 MW of electricity will be generated. Coal production will be raised to 4 million tons per annum from the 12th year when 1,000 MW of electricity will be generated.

under Exploration License Programme, Hosaf-Chinese Consortium submitted the Feasibility Study Report of Khalashpir Coal Deposit to the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD) in August 2006, seeking mining lease.

During the last caretaker government the Khalashpir Feasibility Report was not evaluated due to absence of coal policy, because the Bangladesh Coal Policy is not at all relevant for its evaluation since the exploration work was done under an Exploration License Contract, which is based on Bangladesh Mines and Minerals Rules.

The present government has started the evaluation, but it is proceeding slowly. It is estimated that Khalashpir coal can generate 1,000 MW of electricity within five years from now if mining lease is awarded to Hosaf-Chinese Consortium immediately under the provisions of Bangladesh Mines and Minerals Rules. The government is planning to generate electricity by imported coal, but the appropriate authority may now consider using Khalashpir coal for power generation.

Engr. A.K.M. Shamsuddin is Petroleum and Mining Consultant, and former Managing Director, Paschimanchal Gas Company Limited (PGCL), Petrobangla. E-mail: sham19472001@yahoo.com

Metternich's World Out of Africa...

THERE is something terribly wrong going on in Cote d'Ivoire, or the Ivory Coast as we once were wont to call it. Remember the country's first president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, in that remarkable era when Africa began to break free of colonial rule in the 1960s?

Of course, the process of African independence was set in motion through the granting of independence to the Gold Coast, or Ghana, in 1957. One fine morning, Kwame Nkrumah found himself transported straight from prison to the prime ministership of the new country.

Where Cote d'Ivoire is concerned, it has had its long moments of political fluctuations when the pendulum swung both ways. But this year's presidential elections should have been different. What has now emerged is a situation where the two men who contested the presidency refuse to accept defeat.

One of them, in this case President Laurent Gbagbo, has patently lost the election. There are clear grounds to think that Allasane Ouattara has been duly elected, that he should be taking over from Gbagbo, who has been in office since 2000. The country's election commission made it clear that Ouattara had won the election, that Gbagbo had come out the loser.

But that hardly mattered with the Cote d'Ivoire constitutional court, which decided in all its infinity of sycophancy that the decision of the election commission could be overturned and Gbagbo declared triumphant over Ouattara.

The result is a bizarre political condition at this point. Both Gbagbo and Ouattara have claimed the presidency and both have taken the oath of office. In other words, it is a volatile situation in Cote d'Ivoire today, with the potential for severe violence becoming increasingly a possibility. That certainly has the rest of the world worried.

Quite a similar thing appears to have taken over Guinea. Since the end of the long rule of the country's first leader Sekou Toure, Guinea has not quite been a stable place. When you observe the difficulties in which African nations have found themselves, particularly since they slowly began to inch their way toward western-style democracy, of a kind, you are quite inclined to ask if democracy as we know it is possible in Africa or even in large parts of Asia.

Congo went through an election some years ago, putting Joseph Kabila, the son of Laurent Kabila, firmly in office. That has hardly given any firmness to the country itself.

Nigeria has been going through its own problems. With Umaru Yar'Adua dying after a long illness, the country has been forced into a new round of elections. That is no guarantee, though, that Nigeria has turned into a symbol of stability. In Zimbabwe, the fragile alliance of President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai could come apart any moment.

If you turn your gaze towards Eritrea, you will likely be assailed by thoughts of a depressing nature. There used to be a time when Issaias Afewerki and his band of guerrillas offered a rainbow of hope to their people as they waged a guerrilla war against the Ethiopians. Afewerki and his team began well, earning the admiration of the world for the simplicity and humility they brought into government.

Now, nearly two decades into freedom, Eritreans find that they cannot have a set of new people in charge because President Afewerki will have nothing to do with elections. His idealism has mutated into politics of the authoritarian kind. Much a similar case can you find in Ethiopia, where Afewerki's friend turned enemy, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, brooks no opposition and is only too happy locking up anyone who has the temerity to disagree with him. It is not a pretty sight.

Gbagbo's refusal to part with power in Cote d'Ivoire is but symbolic of what seems to be happening in major parts of Africa. Libya's Muammar Gaddafi, in power since 1969, is not keen to make way for a new generation of leaders. But if he ever is, it will likely be his son Saif he could well be thinking of placing at the top. In Egypt, an aging and ailing Hosni Mubarak, in office since 1981, is determined to hang on till son Gamal is ready to assume charge.

Elections are yet a new phenomenon in Africa. One will recall the elections in Kenya a few years ago, an exercise which led to the deaths of thousands of people. Ruling politicians in the continent, having lost elections, have nevertheless refused to pass the torch on to the victors.

In an earlier era, it used to be that presidents and prime ministers were overthrown, absolutely illegally, in coups d'etat by their own military commanders. These days, elections, because of the controversy they get mired in, fail to inaugurate a new phase in politics in the continent.

E-mail: mwmmetternich0@gmail.com

Trade with North-East India

Minister for Industries & Commerce, Handloom Handicraft & Sericulture, Rural Development and Forests **Jitendra Chaudhury** of the government of Tripura, who is the main architect of the concept of a 1971 war memorial to be built at South Tripura district, and has had very close attachment with Bangladesh since the War of Liberation in 1971, talked to **The Daily Star** Special Correspondent **Rezaul Karim** on how Bangladesh and Tripura can be benefited through trade and investment, establishment of old communication links, transit and transshipment and ties between the people of Bangladesh and Tripura.

THE government of Tripura is constructing a Bangladesh War Memorial and India-Bangladesh Friendship Park at Chottakhola, a border village at Rajanagar under Belonia of South Tripura, which is 130 kilometres from Tripura's capital Agartala.

Chottakhola was one of the 11 warfront-camps in Tripura in 1971. A verdant 20 hectare-land dotted with seven hillocks and a lake will house a memorial and a museum to commemorate Indian soldiers and Mukti Bahini. The park will also have a statue of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of the country's independence.

Talking to The Daily Star Jitendra Chaudhury said that building of such a memorial was a long cherished demand of the people of Tripura as they were

actively involved with the 1971 war by providing support to the freedom fighters and sheltering around two million people in Tripura. He said that people of this state had strong love and feeling for Bangladeshi people and also shared the joys of Bangladesh's independence.

Speaking on trade, he said that Bangladesh could explore huge business opportunities in the north-eastern states to narrow the huge trade gap with India through doing business with Tripura. He said that Tripura was the gateway to the northeastern region and it could help Bangladesh derive further economic advantages from a market that is estimated to be over \$20 billion, which is more than twice the trade deficit of Bangladesh.



Jitendra Chaudhury

He said that the state could be a potential hub for trade with Northeast India through development of transit and transshipment via Bangladesh because of the 856 km long border, which lies mostly in non-mountainous plain areas.

The location of the state and socio-economic linkage with Bangladesh enables easy and short distance access to the eastern, central, southern and, to some extent, the north-eastern parts of Bangladesh from Tripura. He said that access to existing major communication links in Bangladesh is possible.

Speaking about proximity of Tripura with Bangladesh, he said that the Dhaka-Chittagong highway could be accessed from Tripura through a very short road. The year-round inland river port, Ashuganj, is also very close to Agartala. The state is also alongside the Bangladesh railway network, which runs parallel to its international border for almost the entire length.

The Tripura minister said that con-

nectivity between the major locations in Bangladesh through existing networks is already reasonably convenient due to proximity, which could be easily upgraded because the border is almost entirely plain areas.

Giving a historical background, the minister said that Tripura was just beyond the erstwhile East Bengal -- the eastern end of British India. The communication and socio-economic linkages of this state with India and the rest of world were naturally established through East Bengal, now the independent Bangladesh.

Down the centuries, Jitendra Chaudhury further said, a vast tract of land in Eastern Bengal -- comprising the entire Comilla district and parts of Noakhali and Sylhet districts -- formed part of Tripura's royal domain during the British period. This tract of land was renamed "Chakla Roshanabad" as the Zamindari of Tripura's princely rulers in the wake of the permanent settlement implemented by British Governor General Lord Cornwallis in 1793.

While the political map of Bangladesh and Tripura, he said, had undergone radical changes in the wake of the Partition, the socio-cultural bond and ties of heart and economy have remained as strong as ever.

The state is now approachable by land route via Guwahati. The distance between Guwahati and Agartala is about 587 km. The distance between Agartala and Siliguri, which is considered the

entry point to the North East, is about 1,065 km. He said that the eight states of the Northeastern region covered 8% of the total area of India, and had 4% of the total population of India. They have huge untapped natural resources like minerals, natural gas, oil, coal, agricultural and horticultural produce, forest produce, rubber etc. The region is also has high hydro potential, he added.

The proximity of South East Asian countries also placed North East India in an advantageous position compared to other regions of India. He said that the current internal trade involving movement of goods to North Eastern region from Eastern India offers a great opportunity for Bangladesh's trade and commerce. The goods traffic flows currently via Siliguri, passing through difficult mountainous terrain that is susceptible to natural disruption.

The eventual expansion of potential trade and commerce opportunities would require improved infrastructure on both sides of the international border. Even for Bangladesh, he said, it would be most effective and economic to improve links that already exist near Tripura and are in easily accessible plain areas of Bangladesh.

About Tripura's economy, he said that the state, with a population of about 3.5 million, was the second largest in the northeastern region and one of the better performing states in the region with a number of positive indicators in crucial sectors.

In this context, he said that Tripura's rate of growth in per capita income is highest among all the northeastern states, and it had registered a compound annual growth rate of 10.71% during 1993-94 to 2007-2008.

The minister said that the achievement had been possible as there was peace, good governance and security, which have been the hallmark of the state administration and play a crucial role in accelerating the pace of development.

Speaking about Bangladeshi businessmen's investment prospects in Tripura, Jitendra Chaudhury said that though the state was primarily an agro-based economy it was rich in natural resources like rubber, bamboo, tea, natural gas, agro-horti produce.

Referring to the recent agreement between India and Bangladesh, like declaring Ashuganj as "port of call," allowing transportation of Over Dimensional Cargoes (ODCs) through waterways from West Bengal to Ashuganj river port and then Ashuganj to Akhaura by road, allowing use of Chittagong port, construction of Akhaura-Agartala railway link and river protection at Feni, operationalising land customs stations at Sabroom in South Tripura and Ramgarh on the Bangladesh side, and strengthening infrastructure of land customs stations, will move forward socio-cultural and economic relations between Bangladesh and Tripura, he said.