

EC's shocking decision

The proposal should be withdrawn

WE are appalled at the recent move by the EC to disempower itself by willingly ceding its authority to cancel the candidature of a candidate for gross violation of electoral rules.

The EC proposal to us is rather absurd. At a time when one is talking of strengthening the commission, particularly with the next parliamentary election round the corner, and where there is no meeting of the minds between the two major parties on the modalities of holding next election, abdicating its power will not only weaken the election commission, the proposal, if accepted, will further make the EC's capacity to hold fair elections more tenuous.

In the absence of an effective deterrent i.e prospect of candidature cancellation, there is bound to be more infringements of election rules given the general propensity of the candidates to violate the electoral code of conduct.

The commission's capacity to project itself as an institution capable of holding a free, fair and impartial election, under whatever political dispensation elections to the next parliament are held, is paramount, and something that would remain under very close national and international scrutiny. The commission must not sap but rather invigorate itself even more to demonstrate its reliability as well as capacity to deliver.

We are for a strong and independent election commission. And if there is any lacunae in any existing rule, that can be suitably amended for the cause of fair play and justice, but the entire proviso should not be scrapped.

Water logging turns critical

Costly project draws a blank

BANGLADESH government spent Tk.152 crore to reduce water logging in the past two years, but with little effect on the situation. As monsoon is at its height, we have been facing waterlogging in a lot of areas of Dhaka city, with knee to waist-deep water.

We know a good amount was spent on fixing pipelines and building culverts, but obviously that was not enough. The drainage system in Dhaka is already poor even without monsoon and the overflow of garbage and water sadly are something every pedestrian has difficulty in coming to terms with.

The mechanism of pumping the excess water out of the city remains inadequate. Many of the culverts which were built to reduce water logging have also been destroyed to make roads. Storm sewers and surface drains overflow with excess water with little provision for run-off water.

Going forward we hope we do not face the same ordeal next monsoon. We want to enjoy the rain and cherish the goodness it brings us, for our fertile land and our farmers, and we strongly hope that by next monsoon improvements will be in place for our Dhaka city dwellers.

No respite in Chittagong gas crisis



Today, Chittagong has neither any reliable producing gas fields nor any stable transportation backbone. Consequently, Chittagong is now getting only 50% of its existing demand (400-420 mmscfd).

THE prolonged gas crisis over the last 5-6 years has essentially sapped business prospects in the port city of Chittagong. Petrobangla boasts of increasing gas production by 500 million standard cubic feet per day (mmscfd). Contrary to that, gas supply to Karnaphuli (KGDCL) franchise remains in the region of 195-210mmscfd today. Practically, gas supply to Chittagong has been reduced after such huge claim by Petrobangla.

Year (Jan-Oct)	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 (Jan-May)	2012 (Jun-Dec)	2013 (till Jul)	
TGTDCSL	1286	1375	1435	1440	1553	1400	1405	
BGSL	278	289	288	282	281			
BGDCL						305	290	
KGDCL						223	205	
JGTDSL	103	130	138	151	165	180	230	
PGCL	73	70	81	80	68	86	113	
SGCL/BAPEX	N/A	6	6	5	2	7	8	
TOTAL	1740	1870	1948	1958	2069	2195	2251	
(Increase during 2008-2013)							511	

Data source: Petrobangla daily report in website (Figures in MMSCFD)

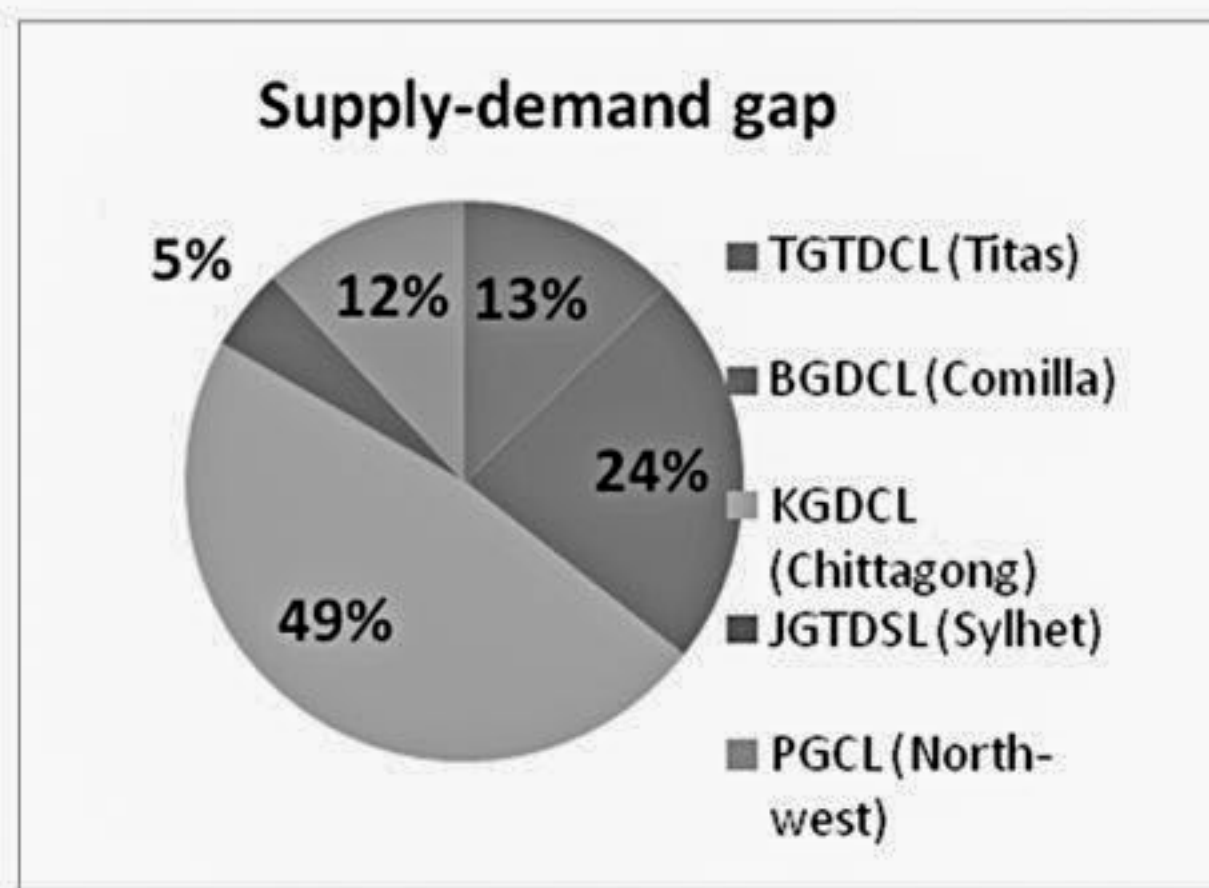
After splitting of Bakhrabad Gas System Ltd (BGS); Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Ltd (KGDCL) became responsible for supply of gas in Chittagong district including the Hill Tracts, and Bakhrabad Gas Distribution Company Ltd (BGDCL) looks after gas supply in Comilla and Brahmanbaria region. These two franchise areas get their supplies from two sources: (i) production from smaller fields around Bakhrabad hub and Chittagong region (namely Bakhrabad, Saldanadi, Srikanil, Feni, Sundalpur, Semutang, Sangu gas fields etc); those are having tiny reserve potentials, and (ii) import from the north-east gas fields via Ashuganj-Bakhrabad (A-B) pipeline.

A-B pipeline transports gas from the north and delivers about 570mmscfd to two bifurcation lines at Bakhrabad hub. One is Bakhrabad-Demra (B-D) 60 km pipeline and the other is 175 Km Bakhrabad-Chittagong (B-C). Currently, free flow gas distribution at Bakhrabad hub is 66% to B-D and 34% to B-C pipelines respectively. In 2010, the ratio was about 60%-40% at the rate of 480mmscfd distribution. Being closer than Chittagong; Dhaka and its surrounding regions get the larger portion of A-B deliveries. The only Bakhrabad-Chittagong (B-C) corridor for Chittagong whose original design capacity is 350mmscfd at 960psi at Bakhrabad point is now operating at about 600 psig pressure; currently able to handle maximum 190mmscfd from A-B pipeline. Thus, B-C pipeline is kept underutilized by about 100mmscfd than its design capacity, because of layman's exchange of transmission bottleneck; the cause remains unchanged over last 6 years.

In 2008 Ministry of Energy undertook several gas exploration and infrastructure development projects with special focus to alleviate Chittagong gas crisis and to capitalise growth potential of Chittagong. The plan articulates that by 2012, more than 600mmscfd supply will be ensured through production improvement from smaller fields namely Bakhrabad, Meghna, Saldanadi, Feni, Semutang, Srikanil, Begumganj, Sangu, etc and piping 400 mmscfd from the north. Development of such smaller fields has been accomplished partially that added about 80mmscfd but nothing is allocated for Chittagong since the additional

production has in its entirety been consumed by the upstream consumers. Quantity of piping gas from north is unchanged and hovering at 180-190mmscfd because new A-B-C pipeline plan is shelved and the existing A-B pipeline has not been allowed rational gas distribution at Bakhrabad hub.

It is rotten luck for Chittagong residents that the pipeline project has been shelved. Additional disappointment came when Santos fell back from developing "Magnama" field. Meanwhile quick LNG project got sidetracked, which according to experts was the wrong strategy to adopt in terms of timing. This has practically blocked previously planned development projects for Chittagong. Gas Transmission Company (GTCL) which has diverted its concentration from constructing planned A-B-C loop line and a line compressor at Feni that had been identified as the only permanent solution by the Ministry of Energy in 2008. Today, Chittagong has neither any reliable producing gas fields nor any stable transportation backbone. Consequently, Chittagong is now getting only 50% of its existing demand (400-420 mmscfd).



Gazprom's gas development program (drilling of 10 wells) will provide us in stages, about 250 mmscfd by 2014. Chevron is on board to supply additional 400mmscfd by 2015 from its gas fields. BAPEX is also working, albeit at a sedate pace, which would add some amount of gas to the national grid. All these would add about 800mmscfd into the national grid by 2015. Ironically, since the transportation bottleneck exists persistently, Chittagong may end up receiving a meagre quantity of additional gas supply unless the Energy Ministry takes up the issue seriously.

Given the above scenario, precisely how consumers in Chittagong will react when the port city remains in the grip of gas scarcity in two years is anyone's guess; especially when significant new gas, primarily from Sylhet and Titas fields, augments the national gas supply and the line compressors are installed in Ashuganj. Unless Energy Ministry takes a rational and equitable distribution policy to allocate 320mmscfd (about 80% of current demand) for survival of Chittagong; severity of crisis in coming years will be unimaginable. It is understandable that maintaining design pressure at Bakhrabad hub is almost impossible because of overall flow hydraulics of the transmission network. The only way to get out of this vicious circle is to implement 2008 plan through construction of Ashuganj-Bakhrabad-Chittagong express pipeline with bi-directional design criteria so that gas can flow to either of the two directions.

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COMMENTARY

The sons are coming? How are we to feel about it?

Commentary by Mahfuz Anam
(continued from page 1)

To state ministers derived their power from a source other than the elected government. The resulting power conflict between ministers appointed by Begum Zia and those by her son paralysed ministries and made governance literally impossible. When ministers complained to Khaleda Zia about the state of their respective ministries, her reply was: How would future leadership emerge if youngsters did not get hands on training in running the country? Well, we all know in which sort of activities they were "hands on".

When the son could affect the government in such a manner- all of which was illegal and unconstitutional- one can well imagine the power he wielded in running the party. With his sudden elevation to the number two position- which in effect was number one as Khaleda Zia being the PM had very little for the party- party veterans and tested leaders, those who had spent decades building the party, were suddenly thrown by the way side.

Following the Sanjay Ghandhi model he was touted as the future prime minister with a clear signal to the bureaucracy, business community, civil society, media, etc., to hail the coming saviour.

How he abused his derived power is now a matter for record, including investigation by the FBI, etc.

Today as he plans to re-enter politics there is not a word of regret for his misdeeds of the past nor a pledge to desist from them in the future.

An orchestrated cacophony of his praises can now be heard, regrettably led by none other than the well thought of Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir who, having waited long to get the word "acting" removed from his title of secretary-general, has decided there is no other way ahead

but to sing the son's praise.

The other son is less known. "To be or not to be" has been his existential question. His on-again off-again presence in Bangladesh has led many to question as to how serious he is about Bangladesh and its politics. Unlike the other mother, Sheikh Hasina very correctly tried to give her children good education. Her daughter is reliably learnt to have done some good work with autism and to have substantially advanced the cause of this group of children who did not have a high profile champion before. The son has himself proclaimed his coming in his own words, "I have come to counter the propaganda of BNP against the Awami League government", especially about corruption. As reported in newspapers he urged Juba League members to remind everybody about corruption during BNP time whenever anybody talks about AL's corruption.

Why a veteran and highly organised party like AL, with more journalists in its stable than it would care to admit, and now with a newly appointed "Media Advisor", should need the son to help them deal with BNP propaganda is beyond comprehension.

While we have been told about his IT know-how, what knowledge or expertise he brings to political propaganda handling remains a mystery. It has been reported that he has brought a Harvard expert to advise him in this job. Sounds very interesting indeed!

His first foray in countering BNP propaganda has been so successful that the ever agile mother had to come to his rescue to explain what he meant, with of course some BNP bashing on the side. Well, if the "counter-propagandist's" message needs another person to be explained, it is anybody's guess how

effective the son is likely to be.

His claim that he has information that his party will return to power was naive, impolitic and disastrous, allowing the opponent to quickly term it as a blueprint of AL to "bag" the election. What he should have said, as Sheikh Hasina correctly explained, was that he had conducted an opinion poll, which indicates that AL still enjoyed more public support than its opponent.

He failed to understand that it is one thing to say that AL enjoyed more public support than BNP and quite another to proclaim that his party will win the election. How can one be so sure? About elections one can only "speculate", and never speak with certainty.

Most importantly, election is a phenomenon when the voter feels important. It is one time that he or she feels equal to the leaders. Voters enjoy the spectacle of powerful figures going through the villages of rural Bangladesh literally begging the "poor and the destitute" to favour them with their votes.

The voters resent anybody trying to pre-empt their "right to elect" by premature proclamation of victory. In fact, sometimes a negative feeling may be triggered, resulting in the desire to "punish" those who make such "claims". If one does not know this subtle feeling of voters then one is more likely to embarrass the party than help it.

A final point: How reliable can a survey be, which is conducted by oneself about one's own future? This can very well lead to self-delusion.

Whether we like it or not, it is now clear that the two sons will feature prominently in the coming election. Either one, depending on which party wins, is likely to play a significant role, howsoever undeserving, in the post-election period. That seems to be our fate.
Beware.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR
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The same old Ershad

H. M. Ershad has always been a funny character in Bangladesh politics. The man is infamous for his skillful somersaults. As the national election is approaching, Mr. Ershad is getting into his old acts. To raise his price bar, he is again making those old comments to do the election of his own. We are unfortunate as a nation that our major political parties still require his blessing. It shows the moral bankruptcy of our politics. When it comes to election and vote, our political parties do not even bother to cross the moral limits. I do not know when good sense will prevail in our politics.

Kabir Hossain Taposh
 Banani, Dhaka

Self-defence as a ploy to kill

Stand-your-ground laws are frequently criticised and called "shoot first" laws by critics, including the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. In Florida, the law has resulted in self-defense claims tripling. The law's critics argue that Florida's law makes it very difficult to prosecute cases against people who shoot others and then claim self-defense. The shooter can argue that he felt threatened, and in most cases, the only witness who could have argued otherwise is the victim who was shot and killed. Many states have some form of Stand Your Ground law including California.

The Hate Crime Statistics Act defines hate crimes as acts in which individuals are victimised because of their "race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity."

Why is there anti-Americanism? Because of American policies toward other nations and people! They were under-developed in war, weapons, brutality, cruelty, selfishness, and the desire to dominate others! Actually they were over-developed in some of the world's most beautiful and peaceful cultures, which the White came to destroy, and to make slaves of them.

Ted Rudow III, MA
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 Palo Alto, CA

Our scientists deserve kudos

I was so proud and happy to read that microbiologists discovered the bacteria Burkholderia pseudomallei in Gazipur soil through concerted research. In my 36 years of service life, I have heard about only very few research work by our scientists in Bangladesh. The few I saw were in 1974 when Dr. M. H. Khan, the then head of department of Mechanical Engineering, BUET made the three wheeler - Mishuk. After that in 2000, I saw in the newspaper another engineer claiming to have made a power generator that produces power from recycling the power it generates thus requiring no additional fuel. Then in 2002, there was Spirulina- the wonder herbal medicine made by the scientists of BCSIR. After that there may have been a few more but I don't remember.

Our scientists who discover various things through research should be recognised and rewarded in Bangladesh to encourage other brilliant minds. A 'Book of Discoveries' should be published by the ministry of science and technology listing the various researches done. There are no such entrepreneurs in Bangladesh as yet who would sponsor these brilliant scientists to discover new things and convert them into sustainable projects which would eventually benefit Bangladesh.

Imtiaz Ahmed
 On e-mail

Comments on news report, "Manmohan repeats old pledges," published on July 27, 2013

Nasim Hasan

A completely fruitless visit. We have mountains of issues with India and none has come into a solution during this visit.

S.M. Iftekhar Ahmed

In another news article, it was revealed that Indians trust Bangladeshis the most, yet India has failed miserably to deliver on its promises, thanks to the inaction of certain Indian leaders whose names we all seem to know. What is the point of making promises, and pledging to be a good neighbour if your actions don't speak louder than your words?

Abul Kashem

India has nothing but to repeat their decade-old unspoken pledges, which, the general people think, may be a big reason for AL's recent debacle in local elections, assuming that AL is trustworthy and dependable only to India.

M. Ashraf

So, what exactly was achieved? Positive outlook, clearer picture, good weather do not mean anything if we don't get the water we need. Or does the party plan to dry out Padma so that we don't need a bridge?

Akhter

AL government gave everything to India according to their wish but in return got nothing but promises, and that satisfies AL leadership, not the mass people.

What can we do for saving tiger?

MAHFUJUR RAHMAN

WORLD TIGER DAY IS OBSERVED to make the citizens of this planet aware about the importance and way of saving tigers. Tigers are part of our environment; they are needed to maintain ecological balance of our environment.

Tiger is a majestic animal found in coastal and inland regions of Asia where healthy forests exist. Unlike lion it moves and hunts alone. According to World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the number of surviving tigers in this planet is below 3500 in tropical rainforests, evergreen forests, mangrove swamps, grasslands, savannas, and temperate forests. We lost 80% of our wild tigers just within a century.

Bengal tiger is very distinct in nature, inhabits in India-Bangladesh' contiguous mangrove forest of 10,000 km² land area. Comparatively Royal Bengal Tiger is the largest in size among other sub-species and also occur in largest number in nature. However, its number is also below 2500 in wild.

Habitat loss is the most fatal reason that has made Tiger an endangered species in IUCN red list. Tigers lost their 93% of their historic range due to human-tiger conflict, environmental change and climate change.

Only one tiger can protect around 25,000 acres of forest says WWF research. Saving tigers and saving forest is synonymous as we need to protect the forest habitats across Asia where they live. By saving biologically diverse places, we allow tigers to roam and protect the many other endangered species that live there. As the top predator, the tiger plays a vital role in maintaining healthy ecosystems of Mangroves in Bangladesh that supply both nature and people with fresh water, food, and health -- which means by saving the tiger, we are helping people. The existence of Royal Bengal tiger depends on the geographic coverage, undisturbed forest environment and bio-species. Thus conservation of Tiger needs conservation of Sundarbans, its ecosystems and species. First of all, we need to Protect and Connect Tiger Habitats making lives of tigers easy. However, without true political will and its implementation we can achieve very little in tiger conservation. Governments of tiger range countries need to engage more resources for elimination of trade in tiger parts which ultimately eliminate poaching. Government of Bangladesh and India need to work more coherently in this regard. We need to mobilise more fund and program of activities for tiger conservation from international to local level. At individual level, we, rich people of the first world countries need to boycott tiger products so that illegal business is stopped automatically.

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