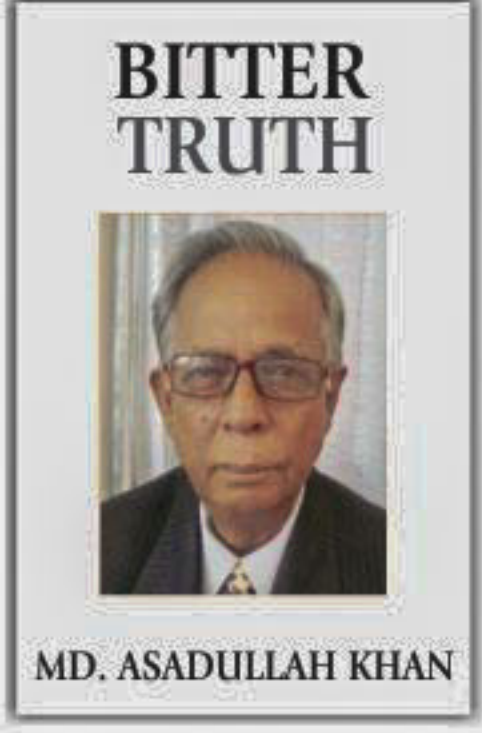


After Rampal, furnace oil power plant at Mongla!



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

BITTER TRUTH
 THE news item published in a Bangla newspaper on December 21 that PDB is planning to set up a 150 MW furnace oil power plant near Mongla is alarming. The report comes at a time when Unesco World Heritage Centre, Ramsar Secretariat and environmentalists in the country have expressed serious concern about the impact of the oil spill in the Shela river on the biodiversity and ecology of the Sundarbans, a national and international heritage site. The report further says that permission has been accorded to a private company without inviting tender! The plant will be run by furnace oil and the electricity produced will cost Tk. 17.75 taka per unit.
 It was learnt that a proposal from the company, processed by the PDB, has been sent to the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. The plant will need 10.5 lakh litres of furnace oil daily to run. It will daily need 3 oil tankers of the size that sank in the Shela river on December 9. That means there will have to be a permanent oil reserve of 20 million litres.
 When people throughout the country have been protesting against setting up of the Rampal power plant within 14 km of the Sundarbans, some sectors of the government continue to take such moves fraught with danger and risk. Okaying

such proposals, defying environmental regulations, highlights the ignorance, callousness and indifference of the policy making cell of the government. Environmentalists and eminent people have expressed their concern reiterating the fact that setting up power plants in the vicinity of the Sundarbans, whether it is coal-based or furnace oil based, will put the Sundarbans at grave risk. We can neither create nor replicate another Sundarbans but we can set up power plants in any other place in the country.
 It would be folly to be complacent that the Sundarbans has recovered from the damage of the recent oil spill, rather the spill has started taking its toll. Oil spills often result in both immediate and long term environmental damage, some of which can last for decades. When an oil slick from a large spill reaches the shore or beach, the oil coats and clings to every grain of sand and mud. If the oil washes into coastal marshes, mangrove forests or wetlands, fibrous plants and grasses absorb the oil which can damage the plants and make the whole area unsuitable for wildlife habitat.
 When this oil begins to sink into the marine environment, it can have the same effect on underwater ecosystems, killing or contaminating many fish and smaller organisms that are essential links in the global food chain. Even a small amount of oil can be deadly to a bird. By coating the feathers, oil not only makes it impossible for birds to fly but also destroys their natural waterproofing and insulation, leaving them vulnerable to hypothermia and overheating. As the birds preen their fathers to restore their

natural protection, they often swallow some of the oil, which can severely damage their internal organs and lead to death.
 The Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989 killed somewhere between 250,000 and 500,000 seabirds, thousands of sea otters and many rare bald eagles. The spill occurred in 1989 but a 2007 study conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) found that oil spill was still trapped in the sand along the Alaska shoreline. There is no reason to think that damage to mangroves and marine species due to this spill will disappear in just about a week or a month, as our shipping minister is prone to believe.
 Even when marine mammals escape the immediate effects, the oil spill can cause damage by contaminating their food supply. Marine mammals that eat fish or other food that has been exposed to an oil spill may be poisoned by the oil and die eventually. The long term damage to various species, and to the habitat and nesting or breeding grounds those species depend upon for their survival, is one of the most far-reaching effects caused by oil spills.
 Studies conducted by the Fisheries and Marine Resources technology experts at Khulna university say that oil spill has hampered the growth of micro-organisms like phytoplankton and zooplankton that are at the base of the food web in an aquatic environment to the extent of 40% to 80%. Moreover, aquatic species that have failed to migrate will have consumed oil, and this will have devastating effect on the fish population.

Projects like Rampal or Mongla that went ahead defying expert and public opinion, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) restriction, and with total disregard of environmental safety and ecology in other countries of the world had to be abandoned later in the face of public protest, resentment and criticism. People had to pay an unacceptable and unnecessary price when such reckless development projects were implemented defying public opinion. After the 'World Commission Report on Dams' was made public, four dams across the Snake River in Washington were decommissioned because they threatened the survival of salmon, a prized fish.
 The decision about Rampal power plant was taken ignoring the opposition from the environment and forest ministry and in defiance of the regulations related to conservation of wild life and biodiversity in the country.
 At the height of a long debate and persistent mounting protest, it must be said that the Sundarbans forest, a unique national and world heritage site must be left on its own. The government must review its decision of setting up power plants in the vicinity of the Sundarbans. The explanation given to the people that Rampal power plant would be super critical and will not emit any toxic gas or ash that will endanger the biodiversity and wild life habitat of the Sundarbans, must be taken with a grain of salt. Only time can tell what will happen and it must be noted that any untoward change on the delicate ecology of the Sundarbans will be irreversible.

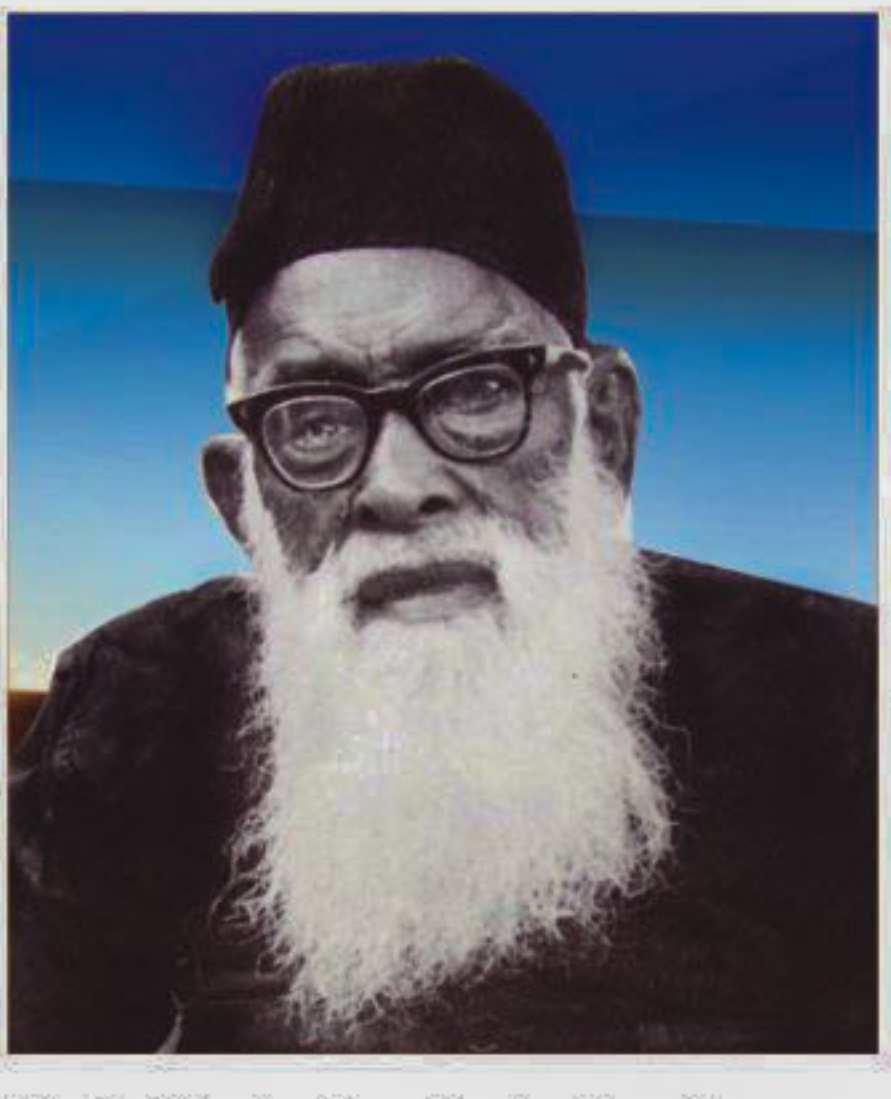
MD. SAIDUL ISLAM

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY IN ASIA
A critical dilemma
 FEEDING the people of the planet puts a lot of stress on the environment. Farming takes more than 40% of land and half the world's available freshwater. We may need to raise productivity by 70% by 2050. The simplest way to grow more food is to use more land, but it would come with a major environmental cost. Climate change, too, is putting a lot of strain on our food supply. The challenges and dilemmas we are facing today include how to grow more using less in a sustainable manner; how to optimise the entire food value chain reducing the carbon footprint from field to fork; protect the environment and support biological diversity; better the lives of rural populations; and contribute to the growth of the world economy.
 The world population now stands at 7 billion, and one in seven of these people are already hungry. The world population is expected to reach 9 billion by 2050. What does that mean for food security and hunger? With almost 870 million people chronically undernourished in 2010-2012, the number of hungry people in the world remains unacceptably high.
 According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, most of these people are found in Asia. It is clear from the regional impacts of the 2008 food crisis that the central dilemma for Asia is how to guarantee food security in the context of growing demands of food while the production of food itself is constrained by, among other things, climate change.
 Despite Asia's unprecedented economic growth and advances in science and technology, there has been an increase in poverty, and stagnation in average crop yields. The problem of food security remains a major challenge because of destabilising factors such as competition for land, rural-urban migration, rapid urbanisation, population growth, climate change, and the increasing shortages of energy and water.
 Currently, the Asia region is home to two-thirds of the world's poor, with 947 million people living on less than \$1.25 per day. To feed the growing population, we may need to raise productivity by 70% by 2050. However, the attempt to increase food production has become a major food security challenge, which is now compounded by climate change. Similar to food security, climate change is a multidimensional issue. The impacts of climate change on the four dimensions of food security—availability, physical and economic access, and utilisation—are complex as these impacts are also linked to other factors influencing changing climate.
 Scientific findings have shown that rising temperatures increasingly affect food crops. It is projected that, based on a scenario of an increase of 2 degrees Celsius, without taking into account changes in rainfall patterns, production of major food crops would decline.
 In the last century, dietary patterns of wealthy buyers shifted from traditional food to wheat-based diet to high value foods such as meat, fruits and vegetables to exotic foods (shrimp, lobster, shark fins etc.). Despite these food revolutions, food security remains a critical issue for many.
 While some experts argue that an increase in food production to meet future demand is inevitable, others suggest that to reduce world hunger, economic growth needs to be accompanied by purposeful and decisive public action as well as inclusion of the poor in the process. The latter group of experts also suggests that feeding the middles class of the world is actually draining the resources of the planet and taking the resources away from the poor, with climate change exacerbating it. Increased productivity is perhaps a part of the solution, but the real solution lies in "global food justice." This includes creating access to food, finding alternative sources of food, changing food habits away from exotic foods to more environmentally-friendly ones, establishing a global food bank for the impoverished, and global food governance.
 Climate change pushes national and regional actors to embark upon numerous initiatives, for example, food security initiatives. As these initiatives are often driven not by a genuine intention to protect the environment, ensure food security, and address the need of the poor, but by protecting a "green façade" and finding economic opportunities alone, the chances of success through such initiatives are slim. Though there are prospects for regional cooperation and opportunities, competing and conflicting interests on power and resources further fragment the region.
 Economic growth is necessary but not sufficient to tackle climate change as well as accelerate reduction of hunger and malnutrition unless it is accompanied by robust public policies accompanied by consultations with the poor and disadvantaged. Food security can be sufficiently solved by higher income and trade, with distribution/equality improvements.

KHAN BAHADUR AHSANULLAH The pioneer of Muslim Renaissance in Bengal

MD. MONIRUL ISLAM
 THE Bengal Muslim Renaissance refers to a socio-cultural, educational and religious reform movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in undivided India's Bengal province. It is said to have begun with Sir Sayed Ahmed (1817-1898). Nawab Abdul Latif (1828-1893) is considered as the architect and Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah (1873-1965) was one of the pioneers of the Renaissance in Bengal.
 Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah was a silent revolutionist who played a pioneering role in upgrading Muslim society in undivided Bengal during the British period. He was a renowned educationist, a high government official of Bengal, one of the most enlightened personalities of his time, and a social reformer of undivided Bengal and Assam. He was also a philanthropist, remarkable literary figure, humanitarian philosopher, religious thinker and a spiritual guide to his people. He is known as the founder of Ahsania Mission and considered a great Sufi.
 Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah was born in a respectable Muslim family of Nalta Sharif village—under Satkhira district—in December, 1873. He passed the Entrance examination with a scholarship and distinction from the London Missionary School of Bhabanipur, Kolkata in 1890. He passed the F.A. examination with a scholarship from the Hoogli College, Kolkata in 1892. He obtained the B.A. degree in 1894 and M.A. degree in Philosophy from Presidency College under the University of Kolkata in 1895.
 After getting the Master degree he joined as a supernumerary teacher at the Rajshahi Collegiate High School in 1896, and became its first Muslim headmaster in

1904. In 1924, he was promoted to the post of the assistant director of education department of undivided Bengal and Assam. He was the first officer from India and also the only Muslim who was selected for that post, and after his retirement no other Indian was appointed to that post. He was a close friend of Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Haque and played a very important role in education of Muslims in undivided Bengal.
 During his service life (1896-1926) he tremendously reformed education of Muslims. He introduced the system of writing the roll numbers of the students instead of their names in examination papers. In the schools and colleges, he readjusted the ratio of stipends for the Muslim students and made provisions so that increasing number of poor but meritorious students could study free of cost. He was instrumental in establishing many madrasas and Muslim high schools, and the Islamia College for Muslim students in Kolkata. He was actively associated with the establishment of the new-scheme madrasa. He made valuable contributions to the establishment of the Baker Hostel, Taylor Hostel, Carmichael Hostel, Muslim Institute of Kolkata and the Fuller Hostel in Rajshahi. He was elected a member of the Senate and the Syndicate of the Kolkata University.
 Ahsanullah was conferred the title of 'Khan Bahadur' by the British government in 1911. He was also elected a member of Royal Society of London the same year. During 1917-1918, he was the vice-president of the Literary Association of the Muslims of Bengal. Ahsanullah was an official member of the Muhammadan Educational Advisory Committee. The Islamic Foundation Bangladesh award was bestowed on him posthumously in 1405

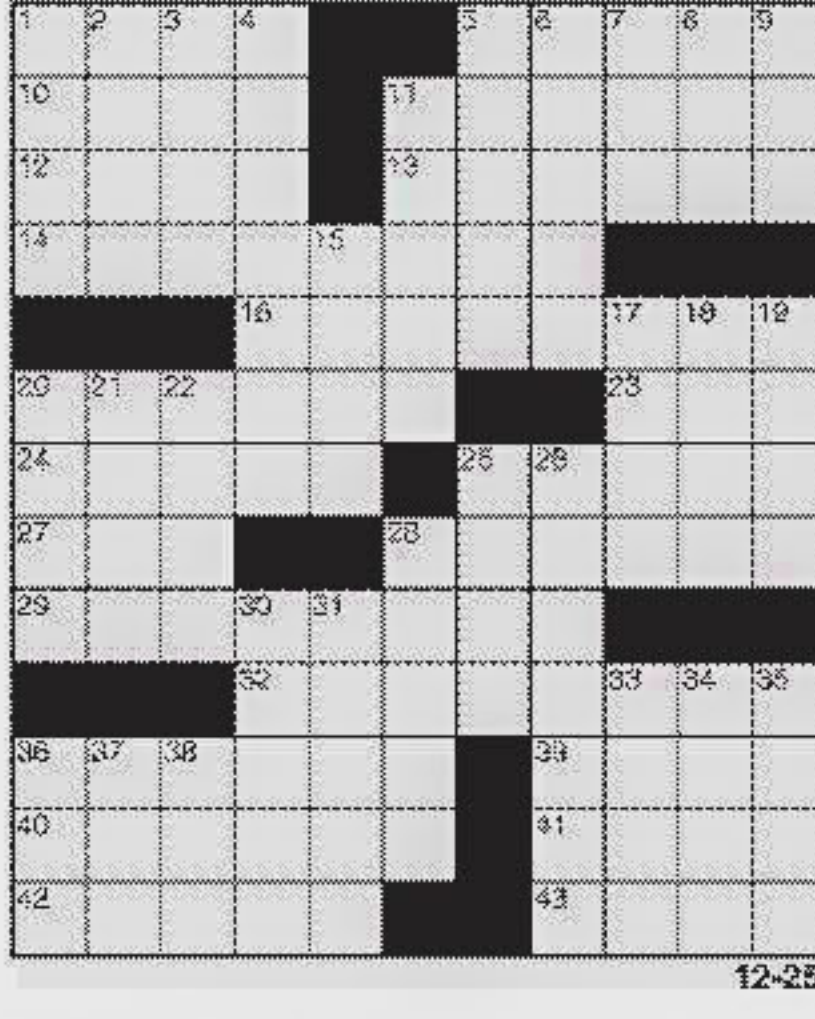


Hizri of the Arabic calendar. Bangla Academy also awarded him an honorary fellowship in 1960 for his valuable contributions in the field of Bengali literature.
 Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah had a significant contribution in the formation of the University of Dhaka (1921). After the First World War, the Hornell Committee (special committee to establish Dhaka University) was formed in 1914 and Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah was made a member. The Commission justified the setting up of University of Dhaka. On November 1, 1919, a nine-member senate special committee was formed, and Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah was an important member. It submitted its report along with a note of dissent from Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah, in which he reiterated the reasons for the establishment of the University. Most of the suggestions from Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah were adopted in the Dhaka University Act 1920.
 During both his service and retired life, Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah tried his hand

at literature and creative writings. He wrote more than one hundred books on Muslim traditions, thoughts on Islam, philosophy of Sufism and various aspects of Islamic history. His book, History of Muslim World, was a recommended book in the syllabus of Oxford University. Now, Sufi is a recommended book in the department of Islamic Studies in University of Dhaka and National University in Bangladesh. In order to encourage writers he established the Makhdumi Library and the Empire Book House at Kolkata.
 In 1935, Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah founded a non-political and service-oriented organisation, Ahsania Mission—inspired by Ramakrishna Mission—with its head office at Nalta Sharif, Satkhira. The motto of Ahsania Mission is "Divine and Humanitarian Service." There are now 138 branches of the Mission at home and abroad. Ahsania Mission is the outward manifestation of Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah's faith and ideals, and reflects the inherent beauty of his being. It is still working to ensure humanity, social welfare, education and spiritual line.
 Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah passed away on the February 9, 1965. He was a spiritual leader and his tomb (Pak Rawza Sharif) is in Nalta and is called holy Nalta Sharif. His name and fame, and his contributions will live eternally. He was a great contributor to the upgrading of Muslim education and Muslim society, but at the same time he was a non-communal philosopher.

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**
 1 Classic Christmas gift
 5 Eyelashes
 10 Game with mallets
 11 Planters
 12 Declare
 13 Christmas decoration
 14 Christmas pullers
 16 Christmas pullers
 20 Baby
 23 Spanish gold
 24 "Keen!"
 25 Prepare to propose
 27 Playing marble
 28 Disrobed
 29 Christmas decoration
 32 Christmas activity
 36 Christmas decorations
 39 Clarinet cousin
 40 For each
 41 Blood fluids
 42 Rushing sound: Var.
 43 Christmas decoration
DOWN
 1 Rigging support
 2 Cherishes
 3 "The Time machine" tribe
 4 Perfectly memorized
 5 Hearts
 6 "If- a Rich Man"
 7 Pasture
 8 NYC subway
 9 Fireplace bit
 11 Adorable
 15 Bond foe
 17 Christmas song
 18 Christmas symbol
 19 Hawked
 20 Fond of
 21 At hand
 22 Forest youngster
 25 Casino game
 26 Annual statement amount
 28 In itself
 30 Needs a massage
 31 Fire starter
 33 "Yeah, right!"
 34 Director Ephron
 35 Bike part
 36 Bar concern
 37 Wall St. Debut
 38 Joe, in Italy



Yesterday's answer
 WAGS SIFT
 AMOUR MACAW
 NUEVO AGILE
 ELS MIRACLE
 DEBACLE LET
 TYROL DEN
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