

It is our pleasure to make this article from Inroads 12 available to you free of charge.

Please consider a subscription (or a small donation) to help us to continue to provide timely, thought-provoking articles in print – and often on-line – to readers across Canada and beyond.



On the last page, you will find information about subscribing. You can print it out or just send us an email or give us a call. Or you can subscribe on-line.

www.inroadsjournal.ca

Check out our website to find out more about Inroads 12, and our back issues.

A WORD ABOUT PRINTING THIS ARTICLE: These pages are intended to print on legal (8.5 x 14 inch) paper, two pages per sheet, in a horizontal landscape. Pages can also printed onto letter sized paper, vertically, at a reduced size.

Power to the people

A Bangladesh photo essay

by Rose Murphy and John Richards

Bangladesh is a beautiful country of rivers, farms and tropical forests. Home to 130 million people, it counts more than 60,000 villages, a few sizable cities and one chaotic megacity, Dhaka. Bangladeshis have been blessed with some of the world's most fertile land. When the rains come at the right time and in the right volume, or where irrigation is feasible, farmers harvest three rice crops a year.



How many of these children will learn to read and write? Not enough. Bangladesh needs to improve its schools – and reliable power for schools would help.

The Bangladesh flag, flying here on the IUBAT campus: the red sun symbolizes the blood sacrificed by those who liberated the country from Pakistani rule in 1971; the green background represents paddy fields.



However, Bangladeshis have not been blessed with one of the world's more efficient governments. For the last two years, Transparency International, a respected organization that measures such things, has concluded that Bangladesh has the most corrupt government on earth. This year, it beat out 101 others for this dubious honour, including serious contenders such as Nigeria, Paraguay, Madagascar, Angola, Kenya, Indonesia and Azerbaijan, which had to be content with second through eighth ranks.



A girl in front of a rural home with an electrical connection. PBS consumer members are at the heart of the rural electrification program, which represents a departure from the norm of centralized decision-making.

A rural electrification success story, Dhaka PBS-1, turns a profit through its operations just outside Dhaka. Financial independence is much more difficult to achieve for the PBSs located in remote areas.



Nowhere are the problems of public administration more acute than in the power sector, the subject of a study prepared by the two of us along with Nuruddin Kamal, a recently retired public servant who occupied numerous senior positions in the Bangladesh government. For several years, Nuruddin chaired the Bangladesh Power Development Board, a vertically integrated state-owned power company that controls nearly three quarters of the country's generation capacity.



The campus of the International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) is a converted warehouse in the Dhanmondi district of Dhaka.

seventh). Load shedding is the practice, engaged in by Power Board managers, of containing demand by simply shutting down power to particular regions of the country during peak load periods of the day.

- *Operating inefficiency:* Whereas Bangladesh requires 24 employees per 1,000 customers, Pakistan and Sri Lanka require 20, India 15 and Thailand only 9.



Md. Abdur Sabur is the manager of Dhaka PBS-1. EBS employees are proud of their role in the rural electrification program, which has demanded honest and efficient management within the power sector.