

## **Early Closure of Shops and Load Shedding!**

**By**

### ***Engr Tahir Basharat Cheema***

B.E. (Elect), Dip. Pub. Admn, Dip. Bus Admn., Cert. Statistical Sciences, M.B.A.  
M.I.E. (Pak), F.I.E.E.E. (Pak), M.I.E.E.E. (USA)  
House # 282, St. # 8, Cavalry Ground (Ext), Lahore Cantt. Tel # 36653813/ 36650367  
Email: [cheema\\_tahir@yahoo.com](mailto:cheema_tahir@yahoo.com). Mob # 0333-4218969  
Member Central Council  
Institution of Electrical & Electronics Engineers Pakistan

Holding of the bi-partisan Energy Summit in late April 2010 by the Prime Minister of Pakistan will always have a seminal position for Power Sector operations in Pakistan. Also, it could not have been held at a more opportune time. Actually, because of the mismatch between the generation capability and the high loads spurned on account of drought like conditions and the unprecedented heat wave (which broke the last 37 years record), the whole Power Sector was in a turmoil. Poor hydrology leading to very low hydel generation had further spoiled the capability to serve the people. Besides, the metrological department had promulgated 2010 to be a drought year akin 2002.

On the other hand, it will have to be remembered that out of the 13,500 MW or so of maximum generation capability of PEPCO then, a cool 6,444 MW pertains to hydro- generation from the 3,600 MW Tarbela, 1,050 MW Mangla, 1,450 MW Ghazi Barotha and smaller of the nine hydro-plants. Consequently, hydrology plays a very important part in the management of supply and demand. As such, because of the above mismatch, 9-11 hours of load management was being faced by the people in addition to what is known as the forced load shedding. Although the forced load shedding was hitting only 10-20% of the areas in Pakistan, the media had a field day in propagating the same as widespread and a norm for the whole country. And while the Power Sector was fighting day and night, the fact remains that industry and the general customer was badly hit during February, March and April 2010.

The Energy Summit attended by all stakeholders including the Chief Ministers of the Provinces, came up with great decisions pertaining to the immediate adoption of conservation measures, plans to add generation capacity on the immediate and short term, financial measures to arrange for sustainability in operations and lastly also firmed-up plans for medium and long term generation capacity additions.

The Conservation Measures included reduction of lights upto 50% in the President's and the Prime Minister's Secretariats, Federal Ministers, Governors, Chief Ministers, Provincial Ministers and all Government offices. Furthermore, provision of Energy Savers in the offices replacing the existing incandescent bulbs at the earliest was required. Use of air-conditioners was restricted to authorized officers only and that too after 11.00 am. Illumination of alternate streetlights and non-supply of grid power to billboards and neon signs was added to the list. Ban on commercial decorative lights, staggering of weekly holidays for industry, non-use of agriculture tubewells during peak hours, restricted marriage / banquet / functions halls to 3 hours usage every evening, five days week for Government Departments and affiliated institutions was also decided. However, the most important of the decisions was the closure of markets and shops at 8.00 pm.

Immediate and short term measures for capacity additions required availability of an additional 183 mmcf/d gas for PEPCO, RFO for KESC to utilize 300 MW of its dormant capacity, incentivized purchase of pre-COD test energy from IPPs / RPPs, fast-track addition of 1305 MW from 10 IPPs by December 2010 and 605 MW of Rental Power by the same date. The financial plan focused on immediate payment of unpaid power bills by Governments of Sindh, Punjab, Kyber Pakhounkhawa, Balochistan and the AJK. KESC was directed and agreed for direct payment to PEPCO by the Ministry of Finance on account of subsidies pertaining to the former, while additionally the Ministry of Finance was to arrange for Rs.116 billion in all including the payments from the Provincial Governments to bail out the Power Sector from the financial crunch it was facing on account of non-payment by the above entities. The medium and long term measures looked towards mitigating the expected demand of 36,000 MW by 2015 and 114,000 MW by 2030 respectively.

All the above are great decisions, but the most effective one has been the closure of markets and shops at 8.00 pm as stipulated in the Shops and Commercial Establishments Ordinance, already available with the Provinces. This measure, after its implementation from April 24, 2010 onwards, has brought in great discipline to load management in Pakistan. Besides, there have been other gains on the social plain. It is because of the early closure now against the earlier indiscipline, that the peak hour demands have been reduced by 900-1100 MW on various days. This reduction, alongwith the fruits of other conservation measures, has resulted in the banishment of forced closure from the country and uninterrupted supply for most of the industry. The little cuts for some categories of industries have been adopted through a consultative process and are accepted by the owners and operators of the industry. The closure of markets and shops has been an uphill task and was possible only with the resolute commitment on the part of the Provincial governments for inculcating positive social values in the society. Most of the commercial sector has also pitched in positively. Whereas the public in general is happy with the decision, a little resistance from vested interests is evident, that constitutes a negligible component in the entire fabric of the country and surely has very little impact on the programme. It is also hoped that this un-wanted opposition too would vanish soon.

Looking at the global practices, we see that market and shops – rather, the whole commercial activity comes to halt around 5 or 6 in the evening each day. In some countries, such closures are evident at sunset. It is further seen that there are a few under developed countries where commercial activity carries on at will but it is surely an aberration. In India, our neighbor, the markets and shops are closed by 6.00 pm and in the metropolitan areas these are closed by 8.00 pm. Delving in history, we see that in Pakistan, the Shops and Commercial Establishments Ordinance was first enacted in 1963, consequent of which both the opening and closing of the establishments and labour utilization were channelized. The situation remained so till 80s, where after it had been a free for all. This led to indiscipline in the activity, flouting of the labour laws, exploitation of the sales staff, complete change of cultural values and even increase in the crime rate. All this has been corrected after the recent decision for early closure of markets and shops. Besides, it has resulted in the reduction of peak hour demand by 1,000 MW and discipline in the load management for the country. The industry, because of this level of reduction in peak demand, is mainly getting interruption free supply, while the Distribution Companies are able to adhere to their load management schedules. It is also a fact that for quite a large number of days, there has been no load shedding during the last and the current months.

The decision for closure of markets and shops by 8.00 pm has been implemented in most of the part of the country, however, in some areas it is being implemented partially. The position in Karachi is different, where the decision has not been implemented in letter and spirit. The protagonists state that

Karachi has always been different and should be tackled differently. They forget that discipline in all facets of life is important and absence thereof is bound to incur losses. They also forget that crime in the megapolis also needs to be curbed and early closure of shops and markets would surely facilitate this resolve. Moreover, non-compliance is leading businessmen in other areas and specially those adhering to the government decision, to agitate on this and are placing demands for fair and equal treatment at par with others. And they are right in demanding so, hence there is a need for similar closures across the country.

It is seen that early closure of markets and shops has resulted in great dividends for the country and consequently it must carry on as a regular practice. All of us need the discipline and also the time to look after our families. The wrong culture of shops remaining open till past midnight must end once for all. We must follow what the developed and the developing world is doing and then reap the dividends.