

## Creaking law and order

*Performance of police must improve vastly to counter it*

THREE people were murdered in the city in a span of three hours on Saturday. This is but a dramatic reflection of a fact surpassing fiction in terms of rise in criminality.

Against this backdrop, some important decisions were taken at a cabinet meeting on law and order. Police have to take a large part of the responsibility for the ever-worsening law and order situation. The Inspector General of Police put forward the suggestion that action be taken against law enforcers if they fail to arrest culprits within 48 hours of the crimes being committed. Implied in the decision is an acknowledgement of the fact that the police can catch criminals if they are serious in their pursuit. The view may add substance to the IG's recommendation and will also strengthen the case for breaking the much-talked about police-criminal nexus. Moreover, we think, political patronisation of criminals will have to cease.

There are certain things which cannot be bypassed in any discussion on law and order. By setting a deadline for arresting the criminals, the IG has only emphasised the need for quicker and decisive action on the part of the law enforcers. But such action will always depend on factors like manpower, equipment, mobility, training and motivation of the men chasing criminals.

Reports indicate that the number of criminals has increased considerably in the city without a corresponding rise in the number of law enforcers, which means an unfavourable police-criminal ratio for law enforcement. Then a few more areas have become extremely crime-prone alongside the known vulnerable points. But it may not be easy to deal with the problem as much of the police strength is deployed on VIP duties and tailing processions.

As regards training and motivation, our police have not undergone the necessary modernisation and overhauling that could raise their level of efficiency appreciably. Police must also be able to adjust themselves to the changed circumstances in which crimes like murder and robbery are being committed in far greater numbers than petty variety.

We feel all the measures needed to modernise police must be adopted as a matter of priority. And steps like increasing the number of plainclothesmen at the vulnerable points should be considered to keep the situation under control.

Finally, the process of criminalisation has a lot to do with unemployment and a host of other social maladies which must be countered through reinstatement of parental authority topped off by creation of opportunities for the less privileged.

## Flood catching us unawares

*Redoubled efforts needed for mitigation*

ONLY in July we had a close shave with a big country-wide flood. Thank stars, the Padma, Brahmaputra and Meghna did not rise simultaneously to inundate the country. Nevertheless, the experience was demanding enough and when the flood waters finally receded we heaved a sigh of relief. We liked to hope as well that the flood season was left truly and squarely behind. That expectation stands belied as we are having to deal with a flash flood.

It is in the nature of such flooding to be intensive rather than extensive. But the conventional definition of a flash flood has been somewhat overshoot by the sheer spread and reach of the current phenomenon. Although confined to the Padma basin, the flooding has pushed newer borders within it. And, given its intensity, the damage has been pretty much corrosive. The Padma, Mahananda and Arial Kha have swelled resulting in large parts of Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Ishwardi, Pabna, Kushtia, Nilphamari and even Faridpur coming under water. The Padma protection dam has breached threatening further inundation; land erosion has caused homelessness, not to mention the large scale damage wrought to crops, property and homesteads. Six persons have already died.

Economic loss could be substantial. A large swathe of granary has been affected giving rise to the sordid prospect for reduced harvesting of Aman. The snapping of supply-line in the hinterland will predictably raise the market prices.

The cascading waters would flow into the sea as swiftly as they came over our territory, the Meghna estuary remaining free for the downward rush waters into the sea. The whole point is: the quickly receding waters will leave spawning grounds for various diseases, cholera in particular, which can wreak havoc on public health. The needs for water purification tablets, ORS sachets, vaccines and food handouts are too compelling to sit on. Medical teams must reach out to the affected areas. Let the administrative and local government functionaries and voluntary outfits and NGOs work in tandem to mitigate the suffering of flood-affected people.

# Indian grand scheme of interlinking rivers: Bangladesh perspective

QAZI KHOLIQUZZAMAN AHMAD

THE idea of inter-basin transfer of water from north east India to water deficit west and south India by interlinking rivers within India has been proposed and discussed from time to time since the early 1950s when Dr. K. L. Rao (who later became India's Water Resources Minister) first came up with the idea. The Indian National Water Development Agency (I-NWDA), established in 1982, has been carrying out studies to identify feasible inter-basin linkage sub-projects and has already generated a substantial portfolio of links with pre-feasibility studies completed, for few of which feasibility studies have also been completed. The concept was included in the 1987 Indian National Water Policy and reiterated in the 2002 version of it. The I-NWDA has been investigating two sets of linkages one relates to peninsular rivers and the other to Himalayan rivers. While the former is only an inter-state issue within India, the latter additionally involves international perspectives. However, the project remained on the backburner until October 2002.

It is now well known that the project received a shot in the arm when the Indian Supreme Court ordered the Indian Central Government, in October 2002, in response to a public interest litigation, to complete the task of interlinking all rivers of India in a period of 10 years. As suggested by the Supreme Court, the Government of India (GoI) set up a Task Force on 16 December 2002. The timeline formulated has been to prepare action plans and complete feasibility studies and detailed project reports by end of 2006 and the implementation of the full project by 2016. The Task Force has been charged with the responsibility of investigating and reporting on economic viability, socio-economic impact, environmental impact, and resettlement options and plans for each individual linkage sub-project. It is envisaged to transfer 173 BCM of water from the Ganges and the Brahmaputra and more from Teesta and other eastern rivers to the States of UP, MP, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu by digging canals and putting in place other necessary structures including reservoirs at an estimated cost of over US\$120 billion or about Rs. 5,600 billion at 2002 prices.

The order of the Supreme Court of India and the follow-up steps taken by the Indian Government have been in the public domain since their respective issuance. According to newspaper reports, the GoB has very recently lodged its concerns with the GoI and will take up the matter in the forthcoming JRC meeting to be held in New Delhi on 29-30 September 2003. I am not sure at what point of time in a matter like this it would have been appropriate for the GoB to take up the issue of the possible severe adverse impact in Bangladesh of the Indian scheme of interlinking rivers with the GoI. However, the professionals and other elements of civil society could certainly have taken up the task of reviewing its implications for Bangladesh and sensitizing all concerned about them at least since the Indian Supreme Court order or even the setting up of the Task Force. Unfortunately, no momentum in the attention in Bangladesh to this Indian scheme developed until mid-August 2003, although sporadic comments were heard over the previous months.

On 6 April 2003, I spoke about this Indian scheme of interlinking rivers in a seminar in Dhaka, which was organized by Media Network for Sustainable Development (MNSD). I gave some details as to how it was being planned and how might Bangladesh be affected as a result. My comments were based on what I knew from my previous knowledge about the project and the data and information I was able to collect while attending the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum in Japan in mid-March 2003. Realizing its crucial impor-

tance, the Daily Star picked up the issue, prominently reporting it on the front page on 7 April 2003, following up with an editorial the next day. Unfortunately, however, the issue did not receive much attention from any other quarters until the Indian President announced on 15 August 2003, the Indian Independence Day, that the grand scheme of interlinking rivers for transfer of water from the Ganges and the Brahmaputra basins to west and south India was going to be implemented. The same day, the Prime Minister of India announced that the project would be implemented on a war footing.

Since then, a flurry of activities ensued in Bangladesh by way of newspaper articles, seminars, and setting up of networks and organizations, protesting the Indian scheme that would have severe adverse impact on Bangladesh. This indeed is good news as, although belatedly, reaction has started to build up. However, this inordinate delay also shows that we are not creative enough and leave things undone/unattended to until we are finally jolted hard to wake up. Moreover, the reactions being expressed are often emotionally charged and rhetorically not robust based on facts and analysis. In fact, we should have been working to prepare our responses since long. Even when I made the above mentioned statement in early April 2003, it did not generate much interest.

While the appraisal process goes on in India for the interlinking of rivers project, Bangladesh should prepare its responses and remain alert, assuming that the Indian scheme would be implemented. It may be mentioned here, though, that the Indian scheme is very complex and complicated and can have far-reaching, irreversible adverse consequences within India, which may be damaging to many areas, particularly in the basins from which water will be transferred, and in many respects (economic, social, environmental). The question remains as to what would be the net benefit. That is, its economic, social, and environmental implications may be such that the implementation of the project could be a matter of much regret years down the line. In this context, it may be mentioned that, according to Indian experts, highlighted in newspapers and TV channels, the large-scale river bank erosions now occurring in Maldah and Murshidabad

are due to the Farakka Barrage and, also, there are serious questions being raised about the fulfillment of its primary objective of saving the Kolkata port. In fact, there were voices raised in India against the advisability of the Farakka Barrage before it was constructed. As a result of the Farakka Barrage, Bangladesh has been severely suffering and the sufferings and damages in India may eventually turn out to be large. The barrage may, therefore, turn out to be a loss-loss situation for both the countries.

Regarding the scheme of interlinking rivers, there are strong voices being raised in India in relation to its adverse economic, social and environmental consequences, particularly in the Ganges-Brahmaputra basins within India from which waters will be transferred. Interstate issues are coming into the forefront, of which satisfactory solutions could be intractable. We know about the works of some of the people involved in such exercises in India. It will serve the interest of millions of people of India and Bangladesh that professionals and other civil society groups in Bangladesh establish contacts and work together with those groups in India to uphold people's interests in both the countries and raise

bound by this Treaty to work together to augment the flows of the Ganges waters during the dry season. Further, in the preamble of the Treaty, it has been stated that the fair and just solution be found without affecting the rights and entitlements of either party and that the two countries are determined to promote and strengthen their relations of friendship and good neighbourliness. Hence, the grand Indian scheme of interlinking rivers, without first reaching an accommodation with Bangladesh, violates the above mentioned two Articles and Principles enshrined in the Ganges Treaty. In accordance with the above mentioned provisions of the Ganges Treaty, India is required to discuss with Bangladesh all major projects of interventions in the common rivers before.

facts-based and analytically formulated not emotional, rhetorical, or rabble rousing voices against the scheme that could spell disaster for millions in India and Bangladesh.

The GBM region, stretching across Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan and China (Tibet), contains about 40% of the world's poor, despite the fact it has huge water and other natural resources. Studies have shown that sensible development and utilization of these water and other resources of the region under a mutually beneficial, cooperative framework within the region will help augment growth and reduce poverty in the region much faster. On the other hand, transfer of waters from this region will severely damage the prospects of this region's development and poverty reduction.

The Helsinki Rules (Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, adopted in Helsinki in 1992) and the UN Convention (Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Use of International Watercourses, 1997) on international watercourses provide that all co-riparians of an international river or a lake must have equitable access to good quality water from it and that all co-riparians shall take all appropriate measures against causing adverse transboundary effects. While the Helsinki Rules were adopted by some European countries, the UN Convention has not been ratified by either Bangladesh or India. Yet both of these Conventions may still be invoked as internationally recognized principles, but a strong basis exists in this regard for Bangladesh in the 1996 30-year Ganges [Water Sharing] Treaty between India and Bangladesh, to which both the countries are, by Treaty, committed. The following two Articles of the Treaty may be quoted here: "Article IX. Guided by the principles of equity, fairness and no harm to either party, both the Governments agree to conclude water sharing Treaties/Agreements with regard to other common rivers." "Article VIII. The two Governments recognize the need to cooperate with each other in finding a solution to the long-term problem of augmenting the flows of the Ganga/Ganges during the dry season."

Clearly, therefore, the two countries have bound themselves by Treaty not to cause harm to the other party and establish fairness and equity in using waters of the Ganges as well as other common rivers. The two countries are also

reach an accommodation with Bangladesh before taking further steps towards implementing its grand scheme of interlinking rivers.

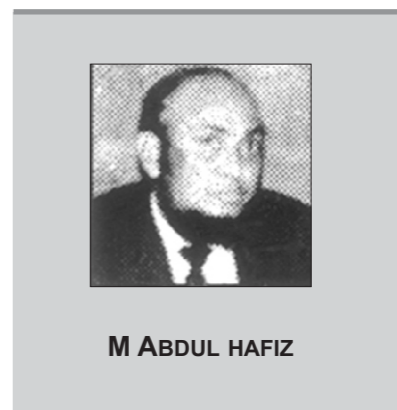
In order to strengthen this argument all possible implications of reduced water flows to Bangladesh, as a result of the interlinking of rivers in India, should be worked in both qualitative and quantitative terms in respect of all sectors including agriculture, industry, ecosystem, human health, fishery, and river transportation. Other concerns of adverse effects that may result from reduced transboundary water flows in different parts of Bangladesh would include water supply and sanitation, ground water recharge, water pollution, salinity ingress, drying up of wetlands, loss of biodiversity, and loss of mangroves. It is not enough to say that reduced water flows will have severe adverse implications in all these respects; it is necessary to undertake appropriate studies to quantify as far as possible and derive research-based qualitative conclusions relating to all of these impact areas. The exercise can be undertaken on the basis of different assumptions concerning the availability of water through the common rivers during the dry season, assuming that the interlinking of rivers project will go ahead in India. Such studies should be completed as soon as possible towards strengthening the arguments based on the principles of equity, fairness, and no harm done to either party as a result of water sector actions taken by one party. In the meantime i.e. as the proposed studies are planned and undertaken, though, it is necessary to bring together immediately whatever data and information are available from various sources to highlight as much as possible the likely adverse impact.

It may be worthwhile to mention here that while this process of protesting and negotiating with India goes on, it is important that the National Water Management Plan, which includes the Ganges Development Area Options Study that has recommended the construction of a barrage on the Ganges to supply water to south west Bangladesh, need to be approved without further loss of time. And, following the approval efforts must be mounted to prioritize water sector activities within the framework of the National Water Policy and National Water Management Plan. One priority would

# Beyond the failed 'road map' for mid-east peace

## PERSPECTIVES

Yes, Arafat is an obstacle to peace -- peace on Israeli term...The Americans followed a long meandering route to peace in search of a pliant Palestinian leader in place of an unbending Arafat least realising that no Palestinian leader other than Yasser Arafat can deliver peace in the Middle East. All intimidation, humiliation and threats meted out to him vindicate his position as the supreme leader of the resistance in Palestinian eye. More significantly, Arafat is only one who can act as a counterweight to the extremism of Palestinian militants.



M ABDUL HAFIZ

EVEN the Oslo peace process confronted by domestic opposition both in Israel and Palestine dragged on for ten years, had its ups and downs and could produce the Palestinian Authority a precursor of the Palestinian State. Ironically, only four months after it was inaugurated the US-backed road map for middle-east peace is already in shreds. Dogged from the out-set by a crisis of intent it was pre-destined to doom. Prior to the launching of the road map when in April last the Americans in a bizarre move proceeded to sideline Yasser Arafat the undisputed leader of the Palestinian people and still the president of the Palestinian Authority the world at large became sceptic about the project's outcome. The US-Israeli attempt to poop up a tin pot leadership in his place with Mahmud Abbas, basically a bureaucrat, as prime minister of the Palestinian Authority to henceforth negotiate peace with the Israelis only intensified the scepticism. This deliberate step to make Arafat 'irrelevant' for any middle east settlement in future could not but erode the credibility of the road map at least in the eyes of the Palestinians.

Yet the Palestinians under persuasion of Mahmud Abbas gave chance to the peace process by agreeing to an unilateral ceasefire, at the end of June last which brought about significant decline, if not absolute end of the Palestinian violence. But it could last barely seven weeks when on 19 August a Hamas suicide bomber blind himself up killing 22 Israelis on a bus in Jerusalem. The Palestinian impatience was understandable as the Israelis failed "to implement its commitment under the provision of road map."

During the ceasefire all that the Israelis did was to withdraw its tanks a few meters from Bethlehem, open a few roads in Gaza and remove five road blocks out of 220 in the West Bank. "It did little else to loosen the 'closure' that isolates each Palestinian village from its neighbour, leave one out of two Palestinians without a job and nearly two out of three in poverty." Israel also did not care to freeze the construction of the Jewish settlements; neither did it stop the construction of so-called 'security fence' swelling up large chunk of Palestinian farmland. In the meantime the targeted killings of the Palestinian leaders went on unabated as the Israelis were not the party to the truce. Under the circumstances it was absurd that the ceasefire could prolong.

Now as Yasser Arafat has inevitably bounced back to the centre stage and Mahmud Abbas, the America's man-discredited and letdown by all quarters including the Americans and Israelis stepped down yielding his place to a new incumbent, Ahmed Qowli -- an Arafat loyalist can the road map be put back on the track? There are few chances as the Israelis repeatedly made it clear that they should never negotiate peace either with Arafat or any dispensation enjoying his support. They have summarily rejected Arafat's offer for a fresh ceasefire which he

put forward so that the peace process could be salvaged. But Israel views another Palestinian ceasefire as just another ruse to evade the Palestinian Authority's responsibility to take on the Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Stunned by the departure of Abbas, their man and cool to his successor, believed to be Arafat's man the Americans also feel the same way. Even though the EU is some what less prejudiced to Qowli, it too after declaring 'Hamas' a terrorist organisation recently places the onus on the PA and the new prime minister to act against the militants and act first. But the problem with Qowli is the same as it was with Abbas. Without some substantial return from Israeli side the Palestinian public opinion is unlikely to tolerate a vigorous move against the Islamists and the action will only spark a civil war.

After the suicide bombs in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv the mood in Israeli government circle is no more in favour of a fresh negotiation under road map. It is now ominously about the disposal of Arafat through expulsion, assassination or more stringent confinement. The killing of Arafat as one of the option has been chillingly expressed by none other than Israel's deputy prime minister. By all appearance the things are moving fast towards a fateful consequence. The Israeli security cabinet's mafia-like pronouncements, the veto to block Arafat's safety and Israel's track record in the past -- all combine to suggest that the Israelis may as well kill Arafat out of desperation. Only weeks before they made an attempt on the life of Sheikh Yassin, the spiritual leader of the Hamas. Their hatred of Arafat already borders on obsession and are likely to be tempted to eliminate him -- the only obstacle to peace!

Yes, Arafat is an obstacle to peace -- peace on Israeli term. Although he was accorded a red carpet in the White House alongside Late Yitzak Rabin in 1993 he started drawing the US' ire ever since he refused to comprise on Palestinians' vital interests in Camp David II in July 2000. The Americans followed a long meandering route to peace in search of a pliant Palestinian leader in place of an unbending Arafat least realising that no Palestinian leader other than Yasser Arafat can deliver peace in the Middle East. All intimidation, humiliation and threats meted out to him vindicate his position as the supreme leader of the resistance in Palestinian eye. More significantly, Arafat is only one who can act as a counterweight to the extremism of Palestinian militants. It is the bellicosity of Israel which has radicalised Arafat over the years leaving almost no moderate leader in Palestine with enough could to work for peace through a political process.

By turning a blind eye to the fundamentals of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict the sponsors of the peace process in the Middle East have failed to give it a fair chance of getting off the ground. The role of US at the apex of quartet sponsoring the road map has been anything but that of an honest broker. It is her acquiescence, if not abutment that made Israel's ruthless policy of pressing on with the colonization of more and more Palestinian land and its brutal reprisals in the name of punishing militancy possible.

There may still be options left with America to deliver peace on Israel's term but that peace will prevail only when Israel and Palestinian turn into graveyard with more violence, blood letting and devastation. The collapse of the road map in bloods is the sad reminder of that looming reality.

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# Crossing the border of decency

## Tokyo governor makes a remark encouraging terrorist acts

MONZURUL HUQ writes from Tokyo

DECENCY in comment is what people expect most from politicians who are chosen to take leadership role. If leaders are to make comments on matters crossing the threshold of narrow geographic boundaries, the need for decency is more urgent as even a slip of tongue might also lead to complications in diplomatic relations not desired by any sides.

It looks like as if a group of old guard politicians in post World War II Japan has always been involved in proving to the people that they quite often forget the reality that the game they are involved in is called politics and hence there is an urgent need to think seriously about any possible consequence before uttering unpleasant words that usually spread around with the speed of the light if the comment contains elements of extreme controversy.

There is also no shortage of examples among Japanese politicians expressing regret for what they had said earlier. Despite such examples plentiful all around, there is no sign that politicians have taken the matter seriously as controversial and in times outrageous comments by some leading political figures in Japan continue to damage the image of the nation overseas.

The maverick politician of Japan's 'Old Guard Political Camp', Shintaro Ishihara, who first came into international limelight for making comments considered unusual for Japanese political figures in late 1980s through his thought provoking publication 'Japan that can say No', has since then repeatedly proved that he is not a person that foreigners figure on as stereotyped Japanese -- light lipped and indifferent when specific comments on an important issue is expected. Now serving his second term in the office

as governor of Tokyo, Ishihara in the recent past has outraged the Asian population of the Japanese capital by branding them as polluters and troublemakers and asking country's defence authority to be vigilant of their movements. And now he came a step forward with another of his branded controversial comments that outraged many of his own people who rightfully think that the Tokyo governor has crossed the border of decency by suggesting that a high government official deserved to be a legitimate target of terrorist attack at his home in Japan's capital city, the metropolis that has its reputation of being the safest mega city in the world.

Like in most other countries of the world, Japan too have numerous organisations involved in activities ranging from helping the disadvantaged to dubious religious practices. Some have strong political connection, while others go for economic,

material or spiritual gain. Among the groups with political linkages, there are quite significant number calling for a return to Japan's 'glorious past' when the country expanded its military occupation throughout Asia. These groups are also allergic to making any concession, particularly to China or Korea on political matters, and hence stand firmly against normalization of Japan's diplomatic relations with North Korea. One such self-proclaimed ultra patriot group has set the goal of targeting 'traitors of Japan' in order to get rid of those whom they see as selling out country's interest to the foreigners.

The group has claimed responsibility for a time bomb found recently at the home of a senior foreign office bureaucrat who served as Japan's point man in talks with North Korea. The bomb was removed from the home of Additional Foreign Secretary Hitoshi Tanaka and he and his

family members were briefly evacuated to a police facility.

The device found at Tanaka's home was similar to ones used in fake bombs discovered earlier near the facilities of Japan's pro-Pyongyang Korean residents' association in Fukuoka and Niigata prefectures, with the important difference that the bomb placed at the residence of the foreign office bureaucrat being a real one. Police also found an envelope addressed in Japanese to "Kakuzoku Hitoshi Tanaka", "Kakuzoku" in Japanese means traitor to Japan. On the back of the envelope the sender's identification was given as 'nation-building volunteer corps', a dubious terrorist group trying to purify Japan in the same way as some of country's top leaders in late 1930s and early 1940s tried and miserably failed.

The incident happened at a time when Tokyo governor came forward with his endorsement in support of a

leading contestant in the upcoming presidential election of Japan's main ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). As the president of LDP is also to become the next prime minister of Japan, the election carries significant importance and Ishihara considered it to be his responsibility to stand behind one of the three candidates who are challenging Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

At a recent campaign speech in Tokyo in support of LDP presidential candidate Shizuka Kamei, Ishihara bluntly criticised the foreign office bureaucrat whose home was the target of a terrorist bomb attack by saying, "that fellow Hitoshi Tanaka had it coming." The Tokyo governor also did not hesitate to tell the audience that he thought Tanaka was a pawn working to uphold North Korea interest. Ishihara made it clear that he favours a high-handed Japanese attitude to punish North

Korea instead of negotiating with the country.

His comment, which some in the Japanese media has termed as a 'terror-tolerant' one has stirred controversy and country's leading politicians, including the prime minister, have expressed shock over the matter. Koizumi called Ishihara's comment 'inappropriate', while the foreign minister was outraged that one of its top officials was publicly blamed for the service he was rendering to ensure peace and stability in the region.

But the governor himself remains defiant, and despite outrage from fellow politicians and officials, Ishihara not only refused to apologise, but also added country's foreign ministry to the list that he blames for the bomb discovered at the house of a top bureaucrat. The Tokyo governor made it clear he was not in doubt that there were a number of events handled by the

foreign office that, according to him, led to what the concerned official rightfully deserved.

As a result, many in Japan are now asking if planting a bomb at the house of someone who is disliked by a certain group is what the governor of Tokyo considers an act that calls for his support. This kind of open endorsement of violence by highly placed politicians, critics argue, might turn Japanese capital into a heaven for those looking for taking law into their own hands by involving in random revenge and contact killings, not to say of the different groups of terrorists that are now roaming around the globe in search of right opportunities to hit their targets. No doubt, a chilling option for a capital city with a population exceeding 10 million.