### The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Friday, April 16, 1999

Heads Should Hang in Shame
This is a classic example of turning the tail and duck-

ing for safety from public wrath boiling over the government's failure to provide the citizens with two most basic amenities of life - power and water. Since electrical energy is key to the functioning of water pumps it is obviously at the heart of our concern now, all said and done.

No sooner had the present government come to power nearly three years ago than we editorialised on the supreme necessity for it to come out in public with full particulars of the state of the energy sector. What we wanted to know were not merely the power generation and distribution capacities left by the preceding government but also the plans and projections the new government had up its sleeves together with a definitive timeframe announced for their implementation. In simple terms, the dilapidated, obsolete and overworked plants needed to be upgraded or replaced where necessary, on the one hand, and on the other, the huge pressure of demand impelled creation of new capacities. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on assuming power wasted no time in denouncing the BNP for its abysmal failure to add even a single megawatt of power to the system during its five-year rule. As she continued in this strident note, which ironically, but not inexplicably, has subsided now, people thought that they were about to see the table turned on BNP's poor performance with new megawatts added to the system as the old plants in it got recharged into new life. But the records of this government after nearly three years in power portray regression and not progress in the sector. The most disappointing giant leap backward has been the starkest reality ever to confound the nation to-date. Except for certain agreements being signed on barge-mounted projects there has been regression in all other areas. Pursuit of projects left off by BNP government has been bedevilled by inefficiency and corruption in the government agencies concerned with scrambles for winning contracts fuelling all that to a point of utter indecisiveness.

As things went downhill, a plethora of early warnings of disastrous consequences shaping up for the power sector were sounded by us to the government. And, at the risk of being irritating to the government and repetitive to our readers we persistently urged the government to publish a White Paper on the whole affair. Now, when the sector has fallen face down with a final collapse of the human factor involving an abject lack of coordination and accountability between the ministry and the PDB at the decision-making level; and between PDB and DESA at the operational level, then what we have is perhaps the last nail driven in the coffin.

A mere reshuffling of officials when the objective situation is so bad in the power sector looks like being another dose of palliatives we would much rather express our revulsion against far too deluged as we have been by incurable adhocism to eschew it anymore.

There are too many centres of power operating at cross-purposes in the decision-making process relating the power sector. The whole notion of the government's collective wisdom coming into play has been conspicuous by its absence as a handful at the PMO, or in relation to it, called the shots that missed the targets. Then there has been this lobby factor trying to move things their

It is only by publishing a White Paper that the government can make an unencumbered start for a rapid and meaningful transformation in the power sector.

### Friday Mailbox

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Talking of gender sensitivity

Sir, The DS YEP page of 2nd April '99 on "New Horizons in the Tele-Media: impact trends directions ..." was an interesting one. But what was more interesting that the panel did not consist of a single woman professional. Are we then supposed to believe that there aren't any women professionals in the media, who are recognised as advertisement/documentary film-makers, appropriate enough to talk on the issue in question?

Gender sensitivity seems to hover around only when gender issues/subjects are in discussion or during seminars, forums like on "International Women's Day". This is not expected of the DS or the British Council and Mr Mahfuz Anam in particular, who has been advocating gender awareness and equality for quite some time.

If we look around, we'll find in every profession at least a couple of Bangladeshi women experts who have made their mark both nationally and internationally. It's time the DS and BC are genuinely more gender focused.

> Zaraazra Dhaka-1207

Leadership: In search of def-

inition Sir, Muhammad Badrul Ahsan's erudite piece

(The Daily Star, 9 April, 1999) on true leadership raises a number of questions. Allow me to raise a few. Mr Ahsan makes much of the need for leaders to know the flock they lead. And rightly so. He then goes on to cite Mahatma Gandhi undoubtedly one of the greatest men of the twentieth century - as an example of leader per excellence. Mahatma "became one with the masses", as Mr Ahsan puts it. How ironic is the imagery! Gandhiji indeed became one with the masses, but that was certainly not an unmixed blessing. He became so much like them - even as there was so much in him that made him so different — that he could no longer lead them. When the crunch came, he failed them. His tradition-based, non-secular, politics was a disaster. And it destroyed him along with his lofty ideals. He was a great man. But I doubt whether he was a great leader.

A leader must remain one step ahead of the masses. Masses are inevitably short-sighted. They do not usually have long-term goals. It is up to the leader to draw attention to these goals. if not to set them. Achieving these goals can often be difficult. Hard choices have often to be made. A leader is one who makes the implications of these choices clear to the masses and lead them to the goal as best as he can. He must know the masses but he cannot be "one with the masses" in any useful sense. Merely addressing "people's emotions" will never do.

To be frank — and is it not time? — our present leaders are indeed addressing people's "emotions". Nay, they are in fact stoking them. They are nowhere near addressing the difficult tasks of leaderships. Nelson Mandela is without any doubt one of the great men of our time. But one should not read too much in his analogy of the village herd boy and his herd. If he accepts it as an article of faith that he should always lead it from the rear, the chances are that he would not be able to prevent the "more energetic cattle" heading straight for the ravine, taking the rest of the herd, and possibly the herd boy himself, with

That, to repeat, is the danger that Bangladesh is facing.

> Mahfuzur Rahman New York, USA

Tajuddin and Osmany

Sir, The letter in the DS, April 10, on blackout of Tajuddin by AL was too polite. There is another noticeable black-out that of the late General Osmany.

Third black-act: Why the Dec '71 surrender documents were signed by non-Bangladeshi on behalf of Bangladesh?

What is the party image today? It cannot get the benefit of the doubt.

> A Senior Citizen Dhaka

TV licence

Sir. Every year the renewal of TV licence and that of other electrical devices begin from January. Whether one pays the licence fee for TV in January or February, no new licence is issued by the bank concerned before April. Meanwhile, we, who pay the licence fee regularly, have to surrender the original licence of the previous year to the bank concerned along with the fixed amount in cash. Why cannot a photo copy be kept by

the authorities concerned? Moreover, we are aware of the fact that quite a large number of city dwellers never bother to pay the bill let alone renew the licence. But for some mysterious reasons

they are never inquired. In 1997, I received a letter (actually legal notice) from the GPO asking me to explain why I had failed to renew my radio licence for the year 1996. It also asserted that If I failed to give an acceptable reply, legal action would be taken. But the authority concerned made no mention of the required 1997 licence, although the notice was sent in October. This proves that GPO does not maintain a proper record of radio sets owned by the consumers.

Does the same apply to the TV bhobonwals?

> Mujibul Haque Mirpur Road Dhaka

It's worse

Sir. The law and order situation of the country has deteriorated. After the appointment of the new home minister the situation has become worse. Each and every citizen of the country has become concerned of his personal security.

It is felt that what the former home minister could not control in three years, it cannot be put in track by the new home minister in three months. It is the home secretary who should control these matters and guide the minister accordingly.

We believe it is primarily the home secretary's failure because he has the information and knowledge about the whole situation. We feel that the change of home secretary will definitely effect the present law and order situation of the country, improve the image of the government and save the helpless citizen from such a terrible situation.

> Pervez Ahmed Green Road, Dhaka

### An Appraisal of India's Agni-II Testfire

OR the last fifty years or so Indo-Pakistan relations appears to be a seesaw game in diplomacy. It vacillates between the efforts of reconciliation and the exhibition of toughness without any rhyme or reason. Only seven weeks ago, the two Prime Ministers signed the Lahore Declaration which set out a process of reconciliation between the two countries. Together with the Declaration, a Memorandum of Understanding was concluded by the Foreign Secretaries of both countries which aimed at the moratorium of nuclear tests and the establishment of appropriate communication mechanism to avert accidental or otherwise a nuclear war. It was expected that a regime of

sile race in the sub-continent. Regrettably that is not to be so. India dashed the hope of restraint on nuclear weapons and missile technology by successfully testing its locally developed, upgraded intermediaterange ballistic missile Agni II on 11th April from Wheelers Island, in Balasore district of the state of Orissa. The over 20-metre long is a two-stage missile with a payload of 1000kg. India tested in 1994 Agni 1 which had a range of 1500km. Agni II has a range of 2200 km and will cover the entire territory of Pakistan and a greater part of southern China. India's Information Minister Mahajan said: "It was a perfect launch." This test must have rattled both China and Pakistan as well as

restraint and reason would

prevail in the nuclear and mis-

The missile test: Why? The missile test appears to be no surprise to many political analysts because it was foreshadowed by the government for many months. The present government is known to have made it clear that it is committed to upgrade its nuclear and missile arsenals matching China's. The test of Agni II missile seems to be a corollary to the nuclear explosions of last May. After all, the possession of

snubbed the US.

by Barrister Harun ur Rashid nuclear weapons per se have only limited strategic importance and without a missile carrying the nuclear warheads, they become practically ineffective. India does not see the test as a trigger for nuclear arms race in the sub-continent.

India's nuclear doctrine appears to be centred on two concepts: building a minimum credible deterrence and the nofirst use of nuclear weapons. Defence Minister Fernandes stated that the test was conducted for India's security and there would be no compromise on the issue. He further said: "We have reached a point from now on nobody from anywhere will dare to threaten us."

India perceives that the strategic dominance in the region appears to be shifting to China. Both militarily and economically China is ahead of India. India is unhappy that it is slipping strategically under the domination of China. India knows well that in any armed conflict with China, the West is unlikely to be directly involved India needs to be self-reliant from the perceived security threat from China and the missile test appears to be a part of its defence strategy. Furthermore India made it

clear last May when it detonated its nuclear devices that it considered China as its main rival with Pakistan playing only a secondary role. India believes that China cannot be excluded from the security architecture of the Indian sub-continent and accuses Pakistan of being "Indo-centric" and unmindful of India's security interests vis-a-vis China. This implies that the target of India's missile is not Pakistan but

It perceives security threats from China given the unresolved territorial border dispute on the Himalayas. China conducted numerous advanced nuclear tests till late 1996 when it announced that it would not

hold any more tests. China's leadership is reported to have put back at the top of its agenda its re-armament programme and to achieve this aim it is in the process of acquiring a fleet of fighter jets, submarines, and missile destroyers with antiship missiles from cashstrapped Russia. China is believed to be much ahead in nu-

than India which could argue that the missile test is primarily aimed at self-defence. If it is assumed that the missile Agni-II test is necessary for India, a question that arises is: why did India conduct the test at this point of time?

Many in India and outside

clear and missile technology

will question the motive of the government and there is a view that the test was conducted by the BJP-led government to bolster its political strength when it is facing its immediate collapse after one of its principal allies (AIDMK) threatened to withdraw support later last week. The test is interpreted as a shrewd political tactics to obtain support from other minor parties to prove its majority, if asked for a vote of confidence in the House of Representatives (Lok Shobha). The government wants to convey to the people that it is serious with business and is dealing with an important security issue.

Although all the political

parties in India may not differ

publicly with the views of the government on the security issue, the government is expected to come under severe criticism with the timing of the test. The West Bengal Chief Minister Basu said that the test was a political stunt and had nothing to do with India's defence. The government is seen to be exploiting the sentiments of the people on the vital security matter in a bid to retain power or to win the election if snap poll is held in near future. Although its political game could be exposed, it might work. The Hindustan Times said on 12

April that the Agni II test was another example of how China's "India-encirclement policy" was back-firing. This view largely echoes the widely held perception among the Indian

Pakistan's response

Pakistan was watching

with an unease India's growing strategic alliance with Russia while Russia's Defence Minister paid a visit to India in recent times. Pakistan naturally felt threatened with the test of Agni II. It appears that Pakistan did not buy India's perceived threat from China. It considered that the test of Agni II disturbed the military balance in the subcontinent in India's favour and the position was not acceptable to Pakistan. Furthermore Pakistan appeared disappointed with India's action as it expected to have agreement with India not to accelerate either nuclear or missile race in the sub-continent following the Lahore Declaration.

Pakistan last year launched a medium range ballistic missile "Ghauri" which is believed to have a range of more than 480km and is capable of carrying a nuclear head as far as New Delhi. Pakistan is committed not to alter the military balance in the sub-continent and is a firm believer of matching response with India. It was no surprise Pakistan conducted a test of an intermediate ballistic missile Ghauri II on Wednesday. Earlier Pakistan claimed that it had three kind of missiles which could be tested. One is Shaheen 1 which has a range of 750km, the other two being Ghauri II and Shaheen II with range of 2000 km and 2300 km. Shaheen I could be tested within a few days and Pakistan claims that it is a missile of an advanced technology which India has not yet able to demonstrate. It is a guided missile with 100 per cent accuracy. Pakistan believes that Shaheen

I is an adequate response since most of the strategic targets in India are located within the range of 300-400 km from Pakistan's borders.

International response The US. Britain . Australia and Japan expressed concern at the test. It is seen as a defiance of international appeal to put India's nuclear and missile programmes on hold. Further the test will be a contentious issue in the ongoing talks with the US on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and restrictions on its development programme of missiles. The UN declined to comment on the test and affirmed global nuclear disarmament for peace and se-

Conclusion

The test is likely to exacerbate the suspicion and ill-will which infected Indo-Pakistan relations as the missile test will be seen by Pakistan as its front-line target. The Lahore Declaration which generated great expectations in the minds of the people in the sub-continent in restoring mutual trust between the two key players has been put into back burner. The two countries appear to undo a great deal of good work in promoting an understanding between them. India dashed the hope of Pakistan for a restraint in nuclear and missile regime. Regrettably it seems that they are back to square one.

The test will send a message to China, in particular when one of the top Chinese leaders Li Peng, former Prime Minister and Speaker of the Parliament (number two in the standing) is on a visit to Pakistan and Bangladesh. Indirectly India appears to make it palpably clear that the threat of the strategic alliance between China and Pakistan can be matched.

The writer is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the United Nations in Europe,

### Three-nation Conference in Kathmandu

## Removing the Greatest Obstacle

by Haroon Habib

N an atmosphere of mistrust and lack of confidence that Lepersist in the South Asian region, any initiative aimed at increasing cooperation among the close neighbours is important. Even if that initiative fails to achieve its desired goals instantly, it contributes positively to the avowed goals in the long run. Fortunately, we have now entered a stage when a large segment of our people talk about regionalism, and condemu protagonists of isolation, which only 10 years ago was not

The Kathmandu conference (April 3-4) on harnessing the Eastern Himalayan Rivers. therefore, deserves appreciation. The two-day meet in the capital of Himalayan Kingdom was designed to further the cause of harnessing the three mighty rivers of the region for benefit of the regional people. As my experience in the conference goes, the deliberations were worthy because the participants - eminent politicians, both from ruling and opposition parties, experts, academicians and journalists - from India, Bangladesh and Nepal spoke frankly about problems. and felt, almost unequivocally, the need for greater crossborder cooperation. They have also spoken about hindrances on way to achieving such cooperation, and suggested their reme-

The initiative of harnessing the water resources of the Ganges, Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) region was first taken in 1990 by three leading non-governmental organisations. The Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) of Dhaka, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). New Delhi and Institute of Inte-

dies in the own ways.

grated Development Studies (IIDS). Kathmandu took a joint step and moved ahead with zeal for some years. The Phase studies of the group reflected a range of broad agreements and a number of specific proposals for cooperation in the GBM region. The basic premise under lining the initiative was that a cooperative regional approach to the regional, and even certain national issues would generate a positive sum win-win result for all the participating

The studies provided analyses on several aspects including socio-economic realities, water, energy, island water transport. environment, natural disasters and modalities of cooperation. Building on these analyses, it outlined a number of possibilities of cooperative action by India, Bangladesh and Nepal.

The Phase 2 of the initiative was designed to explore further nine of the possibilities identified in Phase 1.

The works done so far by the three non-governmental organisations are important, particularly when they have identified the areas of cooperation and suggested how those areas could be best used for the teeming millions of the region. But the vital question is: how these good works will benefit the three countries unless we restore mutual trust, especially under the given socio-political environment?

As we know, the signing of the landmark Ganges Water Sharing Treaty between India and Bangladesh, and also the Mahakali Treaty between Nepal and India have ushered in changes in favour of cooperation in the GBM region. These two treaties are the demonstra-

tions of positive political will. and I believe they are the two breakthroughs in our regional approach, that the three democratic governments of this region have boldly shown. But what is the political re-

ality in the region after signing these treaties? The Ganges Water Sharing Treaty received a bitter criticism in Bangladesh. particularly by political quarter, which perhaps believe that if existing problems with India is resolved, they might suffer a set-back in domestic politics. In Nepal the Mahakali Treaty has become a political issue. In India, when the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty was signed, the then opposition BJP and most of its regional allies opposed it strongly. Surprisingly, the basis of their criticism was not technical but political, and more precisely influenced by their religio-political culture.

There may be various reasons to oppose an international treaty, but when it comes from partisan political considerations it becomes a tragedy for all. This is the irony of fate of our region that we have developed a culture of politicising everything - our resources. rivers, even religion and the sky. And I strongly believe that unless this ommous political culture is challenged, or we take a bold united stand against the elements who divide people on religions and ethnic lines, the regional countries will continue to suffer.

l am not talking about Bangladesh alone, where religious extremism and communal politics are still trying to capture front pages of newspapers. The politics of religious fanaticism and communalism are often blocking all of us in

the region from joining hands across borders. The trend — the old political culture of politicising religion - is equally powerful in India, for instance a party like BJP is now in power in India, least to speak of Pakistan, where religion is the main political slogan. Religious chau vinism in each of our countries is inflicting heavily on our confidence. As I understand, and also referred by various other participants in the recently held Kathmandu conference, the major obstacle to greater regional cooperation is the historical mistrust and lack of confidence amongst us. And this lack of confidence was mainly created by a section of politicians who survive on political trade and befool the people by chief slogans. And more unfortunately, while the mistrust was the planned creation of the colonial British aided by our older generations, many new generation politicians also pursue the same line since they think it is easy to be accomplished.

All of us have been hearing for long that GBM region has plentiful human potentials. abundance of national resources, and a joint endeavour would benefit us all. But what we see in reality? Why we are not being able to cooperate meaningfully so far? Despite abundance of our resources why the GBM region is still the home for largest concentration of world's poor?

Therefore, conferences like this assumes a great significance. It proves that even when many have succumbed some have not. Several senior political leaders from India. Bangladesh and Nepal, both from ruling and opposition par-

ties took part in the exhaustive deliberation along with experts. scholars and journalists Despite a few differences in the ways and means, they have all strongly emphasised the need for removing the deep-rooted mistrust in achieving the much desired goal of greater regional cooperation. It was almost the consensus view of the participants that our people must be told, repeatedly, that the days of isolation and religious bigotry is over. This is the time for togetherness and unity. Our shared history and bitter communal experience many have cost us heavily in the past, but this is the time to begin our life afresh with a new trust and vision. Because unless were are able to overcome the mistrust. and bury the bitter past, the desired development of this region with a common endeavour, despite all our efforts, will contimue to bypass us. We will go on holding such conferences, but finally our fates will remain unchanged.

The common people of these three countries must be mobilised, in all possible ways, to must bury the bitter past and begin a new today for a prosperous tomorrow. We must also have a strong political will at government levels, a strong social mobilisation to back the political will solidly, and a strong and united social resistance from all these countries to resist the religion-based political culture which I call the greatest obstacle in our progress. I am happy that the Kathmandu Conference ended with a Declaration which called for looking beyond the past and join hands with trust and vi-

#### **OPINION**

# Who is Going to Police the Police?

by Dr. A.H. Jaffor Ullah

HIS is not the first time I have written an article A narrating the nefarious activities of Bangladesh's police force. And the way things are developing inside Bangladesh's law enforcement department. I can guarantee the readers that this won't be my last article on the devious role of Bangladesh's police force either.

Most daily newspapers in Bangladesh including the major vernacular ones have copiously reported the wrongdoing of Bangladesh's police force. Sometimes I wonder whether the Hasina administration or members of the parliament would care to read the headlines of our nation's newspapers delineating the police brutalities within the confines of the police station; let alone the complete accounts of such reportings. Otherwise why do they keep mum about the whole situation? Do they care about the moral degradation that has already plagued the police force? Or, do they think that the police department is so rotten to the core that no one can do anything humanly possible to

clean up the system. The police department of Bangladesh is the "proud" recipient of all the negative accolades one can think about. This is nothing new. The British instituted a corrupt police department from the very beginning of the Raj days. Trust me.

I know what I am writing about. My maternal grandfather's brother was a Superintendent of Police during the 1920-30s in Bengal. Before the partition in 1947, he was the deputy Inspector General of Police in Calcutta; quite a position I must say. His lifestyle was no less than a Nawab during the British Raj. The British didn't care much about the corruption and deceit that were rampant inside the police department in the heydays of the British Raj.

Our father's generation thought things would be dramatically different in Jinnah's Pakistan. But the extent of corruption inside the police department skyrocketed in the 1950s and 60s. I was there as a teenager to witness the wheeling and dealing that went unabated at the time. My parents' house was conveniently located next to Tejgaon police station in Dhaka.

During the last 28 years ever since we removed all the shackles of subjugation imposed by our colonial masters I thought the police department would finally be reformed for the better. But, how wrong was 1. The extent of corruption took quantum leap and the denizens of Bangladesh's police

department had become the

vilest people to roam freely in

Bangladesh. Aren't they fa-

mous for extorting money from the people who would visit the police station? Bribery was institutionalized a long time ago in every police station from northwestern town of Hili, Dinajpur to the southeastern town of Teknaf, Chittagong, In the last decade the

"esteem" of the police department had sunk even lower. Sexual misconduct, brutality. money extortion, civil rights violation, etc. are some of the "accolades" reserved for them these days. We don't relish the news that a certain embassy in Dhaka is alerting its female citizens not even to visit the police department in the event they are mugged by the street thugs. With the advent of the Inter-

net, the whole world is now witnessing all the charades going on in our police department all across the nation. Does this please Mrs. Hasina Wazed, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh? Something drastic should be done with the police department right away. Otherwise, the entire law and order situation will deteriorate so fast that Bangladesh will become the most corrupt society in entire "South Asia. I think we are in the final leg of our journey to abyss. Time is ripe for doing something drastic. The big question now is - who is going to police the police department

of Bangladesh?

The Hasina administration should immediately appoint a commission comprising of judges, university professors, and others from civil society to investigate and weed out the rogue top officials from the police department. The upper echelon of Bangladesh's police department is most certainly the vilest and responsible for the misdeeds of the lower ranking officers. They are all partners in crime.

Bangladesh's universities and colleges are producing enough graduates every year. Therefore, it is not going to be a difficult task to fill in the positions that would be vacated by the forcible removal of unscrupulous officers. The Administration should implement a five-year plan to overhaul the entire police department, from top to bottom. It could be done in an efficient manner provided the present administration has the resolve

It is quite disconcerting to know that Bangladesh is fast becoming the den of political terrorists. To combat the actions of these rogues we need a well-disciplined police force. The weeding out of rogue high officials from the department will restore confidence and the lower ranking officers will get

the message right away. It is about time that Bangladesh's home minister took the matter

seriously and the challenge. The government should appoint a permanent body to police the police department of Bangladesh. This is an auspiclous moment to form such a commission. Citizens of Bangladesh who had watched the decay in moral fabrics of the police department will most certainly welcome this move by the government. The police department of Bangladesh has the idea that they are above the law. This myth should be decimated early. No one should be above the law in a democratic society.

An adherence to strict laws of the land is a sine qua non of a civil society. If Bangladesh wants to be a member of such a civil society in this world then there are no alternatives but to reform her police force. The sooner it is done the better off the nation would be in the near

term.

My request to the present administration of Bangladesh is - seize the moment and do something drastic to reform the entire police department even if it means forcible removal of the few incorrigibles high officials. Why not do this? The entire nation will benefit from such an exercise. Besides, a good governance is ought to be any government's raison d'être.

Views expressed in this column are the writers' own. The Editor may or may not subscribe to those views. The Editor reserves the right to decide which letters should be published.