

## The Bidding Rounds in Hydrocarbon Exploration

by Nuruddin Mahmud Kamal

*A clear policy on the utilization of the gas reserves established already and are likely to be added in the counting of numbers shortly is extremely important, otherwise the nation might walk into inaccessible areas or even unwittingly get overpowered in the crucial negotiating points.*

It is important that Bangladesh should know what its reserves of gas are because its economy depends heavily on gas-based energy, especially for generation of electricity. It also needs to know where the reserves are. But any one cannot go out to count the reserves because they lie far underground in geological traps whose precise nature can only be estimated. The exact size of the reserves of a field will be known only on the day when it is finally abandoned. Until then, some measure of uncertainty will always surround the number. We need to understand that uncertainty better, in the same way as we assess the probability of a cyclone striking a particular place at a given time.

Say, about thirty years back, when there was still a great deal of gas left to find, the issue of reserves was not particularly critical. They were little more than a pragmatic inventory. But now, when there is comparatively little left to find, the subject became more important, especially when we want to use the trend of past discovery as a guide to estimating future discovery. Perhaps it is ingrained in our psyche that 'correct' answers always exist and are to be found in books, or through printed matters or from authorities. The situation however might become critical when the right or appropriate answers are not available either from books or from the bureaucracy led authorities in Bangladesh. The high profile petroleum engineering seminar held in the last week of May this year in Dhaka, attended by experts and professionals but no political personalities, deliberated on the various aspects of hydrocarbon exploration particularly on the reserves and the prospect of gas export. During the same time The Daily Star published one of my articles entitled 'Gas Contracts and Tasks Before Bangladesh'. The Daily Star also published my review on the above mentioned symposium on 2 July 99. In the meantime, an article entitled 'Export of Gas: Promises and Perils' written by me was also published on 14 June 99. This was followed by a thought-provoking and enlightened article by Mr. Shahid Latif - 'Gas export: Yes or No' on 8 July 99.

(one) TCF. The structure was not developed, rather abandoned by the foreign company. In early 90's Messrs Scimitar proposed for the first time export of gas through pipeline, which was not accepted. Nevertheless, these are delicate issues and their pros and cons may be examined, analysed in the day light and perhaps a win-win situation may become visible through the window. While doing so, the government must be on guard and alert at all times.

Indeed, provision is there in the current PSC for export through LNG route. Now, they want a major change in the contract. To most people, their proposed option of a dedicated pipeline on a non-competitive basis may not be good in the interest of Bangladesh. Yet, it is rather intriguing that the IOCs having signed PSCs in the mid 90's are also now proposing to amend their contracts, which could have far reaching implications and ramifications on agreements made. From their proposal it would appear that even the signed contract(s) will undergo major surgical operations to obtain uneven advantage to the IOC. Why should the government consider such changes proposed by the IOCs, while other stipulations in the contract remains intact. I believe, it has not even been discussed who would do the export, if at all, and on whose behalf? The gas under the ground belongs to the state and the state (Bangladesh) belongs to the people. The contract is for sharing products before and after cost-recovery. But an IOC cannot over generalize contract and intervene into the sovereign right of the government. For example, under PSC-1974, in an off-shore block Messrs Union Oil Company (perhaps Unocal now) discovered Kutubdia gas of around 1

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## The End of Morality

by Irfan Husain

*Most of the French monk's gloomy forecasts are so ambiguously worded*

*Perhaps when Nostradamus warned us of the destruction of the world at the end of the millennium, he was referring to the end of morality.*



possible motive in approaching the idealistic Bohr.

Heisenberg vacillates between two positions. The first is that he took a humanitarian stance in not making an atom bomb for his Nazi masters; but he also admits that he had failed to carry out a crucial set of calculations that would have confirmed that a chain reaction was very possible to achieve. The audience is asked to decide if Germany failed in its nuclear ambitions because of Heisenberg's idealism or incompetence. These ambiguities and ambitions make for riveting theatre, but at the end, I was left asking myself whether Dr A. Q. Khan and his other colleagues in charge of Pakistan's nuclear programme (or indeed their Indian counterparts) have ever been troubled by such moral issues.

Of course a fundamental difference is that Dr Khan and his team are functioning as engineers manufacturing nuclear devices on the basis of the principles discovered earlier in this century by Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg, Fermi and others. They are not breaking any fresh ground; indeed, Dr Khan is himself a metallurgist and not a nuclear physicist at all. But nevertheless, I wonder if any of them engage in any introspection, asking themselves if their work is morally justified. After all, if one's research (or even application of existing theoretical work) results in a device that can kill millions, surely such activity should result in sleepless nights for anybody who accepts responsibility for his actions.

The playwright focuses on a moment of time in 1941 when the German scientist visited Copenhagen and speculates on what happened in his meeting with Bohr. In a literary sense, Frayn applies Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty Principle' in his attempt to establish what the two talked about: the play of fers three different scenarios, with Bohr's wife defending her husband's role and finally accusing his ex-pupil of the worst

The Nuremberg trials at the end of the Second World War established the principle that to act according to orders from a

superior authority did not absolve a person of his responsibility.

Consequently, those engaged in research and development of weapons of mass destruction cannot hide behind the defence that they are just doing what they are paid and told to do. What distinguishes humans from animals is free will: the former can distinguish between right and wrong, and act on this basis; the latter act on instinct.

But these are issues best discussed far from the smoke and din of battle: once a nation is at war, many of these moral distinctions are lost sight of. The war casts a long shadow over the cerebral and passionate conversations between the protagonists of 'Copenhagen'. Even Bohr, a half Jew, admits that he helped in the development of the atom bomb after he fled to the United States to escape Nazi persecution.

Today, such existential debates seem almost irrelevant. Shorn of moral moorings, we drift in a sea of convenience and compromise, seeking only the shore of material plenty. Perhaps when Nostradamus warned us of the destruction of the world at the end of the millennium, he was referring to the end of morality.

Courtesy: The Dawn of Pakistan

Heisenberg's dilemma is at the cutting edge of quantum mechanics and particle physics before the Second World War, and contributed enormously to our understanding of the true nature of matter and energy.

Heisenberg, a German, was Bohr's student in Denmark in the early 1920s, and soon acquired fame with his 'Uncertainty Principle'. The rise of anti-Semitism in Germany in the 1930s drove away the cream of physicists, most of whom were Jews. Warmly welcomed in the United States, they launched the Manhattan Project to manufacture atom bombs. Isolated from the latest research, Heisenberg headed the German programme that did not really achieve very much.

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Courtesy: The Dawn of Pakistan

## Liberation and Beyond

by J N Dixit

(The Daily Star is serialising extracts from the book through exclusive contract with University Press Limited (UPL), publisher of its Bangladesh edition).



## 1972: Efforts at National Consolidation

Part-V

THE fact of the matter, however, was that not all arms were surrendered. Some of the freedom fighter groups retained arms. Some followers of Tiger Siddiqi and Mukti Bahini cadres belonging to Shahjahan Siraj and Sikdar Group with leftist leanings did not surrender their weapons. This was to generate political tension in Bangladesh in the two years that followed. One consequence was the split in the Chhatra League, student wing of the Awami League, on ideological lines early in 1972.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had scheduled a big public meeting at the Ramna Maidan for Mrs Gandhi's visit. Construction work started on a huge rostrum shaped like a country-boat (The Awami League's election symbol) from which he and Mrs Gandhi were to address the public meeting. He conveyed to Mrs Gandhi that later he would like to erect a memorial for the Indian soldiers who fought for the liberation war at this site which would also commemorate her visit to Dhaka. Mrs Gandhi's response to this proposal was politically astute and pre-scient. She instructed the High Commissioner to tactfully refuse the suggestion. Her reasoning was that given the limited resources with the war-ravaged country and considering the sub-conscious Islamic values among the Bangladeshis such a monument would not be advisable to have. It may be seen as a reminder of the process of the creation of Bangladesh. And, if at some point of time Indo-Bangladesh relations were to suffer from distance and tensions, as it often happens amongst close neighbours, the monument may become the target of attack and desecration, aggravating antagonism between India and Bangladesh. She asked that these views should be conveyed to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman while emphasising that his offer and gesture was a sufficient expression of goodwill and affection of Bangladeshis for India, and that she was deeply touched by this gesture of goodwill. Given the ups and downs that Indo-Bangladesh relations have witnessed in the 26 years since liberation, Mrs Gandhi's decision proved to be wise.



Mrs Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman signing the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship and Joint Declaration at Dhaka on March 19, 1972. The author is standing beside Mrs Gandhi.

Defence Headquarters of the Eastern Command at Dhaka organised a farewell parade by the Indian army in the Dhaka Stadium on March 11. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the chief guest was requested to take the salute. The parade was held in an atmosphere of goodwill and intense emotion. Mujibur Rahman took the salute, made an emotional speech thanking the government, the people and the armed forces of India for having made profound contributions to Bangladesh's liberation. He expressed the hope that friendship and cooperation between India and Bangladesh would expand in the same spirit which had animated cooperation during the liberation war. As the last unit of the Indian army marched out of the stadium with their colours against the background of a setting sun, there were moist eyes among many in the audience and even in the eyes of senior Indian military commanders witnessing the parade amongst whom I sat.

Mrs Gandhi arrived in Dhaka on the afternoon of March 17. She was put up at 'Banga Bhawan' as the guest of President of Bangladesh, Justice Abu Sayed Chowdhury. Mrs Gandhi was accompanied by a high level team. Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh, some MPs from West Bengal, DP Dhar, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister PN Haksar, and Foreign Secretary TN Kaul. There was a glittering State banquet on the night she arrived. She had three lengthy discussions with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. She addressed a public meeting attended by an estimated eight lakhs of people.

The highlight of the visit was a day long cruise on the Padma river from Dhaka to Narayanganj and back. It was during this cruise that the terms of reference of future bilateral relations were finalised, some of which later became a matter of controversy and motivated misinterpretation by later Bangladeshi governments. Here is how the talks went. After an early brunch Mrs Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with their advisers, assembled on the upper deck of the boat. Mujibur Rahman asked Mrs Gandhi as to what kind of document should be issued at the end of her visit. Mrs Gandhi turned to TN Kaul and asked what it should be like. Kaul said normally a joint communiqué is issued summarising the decisions taken by the prime ministers. Mujib interjected, saying: 'Dildi, what is better than a communiqué?' Kaul said: 'A joint declaration.' Mujib persisted, and inquired what was better than a joint declaration.

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