

Dynamics of Bangladesh-US Relations

by Mansoor Mamoon

Analysts maintain Clinton's visit and the Washington's new found interests in Bangladesh have some specific objectives of far reaching import. Washington is desperately looking for alternate source of energy namely the natural gas and Bangladesh has ample proven reserve of it. Several American companies have made substantial investment in the exploration of gas and more are in line with their investment provided the Bangladesh government allow them to export it to India. Bangladesh market is relatively small for the huge investment that these companies will be required to make for siphoning off their profit. So they are clamouring for expansion of their market which in other word means permission to export to India.

Twenty-five years ago fought against US occupation. Today the two countries' relations have normalised and the US Defence Secretary Cohen undertook a visit to that country. After liberation the United States was initially hesitant to accord diplomatic recognition to Bangladesh. The Awami League government led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was greatly embarrassed when Henry Kissinger had described Bangladesh as an international basket case incapable of standing on its own feet. But Sheikh Hasina did not hesitate to receive the UNESCO Peace Award from the very same Kissinger, who once derided her father's regime.

Some in the Awami Leaguers had all along been blaming



President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton visit an elementary school in Washington

USA for the famine of 1974 as well as the CIA for masterminding the killing of their leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The present Awami League leadership in its euphoria to receive Clinton prefers to forget the past in its expediency of making political gains out of the first ever visit of a President from the United States.

vision and plan, and he decided to run for President. He also felt that he had the experience and the best ideas for changing our country for the better. He wanted to strengthen the health care system, to improve the school system, and, most of all, to bolster the economy and create new jobs. He brought his message to the country by going door to door, holding one-on-one talks with people in town hall meetings, and appearing on various talk shows.

After a long primary process, Governor Clinton was nominated as the Democratic presidential candidate. He chose Senator Al Gore, of Tennessee to be his vice-presidential running mate. Together, Bill Clinton and Al Gore set out by bus to meet the people of America and to hear about their concerns and their hopes for the future. They campaigned on the concept of "putting people first" - preserving the American Dream, restoring the hopes of the middle class, and reclaiming the future for the nation's children.

When election day arrived on November 3, 1992, voters turned out in record numbers to cast their ballots. Bill Clinton was elected the 42nd President of the United States and Al Gore the 45th Vice President. They had succeeded in bringing the people together in their efforts to change our country.

Throughout his life, President Clinton has worked to make a difference in the lives of others. To him, Hope means more than a small town in Arkansas; it means working to ensure that each American has the opportunity to fulfill his or her dream.

IN 1991 in the aftermath of the great cyclone that badly battered the country's coastal areas and the offshore islands when the US Marines and troops came rushing from Kuwait to take part in relief activities under Operation Sea Angel, the Awami League, then in the opposition, was on record to have raised great hue and cry that the sovereignty of the country was at peril and that Parliament should have been duly consulted before the arrival of foreign troops notwithstanding their motive. Barely ten years after that hubbalo the entire scenario has undergone a dramatic change. The AL is now in power and its glee in receiving the US President in the soil of Bangladesh has apparently made it oblivious of the country's sovereignty issue of which it claims the sole monopoly. According to independent newspaper reports the US troops and intelligence agency personnel in their scores have taken over the charge of the security of their President during his brief stay in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh government reportedly does not know how many of them have already arrived, whether they carry necessary visa and what latest devices and gadgets they have brought in with them.

The Prime Minister expressed her helplessness when her party leaders requested her for arranging their meeting with Clinton, she reportedly told them that the entire itinerary had been set by the White House

without consultation with her government. The Foreign Ministry also openly expressed its ignorance. Such is the position of the government vis-a-vis President Clinton's visit. The second bid reading of the gas blocks is being completed at a break-neck speed to facilitate the signing of the PSCs (Production Sharing Contracts) with four US oil companies for exploration and drilling of natural gas in a number of blocks in presence of Clinton. Defence cooperation and other matters are also known to be up in the sleeve of US President. Clinton Administration has described Bangladesh as a traditional friend (Karl Inderfurth) which is bound to raise eyebrows among the people here. Barely three decades ago the United States tried to block the independence of Bangladesh and entered into an unholy alliance with the then Islamabad military junta for protecting the integrity of one Pakistan.

Even its Seventh Fleet started cruising in aid of the occupation army. But their ignominious surrender before it could reach the shore put a brake on the deadly expedition. It was the cold war and US geopolitical interests (the expansion of Indo-Soviet orbit on the one hand and Pakistan's good offices for US-China thaw on the other) were behind Washington's taking a strong anti-Bangladesh posture. But then in the diplomacy there is no permanent enmity nor is there eternal friendship. Vietnam

building necessary infrastructure it could easily strengthen the economic moorings generating employment opportunities for the people. Bangladesh could also have opted for gas based electricity and fertilizer factories, petro-chemicals etc rather than feeding with gas these plants in India, the export of which would fetch more money. The experts also apprehend that export of gas is likely to exhaust the entire reserves within twenty-five to thirty years after which Bangladesh might be required to procure energy at a far higher rate and cost. Petroleum products and hydrocarbons are already becoming scarce, their prices being almost equal. (On March 7, petroleum prices jumped to over thirty US dollars a barrel).

The people, therefore, have a right to know how the gas blocks are being awarded to the American oil companies. According to reports the people are completely in the dark and the parliament has also been by-passed in this regard (even though it has been largely turned into a one party affair). The previous BNP government also did the same and now the Awami League is following suit. Along with gas, the United States is also seeking an outlet to the sea for its business interests in South Asia, particularly for the north-eastern region of India. The Calcutta port has choked up and is no longer in a position to meet the increasing demand in the coming days, particularly following the expected rush of US investment in India. The government is under tremendous pressure to finalise the deal with the US company SSA for a private sector terminal at the confluence of the Karnaphuly river. This is likely to make the existing Chittagong port greatly redundant and the

port workers belonging to all political parties are putting up stiff resistance against the move. Even the Mayor of the Chittagong City Corporation, a veteran Awami Leaguer, has termed it as against the sovereignty of the country. The Chittagong port officials strongly maintain that instead

of building a new terminal if the money to be spent is invested for developing, modernising and renovating the existing port it will in all respect serve the purpose better. The reason for going for a separate terminal is that it is in the joint interest of the US-Indian new business coalition, maintain analysts. Apart from gas, President Clinton is presumed to have some other vital things in his mind. According to newspaper reports he will also be seeking defence cooperation between Bangladesh and United States like joint military exercises in the Bay of Bengal and training of military personnel. HANA (Humanitarian Assistance Need Assessment and SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement) which Dhaka rejected earlier under pressure from India, is likely to resurface during Clinton's talks with Hasina

The United States has objected to defence purchases from India, Russia and China and is likely to insist on going for military hardware from Washington instead. It is known to all quarters that such visits are designed for fostering arms sale and Clinton's trip to Bangladesh will be no exception. But what did not come up prominently is the US intention to have naval base or proper monitoring facilities in the Bay of Bengal to counter as well as to maintain strict vigil

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It All Began in a Place

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in the office of Arkansas Senator J William Fulbright. There he learned how government worked and what it was like to be a politician. He admired Senator Fulbright for his accomplishments and beliefs.

When Bill Clinton finished college in 1968, he won a Rhodes Scholarship, which allows select students to study at Oxford University in England. While at Oxford, he studied government and played rugby. Upon his return to the United States, he began law school at Yale University. At Yale, he continued to work hard. He maintained his interest in government by campaigning for a Senate candidate in Connecticut. He also met Hillary Rodham, whom he would later marry.

When he graduated from law school in 1973, Bill Clinton returned to Arkansas to teach law at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. There he could concentrate on his goal of running for political office. In 1974, he had his first opportunity when he ran for Congress against Republican incumbent John Paul Hammerschmidt. Although he lost the race, Bill Clinton learned much about politics and met people who have remained his lifelong friends. Hillary had joined him in Arkansas and helped him campaign. She also began teaching at the University of Arkansas. They were married on October 11, 1975.

In 1976, Bill Clinton was elected Attorney General of Arkansas. Two years later, at the age of thirty-two, he became

the youngest governor in the United States. As governor of Arkansas, he concentrated on improving the state's educational system and building better roads. On February 27, 1980, the Clintons' daughter, Chelsea Victoria, was born. The Clintons describe this day as the happiest one of their lives.

Later that year, in a close election, Governor Clinton lost the race for a second term to Republican Frank White. Feeling that he had not accomplished all that he wanted to do, he ran as the Democratic candidate in the next gubernatorial election. Campaigning throughout the state, he assured the voters that he would address their needs, and he was re-elected in November 1982.

Again, his most important goal as governor was to enhance the quality of education in the state. He raised teachers' salaries and began a programme of testing students after the third, sixth, and eighth grades. He also encouraged parents to participate in their children's education. His new educational standards ensured that every child in Arkansas, regardless of the size or wealth of his or her community or of family income level, would receive a quality education.

From August 1986 to August 1987, Governor Clinton served as chairman of the National Governors' Association. During that time, he led the governors' efforts to reform the welfare system and the educational systems of the states.

By the fall of 1991, Governor Clinton believed that the country needed someone with a new

vision and plan, and he decided to run for President. He also felt that he had the experience and the best ideas for changing our country for the better.

He wanted to strengthen the health care system, to improve the school system, and, most of all, to bolster the economy and create new jobs. He brought his message to the country by going door to door, holding one-on-one talks with people in town hall meetings, and appearing on various talk shows.

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A Tribute

by S Shahid

Living in Bangladesh as a humble person I pay my tribute to President Bill Clinton. America is a great country stocked with great people. The superman Bill Clinton is a bright example. His fund of energy is never exhausted. His fight for justice always undaunted. His personality is dynamic with selfless character. He works days and nights to make life better. America is a garden where grows flowers of peace. Clinton offers gifts of flower where peace not at ease. He takes steps for great cause on humanitarian ground. He faced many tempests remaining bold and sound. Clinton faces global problems providing solutions. He loves equally members of all nations. Clinton tries to track down entire global neighbourhood. For peace, prosperity and happiness under universal brotherhood. His appearance is admirable with attributes of leadership. Avoiding all clashes for the sake of friendship. His visit to Grameen is a matter of pride and inspiration. It will help furtherance of total poverty alleviation. May God bless him and grant him long life. To serve for human cause above all worldly strife.

Pax America

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America is every mood the home of gourmet junk food. America is the extrovert's dream come true.

7. While brave and bold Americans waver over gun control, America is a combat zone.

never one to run from danger America is the Lone Ranger, God's gift to the weak, America is the indiscreet policeman of peace with a scintillating star spangled saber —

O America, you incurable do-gooder, are you never fatigued with being everybody's neighbour, are you really Superman...

or just another lamb in wolf's clothing which the world, never fails to misunderstand.

8. America is many things, the sanctuary of carpetbaggers and kings but most of all, America is a time-tossed state of mind

that has survived the profound jealousies of all its allies and adversaries alike,

for better or for worse America is cursed and blessed to be

every lost tribe's happy hunting ground.

This poem is from the author's forthcoming book 'Politically Incorrect Poems'

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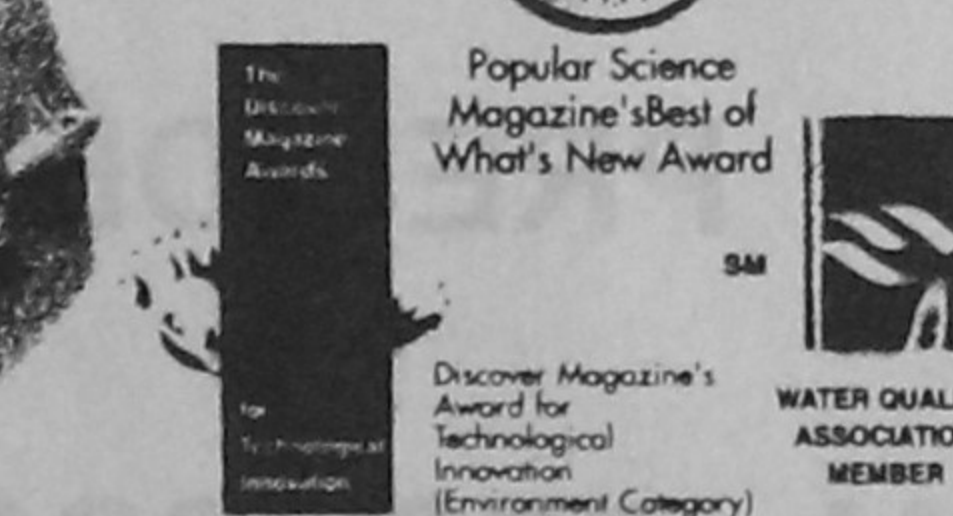
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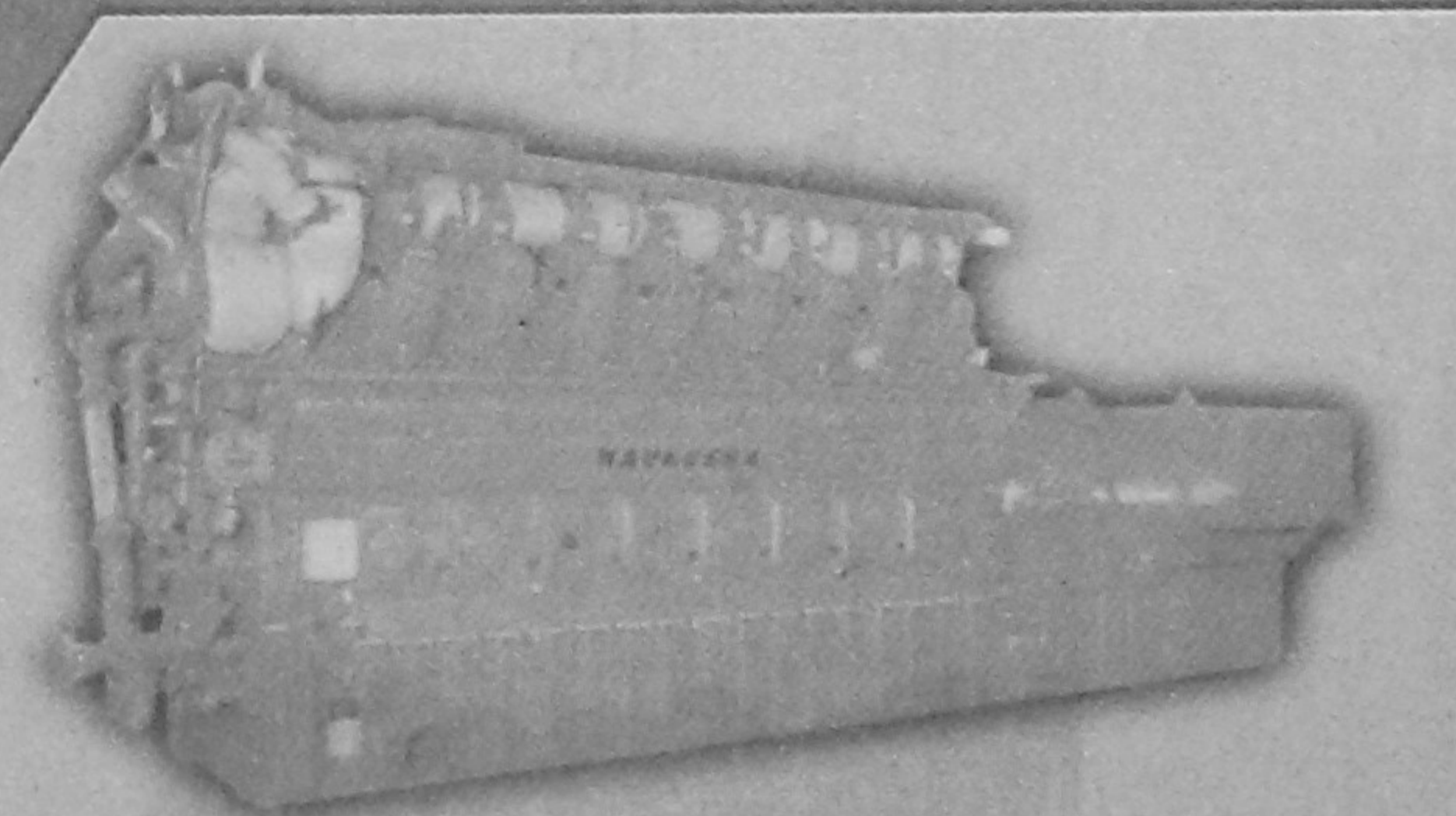
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- ✓ Costs less than comparable systems.
- ✓ Eliminates the need to purchase fuel or gather wood to boil and purify water.
- ✓ Suitable for a wide range of uses, including: rural communities, single residence with wells, farms, school, hotels, hospitals, and more.
- ✓ Easily powered by a car battery, a bicycle generator, wind, solar cells or a small hydroelectric source.

The US capital wants to turn India into its next big bazaar. But India is currently undergoing a serious crunch of energy. President Clinton will, therefore, exert his influence for the export promotion of US Oil companies. Washington is rather keen to bring the entire South Asia region into a single unified grid to promote its energy option. With this end in view, it organised and sponsored the South Asia Energy Conference in Kathmandu early in March this year, where export of gas through a network of extensive pipeline figured prominently together with the possibility of the exploitation of the vast potential of Nepal and Bhutan's hydro-power with US investment. According to information the PSCs to be initiated and signed with the foreign companies regarding award of blocks have rekindled hopes among them that eventually the Bangladesh government will capitulate in not too distant a future and will ultimately agree to the pressure for export of gas to India (BBC, March 13). Experts have in one voice objected to the award of gas blocks to foreign companies on many counts.

They strongly maintain that Bangladesh has the necessary expertise to explore its own gas reserves. If the country can build such a huge construction like the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, it can also mobilise enough funds to carry out its own exploration and must not hand over the only resource that the country now has to foreign companies to the detriment of national interests. PSCs now being offered favours the foreign companies which will reap enormous profit in comparison to what they will invest. They obviously have the profit motive uppermost in their mind albeit the hanging of the carrot that by exporting and utilising hydrocarbons the country will soon reach the stage of a middle income country. Political elements who oppose the move, maintain that in the event of such a development (export of gas by American oil companies) Bangladesh is likely to meet the fate of Nigeria, Venezuela and Indonesia, where a handful reaped the windfall gains while the vast majority still languish in abject poverty. Experts and politicians equally are of the opinion that consenting to the export of gas without assessing its actual reserves and keeping in mind the next fifty years' domestic demands will be simply suicidal for Bangladesh. But can Bangladesh government afford to take a negative stand in the face of joint Indo-US pressure? Resources of Bangladesh very much belong to its people. If gas could have been better utilised inside the country through

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