

The fallacy in Unocal's gas export proposal

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ON expiry of about seven weeks, citizens of Bangladesh now allege that the new government has raised as much dust as it liked to cloud the issue of gas export to India. Indeed, because of an unrestrained exuberance and pursuit of many goals in the first one hundred days, suddenly 'gas-confusion' has been created by the authorities, which has sparked countrywide protests, rallies and seminars against the move for gas export. On the other hand the vested interests are endeavouring to influence the authorities to convince: (a) what a Master's thesis of a BUET student has revealed about the critical issues in the gas reserves in Bangladesh, (b) what Unocal, a contractor, operating under the PSC has said about the gas resources and reserves position and the likely benefit may be drawn from the proposed 1,363 km pipeline from Bibiana gas field to India. As members of the geological profession for decades and also as part of the civil society, we owe some responsibility to our society. Pursuant to our article published in The Daily Star on 5th and 6th November, 2001 entitled, "Natural gas export: Cautious steps necessary", we would propose to the government to take into consideration the following.

To begin with, the authorities may:
 1. first try to search through its own information bank (Petrobangla) along with detailed breakdown of gas reserves from all the 21 gas fields (except Bibiana) discovered in the past 46 years since 1955;
 2. then take a deep look into the relevant provision of the Constitution of Bangladesh, particularly Article 7, 143, 145, insofar as it refers to supremacy of the people, property of the Republic, international treaties and suits in name of Bangladesh;
 3. walk through the Production-Sharing-Contracts (particularly the one now concerns Unocal) signed in 1994-95 to find out the provisions related to Export of Gas (Article 14.4, 14.5.1, 14.5.4, 14.5.5 and 14.6(b));
 4. read between the lines the contents of Unocal's proposal and their anomalous and fictitious presentation on Natural Gas Pipeline Project which contains at least 14 nos. of lies and or misrepresentation of facts.

The Ministry of Energy appears to have identified Hydrocarbon Cell (which is a spoon fed technical arm of the Ministry), and a hand picked Norwegian expert, who has never worked in the field of petroleum reserve estimate etc. in Bangladesh. Perhaps it would have been more appropriate to consider engaging the professional services of either the German Geological Advisory Group (GGAG working in Bangladesh since 1978) or a reputed consultant from Japan or Well-drill of U.K. or IKM of Canada.

But before we make an effort to elaborate the issues, we would like to point out that the most recent troubles erupted overnight during 10-15th October, 2001, when the Planning and Finance Minister, Mr. Saifur Rahman spoke out his mind about gas export to India. The latest statement of the FM is that

say that, they are not telling the truth. But why should they be restating the blatant lies of Unocal? The FM said, "Did Awami League sign nine PSCs- to eat gas?" (Prothom Alo, 27 November, 2001). Facts will reveal that only four (4) PSCs were signed (block nos. 5, 7, 9 and 10) at the end of the AL period, and for what god-damned reason they know best. But in none of these blocks investments would be made for the next five-year, if no market can be found. The four IOCs have only blocked the blocks and neither these blocks will conceive nor will it produce anything for the next five years. Nevertheless, AL must answer to the people of the country why did they do what they did? On the other hand during 1994-95 as many as six contracts were signed on eight blocks (block nos. 12, 13,

which would increase to 1750 MMCFD by 2005 as per demand forecast (i.e. 500 MMCFD increase or about the same Unocal proposes to export to India). The most important issue not being discussed at all is how the Unocal pipeline will cross the Jamuna river. There is only one pipeline of 30" diameter and with compressor facilities it can carry a maximum of 850 million cft of gas per day to the west side. If this pipeline is used for carrying 500 million cft to India then only 350 million cft can be supplied to northern and Southern Bangladesh. This amount will be far less compared to the requirement of the western zone. It is rumoured that the Unocal pipeline will cross the Jamuna in the traditional 'river bed crossing method'. But the latest feasibility for crossing the Jamuna by this method by a famous consultant appointed by the World Bank, "Rendall, Palmer and Triton" as late as 1982 found that this is not possible. Did Unocal have a recent study on the issue, if so then why are they silent on this point? The nation, particularly the people of the west zone of the country have a right to know about the studies made by Unocal regarding the crossing of the Jamuna. The economic development of the west zone depends on this.

We would also like to make a comment (on a statement by an eminent economist of the country) that the present debate on gas export is not between 'two or three engineers' and the geologists' community rather it is a debate between a small group (may be around ten at the most) of vested interests and the people of Bangladesh. This is not an emotional statement. Secondly, Bangladesh's gas reserves position cannot be compared with Canada (which had 50 years reserve policy earlier), U.S.A, Indonesia, Malaysia or even India simply because Bangladesh is a "mono-energy" (gas only) country while all other countries mentioned above are multi-energy (that too with huge reserves of oil, gas, coal and nuclear). Another confusion arose because of Unocal's mix-up of data between resource and reserves, which has been beefed up without any field study (except Bibiana, Jalalabad and Moulvibazar) by a phenomenon called field growth as a result of applying new technologies to the existing gas fields in Bangladesh.

Instead of trying to discover "new gas" hypothetically IOCs and Petrobangla should go to the gas fields and conduct 3-D surveys appraisal drilling and obtain reliable data on gas reserves in Bangladesh. However the results so obtained must be certified by internationally reputed independent specialized consultants / appraisers as Unocal did for Bibiana gas field.

after keeping gas reserves for 35-40 years of home consumption, export might be considered (Prothom Alo, 27 November, 2001). The happier news for the citizens however came from Hon'ble Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, when she said, "Gas export only after meeting the country's demand." She also nullified all misinformation given out so far regarding gas export and said that her government has not decided about gas export to India (Ittefaq, 25 November, 2001). We may recall that she had given a similar signal earlier (Dainik Dinkal, 8 May, 2000). Even the BNP general secretary Mr. Mannan Bhuyan categorically expressed that secret plans to export gas to India will be thwarted (Dainik Dinkal, 19 May 2001). However, it is alleged that the phony utterances and prescription's loudly spelled out by the State Minister for Energy Mr. AKM Musharraf Hossain on 14 November, 2001 at BUET, Dhaka and his subsequent statements aggravated the entire situation. We know, that everybody needs a burr under his tail to keep him moving. But whose burr the State Minister for energy is wearing anyway and for what purpose? We would not even pretend to

14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 22) with the IOCs. Now, block 13 and 14 have already been surrendered in January 2000 and most likely, in the first phase of operation block 22 and shortly afterwards block 17 and 18 would be relinquished as per provisions of PSCs. Thus only blocks 12, 15 and 16 would remain alive at the end of the day to bother Petrobangla /Government. The itchy issue now is block 12 and Bibiana discovery. Let's now make a quick analysis of Unocal and Shell's failures in the past five years. Unocal's "Ratna" and "Capna" drilling has failed to produce anything. So did Shell's "South Sangu" (off-shore), "Halda" and "Swandip" drilling programme, i.e. in the past four years, out of eight exploratory drilling programmes, five turned out as dry holes.

Nevertheless, industry and the public were caught by surprise by the actions of the authorities in the past six weeks or so. Although there had been warnings that we were going through an energy supply-demand problem, few had paid any attention. Rather, the bureaucracy and the political government ignored the declining situation over the years and sought adhoc solutions to cool down the

soft padding on the landing ground for this desperate soul because his thoughtless action is nothing but a bid to sell out the most valuable asset (gas) of this poor country to India depriving our own people!

Now let's give a quick look at some salient features of the PSCs signed during 1994-95, in particular the contract signed by Occidental (now in operation by Unocal). Unocal has submitted the Natural Gas Pipeline Project on the basis of discovered gas at Bibiana (greater Sylhet). Through an internationally reputed independent consultant/ certifying agency the reserve of gas has finally been assessed at 2.4 Tcf (earlier Unocal propagated very loudly for two years the reserve at 6 Tcf, which has now been accepted at 40 per cent of their original publicity). As per PSC the Unocal is entitled to produce annually up to 7.5 per cent of the proven plus probable reserve. However, Article 14.5.1 states that the contractor shall have the right to export marketable gas as Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and not piped gas (which they have now proposed violating the provisions of PSC). It is also important to note that as per Article 14.6(b) contractor will be free to find a market outlet in the domestic market (not outside). Moreover, Article 14.6 of the PSC has not been operationalized i.e., Gas Purchase and Sales Agreement (GPSA) has not been signed. How did the contractor (Unocal) dare to violate the provision of PSC, which is destined to market gas in India? And who has given Unocal the right and authority to state (without prior consultation with Petrobangla), "Unocal and Petrobangla dedicate reserves?" Unocal (closed its eyes like a cunning fox) very cleverly indicated (as a comparison) that Bibiana's proven and probable reserves account for less than 5 per cent of Bangladesh's currently estimated resource base (assuming 61 Tcf as resource, a concocted figure). This is a blatant misrepresentation of fact for a company of Unocal's standing. The fact of the matter is that, not even a stupid would try to compare "Reserve" with "Resource" because they are two different animals of the same phylum. If however, one compares with the actual reserve figure, the comparison would be around 22 per cent of the total reserve. In fact, there is still another catch-- it will now be even 33 per cent of the total reserve! Here is the fallacy: proposed throughput in the pipeline is 500 million cubic feet per day (MMCFD) for 20 years i.e., 500x365x24=3.65Tcf? Where from Unocal would commit an additional 1.25 Tcf? Referring to an independent study (?) Unocal stated that Bangladesh gas market is "over-supplied" for eight years before the country can absorb any volumes from Bibiana and more than 15 years before Bangladesh can utilize Bibiana's maximum production. This is not a fallacy, it is a lie, an understatement about Bangladesh's gas demand in the near future because gas has already been taken to the western zone (across Jamuna river) and the entire zone is energy hungry. The 30" dia pipeline is meant for supplying gas for generation of electricity (the demand of which is expected to quadruple by 2020 as stated recently by the State Minister for power), which will also provide an expanded market for fertilizer, industry and other commercial activities as it did in the eastern zone in the 1980s and the 1990s. Currently, only the eastern zone is consuming about 1100 MMCFD,

which would increase to 1750 MMCFD by 2005 as per demand forecast (i.e. 500 MMCFD increase or about the same Unocal proposes to export to India).

The most important issue not being discussed at all is how the Unocal pipeline will cross the Jamuna river. There is only one pipeline of 30" diameter and with compressor facilities it can carry a maximum of 850 million cft of gas per day to the west side. If this pipeline is used for carrying 500 million cft to India then only 350 million cft can be supplied to northern and Southern Bangladesh. This amount will be far less compared to the requirement of the western zone. It is rumoured that the Unocal pipeline will cross the Jamuna in the traditional 'river bed crossing method'. But the latest feasibility for crossing the Jamuna by this method by a famous consultant appointed by the World Bank, "Rendall, Palmer and Triton" as late as 1982 found that this is not possible. Did Unocal have a recent study on the issue, if so then why are they silent on this point? The nation, particularly the people of the west zone of the country have a right to know about the studies made by Unocal regarding the crossing of the Jamuna. The economic development of the west zone depends on this.

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If a medical student can learn about 200,000 new medical terms per year, one should not take very long to learn 2000 Arabic words; only thing we need is to prioritize our urgency. If we can strive hard, in fact study day and night to excel in the Board exams like SSC and HSC (or O level, A level), then why can't we take the challenge to face the Big Test of the Day of Judgement with the same competitive spirit? Wouldn't it be neat to be on the forefront on that Big Day too? We badly need some motivation.... When I almost completed the study and memorization of the sura Baqarah, my Quran teacher sister Imaan asked me if I am planning to memorize sura Ale-Imran after I finish Baqarah. When I answered in affirmative she told me that these two suras are the light of the grave - whoever memorizes these two suras, his or her grave will not be dark. But I have another target in mind; I want to see bejeweled crowns on my parents on that Big Day. Nowadays there are a number of

Ramadan: the month of the Quran

IFFAT MIRZA

RAMADAN is the month when the Holy Quran, the Final Testament, was first revealed to the prophet Muhammad (SM) more than fourteen hundred years ago. On this occasion, Allah asked his servants to fast the whole month to thank Allah for His great favour to the mankind and to celebrate the revelation of the Quran. Allah said in the Quran, in Surah Baqarah, verse 185: "Ramadan is the month in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgement (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance you shall be grateful."

The Quran is not just a Holy Scripture full of moral values; it is a handbook as well as the user guide for the humankind - dealing all aspects of our life. It helps us to lead a smooth, successful and happy life in this world and at the same time guides us to avoid any humiliating situation in the Hereafter. It is said that if one opens the Quran at random in the morning before going out, the page he gets contains the message from Allah for him for that day.

Every year, during this month, Archangel Gabriel used to recite the whole Quran with our prophet at least once. Even today, the Muslims around the world try to keep that old tradition alive, they read the Quran as much as possible during Ramadan.

The Quran was revealed in the Arabic language and still exists in the original form unadulterated. The Quran is God's words and it is not humanly possible to recreate the beauty of the Quran by translating it in to some other language. We need to study it in Arabic to fully appreciate its scholastic depth, but at the same time we need to understand the meaning. Otherwise how are we going to apply it to our daily life? The Muslim children all over the world start learning Arabic in an early age to be able to read the Quran. But only about 15 per cent of the world Muslim population are Arabic-speaking. As a result many Muslims only read the Quran in Arabic getting spiritual benefit out of it without grasping the profound message.

Quran study: There are approximately 80,000 words in the Quran, but often we find that the same word or even the same sentence has been repeated more than once; as a result there are only about 2000 unique words. This makes learning the meaning of the Quran even easier.

If a medical student can learn about 200,000 new medical terms per year, one should not take very long to learn 2000 Arabic words; only thing we need is to prioritize our urgency. If we can strive hard, in fact study day and night to excel in the Board exams like SSC and HSC (or O level, A level), then why can't we take the challenge to face the Big Test of the Day of Judgement with the same competitive spirit? Wouldn't it be neat to be on the forefront on that Big Day too? We badly need some motivation.... When I almost completed the study and memorization of the sura Baqarah, my Quran teacher sister Imaan asked me if I am planning to memorize sura Ale-Imran after I finish Baqarah. When I answered in affirmative she told me that these two suras are the light of the grave - whoever memorizes these two suras, his or her grave will not be dark. But I have another target in mind; I want to see bejeweled crowns on my parents on that Big Day.

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good translations of the Quran available, some with word by word meaning as well as grammar. Thus it is not difficult to learn the meaning of the Quran, God's masterpiece. But Allah wants us not only to understand this divine message but also to reflect on it to help us rise higher and higher on the spiritual plane. Usually when we are afflicted with some trouble we remember Allah and send him SOS. But we need to keep our line of communication open so that we can get His help quickly. We can easily set aside an hour everyday from our busy schedule of the worldly life for the study of the Quran while we are able and enjoying good health. It helps us to keep our communication line active too. Also when later in the life our health does not permit us to do much to please Allah, it doesn't matter. We will receive full merits for these ailing days as we used to do before when we were in good health.

Quran the Intellectuals' Choice: The people with wisdom want to verify the truth behind every assertion. A close scrutiny by its opponents and patrons alike proved that the Quran has been preserved unchanged from the time of its revelation, protected from human tampering. The awesome Quran mesmerizes the Western intellectuals. They are finding answers to all their queries in it to fill their spiritual

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void. Today Islam is the fastest growing religion in North America. Western education makes people independent and fair-minded and these Western intellectuals can tackle different questions of their opponents promptly and serenely.

A fourth year Law student of University of Wisconsin, Madison read Salman Rushdie's controversial book "Satanic Verses" in 1989. According to him, he felt that he should be intellectually fair and should understand the other side of the controversy. In his quest for fairness he read the Quran and got involved with it emotionally and spiritually and became a Muslim and took the name Omar Abdur Rahman. [From an interview by Sound Vision]

Dr. Jeffrey Lang, currently associate professor of Mathematics at the University of Kansas described how he felt when he read the Quran in his book "Struggling to Surrender" [Amana Publications, Maryland, USA, 1994] in the following words: "You cannot simply read the Quran, not if you take it seriously. You have either surrendered to it already or you combat it. It attacks tenaciously, directly, personally. It debates, criticizes, shames, and challenges. From the outset it draws the line of battle, and I was on the other side. I was at a severe disadvantage, for it became clear that the author knew me better than I know Him. Painters can make the eyes of a portrait appear to be following you from one place to another, but what author can write a scripture that anticipates your daily vicissitudes? The Quran was always way ahead of my thinking. It was erasing barriers I had built years ago and was addressing my queries. Each night I would formulate questions and objections and

somehow discover the answer the next day as I continued on in the accepted order. It seemed that the author was reading my ideas and writing in the appropriate lines in time for my next reading."

The miracle of the Quran on the psyche of the unbiased intellectuals is time independent it made impressions on their fair minds the same way in the olden days as it is doing today. The Austrian journalist Leopold Weiss was a Middle East correspondent for the Frankfurter Zeitung. He had the opportunity of mixing with the Muslims from a close proximity when he traveled extensively in the Muslim lands and started to appreciate the Islamic way of life. But he had one hesitation "was Islam truly a message from God or merely the wisdom of a great, but fallible, man?"

Then one day, in 1926 while he was travelling with his wife Elsa in the Berlin subway he noticed with surprise that all the people around him were well dressed and looked rich but their faces had sad expressions of unhappiness. He described his experience in his book 'The Road to Makkah' as follows:

"I had never before seen so many unhappy faces around me: or was it perhaps that I had never before looked for what was now so loudly speaking in them? The impression was so strong that I mentioned it to Elsa: and she too began to look around her with the careful eyes of a painter accustomed to study human features. Then she turned to me, astonished, and said: 'you are right. They all look as though they were suffering torments of Hell. I wonder, do they know themselves what is going on in them?'"

When we returned home, I happened to glance at my desk on which lay open a copy of the Koran I had been reading earlier. Mechanically, I picked the book up to put it away, but just as I was about to close it, my eye fell on the open page before me, and I read:

You are obsessed by greed for more and more
 Until you go down to your graves.
 Nay, but you will come to know!
 Nay, but you will come to know!
 Nay, if you but knew it with the knowledge of certainty,
 You would indeed see the hell you are in.

In time, indeed, you shall see it with the eye of certainty:
 And on that Day you will be asked what you have done with the boon of life.

For a moment I was speechless. I think the book shook in my hands. Then I handed it to Elsa. 'Read this. Is it not an answer to what we saw in the subway?'"

I knew now, beyond any doubt, that it was a God-inspired book I was holding in my hand: for although it had been placed before man over thirteen centuries ago, it clearly anticipated something that could have become true only in this complicated, mechanized, phantasm-ridden age of ours.... Out of the Koran spoke a voice greater than the voice of Muhammad...."

Yes, your guess is right, after this incident Leopold Weiss the Austrian journalist embraced Islam along with his wife. He then dedicated the rest of his life for the cause of Islam. He is popularly known among the Muslims as Mohammad Asad.

Another Western intellectual, A.J. Arberry wrote in the preface of his English translation of the Quran that he found tremendous support and solace in the pages of the Quran during his personal turmoil and being a Christian, wondered how the Muslims feel when they read this divine book of theirs. He also wrote: "Whenever I hear the Quran chanted, it is as though I am listening to music, underneath the flowing melody, there is sounding all the time the insistent beat of a drum, it is like the beating of my heart."

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