

## Reclaiming Turag

Action can be replicated for other rivers

THE good news is that the Turag river is being restored, somewhat, to what it once used to be. The project undertaken by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority to widen the river, after all the encroachments that have affected its depth and width, is certainly laudable. It is proof that given proper planning and corrective steps, it is not beyond us to save our rivers from dying out. In recent years, there have been innumerable reports about the difficulties our rivers have been facing. On the one hand, there is the problem of riverbeds getting dried up. On the other, and definitely much worse, is the damage done to the rivers by manipulative and unscrupulous elements. In a very large number of cases, rivers have shrunk owing to the many unauthorized constructions that have been going on. A case in point is the Buriganga, where human nastiness has been responsible not only for the shrinkage of the river but also for the effluents which have vitiated its water and the surrounding areas.

What the BIWTA has done at the Turag is go for a dredging of its bed, with the result that there is now a noticeable degree of excavation allowing for the river to flow better than before. However, the original plan to widen the river by at least 400 feet has not been implemented because of a failure to remove the sand that traders had dumped into it earlier on. This is yet one more instance of how criminality has contributed to a destruction, or near-destruction, of our environment. Such acts become unpardonable when they affect the country's rivers since rivers are not merely a significant feature of our topography but also the most important means of communication in the country. The commandeering of rivers in the past, thanks largely to political manipulation, has put communication and, by extension, economic activities at risk. It is a condition that must now be turned back, resolutely and irrevocably. For all our happiness at reclaiming the Turag, there are yet grounds for concern. While dredging has gone on, sand traders have been seen encroaching on other areas on the banks of the river. Such audacity calls for swift punitive action.

The Turag dredging programme is a sign of what can be done about all the other rivers which need to be brought back to vibrancy. The BIWTA will be fulfilling a public need by undertaking a similar programme of excavating other rivers at present in a state of suffocation.

## Our performance at the World Cup

Some bright spots to inspire, lessons to learn as well

WE should take pride in the fact that we found a place in the super eight and it was entirely on our merit. We have beaten two of the world's top teams. We are no longer 'pushovers' and the big teams had taken us seriously. Nevertheless, when the die was cast we showed signs of crumbling under pressure. Despite the laurels, we couldn't get our act together towards the last stages of the super eight encounters. In fact, we went through a reality check in terms of measuring ourselves with the Ivy league of world cricket.

On the whole, while our overall performance might have been better, we feel that the team must emerge more confident than before to take on the big sides in world cricket. But for the inconsistency, which was the result of not lack of talent or ability, but more the lack of application on a particular day, we would have emerged with better results from the quadrennial event.

There are certain lessons that the players, the team management and the organizers must draw from our experience. We have a very young team with some extremely talented players. But as with all team games, winning a cricket match requires all the eleven performing in tandem. Individual sparks if not backed up by the rest of the team will turn out to be merely a temporary flash. We have not as yet developed into a team that uses talent with the application of the mind coupled with a right sense of strategy to attune ourselves to the changing circumstances of a game. Greater professionalism is what has to be ingrained in our players.

To the coach Dav Whatmore belongs much of the credit of bringing the level of our cricket to where it is now. We will be sorry to see him go after the end of the series against India. Our grateful thanks to Whatmore.

We are waiting for the day when the Tigers will graduate from giant killers to being giants themselves. We hope that day is not very far off.

## Crime and punishment



KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

## GOING DEEPER

As we have just stepped into the 21st century claiming to have entered into post-modern era progressing beyond Max Weber's regard for rationalization as a key component of modernity into an era of compression of space and time, loss of community and rise of individualism; we, perhaps, have to forego the animal instinct of a tooth for a tooth and rationalize that sometimes it is better to pardon crimes which otherwise may have the possibility of destabilization of an already "weak state" as Dr. Susan Rice has described Bangladesh.

of Benazir Bhutto (notwithstanding her threats to return to Pakistan and rumoured negotiations with President Musharraf) and that of Nawaz Sharif as example of political expediency, the exile and now on trial of Robert Taylor of Liberia for dealings in blood stained diamond, or those of countless dictators like Haiti's Duvalier, Peru's Alberto Fujimori, Chile's Pinochet one of whose victims of torture is the current president of that country, and many others.

Professors Andrew Herod and Melissa Wright while introducing the book "Geographies of Power" have tried to examine the scale of a crime as to when it graduates from local to regional to global level. Equally it appears that while constitutions may declare that all citizens are equal before the law the reality proves that the rapacity of the rich and the powerful can be condoned,

perhaps because the impact of their crimes and consequent punishment can be felt not only within the country but also beyond.

Is it so difficult to listen to Lord Acton's exhortation "never to debase moral currency or to lower the standard of rectitude" simply because fledgling and intermittent democracies like ours cannot bear the possibility of threat that the relief we have secured for ourselves can again be undone by unscrupulous elements?

Indira Gandhi was not spared for the crimes committed during the emergency she had declared nor was Spiro Agnew for his corruption. But Ferdinand Marcos was flown to Hawaii. So we have quite a fractured picture of crime and punishment in developed and developing countries.

In developed countries the people have very little patience with indiscretion committed by public

officials. In England, Profumo had to leave for lying to the Parliament and Blair's home secretary had to resign his post for a fault that would have been normal in the East where tribal primordial loyalties demand of public officials to look after their relatives and friends in the conduct of public affairs.

Perhaps the conflict between the Eastern communitarian values as opposed to Western individualistic approach to life where the rights of the individual overrides that of the community explains the apparent disconnect between crime and punishment in developing nations.

Yet it is difficult to understand when a country like Bangladesh that has become a signatory to the UN Convention relating to Corruption, UN Declaration on Human Rights, and other national and international legal documents, and now lends ears to Amnesty International and Human Rights



Watch, that the same country will bend before the demands of politico-expediency.

But then the people in power have more information at their disposal to determine the geography and the scale had punishment been meted out to the accused after trial. One may, therefore, have to remain satisfied with this knowledge of ignorance and not ask of the government the details of negotiations reportedly taking place with people accused of Kleptocracy on which the G-8 and President Bush himself have taken a clear stand? Could not the others similarly accused also claim equal relief from punishment?

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In the ultimate analysis when the dust has settled down history will deliver its judgment on those now in power for this digression from the path of justice and morality they have been pursuing since January 11. One can only hope that what is being done is for the good of the country and the people.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

## Peace pipeline or pipedream?

IKRAM SEHGAL  
writes from Karachi

## AS I SEE IT

The peace pipeline needs India's participation, but if for any reason India should opt out, Pakistan cannot remain hostage to the third party influence on India, national (and economic) interests dictate a go-it-alone policy. If the peace pipeline is a pipedream, an Iran-Pakistan pipeline is still a very feasible proposition, not only economically but also geo-politically.

passing through Khuzdar. One section will run south to Karachi, the main section going through Multan to the Indian border (760 kms), and thereafter traveling 860 km to Delhi.

Pakistan and Iran signed a preliminary agreement in 1995 for the construction of a natural gas pipeline linking Karachi with the South Pars natural gas field. Iran later proposed an extension of the pipeline into India, with Pakistan standing to benefit from transit fees. For the record, Pakistan is asking for 10% of the gas price i.e. 50 cents per million British Thermal Units (MBTU), while India is willing to pay only 15 cents per MBTU.

Political tensions with Pakistan deterred Delhi from creating any economic attachment with Pakistan. The recent improvement in the relations revived the project. With China looking for oil and gas for its Southwestern Provinces, the grid would mean additional transit fees for Pakistan.

Showing ambivalence for the project because of US pressure, India has three options for acquiring gas from Iran: viz (1) in LNG form in tankers through the Arabian Sea (2) through a deep sea pipeline or (3) through land route. The land-based option is four times cheaper than others, after including transit fee payments to Pakistan.

From South Pars, a pipeline will stretch over 1,100 km within Iran before entering Pakistan,

engendering stability and predictability in the political equation and (3) the IPI grid being extended into Turkmenistan to allow Central Asian and Caspian gas to flow in. Finally, the grid could be extended eastward, from India through Bangladesh to northern Myanmar and China's Yunnan province, thereby tying India, China, Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh and Central Asia into a vast common energy grid that would lower costs of transportation all round.

All great strategic projects face different challenges relative to their size. People, or groups, in these three countries are opposed to the pipeline for various historical, political, and even national reasons. Other problems are caused by some extra-regional countries, because the project reduces their geopolitical importance in the region and deprives them of the markets they have monopolized during the absence of Iran.

Faced with a litany of accusations despite being in the forefront as a US ally in the "war against terrorism," the US opposition to the peace pipeline could be the straw that broke the camel's back, signaling a major re-alignment of Pakistan's foreign policy.

For India, the number of pluses

statements and initiatives resemble a snub of sorts to the US, given Pakistan's servility to the US for over 50 years.

The pipeline route passes through Balochistan and Punjab in Pakistan. Strategically important due to its large reserves of oil and gas, Balochistan is one of Pakistan's poorest areas and a restive province, dominated in recent years by private militias belonging to Baloch sardars.

Sporadic armed clashes still occur, with attacks on water pipelines, power transmission lines and gas installations.

Lack of economic progress and a deep sense of disaffection has contributed to the distrust between the federal government and the Baloch population, exploited by Baloch sardars and their motivated interests in opposing any energy-related projects in their area.

Tough measures to curtail the influence of renegade tribal chieftains aside, a number of development projects have been initiated by the government for bettering the socio-economic situation in the province.

The grievances of the local population have still not been addressed satisfactorily but, while the situation is still not fully

under control, it is getting better by the day. Acts of sabotage and terrorism have also greatly abated. The economic gains from transit fees should be shared by the locals in the form of royalty and job opportunities for the Baloch, with locals directly responsible for the security of the pipeline traversing in their territory.

Iran's relations with Pakistan are strategically important, never more so than at the present time. With American troops stationed in neighbouring Afghanistan and Iraq, Iran is trying to check US influence in the region by strengthening its ties with Pakistan, a most needed (and most vilified) US ally in the war on terror.

Pakistan has a common cultural background with Iran, and close cooperation in some fields. On the negative side, there are strained relations viz (1) due to sectarian issues which have become more virulent lately (2) distinct differences in the attitude of the two countries towards the US and (3) conflicting interests in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has no border issue with Iran, but it shares the territory inhabited by the Baloch. These tribes have created trouble between the two countries several times. A Balochi Sunni terrorist group, "Jundullah," believed to be financed by the CIA, is carrying out terrorist attacks in Iran operating from Pakistani Balochistan.

Even if Iran's nuclear problem is peacefully resolved, the US will continue its opposition to Iran's development and integration into the region. Washington wants to use local countries to maintain its

influence in the region. From using the Shah of Iran as "police-man" for the region, the US has now turned to India, not only for that role but also to contain China. The US upped the ante by striking a civil nuclear energy cooperation deal to meet all of India's energy needs.

The US says that there is no need for the pipeline. And what about the energy needs of Pakistan, the supposed "cornerstone of US policy?" While stating that it has no problems with nations doing business with Iran, the US is using pressure on those countries and offering diverging incentives. It is perpetuating conflicts and preventing efforts at regional economic cooperation.

Apart from the economic value for Pakistan and the other countries involved, the pipeline project is an important geo-political crossroads opportunity for (1) a new political alliance in the region, making the region (and Pakistan) less vulnerable to American pressure and influence and (2) with the absolute subservience to the US coming to a close, creating a new political and more equal partnership based on pragmatic mutual interests.

The peace pipeline needs India's participation, but if for any reason India should opt out, Pakistan cannot remain hostage to the third party influence on India, national (and economic) interests dictate a go-it-alone policy. If the peace pipeline is a pipedream, an Iran-Pakistan pipeline is still a very feasible proposition, not only economically but also geo-politically.

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## Fake students at DU



ANM NURUL HAQUE

## BY THE NUMBERS

Only turning out of these fake students from the university will not be enough as they deserve appropriate legal action in accordance with the law of land for committing such contemptible crimes. Exemplary punishment including dismissal from service must be given to the teachers and officials who were involved in the process of fake admission so that such crimes are not repeated. Stern action under the ongoing cleansing drive must also be taken against the unscrupulous coaching centres to wipe out such mischief from the universities.

students somehow managed to get themselves admitted in this department though they have passed Alim and Dakhil examinations from madrasas.

The Bengali daily Prothom Alo came up with this stunning news on its front page on April 16. Earlier another newspaper report said that nearly 20 percent of students in three departments and an institute of DU have been identified as fake. These departments are economics, public administration and international relations. After a vigorous investigation the DU authority has become sure that there are many fake students in other departments also who

cheated their way to admission with the help of a number of unscrupulous coaching centers.

A probe committee headed by Prof. Yusuf Haider, the pro-vice chancellor, has detected many fake students through an extensive investigation and has issued letters to 33 alleged fake students of economics department and 22 fake students of the department of public administration asking them to submit their relevant documents, including certificates and marksheets.

According to the probe committee an organized and powerful gang, comprising university officials at different levels, a section of

teachers, student leaders and some coaching centers were involved in the mischief. Utilizing the loopholes in the admission system, particularly the quota system. At present there exists four types of quotas for admission in DU. These quotas are the children, wives and husbands quota for the teachers and employees, freedom fighters quota, blind students quota and quota for tribal students. Sportsmen quota for admission

like the BCS and the medical college admission test. The circumstantial evidence amply suggested that some of the coaching centres were directly involved in the leakages.

The coaching centres enjoying laissez faire, are not only making a mint by deceiving the innocent students, but also gnawing the vitals of the country's education system. These coaching centres allure students through unscrupulous means. The students taking coaching for the BCS examination, are given full assurance of qualifying in the written examination. Such assurance is one of the major reasons for the alleged involvement of some coaching centres in leaking BCS examinations.

There were strong proofs that some coaching centres were directly involved in the leakage of question papers for admission test of the government medical colleges for the current session.

According to probe committee, some coaching centres and consultancy firms were involved in the process of admitting fake students in DU. Fourteen out of the 16 sus-

pected students of the department of Mass Communication and Journalism had their university admission coaching from a coaching centre located in the Farmgate areas of the capital were some of the teachers of DU are also involved.

The probe committee said, these fake students either did not sit for admission test or were not on the merit list prepared by the dean's office. The racket took these students in different departments utilizing the loopholes in the admission process. The loopholes in the admission process need to be removed with abolition of quota system.

As the public universities are unable to accommodate more than a fraction of those seeking admission, the mad race for a seat in the public universities is obvious. This is quite understandable that some students, abetted by a section of unscrupulous teachers and coaching centres will choose to cheat their way to admission to avoid tough competition. But the DU authority failed to properly handle the admission process, where the fate of the thousands of students

are involved and it is pertinent to call into question their competence and sincerity.

With detection of huge fake students in the different departments and institutes of DU, a long-held suspicion of such crimes has at last come of light. Certainly this testify for moral degradation of the university teachers and officials involved in the mischief, as well as of the students who have chosen such a depraved way to pursue higher education.

Only turning out of these fake students from the university will not be enough as they deserve appropriate legal action in accordance with the law of land for committing such contemptible crimes. Exemplary punishment including dismissal from service must be given to the teachers and officials who were involved in the process of fake admission so that such crimes are not repeated. Stern action under the ongoing cleansing drive must also be taken against the unscrupulous coaching centres to wipe out such mischief from the universities.

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