

... and 'WikiLeaked' Bangladesh!

from the 'unjust systems' and for getting on the road to reality in this era of 'Right to Information'. In general, it cannot be denied that the leaked incidents coincidentally

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If the WWII, as it has already been predicted, would befall for the paucity of 'potable water', then it may be considered as possible that the WWIV would take place for acquiring 'information'. This may seem imminent eventually as concealed and classified 'facts' unveiled by the WikiLeaks have become a matter of headache for the big powers along with the Superpower. Julian Assange, the internet's freedom fighter's endeavor to shift regime behavior and to reveal 'unjust systems' has unleashed diplomatic cables consist of embarrassing 'confidentials' that did concern the related regimes and the entire diplomatic world. In conjunction with this, the exposé includes the 'tale of woe' for Bangladesh as well, and disclosed secrets that would question the statecraft, political posture, intelligence, security issues, human rights situation, and predominantly, the sovereignty of the country.

As WikiLeaks published 'secrets' on Bangladesh, albeit claimed 'cynical' by some, these leaked diplomatic cables delineated that they are not that much far from the truth in some points of facts or just confirmed the occurrences. At the outset, the allegations in the leaks on RAB of being favored as a counter-terrorism partner and 'Bangladeshi FBI' by the governments of the US and the UK point towards the secu-

urity and human rights issues of Bangladesh. RAB has now been a concern to the human rights organizations for its extra-judicial killings and criticised as the British trained 'accredited government death squad'. It has also been published in the cables that DGFI was responsible for promoting extremists (HujjibD) and for bringing them into the mainstream politics through a new political party (IDP) that certainly shows the decadence in the intelligence system. Also, cable derived from the US mission in New Delhi showed that the preceding Caretaker Government had taken 'Minus-2 Theory' to push the two major leaders out of politics with the instigation of different foreign embassies which phased in 'Bangladesh at Crossroads' and the whole political posture under serious question mark concerning the democratic system of the country.

Then again, cables revealed that British officials along with the US and development agencies like DFID and USAid are working on promoting a curriculum reform of Madrassas in Bangladesh to prevent the 'radicalization of Muslim youth', which indicates that the government's education policies are not much free from foreign pressures whatsoever. Moreover, cables posted by WikiLeaks on the US diplomats' pressure on the government for reinstating Phulbari coal mine which was closed after violent protests and also for engag-

ing Asia Energy again to the project with the prescribed 'open-pit mining', and on newer leaks, for insisting on to hire US-based Conoco Philips and Chevron for working on the gas sector. These clearly depicted the weaknesses in major policy implications in terms of taking the decisions by the government

Whether the cables are authentic or erroneous, they could be helpful for emancipating from the 'unjust systems' and for getting on the road to reality in this era of 'Right to Information'.

itself. Another leaked diplomatic cable suggests to keep an eye on 'Bangladesh's attempt to gain influence' in different regions via UN peace keeping operations which comprehends the deficiency of the US's confidence in the international position and participation of Bangladesh.



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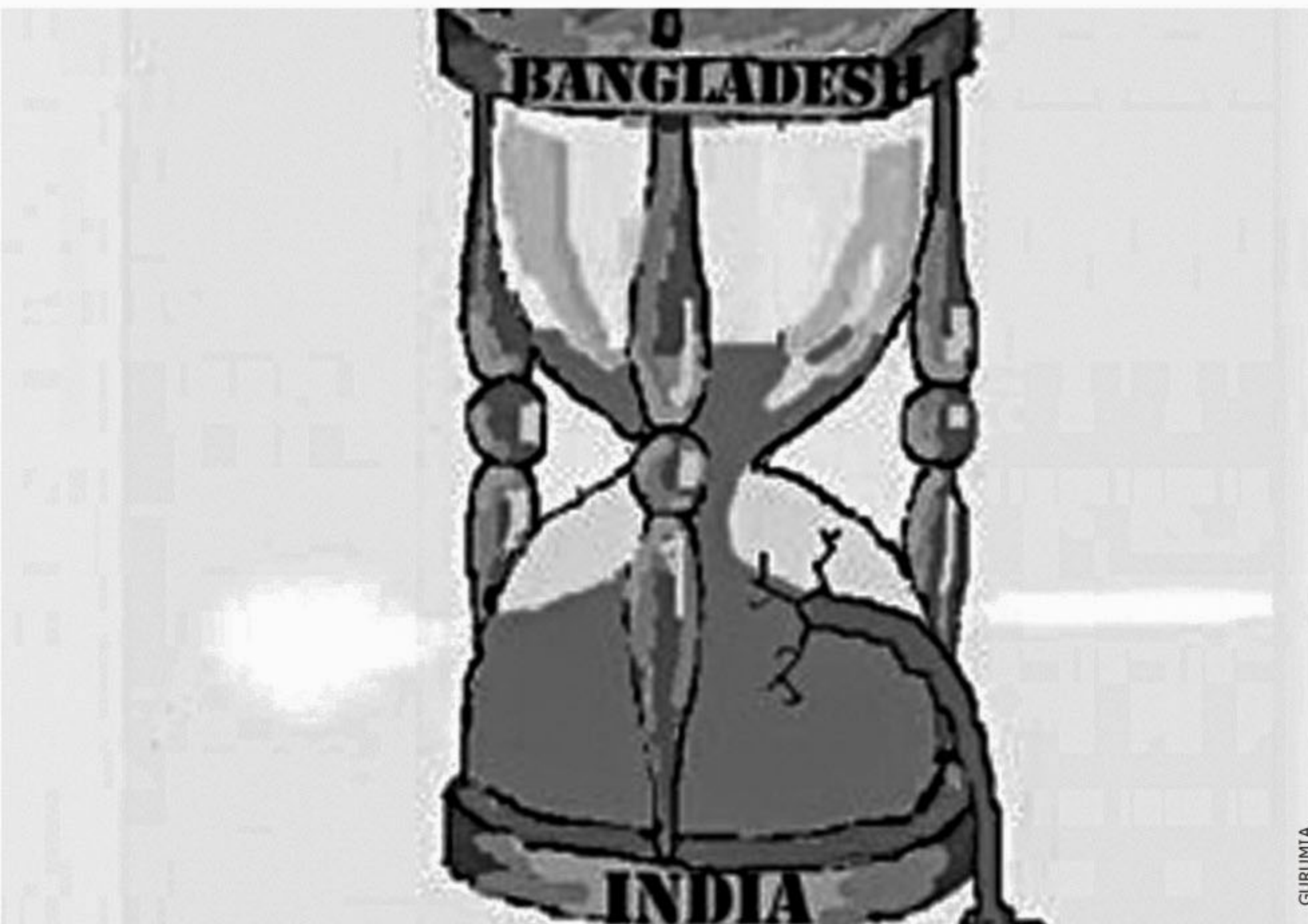
Consequently, these contentions and revelations evidently define the 'tale of woe' and defenselessness of the sovereignty along with the governance of the country, which provides no alternative but to merely sit on the fence. The government has to concentrate more on attaining 'self-

determination' given that the foreign embassies and big powers have long been the mentors of every government of Bangladesh in terms of formulating national policies and strategies, and also other pertinent issues. Whether the cables are authentic or erroneous, they could be helpful for emancipating

harmonized the existing concerns with the exposé, likewise in case of Bangladesh too. Not surprisingly, who knows, the reality behind the revelations could be more intense than the labyrinth itself.

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India's Bangladesh Moment



GURUMTA

Over the years river water issues have become sensitive and a major resolution will be highly positive. A sensitive issue of late between India and Bangladesh has been the very adverse trade balance, which is ten times in India's favour.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) DIPANKAR BANERJEE

A historic opportunity awaits India in the next few months to address its fundamental security, cooperation in the region and its larger 'Look East Policy'. All of which can be enhanced through a strong partnership with our neighbour in the East, Bangladesh, overcoming years of suspicion. The time has come for a new approach, bold measures and out-of-the-box thinking.

An international conference in New Delhi between India and ASEAN leaders in March 2011 indicated that the region is today poised for unprecedented cooperation. Even though China's influence and presence in ASEAN is much higher and growing even faster, there remain enough opportunities and space for simultaneous cooperation with India. That process will be facilitated

through redefining our relations with Bangladesh and Myanmar, which in turn will benefit 400 million people that inhabit the entire region.

The completely free and credible elections in Bangladesh in end 2009 ushered in a government with a large mandate. It also demonstrated that given the right opportunity, the people's choice would be peace, development and a tolerant society. Bangladesh is not a 'basket case' as Henry Kissinger so dismissively described it not so long ago. It is not also a 'failed state' like Pakistan, which for many decades kept it under its servitude. Instead it is a vibrant society where its rich language and culture and moderate Islam define its identity and nationalism. Yet, the nation is also densely populated, resource-scarce and susceptible to the frequent furies of nature. It provides a natural fit for a genuine partnership with India that is based on equity, self-respect and generosity as between

friends, without insistence on 'equal reciprocity'.

Over the years, parts of the population in Bangladesh have been influenced towards a more radical Islam. Their potential influence cannot be ignored, but should be recognized as a force that thrives only in times of economic difficulties. Dhaka has recently comprehensively addressed India's core security concerns by cooperating in countering terrorism. Insurgents from India's northeast, whose presence previous regimes flatly denied, were ferreted out and handed over.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in Jan 2010 set the stage for a new partnership. Apart from three major agreements signed it also laid out a road map and initiated an eighteen track process to address other issues.

But, decisions have a timeline and agreements take place in a political context. Just as sensible people in

both countries understand the importance of genuine partnership and the economic opportunities that this will open up, there is still a sizeable community in Bangladesh that consider this a ripe issue for mobilizing anti-India sentiments. In an intensely bipartisan and divided polity, the government in power often succumbs to this pressure as elections loom. Then there are rising expectations, tendency of politicians in power to succumb to corruption over time and thus lose popular support. A time may soon come in Bangladesh when the cumulative effects of all these developments may become a serious obstacle even to agree to sensible agreements.

Dhaka is looking to a visit from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to consolidate this partnership. The time for moving forward is now. Elections to both the neighbouring Indian states, West Bengal and Assam, are

in April and results are due in mid-May. Hopefully Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh will take place at the earliest, before the onset of monsoons. It is likely that negotiations on all tracks will not be completed by then. But, a few major breakthroughs and critical agreements that serve as real 'game changers' must be signed during this visit. What might these be?

It is suggested that these should include the vital issues of territory, water, trade and connectivity. The enclaves issue is ripe for a solution and bold political decisions in conjunction with West Bengal should resolve them. The Teesta water-sharing negotiation too is at an advanced stage and it will be enormously helpful if this is agreed by that time. Over the years river water issues have become sensitive and a major resolution will be highly positive. A sensitive issue of late between India and Bangladesh has been the very adverse trade balance, which is ten times in India's favour. This is clearly unsustainable between friends. India can afford to have a zero-tariff regime for Bangladesh and not suffer a dent in its overall trade balance. But, if there is an apprehension that this may be misused, at least Bangladesh textile import tariffs should be eliminated. This will benefit maximum numbers of its citizens and an important constituency. Taken together these will be true game-changers in India-Bangladesh relations.

In turn these would open up the whole question of connectivity already liberalized through direct access from Bangladesh to Bhutan and Nepal. Building further on this through multiple nodes across Bangladesh will be of enormous financial benefit to its people in several substantive ways.

The time has come to build public opinion in both countries to ensure that Manmohan Singh's visit is of historic significance to both countries.

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US wary on no-fly zone over Libya

Forces loyal to Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi launched air strikes on rebel positions as the United States said that any no-fly zone over the country would need to have full UN backing.

US President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron said they would plan a "full spectrum" of action against Gaddafi while US officials met with opposition members seeking to topple the veteran leader. Cameron said the world could not stand aside while Gaddafi did "terrible things" to the Libyan people.

"We have got to prepare for what we might have to do if he goes on brutalising his own people," Cameron said.

As fighting raged, a rebel spokesman said a Gaddafi intermediary had offered talks but was rejected outright.

That claim was dismissed as "rubbish" by a government official in Tripoli, where a defiant Gaddafi made a late-night appearance at a hotel used by many foreign correspondents in the Libyan capital.

Heavy shelling was heard on the front line with the rebel-held east. Rebels said government troops had unleashed a torrent of fire west of the rebel-held oil town of Ras Lanuf, and dozens of opposition fighters were seen moving up the desert road.

The rebels, who control most of eastern Libya, have found their advance checked as their rebellion against Gaddafi's more than 41-year-old rule entered a fourth week.

Their goal of marching to Tripoli has stalled since the weekend when the regime recaptured Bin Jawad, a hamlet 15 kilometres west of Ras Lanuf, and numbers at the front appear to have decreased.

But the ragtag rebels were still moving forward near Ras Lanuf from their strongholds in the east, many carrying AK-47 assault rifles or rocket propelled grenade launchers (RPGs).

Saad Hamid, a "media official" for the rebel national council, said government forces had been seen digging trenches and had brought up rocket launchers, tanks and artillery, as well as intensifying air strikes.

"We now have reinforcements on the way and they are also making preparations," he told Agence France-Presse.

Earlier, warplanes staged a series of raids on Ras Lanuf, wounding one person. A former official said Gaddafi's forces have launched a final onslaught on the western city of Zawiyah and described the situation there as "very critical".

"Round every corner there are people shooting. He (Gaddafi) wants to take it before Wednesday. The international community must do something," Murad Hemayma said of the strategic city, besieged for days by Gaddafi tanks and troops.

As pressure grew from inside Libya and elsewhere in the Arab world for a no-fly zone, the White House said Obama and Cameron agreed to press forward with planning, including at NATO, on a range of possible responses.

Measures under consideration included surveillance, humanitarian assistance, enforcement of the arms embargo and a no-fly zone, the White House said.

Washington has been markedly less enthusiastic about the possibility of such a step than some of its allies, with some officials noting that it would likely require bombardment of Libya's air defences.

Showing continued US caution about a no-fly zone, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that any decision to impose such a measure to protect civilians from Gaddafi's air power should be taken by the United Nations and "not the United States".

"I think it's very important that it's not a US-led effort because this comes from the people of Libya themselves," Clinton told Sky News...

Source: AFP