



Trans-boundary water matters!

SHAMIMA NASREEN

RECENT events in the history of mankind have shown a concern for the preservation and rational utilization of water resources. Among many events we can cite the United Nations Conference on Environment in Stockholm (1972), the United Nations Conference on Water in Mar del Plata (1977), the International Conference on Water and Environment in Dublin (1992) and the Eco 92 in Rio de Janeiro (1992). At this point, it is a concern for preservation of the environment and more specifically of water resources in relation to specific actions of different countries that attempted to create treaties, agreements and international standards on the proposed issue. And in the Congress of Vienna in 1815 the subject of international rivers was approached by international documents. Here the international watercourses were classified contiguous (when served as boundaries between states) and succeeding (they crossed two or more states).

In 1966 the International Law Association launched the Helsinki Rules, which defined an international drainage basin as a geographical area that covers two or more States determined by the limits of the watersheds, including surface water and groundwater, leading to a common end point.

In this way, Brazil and Argentina considered and used the above mentioned definitions to support their positions in relation to the hydroelectric potential of the Paraná River (Brazil-Paraguay border-Argentina), where today the Itaipu dam is located. But in the case of water-sharing between

India and Bangladesh, it is known that bilateral official discussions did not produce effective result so far in solving water dispute between India and Bangladesh. One of the reasons for this is the nationalist politics especially in India that jeopardizes win-win dialogue. There has always been pressure from politicians and Indian policy makers that India must win the negotiation. India is yet to share justifiable amount of water with Bangladesh through appropriate measures. Both the countries should consider and practice relevant international laws and principles to lessen trans-boundary water crisis. Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 dealing with water resources, highlights the concern for the preservation of water and the need for co-management of water resources in border areas:

"The widespread scarcity, gradual destruction and aggravated pollution of freshwater resources in many world regions, along with the progressive encroachment of incompatible activities, demand integrated water resources planning and management. Such integration must cover all types of interrelated freshwater bodies, including both surface water and groundwater, and duly consider water quantity and quality aspects...Trans-boundary water resources and their use are of great importance to riparian States. In this connection, cooperation among those States may be desirable in conformity with existing agreements and/or other relevant arrangements, taking into account the interests of all riparian States concerned."

Some say that all these crises are happening because there is no effective pressure from other people

It is mandatory to create pressure-group to influence Indian policy-making regarding this very issue and let them pay heed to our working with Indian civil society (through dialogue) who will work as a pressure concern and will follow international law.



to solve this. People to People Dialogue (PPD)--both face-to-face and digital (facebook, twitter, etc)--can be appreciated because it would be an initiative of grass-roots/community-based organizations, development NGOs, where prestigious academic and cultural people participate and critically address peace building and development agenda. Furthermore, it can contribute to peace and development in a sustainable way since it incorporates all communities. It is mandatory to create pressure-group to influence Indian policy-making regarding this very issue

and let them pay heed to our working with Indian civil society (through dialogue) who will work as a pressure concern and will follow international law. India really needs friendship with this neighbour which has a vast comparative geographic advantage over it (bisecting two important Indian regions).

Mohammed Mohsin, former ambassador of Bangladesh said that SAARC leaderships seem to be good in taking so many decisions (and even repeating many) in last 25 years, but they seem to be lacking in implementations. Our South Asian civil societies have unfortu-

nately so far contributed little, except for helping themselves in sustaining their dialogues with well-meaning overseas donors, and carry on with their academic/intellectual dialogues but with no practical acceptability to the Member States. In response to this Kant Bhargava, Indian former ambassador believed that civil society in South Asia should now take up the role of mobilizing political will for implementation. He also said that among various unresolved issues the concern for trans-boundary water is very prominent, which should deal with actions by the civil society and urged the importance of developing border policy and management jointly that will take into account the interests of the people in the border region.

One should also consider opening a window of working with some institutions in the neighboring China, which is currently an observer in SAARC, and have shown interests in working with the SAARC. Reportedly currently India on her own is negotiating some bilateral trading posts/road connections (through Nathula Pass in Sikkim) with China, while Bangladesh & Indian North East would also be interested in having all-weather overland border road connections with the big neighbour, as well as having joint talks with China on Brahmaputra river waters.

Beside dialogues at all levels, working on a trans-boundary water related database is also a demand of time. In this modern technological arena, development of interactive database and their links to geographical information system and the assimilation of data from remote sensors are recommended wherever possible to create network of information on

water. It should be done in the preliminary stages of survey projects, studies and research of various countries. The government of Bangladesh has already allocated 300 crore taka as climate change fund. A portion of the fund can be used for Trans-boundary water database, research and management.

Considering the international laws and suggestions of the experts, Regional Trans-boundary Waters Action Plan (RTWAP) can be developed for ecological equilibrium and to manage ecological refugees. Maintaining national water management related laws and policies is also inevitable because one has to realize that natural degradation doesn't follow border. People of the both regions, especially who are adjacent to border area are mostly the victims of natural degradation and pollution. If Bangladesh and a portion of India is suffering today, the day is not too far when India as a whole will suffer. Moreover, we shouldn't forget that Trans-boundary water management also depends on Inter-border Tree-plantation programme. That tree can solve many problems like desertification, river erosion, floods are evidenced by tree-plantation programme in Kenya by Wangari Maathai in her Green Belt Movement.

Last but not the least, in the densely populated region, family planning programmes are also needed because over population encourages negative competition. Instead of fighting for natural resources, we can hope that people irrespective of nations will be reunited to protect the Mother Nature for their own existence.

The writer is an Analyst on International Relations and Sub-editor, The Daily Star.

SHAMMUNUL ISLAM

THERE has been a revolutionary change in the Arab world with people calling for the removal of autocrats. Starting with Jasmine revolution it is now facing a stiff challenge in Libya where bombardment of NATO force is going on indiscriminately. With the UN resolution authorizing its members "to take all necessary measures... to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya", this war is raging on without any particular leadership. The legitimacy of the war itself is questioned and the way this war is being handled points towards a strategic shift of policy.

Libya's regime was using limited force to subdue internal rebellion where the rebel group consists of motley kinds of people. The African Union was against any military intervention and was planning to negotiate as against the stance of Arab League which on 12th March backed the idea of a no-fly zone over Libya. As chapter VIII of the UN Charter allowed a broader mandate to regional bodies to deal with regional matters of war and peace, the African Union (AU), of which Libya is a leading member, was definitely the one to be consulted with. But in reality it was barred from entering Libya by NATO forces prior to the NATO offensives.

This war is actually a hastily prepared one with England and France spearheading it. America was reluctant in going into war but the announcement of Gaddafi to cleanse Libya house by house prompted Obama in taking actions. America has again started a new war against a Muslim country when it has already been mired in wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. Obama, the 2009 Noble Peace Prize winner is trying to avoid being the ringmaster.

This war actually has seen a shift in America's stance towards crisis or conflict management. America always used to take a

The dawn of a new world order?

proactive role in the case of identifying crisis, taking actions and bounding threatened countries to join in the 'collective action.' America is showing less of its imperialist nature now due to a variety of factors.

We can see a moderate temperament of US president over dealing with Libya which is already been criticized in his own country. America has not shown its big

to give away several Senate seats in mid-term election to Congress. At such a point of time it is normal that Democratic Party would not want to jeopardize its position more by taking the lead of this war as the economic condition of US is not also robust now.

But America had to intervene at last in conformity with their previous records. America involved with First World War just when it

bystander in such a moment. As US was reluctant to further entangle in another war, they came to the forefront. Only saving the people (their stated intention) may not be the only target, rather if we take history as any guide there may be some stealthy intentions. We need to understand the way leading western countries perceive Arab countries. When RAF Middle East command in Cairo approached Winston Churchill (Secretary of State at the War Office in 1919) for permission to use chemical weapons "against recalcitrant Arabs as experiment," he authorized this experiment and found nothing "unreasonable" in it. He said "I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas... I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes... It is not necessary to use only the most deadly gasses; gasses can be used which cause great inconvenience and would spread a lively terror and yet would leave no serious permanent effects on most of those affected." Another thing which history tells us that England itself was a big imperialist country which lost its dominance over time to US. So this war is a way to penetrate further to the Arab countries and to exert more control over world politics and thus consolidating their own positions by this war.

By the UN resolution itself, this allied force can stay there as long as they want as there is no mentioning of the time period and can do whatever they think is necessary to save the people of Libya, even if it means the loss of civilians as the war has been carved out so far. The 'New World Order' starting with the introduction of US troops into the Middle East during the Gulf war consolidated US hegemony and military power. Now we may be witnessing another dimension added to this 'New World Order' where past imperial countries will also have the chance to flex their muscles as they were used to and we may witness a new type of hegemony.

Shammunul Islam is a freelance writer.



BEYONDTHECURTAIN

brother attitude as it has been pursuing an aspiration of repairing the damaged relation with the Muslim world. The Cairo speech of US president in June 2009 signaled towards a change in this direction. He mentioned that US was seeking "a new beginning" based on "mutual interest and mutual respect." The irony about this speech is that he was the guest of Hosni Mubarak then. He further mentioned that "no system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other."

Another fact which might work here is that US election is not so far away. Barack Obama has already declared his intention to stand for a second term in office in 2012. Obama's Democratic Party in November 2010 suffered a huge blow when it lost control of the House of Representatives and had

was imminent for them to tip the balance of the war. The same happened in the case of Second World War as US involved with this war only when Japan attacked it and Hitler declared a war. America used to call any war against Islamic countries as 'crusade'. But with the realization that they could not make friends with this strategy, America used the term 'war' for the first time in the Gulf War of 1991. From then on America always remained a proactive state in case of warfare as opposed to their pre-Gulf war position as reluctant imperialist. As US was reluctant to spearhead this attack, England and France came forward. These two countries got involved in this war in haste mentioning that they are to save the people of Libya from the atrocities of Gaddafi and that they can remain inactive

Japan upgrades nuclear emergency level to seven



JAPAN upgraded its nuclear emergency to a maximum seven on an international scale of atomic crises on Tuesday, the first time the ranking has been invoked since the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

News of the raised alert comes as the country's nuclear safety watchdog said that radiation emissions equivalent to 10 percent of Chernobyl have leaked from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

The incident at the facility was sparked by last month's earthquake and tsunami, which killed more than 13,000 people, with around 14,500 people still missing. The regrading to a "major accident" puts Fukushima on a par with the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, the world's worst ever peacetime nuclear event. The meltdown at Chernobyl in the then Soviet Union spewed a large volume of toxic radiation, poisoning large areas of land and affecting thousands of lives.

Officials said it was difficult to estimate exactly how much radiation had been released in Japan's nuclear emergency. But available estimates "show levels equivalent to Level Seven," a safety agency official said.

Workers at Fukushima Daiichi are battling to control overheating reactors whose cooling systems were knocked out by last month's enormous waves.

The re-assessment from level five on the scale came as Japan was rocked by yet another powerful aftershock from the 9.0 magnitude quake that unleashed a devastating tsunami on March 11.

The 6.2 magnitude tremor hit 77

kilometres east of Tokyo on Tuesday and swayed buildings in the capital, temporarily shutting down subway services and halting bullet trains. US geologists originally put the magnitude at 6.4.

In a fresh setback, a fire broke out early Tuesday morning at a battery unit outside a building at the No. 4 reactor unit, but was quickly extinguished and did not spread to other areas, plant operator Tokyo Electric Power said. Japan's meteorological agency withdrew the warning less than an hour later as the nation marked a month since the monster quake and towering tsunami of March 11...

Tokyo said Monday it was augmenting the evacuation area around the plant because of long-term health worries, even as the government said the danger of a large leak of radioactive materials was fading.

"The possibility that the situation at the nuclear plant will deteriorate and lead to new leakage of massive radioactive materials is becoming significantly smaller," chief government spokesman Yukio Edano told reporters.

He later told reporters the government was concerned over the effect of long-term exposure to radiation and would be ordering people to leave certain areas more than 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the plant, which are currently outside the exclusion zone...

Around 150,000 people are still in emergency shelters after losing their homes or being evacuated from around the leaking Fukushima Daiichi plant.

source: defencetalk.com