

National energy security put at risk

Bapex fails to deliver

THE nation's hopes had been raised when Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company (Bapex) had declared that the nation was, literally, floating on gas in Netrokona-Sunamganj area. According to Bapex's estimates, the area was sitting on 2 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of gas. Unfortunately, initial drilling down to 4,500 metres has only found small pockets of gas. This puts a huge dent in the government's plans to pump in significant new gas supplies in the national grid.

Authorities contend that until "logging" is done, a process that would give detail information about the nature of geological formations of gas pockets underground, the final estimate cannot be ascertained. Only upon completion of all exploratory works will tell us whether or not the "Sunetra" field will be able to deliver or not the big promises that have been made. But initial results are not very promising.

What we are faced with is that the nation's energy planning has been made based on dubious calculations. The implications for such faulty assessment can in no way be viewed lightly. Energy planning for a host of other sectors has been made based on a 2tcf find and these include transmission pipelines and a number of gas-fired power plants. When the present government came to power in 2009, it embarked on an ambitious plan to boost power generation. Stepping into its final year in office, the government has an installed capacity of 2,315 megawatts of new power plants that are dependent on imported liquid fuels. In the current fiscal, it is estimated that the government will be spending as much as US\$3 billion on fuel import. The Sunetra gas find that now looks more and more like a pipedream was supposed to ease the power generation sector away from costly rental power.

Mono sourcing, i.e. dependence on a single source of fuel supply like gas and an overt dependence on oil guzzling power plants has not paid dividends. Given ground realities, it is now up to policymakers to come up with a pragmatic approach that will fast track sourcing of diversified fuel supplies and ensure current and future energy security.

Audited risk assessments and safety flaws

International Labour Rights forum speaks up

THE International Labour Rights Forum (ILRF) in its report titled Deadly secrets has revealed a shocking trend among clothing brands and retailers. Although they conducted factory audits they did not bother to share their vital findings with apparel manufacturing companies in the exporting countries. They did not warn government agencies or workers about the imminent dangers posed by the working environs in the factories.

All they did with the auditing results was to cease business with factories to safeguard their brand reputation and image rather than reveal the horrific secrets and tell workers about risks they face.

Furthermore, buyers negotiate contracts with manufacturers on the basis of price and quality of products being totally oblivious to the fact that the demand for a better working environment requires an additional investment. This is roundly ignored or bypassed.

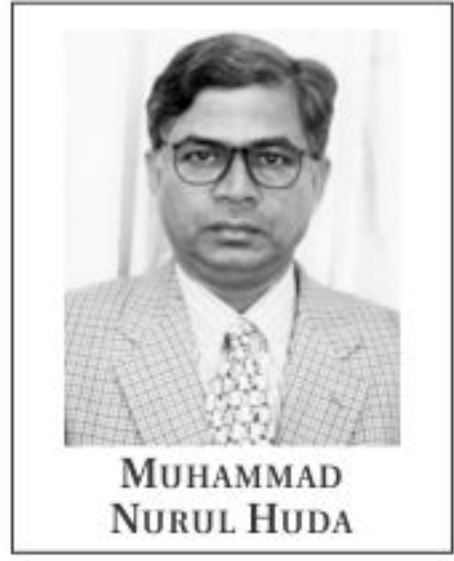
In all, this is self-servingly unethical on the part of brand entities and retailers. The garment factory owners seem to have played into their hands by not feeling pressured enough to build all standard safety precautions into the structure of garments houses.

Basically, Bangladesh garment industry is 'founded on rock-bottom wages, labour rights restrictions and poorly enforced health and safety standards', as the author of the report, Bjorn Claeson pointed out.

The report instituted in the wake of deadly fires in Pakistan and Bangladesh which snuffed out 400 workers altogether and injured hundreds more calls for urgent attention from all concerned. It highlights a systemic failure that has been allowed to perpetuate for lack of any intervention at any point in time. This should be forthcoming now.

We could not agree more with the call for a 'new openness' in the garment industry where companies will share what they know about the dangers in work places and

STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE gory murder of Biswajit in broad daylight and in full public view, including law enforcers, shall remain a blight on public conscience. The outpourings of public anger consequent upon the blatant crime and the exhortations to do the needful at the earliest perhaps indicate that civility and sense of justice has not left us yet.

Though distressing, it is refreshing from an ethical and moral standpoint, to hear the father of the accused demanding exemplary punishment to his bestial son.

The fact is that sorrow and sympathy will not be enough to meet the ends of justice. Similarly, the colour or affiliation of the perpetrators must not minimise the gravity of the offence or the steadfastness of the State organ charged with ensuring correct and speedy investigation.

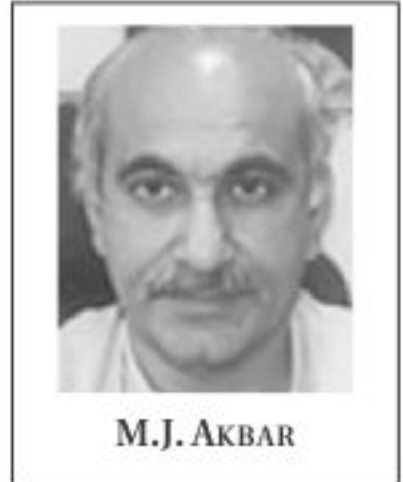
It is time to remind ourselves once again that efficient police investigation is the sheet-anchor of success of a criminal prosecution. The police, along with others, have to play their part worthily in tracking down the criminal and bringing him before the bar of justice to receive his due punishment, and if they fail in this duty the result is a slur on justice itself.

The receipt and recording of information report is not a condition precedent to the setting in motion of a criminal investigation. If the police has in their possession, through their own knowledge, or by means of credible though informal intelligence, which genuinely leads them to the belief that a cognizable offence has been committed, they can of their own motion undertake an investigation.

The statute does not provide that information has to come from an eye-witness.

In our parlance, the investigation of a criminal offence is the field

BYLINE



M.J. AKBAR

SINCE an improvement in bilateral relations was clearly not on Pakistan interior minister Rehman Malik's agenda, why did he come to India? There has to be some rational reason. Tourism offers a possibility. Taj Mahal, that magnificent metaphor for love, is a powerful magnet for our western neighbours even when India-Pakistan affairs are not in a honeymoon phase, tinged as it is by that wistful feel of so-near-yet-so-far. You cannot really blame a minister for dropping by to take a look in the last months of office, before next summer's elections inevitably take his job away and his security ring withers.

Then there is religious tourism, which ostensibly brought Asif Zardari to India; particularly the mausoleums of Hazrat Nizamuddin of Delhi and Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer, saints and symbols of unity built around a humane philosophy. What a pity that religious tourism was not included in the minor visa reforms signed by fractious neighbours. That would have driven up demand for travel. After five decades of hammering at the wall that went up after the 1965 war, divided Muslim families have virtually given up on preserving kinship across hostile borders. The emotional and physical cost is too high. But the great dargahs from an undivided past remain a solace to the soul. Rehman Malik obviously

Investigating the dastardly murder

exclusively reserved for the executive through the police department, the superintendence over which the government vests in.

Therefore, the State can under no circumstances shy away from overseeing the correct investigation of such criminal offence. In fact, it would only be proper to observe that in every criminal prosecution the State is the complainant.

The above stipulation has been



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impressed upon because although in the fitness of things every criminal case has to be disposed of on its own merit, there are objective conditions in Bangladesh to doubt that the fate of some cases, if not many, did not have the benefit of such ideal standard.

Similarly, if the investigating agency unfortunately stands accused of being dictated by the wishes of successive political regimes as has been commented upon, then credible investigation becomes a daunting job.

The question is: Are there certain facts and circumstances of our socio-political existence, as well as the worrisome political polarisation of our society, suspected to have an adverse impact on the basic regulatory function of criminal

investigation?

The cynics say that the pernicious culture of playing to the tune of unscrupulous political masters or pandering to their unholy wishes by the investigating agencies and other sensitive State agencies has not occurred all on a sudden.

Spells of unconstitutional rule, particularly during 1982-90, have substantially damaged the ethos of our public service including the

investigating agencies. While leadership deficits account for some malfeasance, the real damage has been done by an insensitive and myopic dictatorial establishment that was hell-bent to screw all regulatory and corrective institutions.

The unwholesome effect of such institution-bashing is now being felt by a concerned citizenry. One is, however, not oblivious of the fact that the democratically elected but temperamentally dictatorial regimes since 1991 have been any better in realising the damage done to the professionalism of the services.

The halo and élan of public service has meant little to the political leadership who has spent more time and energy in fostering the growth of

pliable and time-serving personnel for achieving their selfish goals.

It needs to be noted that in a disturbingly polarised polity if criminals enjoy political patronage, criminal activities are accorded recognition for so-called political compulsions and a loathsome all-pervasive distrust between different social and political groups prevail, the predicament of police investigators, who have the double jeopardy of being less-than-credible in the eyes of the law of the land and the members of public, can only be appreciated by a reasoned observer.

Our investigators definitely suffer from inadequate scientific support but even under the present circumstances they can achieve commendable success. Such investigators for reasons known, do not operate in a favourable environment where helpful information comes voluntarily from members of public but still like our physicians they do good clinical investigation without laboratory support by virtue of their intuition, gut reaction and the limited information network.

We will definitely put ourselves and our future generation in peril by our inability to let a truly professional investigating agency grow in accordance with the dictates of the law.

Viewing criminal occurrences from a political angle only will be ruinous because that would not only be a damper to the growth of professionalism but also in the process shatter the remaining confidence reposed in the vital institution of the State.

We still have pockets of excellence in our investigative outfits and it shall be in the fitness of things to allow such outfits to attain professional excellence without being tainted by any direction.

Let the actual facts and circumstances of the incident be ascertained as is the job of the investigator and let that be placed before the court for adjudging the guilt.

The writer is a columnist for The Daily Star.

Peace, but with Justice

did not come merely to sign the visa document. Bureaucrats would have sufficed for this illusion. Visas have been made easier for those who cannot travel alone, the under-12s, and those who will not travel alone, the over-65s. Both categories, exceptions apart, need the company of an adult still trapped in the humiliation of the present process. Frankly, it does not seem sensible that Rehman Malik came merely to see the Taj or prove that he can use a fountain pen. I think I have the answer. He came to India to win the next election in Pakistan. His first

Indians know that Mumbai might fade from memory but will never disappear, and that Pakistan can do something to ease the pain. Pakistan can ensure that the Mumbai masterminds do not laugh derisively while Indian hearts burn.

press conference in Delhi was not addressed to Indians; he was talking to the more vitriolic of his constituencies in Pakistan.

Rehman Malik has admirable clarity, supported by a noticeable absence of sentiment and no sense of embarrassment. Nor is he troubled by doubt. The rules of politics, for him, are far more important than the laws of hospitality. An old maxim of behaviour demands that guests should not be rude to their hosts. Rehman Malik has no such qualms. No visitor has been as deliberately offensive towards Indians as Malik managed to be within hours of landing in Delhi.

Perhaps Malik, and others like him,

do not want to understand what the terrorist savagery in Mumbai means to Indians. India watched transfixed as this horror unfolded on television. India heard the interaction between killers and their command centre in Pakistan, run by Lashkar e Taiba operatives.

Pakistan's present high commissioner in Delhi Salman Bashir once dismissed Indian evidence provided by Home Minister P. Chidambaram as "mere literature"; Malik thinks that additional material is "only information", possibly because his English is not as good as

about the role of ISI in the Mumbai havoc. It is not only Kasab who has provided details; David Headley has outlined a whole narrative of how ISI officers helped lead, manage and finance this operation. Headley is not in an Indian prison, but an American one.

Have Dr Manmohan Singh and Mrs Sonia Gandhi decided that it is time India forgot about Mumbai and moved on, as Rehman Malik publicly urged India to do? I imagine that our leaders squirmed a little when Rehman Malik declared Hafiz Saeed innocent, or indeed when he blamed the death of Kargil martyr Saurabh Kalia on the weather rather than enemy atrocity.

Perhaps they think that cricket will wash such tremors away with a great feel-good wave. They have also developed, on a parallel track, a little ploy: all those who want accountability are bloodthirsty hawks; and all those tilting towards obfuscation are little doves full of grace and wisdom. India is not divided into hawks and doves. A majority of Indians wants peace with Pakistan, but they want peace with justice.

Indians know that Mumbai might fade from memory but will never disappear, and that Pakistan can do something to ease the pain. Pakistan can ensure that the Mumbai masterminds do not laugh derisively while Indian hearts burn.

Is that too much to ask, Dr Singh?

The writer is Editor of The Sunday Guardian, published from Delhi, India on Sunday, published from London and Editorial Director, India Today and Headlines Today.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

December 22

1790

The Turkish fortress of Izmail is stormed and captured by Suvorov and his Russian armies.

1939

Indian Muslims observe a "Day of Deliverance" to celebrate the resignations of members of the Indian National Congress over their not having been consulted over the decision to enter World War II with Britain.

1971

The 1971 Liberation War: The provisional government of Bangladesh arrives in Dhaka from exile.

1978

The pivotal Third Plenum of the 11th National Congress of the Communist Party of China is held in Beijing, with Deng Xiaoping reversing Mao-era policies to pursue a program for Chinese economic reform.