

Resolve the issue of election

Abjure rigid positions

WHAT one had hoped to see happen at the end of the last session of the parliament, with the BNP joining after a long absence, did not. While one was heartened to see lively debates, albeit interspersed with unprintable comments by some MPs, the closing speeches of the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition did not hold out any promise of resolution of the point at issue -- the modus of conducting the next parliamentary election.

Let us be clear on one important matter, which is also the general opinion of the people, that the 15th Amendment does not provide a level playing field, given that the parliament would still be in vogue and the current incumbents would still hold their status as MPs during the election.

Unfortunately, we find the reaffirmation of government's position in the PM's outright rejection of the opposition leader's call to hold talks on the election issue extremely inadvisable. It is not really the response to the opposition leader's call for discussion. Similarly, we are rather petrified when the leader of the opposition threatens to push the CTG system down the throat of the government.

The matter calls for a rational approach from both sides of the aisle because any posture that is based on a stone cast position can make things worse. We hope the two leaders are aware of the fact that there is no absolute in politics. Politics is the art of compromise, and both must work to achieve it.

Setting up of food courts

What is holding it back?

UNBRIDLED food adulteration and use of toxic chemicals to preserve fruits, vegetables and fishes compounded by lack of deterrent action from the government have put public health in severe jeopardy.

This is baffling, since the government, directed by a High Court order of 2009, issued a gazette notification last March informing setting up of a food court in every district and metropolitan cities. The question is what is holding back these courts to function and try and punish the food adulterators, the enemies of public health?

Adulteration of all types of edibles in the kitchen market including fruits having taken unprecedented proportions in recent times, a stern decisive action against the outrageously unscrupulous and greedy traders engaged in such criminal trade cannot wait.

And if, as reported, constitution of the courts is being hampered by any lacunae, such absence of a detailed guideline or specific time limit in the said gazette notification, the government must address those shortcomings expeditiously in the greater interest of public health.

On-again, off-again actions taken through mobile courts and that, too, often rather lenient compared to the degree of the crime committed by the offenders have only gone to further embolden the food adulterators.

It is time they are made to get their deserved comeuppance. The government must stop dragging its feet over the issue. It must activate and empower the food courts to bring the food adulterators to due justice.

What is 'feasibility evaluation'?

ABDUL MATIN

THE cabinet committee on purchase recently approved a proposal to award the pre-construction work for the Rooppur nuclear power project (RNPP) to a Russian company Atomstroyexport. The scope of the pre-construction work includes a "feasibility evaluation" (FE) and a long list of studies.

"Feasibility study" is an evaluation and analysis of the potential of the proposed project which is based on extensive investigation and research to support the process of decision making. The term feasibility obviously implies evaluation. Why then call it "feasibility evaluation"?

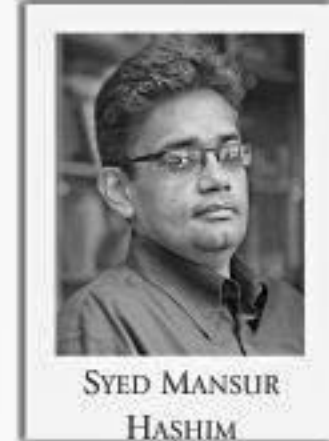
The list of the studies contains such a unique and exotic combination of terms that it becomes difficult to understand what the topics actually mean. My point will be clear if one carefully looks at the repetitions of the terms in the following topics as quoted in a national newspaper: "feasibility evaluation (FE), environment impact assessment (EIA), development and engineering survey, development of the comprehensive programme of engineering survey, anthropogenic conditions at the NPP area and site, engineering and hydro-meteorological survey, engineering and geodetic survey, seismological and seismic-tectonic studies, engineering and aero-meteorological survey, FE development, EIA development, pre-design works, and geological, environmental and engineering studies."

It is reported that the Russians would make 62 such studies. Would the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission publish a complete list of the studies and explain what the Russians actually want to find out from each study and indicate the purpose for which the results of the individual studies would be utilised? \$45.9 million appears to be too big an amount for such studies.

Secondly, I recall while preparing the feasibility report of the Rooppur nuclear power project in 1968, V/O Technopromexport of Moscow sent us a long list of information (in the form of a booklet) they required for the study. After going through the list, we found out that several sections of the required information were not even remotely related to the Rooppur project and even the Russian team which came to collect the information failed to explain their relevance. Ultimately, the list of the required information was shortened significantly by deleting the irrelevant items.

Looking at the scope of work, it seems that the draft agreement for the pre-construction work, perhaps sent by Atomstroyexport, has been approved by the cabinet committee without any correction, modification or technical assessment. Does it mean that we are going to sign a \$45.9 million agreement with the Russians on dotted lines without proper understanding of the scope of work?

The writer is a former chief engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and author of "Rooppur & the Power Crisis."

SYED MANSUR
HASHIM

GOING by World Bank Country Director Ellen Goldstein's statements made in January that the Bank would like to help facilitate 15 to 20 new private economic zones in the country with a capacity to accommodate up to 700 new companies by 2021 is promising news. Were these zones to come into existence, there is strong potential to attract foreign direct investment to the tune of \$8 billion and create 15 million new jobs. That would propel Bangladesh to attain middle-income status.

Bangladesh does not however, boast an impressive history of setting up special economic zones (SEZ). There are a number of impediments that have acted as bottlenecks. Problems associated with poor infrastructure and lengthy licensing procedures have derailed plans to establish economic zones in the past. One glaring example till date remains the Korean export processing zone (KEPZ). Youngone Corporation, one of the largest Korean conglomerates, procured 2,500 acres of land in Chittagong to build and EPZ in the mid-90s.

The plan envisaged around \$1 billion in investments generating around a 100,000 jobs and an export basket of \$1.25 billion per annum. That was the plan. The licensing procedure took almost eight years to complete and the lengthy procedure associated with the obtaining of each license ranging from environmental clearance to the red-tape involved in procurement of land to getting electricity and gas supplies has been a nightmare.

The KEPZ experience is a prime example of how Bangladesh lags behind the rest of Asia in setting up zones that facilitate investment and job creation. It goes to explain why since independence, Bangladesh has managed to establish only eight public-owned EPZs and one privately-owned EPZ with a total of

350 companies, whereas, the Philippines, since 1970, has 207 EPZs with 2,241 companies. Indeed, going by World Bank data, that country has created 3 million jobs in four decades, whereas we have managed a mere 350,000.

This government is mandated to set up at least one SEZ during its tenure. A new authority, i.e. Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) has been set up to oversee the establishment of SEZs. There is little room for complacency as Myanmar's Budget Department and Japan International Cooperation Agency

Bangladesh could take Japanese Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for developing off-site infrastructure. JICA's ODA funding is provided in the form of concessional loans that are made bilaterally.

(JICA) has recently entered into a multi-billion Yen loan agreement for the construction and renovation of infrastructure in Thilawa Special Economic Zone. Hence, the initial interest shown by Indian investors in Bangladesh's proposed SEZ could very well dry up unless rules and regulations governing BEZA are streamlined and authorities take serious steps to turn SEZ into reality. The potential for \$2 - 3 billion FDI from India cannot be taken lightly.

BEZA has selected five potential sites for SEZ development. These are Mirershorai (Chittagong), Anwara (Gohira), Sherpur (Sylhet), Sirajgonj (Rajshahi) and Monghla (Bagherat). It is understood that Mirershorai, Anwara and Sherpur sites will be evaluated on the basis of feasibility study, whereas BEZA has already invited international zone developers to conduct studies on Mongla and Sirajgonj sites. These are positive vibes.

However, BEZA Regulations 2011 have not yet been vetted by the

Ministry of Law. Without vetting, BEZA remains ineffective. These regulations are fundamental to regulate, manage and operate SEZs. As pointed out by a recent JICA study "concrete roadmap and milestone towards development SEZ are not clear to the public." So while we have the law, Bangladesh Economic Zones Act, 2010, the roles and responsibilities of the zone authority have not been finalised.

This is certainly not the way forward if Bangladesh wishes to show up on FDI radar. Authorities certainly need to get their act together on infrastructure to address development and financing needs of a SEZ. Government financing will ensure off-site infrastructure: access and link roads and railway link to connect zones. Utilities including gas, electricity and water must be established. Inland Container Terminal and customs facilities (bonded warehouse, etc.).

In parallel to these there must be clear cut deadlines for on-site infrastructure development: acquiring and developing land, power generation, demarcation of commercial and non-commercial areas, setting up of utility networks and amenities (schools, hospitals, recreation centres, etc.). All in all, a whole plethora of activities that needs to be tackled.

Taking cue from the Myanmar experience, Bangladesh could take Japanese Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for developing off-site infrastructure. JICA's ODA funding is provided in the form of concessional loans that are made bilaterally. Loans are soft in nature, i.e. repayment period is 40 years with a low annual interest rate of 0.01% per annum and a grace period of 10 years, and a project implementation period of 5 to 7 years -- conditions that are all conducive in Bangladesh's favour. These are decisions that need to be taken today. Unless conditions are made fit for FDI, we stand to lose out to competition in the region.

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India's nuclear doctrine and capability: Some answers

MANPREET SETHI

IT has been fifteen years since India conducted five nuclear tests. This period has been spent operationalising the country's nuclear doctrine in order to establish credible deterrence. This has meant building certain capabilities to address the country's threat perceptions. The most evident of these have been the testing in 2012 of Agni V, a ballistic missile of the range of 5000 kms, and the launch in 2009 of INS Arihant, the nuclear submarine.

Both these capabilities are still some distance from being inducted into operational service. Comments, however, have appeared (such as in Daily Star of June 9, 2013) expressing apprehensions over what the capability would mean for "small nations like Bangladesh in the Asia Pacific," or that through these India is looking for "great power status" which it might then be tempted to abuse.

These questions arise from an inadequate understanding of India's nuclear doctrine and the role that the country envisages for its nuclear weapons. India entrusts its nuclear weapons with the narrow task of deterring the threat of use or use of nuclear weapons. Deterrence is based on communicating the message that any nuclear use against India would invoke massive retaliation since India eschews first use of the weapon. It is also clearly stated that India would not use or threaten to use its nuclear weapons against states that don't possess these weapons and are not aligned with other nuclear weapon powers.

Not all nuclear-armed states so clearly define the purpose of their nuclear weapon or the circumstances of their use. But, India has been transparent by placing a written doctrine in the public domain. Encapsulating the philosophy behind the nation's nuclear strategy, it provides pointers on the nature and size of the nuclear arsenal, including delivery vehicles, the kind of command and control systems, and the type of retaliation and targeting options.

Another unique aspect of India's nuclear doctrine is that while operationalising nuclear deterrence, it nevertheless identifies "global, verifiable and non-

discriminatory nuclear disarmament" as a "national security objective." This is not rhetorical. India believes that its national interest best lies in a world without nuclear weapons. Until such a world emerges, however, nuclear deterrence becomes necessary to safeguard the nation against nuclear coercion or blackmail.

Rejection of the concept of nuclear war fighting and the need of

Compelled to build a nuclear arsenal, India has nevertheless opted for least destabilising options. An understanding of its doctrine and the narrow role it envisages for the weapon should set at rest many of the questions and fears of non-nuclear states in the region.

the weapon purely for defence allows India to accept credible minimum deterrence (CMD) and no first use (NFU) as the defining principles of its doctrine. Both these need to be examined in some detail to understand why India is building the capability it is.

CMD mandates a capability that remains at the minimum level and yet credibly signals that nuclear use against India would invoke retaliation that would be punishing enough for the aggressor to negate any gains he makes through first use. It is a strategy that deters by the promise of punishment, and punishing modern urban conglomerates does not require a huge arsenal. Therefore, India's focus has not been on increasing nuclear warheads, but on developing delivery systems of requisite ranges, accuracy and reliability that can reach targets whose loss would be unacceptable to the aggressor. The continued testing of missiles, including Agni V, is with this objective in view.

The second pillar of India's nuclear strategy is no first use (NFU) or a retaliation only posture. Since India does not intend using the nuclear weapon for coercion or territorial ambitions, it refuses to carry the burden of first use. Rather,

it maintains deterrence by conveying that while India will not use the weapon first, in case the adversary does so, India would respond to inflict punishment.

This approach reinforces CMD since it does not require India to build a large force capable of fighting with nuclear weapons. Nor is it necessary to keep forces on hair trigger alert with an elaborate and edgy delegated command and control system -- capabilities that are prone to accidental or unauthorised use. The NFU, therefore, contributes to stability by steering clear of nuclear brinkmanship.

NFU, premised as it is on the promise of assured punitive retaliation, requires a capability that can survive a first attack sufficiently to retaliate. Dispersal of the nuclear arsenal over a triad becomes essential in this context. And hence the need for nuclear powered submarines equipped with nuclear tipped missiles with sufficient ranges.

Evidently, the capabilities that India is currently developing are in keeping with its nuclear doctrine, which has not only been in the public domain since 1999, but which also clearly defines a very constricted role for its nuclear weapons -- the narrowest, in fact, amongst all nuclear armed states. These capabilities are being built to establish credible deterrence within the self imposed constraint of CMD and to fulfill the requirements of NFU, and not because others are developing the same or other capabilities.

Perhaps the best evidence of the fact that India is in no arms race is evident in its response to Pakistan's acquisition of tactical nuclear weapons -- a development that has evoked no change in India's nuclear force structure because its doctrine rejects the idea of nuclear war fighting.

Obviously, there is nothing sanguine about nuclear weapons. Yet, compelled to build a nuclear arsenal, India has nevertheless opted for least destabilising options. An understanding of its doctrine and the narrow role it envisages for the weapon should set at rest many of the questions and fears of non-nuclear states in the region.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Don't split Grameen Bank

We are appalled by the government's plan to split the Grameen Bank which is recognised by the world for establishing peace through micro financing across Bangladesh. It gives loan mainly to the rural women and it is successful in its mission. The founder of the Grameen Bank Dr. Yunus is our pride who is the first Bangladeshi to have won the Nobel prize. But the government has set the worst example by dishonouring him. I humbly request the government not to play with the Grameen Bank.

Md. Mojammel Hoque
Fatickchhari, Chittagong

Maintain sanctity of parliament

We were shocked at the use of vulgar words by some MPs belonging to the treasury as well as opposition benches in the JS. We could not believe our ears



when we heard them! MPs are constitutionally-bound to discuss problems of the country, take proper action, and make laws. But what they are doing in the parliament is dangerous and outrageous. Many parents switch off the television during parliamentary sessions in the fear that their children may get spoiled. Therefore, we urge all the MPs not to utter a single indecent word in parliament.

Sultana Khatun
Govt. Teachers' Training College
Dhaka

Hold dialogue on CTG

Our country is heading towards an uncertain future because of CTG issue. The ruling party is stubborn in its decision not to restore CTG and BNP is continuing movement demanding restoration of CTG. Are we waiting for another 1/11? There is no alternative to dialogue between the two main parties on this issue.

Md. Nahid Hosen
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Political interference in local govt. polls

Local government is the foundation of democracy. The inhabitants of an area are supposed to elect their representative to solve the local problems. We are observing with much concern that political parties are interfering in the city corporation election in Gazipur. The same thing happened in all the city corporation elections violating electoral code of conduct. We saw the ministers, MPs, and other senior leaders campaigning for the candidates, giving instructions and even supplying them with logistic supports. If this trend continues, democracy will exist only in the speech of politicians.

Badsha Solaiman
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Comments on news report, "It's not my article," published on June 30, 2013

Fazlul Bari

If Khaleda Zia did not write the article in The Washington Times, then who wrote it? If she is honest, she should tell us who wrote it for her? Otherwise, no one will believe her. Perhaps it was Moudud Ahmed or Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury, who had written the article for her. If so, one of them should come forward to save her from embarrassment.

Sheikh Monirul Islam, Opee

Khaleda Zia can not do this sort of negative activities in the foreign media, while we all have reason to believe that Sheikh Hasina is quite capable of doing such activities. Her interview with BBC regarding reasons for entering politics is just one example.

Nds

Such belated denial appears strange to me. One can recall that after publication of the article, AL supporters raised a hue and cry against the opposition leader. On the other hand, BNP leaders publicly took a strong stand in defending the article but never denied that the very article was written by their leader.

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"Youths should take leadership" (June 30, 2013)

Wind

Nobel laureate Prof. Yunus has been continuously dishonoured by the AL. The country needs a new ruling system where all can express their opinion without any fear or threat.

Mofi

"Charities and benefits are important...people are in distress...get out of poverty." Agreed wholeheartedly. I think it's the statement of the day. In Europe and USA charities and doling out payouts are usually followed by sustainable actions normally performed by their able governments.