

New features to Indio-Bangla ties

Headway yet to be made on
Teesta and LBA

ONE can clearly see a fresh momentum gathering on refurbishing Delhi-Dhaka ties with new elements. This is a welcome development boding well for the future of both countries. The third Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) meeting between Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Bangladesh Foreign Minister AH Mahmud Ali held in New Delhi while flagging off some new areas of cooperation fell short of signaling any definitive headway being made on Teesta water sharing and ratification of Land Boundary Agreement along with the agreed protocols by India. Beyond noting that these are critical issues for Bangladesh, we have to say that it has largely been repeating the known, namely that a consensus building process is on with other parties and the neighbouring state government. Of course, we realize that in the Indian federal structure there is no short-circuiting such decision-making.

Yet, considering that the issues under the purview of central subjects have been on the table for an inordinately long time and they cast an avoidable shadow on realizing the full potential of an equitable vigorous relationship, our attention is riveted on to the following cogent factor: The new BJP government in India has come with a massive parliamentary majority. By virtue of this, Modi government should be able to it to see through the resolution of LBA issue in the first place followed by effective persuasion with West Bengal government on the Teesta sharing question.

Hazaribagh relocation

Further delay totally unacceptable

THE saga of relocating polluting tanneries from the heart of Dhaka has, apparently, hit another snag. What has been revealed in a survey conducted by an environment watchdog body, a mere 19 out of a total 155 factories have relocated to the new industrial park in Savar. Time is of the essence, as the threat of a clampdown on import of leather goods from Bangladesh by the European Union looms after 2014. It won't accept goods produced at the cost of environment.

With nearly 90 per cent of factories yet to set up shop in the designated industrial park, precisely what is to become of the industry beyond 2014 is hard to imagine. The relocation timeframe is already in its second extension period. Needless to say, this paper has repeatedly highlighted the dangers posed by toxic discharge of chemicals into the waterways around Hazaribagh and the public health disaster caused thereby. That authorities have done their part in allocating land and the setting up of a central effluent treatment plant (CETP) is commendable. However, unless all the factories are re-established in the industrial zone where the CETP is located, the plant cannot start operation.

Given the gravity of the situation, i.e. risking an export segment worth more than US\$1 billion per annum and saving Dhaka residents from ill effects of toxic material discharge entering the food chain and water supply, it is up to the government to impress upon the industry to relocate

Facebook as we know

MUAZ JALIL

THE recent suicide committed by two siblings in Uttara has deeply saddened and shocked the nation; our deepest sorrows are with the single mother. Keeping aside the societal and domestic unhappiness caused by the separation of the parents, another aspect that might be missed is the part played by Facebook in this tragedy. It seems the father, who currently resides in China with his second wife and their children, often posted pictures of vacations he was making with his new family. The mental torture and feeling of abandonment, jealousy and probably even misplaced remorse felt by these teenagers cannot be comprehended. Did Facebook amplify their grief which they could not manage? What started off as a medium for communication and connectivity has metamorphosed in to something larger than life!

Don't we fill the tickle of 'checking in' when we visit the new restaurant in town, or are invited to Westin? When we are travelling don't we take a scenic picture or a 'selfie' and think it will look good in Facebook. Posting a status or using high-minded quotation of Oscar Wilde and seeing many likes don't we feel joy; at the same time aren't we depressed when our 'shared' 9gag or Buzzfeed video only garners 4 likes! Don't get me wrong reader it is not the sharing that is the issue but when we start doing things predominantly so that we can share it in Facebook that thing become problematic. Don't be disingenuous reader and try to convince yourself that you are among the select few who haven't been infected with this vanity engine. If this was limited to individual vanity, nobody needs to bother but because it affects others and has real life consequences especially for underage that we need to be wary of it; recently news came out that Steve Jobs himself significantly limited how much technology his kids used at home.

In Facebook we create a persona where everything is excessive, either we are leading the perfect life, or wallowing in self-pity; some are true patriots, others religious luminaries and some Socrates reincarnate. Since we are cognitive misers and self-centred, we make the faulty calculation subconsciously that others are being truthful in Facebook while we are being disingenuous. The result is other's vanity makes us less content and we try to overcorrect it by either reacting with our own overblown vanity or sliding deeper into depression. On top of that our telecom operators have now made Facebook browsing free, which is sure to garner loyalty and increase internet usage. But one has to ponder the societal implication of having potential 30 million internet users, significant number of who are teenagers, now having access to Facebook before they are adequately capable of coping with its pressure.

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Struggle for self-determination: Scottish lesson

KALEIDOSCOPE



SYED FATTAHUL ALIM

To resolve what the Scots really want, cessation from Britain or continuing with the Union, champions of the cause of independence took a historic decision. They left the matter to be decided by ballot. But making no mistake of the voting public's pulse once the polls result came out, Alex Salmond, first minister of the Scottish regional government and the leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), who spearheaded the independence campaign, did not waste a moment in accepting the people's verdict. He termed the result as the "triumph for the democratic process." And accepting responsibility for the independence bid's defeat, he said, "no campaign is ever perfect, and whatever mistakes are mine and my own." How rare is such humility and respect for polls result in our part of the world!

It was true to the tradition of democracy from the leader of a great people. And as he could not to prove his cause through ballot, Alex Salmond did what he was expected to do: he stood down as party leader and as first minister of the regional government. There was no bad blood between him and his opponent, leader of the pro-UK Better Together campaign, Alistair Darling.

But why did the majority Scots turned away from the independence call, which appeared to be gaining grounds in the final weeks of the Yes-campaign? Was it the argument that the Scottish people would be better served, if they remain part of a bigger political and economic entity that persuaded them to say no against independence? Evidently, it was the cold and calculating section of the Scottish population who turned the tide. And it was also nothing very surprising, because the pro-Independence politicians were not very articulate about what additional benefits in the economic, strategic or other terms, the Scottish people would gain from the secession other than the uncertainties of an independent nationhood. But how could such pragmatic considerations influence No-voters, but were lost on the Yes-voters? Were then the Yes-voters, who comprised nearly half (45%) of the electorate, driven purely by a pipe dream? Or were there other underlying reasons that worked behind a sense of deprivation among a section of the Scottish population that got disillusioned about London's continued suzerainty over the fate of Scotland? If the voting pattern is any guide, then one would see how the poor and the working class voters of Glasgow, Dundee and North Lancashire voted for the pro-independence campaign. Also, an opinion poll conducted by The Daily Telegraph before the referendum showed that 58 per cent of the female voters supported the Union, while 53 per cent of the male voters backed independence. Perhaps, pragmatic Scottish women made a major contribution towards tilting the scales in Union's favour.

The referendum made it clear that the Scots belonging to the working class were not happy with the status quo and thought that independence might bring the desired economic change in their lives. This is truly a paradoxical situation for Scotland where the rich and the middle class people are voting in greater number to keep the Union

intact, while the opposite is happening in the case of the working class people, who are generally not swayed by bourgeois nationalistic slogans that are often apt to shield deeper issues of social discrimination and economic disparity attributable to exploitation of the poor by the rich. That also signifies that Scotland's working class is not finding a common cause with their brethren in England or of Wales or of the Northern Ireland. That is certainly not a piece of good news for the British Left. Not surprisingly, former British premier Gordon Brown, who is a Scot and a Labour MP, perspired a lot in his last-ditch effort to convince his fellow Scots to save the Union by voting No and promised more powers to Holyrood, the seat of Scottish parliament in the capital Edinburgh, if they did. Small wonder shoulder to shoulder with his political rival and incumbent Tory prime minister David Cameron, he even set a timeline to work on the devolution. How far the Westminster will afford to deliver on the big promises remains to be seen and even if it finally does, that would still be no guarantee that it will placate the Scots' passion for independence once and for all. But what is more important than that to the British Left, and also no less to Labour is to seek to address the deeper causes of the discontent that has alienated the poorer Scots from London. This is an issue the Labour party, which hopes to return to Westminster in May 2015's general election, can ill-afford to take lightly.



Scottish experience may send a depressing signal to the peoples struggling for self-determination elsewhere in the world. That brings one to the most fundamental question of the readiness and ability of the vanguards of those freedom movements to know the minds of the people, whose perceived cause they are fighting for. Independence-seeking Scottish leaders did it according to their own tradition, in a democratic way. But the British government in London was no less democratic and tolerant towards Scottish people's aspiration for independence. That has become manifest from London's mature handling of the situation in that no roadblock was ever created on the path to the referendum from the campaign's beginning to the end. But in absence of a deep-rooted democratic tradition and the political culture of tolerance in a society, there is the danger that any struggle for one's rights including self-determination may turn violent and bloody. Therefore, the prospect of a peaceful transition like it happened in the case of Scotland depends a lot on the leadership in the forefront of such struggles for self-determination in those countries.

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What water's worth

ASIT K. BISWAS and AHMET C. BOZER

In the early nineteenth century, Lord Byron wrote in *Don Juan* that "Till taught by pain, men really know not what good water's worth." Nearly 200 years later, humanity still does not seem to understand water's value, exemplified in decades of poor water management and governance practically everywhere. But the impending water crisis is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore – especially for those who are already feeling its effects.

To be sure, some improvements in water management have been made in recent years. But they have come incrementally, at far too slow a pace to address the problem effectively.

To help kick-start progress, major multinational companies like Nestlé, Coca-Cola, SABMiller, and Unilever – which have long emphasized to their investors the challenge that water scarcity poses for their businesses, not to mention the communities in which they operate – are working to improve water availability, quality, and sustainability. Their success will require an innovative strategy that upends entrenched assumptions about – and approaches to – water-related problems.

For example, the prevailing view that the world needs good water management, though accurate, is too narrow. Water management should not be regarded as an end in itself – a single-variant solution for a single-variant problem – but as a means to several ends, including environmental conservation and social and economic development.

Viewed in this broader context, many of the paradigms, practices, and processes that are currently being used to manage communities' water resources must change. Given that competition for water resources cannot be disengaged from competition for, say, food and energy, it cannot be addressed independently. Multivariate problems demand multivariate solutions.

Complicating matters further, these problems' backdrop is likely to change considerably over the next few decades, owing to demographic shifts, population growth, urbanization, migration within and among countries, globalization, trade liberalization, and rapid expansion of middle classes in the developing world. These shifts will accompany rapid industrialization and advances in science and technology (especially information and communications technology), and will transform dietary habits and consumption patterns.

As a result, water-consumption patterns will change considerably, including indirectly, through shifts in agri-

The water sector will have to react to developments in the energy and other sectors, over which, despite close ties, it has very limited control. Coordinating the various sectors' policies effectively will be difficult, to say the least.

culture, energy, and land use. Indeed, these linkages are already evident in many parts of the world. For example, in many Asian countries – including India, China, and Pakistan – groundwater levels are declining at an alarming rate, owing to over-extraction and energy subsidies.

For India, the problem began in the 1970s, when major donors encouraged the government to provide farmers with free electricity for irrigation. The subsidies were manageable at first, and achieved their goal of boosting food production in states like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.

But the policy removed the incentive for farmers to limit the amount of water they pumped. They had to invest only in installing the actual pumps – and they did so willingly, resulting in a total of 23 million water pumps today.

This profligacy has taken a serious toll on groundwater levels, forcing the tube-wells from which the water is pumped to be installed ever more deeply. According to the Third World Center for Water Management, the amount of electricity required to pump water in India has doubled – and, in some cases, even tripled – in the last decade alone, as tube-wells have moved from 10-15 meters (32-50 feet) to 200-400 meters (650-1300 feet) deep. The increasing depth requires 3-4 times more horsepower for each pump.

Under these conditions, state water ministries have few options for making groundwater irrigation

sustainable. With the relentless increase in electricity subsidies, which are squeezing the energy sector, it is difficult to devise effective policies to stem over-pumping.

The water sector will have to react to developments in the energy and other sectors, over which, despite close ties, it has very limited control. Coordinating the various sectors' policies effectively will be difficult, to say the least.

It may sound daunting, but the reality is that these challenges are surmountable – if, that is, our leaders commit to tackling them. We already have the needed technology, know-how, experience, and even financing. With strong political will, sustained pressure from an informed public, and a "can do" attitude from water professionals and institutions pursuing intersectoral cooperation, the world's water-management problems can be addressed effectively.

But we must act now. Time – and water – is running out.

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LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

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People won't accept

16th amendment

Like January 5, September 17 could be called a black day because on that day the parliament unanimously passed the 16th amendment bill, empowering itself to remove Supreme Court judges for misbehaviour, or incapacity, rejecting all calls for soliciting public opinion and bringing some changes in the bill.

We watched it happening with shock and disbelief. How could the bill be passed by members of the parliament who are not elected by the people? The people of this land liberated the country but they do not count anymore, they are nobody.

We protest this step vehemently. This will ruin the independent judiciary and democracy. People will not accept the 16th amendment of the constitution, so the government must abolish it.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Disappointing West Indies tour

When Shakib Al Hasan was banned for six months in July, I felt Bangladesh would badly miss a player of his calibre in the West Indies. However, judging from their performance, it seems unlikely that Shakib's presence would have made a difference barring the first ODI, where Bangladesh lacked a 5th bowler after getting the opposition down at 34 for 5. A player can rarely make a difference if he is surrounded by irresponsible team mates.



We all know what the problems are, and yet the BCB is more inclined on disciplining Shakib, instead of focusing on improving the domestic cricket structure and the team selection policy. One cannot expect all players to be adept at all formats. However, in Bangladesh, a few good knocks at any format guarantees a player a place in the team for a long time, while one failure for a newcomer might end his career altogether. It is high time that players like Nasir Hossain, whose approach has been very casual throughout the tour, was dropped and given time to settle in the domestic cricket, and players like Naeem Islam got a much deserved opportunity.

Tauhidul Islam
A level candidate
Uttara, Dhaka

A triumph of democratic process

The United Kingdom has shown a pragmatic way to uphold democratic values by peacefully running the historic referendum in Scotland. The majority Scots voted 'No' against the independence move thereby preventing a rupture of the 307-year Union. This is a triumph of democratic process. The Scottish referendum is a lesson for countries that are struggling to attain democracy around the globe.

Let the institution of democracy flourish everywhere including Bangladesh.

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*Comments on commentary,
"No head above King," published
on September 19, 2014*

A.H. Dewan

An outstanding commentary unmasking the dictatorial attitude of the government in the garb of democracy.

Fareed Wakil

An absolutely brilliant dissection of the current state of democracy in Bangladesh, which is far more like a medieval durbar. This parliament could have redeemed itself with vigorous debates and dissent, but instead has become an absolute disgrace to Bangladesh, to its people, and to the ideals of the Independence War!

M. Akram Khan

I salute, with deep admiration, the erudition, prescience, patriotism and above all, the courage of the writer.

Ashis Roy

Autocracy will prevail in the name of democracy. It is a good piece of writing but the irony is that our political leaders do not read and if they read, do not take any lesson.

*"JS regains power to impeach
judges" (September 18, 2014)*

Kabdullah

It's really not the JS, but the PM who has gained the power to impeach judges.