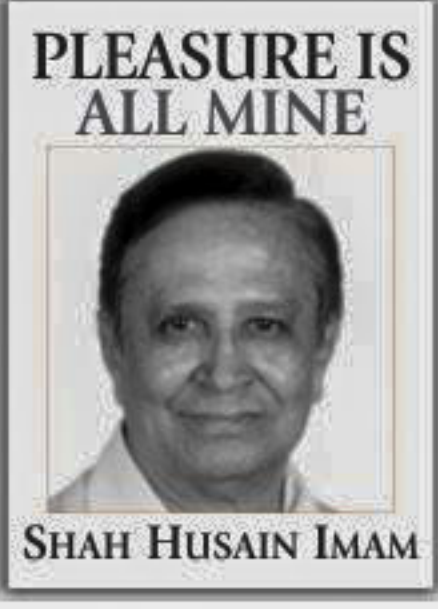


Media monitoring centre or self-regulation?

In an overarching sense, the matter by its very nature requires consultation with stakeholders, media representatives and experts before a set of best practice methods can be evolved in employing the media as a partner of democracy and protector of public weal.



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE

INFORMATION Minister Hasanul Haq Inu has made a thought-provoking announcement in the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday. He said, a "media monitoring centre" was being set up to keep an eye on materials emanating from different media. It's a threadbare statement falling short of outlining the ToR, structure and modus operandi of the proposed centre. We are told, a committee in the information ministry, has been working at it for months. It has collected data from certain countries as to how they have kept tabs on the media. One hopes the list had included some liberal countries with a reputation for free, critical and constructive media in a changing media landscape. You cannot, however, but sit up and take note of a jolting choice of a country to set the process afoot. Last June, a team led by the information minister had visited Sri Lanka to 'gather experience' from that country, about monitoring media and setting up a 'data bank'. What has Sri Lanka to offer except its

tarred legacy of controlling the media under a strict leash? Even editors were killed and some lived under constant threat to life, particularly during the Tamil insurrection, put down by an iron-fisted Rajapaksa and its immediate aftermath. The idea of 'watch-dogging the media' can be termed as a knee-jerk reaction although months have been devoted to the agenda. The points at issue are: Print and electronic media are institutions while the bloggers are individuals operating in the free cyber space. On the pretext of curbing blogs perceived to be irresponsible, the monitoring provision is being extended over to the institutional and formalised media. This smacks of shrinking media space at best in an era of expanding communication and at worst, discouraging dissent where it may be a critique for the better. All this in spite of the fact that laws are in existence, some of them stringent and draconian against free media, long overdue for reform. In addition, there are oversight bodies like the Press Council to make media accountable to the law of the land. But drawing a line between collective media and individualised media does not mean that curbs on social media do not impact negatively on media freedom as a whole. It cannot be lost on



anybody that just as the new media has the potential of dividing society it has also the power to keep it connected, informed, progressive, tolerant, dynamic and mutually serving. In an overarching sense, the matter by its very nature requires consultation with stakeholders, media representatives and experts before a set of best practice methods can be evolved in employing the media as a partner of democracy

and protector of public weal. Now to the virtues of self-regulation within the media vis-à-vis imposed regulation by the state. We go back to July 2011 when, following a series of revelations about 'phone hacking' and other illegal practices attributed to Britain's largest circulation newspaper The News of the World, all political parties agreed to establish an inquiry into the "culture practices and ethics of

the press". The task was carried out by a senior judge Sir Brian Leveson who published a report in 2012. The Leveson report proposed a system envisaged to ensure that a self-regulator (set up by the press) is independent and effective, and where it contains "double lock" safeguards against government or political interference. The Press Complaints Commission exists to implement the benefits of self-regulation which are: Quick and free service, accessible to all, protecting the vulnerable, and maintaining a free, responsible press. After long and protracted debate, the Britons have settled for self-regulation and that too, a non-statutory one. Thus "the press is given significant and special rights in this country ... With these rights, however, come responsibilities to the public interest: to respect the truth, to obey the law and to uphold the rights and liberties of individuals. In short, to honour the very principles proclaimed and articulated by the industry itself (and to a large degree reflected in the Editors' Code of Practice)". - Sir Brian Leveson

The writer is a regular contributor of The Daily Star.

How you can prevent the next gas explosion

MUINUL AHSAN

RECENTLY several gas explosion related accidents have occurred in houses in Dhaka under the Titas Transmission and Distribution Company franchise area. Apart from the negligence of Titas' authorities, it is apparent that the ignorance of the household inhabitants was also responsible for these accidents. In order to prevent gas explosions, it is important to be informed about the nature of these explosions and how to avoid them.

Natural gas is odourless and is generally not dangerous in an open atmosphere, as it will only burn there. However, if natural gas is allowed to accumulate in a closed house or room in the ratio of gas to air at 6:1, it forms the explosive mixture, which can explode out of a small spark from an electric switch or even a matchstick.

If gas leakage occurs in an open space, it poses no danger. It will only burn at the leakage point. If windows of a kitchen are open, or if there is proper exhaust in the room, it will ensure that the gas escapes and the formation of an explosive mixture is avoided. Thus, it's important to make sure that the doors and windows of the kitchen are not tightly closed, and so the windows should be left slightly open, thereby ensuring that gas is allowed to diffuse into the air in case of gas leakage.

Another preventive measure could be to not immediately switch on the lights or fans of your house once you come back home after a long day. The main door should be left open for a few minutes before turning on the light or fan. In case of a gas leakage, this would ensure that the explosive mixture is diluted, thereby preventing a gas explosion.

While gas is odourless, gas leakage can be detected at an early stage from its smell, provided the gas companies use odourants. However, unfortunately gas companies nowadays tend not to use odourants in gas, either due to sheer neglect of their duties or other



A refrigerator shop destroyed by Tuesday night's gas cylinder blasts at Gouripur Bazar in Daudkandi upazila under Comilla. PHOTO: STAR

reasons. It would appear that workers of the said companies need to exert a little more effort to lift the drum of odourants to a higher platform, thereby making them unwilling to do this task with sincerity. Moreover, the supervisory staff and engineers also seem to have a negligent attitude as they do not ensure the use of odourants in the gas supply system. This human error leading from negligence results in the loss of lives and properties from gas acci-

dents, as people are not aware of a gas leakage until it's too late. If gas leakage is detected, it's important to close the valves of the gas burners as well the valve near the gas regulator, which will be outside your apartment but within your building complex. You should then immediately contact the control room of the gas company. If the doors and windows of your house are not open, make sure to open them immediately, so that the gas

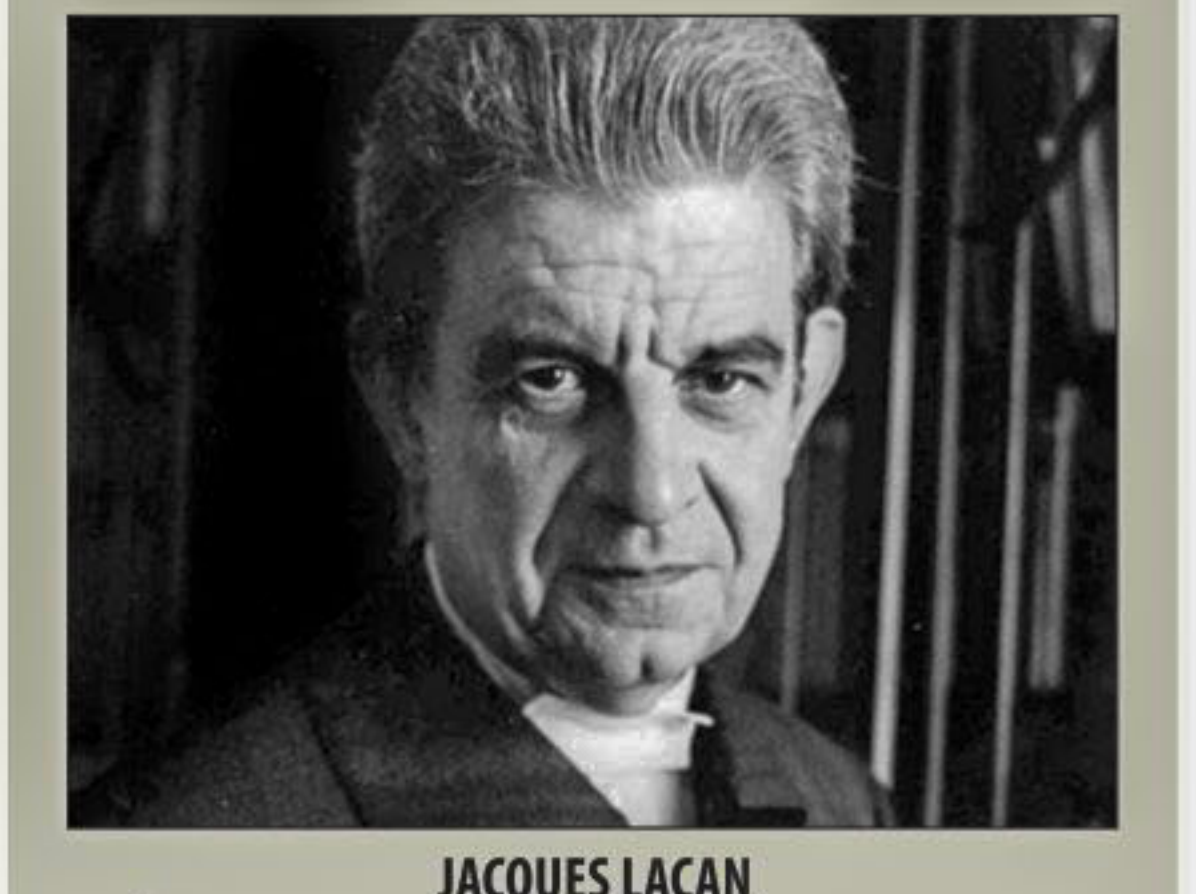
formed has a way to escape. Most importantly, do not panic! It's not like danger exists only with LPGs; risks are similar with natural gas as well. In a closed atmosphere, the explosive mixture of natural gas will be formed at almost the same percentage. As with LPGs, it's easier to ensure to prevent the formation of explosive mixtures in the case of natural gas. However, there is a heightened risk with LPGs. LPG is bottled under high

pressure and may explode if proper thickness of the steel of the container is not ensured. While purchasing a container of liquefied gas, please check if it has been manufactured by an authorised company, who are issued certificates ensuring the quality of steel while also assuring users that it will be able to withstand the high pressure of LPG.

The writer is an Energy Specialist.

While gas is odourless, gas leakage can be detected at an early stage from its smell, provided the gas companies use odourants. However, unfortunately gas companies nowadays tend not to use odourants in gas, either due to sheer neglect of their duties or other reasons.

QUOTABLE Quote



JACQUES LACAN
What does it matter how many lovers you have if none of them gives you the universe?

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Location
 - 6 Soaking spot
 - 10 Boston airport
 - 11 Bitter
 - 13 Take as one's own
 - 14 Tent anchor
 - 15 Buddhism branch
 - 16 Color
 - 18 Rent out
 - 19 To the max
 - 22 Battleship letters
 - 23 Unfocused sight
 - 24 Talk nonsense
 - 27 Bath bars
 - 28 Give for a time
 - 29 "Alice spinoff"
 - 30 Shakespeare comedy
 - 35 Soaking spot
 - 36 Total
 - 37 Commotion
 - 38 Ham it up
 - 40 Alma
 - 42 Passover meal
 - 43 Be real
 - 44 Colors
- 45 Cars' scars
- DOWN
- 1 City square
 - 2 Mine finds
 - 3 Extreme pain
 - 4 Beanie or beret
 - 5 Cush
 - 6 Swiss city
 - 7 Play division
 - 8 Refrain bit
 - 9 Increases
 - 12 Hinders
 - 17 Good times
 - 20 Surpass
 - 21 Downloadable read
 - 24 Settling items
 - 25 Began again
 - 26 Whatever person
 - 27 Lost weight
 - 29 Winter bug
 - 31 Manual readers
 - 32 Kind of kitchen
 - 33 That is: Latin
 - 34 Civil wrongs
 - 39 Golfer's peg
 - 41 Hatchet's cousin

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | H | A | D | L | I | A | R | | |
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| R | A | N | O | T | T | E | R | S | E |
| E | N | D | Z | O | N | E | A | I | L |
| P | I | E | T | U | R | K | I | S | H |
| T | A | L | K | E | D | A | N | T | I |
| E | D | G | A | R | | | | | |
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| N | E | P | A | L | A | M | E | N | S |
| D | E | N | S | M | A | S | T | | |

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