

Cairn Oil to invest in Bangladesh

Cairn Energy, the Edinburgh-based oil explorer which discovered oil in India's state of Rajasthan, has now decided to invest £57 mn on further exploration and development drilling in Bangladesh's offshore gas fields.

A senior Bangladesh government official, confirming Cairn's plans, said preparations were underway for drilling to start in November. It is understood that Cairn has completed two-dimensional seismic surveys at Magnama in the Bay of Bengal, around 64 km south of the port city of Chittagong.

The possible gas reserve at the offshore field might be 3.5 trillion cu ft (tcf), according to local energy officials. Cairn will drill two wells in Magnama and later one in offshore Hatiya, which has a possible 1.8 tcf gas reserve. Seismic surveys have been completed at Hatiya.

Cairn Energy is currently operating Bangladesh's only offshore gas field at Sangu. Another possible gas field has been identified at Char Jabbarin in Noakhali district with an estimated 2.8 tcf of gas reserves. Cairn and its joint venture partner, US oil services giant Halliburton, have so far invested nearly \$670 mn in Bangladesh. The country has an estimated 13.54 tcf of proven and recoverable gas reserves.



In 1963, the US wanted India to have the bomb

One year before Beijing carried out its first nuclear test in 1964, the US State Department suggested 'giving' India the nuclear bomb as a way of outsmarting the Chinese communists.

The State Department proposal is cited in a newly released book, *America and the Islamic Bomb*, by Washington DC-based authors David Armstrong and Joe Trento, who write that the US authorities of the time were desperate to find a friendly country that would give the communists a black eye.

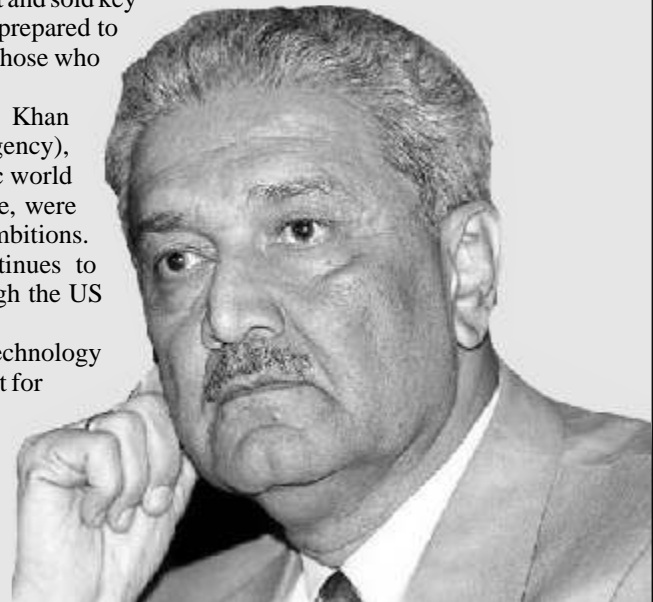
The book also contains many other details about the subsequent nuclear arms race in South Asia, including a memorandum from President Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who said Washington should set aside non-proliferation considerations when it came to Pakistan in order to secure Islamabad's help against Soviet forces occupying Afghanistan.

Brzezinski's memo meant that Washington looked the other way as Islamabad's leading nuclear expert, Bhopal-born Dr Abdul Qadir Khan, stole nuclear technology from Holland and used it to build Pakistan's own nuclear bomb.

Once Pakistan had the bomb Khan decided to enrich himself by selling nuclear secrets to such countries as North Korea, Libya and Iran. He was aided by greedy middlemen such as Sri Lankan born B.S. Tahir — who has family in India — and a former Indian national, one Abdus Salam, who bought and sold key nuclear components to whichever country or individual was prepared to pay the price. There were other middlemen as well, but even those who were convicted spent very little time behind bars.

The speculation among nuclear watchers is that the Khan network was infiltrated by the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), which used it to monitor nuclear research work in the Islamic world and North Korea. Both North Korea and Libya, for example, were wannabe nuclear powers and have since renounced their ambitions. Iran, another country served by the Khan network, continues to maintain it was never interested in nuclear weapons, although the US begs to differ.

Those middlemen who sold them the supersensitive technology needed for their programmes have never been made to account for their activities. One of them has been granted US citizenship and lives luxuriously in Florida. Another roams freely in Europe and returns from time to time to his luxury home in the south of France. It seems their identities and lifestyles are being protected by 'higher' authorities.



'Human Rights in POK Being Trampled upon'

The people of Pakistan-occupied Gilgit and Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) have been deprived of their fundamental rights and are being treated like herds of goat and sheep, a leading Kashmiri activist has told a meeting of NGOs in Geneva.

Sardar Shaukat Ali Kashmiri, Chairman of the United Kashmir People's National Party, explained that the situation in POK and Gilgit Baltistan 'is worse than in any other part of the world. People in these areas have been deprived of modern health and education infrastructure. Job opportunities are very limited, and there are no alternative economic opportunities.



In 'Azad Kashmir', under the Act of 1974, 'No person or political party can take part in activities prejudicial or detrimental to the ideology of state accession to Pakistan'. There is no freedom of assembly or of expression. Fundamental freedoms have been marginalized and the democratic process at the grassroots level is badly damaged. Local elections have not been held after 1988. The entire state mechanism is being operated by Islamabad with officers who have no sympathy with the local people in Gilgit Baltistan, who are being treated like herds of goats and sheep.

'Pakistan is collecting huge sums of revenue in terms of using the famous Silk Route for trade with China, but there are no civil courts and basic facilities for the people. Pakistan is trying to shift Pushto-speaking people and Punjabis to settle there in order to reduce the gravity and demand of fundamental freedoms and constitutional, democratic, cultural rights, like people in the modern world.'

North Korea's N-expertise on sale

North Korea may have agreed to give up its nuclear ambitions, but that has clearly not prevented it from exporting know-how to other countries.

According to 'independent experts' cited by the *Washington Post*, a Syrian site bombed in September by the Israel Air Force indicates a building 'similar' to a North Korean reactor capable of producing material for a nuclear bomb.

If accurate, the newspaper report ends weeks of speculation about why the Israelis took such drastic action in their own volatile backyard. Despite a news blackout about the Israeli operation there was speculation at the time about targeting a North Korean-supplied reactor, as well as suggestions that the Israelis had intercepted an arms shipment from Iran to the Lebanon border with Israel via Syria.

This is the second time the Israelis have attacked a reactor facility in the region. The first time was more than 20 years ago when the Israelis bombed Iraq's Osirak reactor. As with Osirak, there is concern about the health hazards and possible nuclear fallout from the bombed facility in Syria.

Meanwhile, it transpires that what Syria and North Korea have in common — apart from a shared distaste for Israel — are strong links with Pakistan's Bhutto family.

It was Benazir Bhutto who allegedly carried the designs of a nuclear bomb to Pyongyang in exchange for North Korea's help with building missiles. And it was Benazir's brother Murtaza who was given shelter in Damascus during the dictatorship of Pakistani president General Zia-ul Haq. Murtaza later returned home to Pakistan where he was killed in suspicious circumstances.



Indian erotica exhibition in London

The sentiment of erotic love in ancient Indian aesthetics is being showcased at a London gallery to coincide with the 10th Asian Art fair in the British capital.

The 'Shringar' exhibition at the Francesca Galloway gallery includes a number of paintings and ivories showing passionate couples engaged in lovemaking. Also on view are a small collection of Company School paintings, several Imperial Mughal works on paper and ivory, and a fabulous Deccani professional scene.

The term 'Shringar' is used to describe the daily appearance of the god Srinathji at his shrine in Nathdwara in Rajasthan. It is also used to describe the outfit and ornaments worn by the image of Srinathji during his daily appearances at normal ritual and for special festivals. Several paintings and painted textiles on exhibition illustrate this theme.

Nathdwara north of Udaipur is one of the great pilgrim centres of India and is particularly important for the Pushtimargis or Vallabhacharis, adherents of a particular sect who worship Krishna in this form. The sect was founded by Vallabhacharya (1479-1531) who is regarded as one of the five principal acharyas or teachers of Hindu religious philosophy.