

TAPI, IPI PROJECTS SEEN VITAL FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION, PROSPERITY

Islamabad : Two mega energy projects – Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) and Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipelines can serve as highways to regional integration and prosperity for the region and the world as well, a former envoy said in his analysis on Friday.

“Flow of energy from one region to the other will cement the bonds of friendship and economic cooperation in the most promising region of the planet”, B. A. Malik a former ambassador of Pakistan and an analyst of macro-economy and geo-political developments said in a statement.

He said regional integration is a foundation stone of the foreign policy as envisioned in Pakistan Court’s manifesto of 2008, which can be boosted by the TAPI and IPI gas delivery lines.

Malik was of the view that it was disheartening to note that the region had lagged far behind other regions of the world in the field of regional cooperation.

“The South Asian region is left with no choice but to join hands and team up immediately for shared peace and development”, he remarked.

The former ambassador said that present century could become Asian century, only if South Asia wakes up and takes its destiny in its own hands.

He further said that the TAPI and IPI gas transmission lines under consideration are super highways to regional integration, peace and prosperity.

He was of the opinion that the two mega-projects however face hurdles, which should be overcome with joint efforts.

He was of the view that TAPI is handicapped by certain difficulties including law and order situation in war-torn Afghanistan although major world powers are not opposed to this international flow of energy.

He maintained that Pakistan’s energy sector would face acute shortages leading to fatal pressure on the war-affected economy of Pakistan. Additionally chances of regional integration of the economies of South Asia and Central Asia will become bleak.

“More poverty in this region will not mean a good news for Washington as well”, he said.

Malik said that IPI and TAPI are two integral components of a win-win strategy for all stakeholders including the United States of America.

Pakistan, he said can serve as bridge between Washington and Tehran as Islamabad successfully bridged differences between Washington and Peking in 1970.

“Pakistan and US need each other because the two are allies against the long war on terrorist threat to democracy. It is imperative, therefore, that the policy makers in the corridors of power in Washington maintain friendship with Islamabad and vice versa”, he added.

The former Pakistani envoy said that the IPI and TAPI would also bring India and Pakistan together on one page and eliminate the threat of a nuclear winter which will remain a distinct possibility if the two nuclear armed nations do not step back from the disastrous precipice.

He added that the third tripartite Pak-Afghan-Iran summit has raised new hopes of emergence of regional cooperation.

“As a complementary process Pakistan and India have signed three trade agreements recently giving fresh impetus to stalled peace process in South Asia”.

These positive developments, he said have laid a groundwork for materialisation of TAPI and IPI projects.

Under these hopeful circumstances the United States can be convinced to agree that TAPI and IPI initiatives will serve national interests of all stakeholders who are interested in peace and prosperity of mankind.

Pakistan’s acute energy needs cannot be left at the mercy of outsiders whose global interests may not converge with our own. This is a moment, which has to be seized come what may, he remarked.

Pakistan, he said has been a trusted ally of the United States for over six decades during the cold war as well as the war on terror.

“Now is the time to test the sincerity and friendship of our war time allies. The ball lies in the US court”, he remarked.

He urged the United States to wash the ugly slur of imperialism from it’s face by supporting traditional friends including Pakistan and Iran instead of erecting hurdles in the way of human progress.

“It is the best opportunity for America to gain high moral grounds”, he concluded. - APP