

NEIGHBOR
Mounting Pressure

June 2012

SOUTHASIA

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The Regional Business & Economic Review

INSIDE:

PAKISTAN

The Teflon Prime Minister

INDIA

Race in Space

AFGHANISTAN

Any Which Way You Can

NEPAL

A Crumbling Democracy

Taking Charge **'Aunty'** Style

Hillary Clinton arrived in South Asia with a 'Things to Do' list and immediately took charge, advancing her unsolicited opinions and shooting out orders, which served to further reinforce her image as South Asia's 'Aunty'.



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I am Pakistan

I am not just terrorism, poverty and corruption. I am **Abdus Sattar Edhi's** philanthropy. I am **Ansar Burney's** compassion. I have the courage of **Rashid Minhas**. I possess the beauty of **Sadequain's** calligraphy. I am **Arfa Karim's** brilliance. I am **Pervez Masih's** sacrifice. I am **Shahid Afridi's** exuberance. I am **Jahangir Khan's** consistency. I am the **1992 Cricket World Cup**. I am **Sharmeen Obaid's** Oscar. I am **Cowasjee's** pen. I am **Dr. Abdus Salam's** Nobel Prize. I am **Gulgee's** masterstrokes. I am **Noor Jehan and Mehdi Hasan's** voice. I am **Ayub Ommaya's** invention. I am **Adeeb Rizvi's** humanitarianism.

I am home to the ancient civilizations of **Indus Valley, Moenjodaro, Taxila and Harappa**. **Himalayas** and the **Hindu Kush** are a part of me. The world's 2nd highest mountain peak, **K2**, is my strength. I am **Shandur**, the highest Polo ground in the world. I am **Gwadar**, one of the world's largest deep sea ports. **Karakoram Highway**, the **8th wonder of the world**, resides within me. I have **Khewra** mines, the world's second largest and oldest salt mine. I am **Shah Faisal Mosque**, the ninth largest mosque in the world. I am **multi-ethnic** and I speak more than **60 languages**.

I am the **6th largest milk producer** and the **4th largest cotton producer** in the world. I have the **5th largest coal and gold reserves**. I am blessed with the **10th largest workforce** in the world. I have the **27th largest economy**. I have the potential to become the **5th largest telecom market** in the world. I am Asia's **2nd best performing stock exchange**. I am the **9th largest English-speaking nation** in the world. I am the **7th largest standing armed force**.

I am a country of **180 million** people. I am an ever-expanding middle class. A proud **nuclear-armed** state yet peace-loving, I have the **highest number of troops** in UN peacekeeping missions. I am a model of survival. I am **40,000 deaths** for global peace. I am an epitome of **resilience**. I am **hospitality**. I am a sea of **untapped potential**. I am a **goldmine of opportunities**.

**I am the bravest nation in the world.
Yes, I am Pakistan.**



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No Clear Direction

In announcing Pakistan's much-trumpeted fifth federal budget, has the government of Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani moved forward or backwards is a question that many people are asking. In normal circumstances, the budget of a democratic government in its concluding year in power should have been one of triumphs and successes, of thresholds crossed and targets achieved. In the context of Pakistan's budget for 2012-13, however, there are more apologies than achievements. It is a budget encompassing diverse directions in attainment or otherwise of goals and targets in the areas of energy, social services, security and overall growth. Many have described the budget as largely a rudderless document. The government seems to have underestimated expenditures and overestimated revenues, perhaps oblivious of the fact that all this numbers-flaunting would need to undergo a painful revision when reality sets in.

The country's economy has been besieged for the past few years by the power crisis though, as claimed by the Finance Minister, subsidies worth Rs. 1,250 billion have been provided to the power sector over the last five years. The government is said to be undertaking reforms to set the system right, but these are painful reforms and cannot be implemented overnight. Furthermore, for a problem that made its appearance in the middle of the last decade, it is unfortunate that no meaningful planning has been undertaken so far and no concrete steps implemented to catch the bull by its horns. It is not clear what the government's way forward is on this. All that there has been in evidence is a lot of fuzziness while people have been literally kept in the dark.

There is obviously a lot of political expediency riding the taxation proposals in the new budget announced by the Pakistan government, wherein tax rates have been lowered for some and raised for others. The government proposes to raise additional taxes worth Rs.63 billion, including sales tax and federal excise duty of Rs.29 billion though it does realize that this will fuel inflation, much to the detriment of the poor. The business class has been spared new taxation and has also been extended a relief of Rs.2 billion in customs duties on a wide range of items. A lucrative package has also been introduced for investors in the share market through whitening of black money. And despite the fact that new tax measures worth Rs.34 billion form a part of the budget, these are sought to be raised from sectors where the tax machinery is likely to face a tough time collecting revenues. Voters are certainly being wooed in this election year, especially the salaried class and pensioners, and have been given a relief of Rs.24.5 billion in income tax and Rs.5.5 billion in sales tax.

Budgets come and go but it is again evident that the government in power in Pakistan does not seem to be intent on tackling deep-set economic problems. From power sector reforms to raising the tax-to-GDP ratio, there seems to be a lack of application at the government end to find workable solutions. The saga of mismanagement and misgovernance continues while the pressure on the economy increases.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

A New Era of Engagement?

The Indo-Pak relationship is witnessing quite a few strides what with high-level talks, trade agreements and of course the very influential Aman ki Asha economic forum. Such steps are admirable for sworn enemies that are now looking to establish a new era of bilateral engagement. While outstanding military issues remain, movements to usher in peace and agreements to enhance trade can greatly benefit both countries and their people. Trade is perhaps the most critical and im-



portant factor. With Pakistan revising the negative trade list and granting India the MFN status, it will curb mass smuggling of goods and will in fact benefit from its entry into the market. On the other hand, if India were to follow through on its promise of easing visa restrictions and tradable goods preferences, it could provide Pakistan with healthy competition and certainly help in alleviating the country's trade balance. Both countries have much in common and it is only sensible to further economic ties. It is important to also remember that while exchange may not be approved at a governmental level, numerous Indian goods still exist in the Pakistani market through illegal means. It is only

acceptable that the government while still allowing such entry of goods, makes sure to charge for it and benefit from imports.

Mudasir Bashir
Islamabad, Pakistan

2. Much has been said recently about the Indo-Pak relationship. Over the course of a few months, numerous senior level trade talks have been held, with some commendable breakthrough. While both governments seem to be making a concerted effort to enhance bilateral trade, cultural and social exchanges, such as Lifestyle Pakistan, are also contributing an insurmountable amount with regard to investment, trade and cultural exchange. Furthermore, Aman ki Asha remains at its best to further dialogue and bring businessmen and analysts to explore innovative ways to do business. Though such efforts are certainly admirable, they will only go a certain extent before the relationship succumbs to the real problem: a military and strategic impasse. Against the backdrop of cultural and trade exchange lies the Siachen tragedy that remains an outstanding issue that absolutely cannot be ignored. Both sides will eventually have to talk about the issue and even though trade agreements have been signed, when push comes to shove it is debatable how much such advances will occur within a strategic and military framework. It is debatable whether both sides will be able to separate military deadlock with cultural and trade exchanges. Though such strides have not been taken in the past 63 years, there is of course reason to hope.

Kashmala Farooqi
Hyderabad, Pakistan

The Woman Who Promises Change

Your profile on Myanmar's face of democracy, Aung Saan Suu Kyi, was

beautifully presented. Suu Kyi, the Nobel Laureate, has certainly made her mark not only in Myanmar but throughout the world. Under house arrest for 15 years, Suu Kyi is the world's most recent, prominent political prisoner. Her charismatic

leadership and commitment to bring change has swept many off their feet which would explain her rising popularity. However, as mentioned in your article, the NLD has a long way to go before it can occupy the majority of the House of Representatives. While many question how much change she will actually bring about, what is certain though is that just by her presence as a member of the House and the international attention she brings with it, the military leadership and the government will have to carefully consider the steps they take. If anything, Suu Kyi will act as the people's eyes inside the Parliament, influencing policy in their favor and ensuring that Myanmar guarantees equal rights to its citizens. This is an enormous success for the people of Myanmar who have been subjected to a military dictatorship and are now ready to usher in change and a new era of democracy. If she hopes to truly usher in change, Aung San Suu Kyi will have to work within the system and change it from within rather than try to overthrow it. This will take a great deal of skill in political diplomacy and only time will tell if Suu Kyi is really cut out for politics.

James Fulton
Maryland, U.S

A Hidden Paradise

For countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan that have international



reputations for harboring terrorism, establishing tourism can be an enormous feat. What is most depressing is that such countries are also host to beautiful landscapes, mountain ranges, plateaus, unique tribes and rich cultures that could attract record tourists, if given the opportunity. Afghanistan's mountainous terrain is one such example. The Second Ski Challenge drew in numerous foreign ski enthusiasts as well as locals who engaged in healthy competition and challenges. Such events bring funding and a positive image for the host country and Afghanistan needs that now more than ever. It is disappointing that such events cannot take place regularly and it is imperative that the country truly improve and establish its security mechanisms. This will not only benefit the common man but will also draw in tourism which can provide billions to the government. Being



able to show off a country's natural beauty is a gift and one that not all are endowed with. It is unfortunate, that beautiful places in Afghanistan will only be witnessed by a select few. It would certainly be beneficial if the Afghanistan and Pakistan governments made a concerted effort and pledged to improve their security because the impact of tourism could bring both countries much needed revenue.

Huda Taureez
Kabul, Afghanistan

Fighting for Protection

South Asia is home to one-fifth of the world population and in many cases, harbors a vibrant media. However, an independent media also requires protection as numerous South



Asian journalists often find themselves reporting on the front lines of on-going wars, domestic unrest, or taboo or sensitive subjects. It is appalling that a country like Pakistan that boasts of a free and vibrant media is also the most dangerous place for journalists. As mentioned in your article, South Asian countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka also persecute their journalists thus placing a ban on freedom of expression and curbing independent reporting. If the media remains targeted in this way, South Asia is going to usher in an era of the dark ages of which, it will be increasingly difficult to escape. A political environment guaranteeing peoples basic rights and conducive to media independence and freedom of expression should be created and enforced. However, the media itself is also to blame. With independence comes responsibility and the media should take care to report news and not rumors. Despite that, freedom of expression is a basic right of all human beings; one that should not be curbed not persecuted.

Mubashir Haider
New Delhi, India

Return of the King

The Nepalese Constitution has been in a deadlock though recent ef-

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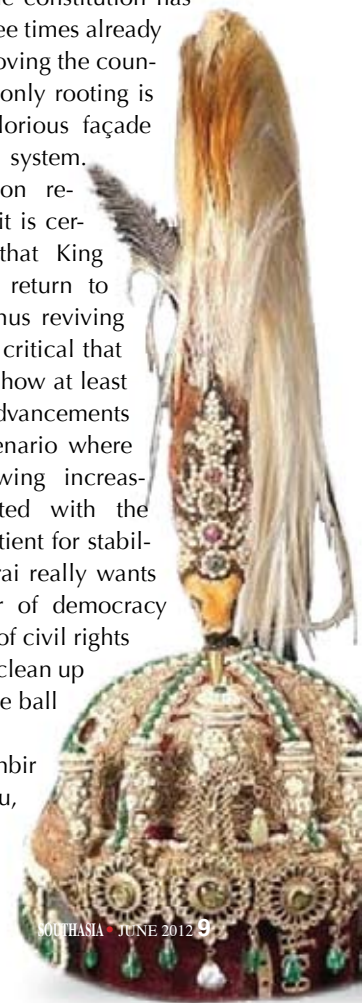
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orts have been made by Prime Minister Bhattarai to break the impasse and move the process along. It will be interesting to watch Nepal transition from a mono-religious monarchy to a pluralist democracy. It is generally the case that once a government has been ousted, if the process to establish a new system is repeatedly delayed, it only furthers the legitimacy of the previous system. In this scenario, the drafting of the constitution has been delayed three times already and instead of moving the country forward, it is only rooting is deeper into a glorious façade of the previous system. If the constitution remains in limbo, it is certainly possible that King Gyanendra may return to helm of affairs thus reviving a monarchy. It is critical that the constitution show at least some signs of advancements in a political scenario where people are growing increasingly disenchanted with the system and impatient for stability. If PM Bhattarai really wants to be the savior of democracy and a champion of civil rights then he needs to clean up his act and get the ball rolling.

Aayushi Danbir
Kathmandu,
Nepal





"We should live in this country as children of one mother. No differences of race, caste and religion should prevail here."
Mahinda Rajapaksa
President of Sri Lanka



"The essence of Hinduism is that the path may be different, but the goal is the same."
Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India



"Capitalism knows how to create wealth but does not know how to distribute wealth. Communism knows how to distribute wealth but does not know how to create wealth."
Jigme Y. Thinley
Prime Minister of Bhutan



"It seems to be impossible to hold a credible election without reforming the electoral system."
Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister of Bangladesh



"Terrorism as a force is gone. As individuals they are all around and we will continue to look for them."
Hamid Karzai
President of Afghanistan



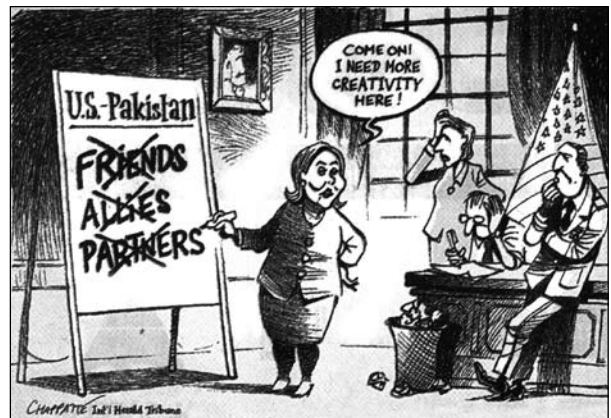
"Our country is known as the land of the brave Gurkhas, and is popular for its natural beauty. But it has lagged behind in development."
Ram Baran Yadav
President of Nepal



"Why don't [Pakistanis] just leave then? Who's stopping them?"
Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani
Prime Minister of Pakistan



"I don't want to set a presidential commission to do that and to influence the process. There is a constitutional mechanism."
Muhammad Waheed Hassan
President of Maldives



Note: The title of Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, Prime Minister of Pakistan, was inadvertently stated as 'President of Pakistan' in the May issue of SouthAsia. The error is regretted.



"All the great things are simple,
and many can be expressed in
a single word: freedom, justice,
honor, duty, mercy, hope."

—Sir Winston Churchill

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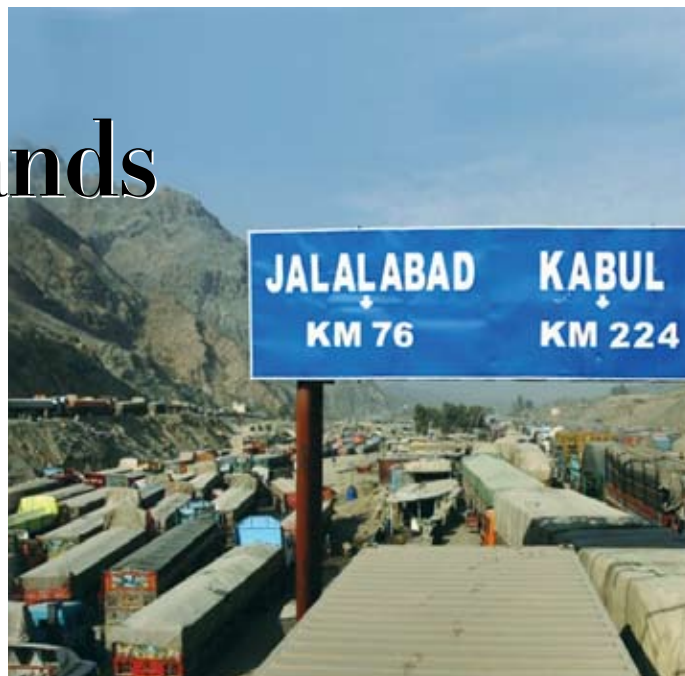
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PAKISTAN

Revising Demands

U.S. – Pakistan relations saw a major deterioration following the ‘accidental’ NATO killing of 24 Pakistani troops at the Salala checkpoint that prompted Pakistan to block NATO supply routes through the country. President Zardari, a last minute guest at the recent NATO Summit in Chicago, was snubbed by President Obama thus receiving a strong hint of U.S public sentiment and official stance. President Zardari’s 11th-hour invite and the lack of an official meeting with President Obama, underlined the inherent mistrust and tense relationship the two countries currently suffer. In a supposed show of goodwill, President Zardari demanded that NATO forces offer Pakistan \$5000 per truck in return for renewed access to the route. The demand was hugely unpopular and

drew a slew of criticisms from the international community. Pakistan originally charged \$250 per truck and such a steep rise is deemed absurd and unacceptable. U.S and Pakistan are now working towards a compromise to reopen the routes, which are critical to a swift, responsible and stable U.S withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistan has also agreed to revise its demand and analysts predict that it will present a more realistic figure of \$300-\$500 per



truck.

Ambassador Sherry Rehman has also met U.S officials and ambassadors in an effort to enhance engagement and further dialogue on the specific issue of reopening NATO supply routes. **S**

AFGHANISTAN

Committed to Leave

French President, Francois Hollande, recently visited French troops in Afghanistan and reiterated his campaign promise to withdraw all troops by the

end of the year. Hollande arrived in Afghanistan with his defense and foreign ministers and after meeting with troops, held a meeting with President Karzai.

Though the pullout will be complicated, Hollande has already ordered to withdraw 2000 troops by this year but has specifically guaranteed French commitment to provide support in other ways that include training and cooperation in culture, health and education.

Though the pace of withdrawal has not

yet been decided, Hollande alleviated NATO concerns at the recent conference in Chicago, stating that withdrawal will be done in an orderly fashion keeping in line with NATO policies, thereby not disrupting the original withdrawal strategy scheduled for 2014.

A total of 83 French soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan since the mission started in 2001. At one point, France contributed almost 4,000 of the 130,000 troops in the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, making it the fourth-largest contingent. The majority of French soldiers are stationed in Nijrab and 600 will be replaced with Afghan soldiers when forces start to withdraw. **S**



Enhancing Partnership

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's recent visit to Myanmar has highlighted India's interests and commitment to the country and its development. The first visit by an Indian leader in the past 25 years came amidst international attention accorded to Myanmar for its political reforms and untapped natural resources. Both the U.S and EU have shown a heightened interest and have increased diplomatic ties. India, clearly threatened by geo-interests has entered the game as well.

PM Singh met with Myanmar's reformist President, Thein Sein. Dur-

ing the meeting the two heads of state signed 12 agreements, one of which included a \$500 million line of credit. In addition to this, agreements on investment promotion and agricultural reforms were also reached. The two leaders agreed to enhance transport links along their border to facilitate trade and tourism and held extensive discussions about strengthening air, rail and shipping links. In terms of energy development, India has hinted at investing in the Dawei port as well as a port in Sittwe, which will allow for an extensive river and road network, carving out a trade route for both



countries and providing jobs to 600 Myanmar workers.

India is Myanmar's third biggest export market and following the meeting, exports are expected to rise to \$2 billion from the current \$1.4 billion in the next two years. **S**

Stepping Down

U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker recently announced that he will be stepping down from his post this summer, after serving for less than a year. Crocker, 62, cited health reasons for his departure. The ambassador's departure comes amidst growing concerns regarding the commencement of a new phase in the U.S-Afghanistan relationship marked by NATO withdrawal and Afghan forces gearing up to take responsibility for not only their security but also their governance. A responsible and committed withdrawal is going to be a defining point for the U.S to illustrate its investment in the 'unwinnable war.'

The former ambassador to Iraq, came out of retirement at the behest of President Obama to lead the embassy at a time when the U.S suffered a rocky relationship with Afghanistan, as a result of leaked cables. Having already served at

the embassy in 2002 and with an extensive understanding of Pakistan, Crocker was perfectly suited for the position.

His resignation comes amidst major senior diplomat changes in the region. U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Cameron Munter, has also prematurely ended his term and, like Crocker, will step down in summer 2012.

The resignation of both senior diplomats has been downplayed by the State Department even though news reports quote disagreements with U.S government policies in the region. The premature departures pose a significant threat to U.S policies and interests in a region that urgently requires a committed and stable presence. **S**



BANGLADESH

Striking an Oil Minefield

Bangladesh has recently discovered oil reserves in two of its northeastern fields. Previously untapped, these oil fields have an extractable reserve worth of \$5.5 billion. The two fields, Kailashtila and Sylhet, contain reserves of 137 million barrels of low sulfur crude oil, of which 55 million barrels can be lifted commercially. This discovery comes at a time when the global price of oil is rising due to demand as well as the risk of sanctions on Iran: a chief crude oil exporter to numerous countries.

Bangladesh has fields of low sulfur, or “sweet” crude oil that is highly sought after and is more easily processed into gasoline than high sulfur crude. In 2011, the impoverished

country spent \$5 billion to import crude and refined oil.

State fuel importer Bangladesh Petroleum (Bapex) made the accidental discovery when it was analyzing 3D seismic surveys in an effort to determine the size of remaining gas reserves in the two fields, which were discovered in 1962 and 1955. A small oil reserve had been found in 1968, but only one million barrels of this were accessible. This is the first oil discovery in Bangla-



desh that is economically viable.

The country is expected to drill wells in the next 18 months and collaborate with foreign consultants, since it has never conducted such an extensive oil extraction before. **S**

NEPAL

Crisis Mode

Nepal has slipped further into a deepening political crisis after lawmakers were unable to reach a consensus on drawing a new constitution before the deadline, expiring on May 27, thus leaving the country with no legal government. Though the Prime Minister has called for fresh elections on November 22, many have contested his legitimacy. Claiming that Nepal has no other option, Prime Minister Bhattarai has stated that he will lead an interim government until the November elections.

Most political parties in Nepal are strictly divided and the country has



been put on high alert to brace for street protests and riots, demanding the resignation of the “Prime Minister.” The deadline for finalizing a con-

stitution has been delayed four times but the Supreme Court rejected any further extensions. Many analysts felt that all Nepalese political parties were finally inching closer to drawing a conclusion. However, the Constituent Assembly was unable to reach an agreement and was promptly dissolved as political parties were unable to agree on the issue of whether states should be divided along ethnic lines.

Three political parties have already resigned from the Maoist-led coalition with more expected to abandon the ruling party, over the next few weeks. **S**

The Next Frontier

Sri Lanka and China may soon be collaborating on a project to launch Sri Lanka's first satellite by 2015. An exclusive agreement signed between Sri Lankan local company, SupremeSAT and China state-owned China Great Wall Industry Corporation (CGWIC), details the design, manufacturing and launching of the satellite.

SupremeSAT has reached an agreement with the Sri Lankan board of investment, securing \$20 million, expected to increase to \$320 million in the long-run, for a very ambitious project to take Sri Lanka into the global space race. The orbital slot of Sri Lanka is located at 50 degrees east and will be host to Sri Lanka's first telecom satellite.

Established in 1980, the CGWIC is China's only company authorized to provide satellites, commercial launch services and conduct international space cooperation.

The satellite will be named the DFH-4, also known as Dong Fang Hong, which translates into "Rising of the shining East." SupremeSAT is expected to provide a range of telecom services including broadband and networking services, numerous broadcast solutions and

other services such as e-government and e-learning. **S**



Pointing Fingers

After much deliberation and completing a fact finding mission in the Maldives, Sir Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Special Envoy, has endorsed the Committee of National Inquiry (CNI) as "impartial, credible and broadly acceptable." The new government of President Waheed has faced heated criticism, amidst growing international influence wielded by former President Mohammed Nasheed, over the transition of power. While Nasheed has argued that he was forcibly removed, Waheed has vehemently denied the rumors.

In an effort to quell such accusations, President Waheed established the CNI to investigate the events leading up to Nasheed's removal and the

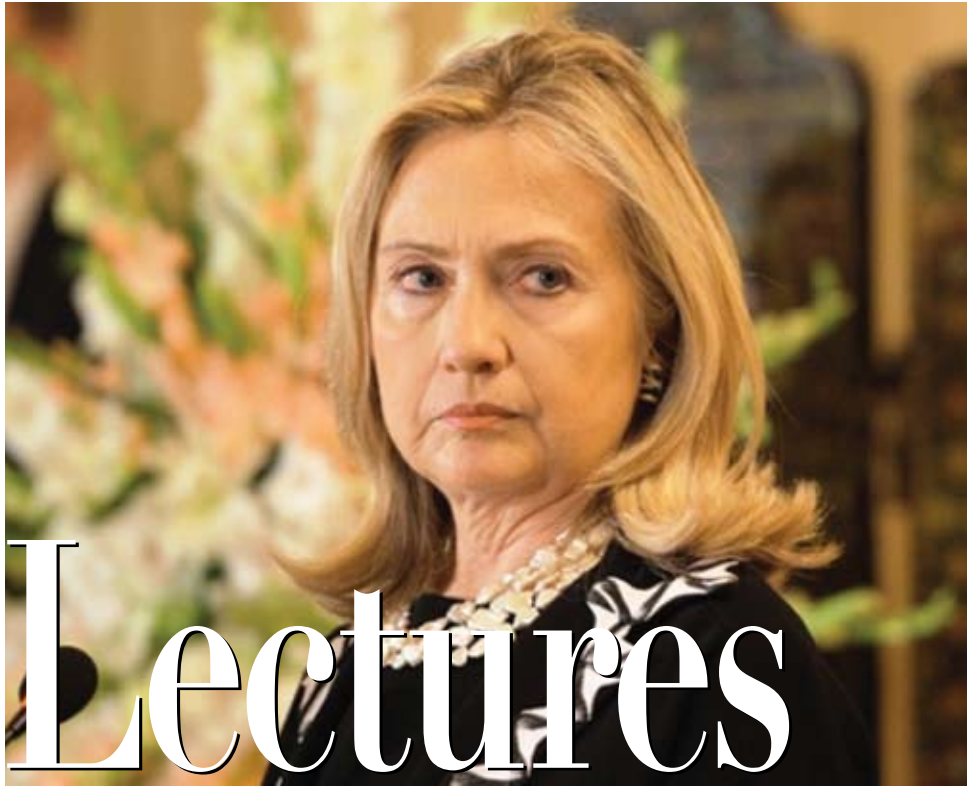
subsequent transition of leadership. Sir Don recently visited the Maldives and held meetings with various representatives of the government as well as the Opposition. After conducting a thorough examination of the CNI, its clauses and aims, Sir Don and the Government of Maldives reached an agreement to better strengthen the powers of the inquiry and expand the CNI membership in accordance with a series of agreed criteria.

In light of threats of expulsion from the Commonwealth, this move is seen as a way for the Maldives to reiterate its commitment to the organization and desire to facilitate a more comprehensive democratic process. The government has in-

vited President Nasheed to nominate an appropriate candidate for the Commission who can engage with other participants and move the process forward. However, Nasheed's nomination of candidates who fail to meet the minimum requirement of holding an undergraduate degree is seen as a reflection of his lack of seriousness and cooperation with the CNI. **S**



The Hillary Lectures



Madame Hillary Rodham Clinton was on a lecture tour to two important countries in South Asia recently, preaching the American gospel.

By S.G. Jilane

Listening to America's lectures, advice and admonitions is nothing new for weaker nations. There have been strong and cruel women before as US secretaries of state, such as Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice. But Hillary is different. She is a former First Lady as well as "president manqué." Therefore, she sports more than just ordinary hauteur.

Remember last October when she headed a delegation of top US Generals to Islamabad? Hillary demanded that Pakistan destroy Haqqani network's safe havens in Northern Waziristan and squeeze the Haqqani

leadership to sue for peace at America's terms. She had rounded off her demands with the strict warning that she wanted results "within days and weeks, not months and years."

Ms Clinton must have felt like a woman scorned when Islamabad took no action on her diktat. And as Congreve has said, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." Her recent choice of India for vitriolic attacks against Pakistan should therefore be analyzed against this backdrop.

In Bangladesh, she lectured her counterpart Deepu Moni on controlling domestic violence and while with Prime Minister Hasina, lobbied for her

friend, the Nobel laureate Dr. Yunus.

But her star performance was reserved for India. Therefore, immediately after landing in Kolkata for an overnight sojourn on the first leg of a two-day visit, she went on a charm offensive, with a powerful broadside at Pakistan, whining before a receptive media that Pakistan was not doing "enough" to bring key terror suspects to justice.

This was clearly her reaction to Pakistan not obeying her October demand to deploy its entire army in order to depopulate the tribal belt of North and South Waziristan. How else could the lady forget that the Pakistan

army has lost more than three times the number of US troops in fighting America's war and that, in return for these sacrifices, American troops mowed down further 24 Pakistan officers and men?

Yet, for Clinton and others of her ilk, "doing enough" means that Pakistan should become a US clone - look with American eyes and think with an American mind. They are miffed therefore when Pakistan balks because of the dreadful aftermath of undertaking such reckless adventures.

During her speech, the secretary of state mentioned two key personalities: present Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri and Jamaat-ud Dawa (JuD) chief, Hafiz Saeed. About Zawahiri she claimed, "There are several significant leaders still on the run. (Ayman al) Zawahiri who inherited the leadership from (Osama) bin Laden is somewhere, we believe, in Pakistan. So we are intent upon going after those who are trying to keep Al Qaeda operational and inspirational."

Evidently Clinton introduced Hafiz Saeed just to impress her audience because Zawahiri and al Qaeda are American headaches with which India is not directly bothered. It was also a clever ploy to lay the foundation for a fruitful meeting with her Indian counterpart S.M. Krishna, later.

The Secretary of State bent over backwards to demonstrate the tide of American solicitude for India, offering some rare gems of advice on combating terrorism. "The network of terrorism which India knows all too well from your own experiences is more broad-based than any one group. I think you have to do three things - you have to have the very best possible intelligence; law enforcement; judicial defense response - so that you can protect your people," she lectured.

Clarifying the US position on the bounty announced for Hafiz Saeed's capture and conviction, she once

again highlighted the identity of views between US and India, vis-à-vis Pakistan. "These rewards are for information that can lead to bringing somebody to justice. We are well aware that there have not yet been steps taken by the Pakistani government to do what both India and U.S. have repeatedly requested that they do. And we are going to keep pushing that point," she said, adding, "So it's a way of raising the visibility and pointing out to those who are associated with them

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that there is a cost for that and it's a cost that they themselves will have to pay going forward."

To clinch US concern for India's security, Clinton reminded her hosts that she has authorized the US \$10 million award for "one of the people we believe was the mastermind of the attack in Mumbai...that killed 166 people including six Americans and we want everybody associated with this brought to justice." She also reassured her audience saying, "It could take some time before justice is done, but we are going to be standing with you to make that happen and that thirdly though you have to change the way the people think. India and U.S. are the greatest rebukes to religious extremism."

But why this colaveri di; why this venom-spitting against Pakistan on Indian soil? The answer is quite simple. Clinton knew that traducing Pakistan would be music to Indian ears, soothe their wounded feelings and make the

ground ready for the success of her real mission.

The cat jumped out of Clinton's bag in New Delhi as it transpired that the surge of sympathy for India was not natural, but crafted in the White House. It was predicated by India cutting its oil imports from Iran. Failure to obey the US diktat, would invite sanctions.

India gave a subtle message in response by hosting an Iranian trade delegation at the same time as it was

listening to the Clinton lecture.

The fact that America, in the blind pursuit of its selfish interests, ignores is that India faces a \$185 billion trade deficit. It would therefore naturally wish to keep trade flowing. Moreover, Iran is not only a major supplier of oil which accounts for two-thirds of India's import bill, but it has also agreed to receive payment in Indian rupee and, above all friendly relations between India and Iran have existed for many centuries before the United States was born. Such relations cannot be sundered on a whim, particularly when America cannot offer a better alternative.

Meanwhile India has reduced oil imports from Iran by about 15 per cent. That should be enough of a palliative for the White House. Further pressure could be counter-productive. **S**

S. G. Jilane is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia Magazine.

The Meddlesome

As the U.S tries to interfere in India's domestic affairs, will India succumb and play pawn to American interests in Iran?

By Vidya Bhushan Rawat

Clinton

U.S Secretary Hillary Clinton's recent visit to India has exposed the real intentions of American foreign policy interests towards the country. Strangely enough, instead of visiting Delhi first, Clinton landed in Kolkata and met with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The two discussed business and talked about U.S investment in the state. The next day, leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Sita Ram Yechury, questioned the intention of such a visit. It is a well-known fact that crushing communism has been on the American agenda for long and West Bengal, being India's only communist ruled state for so many years, has attracted much attention. Mamata did the unthinkable by dethroning the previous government thus opening Bengal to new opportunities for international business. Kolkata was India's business capital before Mumbai took over as not only India's tinsel town but also its financial hub.

Mamata Banerjee is not on the best of terms with the Indian government despite being a part of the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Banerjee has managed to push for reforms solely through the central government. Clinton was undoubtedly aware that Banerjee wields enormous influence on the Union Government and therefore her visit was not without any economic or commercial interest of the United States.

It is also not a coincidence that the American media has suddenly taken a keen interest in Didi (as Mamata is fondly

called). Time magazine named her as one of the 100 most influential political leaders of the world. The Washington Post recently put her on the front-page center spread as an important leader who can influence policy decisions in India.

The reality is that Clinton was in India to coerce the government to take a decision on Iran. Addressing students as well as speaking to the media, she mentioned clearly that there are many countries which have oil and energy resources and India need not be worried about the repercussions of any decision it take on stopping imports from Iran. Over the years, America has avoided asking India directly to do things according to U.S whims but this time Clinton came with a clear agenda and a tough attitude.

Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh as well as Minister for External Affairs, S. M. Krishna have unambiguously informed Clinton that India has a right to decide its relations with other countries according to its strategic need and the United States should not have any reason to fret. Iran is important to India's energy needs and is essential to maintaining greater stability in the region.

Foreign policy analysts are not much enthused with the prime minister's assurance. They feel that America is dictating its terms and conditions on India. After the 1990s, Indian foreign policy shifted towards the United States after Narsimharao assumed office. When Vajpayee became prime minister, Indo-US ties received a

boost as the right wing Hindutva party has always been pro American in its approach. Non Resident Indians in the US and Europe were the prime targets of the party. A majority of them wanted India to improve its relations with the US. The American administration also needed India in its grand design to counter Chinese influence in South Asia as well as join in the fight against 'terrorism.' The BJP consequently used this anti terrorist bogey for domestic political purposes.

Sadly, Indian defense and foreign policy analysts have been thoroughly communalized. It is difficult to find individuals who advocate for an independent foreign policy. While the US might have its own interests, Indian security hawks and foreign policy experts are exploiting this relationship to build a strong case against Pakistan; a country they accuse for not doing enough to control anti Indian groups on its soil. For years, these analysts believed that America would take action against Pakistan on India's advice, only to be severely disappointed.

Pakistan is essential to American interest in the region and it would be detrimental for both countries to disengage from each other, especially in the present moment. However, the U.S also desires a strong partnership with India. It is clearly playing a double game, which is no more obvious than from the varying rhetoric it accords to the different countries it negotiates with. While American policy makers may argue that they wish to see peace in

the subcontinent, the fact is that peace anywhere will ruin the currently profitable American arms industry.

A vast section of Indians has never been enamored to American flattery regarding Indian democracy. India may be the largest democracy of the world but it is certainly not the best. When President Obama came to India, he talked about creating opportunities for Americans. In his own speeches at many political platforms in the United States, President Obama has termed youngsters from India as the biggest challenge to the job market in the US.

Clinton's visit has explicitly illustrated the American game plan in the region. Questions arise over Clinton's visits to various states and direct meetings with chief ministers about business and other deals. The issue of India's foreign policy and defense matters cannot be discussed with chief ministers but should rather be conducted with the government. Many analysts view such audacity as growing US interference in India's domestic matters. Prior to meeting Banerjee, Clinton met with the Tamil Nadu chief minister, J. Jayalalitha. While refraining from public condemnation, most political parties consider this an interference in domestic affairs. Newspapers too have not reported on such sentiments as the US does not only work through regional parties and national opposition parties but also coopts 'well paid' opinion makers in Delhi.

Whatever these opinion makers claim, common Indians, farmers, students, and workers feel that the United States capitalist model is collapsing and will not be able to withstand global competition. India is not comfortable with serving as America's pawn to reinforce US capitalist sovereignty over other nations. India must assert its independent foreign policy and should not become a tool for US agendas in Iran by creating confrontation. Peace and stability in this region are victims of such interventions and India must play a positive role in saving it from further human disaster. ■

Vidya Bhushan Rawat is a human rights activist and documentary filmmaker, based in New Delhi.



When the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for Dr. Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh and his project Grameen Bank, the country rejoiced but Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, reacted rather indifferently and failed to show any enthusiasm. Perhaps she felt hurt as she was expecting to receive the coveted prize herself. Ever since that oc-

casional, she and her government have not missed any opportunity to defame Dr. Yunus. Yunus is hailed as a pioneer of revolutionary means of micro-credit and for founding the Grameen Bank that became a source of ideas and models for many institutions around the world. Yunus's achievement was not restricted to Bangladesh alone and the whole world became its beneficiary. It was in this context that dur-

high-handed attitude of the government towards the opposition sent out a negative message to the global community and was criticized by the media and the civil society but went unheeded. Clinton's visit was originally scheduled for early 2011 but was postponed amid speculations of US annoyance with the removal of Dr. Yunus from the Grameen Bank.

The US Secretary of State was very



casion, she and her government have not missed any opportunity to defame Dr. Yunus.

Yunus was fired from his post as Managing Director of Grameen Bank, in March 2011 as allegations of misconduct and corruption were launched against him. It is unfortunate that a man who devoted his entire life to alleviating the misery and poverty of innumerable Bangladeshis is targeted for no offence of his own except gaining recognition for his excellent contribution to create economic and social development from below. The hostile attitude of the Bangladeshi government towards Dr. Yunus was

ing her recent visit in May this year, US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, showered praise on Dr. Muhammad Yunus and eulogized the commendable work of this pioneer of micro-credit.

Ms. Clinton arrived in Bangladesh at a time when a number of issues had cropped up that caused a chill in the otherwise cordial relations between the two countries. Bangladesh was strife-ridden with simmering tensions due to political upheaval, strikes, the murder of a labor leader, the abduction of a prominent member of the opposition and squabbling between the two major political parties. The

candid in expressing of her thoughts and articulating US policies on various issues. She did not mince her words in her praise for Dr. Muhammad Yunus describing him as a "tremendous model" for the developing world and cautioning the Bangladesh government to not "undermine or interfere in the operations of the Grameen Bank or its unique organizational structure where the poor women themselves are the owners." To further illustrate her admiration for the Nobel laureate, Clinton held an hour-long breakfast meeting with Dr. Yunus and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee founder, Fazle Hasan Abed.

The Bangladesh government, already suffering from political indigestion, reacted strongly.

Finance Minister, A.M.A. Muhith, criticized Hillary Clinton's statements about Grameen Bank and its founder, terming her remarks as "undue." He said that Grameen Bank was a state-owned organization that did not face any problem after Dr. Yunus' removal and that the government had been

ment alone and the terse remarks of Ms. Clinton were not quite relevant, the position of Dr. Yunus was also not that of any ordinary bank official or economist. He has created an image for himself as the pioneer of micro financing for the poor and his significant contribution towards alleviating poverty cannot be ignored. Yunus has served as a global model of progress and many countries have

on the US for its progress. The Bangladeshi business community is aware of the importance of the US market that consumes 40 per cent of Bangladesh's total exports. The influence of the US in most countries of the world over issues relating to security, economic activity and political environment is not a secret. All international organizations that help an under-developed country monetarily also look towards the US for direction. Despite the rhetoric of Bangladesh's political leaders, the fact is that the country is faced with the narrowness of a policy choice and can ill-afford to annoy a super power. Any change of direction in its foreign policy, therefore, cannot be expected.

On the other hand, the US also considers Bangladesh a key partner in regional counter-terrorism efforts and maintaining security in the Bay of Bengal. It would encourage strong ties with Bangladesh but would also like to see Bangladesh avoiding confrontational politics, resorting to dialogue as a way to resolve differences in a stable democracy and bringing an end to all violent political activity like strikes, street demonstrations, rallies, etc., to encourage foreign investors. The US umbrella for the progress of Bangladesh is too important for the South Asian nation to risk its friendship for matters such as handling the Grameen Bank issue, the treatment of Dr. Yunus or suppressing the opposition at all costs. This is a lesson Sheikh Hasina and her clique must learn, and learn quickly for a cordial and lasting friendship with US. **S**

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Stress and Strain

While Bangladesh faces an imminent crisis, Secretary Clinton's recent harsh remarks have done little to alleviate the situation. Can Bangladesh afford to annoy a super-power?

By Munir Ishrat Rahmani

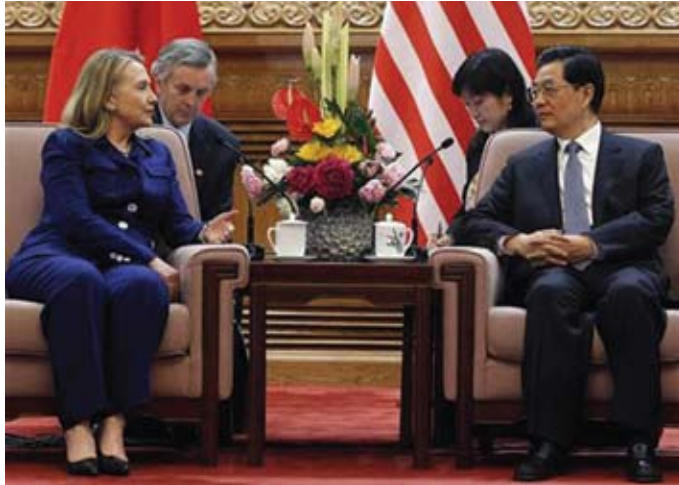
working for its progress. Another minister, Syed Ashraf Islam, who sarcastically remarked that Yunus' received a Nobel Peace prize even though his area was economics, further confirmed the official stance and questioned if Yunus could stop a war through his micro-credit program. It is obvious that the Bangladesh government is very sensitive about the issue, even risking the displeasure of the biggest super-power when it came to expressing its views.

While one may argue that the removal of the Managing Director of Grameen Bank was an internal issue concerning the Bangladesh govern-

ment subsequently followed his lead. The US government has been monitoring the situation and considers the Bangladesh government's handling of the issue unfair. US Secretary of State was required to convey the policy of her government on many issues concerning Bangladesh and this was one of those.

The United States' position as the only super-power of the world is undisputed and is exemplified when it deals with under-developed countries of the world. Whatever stance Bangladesh adopts in dealing with Dr. Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank, it has to weigh its degree of dependence

Before US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton embarked on her whirlwind tour of South Asia, she made a pit stop in Beijing to attend the fourth round of the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED). This meeting came amidst the brewing crisis regarding blind lawyer and human rights activist, Chen Guangchen. Chen, who was persecuted by Chinese authorities for years, miraculously escaped house arrest and took refuge in the US embassy in Beijing. Leaving only after he had struck a deal with Chinese authorities to be reunited with his family, Chen left the embassy but soon changed his mind upon



aimed to address strategic mistrust between China and the U.S. and introduce a dialogue beyond bilateral issues such as trade with Iran and North Korea. Acknowledging that a partnership, rather than competition, is in the best interests of the

with mistrust and rivalry requires sensitive diplomacy and honest commitment. Clinton's efforts to enhance a partnership come in the wake of growing US concerns over global hegemony. In hopes to build a committed partnership, the U.S. guaranteed to not interfere in the outstanding South China Sea issue, for which Manila has requested U.S. assistance. As China moves towards a more market oriented exchange rate system, it has in return committed to provide greater protection and responsibility to US intellectual property rights as well as allow increased market access to US companies.

How far such initiatives will be followed is uncertain but what is obvious is that

Carefully Forward

Threatened by a growing and influential China, Hillary Clinton consciously reiterated US commitment to an enhanced partnership, before embarking on her South Asia tour.

By Ayla Joseph

discovering that his wife had 'almost been beaten to death' after his escape.

It is not clear whether the US will grant the family political asylum but Chen's accusations and demands dominated the SED. However, Clinton used her diplomatic flair to reiterate the US commitment to raise fundamental human rights and stand by those who have suffered injustice.

Apart from this distraction, the SED

U.S. Clinton stated, "We need this kind of open regular mechanism for strengthening our partnership and managing those areas where there are tensions and differences. US-China ties are the most consequential relationship of the 21st century."

The U.S and China are constantly at loggerheads regarding strategic issues, regional dominance and technological advancements. A relationship replete

the U.S. is certainly threatened by a growing global power and is consciously trying to "build a resilient relationship that allows both of our nations to thrive without unhealthy competition, rivalry, or conflict while meeting our national, regional, and global responsibilities." **S**

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**When you fill their cup,
you don't just fill their belly**

**You fill their mind
and feed their future**



Fighting Hunger Worldwide

People are asking why Yousuf Raza Gilani refuses to call it a day and go quietly back to his cozy *gaddi* about whose respectability Choudhry Aitezaz Ahsan, the Indus Man, went lyrical before the Supreme Court not long ago. They are amazed at Gilani's tactic of sticking to his chair in spite of being a convict and call it shameless audacity. His own side, however, affectionately calls him "Teflon prime minister," drawing a parallel with US president Ronald Reagan who initially held the title.

But here they ignore the sharp contrast. Reagan earned the sobriquet for his nonchalant, almost disdainful attitude towards criticism from his detractors. He never defied a court of law, nor was he ever convicted for any felony.

Gaddi-nasheen Gilani, on the other hand, is a convicted felon. The Supreme Court of Pakistan sentenced him to jail "till the rising of the court" for the offence of contempt in the face of the court. Instead of being mortified and downcast, the prime minister walked away after serving the punishment with a broad smile, like the culprits after being publicly lashed on their bare buttocks during the Zia ul Haq government.

But, the *gaddi nasheen* is out to demonstrate the difference between a prime minister and a peon. A peon submits to the law but the law submits to a prime minister. A peon cannot defy the orders of any court; a prime minister can defy even the Supreme Court. Besides, he is following the hallowed tradition set by his predecessors. None of them had the chance to complete their constitutionally mandated term of office. They were either assassinated (Liaquat Ali Khan) or forced out.

Those who watch him thumping his chest and claiming that no one (except a non-confidence motion against him carried through in the National Assembly) can remove him from office, recall how, Prime

Minister Benazir Bhutto had shouted at the peak of her voice in the parliament that nobody had brought her into power and nobody can remove her from power. Yet within days of her bravado speech she was booted out. Likewise, ZAB had thumped at the arms of his chair before TV cameras and roared, "This chair is strong." Yet, only a couple of days he was toppled from the same chair. But Gilani seems to have a short memory.

Didn't Gilani know that his interlocutors in Britain were aware of this ugly side of his character? Yet, he went there with more than six dozen cheerleaders and drumbeaters in tow and had the temerity to grin. He even gave an interview to BBC's Becky Andersen. And when it was pointed out to him that according to a recent Gallup study nearly 30 per cent of Pakistanis

into ridicule."

In the detailed judgment this view has been further clarified. This part of the ruling, since it ineluctably invokes Article 63(1) (g) of the Constitution, points to the indirect consequences. To remove any ambiguity about whether or not Article 63(1) (g) would apply to the case, the Supreme Court has made it clear that the only mitigating factor in passing a lenient sentence against Gilani is that he is likely to suffer further punishment under this article of the Constitution.

According to Article 63(1) (g): "A person shall be disqualified from being a member of the parliament if 'he has been convicted ...for propagating any opinion, or acting in any manner, prejudicial to ... the integrity or independence of the judiciary of Pakistan, or which defames or brings into ridi-

The Teflon

Is Yousuf Raza Gilani trying to stick to the hallowed tradition of Pakistan's prime ministers (and presidents) being removed either by God or kicked out by men?

By S.G. Jilanee

want to leave the country, he cynically asked, "Why don't they leave then? Who is stopping them?" If that is not crass chutzpah, then you don't know what chutzpah is.

As to the Supreme Court's short order, it may be divided into two parts. One is the punishment directly awarded. That part has been executed. The other part that relates to his conduct has wider ramifications. It found that Gilani's defiant refusal to implement the NRO verdict fully, was "substantially detrimental to the administration of justice" and that it had brought 'this court and the judiciary of this country

cule the judiciary ..."

The Short Order has found Gilani guilty of having "brought the judiciary into ridicule," by his defiant conduct. There can be no question therefore, that he should face the penalty prescribed under Article 63(1) (g), despite all the rallies taken out and resolutions passed in his support by the jiyalas of his party.

The application of Article 63(1) (g) is required to be set in motion by the speaker of the National Assembly under Article 63(2), which reads as follows:

"If any question arises whether

a member of Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) has become disqualified from being a member, the Speaker or, as the case may be, the Chairman shall, unless he decides that no such question has arisen, refer the question to the Election Commission within thirty days and should he fail to do so within the aforesaid period it shall be deemed to have been referred to the Election Commission."

And Article 63 (3) lays down that "The Election Commission shall decide the question within ninety days from its receipt or deemed to have been received and if it is of the opinion that the member has become disqualified, he shall cease to be a member and his seat shall become vacant."

Speaker Fehmida Mirza took her full time to ponder over the issue and gave her decision just a few days before the end of the time limit. In her ruling she found that "no specific charge regarding the propagation of any opinion or acting in any manner against the independence of the judiciary or defaming or ridiculing the judiciary as contemplated under Article 63 (1) (g) has been framed" (by the apex court).

Based on the above finding she formed the view that "the charges against Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani are not relatable to the grounds mentioned in paragraph (g) or (h) of clause (1) of Article 63, therefore, no question of disqualification of Syed Yousuf

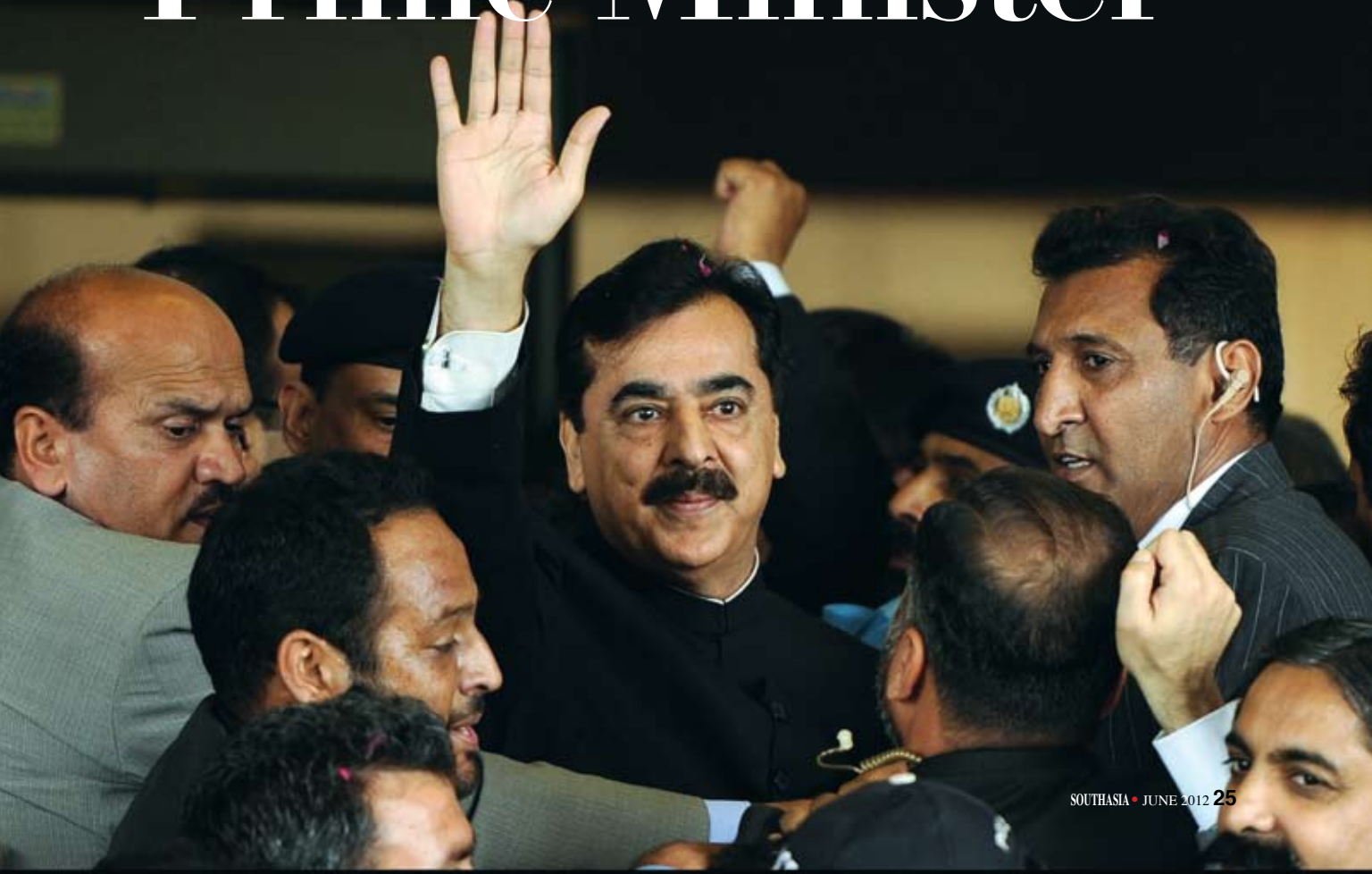
Raza Gilani from being a member arises under clause (2) of Article 63 of the Constitution."

The Speaker and the prime minister are now complimenting each other. She is stressing her authority to decide. He is trumpeting that the power of the parliament transcends all other institutions and that the speaker's verdict is unchallengeable in any court of law.

Nonetheless, the PML (N) and PTI have challenged the speaker's ruling. The issue therefore is far from closed. ■

S. G. Jilane is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia Magazine.

Prime Minister



Race in Space

As the missile race between India and Pakistan speeds up, China too enters the equation. Such strategic and technological advances do not bode well for an already unstable South Asia.

By S. Murari

The test firing of two ballistic missiles by India and Pakistan, one following the other, has sparked new tensions between the two already uneasy neighbors, thus elevating worries about an increasing nuclear arms race in South Asia. Curiously, India, Pakistan as well as China have taken the tests in their stride. In fact, India and Pakistan informed one another in advance about the tests as per a 2005 agreement.

The nuclear race between the two South Asian neighbors started in 1974 when New Delhi conducted a nuclear explosion in Pokhran. India conducted further tests on May 11, 1998, conveying the message that by making nuclear devices and mastering technology in long-range delivery systems, it had added a new dimension to its strategic capabilities. Since neither India nor Pakistan are signatories to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), it is a matter of great concern for other nuclear powers. More worrisome is the missile race between the two nuclear neighbors. If a nuclear-armed missile is launched it cannot be recalled, unlike an aircraft. For two populous countries, so geographically close to each other, the response time is also very short.

The only time the US and the Soviet Union came close to a war was during the Cuban crisis in the early 1960s. On the other hand, India and Pakistan have fought four wars: 1948, 1965, 1971 and the limited Kargil conflict in 1999. Since the first war in Kashmir, the relationship between the two countries has become hostage to the festering dispute over the region.

Another reason to worry about is the safety of weapons and their likelihood of falling into the hands of terrorists. India has for long accused Pakistan of waging a proxy war in Kashmir by training and funding jihadis. India has also experienced two

terrorist attacks in Mumbai - the serial bomb blasts in March 1993 and the more daring 2008 attack, though the origin of the terrorists has not been established with certainty in both instances so far.

For its part, Pakistan is also a victim of Islamist terror, especially on the border with Afghanistan and in the South and North Waziristan tribal belt. In this milieu, India test fired Agni-V, a 5000 km range inter-continental ballistic missile from the Wheeler Island off the Orissa coast on April 19; a move that is bound to escalate tensions in the region. Ironically, while the missile may have been targeted at China, this did not stop Pakistan from testing its own intermediate range missile, HATF-4, six days later.

The Agni-V is a 50-tonnes three-stage solid fuel-propelled missile capable of carrying a payload of 1.1 tonnes and can release multiple nuclear warheads, making it the most advanced indigenously built missile. Only last November, India successfully test fired the 3,500 km range, Agni-IV.

Once the Agni V is inducted in the Indian nuclear arsenal, New Delhi will achieve a deterrent capacity against China. India's strategic establishment had been eagerly waiting for the Agni-V ICBM since Beijing started deploying strategic missiles in Tibet and Xinjiang against India and building capacities of its land forces in the region. Last year, India discovered multiple missile silos at Xiadulla across the Karakoram Pass in China's Xinjiang region. Following this, the Indian Air Force strengthened its air bases along the line of actual control that is the de-facto border between India and China. Though India is fast catching up, China is already at a much advanced stage in its missile capability. China's nuclear arsenal is more than double of India's estimated 100 war-

heads and it continues to deploy both land and submarine launched ballistic missiles.

China has taken India's entry to the ICBM club in its stride. A spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry, Liu Weimin, said, "China and India are not competitors but partners. We believe that both sides should work hard to uphold friendly strategic co-operation to promote peace and stability in the region." Chinese experts, however, feel that Agni V has the potential to reach targets 8,000 km away and that the Indian government has "deliberately downplayed the missile's capability in order to avoid causing concern to other countries."

The United States has lauded India's non-proliferation record and said it has engaged with the international community on such issues. At the same time, Mark Toner, State Department spokesman said, "We urge all nuclear-capable states to exercise restraint regarding nuclear capabilities."

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington-based think tank, has commented that "The lack of US condemnation of India's latest missile test demonstrates that the US is comfortable with Indian progress in the nuclear and missile fields and appreciates India's need to meet the emerging strategic challenge posed by rising China."

Indian officials say that the Agni V missile can be launched from a mobile platform, a claim that raises immediate concerns in Pakistan. A mobile missile launcher will prove much more difficult to destroy in the event of a war.

In a paper presented to the International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE), Indian professor, Suresh Dhanda argues that the introduction of a ballistic missile defense system will trigger an arms race in the region. He says, "China and In-

dia fought over their disputed boundaries in 1962, and India and Pakistan have also gone to war four times. All three share 'lines of actual control' apart from international borders. In this scenario, the introduction of missile defense will disturb existing patterns of deterrence. Although all three states pledge to minimum deterrence, leaders in all three capitals have also said deterrence is not a static concept; the requirements of each state would, therefore, depend on what the others are doing or might seek to do."

American analysts say that as long as Pakistan feels threatened by India's superior conventional forces, it is likely to continue its nuclear build-up. Since the Pakistanis often perceive the United States and India as being in collusion against them, taking measures to secure their nuclear deterrent against foreign plots would be natural.

However, India's national security adviser, Shivshankar Menon has reiterated New Delhi's commitment to the doctrine of "no first use against non-nuclear weapons states." This has been interpreted by some to mean that India reserves its right to use nuclear weapons first, against nuclear weapons states like Pakistan and China.

Pakistan's defense establishment argues that it does not want war, and certainly not a nuclear war, with India. Despite this stated desire, New Delhi and Islamabad are caught in a spiral of tensions and mistrust that could cause the next regional crisis to flare into armed conflict and even a limited war. ■

S. Murari is a senior Indian journalist who has been covering Sri Lanka for the past 25 years. He was associated with the Bangalore-based English daily, Deccan Herald and retired as an associate editor of the newspaper.

A photograph showing President Barack Obama and Afghan President Hamid Karzai shaking hands. They are seated in chairs facing each other, with a small table between them. The background features the NATO logo and the text 'CHICAGO SUMMIT • 20-21.V.2012 • SOMMET'. American and Afghan flags are visible on either side of the men.

Any Which Way You Can

With no clear roadmap for stability and withdrawal from Afghanistan, the much-hyped NATO summit failed to deliver much, apart from sending a strong signal to Pakistan to clean up its act.

By Shehzad H. Qazi

The transatlantic alliance, NATO, that has been battling a decade-long insurgency in Afghanistan, met in Chicago this May. In addition to the pomp and show, the participating heads of state were greeted with hundreds of anti-war demonstrators that included US military personnel. As was expected, discussions on the security transition in Afghanistan and the troop withdrawal dominated the conference.

Three main issues were addressed at the Summit with regard to the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. First,

through an official declaration NATO formalized its withdrawal and security transition strategy for Afghanistan. Its mission will end in 2014, with Afghan forces taking the security lead from summer 2013 and ISAF subsequently moving into an advisory and training role. Despite this announcement, both President Obama and Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO Secretary General, offered repeated assurances that Afghanistan was not being abandoned and that the supporting role of the US and NATO will last beyond 2014. This understanding was also formalized by

signing a US-Afghan strategic pact.

Differences between the US and its European allies on the pace of withdrawal became apparent when France announced that it was pulling out earlier, bringing 3500 soldiers home this year alone. Other NATO countries have already shrunk their troop sizes, indicating that after nearly 11 years, the U.S allies are ready to wind down their commitments and there is little that the U.S can do to change their positions.

The resolve on the Afghan security transition contrasted sharply with

the lack of a breakthrough decision on the issue of NATO supply lines that Pakistan blocked last November, as a reaction to the 'accidental' killing of 24 troops on the Salala border. The primary reason that NATO had invited Pakistan to the Summit was to reach an understanding on the matter. The PPP-led government had shown some flexibility in the days prior to the meeting but alarmed the US-led coalition by asking to be paid upwards of \$5000 per container, offloaded at Karachi Port and moving through Pakistani territory before entering Afghanistan through the Chaman and Torkhum border crossings.

The displeasure was made clear when President Obama refused to meet President Zardari and in his opening remarks recognized the presence of all partners except Pakistan, qualifying the statement as "all those nations who allow transit into Afghanistan." As a Los Angeles Times headline noted, "At NATO summit, warm welcome for most leaders, but not Pakistan's." Even Rasmussen cancelled his meeting with Zardari at the last moment. Though the White House later released a picture showing Obama speaking with Karzai and Zardari, and both governments announced that they were moving towards an understanding, the fact remained that they had indeed failed to reach an agreement. Moreover, the Summit once again illustrated that both countries were resentful and lacked a pragmatic strategy that could secure cooperative engagement on Afghanistan without upsetting their domestic electorates.

An agreement was, however, signed between Kyrgyzstan and the US for cargo shipments. This secures NATO's increased reliance on the Northern Distribution Network, which it uses to transport supplies into Afghanistan from Russia and Central Asia. Nevertheless, while this agreement can provide a costly short-term solution, it cannot solve the major logistical challenges NATO will face when withdrawing in 2014. And so NATO

remains reliant on Pakistani cooperation.

Some attention was also accorded to discussions on Pakistan's role in stabilizing Afghanistan. Prior to Zardari's arrival, Rasmussen commented, "We can't solve the problems in Afghanistan without the positive engagement of Pakistan." In short, the coalition was reminding Pakistan that to ensure Afghanistan's stability it has to remove Afghan Taliban safe havens from its territory

Despite the declarations and re-affirmations of movement toward progress, the summit was disappointing on several issues, the primary one being the failure to offer a comprehensive strategy for a responsible withdrawal. The alliance offered security transition plans without explaining what its political strategy for stabilizing Afghanistan would be. There was no explanation of how reconciliation would avoid another civil war, how a US-Taliban dialogue would be initiated, how the northern parties opposed to Karzai and the Taliban would be brought to the table to engage in meaningful dialogue or what kind of a power-sharing deal would be created? Similarly, there was no discussion on how the regional countries would be involved? Regional cooperation on Afghanistan is both a challenge and a necessity. However, there is currently no roadmap for a strategy that answers security issues and pursues mutual interests in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, on the security front, several issues remained unaddressed. There was no mention of how the war against al-Qaeda will be fought after 2014, especially inside Pakistan. Moreover, while there was much talk of strengthening the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), it is not clear who exactly will pay for their training and maintenance, which is expected to cost \$4.1 billion annually. How will the US and Europe fund this project, and for how long? With Europe's economic woes, pledges have already been hard to come by and a cost-

cutting U.S. Congress may not want to sustain this project for much longer.

Finally, with Obama conceding that the Taliban was a strong enemy and gains in Afghanistan remained fragile, NATO Commander, General John Allen added that he "fully expected combat to continue beyond 2013." With the progress on talks with the Taliban appearing unlikely before the U.S. elections, it is clear that the ANSF will be responsible for fighting the insurgency from next year onwards. What is less clear is whether the ANSF is capable of battling the insurgents.

Ultimately the Chicago summit did not deliver much. The security transition and withdrawal announcement was important because it formalized an existing understanding. However, it proved little because it offered no policy to deal with the political problems of the conflict, which is a bigger concern since a political settlement and not victory on the battlefield can only bring peace to Afghanistan.

NATO also failed to reach a deal with Pakistan on the issue of supply routes. With the NATO mandate ending in just over two years, uncertainty and the absence of long-term thinking continue to define attitudes towards Afghanistan. If the US-led coalition is truly interested in stabilizing Afghanistan, then it must work with the Afghan government to formulate a robust national reconciliation program that brings together various hostile groups and should engage regional countries to develop a strategy for multilateral cooperation. Without these efforts and a long-term commitment to helping Afghanistan reform and develop, stability will be scarcely more than a wish. ■

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The vision of a new Bangladesh before it celebrates its golden jubilee in December 2021 is an interesting phenomenon. Lifting the country from abject poverty and under-development is the cornerstone of the Bangladesh Perspective Plan (2010-2021) (BPP) approved by the National Finance Commission and also supported by the members of European Union. The Awami League

(BNP) is polarized and is in the grip of demonstrations launched by the opposition against what it perceives as political victimization. In this backdrop it will be an uphill task for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government to lure foreign investment and transform Vision 2021 into reality. Armed with a two-thirds majority and witnessing better economic indicators, the AL government is confident that it

AL, which is considered as a major destabilizing factor, impact projected economic growth in coming years?

According to UNB, PM Hasina recently told an 11-member delegation led by Planning Minister A K Khandker that the BPP aims to transform Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 when the country will celebrate its golden jubilee. She expressed her optimism that many investors from abroad are interested in investing in Bangladesh but at the same time lamented that "the country could not achieve the desired development even after 40 years of independence as the political party that led the liberation war was out of power for a long time and undemocratic governments and anti-liberation forces had ruled the country for a long time."

It is another story that the AL government, which ruled the newly independent country from 1972-1975, was accused of political repression, corruption and bad governance. Likewise, the second AL government from 1996-2001 was also blamed of loot and plunder while neglecting the issues which kept the country poor and



Mission Impossible

Bangladesh aims to become a middle-income country by 2021. But given its political instability and social crises, is this a bridge too far?

By Dr. Moonis Ahmar

(AL) government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is determined to pursue Vision 2021 so as to seek re-election in polls due in 2014.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party

will push through major tasks under vision 2021. Can Bangladesh transform from a least developing to a middle-income country and how will the political standoff between BNP and

under-developed. Therefore, critics argue that AL wants to use BPP for political consumption and as a means to seek re-election and is not serious in alleviating the plight of the com-

mon people or promoting economic growth in the country.

In order to get a clear picture about the much publicized 2021 plan for Bangladesh, one must know basic facts in this regard. According to Abdur Rahim Harmachi's report published in *The Bangladesh Chronicle*, the first ever long term plan of the country entitled, "Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2021: Making Vision 2021 a Reality" was approved at a meeting of the National Economic Council. The plan envisions making Bangladesh a middle-income country with \$2,000 per capita income by 2021. According to the *Bangladesh Economic Review 2011*, per capita income was \$818 in 2010-11 fiscal year and \$751 in 2009-10. The plan targets annual real GDP to rise by 8% by 2015 and 10% by 2021. According to the plan, the contributions of agriculture, industry and services sectors to the GDP have been fixed at 15, 32 and 52.5% by 2015 and at 15, 17 and 48% by 2021. The plan also expects power generation to rise to 15,375 MW in 2015 and 20,000 MW by 2021. In terms of literacy, the plan hopes to eradicate illiteracy from Bangladesh by 2014, reduce the fertility rate to 2.2% and bring the number of people below the poverty line to 13.5% by 2021. In the area of trade, the plan aims to attain around 40% of GDP from export earnings and remittance by 2021.

Some of the ideals of BPP include establishing a corruption free society, rule of law, modern infrastructure, e-governance, high economic growth rate, significant rise in per capita income, GDP, GNP and a marked alleviation of poverty. How these ideals are to be accomplished in a span of 9 years time and how domestic fault lines which impede the process of development will be removed, must be contemplated. It is wishful thinking to assume that Bangladesh, which is grappling with the menace of political instability, violence, rampant corruption, poverty and absence of rule of

law will transform in a decade's time as a "success story" in South Asia.

When uncertainty looms large on the horizon of Bangladesh in terms of political stability and a peaceful environment, favoring large-scale investments and entrepreneurship will not match with ground realities.

Foreign governments, including those representing European Union recently pointed out the dangers and threats faced by Bangladesh in order to meet the goals and objectives envisioned in the 2021 plan. For instance, on the occasion of celebrating Europe Day on May 9 and 40 years of partnership between Bangladesh and Europe, the European Union delegation in a press conference in Dhaka called upon the government and opposition to initiate political dialogue in order to promote better investment conditions. The EU delegation comprising the Ambassadors of Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Spain, France and the British High Commissioner stated that, "our role is to encourage and support dialogue. And we believe parliament is the best place for dialogue."

EU is Bangladesh's biggest development partner providing 500 million Euros of assistance every year. Trade between EU and Bangladesh is huge as Bangladeshi goods, particularly garment products, are a source of enormous foreign exchange income. The concern of European Union vis-à-vis growing political polarization in Bangladesh is two-fold: first, strikes and political agitation in Bangladesh will raise a question mark about its capability to sustain the 2010-2021 perspective plan and second, the global image of Bangladesh is also negative. The French Ambassador to Bangladesh, Michel Trinquier stated, "my concern is the image of the country which is required to attract foreign investment for the country's private sector as private sector's growth is imperative for Bangladesh as it wishes to be a middle-income country by

2021." On the issue of corruption, the Dutch Ambassador said in the same press conference that, "corruption is ingrained in the society and we want our tax payer's money used in best ways." EU envoys in Dhaka during the May 9 press conference made it clear that without political peace, control over corruption, good governance and rule of law and infrastructure, Bangladesh cannot proceed to attain the goal of becoming a middle-income country by the year 2021. The issues faced by Bangladesh are not any different than those experienced by many post-colonial states. However, one cannot expect better quality of life unless those at the helm of affairs are able to perform better so that foreign investment and support for developmental projects is smooth.

Since its inception as an independent state in 1971, Bangladesh is heavily dependent on foreign aid and assistance. Money has flowed in from different external sources to Bangladesh since 1972 but rampant corruption, poor planning and lack of professionalism and expertise failed to make purposeful use of billions of dollars of aid and assistance, which was provided to Bangladesh in the last forty years.

The message delivered by EU envoys in Dhaka on the occasion of "Europe Day" was clear: they were not optimistic about the government's confidence about 2010-2021 plans unless the fault lines which cause political schism, violence, corruption and bad governance are removed. Foreign investors will not invest in Bangladesh unless a stable and peaceful environment is ensured. To what extent, the government in Dhaka and the opposition parties adhere to the advice and caution of EU envoys is yet to be seen. **S**

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The political crisis in Nepal is growing from bad to worse. The government recently registered a bill to amend the Interim Constitution to extend the tenure of the Constituent Assembly for three more months. However, the Supreme Court issued an interim order, immediately following the government's decision, thereby rejecting an extension. If the political parties cannot produce

terminate on 27 May. The Court had also asked the government to look for alternatives such as a national referendum or fresh elections.

It is not quite clear why so much fuss is being made on the extension of as useless an institution as the assembly. It has long lost its political legitimacy. No serious discussion on the future political framework has taken place here. It has not made a single

If the government still goes ahead with an extension, which is possible only if it gets a two third majority endorsement in the assembly, it will create a conflict between the government and the judiciary. If the "political supremacy" prevails over the judiciary, it will nail the coffin of an independent judiciary for the first time in the history of Nepal. There is no credible basis to conclude that the political leadership

A Crumbling Democracy

Nepal faces an existential political crisis and there is little hope on the horizon to resolve it.

By Jan Sharma

a new constitution by 27 May, they have no choice but to look for alternatives such as a fresh mandate or a referendum. If a decision is not taken soon, democracy is likely to crumble before it stands.

The deepening crisis reflects the failure of the political leadership as well as the constituent assembly, elected in 2008 for two years to draft a new constitution that would institutionalize the federal democratic republic. The assembly has been extended four times already. A fifth extension is simply not possible, at least constitutionally. The Supreme Court announced in November that there will be no more extensions of the assembly, which will

collective decision. The assembly is, at best a rubber stamp institution that endorses the decisions of a handful of politicians. It has never been, and will never be, a forum where nationally important issues are seriously debated and decisions are taken. It has only served as a shameless financial liability in one of the world's poorest countries.

The government's daring decision for tenure extension does not only make a mockery of the Court verdict, but goes against the grain of democratic principles and practices, such as the separation of powers, rule of law and constitutionalism. It is in opposition to the mandate of the people.

will do something in the extended three months what they have not been able to do in the last four years.

These developments come amid unconfirmed rumors that the government is preparing to clamp a state of emergency under Article 143 of the Interim Constitution of 2007. However, the constitution clearly lays down four conditions for the declaration of an emergency: war, external aggression, armed rebellion, or extreme economic disarray. Since none of the conditions exist at the moment, an emergency is not possible. Some opposition political leaders have alleged that the Maoists are instigating various ethnic and other groups to create

such a situation. Protest demonstrations and *bandh* have been organized but have largely subsided following agreements between the government and the agitators.

The most tricky and keenly disputed issue is that of the restructuring of the state. Political parties are not clear on the issue and, for strange reasons, have evaded any serious dialogue with the stakeholders, including ethnic groups and communities. As a result, they have made the mess even

ment was signed between the government and the agitators meeting most of their demands, including provinces with ethnic identity.

The Nepalese society is intensely divided on the issue of federalism. Apart from partisan positioning and political expediency, there is very little substantive debate on the entire question of federal restructuring of the Nepalese state. The discussion on the issue is basically flawed as an economic vision is entirely amiss.

rochial thinking does not bode well for long-term political stability and economic prosperity.

The second contentious issue is about the form of government to be adopted. It is also doubtful if the accord on the so-called “mixed” form of government will work at all. It will mainly consist of a directly elected president who will share power with a prime minister elected by the parliament. It will mean parallel power centers. The power sharing between the two offices has not been decided, which is a recipe for confrontation between the two power centers.

The third issue is the mixed electoral system – of both direct elections and proportional representation. This will certainly lead to the creation of a hung parliament. Since political parties have problems fighting each other instead of cohabit, political instability will be obvious. No prime minister in Nepal has ever completed a full tenure in office. This will only get worse, with tenures counted in months.

The crisis in Nepal today is mainly because of the failure of the political leadership, which is thoroughly corrupt. A few people who have been running most political parties like their fiefdoms are the decision-makers. These parties are the major elements contributing to national instability and poverty. Yet, there is no debate on reforming the parties and making them financially transparent during the process of drafting a new constitution. The incompetence and indecision of the political leadership inspires little hope for the resolution of the current political crisis. There is no political leadership in sight to address the crisis and prevent a crumbling democracy. ■

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messier. For example, the political parties signed a deal on 15 May for the creation of 11 provinces without naming them or fixing their boundaries. The deal collapsed less than 24 hours after it was signed because of the opposition from the leaders of indigenous nationalities and Madheshi political parties. Some 320 members of the 601 member assembly signed a petition opposing the deal and submitted it to Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda,” who encouraged them to launch an agitation. The groups announced a three-day Nepal bandh, following which a fresh agree-

No one has seriously challenged the need for federalism. But there are those who argue for restructuring on multiple identities since Nepal has always been a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious society. The leaders of indigenous nationalities and the Madheshi political parties, on the other hand, want the provinces determined on the basis of ethnic identity. The economic and political empowerment of the local communities and elected bodies has not been intensely debated. In fact, a federalism debate is limited to narrow power sharing. The dominant pa-

The nature of Maldivian politics can easily be ascertained from the fact that the island nation held its first ever elections in 2008, having gained independence in 1965 from the UK. Four years later, in February this year, the elected President Mohamed Nasheed was ousted, or so he says.

The country, which has been a popular tourist destination what with its vast sandy beaches and tranquil setting, is in quite a pickle following ex-president Nasheed's departure. However, a look back into history will reveal that things were never easy for Nasheed.

In 2008, he was marginally able to beat then dictator Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, which led Nasheed to make a coalition government. Coalitions often have the properties of coals: scattered, black and ignitable. The coalition in the Maldives was ready to explode as soon as Nasheed entered office. This resulted in moderate parties and some Islamic groups forming alliances with ex-president Gayoom's party while the army and the police were caught between choosing sides. During the 2009 parliamentary elections, the alliance was able to win seats which has since led to a number of quarrels and disputes concerning matters of administrative and political nature.

Nasheed instantly secured the support that comes with the privilege of being 'a chosen leader' in states beleaguered by long dictatorships. However, like many 'chosen leaders' he made mistakes that reflected the lingering effects of a dictatorship: Nasheed arrested the Chief Judge of the Criminal Court, Abdullah Mohamed, who refused to investigate the cases against former dictator Gayoom. The ensuing unrest forced Nasheed to resign only to later claim that he was forcibly removed at gunpoint. Video footage showed his cabinet ministers being beaten and Nasheed and his wife, dragged out by paramilitary personnel.

A day later, in an op-ed published in The New York Times, Nasheed defended his position, stating, "Choosing to stand up to the judge was a controversial decision, but I feel I had no choice but to do what I did — to have taken no action, and passively watched the country's democracy strangled, would have been the greatest injustice of all."

The circumstances have brought Mohamed Waheed in power who has promptly appointed numerous ministers from Gayoom's dictatorial era. This obviously brings Nasheed under a sympathetic light. The British-educated, ousted president considers Prime Minister David Cameron and Foreign Secretary William Hague amongst his friends. Sadly, these friends have not been much of a help with Hague only mildly stating, "We hope that the new leadership will have respect for democracy. The fact that Nasheed was ousted or resigned under duress is a testament that the current leadership has very little respect for democracy."

Commonwealth Special Envoy to the Maldives, Sir Donald McKinnon recently visited the new president and urged the government to call for early elections. The visit failed to have as much impact as was expected, considering that the new election date has been announced for June 2013; one year ahead of the proposed deadline. The government argues that this is only constitutional.

The Commonwealth has, on numerous occasions in the past, put pressure on member states to ensure democracy. Over the years, it has faced heated criticism for not doing enough to address human rights concerns or further democratic institutions. India is also heavily invested in the issue. India's main concern revolves around its Lakshadweep islands, one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world that also lies very close to the Maldives. Any political disturbance in the Maldives could pose a grave threat to India's busiest port. Considering



that India has geographical proximity to the Maldives and is an influential member of the Commonwealth, a political climate that illustrates a growing influence of Islamic parties also does not go well with India's interests. Similarly, other states in the Commonwealth do not want radical alliances forming in the island nation, which can be detrimental and strenuous on many foreign policy issues.

International pressure from the West, such as Britain and the U.S has not been backbreaking for the current Maldivian government. China and India have already urged for early elections and Indian Foreign Secretary recently held talks with political representatives in Male. In the past, the Commonwealth has suspended mem-



Uncertain Future

The Maldives finds itself in a precarious situation and faces a serious threat from the Commonwealth if it does not clean up its act quickly.

By Sonia Jawaid Shaikh

bership of its member states under dictatorial leaderships. However, in the case of the Maldives, it may seem that the announcement of elections will certainly buy time, which is of course more than what Nasheed or international watchdogs would like. Nonetheless, an inquiry has been ordered into the circumstances leading to coup.

In the current political scenario, the country's tourism industry imme-

diately came under pressure but the government was quick to react and placate any negative reviews. It has assured the safety of tourists and reports have confirmed that. Nevertheless, the country's tourism industry, which supplies 30% of its GDP, will undoubtedly be disrupted owing to the situation.

It will require time and some drastic steps from the Commonwealth or

any other international power to bring democracy to the country. This phenomenon is of course not unique to the Maldives alone. Developments in Egypt and Tunisia have shown that breaking from the clutches of a dictatorship is not simply a matter of revolutions, elections or foreign interventions. It is a matter of re-developing a national consciousness and acknowledging change. Ghosts of the past often manage to linger on if corrective measures to renew the system are not taken in time. For Maldives, it will still be a long exercise in exorcism. **S**

Sonia Jawaid Shaikh has worked in the media and is currently engaged in the social sector. She frequently writes on various subjects.

Too Much, Too Soon

Exposed to the global community only recently, Bhutan is already facing a severe trade imbalance and a looming currency crisis.

By Kinza Mujeeb



The tiny landlocked country of Bhutan, placed between two giant neighbors, has remarkably managed to keep its unique cultural and religious identity alive. However, the infiltration of mass media in 1999 led to many drastic changes in the world's happiest place. The Bhutanese people, experiencing a late interaction with the rest of the world, began

enjoying the luxuries, equipments, ideas and fashion that they had deprived themselves of over the years. This led to an immediate rise in their consumption pattern, increasing the amount of various kinds of imports, at an accelerated pace. The locals now possess numerous gadgets, equipment, accessories and luxury items as their counterparts from developed

countries. A superficial observation of their extravagant lifestyle may mislead many into listing Bhutan amongst one of the developed countries of the world. In reality however, the country is dependent upon 40-50% of foreign aid for survival.

The recent rupee crisis has been tightening its grip upon the economy of Bhutan. Since Bhutan hardly

produces any of the luxury materials mentioned above, the country is heavily dependent upon foreign countries, mainly India, for such supplies. This has severely drained their rupee stock. As Bhutan does not have enough money to import products from India, they rely for the same on the grants and loans received from India. Even though the debt keeps on increasing, the Bhutanese government has assured its people that the hydro-power projects, which are expected to produce 10,000 MW of electricity by 2020, would generate enough revenue to clear the Indian debt. However, according to a recent study conducted by the Department of Energy, Bhutan may be able to produce only 6664 MW of electricity by 2020.

Before the rupee crisis, citizens were spending ostentatiously and buying expensive products. The interest rate of loans to acquire cars ranged from 10-12%. This has resulted in the influx of imported cars including SUVs even in places where everything is available within walking distance. Amidst extravagant spending with low rates of interest, when it comes to providing loans for the production of agricultural products, the interest rates either soar up or are largely unavailable.

A BCCI study reveals that the government also accumulated dollars received in the form of grants, and instead used rupees, which consequently contributed towards bringing Bhutan's economy almost to a halt.

Considering the severity of the rupee crisis and its potential repercussions, the Bhutanese Government must take immediate measures to formulate long term plans on a macroscopic level.

An instant check on the trade bal-

ance is needed, as it is currently tipped heavily towards imports. The government needs to ensure that the country makes more profit through exporting, by cutting down its expenditures on luxury items. N.K. Arora, CEO, Druk Punjab National Bank, stressed on the urgent need to establish import substitution industries, minimize Bhutan's import dependency, and create export incentives, which will stimulate the production and export of local products.

Bhutan has recently been toying with globalization of which industrialization is a predictable by-product. However, it would be unwise for the government to ignore 69% of its farming population, since Bhutan is primarily an agricultural society. By subsidizing farmers and encouraging them to grow rice and dairy products, Bhutan may be able to save on agricultural imports. For example, the local production of milk in Tashigang can replace processed and packaged milk, 'Tazaa' currently imported from India.

Bhutan is known for its breathtaking views that can rapidly rejuvenate its tourist industry. It offers a kaleidoscope of captivating myths, rituals and traditions. Realizing the level to which it can boost the economy, the government is already working towards strengthening its tourism sector. The Bhutanese government is targeting a 'high value', yet a low volume of tourists. On an average, the government charges each tourist \$250 per day, which includes guides, rooms, boards and transportation. By carefully curbing the influx of tourist, the Bhutanese governments has simultaneously ensured not only high value travelers but also limited individuals, who consequently are less likely to contaminate

their well-preserved cultural heritage. According to the annual report of the Tourism Council in Bhutan (TCB) (2011), Bhutan is anticipating the arrival of a total of 100,000 tourists in 2012.

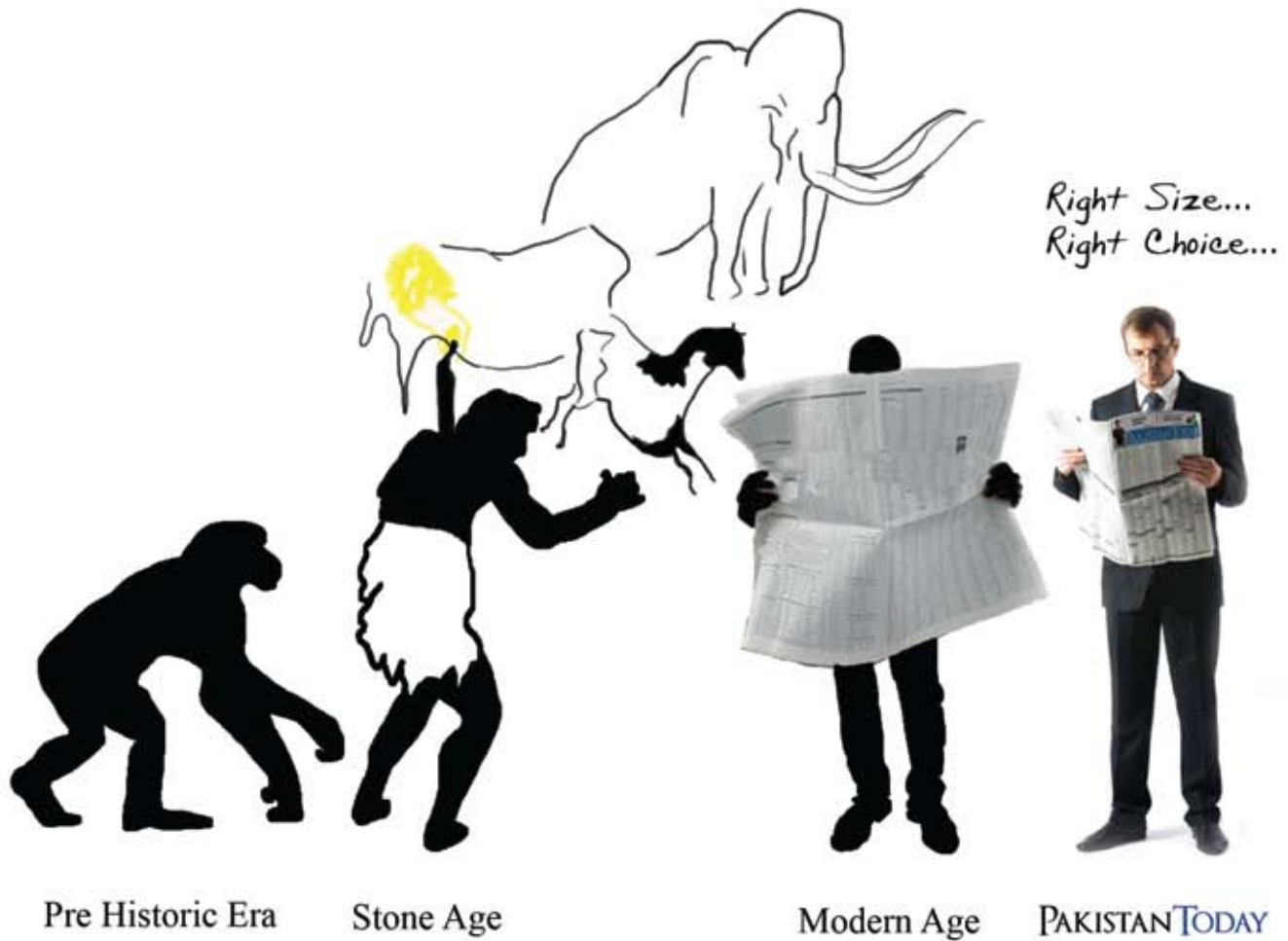
In order to tackle the rupee crunch, Indian Ambassador, Pravan K Varma, guaranteed absolute support to Bhutan. The Indian Finance Minister even allotted INR 26bn in his budget proposal, to be offered as aid to Bhutan. Moreover, the government also requested the Indian government to increase their loan limit from Nu 3 billion to Nu 6 billion, which would lower the interest rate from 10% to 5%. On the other hand, many experts are suggesting that it is rather unreasonable for the government to keep on accepting more loans and aids, when one of the core problems of the rupee crunch lies in the fact that they already owe huge amounts of debts.

The government must set hard currency reserves, as it is much more stable and reliable. Those can be exchanged with the Indian rupee when the Indian rupee depreciates. Additionally, the government must promote the inflow of remittances by non-resident Bhutanese, preferably through the use of attractive exchange rates.

It is not considered obligatory to meet the target set by the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. However, since it has become a global measure of a country's progress, it therefore has the potential to either make or break a nation's reputation internationally. Failure to achieve its targets would give Bhutan the reputation of an incompetent country. **S**

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Unilateral sanctions imposed by United States against Iran, could have serious repercussions for global peace and the international economy. Russia and many others believe that these sanctions may

Council. He emphasized the significance of adopting strategies to lift sanctions against Iran, which showed cooperation during talks in Istanbul. The United States and its allies, however, have expressed inflexibility over

the Islamic Republic. US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, during her three-day visit to India in early May 2012, pressurized India to cut trade with Iran. After her visit, the Indian Government promised to cut down crude import from Iran by 11% in 2012-13.

Though Clinton expressed satisfaction over cuts in Indian imports of Iranian oil, she called for further slashes, saying, "If the international community eases the pressure or wavers in our resolve, Iran will have less incentive to negotiate



The EU and U.S are already forcing chief importers of Iranian crude to cut down their quotas ahead of the sanctions. What would be the repercussions of isolating an important energy-rich country?

By Huzaima Bukhari & Dr. Ikramul Haq

ultimately backfire, dissuading Iran to continue any further negotiations on the issue of nuclear proliferation. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Gennady Gatilov, recently dismissed the possibility of imposing any new sanctions against Iran by the UN Security

the nuclear issue and intentions to impose stringent sanctions.

India has made it clear that it only abides by the United Nations' sanctions on Iran, and is not obliged to adhere to the unilateral curbs imposed by the US on hydrocarbon purchase from

in good faith to abandon its nuclear ambitions." Like their international counterparts, Indian corporations and banks are facing the prospect of tough US penalties, starting end-June, for doing business with Iranian banks. In conjunction with a European em-

bargo, the American legislation aims at choking Iran's oil exports and crippling the Iranian economy.

Though the EU and US sanctions targeting Iran's oil export revenues have yet to come fully into force, the imminent threat has already led countries and companies to take steps to reduce their purchases of crude oil from Iran. An EU ban on the import and transport of Iranian oil, agreed to in January and modified in March, is not due to take effect until July 1, 2012 but many of Tehran's customers in Europe have already begun replacing their Iranian supplies. Recent comments from Iranian oil officials suggest that Iran's total crude exports have already fallen by 200,000 barrels per day (b/d) from last year's levels. Mohsen Qamsari, head of international affairs at the National Iranian Oil Company, told a news conference in Tehran on April 20 that current exports stood at 2.1 million b/d, clearly avoiding any comparison against previous levels.

Japan's crude oil imports from Iran fell 36.4% in March from a year earlier, with the world's third largest oil consumer staring at a complete halt in imports from the OPEC member due to tightening Western sanctions. Kuwait and top exporter Saudi Arabia are the main beneficiaries of the fall in Iranian shipments, along with new suppliers such as Gabon, as Japan buys more oil for firing generators following last year's nuclear disaster. North Asian states imported 305,114 barrels of crude oil from Iran in the first quarter, down 31.2% from 2011, when they purchased 443,535 barrels. The United States and Europe are trying to squeeze the revenues Iran makes from its oil exports to force it to halt a nuclear program that allegedly would be used to make weapons but which Tehran argues is for power generation. In addition, tough new European Union sanctions aimed at stopping Iran's oil exports to Europe

also ban EU insurers and reinsurers from covering tankers carrying Iranian crude oil anywhere in the world from July 2012. Around 90% of the world's tanker insurance is based in the West, so the measures threaten shipments to Iran's top Asian buyers as well.

China's crude imports in the first quarter of this year from Iran were a third lower at 346,183 barrels compared to a year earlier, while South Korea cut imports by 22% to 195,000 barrels. South Korea's largest refiner SK Energy, also the country's top buyer of

Indian trade with South East Asia, declaring that Kolkata would become a hub for a new 'Silk Road Strategy' connecting countries in East, South and Central Asia.

It is election year in the United States and the Obama administration is pleasing the influential Jewish Lobby by pressurizing Iran on all fronts, demanding that it make major concessions at talks while threatening sanctions and military action. US aggression is sharply increasing tensions not only in the Middle East but also in

Iran is bound to lose revenues, but more significantly, it will suffer international isolation. The United States is using India as an ally to achieve this.

Iranian crude, is securing alternative supplies to make up for a potential cut in Iranian imports. Energy-deficient India is looking for liquefied Shale Gas from the United States as the Petroleum Ministry decides to cut crude oil imports from Iran substantially. Succumbing to US pressure, other states including Sri Lanka are also toeing the same line.

Iran is bound to lose revenues, but more significantly, it will suffer international isolation. The United States is using India as an ally to achieve this. In February, after months of hesitation, India voted for a Western-backed resolution in the UN Security Council against the Syrian regime of President Bashar al Assad, Iran's regional ally. In return, during her visit to India, Hillary Clinton signed agreements to buy rice, sugar and soya beans. Additionally, the United States is encouraging closer ties between Bangladesh and India for countering Iranian and Chinese influence in the region. During recent visits to Bangladesh and India, Clinton emphasized the advantages of enhanced

South Asia. The US Special Envoy to India, Carlos Pascual, will soon force India to sharply reduce its crude oil imports from Iran. In this scenario, India will be a gainer; not only getting alternative sources of hydrocarbon from the US but also strategic advantages in the region.

Iran has shown reconciliatory gestures in talks with the Group 5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany). All the negotiating sides must find a political settlement to the issue. After two rounds of fruitful talks with six world powers, Tehran is justified for demanding withdrawal of sanctions. Sanctions pose hurdles in future talks between Iran and the world powers. If peace has to be given a chance, both US and Iran hardliners will have to retreat from their present positions. ■

Dr. Ikramul Haq and Huzaima Bukhari are partners in the law firm Huzaima & Ikram (member Taxand) and Adjunct Professors at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS).

An Impromptu Farewell



Sudden and unforeseen changes at the senior diplomatic level affect relationships that demand stability and can have severe repercussions for the larger U.S. strategy in the Af-Pak region.

By Arsla Jawaid

Ap**A**part from suffering a tense and complicated relationship with Pakistan and facing an uncertain troop withdrawal strategy in Afghanistan, the United States recently received a bigger blow, this time from two of its own.

U.S. Ambassador in Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker and U.S. Ambassador in Pakistan, Cameron Munter (incidentally two of the country's most important ambassadors) have both prematurely resigned from their posts. Crocker's departure comes at a time when the U.S. is entering a new era of engagement with Afghanistan. Though NATO troop withdrawal is scheduled for 2014, the next two years will be paramount in determining the fate of Afghanistan, the possibility of a smooth transition and the country's ability to sustain itself after international forces depart. Munter's departure on the other hand, comes as the U.S.-Pakistan relationship plunges into a deeper crisis which frankly, will continue to

free-fall whether there is an ambassador or not.

NATO forces in Afghanistan face a precarious situation as they gear up to withdraw combat forces and train Afghan personnel to take the reins. Apart from trying to achieve the unachievable, the U.S. has to ensure that Afghanistan is ready to not only take charge of its security but also its governance. How the U.S. ends the "unwinnable war" will largely determine its long-term engagement with the region and quell the slew of international criticism it currently faces. A NATO withdrawal itself will be a complicated event but the years leading up to it will be equally trying and testing, needing the expertise of the men best suited for the job.

Former ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker had warned about the risks of a U.S. occupation and later tried to pursue a new military and diplomatic strategy to salvage a war-torn Iraq. Shortly after re-opening the embassy

in Kabul, Crocker was named Ambassador to Pakistan. Having served the usual three-year term, he resigned. However, as events would play out, Crocker accepted the post of Ambassador to Afghanistan at the behest of President Obama and began his services in July 2011. After only 10 months, Crocker has submitted his resignation and will most likely be leaving the burden of duty on his deputy, James Cunningham.

Afghanistan is of particular significance because the U.S. has already established a steady footprint and is now planning an exit strategy. Having already created a presence in the country and currently in the process of conducting dialogue with various power centers, the issue at the forefront is how the U.S. will train forces and maintain a stable transition of power as it prepares to withdraw. Apart from a military strategy, it is imperative to display American long-term commitment to remaining engaged with Af-

ghanistan, marking a break from its previous withdrawal that it is adamant to avoid like the plague. This can only occur through well-planned diplomacy that absolutely must engage with civil society and include them in the decision-making process.

The game in Pakistan is, however, completely different. Whereas in Afghanistan an endgame is being discussed, the game has not even really begun in Pakistan as yet. It is in essence, a show of peppered events that contribute to a vacillating relationship.

Undoubtedly, the people of Pakistan have suffered enormously what with unaccounted for drone attacks, the infamous Raymond Davis debacle and the May 02 (2011) Abbottabad raid that most Pakistanis remain critical of. Though the episode prompted the people to question their army and hold their government accountable, a severe encroachment of Pakistan's sovereignty remains a sensitive issue. If the situation wasn't bad already, it was made worse when the 'accidental' killing of 24 Pakistani troops at the Salala checkpost in November 2011 lacerated the relationship even further, prompting Pakistan to take serious action and block NATO supplies to Afghanistan. The 'snubbing' it received at the NATO Summit in Chicago and the international criticism meted out to Pakistan after it stamped a 33 year jail term on Dr. Shakil Afridi, the doctor who aided the CIA in confirming Osama Bin Laden's presence at the house in Abbottabad, is detrimental to a relationship already on the rocks.

It is against this backdrop that Washington's man on the diplomatic frontline, Cameron Munter, has decided to prematurely and quietly, quit his job, just 18 months into it. Though rumors circulate that Munter was at odds with the official American handling of events in Pakistan, State Department spokesperson, Mark Toner, downplayed the situation saying, "This



is at the conclusion of his tenure at the end of two years, which is a perfectly normal period for an ambassador to Pakistan."

Munter assumed the role at a time when anti-Americanism was rampant in Pakistan and there was nothing more important than correcting America's image in order to further the dialogue. It seemed, however, that ground realities were not being conveyed to the U.S (or that it simply had selective hearing) because as the situation grew graver, Munter's work became more difficult. Though military cooperation remains dismal, insensitive diplomacy and harsh political rhetoric are far more damaging to public perception than anything else. While the U.S is Pakistan's largest aid donor, money can't buy love and the strategy of "winning hearts and minds" cannot be conducted solely through military and development aid but rather requires a committed partnership based on mutual trust and respect. Unfortunately, both Pakistan and the U.S are severely lacking on this front.

The sudden departure of two senior level diplomats from the region will certainly leave a dent in what are easily the most complicated bilateral relationships for the U.S and two that demand an increasing level of atten-

tion, stability and understanding. It is imperative that all three countries dedicate efforts to rebuilding trust before it is too late. As Afghanistan prepares to stand on its own feet, Pakistan's cooperation will be insurmountable and indispensable to the region as well as the U.S as it prepares to plan a responsible exit. Closer (and cleaner) ties with the U.S are in the long-term interests of Af-Pak and must extend beyond issues of military cooperation.

If a concerted effort is to be made then it must be remembered that all countries will not agree on most issues but working through them as committed and equal partners is essential. In this instance then, the job of a US Ambassador is paramount in determining public opinion and recommending the best way to engage in public diplomacy. A rapid change in senior frontline personnel is not healthy and is in fact detrimental to an already precarious situation.

For a relationship that is often victim to the vagaries of politics, perhaps some stability is in order. **S**

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sured his online presence, Imran Khan became the first politician to launch a national social media campaign, setting an example for others to follow.

In a similar scenario, many instances have occurred in India where certain political groups have utilized the digital medium to present their agenda. When cricketer, Sachin Tendulkar was nominated for the Rajya Sabha, a small group of individuals vigorously used twitter to trigger negative sentiments against him. Though their outburst caught instant attention, it did not succeed much, not because the strategy was wrong but because it was Sachin they were up against.

In January, the Indian government issued a notice against excessive use

they await the diffusion of the social media obsession in their individual countries. Sri Lanka, however, is approaching the next election phase and many political leaders, inspired by the Obama campaign, are exploiting social media and online communities for political marketing.

The situation is nearly the same in the Arab world. In April 2012, a university lecturer in Palestine was reportedly arrested on account of posting on her facebook page a demand for the President to resign. In the same instance, a few young activists were detained in Lebanon a couple of months ago.

In November 2011, during the South Asian Meeting on the Internet

that every individual not only has a viewpoint, but also has the right medium now to express it. In a rapidly globalizing world, everyone has an agenda and is able to put it forward uncensored.

The question then is what should government institutions do to prevent a diffusion of an opposition party's agenda or a disgruntled public sentiment? Does the answer lie in curbing social media outlets? Many governments have already taken such a step but have suffered serious repercussions. It is essential to realize that social media cannot be regulated or controlled by banning the medium. Any attempt to control it will only backfire.

Online, Offline

The social medium is a double-edged weapon that can be used to impact multifarious objectives, both inside cyberspace and outside it.

By Shairose Ukanji

of social media while debating social and political issues. This generated extreme public rage as this was considered an infringement of constitutional rights and individual liberty. In the Maldives a personal blog was shut down by the Communications Authority of the Maldives in November 2011 on grounds of promoting religious-political sentiments.

To the contrary, governments in Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh do not pay heed to the matter because

and Freedom of Expression held in Nepal, participants from all over the region signed a joint petition to highlight the importance of social media and how it can strengthen democracy in their respective countries.

The dilemma is that governments have now realized that people are capable of organizing themselves online to create an impact offline. The fact is that the inverse flow of expertise and opinion no longer startles governments to the core. No one can deny

Often, ideas and opinions can only be countered by other ideas and opinions. The public must be allowed to have their say and set their agendas because the more such objectives surface, the more dialogue will be created. And that would be the absolute accomplishment! **S**

Shairose Ukanji has studied Advertising and Public Relations and is a freelance contributor to national dailies.

Swat Valley, also known as the Switzerland of South Asia, is tucked deep in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). The valley's snow-capped mountains, clear rivers, delicate streams, mystical lakes and lush forests are currently the hotbed of terrorism.

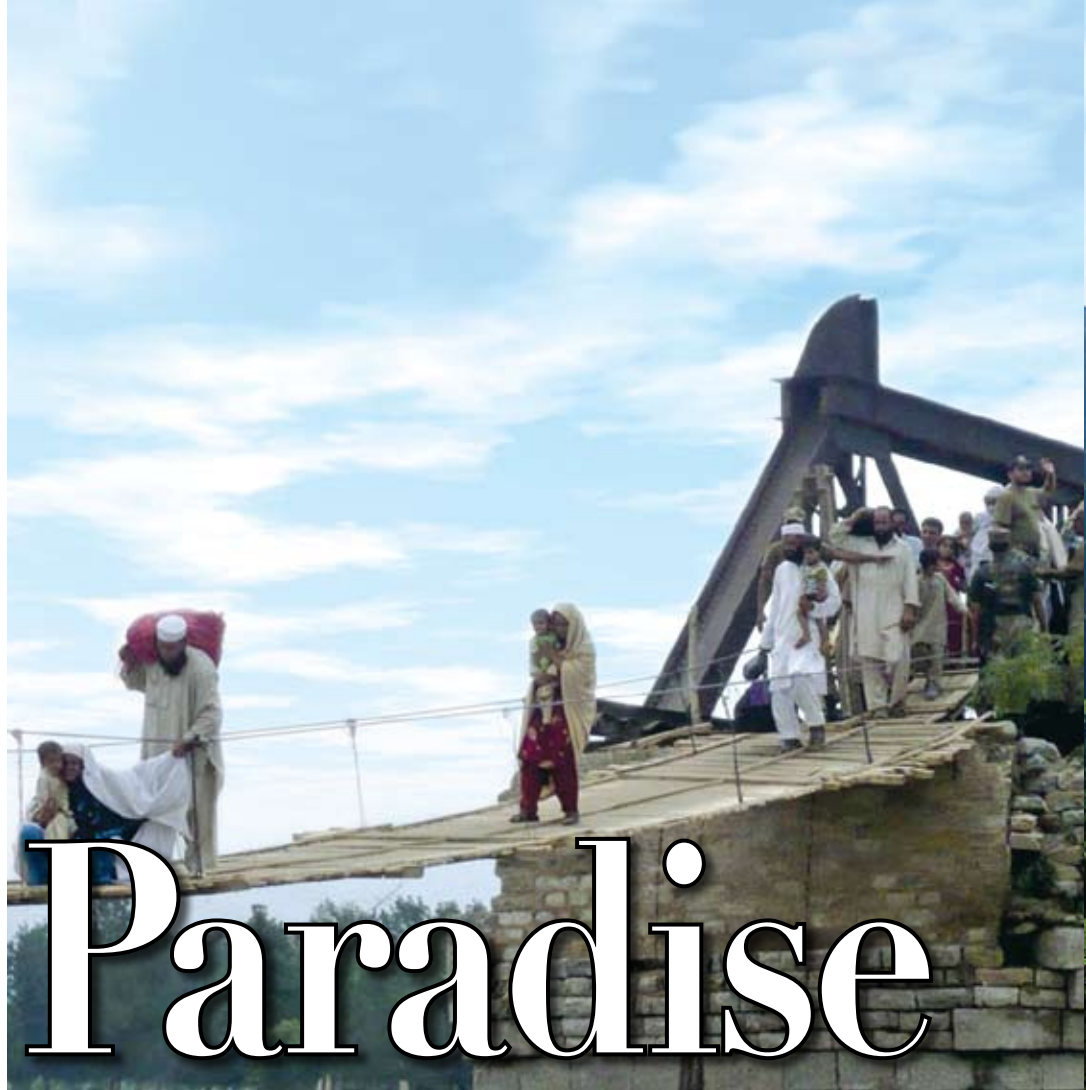
Alexander the Great first captured the valley in 327 BC from the local inhabitants. Since then Swat has hosted various the Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims, before finally falling under the protection of the British Empire. After partition of the sub-continent in 1947, the state acceded to Pakistan. The former princely state was consequently dissolved in 1955 when the Prince of Swat, Muhammad Aurangzeb Khan married the granddaughter of Field Marshal Ayub Khan. Lying to the north of the country, Swat today hosts a predominant ethnic composition of Afghans and Pushtuns (Pakhtoons).

The valley contributed greatly to Pakistan's tourism industry from the late 60s to 2005. Since then its fate changed drastically and Swat became a victim to terrorism followed by a grand operation by the Pakistan Army and later suffered from severe floods. Having been destroyed by both mankind and nature, Swat today holds ruins of schools, hospitals and infrastructure as well as broken dreams and a deteriorating lifestyle. Adding to the misery is that even after two and a half years no encouraging development activity has taken place in the area.

Schools and the academic system in Swat had served as a model for educational and vocational institutes. Catering to a number of different educational systems, ranging from madrassahs to public schools, the area also housed missionary schools serving the students of Swat since the 18th century. Jehanzeb College, founded by Prince Aurangzeb in the late 60s, shows the valley's interest and commitment towards education. Apart from a high literary understanding, the people of Swat exude a hospitable nature, thus making the area a prime

tourist destination.

The Swat valley has drastically changed, making it almost unrecognizable for those who wish to return home. Most of the roads, beyond Mingora (the main town of Swat) or Saidu Sharif (the capital of Swat), have been wiped away by the floods. Beyond Mingora, lie exotic resorts and locations including towns of Madyan, Bahrain, Kalam, the Glacier, Mahudant Lake and the famous Malam Jabba, the 'skiing resort.' With missing infrastructure, much of this tourist spot has been lost.



Paradise

The Swat Valley may not be a slice of heaven anymore but a public-private partnership can do wonders for its lost glory.

By Haseeb Ahsan



Lost

The Swat Valley served as a premiere tourist spot for foreign visitors who would swarm the area. The roads were smooth till Kalam and the Matalan Forests, continuing to the heavenly lake, Mahudan. Today, the roads have deteriorated and a 2 to 2.5 hours drive takes approximately 5 hours. Bad infrastructure coupled with a rising threat of radicalization and terrorism, deprives the world from visiting historic landmarks such as the White Palace - the King's palace situated in the heart of the mountains, built especially for Queen Elizabeth's visit.

Apart from losing tourism revenue, agricultural loss has also severely affected life in Swat. The valley is famous for the best quality of wheat and rice as well as fresh vegetables

like tomatoes, radishes, cucumbers, onions and spinach. Fruits such as peaches, plums, apricots, strawberries, apples and walnuts are also a specialty and are exported to other parts of the country. Agricultural ventures always operate in a chain process; the profit of one production is consumed in the cultivation of another. However, severe floods have disturbed this practice, making the land uncultivable.

Life in Swat will not return to normal without the support of stakeholders in the region. The tourism industry primarily drives the eco-system in the valley. Without any adequate infrastructure, no tourism can take place.

In order to solve this problem, the basic but most urgent requirement is

the re-building of roads. The road from Bahrain to Kalam is hardly 35 kilometers but needs major repairs. The road between Bahrain and Madian is hardly 3 kilometers but has not been restored after the floods. It is only when international tourism events take place, that the government takes note of the deteriorating and, in many cases, absent infrastructure. Some patches have been repaired, especially those on the way to Malam-Jabba, solely because of the skiing festival that was held there a few months back.

It is imperative that the government act immediately in order to save its dying tourism resources. Pakistan has unparalleled natural potential which remains to be tapped. Once the roads are constructed, tourism

will be re-established and the ecosystem will be restored.

Local elders along with many NGOs are working hard to restore and reconstruct the valley but a lot more needs to be done. Without the key support of the public sector, the situation will remain challenging and difficult.

In times like these, it is imperative for Pakistan to display its soft image. The tourism industry can serve as a catalyst in changing the perception of people around the world. The more the global perception changes, the better for the image of Pakistan. **S**

Haseeb Ahsan contributes to various publications on entrepreneurship and skill development.

Falling Standards

Sri Lanka's tea production is taking a hard hit due to international competition and falling domestic industry standards.

By Bushra Khalid

Sri Lanka's finest teas have their own individual characteristics of aroma, color and flavor. Tea production in Sri Lanka is of high importance, having a direct impact on the local economy and the world market. Its tea industry is one of the main sources of foreign exchange and an important source of income for laborers, providing jobs to millions around the country and serving as a source of pride for the Sri Lankan people and their export industry.

Sri Lanka has an established status as a leading producer of the best tea

in the world. In recent years, however, a marked difference can be observed between reputation and performance. The export-oriented business is under increasing threat. Complex domestic issues have severely affected productivity and efficiency. Increasing international competition has also had a direct impact on product price and profitability.

Sri Lanka initially led the way in tea exports and was successfully meeting global demand. According to researchers, two main issues are connected with tea production: the vast

area of land required to grow it and the intensive labor needed to harvest it. Human rights violations have also occurred at plantations in all major countries involved in tea production. Furthermore, tea plantations have a profound effect on the local environment.

One of the main issues faced by Sri Lanka is the poor wages paid to plantation laborers. Plantations do not give enough wages to pull these laborers out of poverty. Housing conditions are poor and medical care provided on the estates is limited. Over

the past few years, severe economic, industrial and political problems have reduced Sri Lanka's standing as the premiere tea producer in the world. Today, Sri Lankan producers are facing major decisions regarding production methods, export markets and product range.

The price rise has affected the situation of working class families to a much greater extent. Most families do not have access to electricity and are unable to use kerosene oil for lighting and cooking. On the other hand, fuel hikes have increased bus fares and prices of other essentials.

According to a female tea worker, in the cold climate, they always have to heat water and meals. At the same time, they use kerosene oil for lamps because there are frequent power cuts. Some plantation workers have no electricity at all. Most workers are already shifting to firewood for cooking because of the high price of kerosene oil. She also says that a new burden has come as the price of wheat flour, rice, lentils and other essentials are skyrocketing.

According to reports, tea plantation workers from Hatton and Bandarawela, in Sri Lanka's Central Hills district, recently spoke about the forthcoming plantation workers' congress. The congress has been convened by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Hatton and is expected to discuss and adopt a socialist program to defend wages, living conditions and the democratic rights of estate workers.

Aislaby Estate and Farm is still owned by the last remaining British planting family in Sri Lanka. After the Aislaby management increased the actual rate of tea plucking, the workers at the estate visited the local Ceylon Workers Congress office in Bandarawela to have a meeting with the area union leaders and demanded that action be organized to fight the measure. Aislaby Estate has been a significant centre in the fight waged in

defense of plantation workers by the SEP.

Besides, the Government of Sri Lanka, with the support of UNICEF, is trying to solve the problems of poor diet and malnutrition in the tea estates across Sri Lanka. Special care is given to the children to promote good diet and educate them on the benefits of such practices.

In the long run, the market and the sector will have to adjust themselves to meet equilibrium again. The government has a responsibility to set up a system to take immediate and necessary steps in times of a crisis like the one Sri Lanka is currently experiencing. Options like forming a government-controlled company are available. But such measures have intrinsic problems as past experience illustrates. Currently, the best mechanism is the Stabilization Fund and there is an urgent need to restore it. More importantly, it is critical that such measures be discussed, keeping in mind the grave situation, and the best alternatives be enforced through informed and committed policies.

The Government is in a stronger position to double per capita income in the next six years. The Northern and Eastern Provinces that hold rich resources for agriculture, livestock and fisheries as well as tourism, are economically active areas at present. These valuable resources were previously denied to the country. Even though there may be a pressing need for high investment to generate higher growth, the real benefits can be reaped from the new space that the government has liberated. Even with a lower rate of investment, Sri Lanka can generate more growth as the current capacity will reach full production in the near future. ■

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The Global Peace Association Nepal and Direction Nepal recently organized a three-day water festival in Kathmandu. The festival, titled 'Water Sustainability for Peace and Security' was aimed at spreading knowledge and creating public awareness for the sustainable use of water. The festival is the first of its kind in Nepal to emphasise wise consumption of water.

tion lacks pure drinking water, with the situation only worsening due to climate change.

Data shows an estimated 8.6 million cubic meters of water flow every year from the Himalayas to the plains and then to the Indian subcontinent, which is enough to support more than a billion people. Glaciers and snowmelts are the only source of fresh wa-

the future.

According to the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage, 42 percent of Nepal's 27 million population lives below the poverty line. Out of this, only 80 percent has access to drinking water.

However, not all drinking water is safe owing to the mass pollution in the rivers and other water resources. While people in the north travel hours and wait in queues to fetch a bucket of water, those residing in the plains depend largely on groundwater that is severely contaminated due to increased use of chemicals in agricultural practices. Numerous rivers flowing through the urban areas of Nepal contain high amounts of pollution, making them unsuitable as sources for drinking water.

Water is rapidly becoming a scarcity, especially in South Asia. With climate change and an appalling record of water pollution, the region is facing an urgent crisis that does not receive the attention it deserves. Programs like the water festival are therefore very important in the society to raise awareness about water conservation



About Water..

Nepal takes the first step of raising awareness on water conservation throughout the entire region.

By Salman Shah Jillani

The three-day festival provided information about the use of water and also exhibited new technologies that can enhance proper and controlled use of water. Though Nepal is the second richest country in water resources with a large number of river basins and flowing fresh water,, the popula-

ter for the population in Nepal which has around 3,000 glaciers and 2,000 glacial lakes. However, as many as 20 lakes are at risk of bursting. Experts believe that the trend in climate change shows that the continuous decrease in snow accumulation and glacial retreat might lead to acute water shortages in

and wise consumption.

Interestingly, the water festival in Nepal attracted the government as well as the private sector, drawing close to 16,000 visitors. Appealing to the civil society, the festival featured students from schools, colleges and universities who participated by dis-

playing their technologies and products for water conservation and efficient usage.

A part of the awareness campaign was to trigger a dialogue over the wide use of water in industries and agriculture. The Water and Energy Consultants' Association introduced a new technology, *Chatte Bijuli*, whereby water is converted to generate electricity. Meanwhile, a group of engineering students have developed a water level indicator -- a device that indicates when the tank is full. As the water level increases, a bulb lights up and an alarm rings, thus preventing water from over-flowing.

Students also showcased home-made water fountains made of recyclable materials such as old CDs, paper, and plastic. When asked about the link between solid waste and water, Narad Bastola, Secretary of the Nepal Rural Development Forum,

said, "Solid waste is dumped in the water and causes pollution. Instead of throwing them in sources of water, we can use them to make creative things." Besides displaying new technologies, stalls also gave out pamphlets and held short presentations describing rainwater harvesting, water treatment, wastewater treatment machines and water purifiers. "I was really curious to know what would be there at the water expo because I had never heard of it before," quipped Pratima Magar, a Bachelor's level student and a housewife who was excitedly learning all about rainwater harvesting. "I also want to install such a system in my house," she said after knowing that she too "could solve the problem of water shortage during the dry season."

Though the target group was mainly the youth, the organizers were overwhelmed by the response they

received from a healthy cross-section of society. Apart from raising public awareness, the organizers were also successful in bringing together stakeholders working in the water sector.

The water festival was a success for Nepal owing to its unique concept, large media coverage, audience response and the number of orders received by the exhibitors. The event has set a benchmark for other South Asian countries to emulate because the entire region faces a looming water crisis which, if unchecked, could soon make water a luxury item. **S**

Salman Shah Jilani is an honorary executive at Sindh Sayed Association (SSA), a Sindh-based NGO, which works for community welfare and development. He is a strong supporter of labor rights and writes frequently on the plight of workers across the region.

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Regional Echoes

A literary culture is fast developing in South Asia.

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar



South Asian countries are vigorously undertaking scholarly endeavors by hosting various literature festivals that have become annual events, especially in Pakistan and India. This year, Bhutan held the third edition of its literary festival, titled 'Mountain Echoes.' The event was held from May 20 to 24 in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. Commencing in 2010, the event is a joint venture of the India-Bhutan Foundation.

Bhutan seldom captures global attention and remains hidden behind other South Asian countries when it comes to the promotion of literary pursuits. Though a number of outstanding writers have emerged from Bhutan proving their mettle in the international arena, they have not yet been given the recognition they deserve. Mountain Echoes gives such writers a platform from where they can proudly showcase their talent.

This year's festival was attended by well-known South Asian authors, including Vikram Seth, Ali Sethi, Kishwar Desai, Ashok Ferrey, Dayanita Singh and Gulzar. They rubbed shoulders with their Western counterparts including Patrick French and William Dalrymple. The festival, meticulously planned, was arranged through the patronage of the Queen of Bhutan, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk.

The India-Bhutan Foundation gets due credit for conceiving Mountain Echoes and making it a successful event. The foundation was formed in 2003 when the King of Bhutan,

Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck offered his services to support India in reinforcing their relationship. The groundwork of this initiative was carried out in 1958 when the late king, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck first established friendly terms with Jawarharlal Nehru.

Though Mountain Echoes is a step forward, Bhutan's literary culture remains fragile to say the least. Bhutanese writers don't enjoy the same limelight as their Indian and Pakistani counterparts. Bhutan has also experienced a sluggish literary evolution. Kunzang Choden, author of *Circle of Karma*, became the first Bhutanese woman to publish an English novel in 2005. Bhutan does enjoy a healthy oral culture but its literary domain lacks vigor, which needs immediate

and writing is still sitting with closed wings. Mountain Echoes will help the country step out of a cocoon of unfamiliarity to new trends in literature. The benefits of such a move will be economical, political and social, thus engaging in meaningful dialogue with other countries.

Of late, South Asian countries have hosted their own literature festivals featuring local and international writers. Sri Lanka's Galle Literary Festival has been held annually since 2005. India has been hosting Asia's largest literature festival, Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) since 2006 while Pakistan's Karachi Literature Festival (KLF) made its debut in 2010. Though the Galle Literature Festival has been going on for seven years, it has failed to muster as much popularity as JLF and KLF,

with the British Council. The festival featured Bangladesh-born, London-based award-winning writer Tahmima Anam along with Bangladeshi poets and writers Kaiser Haq, Farah Ghuznavi and others, British author Andrew Miller and British television journalist Nik Gowing.

Looking at these yearly pursuits, one might wonder if a literary culture is brewing up. The younger generation in South Asia, India and Pakistan in particular, is more open to ground realities as they seem to accept inadequacies of their respective governments and society and boldly express their thoughts in their written works. The shift in trends and attitudes has indeed facilitated both Pakistan and India to promote regional harmony through literature.

Such literary festivals not only motivate local writers in showcasing their best work but also highlight the South Asian region. Regional conflicts have tarnished the image of South Asia for decades. Festivals such as these give Western authors a chance to interact with their South Asian counterparts and realize the positive side of the region that is often buried beneath skirmishes.

Mountain Echoes is one such joint endeavor that supports the mandate of the India-Bhutan Foundation to strengthen bilateral ties and enhance educational, scientific and cultural cooperation, bringing people of both countries closer. Organized for the third year in a row, Mountain Echoes heralds a new era of engagement and partnership between India and Bhutan to stand united for the promotion of literature in South Asia. **S**

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar is Assistant Editor at Slogan. He writes on regional issues and social activism.

Though the Galle Literature Festival has been going on for seven years, it has failed to muster as much popularity as JLF and KLF, primarily because of the plethora of writers that the events in Jaipur and Karachi draw and the media coverage they receive.

rejuvenation to compete with other South Asian countries.

The problem in Bhutan lies in its social strata, which is skewed towards the elite comprising bureaucrats and politicians, who seldom pay heed to the growth of literature. Most intellectuals, writers and readers belong to the middle or lower class thus making it difficult for them to pursue their literary activities. Furthermore, the country's low literacy rate is also a reason why the culture of reading

primarily because of the plethora of writers that the events in Jaipur and Karachi draw and the media coverage they receive.

Following the examples of JLF and KLF, Nepal took a daring stride by hosting its own international literary festival in 2011. The Kathmandu Literary Jatra was a three-day event featuring William Dalrymple, Mohammed Hanif and Tarun J. Tejpal. Bangladesh also organized a literary event, the Hay Festival, in 2011 in collaboration

Only the most dedicated can find hope in despair; in darkness, light. Sixteen such people, imbued with unshakable belief in a happy future for Pakistan, have come forward with highly insightful dissertations on how to turn the country into an el dorado, when, to the naked eye Pakistan presents the picture of a rudderless ship adrift in a choppy sea, buffeted by angry waves.

The writers include experts in the fields of economics, human development, security, journalism as

and so forth. Among the plethora of crises it faces are terrorism, religious militancy, insurgency, inflation, you name it. But what holds the society together is its pluralistic, open society and an organized military.

The writers are under no delusion. In fact several of them have acknowledged the grim situation with such remarks as, "Pakistan is at the crossroads of its political destiny" (p.45); "Pakistan is a prisoner of its geography and history." (p.79); Pakistan today faces a growing threat from violent extremists and Islamic

politics by Shuja Nawaz, Saeed Shafqat, Feroz Hasan Khan, Ahmad Rashid, Syed Ahmad Hussein and on civil institutions by Ishrat Hussein, Ziad Alahdad, Shanza Khan and Moeed Yusuf. Akbar S. Ahmad adds his two bits to reiterate M.A. Jinnah's relevance to Pakistan today. And Mohsin Hamid, as a typical fiction writer introduces an element of fantasy.

The themes of all the essays converge on the central agenda that Pakistan is not about to fail whatever Congressman Rohrabacher might

Changing Pakistan's Fate

Title: Pakistan, Beyond the Crisis State

Edited by: Maleeha Lodhi

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well as one celebrated historian. Maleeha Lodhi has collected these essays in the form of a book, adding one chapter of her own. In *Pakistan, Beyond the Crisis State*, the writers assert that Pakistan is neither a failed nor even a failing state, that there are reasons for hope besides concrete indicators that ensure progress.

Nobody denies that Pakistan is a weak state. It is not capable to grapple with natural disasters, law and order, tax evasion, massive corruption

militants." (p.131); "Pakistan's energy sector is in crisis." (p.231)

Ayesha Jalal kicks off the debate with her thesis that Pakistan has lost historical consciousness and the hope of defining any semblance of a national identity because it sacrificed "credible history" to politics. And it is only a more open-minded history that can redeem the situation.

There are essays on economics by Meekal Ahmad and Modassar Mazhar Malik, on the army and

say. Lodhi's recipe in, *Beyond the Crisis State*, is that political parties should focus on the middle class, on their need for good governance and cast a new agenda of reforms. The writers, each in their own way offer a positive approach and practical solutions.

Yet, the clarion call from Ayesha Jalal for a critical self-analysis and grounding in historical complexity remains largely unheeded. A case in point is Mohsin Hamid's essay,

“Why Pakistan will survive.” As a typical fiction-writer, he goes lyrical about the “vast” size and “large” population of Pakistan. He even fantasizes about Pakistan’s “diversity,” spirit of “co-existence” and, of all things, its “tolerance,” but the frequent massacre of Shias by Sunnis flies in the face of his claim.

Hamid answers the question, “What makes a person, Pakistani?” like a foreign immigration official examining the passport of a Pakistani. “If you are from Pakistan,” he says, “then you are a Pakistani.” He

available, a preliminary task would be to make a clear-eyed analysis of the existing realities and an honest appraisal of the atrocities inflicted by the state on its people and by the people on one another as of routine, instead of sliding into fantasies.

Zahid Hussain’s essay, “Battling Militancy” is a down to earth study of the entire gamut of the religious militancy in Pakistan, the association of religious groups such as the Jamaat-e-Islami and the JUI as well as the collusion between Pakistan’s military with religious militants and

state of defiance to India and support for the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination. He thinks it would prevent India from anti-Pakistan activities.

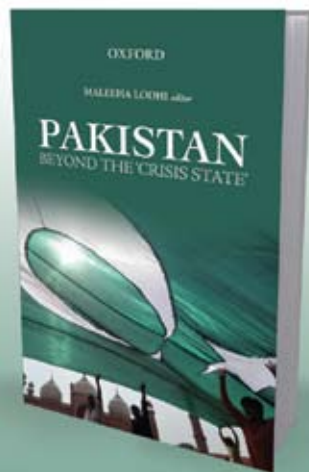
Akram foresees pre-emptive counter force strikes by India to eliminate Pakistan’s offensive systems at the outset of a conflict. “To deter an Indian pre-emptive strike or major power intervention,” he pleads for Pakistan “to put its nuclear weapon delivery system on high alert.” However, he does not explain why there should be an armed conflict at all, after the bitter experience of four such confrontations.

Expert on Afghanistan, Ahmad Rashid has dwelt on the Afghanistan conundrum and examined the role Pakistan could play in a post-war Afghanistan. Riffat Hussain, chronicles all the agreements and rounds of composite dialogue between India and Pakistan, examines India’s status in diplomatic and economic sectors and the options available to Pakistan.

The Concluding Notes compress the expertise displayed in the writings besides offering a strange advice: “Pakistan should also seek to revive historic and mutually supportive relationship with key Islamic nations, especially, Saudi Arabia ...” But there is hardly any need to revive something that has never sagged.

Finally, Maleeha Lodhi remarks in the introduction that the volume is meant as a set of policy responses, which can guide a “capable leadership in charting a new course,” raises the question of the present leadership’s capability. ■

S. G. Jilanee is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia Magazine.



Reviewed by S.G. Jilanee

argues that this ideological definition allows for great flexibility and “relief.” But the statement is utterly hypocritical because Ahmadis, even though they are “from Pakistan” are not treated by the community and even the constitution, as Pakistanis, with equal rights as citizens.

Hamid’s essay ignores Jalal’s fervent plea for an open-minded study of history. To discuss and critically examine Pakistan’s problems – current and future – and the remedies that are

their consequences.

Veteran diplomat Muneer Akram beats the war drum against India. “Accepting Indian domination,” he forcefully argues, “would extinguish the *raison d’être* for the creation of Pakistan as a separate and independent homeland for the Muslims of South Asia. Free from Hindu domination.” But he forgets that Pakistan is anything but a “homeland for the Muslims of South Asia.” He argues for Pakistan to pursue its perpetual

In *Making Lahore Modern*, author William J. Glover keenly investigates the multiple traditions that transformed the once colonial Lahore into its current form and fashion. In particular, he focuses on the conviction that both British and Indian actors who implemented urbanization came to share the basic self-presumed fact that the material fabric of the city could lead to social, economic and moral amelioration of city dwellers. This belief in the power of the physical environment

role of planning, design, and reuse. Finally, he analyzes the changes in urban imagination as evidenced in Indian writings on the city in this period. Throughout, Glover emphasizes that colonial urbanism was not simply imposed; it was a collaborative project between Indian citizens and the British.

According to the author, most of the scholarship on colonial urbanism was focused on presidency capitals (especially Bombay, Delhi, and Calcutta), to the general exclu-

the analysis of a bourgeois society led him to analyze Lahore, which remained a semi-center stage in colonial history.

In *Making Lahore Modern*, William Glover contributes to the burgeoning and exciting, recent literature on the colonial city in India. While others have primarily focused on the metropolitan centers of Calcutta, Bombay or New Delhi, Glover adopts the Punjab provincial capital of Lahore, as his subject. As he argues at the outset, a provincial

The Making of Lahore

Title: Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City

Author: William J. Glover

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ISBN: 9780199062256

to shape individual and collective sentiments linked the colonial history of Lahore to nineteenth-century urbanization around the world.

Glove highlights three distinct aspects of Lahore's history that exhibit this process.

First, he extensively examines the concepts through which the British understood the Indian city and envisioned its transformation. Second, through a detailed study of new buildings and the adaptation of existing structures, he explores the

sion of second or third tier cities. Lahore seemed like an obvious choice to start, given the context. Through a brief trip to Lahore in the early 1990s, Glover had already acquired a deep affection for the city. In retrospect, it was as much a personal as it was an intellectual decision.

The second aspect on which the writer dwells is the introduction of Marxist analysis into architectural designs. His Gramscian (Antonio Gramsci's) thoughts and Foucauldian (Michel Foucault's) readings on

city such as Lahore may be broadly representative of urban change in British India. This book is not just a history of Lahore, but uses the history of Lahore to reflect more generally on the "colonial" and "modern" aspects in India.

Glover remains at pains to upend fashionable dichotomies of "colonial difference" which see the "modern" as a European transplant in the colony and thus contrast the European "civil station" with the traditional "old city." Both new and old

together, he insists, are “modern” in their own ways and incorporate a variety of novel practices, building forms, and representational strategies. “Differing life-worlds existed within the universalizing languages and practices of modern institutions.” In the successive chapters of his book, Glover develops these ideas through a richly textured account of a range of buildings, urban plans, and neighborhoods across the British period from 1850 to 1940. (He does not take up the dis-

son on how to be a “hygienic” nation. Appalled by Indian sanitary practices, the British laid out cantonments, model villages, and canal colonies in the hope that a “suitably organized environment” would have an “educative” effect on the people. But the chaotic, densely peopled inner city, always eluded them. As Glover wryly puts it, “there would always be a little more to Lahore than they could comprehend.”

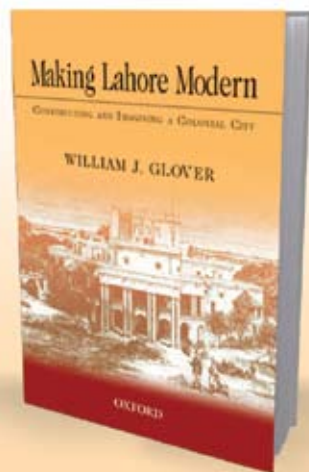
In a carefully argued, refreshingly original, discussion of Lahore’s

amination of construction materials, decorative design and house layouts, derived in large part from applications for building permits, he demonstrates that Indian residents “gradually reworked both the forms and meanings of their homes” to accommodate the new technical, aesthetic, and cultural elements of the “colonial modern. In the later part of the book, Glover explores what it meant for Lahore’s English residents to live in colonial structures, which in no way could be described as resembling an English “home.”

Sophisticated, thoughtful and deeply researched, *Making Lahore Modern* has set a high benchmark for writing on Indian urban history. It has also set high standards to research on modern India with new dimensions of architectural designing. Easy, conventional answers deserve closer scrutiny. The visible separation between the colonial and the native quarters in Lahore, gives an apparent, but not necessarily an accurate, description of the colonial Indian city.

Despite the extraordinary narrative power and highly researched originality, the book seems to be inconclusive. It seems to be an urban fragmentation, which focuses on the creation of public spheres within a city. However, in spite of these minor loopholes, Glover has made a valuable contribution to analyze the history of urban development during colonial times. ■

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Reviewed by Hammad Raza

ruption of partition or the growth of Pakistani Lahore).

Glover discusses how the British transformed major native buildings such as converting the famed Anarkali’s tomb first to offices, then to an Anglican church, and finally to an archive, still frequented by scholars of Punjab history. But the colonial “spatial imagination” soon outgrew such constraints.

The constructive efforts of the British also entailed in them a civilizing zeal “to teach” Indians a les-

monumental architecture, Glover insists that these structures, though they shaped a novel and distinctively colonial landscape, were never mere British implants. Indeed, the mixing of races and classes in the civil station was visibly manifested in two classically styled structures, the adjacent Lawrence and Montgomery Halls.

Glover then takes the reader, in a strikingly original chapter, into vernacular architecture and the old city itself. By a meticulous ex-



By Anees Jillani

Cross-LoC Trade in Kashmir

Can you undertake trading with a person whom you have never met and whom you do not even know about and with whom you are not allowed to communicate by telephone? I don't know about you but I would find it difficult if not impossible to do so. As if this is not enough, what if you don't know what exactly he wants and you are not permitted to pay each other for the goods but instead engage in a barter agreement.

This is exactly how the governments of India and Pakistan expect the Kashmiris to trade. The people of Kashmir must have done something horrible in their past lives to deserve the kind of treatment that is constantly meted out to them since 1947 by both countries. India initially agreed to hold a plebiscite to find out the wishes of the people in Kashmir but then backed out and now even refuses to hear the word; the only thing it wants is either Pakistan handing-over the portion which it calls 'azad' or at most accepting the LoC as the permanent border.

Pakistan, on the other hand, started by separating the Northern Areas from Kashmir whose constitutional status remains undefined and which it refuses to accept as part of Kashmir. It talks about the rights of the people in Indian-held Kashmir but vociferously interferes in Azad Kashmir politics and periodically supports insurgency in the former. Someone has to be very desperate to invest in a region facing all these problems.

India and Pakistan have hardly talked about Kashmir except for a few back-channel exchanges, which have no legal significance. But the sad part is that the people of Kashmir never figure in any of these talks; the issue has become a territorial one with the people being treated like a commodity.

The two sides did not agree to trade across the LoC out of love for the people of Kashmir. In 2008, the people of the Srinagar Valley started a movement against Amarnath land

transfers, which was seen by the Muslims as an attempt to change the religious composition of the Valley. The Hindu dominated Jammu, also part of Kashmir, but adjacent to the Indian plains, supported it. The whole issue caused immense political tension between the two regions and saw the traders divide along political lines. Tension between traders was so intense that trade was completely disrupted between the Jammu and Kashmir regions. In the process, slogans such as 'Kashmir ki mandi, Rawalpindi' emerged.

India panicked. The LoC had already softened after the October 2005 earthquake and the subsequent starting of bus services between Uri and Muzaffarabad in April 2005 and between Poonch and Rawalakot in January 2006, was in full swing. The two sides in May 2008 took the initial steps to initiate cross-LoC trade during Indian Foreign Minister, Pranab Mukherjee's visit to Islamabad. During the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in New York in September 2008, the initiative was approved by PM Manmohan Singh and President Zardari. Singh had an interest in starting the trade as firstly it could help in diverting the Kashmiris attention from the Amarnath agitation; and secondly the decision came on the eve of State elections. President Zardari, on the other hand, was trying to decrease the importance of the military in Pakistan; and improvement in any manner of Indo-Pak relations is seen by many as the best route to accomplish it.

Duty-free cross-LoC trade for 21 items started on October 21, 2008 in haste from two routes: Muzaffarabad-Uri and Poonch-Rawalakot. So far it has not helped in alleviating the suffering of the people. **S**

Anees Jillani is an advocate of the Supreme Court and a member of the Washington, DC Bar. He has been writing for various publications for more than 20 years and has authored several books.

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A photograph of a shanty town structure built on stilts over a body of water. The building is made of weathered wood and corrugated metal, with a red sign that says "FOR SALE" attached to its side. The structure is supported by a complex wooden frame of poles and beams. In the background, a body of water reflects the sky, and some industrial structures are visible on the far shore under a blue sky with light clouds.

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