

LEADERSHIP SERIES
Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

April 2013

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INSIDE:

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AFGHANISTAN

One Step Forward

NEPAL

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INTERNATIONAL

Heading for Disaster



What Next ?

A democratically-elected government has completed its tenure for the first time in Pakistan. Will continuing democracy bring prosperity to the country – or will the military still be the last resort?



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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.
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Down a Familiar Path

From what has transpired in Sri Lanka over the recent past, it is unfortunate that religious-based conflicts are increasing and are becoming more intense. The otherwise peaceful island nation, which is just recovering from a bloody conflict against the LTTE, has now been pitted into another strife. Interestingly, the standoff between the Sinhalese majority population of Sri Lanka and the minority Muslims had been cooking for some time as it seems the Sinhala Buddhists have lost their enthusiasm for interfaith harmony and now seem to regard Muslim and Christian minorities as a threat to Buddhist culture. Vigilante Buddhist groups led by monks are known to have been running campaigns against Muslims and there have even been calls to ban halal meat.

Muslims account for about 10 percent of Sri Lanka's population. After recent attacks on Muslim life and property, commando forces have stepped up security measures around Muslim-owned businesses and homes around the nation to counter mobs of Buddhist extremists who have taken to setting fire to Muslim businesses in the capital Colombo and in other parts of the country. The Muslim Council of Sri Lanka has even warned that anti-Muslim disturbances are pushing religious and ethnic tensions on the island to the limits and this is despite the fact that the majority of the Buddhist population does not support such activity. In fact, one of Sri Lanka's most vocal and prominent Buddhist nationalist groups, the Bodhu Bala Sena, or BBS, has denied that they are involved in these acts. This is heart-warming because the BBS has been known to continually make inflammatory remarks against the Muslims. BBS officials have claimed though that Muslim students receive favorable treatment in schools and are carrying out illegal practices related to the slaughter of livestock. Some nationalist Buddhist monks also accuse Muslims of constructing too many mosques, seeking to forcibly convert Buddhists to Islam and of having too many children in order to increase their influence in society.

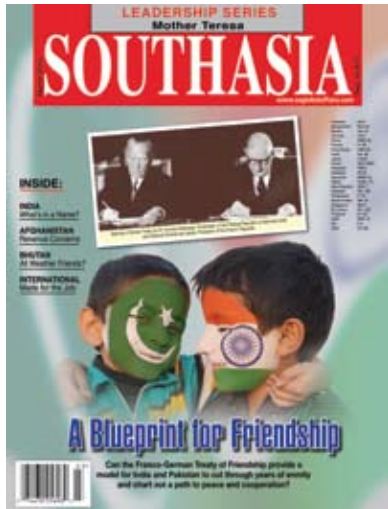
A part of the anti-Muslim rage on part of extremist Buddhists in Sri Lanka emerges from the belief of the Buddhist Sinhala population that Sri Lanka is the only country now left for the Sinhalese whereas, they claim that historically speaking countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and others were all Buddhist countries. In such a backdrop, those who say that at the heart of the Sri Lankan conflict is racism may just be right. This racism is accompanied, as usual, by insecurity, envy and hatred. Some analysts believe that extremist Sinhalese Buddhists, having recently defeated Tamil Hindus, are now targeting the Muslims to enforce their supremacy. However, they are also of the view that in a country like Sri Lanka, that prides itself on being 'multinational,' such racist sentiment will only serve to damage its future. Nationalistic ideals fueled by racism cost the country 30 years of civil war and it is therefore quite a pity four years down the road of peace that Sri Lanka again appears to be heading towards another bloody and unnecessary conflict. It is encouraging that the Sri Lankan authorities have taken due cognizance of the situation and elite police commandos and army units have been ordered to patrol the suburbs of the Sri Lankan capital to diffuse tensions. But those in charge would have to look much deeper and address the problem at its very roots. President Mahinda Rajapakse, who is a Buddhist himself, had urged monks earlier this year not to incite religious hatred and violence. He would be very much aware that Sri Lankan Muslims living in the north were subjected to ethnic cleansing by the Tamil Tigers in the early nineties as a result of which thousands were driven southward from their homes and farms in the mostly Tamil north. Where do they go now? Perhaps, along with the Sri Lankan government, this is also a cause for the world's Muslim community to consider and address – before it is too late.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

Emulating a Model

Your cover story on the Franco-German Friendship treaty and its relevance to the Indo-Pak case was both



informative and engaging. It was eye-opening to discover that two hostile countries that had been embroiled in decades long wars, agreed to reconcile and bring peace for the greater harmony of the region. Today, France and Germany share an amiable relationship, one that barely illustrates the animosity that previously characterized their relationship.

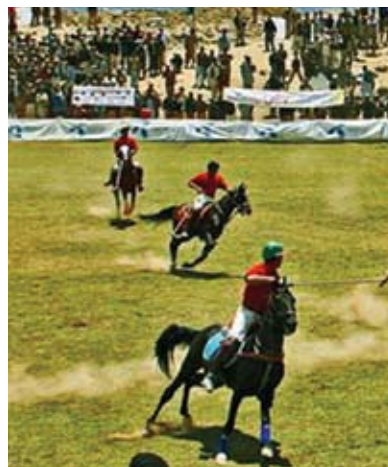
Though a great argument was presented in your cover story, one of your authors correctly stated that the case cannot entirely be relevant in the historic India-Pakistan scenario for the simple reason that innumerable outlying issues continue to jeopardize the relationship, time and again. Any time the two countries take a few steps forward, whether it is through the *Aman ki Asha* initiative or on a government-to-government level concerning trade or visa regimes, positive overtures are often abandoned for the sake of a military strife. Progress will continue to remain half-hearted until and unless both countries do not show political maturity and clearly distinguish initiatives from military cooperation

or breakdown. What is necessary is to emulate a treaty of friendship and regional cooperation, and its consistency, which remains lacking for India and Pakistan, both of which have a hostile history, a constant shuffling of political parties and have made only a half-hearted attempt to move forward together.

Natasha Akbar
Karachi, Pakistan

Source of Pride

Your story on the Shandur Polo ground in Pakistan, the world's highest polo ground, was very interesting. Having travelled extensively in the



northern regions of Pakistan I have had the chance to visit the area and interact with the people there. Shandur is a source of pride for Pakistan and draws international tourists and avid polo players every year as part of the tournament. While the rest of the world raves about Pakistan's natural beauty, it is a shame that our own government belittles it and fails to preserve not only Pakistan's natural geography but also its rich, cultural traditions. International polo matches feature players from urban Pakistani centers while those who play the sport in Shandur with natural passion, vigor and enthusiasm, understanding the

real rules of the game, are left in the dark. Polo, also called the "Sport of the Kings," is a very prestigious and competitive sport played on horseback, which requires rigorous training and commitment. Instead of promoting the game, the annual tournament and Shandur, Pakistan chooses instead to remain mum about it. Few Pakistanis are aware of the sport or the area. The Shandur Polo Tournament is a matter of pride for Pakistan and must be elevated to that stature rather than be diminished in the eyes of its people.

Samina Khan
Islamabad, Pakistan

The New Man on the Job

New U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, has certainly secured a job well-earned. Kerry's record of diplomacy and experience in foreign affairs makes him the perfect fit for the job. While Secretary Clinton led a remarkable tenure and Kerry has some "big heels to fill," there is little doubt that he will rise to the occasion. As mentioned in your story, the real question lies in exactly how Kerry will run the State department. His past performances paint him as a patient man who values diplomacy and multinational alliances while strictly abhorring unilateral military strikes, illustrating much in common with President Obama. However, will Kerry usher in a new and productive American diplomacy in conflict zones such as Syria, lead a strategy for responsible transition in Afghanistan, strike the right balance of relationship with Pakistan and also address the growing threat from China, Iran's nuclear program and India's economic might? Experienced and informed, Kerry does not come across as an impulsive man, a trait that will certainly come in handy during his tenure. In addition, he has a remarkable friendship with global leaders, which



will certainly aid President Obama's second-term administration.

Secretary Kerry's term is one that many are eagerly awaiting for. Whether he will follow the administration's old strategies or use his experience to usher in new policies for diplomacy, remains to be seen. For a man of his stature, let us hope it is the latter for the sake of America.

Josh Mandel
New York, NY

Leading the Party

Your story on Rahul Gandhi and his recent rise to power within the Congress party was very informative and raised a number of pertinent questions. The Congress party finds itself embroiled in a number of controversies and a tenure that many view as outdated with India's real-time problems. The recent civil outpour-



ing following the rape case of a young woman has diminished Congress's reputation and only alienated it further from the people. With elections fast approaching and faced with a dire need to revamp the party, Congress's move to introduce and promote Rahul Gandhi has come at the right time. Gandhi is a younger face, represents a strong continuation of the Gandhi dynasty and has a record of truly interacting with the people in the realm of social development. Though he has tried his hand at state level politics, unfortunately, he hasn't succeeded as was expected. Rahul, unlike his more vocal sister Priyanka, has a more docile personality, a softer stance on national political issues and severely lacks the domineering and confident personality that usually accompanies a strong, political leader. Rahul may have a lot backing him up but that is precisely the reason why he must play harder to make a prominent place for himself in the ugly world of Indian politics. Where India stands right now, a family name won't be enough to carry a legacy. Gandhi will have to prove his worth in the form of realistic and practical policies, strengthening the party's link to its people and improving a tarnished party reputation - a tall order for even the golden boy of the Gandhi dynasty to battle.

Priyanka Patel
Mumbai, India

Changing Media Landscapes?

The media landscape around the world is rapidly shifting to digital. Allowing publications, both formal and informal, to instantly gain access to a global audience, this new era of media has opened doors for a number of opinions and stories to be globally accessible. While traditional publications are closing their news bureaus and expanding their web presence to

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target a larger and unhindered audience, South Asia unfortunately does not seem to be following the trend so far. Of course, innumerable publications have entered into the realm of digital media and continue to thrive and compete with big names, the trend hasn't caught on, exponentially. The prime reason is because internet access in this part of the world remains sporadic and accessible to only a select few, given geographical location or economic class. In Pakistan, internet penetration stands at a meager rate of only 3.4% in a country with 18 million people. While social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have rapidly caught on and are increasing in popularity, most users continue to depend on traditional and cheaper forms of media, like TV, radio and print to gain access to news. It will take time for digital media to fully penetrate South Asia and till then, traditional media houses have little to worry about.

Ali Imran
Karachi, Pakistan



UPCOMING B2B EVENTS ...



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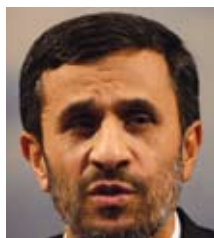


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"You pull away the gun from the face of the Iranian nation, and I myself will enter the talks with you."

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
President of Iran



"The geographical position of Bangladesh obliges us to live in peace with all."

Sheikh Hasina Wajid
Prime Minister of Bangladesh



"The question of me staying as the president beyond 2014 is out of the question."

Hamid Karzai
President of Afghanistan



"On all of the most critical global challenges that we face, India really has a central role to play."

John Kerry
US Secretary of State



"The corrupt talk of eradicating corruption and those who disrespect women talk of women's rights."

Rahul Gandhi
Vice President, Indian National Congress



"When the people live together in unity there are no racial or religious differences. Therefore, it is not practical for this country to be divided based on ethnicity."

Mahinda Rajapaksa
President of Sri Lanka



"Despite a few hiccups, I am very optimistic about our democratic future."

Mohamed Waheed Hassan Manik
President of the Maldives



"What we're saying is we're putting our shoulder to the wheel, but [the peace process] has to be led by Afghanistan."

Sherry Rehman
Pakistan Ambassador to the US



"Not only am I enjoying the matches but also rubbing shoulders with the stalwarts of South Indian film industry. This is the perfect combination of cinema and cricket."

Salman Khan
Indian actor



"It would have been better had there been an agreement to form a new government under a political leader."

Baburam Bhattarai
Prime Minister of Nepal



"The destiny of Bhutan is intimately bound with that of India and it is in our mutual interests to further the bonds of friendship and understanding."

Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk
King of Bhutan



"Providing a direct and comfortable service to our customers at their own city is one of the objectives that we have initiated to all parts of the country."

Nishantha Wickramasinghe
Chairman, SriLankan Airlines

PAKISTAN

Gwadar in the Hands of China

The Government of Pakistan has officially awarded the multi-billion

dollar contract for the construction and operation of Gwadar Port to China. The contract was signed in the presence of President Asif Ali Zardari, Chinese Ambassador Liu Jian and senior government officials.

Previously, the Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) was handling the operations of Gwadar Port. The PSA abandoned the project when Pakistan failed to meet obligations under the 40-year port handling agreement signed in 2007. In addition, the PSA had anticipated spending \$525 million on the project in five years but it made no such investment because of non-ful-

fillment of its demand for allotment of land worth Rs. 15 billion.

China expressed its interest in Gwadar Port in December 2010 when it offered to construct additional berths and make the port operational if Pakistan handed it over.

Gwadar Port has the potential to become the hub of regional trade and commerce, bringing Central Asian countries closer. The strategic location of Gwadar Port will integrate the economies of the region, by serving as a trade corridor, linking China's province of Xinjiang to the Middle East. Moreover, the close proximity of the Middle East to Gwadar will facilitate import of oil to China. **S**



AFGHANISTAN

Obama's Withdrawal Plan

During his recent State of the Union speech, President Barack Obama announced the withdrawal of 34,000 US troops from Afghanistan over the next year. This places the US on the right track for a speedy withdrawal by the end of 2014. President Obama needs to address many challenges in his second term in office; however, dealing with a smooth transition in Afghanistan will be of particular significance. During the speech, Obama spent less time on foreign policy and internal issues and focused more on Afghanistan.

President Obama's announcement comes a month after his meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai where the two leaders agreed to handover combat operation to Afghanistan's national forces. In addition, US military of-

ficials have expressed confidence in Afghanistan's national forces and their ability to take control of the country. Where the US allies applaud President Obama's decision, the Taliban refused to accept it. The extremist faction reiterated that the war would end only when all foreign troops had left Afghanistan. The Taliban further said that changing the number of troops does not solve the problem. The withdrawal of 34,000 troops is itself a daunting challenge for the US. Even if



troops leave the war-torn country, the US would need some backup support in Afghanistan to keep the extremist factions at bay. **S**

Protesting Against Economic Reforms

Trade unions in India observed a two-day strike against the government's economic reforms, describing them as anti-labor. The union members blocked rail and road traffic, affecting daily activities during the course of the strike. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh appealed to the union to call off the strike that direly affected India's economy.

The protests took a serious turn when unknown assailants killed the leader of the trade union. The protest had an impact in the eastern part of West Bengal and southern Kerala states where

trade unions enjoy greater cohesiveness. The striking unions, who pledge their allegiance to the Communists, Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress party, are also protesting against the government's decision to open retail, insurance and aviation sectors to foreign investment and increasing prices of subsidised fuel. Officials of the trade union are of the view that the government's anti-labor policies are ignoring the workers' rights.

By introducing reforms, the government plans to revive its failing economy



and save its declining credit ratings. Prime Minister Singh is certain that the reforms would help strengthen the growth process and will create employment opportunities. The country lost millions of dollars last September when the trade union observed a similar strike. **S**

New Trade Routes

Bangladesh has proposed India to follow new trade routes for import of goods in the country. These routes will import goods to seven northeastern Indian states with a high demand for Bangladeshi products. Recently, the demand for motorbikes, air-conditioners, refrigerators and other accessories has been rising, which India is importing through Pertrapole, situated at the India-Bangladesh border. Until now, India has allowed imports from Bangladesh from Benapole in Jessore, situated opposite to Pertapole.

The Indian side is evaluating the prospects of following this alternate trade route, which will reduce the import costs for Indian traders. Bangladesh and India enjoy bilateral trade relations where trade increased by

nearly 20 percent, exceeding US\$ 4.5 billion in the fiscal year (FY) 2011-12. The two-way trading is expected to cross the \$5 billion-mark at the end of the ongoing FY 2012-13. It is believed that Bangladesh will increase its exports to India, further strengthening bilateral trade relations between these neighbors.

The proposal by Bangladesh comes at a time when India is eyeing to become the regional leader in trade and Bangladesh is fast progressing in all



sectors. The rise in exports from India will help Bangladesh increase its balance of payments, which will facilitate the latter in its quest of becoming an economic hub of South Asia. **S**

SRI LANKA

Controlling Debt

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has advised Sri Lanka to take notice of its mounting external liabilities and reserve adequacy. Sri Lanka's national debt is gradually increasing, amounting to 80% of gross domestic product. The debt to GDP ratio has risen in 2012 mainly because of the balance of payment crisis, which triggered when the country took loans to subsidize energy tariffs.

The IMF suggests that the Sri Lankan government should address the fiscal consolidation. Statistics show that nearly 47 percent of Sri Lanka's debt was foreign while foreign investors



hold 12 percent of the Rupee dominated debt.

Authorities suggest that Sri Lanka must not compare its national debt with other countries because the

budget committee passes most of the funds in Sri Lanka. However, in other countries the spending agencies borrow directly from the government. The spending agencies in Sri Lanka include road and urban development agencies that borrow on their own account outside the budget, which understates the overall budget deficit and the national debt. Sri Lanka needs to maintain its financial health to develop its industries. With a decade long civil war against the Tamil forces ending in 2008, Sri Lanka is slowly becoming a prosperous country. It must take necessary steps in its budget structure to facilitate growth. ■

MALDIVES

Visa Policy

The Maldivian government has agreed to relax its visa policy for its citizens visiting India. The Indian High Commission in Male had earlier advised its citizens to obtain a tourist visa before arriving in India. People from the Maldives were facing difficulties as they once enjoyed free on arrival visa policy but India recently made alterations in its guidelines. According to the Indian High Commission, the Indian government has slightly changed the interpretation of the agreement signed between India and the Maldives in 1979 to grant 90 days free visa on arrival.

In addition, issues such as insufficient visa requirements, overstay and excessive fine on visa breaches are com-

mon. Indian officials believe that changes in the fee structure will also bring some relief to the Indians who have to pay a fine of MVR15,000 for overstaying in the Maldives. The authorities in the Maldives have informed employers not to seize the passports of Indian expatriates while the Maldives Foreign Ministry will resolve the issues in obtaining visas for dependents. The decision to relax the visa policy comes at a time when India and the Maldives are having a row



over the former ousting India's GMR Infrastructure from constructing the Male International Airport. Following the decision, India halted trade ties with the Maldives. The decision to ease visa policies is expected to bring the temperatures down between the two

World Bank Assistance

Nepal and the World Bank recently signed an agreement whereby the latter has provided a loan and grant assistance of Rs.3.48 billion (US\$40 million) to the Government of Nepal.



The agreement was signed between the Nepalese Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, Shanta Raj Subedi and World Bank's Country Manager for Nepal, Tasheen Sayed. The financial aid will assist Nepal in implementing the Project for Agriculture Commercialization and Trade (PACT).

The World Bank grant includes \$22 million as loan assistance and funding of \$18 million. Nepal will use the grant and loan assistance as additional financing to execute the PACT. The objective of the PACT is to improve the competitiveness of the farmers and the agribusiness sector in the country.

The project will help farmers engage in profitable market-oriented production and improve access to markets. The agreement comes into effect at a time when Nepal is strengthening its industry partnerships and reducing obstacles in food trade and agriculture. Although Nepal is a landlocked country in South Asia, it pursues to establish trade routes with regional neighbors including India, China and Bangladesh. The grant assistance by the World Bank will help Nepal develop its agriculture industry as it plans to extend PACT to all 75 districts to establish commercial market chains for local farm producers. **S**

Education for All

India's Infinity Group has recently unveiled plans for building an Education City in Bhutan worth Rs, 4,000 crore. The Group recently signed an agreement with Bhutan's Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Limited to construct the 1,000-acre project in Chozum, situated between Thimphu and Paro. Bhutan enjoys positive bilateral relations with India and this project will further strengthen their ties. Bhutan will have a 51% share in the project while the Infinity Group will settle with a 49% share. The Indian Group is approaching leading universities in the UK, USA and Australia to set up their campuses in the Education City. UK's

Durham School is one of the first institutions to show interest at this offer.

India's assistance will help Bhutan develop its educational system as it



aims to achieve 70% literacy rate by 2014. Moreover, the Education City project will boost foreign investment to Bhutan. In 2011, World Bank as-

essed Bhutan for not being an investment friendly nation, which is why the country is making all efforts to attract foreign investment. The World Bank also cited lack of infrastructure in Bhutan as a major drawback. The Education City is expected to be a state-of-the-art facility that will make Bhutan a favorable investment destination.

The Education City represents a beacon of hope for Bhutan although there are concerns that the country is spending too much at a time when cost saving measures should be its priority. Some quarters of the Bhutanese government are concerned over India's involvement in the project. **S**

There is no (further) hurdle in the way. The last one, a money-laundering case in a Swiss court against President Zardari that threatened to deny the government its full term, has been successfully crossed. The only collateral damage was Yusuf Raza Gilani.

The legislatures were wound up by March 16. The government and opposition political parties had some issues sorting out the names of eligible candidates for a consensus caretaker prime minister. Meanwhile, the Chief Election Commissioner, Fakhruddin G. Ibrahim went ahead with preparations and arrangements for holding the elections.

There is a pervasive sense of satisfaction as signs look propitious for democracy to be estab-

lished in Pakistan. Nobody holds grudges against giving a percentage cut if the other party delivers full measure. The people therefore have decided to ignore the weaknesses of President Asif Ali Zardari, in return for giving them five, full years of democracy for the first time in the sixty-five eventful (and woeful) years of the country's history. It was by no means any easy sailing in the perennially choppy waters of Pakistan's politics. But Zardari demonstrated remarkable political acumen by cobbling a coalition of diverse elements, often with conflicting viewpoints, such as the ANP and MQM. At the same time he cleverly exploited Nawaz Sharif's mortal fear of military intervention to cool his fire.

This unique moment in Pakistan's history, however, calls for a quick look back over the years spent in the quest for democracy.

The founder, a great constitutionalist, did not live long enough to see the sapling of democracy take firm root during his lifetime. In consequence, when he depart-

ed, things were chaotic. Liaquat Ali Khan made a feeble attempt to sustain democracy but the anti-democracy forces arrayed against him were too strong for him to subdue. So he paid for his audacity with his life.

For the West Pakistani feudal elite, democracy was a bugbear. They had never known democracy. It clipped their wings. It impinged upon their freedom to do with their serfs as they wished. In sum, democracy was contrary to their political culture. East Pakistanis were different. They knew democracy. So they would not enter into any back-hand deal that might derail democracy.

Intrigues began immediately after Mr. Jinnah's demise. Pakistan became a wrestling arena for power-seekers. Thus, Ghulam Mohammad who had no credentials for the job became governor-general. He dismissed Prime Minister Khwaja Nizamuddin because, being used to democratic practice as chief minister of pre-partition Bengal, the latter had tried to restrict

Democracy

Having completed its five-year term, the coalition government looked like it had made history.

By S.G. Jilane

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the governor-general's arbitrary powers. But, worse, the Supreme Court, under Chief Justice Munir, upheld the murder of democracy by Ghulam Mohammad.

Far from any democracy, there was not even a constitution.

Whereas India and later, Bangladesh, gave themselves a constitution within a year of independence, Pakistan fumbled for about eight years until 1956 to have one.

Whereas other countries stick to one constitution and insert amendments into it as circumstances dictate, Pakistan has had three constitutions in 65 years. The 1956

constitution was the first. In 1962 President Ayub Khan gave the second constitution. The last, badly battered yet still working constitution was promulgated in 1973.



at Work

Presidents of Pakistan 1956-Present



Iskander Mirza
March 23, 1956
-October 27, 1958
Republican Party



Ayub Khan
October 27, 1958
-June 8, 1962
Pakistan Armed Forces
June 8, 1962
-March 25, 1969.
Pakistan Muslim League (C)



Yahya Khan
March 25, 1969
-December 20, 1971
Pakistan Armed Forces



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto
December 20, 1971-
August 13, 1973
Pakistan People's Party



Fazal Ilahi Chaudhary
August 14, 1973-
September 16, 1978
Pakistan People's Party

Even before the country came under a full military dictatorship in 1958, it had been difficult to define its political profile. As the saying goes, it was “neither fish, nor flesh nor a good red herring.” It started as a British dominion with a governor-general at its head. It was neither truly parliamentary nor presidential. In 1956, it declared itself a republic. With the departure of Mr. Jinnah, a wrestling match for power amongst the leaders was launched. Pakistan saw four governors-general between 1947 and 1956. The last GG, Iskander Mirza, transitioned from governor-general to become Pakistan's first president. But it was the coming and going of prime ministers in quick succession that looked like a game of musical chairs. There were seven prime ministers in the first eleven years of Pakistan's history. Mostly they lasted for two years. Chaudhry Mohammad Ali and H.S. Suhrawardy each had a one-year stint. I.I. Chundrigar served for two months and Nurul Amin for only thirteen days.

From 1958 until the end of 1971, Pakistan was ruled by military dictators Ayub and Yahya Khan. The climate was too unfavorable for democracy to sustain and the sapling withered.

With Bhutto taking charge of the residual Pakistan after East Pakistan seceded, hopes for democracy resurged because he was a duly elected leader. A consensus constitution was promulgated. It looked like Pakistan's politics had at last turned the corner. But the euphoria was short-lived. While anti-democratic forces were already at work to topple the edifice, Bhutto himself contributed to it with his arrogance and reckless actions.

The result was another lethal blow to democracy as Gen. Ziaul Haq overthrew him and took over the reins of government. Feigning deference to democracy he took Mohammad Khan Junejo as prime minister, but his dictatorship revealed itself when he fell out with Mr. Junejo and summarily dismissed him. With Ziaul Haq's demise, though elected governments came to power, alternating between Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif, they were removed one after the other due to misrule. Nawaz

Sharif in his second stint was toppled by then Army Chief, Gen. Pervez Musharraf in 1999.

Musharraf also tried to lend a façade of democracy to his rule. Elections were held and prime ministers appointed. But Musharraf's rule, despite being legitimized by the apex court, lacked authenticity.

It was in 2008, therefore, that democracy in its true form was installed in the country with the PPP in the saddle. The journey on the road to democracy has not been easy. Indeed, often it seemed like the boat would sink. With corruption at its peak, near total breakdown of law and order, ineffective governance, executive and judiciary in a state of perpetual standoff and the America factor to queer the pitch further, it would have invited some self-styled savior to step in and take charge. But, this time history did not repeat itself. The army chief betrayed no inclination to step in and opted to stay back in his GHQ to the frustration of those who thrive under dictatorship.

Opinions are divided as to whether democracy was better suited for the country or dictatorship. Dictator Ayub Khan invoked the people's "genius" in his support; Zia called it "psyche." Where Pakistan's future is concerned, a perpetual debate on whether the system of government should be parliamentary or presidential also exists. The issue of democracy being un-Islamic has however been settled once and for all, since religious parties have reconciled to democracy and are playing a prominent role in it. The JUI (F) is even a coalition partner of the ruling party. This is a good augury for the country's future.

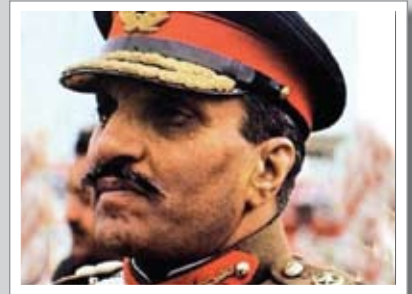
Believers in democracy are looking forward to the next five years of democracy in the hope that they will be spared the sufferings they had to endure during the five Zardari years.

As for the present, it is a time to celebrate. So long only military dictatorships had lasted for long years. But this time an elected government has also completed its full term, weathering all storms. ■

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

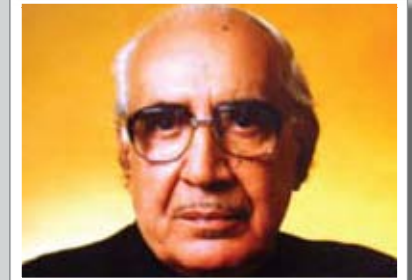
Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq

September 16, 1978-
August 17, 1988
Pakistan Armed Forces



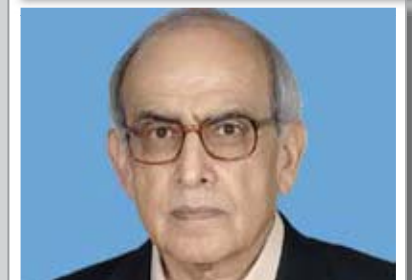
Ghulam Ishaq Khan

August 17, 1988
-July 18, 1993
Independent



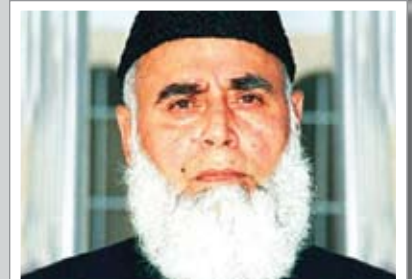
Farooq Leghari

November 14, 1993-
December 2, 1997
Pakistan People's Party



Muhammad Rafiq Tarar

January 1, 1998
-June 20, 2000
Pakistan Muslim League (N)



Pervez Musharraf

June 20, 2001
-October 6, 2007
Pakistan Armed Forces
October 6, 2007
-August 18, 2008
Pakistan Muslim League (Q)



Asif Ali Zardari

September 9, 2008-
Incumbent
Pakistan People's Party



In the Name of Democracy

As Pakistan vacillates between military rule and civilian government, what end of the spectrum will it settle on?

By Dr. Moonis Ahmar



Some people consider it a miracle, others say it's a blessing in disguise and the rest term it as the most painful era in the history of Pakistan. The completion of the five-year tenure of a civilian democratic government in the country, elected as a result of the February 2008 elections, is being celebrated. However, several questions arise regarding the performance of the so-called democratic era of Pakistan. Why is it that in the name of democracy, this civilian government plunged its people in a state of economic hardship, terrorism and rampant corruption? Should the people have tolerated all these enormous ordeals and the failing status of their country just for the sake of democracy? Can the forthcoming elections, if held, bring a qualitative change in the socio, economic and political conditions of the people or is it expected to worsen the situation in the days to come?

Out of Pakistan's 66-year history, the country has been under military and quasi-military rule for around 30 years. The remaining 36 years were governed by civilian governments but under the shadow of the military and intelligence agencies. Even the most powerful civilian government of Z.A. Bhutto failed to curb the military's influence. Following the civil disobedience movement, Army Chief of Staff General Zia-ul-Haq, toppled Bhutto's government. The movement was launched by the Pakistan National Alliance in response to the alleged poll rigging of the March 1977 general elections by the PPP regime.

Post-1972, Pakistan had the opportunity to strengthen civilian democratic rule but politicians failed to



Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf with the members of the National Assembly at Parliament House in Islamabad.

understand that while seeking legitimacy and credit, it was imperative to provide good governance, accountability and rule of law. All the civilian governments ranging from Z. A. Bhutto, to Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, Yusuf Raza Gilani and Pervez Ashraf will be remembered in history as incompetent, corrupt, ruthless,

vindictive, manipulative and apathetic governments. When President Zardari and PML (N) leader Nawaz Sharif tout their success in helping complete five years of a “democratic, civilian” government, the people of Pakistan have learnt to take it with a pinch of salt. The so-called democratic governments have had five

years to deliver but opinion polls illustrate a rise in public frustration and terrorism thus contradicting political claims of success. The rule of law, good governance and accountability remained a low priority for the civilian-democratic rulers of Pakistan. Berlin-based Transparency International (TI) also issued a hefty



report, providing reams of evidence of mega corruption scandals within Pakistan's current government structure. The hearings and verdicts of the Supreme Court in the last four years also speak of volumes of corruption and nepotism on the part of the PPP led government.

Democracy has never been fully practised in Pakistan. Power hungry politicians have wreaked havoc in state institutions ranging from Water and Power Development Authority

(WAPDA), Railways, Steel Mills and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), all at the expense of the common man. In the last five years, the PPP-led government borrowed 8 trillion rupees from different banks and financial lending institutions, including the State Bank. Foreign debt, which stood at 36 billion dollars in early 2008 is now 60 billion dollars. The value of the rupee versus US\$ which was PKR60 in early 2007, now stands at PKR100. Foreign exchange reserves, which should have been on the rise have almost depleted with the State Bank recording only \$8.7 billion. Corruption amounting to trillions of rupees in the last five years has been a source of embarrassment and shame for Pakistan, internationally. Prices of essential commodities have more than doubled over the last five years and the periodic increase in government salaries has skyrocketed inflation. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, public sector universities are unable to pay salaries to their employees and teachers on time. With such a hopeless performance of the PPP-led government, does it make sense to take pride in the false notion of completing the 5 year term of a democratic, civilian government?

While the notion of democracy is contested, many commentators in Pakistan wonder whether given the poor performance of civilian-democratic governments, the people of Pakistan were better off during military regimes? As compared to their civilian counterparts, two critical things, which are controlled by military regimes, whether under Ayub Khan, Zia-ul-Haq or Pervez Musharraf, are price control and law and order. One can do statistical research to compare the performance of military and civilian regimes in Pakistan since 1947 till today. Military regimes are, however, blamed of deepening ethnic and sectarian conflicts, suppressing their opponents brutally

and losing wars and territories. Pakistan lost the 1971 war with India when the military was in power. Pakistan also lost Kargil and Siachen under military rule and the military establishment in order to neutralize its political opponents, patronized ethnic, sectarian and jihadi groups. In terms of performance, both civilian and military regimes have been unable to deliver successfully due to structural inadequacies within the leadership of Pakistan.

Four major reasons are responsible for the failure of civilian governments in Pakistan. First is the lack of educated, professional, honest and enlightened politicians. Secondly, political traits of greed, power, incompetence and opportunism have molded career diplomats who often find themselves in positions of power and promptly resort to abusing the system. Third, the military has historically, and consciously, refused to support political pluralism and democratic institutions thus preventing the introduction and continuation of any cohesive political framework. Finally, the failure of politicians to develop a culture of tolerance has ripped the social fabric of Pakistan. While one can blame the tribal and feudal culture, religious dogmatism, social backwardness and illiteracy as major causes of Pakistan's deterioration into a failing state, it is actually the mindset of politicians which is responsible for betraying the people of this great nation.

Pakistan, in view of its serious fault lines, cannot afford the luxury of bad democracy. Certainly, parliamentary democracy in its present form has failed in Pakistan and serious questions must be raised regarding which political system is best suited to its peculiar socio-political make-up. **S**

Dr. Moonis Ahmar is a Professor of International Relations at the University of Karachi and Director, Program on Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution.

No Solution in Sight

The systematic persecution of the Hazara community in Balochistan has led to strong public opposition and a call for urgent government and military action to quell the rot.

By Huzaima Bukhari & Dr. Ikramul Haq



The unabated killing of hundreds of innocent people in the name of religion in a country where people claim to be the followers of the Quran is enigmatic. The oft-repeated assertion that 'Pakistan came into being in the name of Islam' has led to a gradual "theocratic" state where every sect strives to impose its interpretation on others - even if it requires using force.

On the one hand, many in

Pakistan quote the Quran as stating that "if one kills another except as a punishment for murder or for spreading disorder in the land it shall be as if he has killed the entire humanity" [5:32]. On the other hand, complete apathy prevails over the loss of precious human lives on a daily basis in various parts of the country. The Quran clearly says that "if one saves the life of a single person it shall be as if he has saved mankind entirely," but many outlawed sectarian outfits plead that it is their religious

duty to kill all those who do not agree with their brand of Islam.

The wanton bombing on February 16, 2013 in Hazara Town, Quetta that killed 95 and wounded over 200 Hazaras - including women and children - elicited countrywide protests, bringing to the streets people seething with anger, outrage, shock, dismay and grief followed by sit-ins in various cities that paralyzed normal life. At the global level, the reaction was equally strong. The UN Secretary-General, while condemning terrorist attacks on religious and ethnic minorities in Pakistan, called for swift and determined action against those claiming responsibility and per-



petrating such actions. Earlier, rallies in Australia, US, UK, Austria, Norway, Denmark and Canada marked an international day of protest against the unending wave of attacks on Hazaras in Pakistan.

Hazaras, primarily professing the Shi'ite faith, have been persecuted and discriminated against for centuries. They were expelled from Central Asia to Afghanistan, to Pakistan and elsewhere. More than 900,000 Hazaras live in Pakistan, with thousands residing in Quetta. The Hazara community have faced perpetual persecution in Afghanistan at the hands of Taliban - and others before them. The Taliban in Afghanistan ruthlessly attack Shias, burn villages and kidnap community members, driving the Hazaras into Pakistan. In Pakistan, extremist Sunni militant outfits, allies of Pakistani Taliban, have unleashed sectarian attacks on the Hazaras, alleging that they receive Iranian support.

In the wake of two brazen attacks on the Hazaras in Quetta, both within 40 days, a strong demand was made from the bereaved families, the Shia community and the public at large for immediate action against the extremist militant group, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi that openly accepted responsibility for these attacks. In Quetta, thousands of Hazaras - men, women and children - staged sit-ins despite the bitterly cold weather, refused to bury the dead unless action was taken against the perpetrators and the city was handed over to the army. Through their peaceful protests and demands for a fundamental constitutional right to live, the weak and the helpless Hazaras have won the support of millions of their fellow countrymen and humanity at large.

The Hazara Town tragedy jolted the entire nation and the Supreme Court consequently took suo moto action of the incident. While the government failed to crack down on extremists even after imposing Governor's rule in Balochistan and despite receiving credible information from intelligence agencies


of well-planned, ghastly attacks, as usual, it shifted the blame on foreign players as the Inspector General Police said, "Some hidden hands want to destabilize the country by engineering a Sunni-Shia conflict."

Proceedings before the Supreme Court and news reports confirm that the devastating bombings could have been prevented if military intelligence and police officers had sufficiently followed up on evidence gathered against the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi. Finally, the government, under tremendous pressure, launched an operation on February 19 against the LeJ and claimed to have killed and arrested some of its members. In the wake of this operation and assurances given to the leaders of the Hazara community, most mourners agreed to bury their loved ones.

On February 20, burials of blast victims took place amid tears and sorrow in the Hazara Town graveyard. Thousands of Hazaras participated in the mass funeral that was marred by violent protests and aerial firing. Though sit-ins in major cities of the country also ended, the tragedy left many unanswered questions. The most vital one was that who was financing the terrorist and militant outfits like Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and what are their aims and objectives? Many question as to why intelligence agencies did not act after knowing that a huge quantity of chemicals was transported from Lahore were asked by the media. While there are no two opinions about the complete failure of the government, law enforcement and intelligence agencies, the unsolved mystery is why Lashkar-i-Jhangvi that openly kills Shias is not dealt with the same iron hand as nationalists are treated by the FC and other paramilitary law enforcement agencies? The answer to this mind-baffling question takes us back to Zia's era of bigotry. Pakistan has faced perpetual crises of all sorts with religious intolerance being the worst amongst them. The increasing role of the clergy in politics has culminated in

the genocide of the minority Shia sect and forced conversion of people of other faiths.

The solution lies in what was asserted by the Army Chief in his address at the 65th Independence Day parade at the Pakistan Military Academy on 2 May 2012. General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani said, "the army cannot succeed in its endeavors against terrorists without support of the people." He clearly indicated that terrorists were enjoying support from within, besides getting funds from outside. Despite such a bold statement from the Army, the political leadership, instead of seizing the moment to usher in much-needed strategies, paid no heed to Kayani's points. Kayani stated that (i) the fight against extremism and terrorism is our own war and we must fight it whole-heartedly (ii) if we remain divided we may head towards a civil war (iii) the war against extremism and terrorism cannot be fought by the army alone; and (iv) it is imperative for the entire nation to unite because the army cannot succeed without the cooperation of the people.

The seriousness of the governments — federal and provincial — and the parliament can be gauged from the fact that neither special laws were enacted nor anti-terrorism combat units formed in the last five years to deal with the growing menace as has been done by other states facing similar challenges. The result is before us - carnages like Hazara Town, attacks on sensitive military installations and daily killings have become routine occurrences. The entire state apparatus is crumbling and if immediate remedial measures are not taken, the day is not far when it will collapse completely. The Hazara Town tragedy is only a symptomatic reflection of the actual malady. 

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



"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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Too Close for

China and India are two major economic players, uncomfortably located close to each other. But will India be able to challenge and surpass the stronghold of the Chinese economy?

By Hadia Majid

China's GDP growth rate has been at over 9 percent since 2008, after expanding 2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2012 over the previous quarter. In contrast, India has seen more sporadic spurts of high growth rates – GDP growth stood at 3.9 percent in 2008, went up to 9.6 percent in 2010, while forecasts suggest that India will likely see GDP grow by 6.5 percent in 2013. In addition to their high rates of growth, both India and China have burgeoning domestic markets along with an economy that is largely export oriented. According to the World Bank, China's exports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP have been in excess of 30 percent since 2010 while India's have been in

excess of 20 percent since 2010. Thus, both economies are major players in the international market with China's economy currently being the second largest in the world after the United States, with expectations that it will overtake the US economy within the next decade.

Having two major players in such close geo-physical proximity has resulted in some interesting dynamics vis-à-vis the foreign relations of the two nations. Over the last 60 years, the two countries have



Comfort

been involved in several skirmishes on their common border. In recent years, however, both countries have also endeavored to improve their diplomatic and trading relations. Moreover, although China occupies the stronger economic position for the time being, it is unclear if it will be able to maintain that position in the long run, though as stated, it is likely to surpass the US. Hence, the question of whether India or China will be the dominant superpower in the region, and potentially the largest economy in the world, in the next couple of decades is a matter of debate.

Both China and India have witnessed a fairly similar progression of their economies towards the high rates of growth that they experience today. Both countries have evolved from a largely autarkic economy to one that is primarily export-oriented. Yet, there are also some significant differences in the path that the two have chosen to follow. While the Chinese economy was liberalized earlier than the Indian one, China has been focused on attracting foreign investment to enhance its economic performance whereas the Indian government has emphasized on providing support to local entrepreneurs and businesses. China's success in attracting FDI may be attributed to the openness with which the government has traditionally treated its (wealthy) diaspora. Historically, India's attitude toward its foreign residents has been more hostile. Today this outlook has reversed substantially and India has welcomed increased involvement of its diaspora in the local economy. The Chinese model has stressed accelera-

tion in industry while India has tended to underscore its services sector.

The fact that India and China have chosen to focus on different sectors must be evaluated in the context of their national characteristics. Both countries are home to large populations (China's population stands at 1.3 billion while India's is 1.2 billion) but income per capita is higher for China than it is for India. Furthermore, China had a health per capita expenditure of US\$471 between 2008 and 2011 whereas India's per capita health expenditure for the same period was at US\$41 (World Bank). Finally, according to the CIA Fact Book, adult literacy rates stand at 92.2 percent and 61 percent in China and India, respectively, with the gap between male and female literacy rates being significantly larger in India as compared to China (where adult literacy is defined as percent of individuals who are at least 15 years of age and can read and write).

Given the deficiencies in the current state of human capital in India, the growth prospects for the country will in part be determined by how readily it will be able to move beyond its current emphasis on services to an expansion of trade in manufactured goods. While India's highly educated and technically skilled diaspora has been instrumental in the advancement of its services sector, it is only in the trade of goods that India can truly take advantage of its large pool of undereducated workers.

The ground-up approach pursued by India with regard to its domestic economy has meant a heavier emphasis on indigenous entrepreneurs. Moreover, India's deep-rooted democratic

institutions have given it systemic resilience. Combine these factors with the demographic dividend that India may enjoy in the next decade or so (while China's population ages and shrinks as a consequence of its one-child policy) and India might start to outstrip China in the near future. The robustness of India's more bottom-heavy brand of capitalism is best exemplified by considering the difference in performance between two Chinese provinces. In a 2003 article, Huang and Khanna report that while Zhejiang has focused on local businesses it has also grown at an annual rate that is 1 percent faster than Jiangsu that has relied heavily on FDI to drive its growth.

One major caveat to keep in mind when discussing India's growth potential is that its strong democratic institutions as opposed to China's highly centralized and opaque system of government, inspire (both domestic and foreign) investor confidence. The higher level of corruption in the same institutions also make India the less attractive choice for investors. Furthermore, while the demographic dividend will be important in the near future, India will be unable to take complete advantage of that unless the population's human capital acquisition is also enhanced. However, India faces great challenges with regard to raising educational attainment at both the demand and supply levels. Hence, while India's attention towards nascent home-grown businesses, its democratic institutional strength and the increased involvement of its diaspora implies that it has the potential to surpass China in terms of economic growth, this potential will only be realized if corruption in government institutions can be properly curbed and the currently undereducated population is fully utilized. ■

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One Step Forward

The recent Strategic Partnership Agreement between Islamabad and Kabul could go a long way in enhancing cooperation and political participation in the region.

By Raza Khan

As the withdrawal date of all U.S. combat troops from Afghanistan draws closer, peace in the war-torn country is far from fully restored. In the meanwhile, the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between Afghanistan and Pakistan, signed in February, shows some signs of optimism.

The agreement marks a new era of engagement and cooperation in the field of security and economy. It was debated at the tripartite summit meeting in London with British Prime Minister David Cameron, President Asif Ali Zardari and Afghan President Karzai. At the London meeting, both Afghanistan and Pakistan discussed a regional strategy for a post-withdrawal Afghanistan. While addressing a joint news conference with the other two leaders, President Asif Ali Zardari said, "We feel that we can only survive together in a peaceful atmosphere. We cannot change our neighborhood or our neighbors. We will support our Afghan brothers to come out of this war." Critics argue that these words suggest a strong guarantee from Islamabad to bring the Taliban to the negotiation table. However, it is quite debatable how much influence Pakistan still wields over the Taliban. Undoubtedly, Pakistan has influence over the Taliban but it is not as pervasive as is

perceived by the Afghan government or the international community.

British Prime Minister, David Cameron, while divulging the details of the summit meeting, disclosed that Pakistani and Afghan leaders had agreed to "an unprecedented level of cooperation." The importance of the talks can be gauged not only from the fact that the UK officially hosted and moderated them but that senior diplomatic, military and intelligence officials, including foreign ministers, chiefs of defence staff, chiefs of intelligence, the Afghan national security adviser and the chair of the Afghan High Peace Council also took part.

The summit talks in London were held after Pakistan released 25 leading Afghan Taliban to facilitate peace talks in Afghanistan. In addition, a high-level Afghan military delegation, led by Chief of Army Staff, General Bismillah Muhammadi had also recently visited the country. Afghanistan has been complaining for long that Pakistan was using arrested Afghan Taliban leaders to dictate peace terms in Afghanistan. The gradual release of 25 key Taliban figures left Afghan detractors spellbound. The release of Taliban detainees by Pakistan has resulted in correcting Islamabad's image in the international community, which has also criticized Pakistan-bashing by

Afghan authorities.

As Prime Minister Cameron pointed out, the release of Taliban detainees by Pakistan and the opening of an office in Doha (Qatar) by the Afghan government should send a clear message of negotiation to the Taliban. It still remains uncertain though, how the Taliban will operate their political office in Qatar, which they agreed to open back in 2010. In this regard, there is hope that the Taliban will finally show some flexibility and participate in a peaceful, political process in Afghanistan. Taliban since long have taken the position that they do not recognize the existing Afghan constitution and political institutions as they were established by the United States led Western World

Pakistan indicated the gradual but constant shift in 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan, the roots of which go back to the decade of 1980s and the rule of General Zia ul Haq (1979-88). The credit of initiating a shift in Islamabad's Afghan policy, which has proved destructive and in the words of President Zardari "very damaging" for Pakistan, goes to Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani. It was General Kiyani, who a couple of years back started asserting and reiterating that Pakistan did not want strategic depth in Afghanistan as was generally



Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan, David Cameron, Prime Minister of Britain, and Asif Ali Zardari, President of Pakistan at the trilateral summit in London.

perceived in purely military-strategic terms. Rather General Kiyani counter-argued that Pakistan's conception of strategic depth meant a 'peaceful' and 'friendly' Afghanistan. Independent analysts defined this new conception as a condition where Pakistan's rival India must not have any political, and more importantly military influence in Afghanistan. Afghan officials and politicians, while demanding too much from Islamabad have shied away from giving a candid guarantee that Afghan soil would not be used against Pakistan at any cost.

The SPA also paved the way for Afghan security personnel be trained by the Pakistan armed forces. This was first offered by General Kiyani but was disdainfully rejected by the Afghan government. Kiyani also offered NATO and the Afghans 150,000 troops in four years, if Pakistan was entrusted with the training task. While recently visiting Pakistan and seeing its defence and training facilities, Afghan Army Chief Bismillah stated that the Afghans were not aware of the high quality training facilities available nearby, which can also be taken

advantage of by Afghan forces.

While US and NATO forces want to pull out of Afghanistan as soon as possible, Kabul's SPA with Islamabad could go a long way in triggering processes of Afghan political participation in the country's political system. **S**

Raza Khan is a political analyst and researcher on the political economy and the Af-Pak region. He has served in several senior positions in the Pakistan government and is currently writing his doctoral thesis on religious extremism-terrorism in Pakistan.



Serious Health Threat

Bangladesh suffers from a host of water-borne and communicable diseases that threaten its very survival.

By Fatima Siraj

The constitution of Bangladesh terms health as a basic right of the people. Current and previous health sector programs implemented in the country have often focused on low-income groups leading to what many term as a Sector-Wide Approach (SWA). Bangladesh has made considerable progress over the last few decades in improving

the health of its population. This has manifested in a declining population growth rate, increased life expectancy at birth and decreased infant mortality rates. However, with a meager \$57 recorded per capita health expenditure, Bangladesh has a long way to go before it can solve the innumerable health problems that paralyze it.

The health sector in Bangladesh can be analyzed in the light of various factors; the health of vulnerable groups, the prevalence of communicable and non-communicable diseases, the water and sanitation crisis, environmental health issues and the response to natural disasters.

Vulnerable groups include women, children, youth and the elderly.

According to WHO, while the child mortality rate has declined, maternal mortality rates remain high. Malnutrition is common among pregnant women as well children and adolescents. Nearly half of Bangladeshi children are moderately underweight, one-third suffer from stunted growth and a large number of adolescents, girls in particular, are severely malnourished. The threat of measles poses another challenge with approximately 20,000 children dying of the disease each year. Efforts are urgently needed to ensure safe access to immunization and control vaccine preventable diseases. The youth in particular, also suffers from the risks associated with sexual behavior.

Communicable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and the Avian Influenza, are also a cause of serious concern. In the 1970s, malaria was eradicated from Bangladesh but re-emerged in the 1990s, as one of the major causes of death. Out of 64 districts, 13 districts bordering the east and northeast parts of Bangladesh, constitute the high risk malaria zone. *P. Falciparum*, one of the most dangerous types of malaria infection, puts nearly 11 million people at risk every year. In addition, Bangladesh also suffers from the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This is due to the high prevalence of the disease in neighboring countries and limited access to counseling and testing services plus the social stigma attached to it. Recently, concerns of HIV-tuberculosis co-infection have arisen in Bangladesh, which records the highest number of tuberculosis cases. Bangladesh is also prone to natural disasters such as floods and cyclones that lead to outbreaks of communicable diseases. During the floods of 2004, more than 400,000 people required treatment after suffering from different diseases, particularly diarrheal diseases, in the

aftermath.

From an environmental point of view, the water and sanitation crisis contributes to diarrheal diseases that kill over 100,000 children each year. Thousands of cases of diarrhea occurring in children and adults are recorded every day. These diseases are linked to malnutrition, poor maternal health, high fertility and child survival. In Bangladesh, many wells containing arsenic were closed without considering the repercussions. Once a well is painted red, signifying that the water contains arsenic concentrations above the national standard, community members are discouraged from using it. However, when a well is closed, communities must look for other alternatives for drinking water. In their desperate quest, they usually return to the traditional unprotected water sources such as ponds or ditches, or walk to distant wells that do not contain arsenic.

While reducing the effects of chronic arsenic exposure, such practices dramatically increase the risk of bacteriological contamination, leading to greater outbreaks of water-related diseases. These issues are more pronounced in the squatter settlements of urban slum areas, which are the most densely populated areas of the country. This is because people from rural areas migrate in large numbers to urban centers, hoping to earn enough wages to support their families. A concentration of people in a small area leads to issues of acute poverty, overcrowding and poor housing which further aggravates the health and sanitation problem. Furthermore, outbreaks of dengue are common in unhygienic settlements and government efforts need to be taken to control mosquito breeding.

When it comes to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), unplanned urbanization again plays a major role in contributing to the burden. Other underlying factors that cause NCDs

include changing dietary habits, unregulated tobacco consumption, air pollution, road traffic injury and lack of awareness regarding healthy behavior and lifestyle. Tobacco in particular is a major risk factor.

Despite significant improvements, the government has a long way to go in ensuring that the basic health needs of the population are met. The centralized state health management system has proven to be ineffective in providing equitable health care, especially in rural areas. Concerted efforts need to ensure that health workers are effectively trained and deployed. The government of Bangladesh, along with the World Health Organization, is making a conscious effort towards improving the health situation in the country. In 1999, the WHO developed Country Cooperation Strategies (CCS) to help initiate and strengthen lucrative health policies and develop projects with the help of government officials, development experts and other key stakeholders.

The CCS Strategic Agenda has been aligned with key national and international development priorities including the Millennium Development Goals, the Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Program (HNPS) and the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR). This agenda aims to increase the accessibility of vulnerable groups to health services, prevent and control major communicable diseases, promote healthy lifestyles for the prevention of major NCDs, improve access to safe water and sanitation, assist in the development of the health workforce and overall health systems across the country and improve disaster management. ■

Fatima Siraj is currently pursuing a BBA degree at the Institute of Business Administration. She frequently writes on marketing and social issues.

Future Unknown

Political turmoil has been the order of the day in Nepal ever since the country freed itself from monarchical rule six years back. What is it that stops the nation from holding a free and fair election?

By Rameez Ahmed

The standoff between the various political blocks in Nepal is intensifying. There seems to be no end in sight to the political turmoil in a country that is still grappling with the effects of a decade-long civil war. Talks for the formation of an electoral government have stalled once again as the ruling Maoists demand that the Transitional Justice Mechanism will be included in the electoral deal. The opposition, however, is accusing the Maoists of attempting to provide blanket amnesty to the guerilla fighters of its Peoples' Liberation Army who committed innumerable war crimes. More than 16,000 lives were lost in the 'People's War,' fought between the monarchy and the Royal Nepal Army, which stretched for over ten years between 1996 and 2006.

A Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) and the Seven Party Alliance in 2006, which formally ended the war. A few months later, King Gyanendra capitulated under the pressure and the Republic of Nepal was born. With the transition from a monarchy to a Republic underway, replacing the interim constitution became the need of the hour. Unfortunately, six years down the road, Nepal

remains without a constitution.

The country's institutions are not developed enough to cope with the various sophisticated demands of the state. This is mostly because of the 240-year long monarchical rule which delimited the role of various ethnic, religious and political groups in mainstream Nepali politics.

A weak coalition government of Unified Communist Party of Nepal – Maoists (UCPN-M) and the opposition are finding it hard to develop a consensus on the caretaker setup to oversee elections despite the fact that the Maoists seem ready to give up their policy of violence.

"Revolution in the 21st century can neither emulate the Soviet model nor the Chinese one. We must find our own way as we move ahead," said Chairman CPN-M Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda at the party's recent convention. In an effort to gain international legitimacy and give a new direction to politics at home, the governing Maoist party fast-tracked rehabilitation and integration of its armed wing. Following this, the party was taken off the list of terrorist organizations by the United States. The concept of 'revolutionary' land reform has been replaced by a 'scientific' system,

and the party abandoned the earlier policy of confiscating private property and distributing it to the landless. The leadership has realized that it will need to work together to restore the economy and embrace progressive politics in order to move ahead.

However, according to CK Lal, a Kathmandu-based political commentator, the Maoists are "unfit to govern and unfit to stay in the opposition. But if elections were held today, they would win hands down. And not just that - they would significantly improve their tally."

Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai of UCPN-M has agreed to step down in favor of Supreme Court Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi to lead an Interim Election Council to hold polls in June. Skeptics say it might not be prudent to do so, as it would blur the separation of powers between the executive and judiciary and adversely affect the upcoming elections. Unfortunately, with the election deadline looming ahead that seems to be the only viable option on the table.

The problem can be avoided by barring CJ Regmi from making any decisions related to the judiciary during the time that he heads the caretaker government, which would demarcate

the boundaries of each role and dissipate fears. The idea was provided by the sitting CJ himself.

Critics say this proposal by the UCPN-M would help remove the last remaining hurdle in the party's quest for absolute power. "After dissolving the assembly, buying into media, co-opting the police, appeasing the army and infiltrating the bureaucracy, only the Supreme Court was standing in the way," states a Nepalese daily.

The elections are crucial for Nepal's stalled progress as they would lead to developing the country's constitution.

The reason why successive governments since 2008 have not been able to come to consensus about writing the new constitution is that the interim constitution is silent on what amounts to consensus. The lack of clear authority and jurisdiction has been used by the opposition to bash the Maoist-led coalition which has been blamed for the dissolution of the Constituent As-

sembly, even when it was all the political parties which were in perpetual disagreement.

If a future electoral government is to ensure timely elections, it has to be given a clear mandate and delegated the requisite authority to do what needs to be done to hold free, fair, and timely polls. For that to happen, the parties must agree not to hold the elections hostage to their incessant bickering.

Chances are that disagreements over forms of governance, state restructuring, and the contents of the Truth and Reconciliation and Disappearance Commissions will erupt again in the new Constituent Assembly and again stall the new initiative. But people want the parties to resolve issues in the chambers and not play politics with them on the streets.

Some powers have agreed to appoint the CJ as the head of the electoral government, but the decision has not been owned by many others,

with the fringe parties (ethnic, religious minorities) are angered by their exclusion. The CJ refuses to become a rubber stamp for the all-party mechanism which seeks to run the country de facto. Then there are practical and logistical difficulties in holding elections by May or June.

At the end of the day, Nepal can only go forward if the entire leadership is ready to make a compromise which requires give and take by finding a mid-way solution. Since the opposition and government have failed to come up with a third solution, the only option is to allow Chief Justice Regmi to become the acting prime minister for the elections and allow state institutions to hold free and fair elections. That's the only way to a new, secular Nepal. ■

Rameez Ahmed is currently working as a newscaster at CNBC Pakistan. He has a deep interest in regional politics and writes frequently on various topics.



The Dragon King

As Bhutan anticipates democratic reforms, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck rallies for the people's cause.

By Asma Siddiqui

On 17 December 1907, the Wangchuck dynasty, a hereditary monarchy, was established in Bhutan, after ousting the almost three hundred years old Buddhist theocratic rule of His Holiness, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. Sir Ugen Wangchuck, governor of the Trongsa district, became the first king of Bhutan with direct support from British India. The second king of Bhutan was Jigme Wangchuck, followed by King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and then King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who abdicated the throne in 2006 in favor of his son. The present King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck is the fifth monarch in the lineage of the Wangchuck dynasty. He was the world's youngest head of state until he was surpassed by Kim Jong-un of North Korea.

King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was born on 21 February 1980 and is the eldest son of the

fourth Dragon King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck. He graduated from Magdalen College, University of Oxford, with a degree in the Foreign Service Program and International Relations. Though Wangchuck became the King of Bhutan on 14 December 2006, he was not formally crowned until 6 November 2008, an auspicious year that marked 100 years of monarchy in Bhutan. The coronation ceremony for the King comprised of an ancient, colorful ritual, attended by thousands of foreign dignitaries, including the President of India, Pratibha Patil. According to CNN reports the Bhutanese people painted street signs, hung festive banners and decorated traffic circles with fresh flowers, to welcome their King.

Wangchuck was crowned the King of Bhutan when his father abdicated in his favor. His father, Jigme Singye Wangchuck had ascended the throne at the age of 20 in the year 1972. He

is perhaps best known internationally for his overarching development philosophy of "Gross National Happiness." Satisfied with Bhutan's transition into a democracy, he abdicated in December 2006, believing that his son should have hands-on experience as the nation's leader before presiding over a transformation in the country's form of government. According to the national newspaper, Kuensel, he announced to his cabinet that as long as he himself continued to be King, "the Crown Prince would not gain the actual experience of dealing with issues and carrying out the responsibilities of the head of state. With parliamentary democracy to be established in 2008, there was much to be done; so it was necessary that he gained this valuable experience."

On the other hand, the Bhutanese people felt betrayed after being compelled by the regime to demand the establishment of an inclusive and vi-



The young king began his reign overseeing the democratization of his country by presiding over the last sessions of the parliament where electoral laws, land reform and other important issues were deliberated.

brant democracy. Many anticipated that the transition would define the role and responsibility of both king and the people. However, the peoples' right to participate in nation building by exercising their voting franchise was not forthcoming in the system of absolute monarchy. As a result of a vehement demand for democracy, the absolute monarchy was compelled to transform into a constitutional monarchy.

Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck has also promoted the transition to democracy. The young king began his reign overseeing the democratization of his country by presiding over the

last sessions of the parliament where electoral laws, land reform and other important issues were deliberated. He stated that the responsibility of next generation of Bhutanese was to ensure the success of democracy. He also traveled extensively around the country to encourage participation in the upcoming democratic exercises, speaking mainly to the youth of Bhutan. He stressed upon the need for Bhutan to strive for greater standards in education, business and civil service. His reign has seen the enactment of the Constitution of 2008 as well as the democratic elections of both

houses of Parliament and three levels of local government – dzongkhag, gewog and thromde. Many government initiatives were previously undertaken by the new King with a view to strengthen the system in preparation for democratic changes in 2008. The first elected parliament formally adopted the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan on 18 July 2008.

The Crown Prince, popularly known to the people of Bhutan as 'Dasho Khesar', accompanied his father on tours throughout the Kingdom to meet and speak to the people. In May, he represented Bhutan at the UN General Assembly and made his first speech to the United Nations where he addressed issues related to the welfare of millions of children around the globe. He also attended Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Anniversary Celebrations in June in Bangkok. The youngest of the visiting royals, the Prince caused a sensation, giving rise to a legion of female fans in Thailand. The Thai press dubbed him "Prince Charming," publishing his photograph and running stories on him and tourism in Bhutan for several weeks after he had left Thailand.

Following his 2006 visit to Thailand as Crown Prince, the King has been immensely popular in Thailand. The number of Thai tourists visiting Bhutan has increased steadily. In November 2011, the King and Queen Jetsun made a state visit to Japan, becoming the first state guests to the country since the 2011 earthquake. The Royal Visit had a similar effect, with reports that the Japanese were infatuated with the King and country.

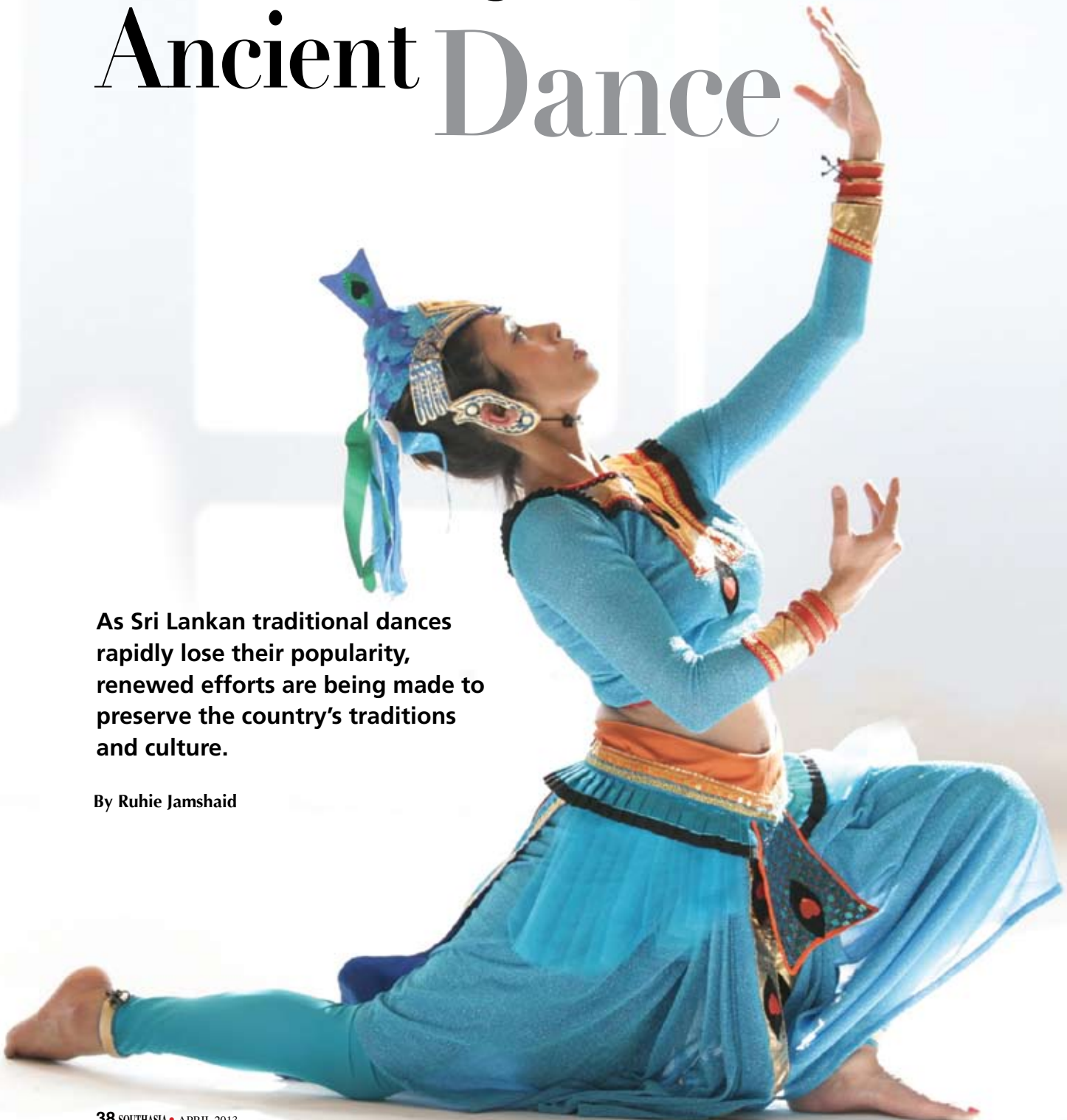
With the new King reigning smoothly, the people seem satisfied and happy with both the monarchy and the new system of democracy. As Bhutan enters a new era of globalization, this has been a welcome change in the country. ■

Asma Siddiqui is a freelance journalist who writes on social issues.

Preserving Ancient Dance

As Sri Lankan traditional dances rapidly lose their popularity, renewed efforts are being made to preserve the country's traditions and culture.

By Ruhie Jamshaid



Sri Lanka is known for its exotic customs and musical heritage. A unique and colorful nation, Sri Lanka continues to deeply value its customs and culture, which remains imbedded in music and dance.

The origins of traditional Sri Lankan dance can be traced back to the 4th century BC. The dance form was initiated with the practical purpose of appeasing the gods to alleviate natural disasters and illnesses. During the pre-Buddhism age in Sri Lanka, many believed in deities and demons as entities that could shower blessings or deprive people of them. As a result, many rituals and ceremonies were invented. These rituals were intertwined with dance to gain the favor of the deities in order to attract a positive fate. Sri Lanka also has a long history as an agricultural nation. Therefore, it has always been a natural and cultural process to worship the gods to invoke a good harvest for the farmers.

Three main repertoires of Sri Lankan traditional dance form exist. First there is the Kandyan Dance, which is largely regarded as the country's national dance. The Kandyan originated from an ancient purification ritual. It is highly energetic and vibrant and is mostly performed in religious ceremonies in honor of the god, Kohumba. There are two aspects of the Kandyan dance. One is known as the Vess where dancers dance in a vigorous and rhythmic fashion. The outfits are exotic with elaborate headdresses. The bare-chested male dancers are adorned from head to toe. Previously only men performed this dance form but today, females dance the Vess Kandyan too. This has resulted in softer dance moves. Another form of the Kandyan dance is the Vannama dance. This is a fascinating dance form that combines dance with poetry. A story is told through animal

movements, which include imitating an elephant, horse, peacock as well as many other creatures. The Vannama is a sophisticated dance form and from it, many modern forms of dance have emerged.

Second, there is the Low Country Dance, otherwise known as the "mask" dance. This dance is specifically performed to appease demons that cause illnesses. Dancers are required to wear elaborate wooden masks of demons, reptiles and birds. The Low Country dance is mostly performed in Colombo and the southern part of Sri Lanka. In addition to movement, it also incorpo-

The origins of traditional Sri Lankan dance can be traced back to the 4th century BC. The dance form was initiated with the practical purpose of appeasing the gods to alleviate natural disasters and illnesses.

rates dramatic dialogue, mime and impersonations to the beat of the so called "demon-drums" which are markedly different from the drums used in the Kandyan dance.


The third traditional dance is known as the Sabaragamuwa. This was specifically invented to chase away demons that cause illnesses. This dance is specifically performed in reverence to the god Saran. The Sabaragamuwa is performed on a stage, decorated with coconut leaves and clay. It borrows movements from the Kandyan and Low Country dance.

Traditional Sri Lankan dance is usually performed at ritualistic ceremonies or on stage. However, with the recognition of the Sri Lankan film industry, it has also found a place on the silver screen. Famous veteran dancers such as Chandana Wickra-

masinghe are known to personally choreograph songs that involve folk dancing in movies. Of course, these dances incorporate Bollywood influences to make it more appealing to the masses. In any case, after the 15th century, the pure traditional Sri Lankan dance was modified to include Tamil influences from India. With each passing era, modifications to the dance form are but a natural aspect of evolution.

Dance academies, renowned traditional dancers and even international organizations such as the Goethe Institute in Sri Lanka, are consciously making efforts to cre-

ate awareness of the dance form and preserve it. Professional dancers such as Visha Manohari De Silva and her dance troupe are also actively involved in popularizing and preserving the ancient dance forms. Dancers like her help in promoting dance form all over the world through their public performances.

As veteran dance teacher Niloufer Pieris, who has dedicated decades of her life to training young ballerinas says, "We need to educate our young people and preserve this extraordinary art." Indeed, traditional dance is Sri Lanka's pride and a unique offering to the rest of the world! 

Ruhie Jamshaid is a creative writing trainer and freelances for various publications. She is currently based in Islamabad.

Getting Kachin Back

The Myanmar government is pursuing all options to resolve the conflict in the Kachin State. However, the violence seems to escalate with each passing day.

By Salman Pervez

The Myanmar national army and armed rebels have been fighting the Burmese Civil War in five states since 1948. These states include Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Rakhine and Shan. The conflicts have resulted in thousands of casualties, displacing over a million civilians in the country. Amongst these five conflict zones, the Kachin State is significantly important due to its borders with China and India.

The Kachin Independence Movement became alive in the 1940s when Myanmar (then Burma) was under British colonial rule. The objective of the Movement was to provide rights to the ethnic groups and minorities living in Myanmar. The conflict intensified during the 1960s when soldiers from the Burmese army defected to the Kachin Independence Army to voice their opinions against the government. Kachin enjoyed independence from the 1960s to the mid-90s with an economy largely funded through smuggling and narcotics.

In 1994, the Myanmar army seized jade mines from the Kachin forces. Trading in jade stone is a lu-

crative business in Kachin whereby the rebel forces demand large sums of money from private companies visiting Myanmar to extract minerals. The conflict ended in 1994 when the Kachin Independence Army signed a peace agreement with the government of Myanmar. However, in June 2011 the Myanmar forces violated the ceasefire and attacked the Kachin army in Bhamo. The fighting resumed when the government attempted to take control of the areas that come under the influence of the Kachin Independence Army. Another ceasefire came into effect in January 2013 with the intervention of Myanmar's president Thein Sein, but with sporadic clashes occurring throughout the state.

Bordering with Kachin is China, which has made efforts to bring the Myanmar army and the Kachin Independence Army at the negotiating table. China has intensified its efforts to strike a peace deal fearing that the Kachin conflict might spill into Chinese territory. As a precautionary measure, China established a military command office in Nabang. It has also set up four refugee settle-





ment sites with facilities to accommodate nearly 10,000 people.

Since December 2012, four bombs from Kachin have landed near China's borders with Myanmar. Although there were no casualties, the Kachin conflict is affecting Myanmar-China relations with insecurities growing on both sides. China's foreign ministry has expressed concerns and dissatisfaction over the issue and has demanded Myanmar take necessary steps to avert any cross border violation. Despite a stern warning China harbors a soft corner for Myanmar because of the Kachin people living in China. This ethnic group, also known as Jingpo, is one of the 56 officially recognized ethnicities in China, which dwells in the Yunnan Province, bordering the Kachin state.

The Kachin conflict has escalated in terms of magnitude over the last few years, catching the attention of the U.S, which closely monitors the region because of its close proximity to China. Last November, US-Myanmar relations received a boost when President Barack Obama visited Myanmar as the first sitting U.S President in history. Even though Obama made his visit when the Myanmar government and the Kachin rebels were locked in conflict, the President refrained from issuing a statement. Critics argue though that President Obama's visit may have influenced Myanmar's President Sein to declare a ceasefire. However, in January 2013, days before the ceasefire, Myanmar carried out airstrikes against the Kachin rebels, which shocked the U.S and the UN. Such aggression can certainly affect Myanmar's relations with both China and India, two South Asian countries that enjoy economic dominance over the region.

Confusion came to the surface

between the U.S and Myanmar when the former expressed deep concern over the Kachin conflict. Myanmar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized the U.S embassy's statements, which appeared to be supporting the Kachin Independence Army. China has not intervened into the Myanmar conflict because of its state policies and past failures to lessen tension in conflict zones. China seeks to play a larger role where its influence reaches the entire globe rather than to remain confined to South Asia. It seems as if the U.S will have to find a diplomatic solution for Myanmar as China's submission to state policies prevent it from intervening into the conflict. Although China is fast becoming a superpower with economic and political influence over South Asia, the U.S is playing a leading role in Southeast Asia. The U.S government has been a silent witness to the rising conflict in Myanmar and its five states. Many political commentators believe that if China raises its concern over the issue, the U.S will definitely make an effort in solving the crisis.

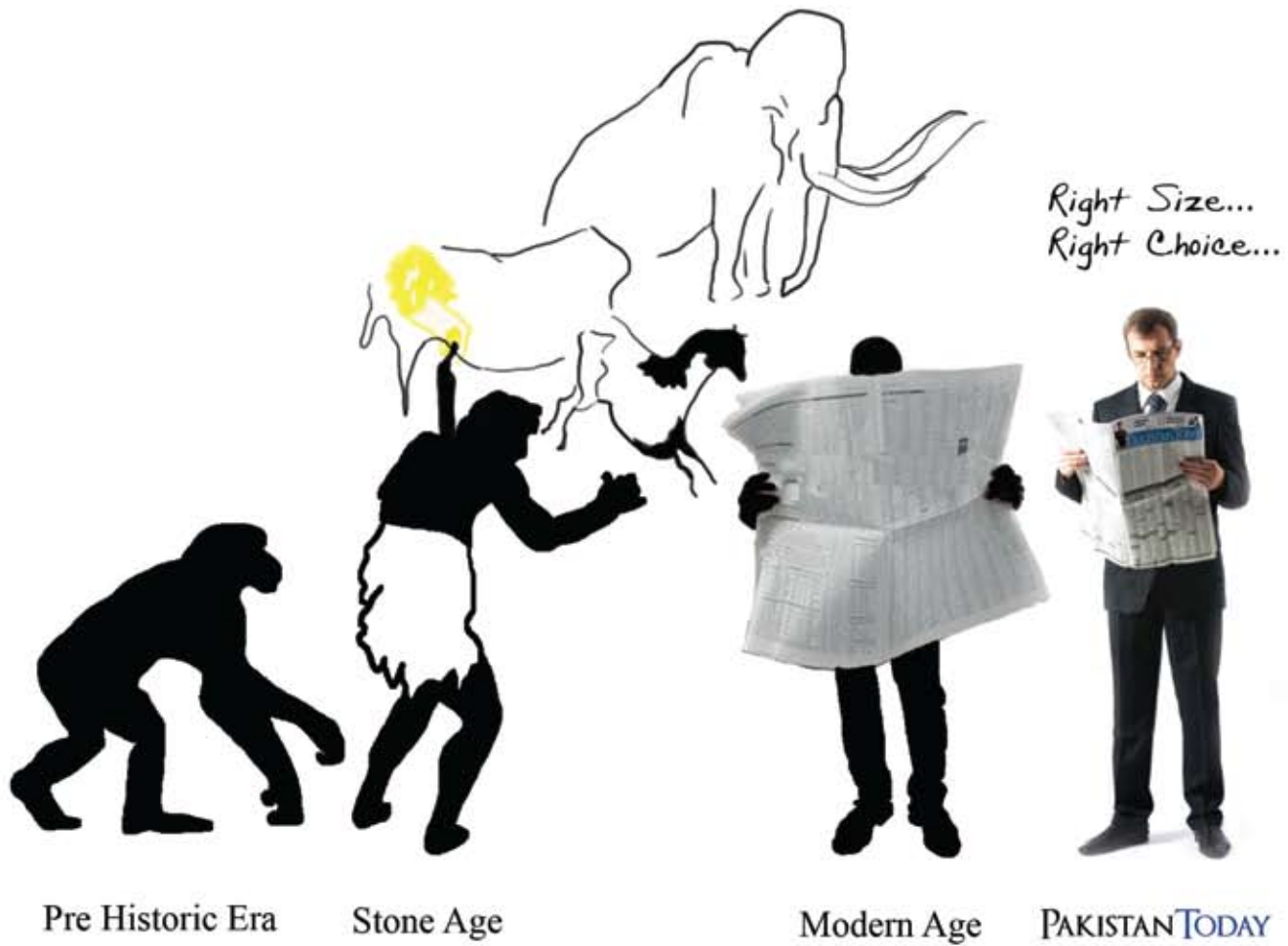
The Kachin conflict affects South Asia in many ways. Myanmar cannot afford to have sour relations with China, its strongest supporter in the long run. Furthermore, the conflict is fuelling a humanitarian crisis as tens of thousands of civilians are leaving Kachin and settling in relatively safer parts of Myanmar or crossing into China. The Kachin conflict also has the potential to spill over into Assam if it grows in magnitude. If India shows agitation over the conflict, Myanmar will be crammed between two South Asian economic powers - a situation which the country absolutely cannot afford. ■

Salman Pervez is a freelance journalist who writes on international affairs.



In 1994, the Myanmar army seized jade mines from the Kachin forces. Trading in jade stone is a lucrative business in Kachin whereby the rebel forces demand large sums of money from private companies visiting Myanmar to extract minerals. The conflict ended in 1994 when the Kachin Independence Army signed a peace agreement with the government of Myanmar.

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In terms of its nuclear objectives, North Korea has behaved like the bad boy of the block and has been defying international obligations, making its nuclear weapons program a curious mix of defiance, deceit and stealth.

Officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), North Korea was a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) but withdrew in 2003, citing the failure of the United States to fulfill its end of the Agreed Framework (a 1994 agreement between the states to limit the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, begin normalization of relations and help the DPRK meet its energy needs through nuclear reactors). On October 9, 2006, North Korea announced that it had successfully conducted a nuclear test for the first time. Both the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and Japanese seismological authorities detected an earthquake of 4.3 magnitude in North Korea, corroborating some aspects of DPRK's claims. On January 6, 2007, the North Korean government announced that it had developed nuclear weapons; an admission, which shocked the world. Following its 2009 second nuclear test, possibly at the site of the first nuclear test at Mantapsan, Kilju County, in the north-eastern part of North Korea, it became evident that the country had acquired a small stockpile of relatively simple nuclear weapons. North Korea is assumed to have at least six nuclear weapons but its military uranium enrichment program could potentially boost the stockpile to as many as 48 weapons by 2015.

No amount of sanctions, threats or cajoling by the international watchdog, IAEA, could deter DPRK to sway from the path it had chosen. Diplomatic efforts at keeping a lid on DPRK's nuclear objectives have been complicated by the different goals and interests of regional neighbors. While none of the parties desire a North Korea with nuclear weapons, Japan and South Korea are especially concerned about DPRK's counter-strikes following possible military action against it. The People's Republic

of China (PRC) and South Korea are also apprehensive regarding the economic and social consequences should this situation cause the DPRK government

to collapse.

The Obama administration has been flexible and demonstrated more willingness to negotiate with DPRK than the

Heading for Disaster

North Korea's latest nuclear test has given the global community enough reason to fret.

By S. M. Hali



previous administration and has indicated that de-nuclearizing the Korean peninsula is a priority. A February 2012 bilateral meeting in Beijing resulted in an agreement to halt uranium enrichment in exchange for U.S. food aid, which has now been cancelled. The agreement included a moratorium on long-range missile tests. Additionally,

the DPRK agreed to allow IAEA inspectors to monitor operations at Yongbyon, its nuclear scientific research center. The United States reaffirmed that it had no hostile intent and was prepared to improve bilateral relationships, and agreed to ship humanitarian food aid to North Korea. However, after DPRK's execution of a provocative long-range missile test in April 2012, the U.S. terminated the agreement and refused to proceed with the promised food aid, thus deteriorating the situation.

On February 11, 2013, the USGS detected a magnitude of 5.1 seismic disturbance, reported to be a third underground nuclear test. Without mentioning the exact yield, DPRK has officially reported it as a successful nuclear test with a lighter warhead, which delivers more force than before. The latest development has received international disapproval and censure. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon condemned the test calling it a "clear and grave violation" of Security Council resolutions. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) called on North Korea to comply fully with its obligations to all relevant UNSC resolutions and to its commitments under the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party. The EU's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton stated, "This nuclear test is a further blatant challenge to the global non-proliferation regime," adding that it poses a threat to international stability.

NATO condemned it in the strongest terms while President Barack Obama called the test "highly provocative," saying that it "undermines regional stability." He vowed to take actions to defend the U.S. and its allies. The United States sent aircrafts equipped with sensors that may be able to determine whether it was a plutonium or uranium weapon. Even the traditional friends of DPRK, Russia and China, have voiced serious concern. Russia "decisively condemned" the nuclear test calling it a violation of North Korea's international obligations while the Foreign Minister of the PRC, Yang Jiechi declared that

China "resolutely" opposes the latest nuclear test conducted by the DPRK. Following the nuclear test, even Iran, which has been chastised by the international community for its alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons, stated through its Foreign Ministry spokesperson, that all nuclear weapons should be "destroyed." There are apprehensions that if North Korea is let off the hook, Iran may take a cue from the test and press on with its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons pleading that "what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!" However, it is hoped that the Iranians will display more responsibility.

As mentioned earlier, the DPRK's stance of food and energy shortage may avert severe sanctions by the UN for the time being. While the acquisition and use of a working North Korean long-range nuclear weapon is concerning to many states, the more immediate danger lies in North Korea's lack of nuclear security and safety standards. DPRK's refusal to allow IAEA inspectors into its nuclear facilities create a very plausible scenario for a nuclear accident; no one is certain regarding the standards of safety measures being practiced, if any. This leads to additional questions about nuclear materials safety and security and the potential for terrorist groups to steal or gain access to sensitive weapons materials. Out of 32 countries thought to have nuclear weapons materials, North Korea ranks last in safety rating. Additionally, many nuclear weapons experts are concerned about the possibility of North Korea selling or providing sensitive nuclear materials or weapons designs to other countries and indulge in nuclear proliferation. North Korea's nuclear objectives regarding the acquisition of nukes are obvious but remaining out of IAEA's loop is a cause for serious concern. ■

Group Captain (R) Sultan M. Hali, now a practicing journalist, writes for print media, produces documentaries and hosts a TV talk show. He is currently based in Islamabad.



A black and white portrait of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan. He is seated in a dark, ornate chair, looking directly at the camera with a thoughtful expression. His right hand is raised to his chin, and his left hand rests on his lap. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt.

Both Sides of the Coin

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's colorful personality and controversial rule has left an indelible mark on Pakistan's history.

By S.G. Jilane

Pakistan's ninth prime minister and fourth president, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was as colorful a personality as he was controversial; loved and hated with equal passion. Born on 5 January 1928, he was educated at U.C Berkeley and Oxford University and trained as a barrister at the Lincoln's Inn. His father, Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto was prime minister of the Indian princely state of Junagadh. His mother, Khursheed Begum was a Hindu convert.

Bhutto entered politics in 1957 as a cabinet member in President Iskander Mirza's government. When Ayub Khan took over from Mirza in 1958, Bhutto became the youngest Pakistani ever to hold a cabinet post. He held several ministries before he was appointed foreign minister in 1963. However, Bhutto's relations with Ayub Khan soured after he supported sending infiltrators into Indian occupied Kashmir in Operation Gibraltar. The plan backfired and led to the 1965 war with India, in which Pakistan was severely humiliated. After Ayub signed the Tashkent Agreement with India to end hostilities, the gulf between the two widened. Ultimately, Bhutto was sacked in 1966.

The next year he founded the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP). In the 1970 general elections, the PPP emerged as the majority party in West Pakistan. After East Pakistan seceded in December 1971, Bhutto was offered the presidency by a shell-shocked nation. In 1973, he gave the country a new constitution and became prime minister. In the general elections of 1977, Bhutto's party swept the polls. The opposition cried "foul," alleged large scale rigging and took to the streets. In July, the army deposed Bhutto. He was jailed and later hanged on April 4, 1979, after a trial for authorising the murder of a political dissenter, Nawab Mohammad Ahmad Khan.

Bhutto's achievements are as numerous and shining as his faults are galore and serious. His first major performance as foreign minister was to conclude the Sino-Pakistan boundary agreement on March 2, 1963 under which China ceded 750 square miles of territory to Pakistan. He forged strong ties with China, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Libya as well as founded the Regional Cooperation for De-

velopment (RCD) with Iran and Turkey.

One of Bhutto's most spectacular achievements was the Simla Agreement of 1972. Barely seven months after becoming president, he secured the release of 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war and the return of 5,000 square miles of Pakistani territory that India had occupied during the 1971 war, all without any quid pro quo.

In 1973, he gave the country its first consensus constitution. In 1974, he hosted the second Islamic Summit in Lahore. The same year he initiated the country's nuclear program, after India exploded its first nuclear device, Smiling Buddha. To Bhutto, also goes the credit for holding Pakistan's First Seerat Conference in 1976.

Among his other gifts to the nation are three major universities: Quaid-e-Azam, Allama Iqbal Open, and Gomal besides the Institute of Theoretical Physics. Bhutto established a large number of rural and urban schools, "including around 6,500 elementary schools, 900 middle schools, 407 high schools, 51 Intermediate Colleges and 21 junior colleges." Bhutto's land reforms re-fixed the maximum ceiling for landholding by reducing it from 500 acres to 150 acres of irrigated land and 1000 acres to 300 acres for semi-irrigated land. All lands in excess of 100 acres allocated to government servants was resumed and redistributed. Bhutto also led the foundation of Pakistan's first and largest steel mill; the country's second deep sea port at Port Qasim; and inaugurated the first Pakistani atomic reactor. His labor reforms gave more rights and perks to factory workers, such as the scheme for workers' participation in management. This scheme provided for 20% participation by workers in management committees set up at factory level. The Workers' contribution to the Social Security Fund was abolished. Instead, the employers were made to increase their contribution from 4% to 6%. Compensation rates for workers under the Worker's Compensation Act were also increased and provision was made for group insurance under the Old Age Benefit Scheme besides pension after retirement. As a result of Bhutto's economic reforms, concentration of wealth had declined

compared to the Ayub Khan era when 22 families owned 66% of industrial capital and also controlled banking and 97% of insurance.

However, not all was as rosy as it seemed.

Bhutto's first critical misstep was to nationalise everything he could lay his hands upon: basic industries like steel, chemical and cement, banks, insurance, flour, rice, cotton and edible oil mills, heavy mechanical and electrical engineering industries as well as schools. Indiscriminate nationalisation even of small rice husking and wheat crushing mills led to economic stagnation due to fall in investment and flight of capital. Next was the dissolution of assemblies in Balochistan and army operation to control unrest in which thousands of civilians were killed. It was also Bhutto who declared the Ahmedis out of the pale of Islam under pressure from religious parties. His Federal Security Force became the prototype of the dreaded Gestapo, notorious for repression of dissidents.

Bhutto was dynamic, resolute, a skilful diplomat and a powerful demagogue. All these attributes put him in good stead to achieve his goals. But he also had an acerbic tongue, an arrogant mien, a short temper, a vindictive attitude and often acted like an absolute monarch who must not be crossed.

For example, in reaction to a critical remark on his inordinate delay in attending a function, Bhutto had J.A. Rahim roughed up by the FSF, even though Rahim was a minister and co-founder of the PPP. He was also totally unprincipled. For him, it was the goal that mattered, not the means. Thus, he equated Ayub Khan with his father when he wanted to become a minister, but after Tashkent denounced his benefactor publicly.

Ultimately his arrogant behavior with the army chief Zia-ul-Haq cost him his life. As Stanley Wolpert writes, once at a banquet for a visiting head of state, Bhutto called Zia to him addressing Zia as "my monkey!" Bhutto's execution was Zia's answer to that insult. **S**

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

Several misconceptions have prevented traditional rivals India and Pakistan from shunning animosity and embracing peace. However, both nations are quick to welcome any initiative that brings them closer. The South Asian Media Summit (SAMS), jointly organized by the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) and Exchange4Media Group in Islamabad, brought to the platform media tycoons, newspaper publishers, and policymakers from around South Asia. The two-day summit, held at Islamabad's China Friendship Centre, drew notable media personalities at a time when the country's political future remains uncertain and the two sworn enemies, India and Pakistan, were still reeling from January's Line of Control incident.

The objective of the Summit was to address the challenges facing main-

stream media in an era when digital structure, production and circulation. The Summit provided solutions to reinvent the newspaper industry. The speakers also discussed the evolution of the media culture in the region and agreed that freedom of the media is an integral part of the society, which would also bring peace between India and Pakistan. The panelists also

Dawn Media Group, Hameed Haroon, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Qamar Zaman Kaira, and Chairman Madison World, Sam Balsara, amongst others.

Discussed in detail during the SAMS 2013 was the media landscape of India and Pakistan. In this regard, the Editor-in-Chief of Outlook,



Broadcast Media in South Asia

The first South Asia Media Summit held in Islamabad addressed challenges facing broadcast and print media in the region.

stream media in an era when digital and social media are changing the landscape. The speakers were of the collective view that limitations prevent the media from expanding its wings to various markets. The government also suppresses media corporations through its policies, which contradicts freedom of press.

The South Asia Media Summit held this year revolved around the theme "Newspapers in the New Media Ecosystem." Since the primitive years of newspaper publication, the industry has seen transformations in its format,

agreed to set up exchange programs for media professionals in South Asia,

Prominent speakers and panelists at the Summit included Prime Minister of Pakistan, Raja Pervez Ashraf; President APNS, Sarmad Ali; Editor-in-Chief, Exchange4media Group, Anurag Batra; former Federal Minister Javed Jabbar, CEO, Times of India, Ravi Dhariwal; Director Marketing, The News Pakistan, Saadia Sharif; Chairman and MD, Vijitha Yapa Group, Vijitha Yapa; Chairman Interflow Communications, Taher A. Khan; CEO Orient McCann Erickson, Masood Hashmi; CEO,

Krishna Parsad said that, "In India, electronic media especially is guilty of more jingoism than reality." Parsad's perception about Pakistan and its media changed during his visit as he felt the people of Pakistan were similar to that of India. He further noted that the Indian media gives the impression of Pakistan being entirely about generals and the ISI, which is not true. According to Parsad, India and Pakistan are facing similar problems, which they can resolve through mainstream media.

Sharing similar views while speak-

ing on 'Preparing for the Dawn of a New Era in Media', CEO of Dawn Media Group, Hameed Haroon suggested that freedom of media is integral to ensuring civic rights and to promote Indo-Pak peace. Highlighting numerous governance problems in Pakistan, Haroon argued that the system is anti-learning and that a threat will forever

formation Minister, Qamar Zaman Kaira reiterated the government's commitment to winning the war against extremism while asserting that radicalism imposed on the Pakistani society was an imported agenda. Kaira alleged that peace in Pakistan is vital for a peaceful India, and vice versa. He also pointed out that

situation, and if ads are to be placed on the basis of relations alone, then newspapers will ultimately die out."

Also highlighted and discussed at the SAMS was the issue of readership management scenario in Pakistan. A transparent system is the need of the hour for the newspaper industry to grow. Managing Director, Ipsos Pakistan, Abdul Sattar Babar, said that, "There are serious questions about the authenticity of circulation data of ABC. For instance, a newspaper with a circulation of 20,000 could show having a circulation of 0.12 million to get more ads."

Panelists discussed the migration of print to online media and its impact on the industry. According to Adil Ahmed, Director, Symmetry Group, "If you want to be part of the digital word, then you need to start with refreshing your digital thinking." Faisal Sherjan, Digital Media Head, Geo TV, recommended that media owners understand the significance of distribution, which is equally important for the digital media as it is for any other medium. With distribution it is also necessary to analyze the revenue streams for online content. Addressing this issue, Anant Goenka, Head of New Media, Indian Express, felt that newspaper publishers should opt to reach extenders by providing benefit through online editions and should develop revenue models for digital media.

The South Asia Media Summit 2013 concluded on the note to address challenges looming over the media industry in South Asia, especially Pakistan and India. The speakers were confident that their suggestions would facilitate their respective governments in taking prompt action to make the broadcast media industry transparent and efficient. **S**



Former Federal Minister Javed Jabbar and President APNS, Sarmad Ali.

eclipse freedom of the press. He also focused on the right to information law, which lost much of its power following the 2002 Ordinance that restricted media outlets from publicizing any military-related information.

Speaking on the subject of 'Challenges and Expectations from the Media across Borders', former Federal Minister, Javed Jabbar said, "I know that both India and Pakistan are facing challenges while deciding on policies for media with respect to their neighbors. Media is so powerful in both the countries that it can reduce the distances and differences between the two." Acknowledging the efforts of the media he said that, "Media has been the fourth pillar of democracy, but now it has become the first pillar of the State." Moreover, Jabbar praised the Aman ki Asha initiative by Pakistan's Jang Group and The Times of India Group and called it a positive step towards bridging the divide between the neighboring countries.

In a special address, Pakistan's In-

Pakistani viewers watch Indian channels and movies with and without government permission. Regrettably, the Indian government and the media owners do not give a similar space to Pakistani media products.

The SAMS 2013 provided an opportunity for the speakers to propose strategies to reshape the newspaper industry. In this regard, Chairman and Managing Director, Madison World, Sam Balsara noted that newspaper publishers should focus on colorful layouts to induce young readers. General Manager, Mindshare Pakistan, Fouad Hussain, stressed on the need for newspapers to modify their production approach. He cited lack of interest as the main reason as to why newspaper readership is less than television viewership. Similarly, Aly Mustansir, Executive VP and Head of Marketing and Brand Management, Habib Bank Limited, urged newspaper publishers to recreate their content to endure the onslaught of social media. He said, "Print media faces a tricky

Open for Business

Despite suffering from a three-decade long civil war, Sri Lanka shows great promise in its apparel export business, promising to revitalize the economics of this war-torn country.

By Madiha Bilal Kapadia

Sri Lanka's apparel export industry is the most significant and dynamic contributor to the country's economy. Over the last three decades, the sector has shown exponential growth and has become the number one foreign exchange earner and the largest single employer in the manufacturing industry. The industry provides direct employment to over 300,000 and indirectly employs close

to 600,000 people, including a substantial number of women.

The Sri Lankan ready-made export history can be traced over 40 years back to the 1960s. Interestingly, the first garment exports from Sri Lanka did not make their way into US or European markets but rather found a strong consumer base in Russia. The textile and garment industry has been Sri Lanka's largest gross earner since 1986 and

accounted for 40% of total exports in 2012. Another major export is tea, which accounts for 17% of the total exports. Other prominent export goods include spices, gems, coconut powder, rubber and fish with the main export partners being the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium and Italy.

Sri Lanka's apparel sector has progressed from being an ODM (Original



Design Manufacturer) to a global leading international OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) supplier. This is mainly due to the encouragement from the world's third largest retailer, TESCO's direct sourcing as well as recent backing from the Government of India, which duly enhanced market access for Sri Lanka's apparel exports.

Today, the garment industry occupies a pre-eminent position in Sri Lanka, producing high quality garments for leading international brands such as Victoria's Secret, Tommy Hilfiger, Nike, Gap, Next and Marks & Spencer's, etc.

Sri Lanka's many competitive advantages promise continuing growth. The country boasts of a 92% literacy rate, an achievement astounding for a South Asian country that is only recent-

ly emerging from a three-decade long civil war. Every year, 38,000 students graduate from nine universities with more than 50% specializing in technical and business disciplines, providing Sri Lanka with a literate and trainable workforce. The Lloyd's register ranks Colombo the number one port in South Asia and 26th in the world. The national airline has been privatized with Emirates selected as its strategic partner. Internationally experienced cargo and courier operators such as DHL and Evergreen have set up operations throughout the country. Over 20 foreign banks have established branch offices in Sri Lanka. The success of the Sri Lankan textile and apparel industry can be attributed partly to the government's policy of attracting foreign investment by offering a number of special incentives including special industrial zones, tax holidays and import duty exemptions.

It is commendable that Sri Lanka has been at par with developed countries in its adoption and compliance of the best labor, trade and environmental laws and practices in the region. It does not subsidize or provide export rebate and there have been no complaints of anti dumping or countervailing. It also has an excellent reputation for abiding by the regulations of the World Trade organization (WTO).

Sri Lanka's textile industry is fast becoming a socially responsible and preferred destination for apparel sourcing. The country pays fair wages to its workers while discouraging sweatshops and child labor in its businesses, making the "Made in Sri Lanka" label synonymous with quality, reliability, social and environmental accountability. On environmental issues, Sri Lanka supports many initiatives focused on minimizing its impact on nature. Efforts to manufacture with sustainability issue standards in view have buoyed Sri Lanka's textile and apparel exports recently. Sustainable production is an industrial process that transforms natu-

ral resources into products in ways that minimise resources and energy. Brandix Group, Sri Lanka's largest apparel manufacturer, has cut its carbon footprint by 30% since 2008 and plans to reduce it by a further 20% between 2013 and 2020. At the same time, their sales have increased significantly and the company hopes to increase its turnover from US\$600 million in 2011 to US\$1 billion in the next five years.

Sustainable production is seen by Sri Lankan textile and apparel manufacturers as an attractive selling point when competing for orders from Western buyers. Although companies have not been able to charge significantly higher prices for sustainable manufactured goods, sustainable production has helped them to cut costs and maintain prices at a much more stable level over the past few years, despite sharp increases in production costs. As a result, it has helped them attract more orders.

In the European market, the average price of clothing imports from all sources increased by 24% over a period of four and a half years, whereas the average price of imports from Sri Lanka increased by just 13.8%. Illustrating the slowest rise among major Asian suppliers, Sri Lanka compared favorably with price increases (over the same period) of 186% in the case of imports from Vietnam, 51.1% in Bangladesh, 36% in Pakistan, 35.6% in India and 28.1% in China.

In future, Sri Lanka aims to compete with Bangladesh on prices by setting up basic low-cost manufacturing units in the rural parts of the country. Labor costs in the north and east regions of Sri Lanka are amongst the lowest in the country and these areas, in particular, are targeted for investment, following the end of the ethnic conflict between the government and the Tamil Tigers. ■

Madiha Bilal Kapadia holds an MBA in Marketing from IoBM and freelances for various publications.



UK and we also have our own manufacturing plants. In terms of design and availability, a vast selection of prints is used and available in one season and we keep our designs dynamic, making sure to keep up with global trends and expectations. Our expert staff, which have years of experience dealing with some of the top international brands, also forms an integral and strong team behind the product.

‘Sri Lanka is one of the most preferred locations for top international brands.’

An exclusive Interview with Asim Younoos, CEO, Avirate Fashions, Sri Lanka

What competitive advantages does the Sri Lankan textile industry offer?

The Sri Lankan textile industry has many advantages to benefit from. Most prominent of these are low prices, the extraordinary quality of the final product and Sri Lanka’s excellent IT infrastructure.

What is the status of the Sri Lankan textile industry in South Asia?

Sri Lanka is one of the most preferred locations for top international brands because of the quality and the expertise that Sri Lankan garment industry is able to provide, as compared to other countries within the region. The infrastructure of the factories successfully meets international standards supported by a great IT structure within their organization.

What challenges have you faced as a manufacturer?

As a manufacturer, the sourcing of the fabric can prove to be quite cumbersome and tedious. To meet international standards and uphold the global reputation of a brand like Avirate, it is essential that we have the absolutely best quality fabric. It is challenging because the local industry for fabrics is below par and limited

What key geographical markets does Avirate Fashion serve?

Currently we are catering to Sri Lanka and India. By mid-2013 we plan to enter Australia and by early 2014, we are hoping to enter the UAE market as well.


What point of differentiation does Avirate Fashion enjoy over its competitors?

Avirate Fashions has established a very strong reputation for itself. Our in-house design team is based in the

Where do you see the industry ten years down the road?

It is going to be a tough road ahead with the cost of living in Sri Lanka increasing. The GSP isn’t available and smaller firms will find it difficult to survive in the market. In efforts to meet competition, international brands are also trying to locate their manufacturing plants closer to the retail destination, since logistics have become costly. However, the bigger companies that deal in high fashion garments will be able to survive and maintain a place for themselves.

What economic impact will the industry reap once the Port of Hambantota becomes operational?

The Port of Hambantota will undoubtedly bring more investment towards the southern area. As a result, more factories will be established thus creating more job opportunities. 



Aviraté is a high-street international label for women, derived from the Sanskrit word Avirati, which means sensuality. A venture of Timex and Fergasam Group, one of the top

five apparel manufacturers in Sri Lanka and amongst the top ten apparel manufacturers in the world. Driven by a vision par excellence, Timex's commitment towards continued growth and exploring new possibilities in the world of fashion led to the creation of the fashion label, Aviraté.

It was launched in June 2010 during the IIFA (International Indian Film Academy) Film festival and was the sponsor of the IIFA Fashion Show.

Initially, the brand showcased its collection at a leading department store and after an overwhelming response, it launched its flagship store in Sri Lanka on December 7, 2010, and a year later in India, in 2011. Aviraté at present has five stores in Sri Lanka and seven in India. It has boldly paved the way for

a new era in fashion. Matching international standards in design and quality, Aviraté, is not about selling; it's about accentuating the inherent sensuality of a woman.

Mahasthangarh has been billed as a major archaeological site in Bangladesh. Situated in the village of Mahasthan, some seven miles north of Bogra, it contains the remnants of the ancient city of Pundranagra. A limestone tablet discovered in 1931 reveals that the origins of the historic site date back to 3rd Century BC. Further archaeological investigation suggests that Mahasthangarh was the provincial capital of the Mauryan, the Guptas and the Palas empires. But recent archaeological efforts have not actively explored the myths and mysteries surrounding of the city of Pundranagra. On the contrary, specialists and experts from across the world have remained indifferent to the prospects of conducting fieldwork in Mahasthangarh. Over the years it has become evident that the Bangladeshi government cannot do much to save this archaeological site from erasure. Even pressure groups have cast a blind eye towards preserving the relics and mounds in Mahasthangarh. The gradual disintegration of the remains has rendered all prospects for future archaeological work and conservation effort particularly difficult to execute.

There are numerous anecdotes and legends about the ancient city of Pundranagra. The city was renowned as the main nucleus for Buddhist learning. Monasteries in the region played an important role in propagating the Buddhist

faith and greatly enriched the scope of religious knowledge.

According to historical evidence, the popularity of Buddhism was challenged with the arrival of Shah Sultan Balkhi Mahisawar – a mystic who visited the city in the 11th Century AD to spread Islam. King Parasuram was the ruling sovereign in Mahasthangarh when Mahisawar paid a visit to the city. Legend has it that the mystic asked the king for a tract of land where he could spread his prayer mat. The king granted Mahisawar's request but once the mat was laid out on the floor, it began to expand throughout the empire. Threatened by the machinations of this dubious mystic, Parasuram declared war on Mahisawar.

During the initial stages of the war, Mahisawar's troops suffered countless defeats. The royal troops had sophisticated weaponry and devised foolproof war strategies to defeat their opponents. Supernatural forces also worked in their favor. Rumor has it that when a soldier was felled in the war, his corpse was bathed in the well of Jiat Kunda and he would instantly come back to life. Seizing the opportunity to weaken his opponents, Mahisawar ordered his troops to fly a kite over the Jiat Kunda and drop a piece of meat into it to extinguish its spiritual powers. The strategy worked and the royal troops were defeated.

Although the archaeological site in Mahasthangarh and the abandoned

Saving the

Archaeological sites in South Asia are fast deteriorating as a direct result of the government's negligence. Bangladesh is no exception.

By Taha Kehar

city of Mohenjodaro were both rediscovered in the early 1920s, the latter has received more attention from historians and archaeologists. This is primarily because Mohenjodaro is considered one of the most advanced cities of the ancient Indus Valley civilization. Archaeological interest in the region has also been justified by the fact that the site has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As a result, survey groups from Germany and Italy have taken a keen interest in pursuing excavation work there.


Mahasthangarh, on the other hand, has attracted only a modest degree of attention. Apart from the fortified citadel located at the centre of the ancient city, only a marginally small portion of the site has been excavated so far.

Interestingly, both archaeological sites have suffered from neglect by government bodies. The Global Heritage Fund released a report in June 2012 mentioning both Mahasthangarh and Mohenjodaro among the twelve archaeological sites that stand the risk of disappearing owing to the dearth of effective conservation measures. The risk of losing a heritage has not been exaggerated. On the contrary, residential encroachments on the site of the ancient city have grown extensively in recent years. The courts in Bangladesh have

outlawed squatting on the site and have issued orders to demolish houses that are illegally constructed. But the damage is irreversible. Most of the houses have been constructed by recycling bricks and using excavated materials. Small villages have emerged. Under the circumstances, it appears unfair to displace people from their homes just to preserve a historical legacy.

Moreover, the government has to take proactive measures to mitigate the incidence of looting on the site. For several years, miscreants have taken advantage of the lax attitude shown by concerned authorities. As a result, many artefacts have been pillaged from the site and subject to misuse. This is a powerful testament of the extent to which a historical heritage has been exploited.

The Bangladeshi government currently finds itself in a quagmire. It is embroiled in a challenging act of balancing the immediate needs of the people with the somewhat ambitious desire for historical preservation. The interests of the population should, as a matter of priority, trump all other considerations for social improvement. But the debate cannot simply boil down to a question of priorities. The scope for promoting the archaeological site as a tourist destination must be recognized.

The excavation work conducted since the early 1920s has led to some intriguing discoveries such as the Jiat Kunda, the Mankalir Dhap and the Khodar Pathar Bhita. In addition, the fortified citadel and the site museum offer a whole spectrum of different artefacts bearing historical significance. The government will need to take a proactive and sustainable approach to developing the ancient city as a tourist destination. The process of compulsory purchase seems to be the only convenient solution to grapple with the problem of competing interests on the land. However, this would serve as drastic step and may elicit a negative response from the media and several international organisations. As a result, the Bangladeshi government will need to chalk out an innovative strategy of preserving the remains of the ancient city through citizen-based initiatives. The activities of pressure groups can play an important role in producing change but ordinary citizens themselves need to understand the negative consequences of losing a heritage and take a step in the right direction. 

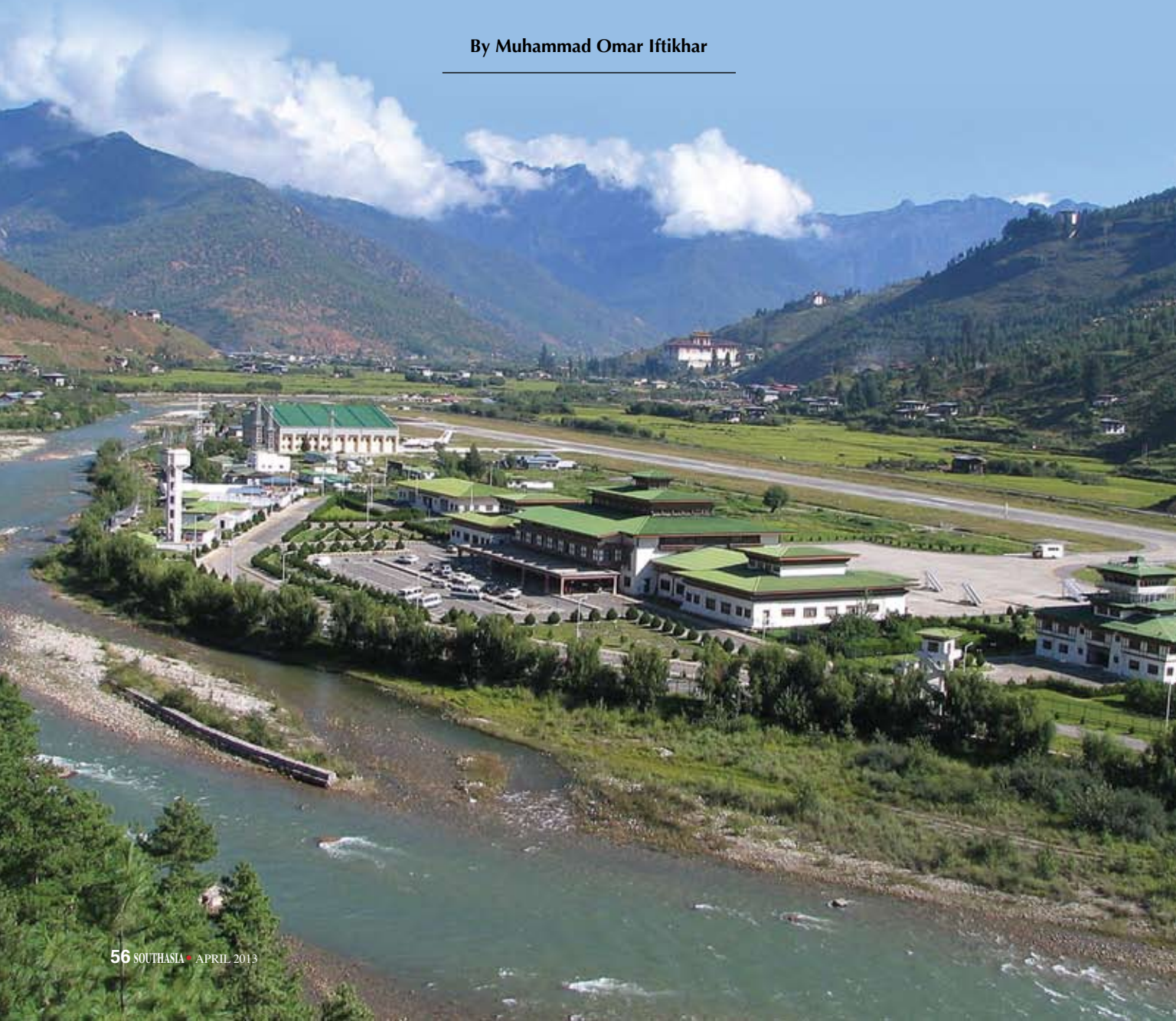
Taha Kehar is a blogger on social issues and has previously worked for a media magazine. He is currently pursuing a degree in Law at the School of Oriental and African Studies.



Flying Through the Mountains

The scenic beauty surrounding the Paro International Airport in Bhutan is a traveler's delight. However, flying in mountainous terrain is not an easy task.

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar



The landlocked country of Bhutan is a traveler's paradise. Surrounded by mountains and natural beauty, the country's breathtaking sights attract tourists from around the world. The adventure begins when the airplane lands at the Paro Airport, the country's only international airport which is situated in the Paro district. Nestled between towering mountains and lakes, the airport's scenic location has become a tourist spot on its own merit.

The airport derives its name from the Paro Chhu Lake that runs parallel to it. Maintained by the Department of Civil Aviation, the Paro Airport terminal was constructed in 1999, offering a glimpse into Bhutan's architectural heritage. In 2002, the airport handled nearly 37,000 passengers and 91,000 tones of cargo.

If passengers need to steady their nerves while the airplane descends, surrounded by mountains on either side, then the pilots too must maintain absolute concentration and possess nerves of steel while steering the airplane to safety. Despite its spectacular beauty, the Paro Airport is one of the most dangerous in the world. Flying an airplane into Bhutan is so challenging that only eight pilots in the world are qualified enough to land or take off from the Paro Airport. The airport, situated only 1.5 miles (2.4 km) above sea level and surrounded by pointed peaks of up to 18,000 feet, has a runway strip measuring only 6,500 feet in length (1.9 km).

Not only do high mountain peaks pose a challenge but pilots must also take extra caution when steering the plane to fly past houses built on the mountains. The wings come within an arm's length from crashing into the roofs. It is because

of this demanding environment that international carriers refrain from putting Bhutan on their route network. Only two airlines operate in the country - Druk Air Corporation Limited, Bhutan's national airline and Tashi Air or Bhutan Airlines, the country's first private airline. Druk Air flies to New Delhi, Kolkata, Bangkok, Kathmandu, and Bodh Gaya. Direct flights do not come to Bhutan. Tourists must first go to Nepal and take Nepal's Buddha Air to reach Bhutan. In 2010, Buddha Air became the first international airline to operate to Bhutan. The thrilling air trip from Paro to Kathmandu passes over the tallest mountain range in the world. In clear weather, travelers can see Mount Everest and the entire Himalayan range.

The Paro Airport operates only in daytime, as it is nearly impossible to fly during the night. The control tower gives the green signal only when the atmosphere is clear. Due to the airport's close proximity with the mountains, the conditions are not conducive for a night-flight.

Nearly 30,000 tourists use the airport every year. Bhutan has an undeveloped infrastructure and the country lags behind in modern facilities because of its isolated location. However, the Paro Airport does offer a range of services. Cargo facilities at the airport include a transit zone, fresh meat inspection site, baggage x-ray equipment, courier centre and aircraft maintenance crew. Facilities for passengers include check-in desks, baggage claim belt, parking spaces, airport hotel, post office, bank, restaurants, VIP lounge, and a Duty Free Shop. The airport's facilities include a passenger terminal with four check-in desks, one cargo terminal and two aircraft hangars.

Apart from air travel, visitors can

commute to Bhutan through roads using public transport. However, road travel in Bhutan is also dangerous as the mountainous terrain and an underdeveloped infrastructure makes the journey quite perilous. International tourists enter the country through three land borders in eastern Bhutan, namely Phuntsholing, Gelephu and Samdrup Jongkhar. They travel through mountains, hairpin bends and sub-tropical areas before reaching the city districts.

Airline pilots face a number of challenges when flying to Bhutan. First, the air pressure becomes difficult to handle when flying in an open area surrounded by mountains. The air swirls around the airplane as it begins descent. A similar disruption occurs during take-off as well, as the airplane has to fly upwards. The air pressure is, however, not much of a problem during take-off as it is during landing, as the pilot has to touch down precisely within the short landing strip.

Apart from Paro Airport, two other airports in Bhutan are the Yongphulla in the Trashigang District and Bathpalathang in the Bumthang District. Both serve as domestic airports. Bhutan also has plans to construct more domestic airports in the city of Gelephu in the Sarpang District.

The influx of visitors increases from April to June when Bhutan holds numerous national festivals and the pleasant climate makes it a memorable journey. The airport becomes over-crowded during peak seasons but the excitement of visiting Bhutan considerably lessens the discomfort. ■

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

Action on Wheels

The Piston Motor Racing Challenge may be one way the Maldives has found to once again boost its tourism sector and garner the much-needed publicity.

By Fara Abrar



Over the years, the Maldives has attracted many tourists from across the world for its natural beauty, which has painstakingly been maintained by the government as a reliable source of income. The country offers incredible holidays and opportunities to get away to its tranquil waters and mesmerizing beaches. But the archipelago is not just a spot for those looking for some time off. It offers plenty for those seeking a bit of adventure. Initially, the Maldivian resorts offered sports like snorkeling, surfing, para-sailing and wind surfing. A diverse set of constant tourists signifies growing competition, making it imperative for holiday resorts to keep their offerings dynamic.

In an effort to further this, the Maldives recently held the Piston Motor Racing Challenge 2013 in collaboration with the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) and the Maldives Motor Racing Association (MMRA). However, the event did not solely focus on racing but rather strived to attract children and families by offering live music, electronic dance groups, laser shows, fireworks, drag racing and so on. The core purpose of this event was to increase sports tourism and also create aware-


ness about road safety.

For the Maldives, motor racing has become an additional source of revenue that will attract racers from across the world to compete in the sport and will simultaneously contribute to the overall economic prosperity of the country. It is expected that most racers would not only participate but would also be tempted to stay slightly longer to enjoy the Maldives' natural beauty and other thrilling water sports. Apart from boosting tourism and stabilizing the economy in a political unstable country, adding a new sporting activity will also increase employment and the demand for skilled labor.

International media eagerly covered the event with fans uploading updates and pictures on social media sites. The Piston Motor Racing competition added much needed publicity to the Maldives that recently finds itself embroiled in negative media reports. Whether the coverage detailed the organized structure of the grand and lavish opening ceremony, the Maldives has certainly generated interest in the sport, for years to come.

In a sport like motor racing, secu-

rity is the top priority for both the racers and the spectators. A slightly greater bend may lead the biker to lose control of the vehicle leading to fatal injuries with high possibilities of death. Furthermore, the chances of the bike sliding towards the spectators is equally high leading to enormous risk and uncertainty if no proper arrangement is made to protect their lives. Hence, the Maldives National Defense Force took responsibility to provide proper safety, security and protection to everyone and ensure that the road rules and guidelines were being followed by the racers.

The promotion of sport tourism in the form of the Piston Motor Racing Challenge will undoubtedly help the country grow economically thus increasing employment, wages and the standard of living. 

Fara Abrar is pursuing studies in Marketing at the IBA and is an active blogger.



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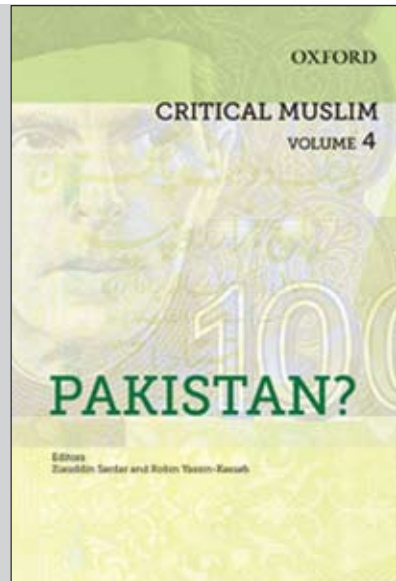
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Theory of Islamic Philosophy

Editors: Ziauddin Sardar and Robin Yassin-Kassab
Title: Critical Muslim - Volume 4
Publisher: Oxford University Press, 2013
Pages: 274, Paperback
ISBN: 9780199068500
Price: PKR 595

Reviewed By:
Dr. Omar Farooq Khan



Critical Muslim – Volume 4 is an amalgam of articles and features providing the reader with a variety of styles and opinions on an important issue. It is an achievement on behalf of the editors Ziauddin Sardar and Robin Yassin-Kassab to compile and present a comprehensive book that makes for interesting reading.

The volume examines Muslim perspectives on many great debates of our times and accentuates “the plurality and diversity of Islam and Muslims” in general. The book “critically examines established conventions” and its authors seek new readings of religion, culture and politics. The purpose of this exercise is stated as the “potential to transform the Muslim world and beyond” and promote dialogue, collaboration, and cooperation between the Muslim world and Western cultures.

The majority of the articles concentrate on the origins and reasons for the recent Arab Revolt termed as the ‘Arab Spring.’ The authors high-

light how a simple yet startling act of immolation by a Tunisian citizen sparked into a forest fire of protest, spreading wildly through the Middle East.

Some of the notable features in this volume include ‘Tahrir Square’, ‘Gaddafi and Me’, ‘A Trans-Islamic Revolution’ and ‘Female and Fighting’ which trace the root causes of dissent in the Muslim world and examine how it has compelled the people to demand accountability from the despotic rulers. Equally interesting is the ‘Arts and Letters’ section of the volume; a collection of beautiful poems along with a feature on Najaf, the cultural capital of the Islamic World. Another interesting piece is the feature on the Turkish model that discusses how secularism reshaped Turkey’s role in the world. However, the icing on the cake comes at the conclusion of the book in the feature ‘Ten Towering Fatwas’.

This shares a list on how the supposed wise and all knowing ‘clerics/bearded brigade’ are issuing fatwas

and directing the Ummah (Muslim nations) on how to conduct their lives.

Various fatwas discussed include issues such as allowing people to divorce via SMS (writing divorce three times and sending it); the Earth being flat and the sun rotating around it; why women shouldn’t wear jeans, and a Council of Scholars working on the concept of a ‘Halal Yoga.’

The volume titled ‘The Idea of Islam’ concentrates on the juristic interpretations (House of Islam) of the religion. The authors argue that the bulk of classical Islamic jurisprudence aided Muslim rulers in developing effective foreign policies in an age of popes and crusades.

The Idea of Islam highlights that the “House of Islam” has numerous divisions. In fact, the contributors are persistent that clear ideological biases exist and, unfortunately, religious interpretations are dated. Ziauddin Sardar further cements the statement by stating that the scholars have discouraged the notion to

think and formulate opinions. Sardar refers to this group as “thieves of free will.” He further attacks the traditionally appointed religious scholars and refers to them as “another prison” that restrains the ability to think and even to imagine religious issues with clarity. Another contributor, Parvez Manzoor, also challenges the tradition of Islamic jurisprudence, stating that it is “devouring morality and ethics and stifling spirituality.” Interestingly, Sufism (probably due to its more tolerant approach) is hailed as the savior of Islamic traditions. Manzoor cites it as a voice of reason and tolerance for Islam against the jurists.

The majority of features in this book highlight those who are disillusioned with the orthodoxy and

dogma in the mainstream currents of the Muslim world and are seeking alternative avenues of religiosity. The book is a must-read for its power of personal reflection. Moreover, it stresses upon the ‘need’ to hold a debate regarding Islamic legal tradition and the spiritual crisis that currently afflicts the Muslim World. Islamic discourse obsessed with power and emotion, gender inequalities, intolerance, and general intellectual immaturity needs to be resolved, bringing practical and effective solutions to crippling issues facing Muslims around the world.

Despite a strong writing style and effective frame of references, the book lacks in its ability to introduce varied perspectives. Perhaps including intelligent voices amongst the class of jurists and for-

mal scholars would have successfully added to the book’s credibility. It is true that the House of Islam remains divided along ideological lines, which is why the editors included essays from different contributors (including more traditionally inclined scholars) to the book’s content.

Muslim intellectuals need to engage with communities and it might be worthwhile to enter into productive conversations with Islamic scholars and tradition, since people are following traditions for centuries. To negate them entirely would result in exclusion of one’s self from the debate. **S**

Dr. Omar Farooq Khan is a freelance writer with special interest in social issues, national heritage and sports.

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By Anees Jillani

Incarceration for What?

On the morning of February 9, 2013, Mohammed Afzal Guru was hanged in the Tihar Jail of New Delhi and subsequently buried inside. His hanging was carried out only two days before the 29th death anniversary of Maqbool Butt, who was also hanged in the same jail on February 11, 1984.

Maqbool Butt was a founding member of the JKLF (Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front), along with Amanullah Khan. JKLF is now headed by Yasin Malik who originally came into prominence as a militant fighting for Kashmir's independence. He was arrested at the start of the militant movement in Kashmir during a police encounter and was incarcerated for six years during which he was severely tortured; the prime reason for his ill-health till date.

Upon his release in 1994 on grounds of ill-health, Yasin Malik renounced violence, announced a unilateral ceasefire and steadfastly stood for a peaceful method to settle the Kashmir conflict. He supports the return of Kashmiri Hindus back to their homeland and is perhaps the only leader belonging to the APHC (All Pakistan Hurriyat Conference) who stands for secularism.

Despite his whole-hearted support for a non-violent solution of the Kashmir imbroglio, since his release in 1994 he has spent prolonged periods of time either in jail or under house arrest, mostly on preventive grounds. This goes to show the insecurity of the Indian State and the step-motherly treatment that the Kashmiri Muslims have continuously been facing since 1947.

It is not easy for any Kashmiri Muslim to obtain a passport and it is difficult if not impossible for a prominent leader to do so. Yasin however, was eventually permitted to go to the United States for medical treatment as his condition was deteriorating. He frequently visited Pakistan, to meet politicians and achieve a consensus on the Kashmir issue. In February 2009, he fell in love with a Pakistani girl, Mishal. Inevitably, his visits to Pakistan became more

frequent as Mishal was unable to get a visa to Kashmir for an extended period.

Yasin Malik was visiting Pakistan for the first time after the birth of his daughter when Afzal Guru was hanged. Hardly anybody took notice and the Government of Pakistan's silence was noticeable although understandable as Guru was accused of involvement in a terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001. However, even the media did not give it due prominence and politicians remained mum on the subject.

Yasin Malik chose to go on a 24 hour hunger strike in front of the Press Club in Islamabad. Everybody concerned with the state of affairs in Indian occupied Kashmir as well politicians, including the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, visited Yasin Malik at the hunger strike camp.

As luck would have it, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, Amir of Jamaat-ud-Dawah, accused by India of being the mastermind of the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, also visited Yasin at the camp, sat with him for half an hour, and made a speech. Suddenly, Afzal Guru's hanging went into the background and the Indian media vehemently accused Malik of collaborating with terrorist Hafiz Saeed. Calls for his arrest and demands for the cancellation of his passport were instantly raised.

On March 9, Malik was attacked at the Delhi airport by RSS hooligans and was detained upon his return to Srinagar for an indefinite period. The Home Minister recently announced that Malik's passport could be cancelled at any appropriate time. It is certainly a shame that an innocent human being can be made a center of ulterior motives from political factions. ■

Anees Jillani is an advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan 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.

"I will spend the rest of my life working towards building the Pakistan that Jinnah originally envisioned"

"I will clean my neighborhood!"

"Provide legal representation to those who cannot afford it and help in establishing a true rule of law in Pakistan"

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"I will research how to eradicate polio and contact agencies to learn how I can become active"

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