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INSIDE:

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A Peaceful Transfer of Power

INDIA

Race to Win Delhi

AFGHANISTAN

A Chance at Redemption

INTERNATIONAL

Jolted to Reality

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Maldives	Rf 45
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The Survival Threat

With a growing population and climate change, South Asia faces an acute water shortage that could threaten its very survival. How long can the region continue to remain oblivious to this threat?





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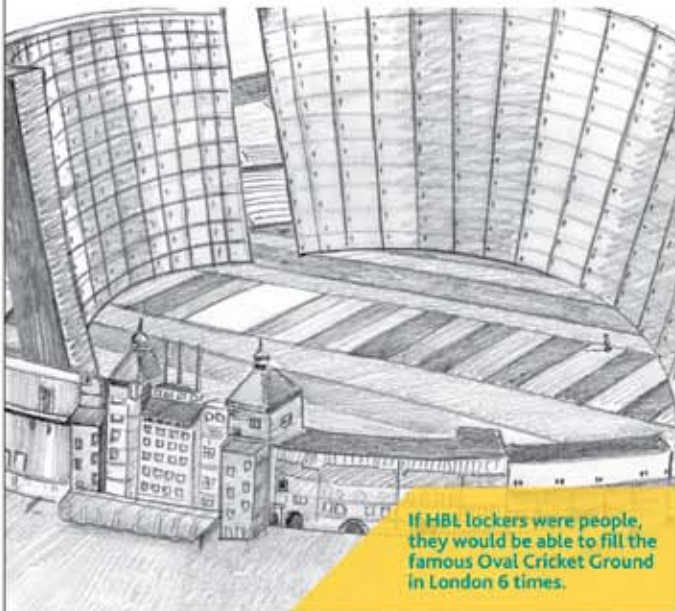
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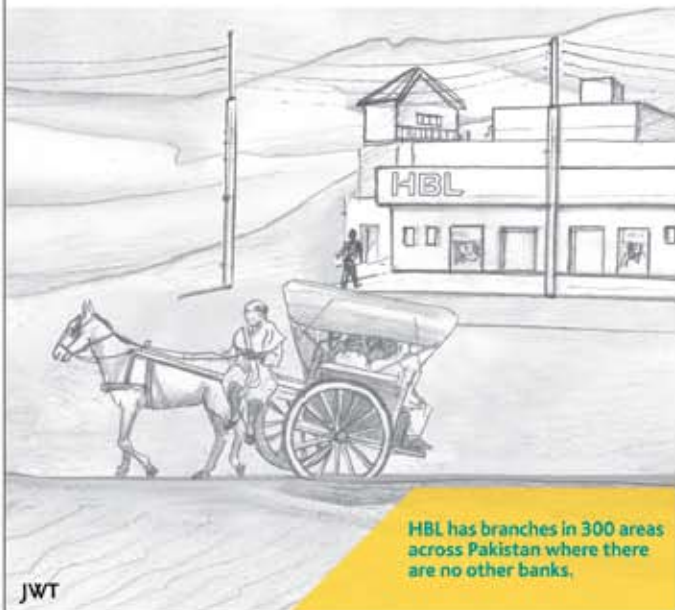
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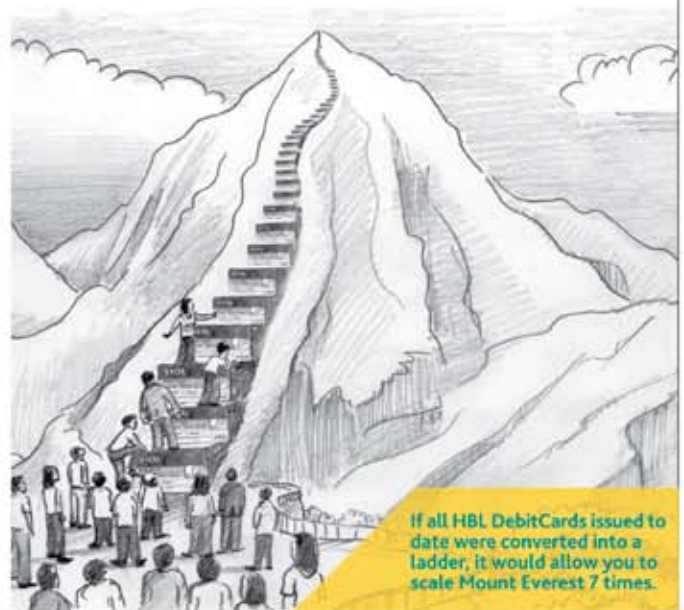
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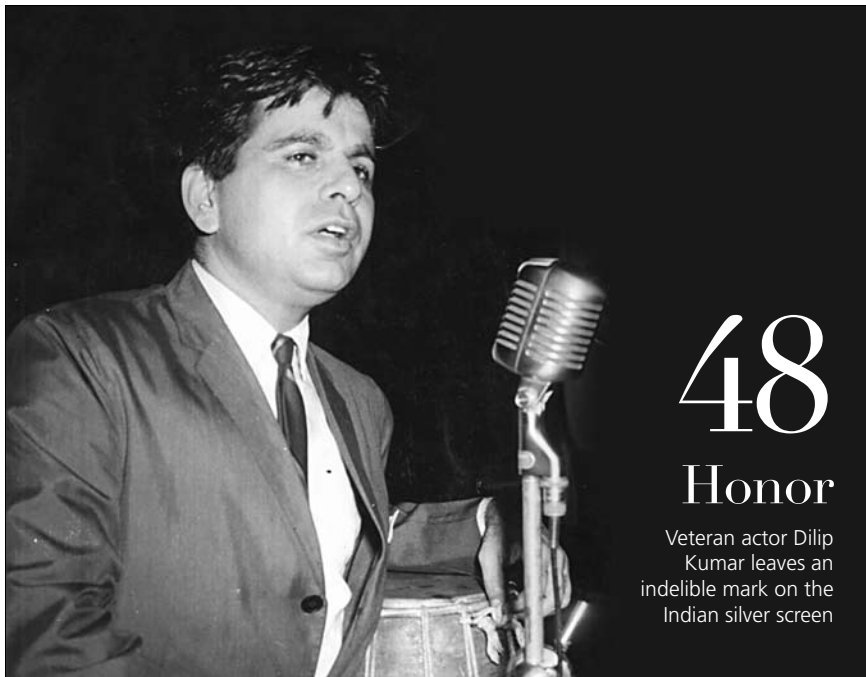


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Bullets and Buzzwords

Amidst such buzzwords as ‘Composite Dialogue’, ‘Confidence Building Measures’ and ‘MFN Status’ fast becoming the stuff of diplomatic jargon and the media lexicon in India and Pakistan over the past few years, it is rather unfortunate that troops were involved in clashes across the Kashmir border at the beginning of the year. On January 6, Pakistani and Indian armies exchanged fire along the LoC (Line of Control) in Kashmir, resulting in the death of a Pakistani soldier. Subsequently, there were reports involving the killing of soldiers on both sides. While this has marked a peak in hostilities since the 2003 ceasefire, better counsels prevailed after the recent flare-up and both armies arrived at an understanding to de-escalate the border tension. There has been quite a bit of goodwill between India and Pakistan ever since the Composite Dialogue process was resumed between the two neighbors in 2011, following the 2008 Mumbai attacks. The process kicked off with Pakistan granting the long-awaited Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to India (15 years after New Delhi granted a similar status to Islamabad). It gained momentum with leaders from both sides meeting at high levels, civil society, cultural and business ambassadors meeting more frequently – and productively – and recently culminating in a long-sought visa agreement that promises relief to divided families on both sides.

There was a time when both Pakistan and India were negatively obsessed with each other but now India does not appear to worry too much about Pakistan as a traditional enemy and is more anxious about China’s growing strength in the region. Senior Indian commanders may have used hostile language in addressing Pakistan following the recent border clashes but that appeared to be more for local consumption. What India seems to be more concerned with now is China’s military advancements and its own competitiveness vis-à-vis Beijing, as the dominant regional power. Pakistan’s newly declared main security threat is also not India-centric anymore; it has been replaced by the domestic militancy which has retched up its violent activities in recent weeks through attacks on Pakistani military targets, particularly in the country’s northern parts.

The Pakistan-India relationship, however, continues to be riddled with difficulties, as underscored by the heating up of temperatures on the heretofore quiet LoC in Kashmir. It is obvious that not much has been accomplished on such basic issues between the two countries as Kashmir, Sir Creek and Siachen. The much hyped-up MFN relationship has also not been normalized so far and formalization of trade relations between the two nations still needs to be addressed in practical terms. Pakistan was expected to remove its negative list - goods that cannot be exported to India - by the end of 2012 but no headway has been made on this count so far. One plausible answer that comes to the fore is that with the US/NATO exit from Afghanistan just around the corner, both India and Pakistan are vying for a role in the endgame in order to establish their dominance in the region. President Obama has already said that (Washington’s) success in Afghanistan would require “constructive support from across the region, including Pakistan.” India appears to have interpreted this as a scenario where Pakistan would have an upper hand in the post-2014 Afghanistan and, therefore, seems to be creating a situation to keep Pakistan pinned to its eastern flank and to further reinforce its own zones of influence that it has already created in Afghanistan.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

A Second Chance

Your cover story on U.S. President, Barack Obama's second term highlighted a range of analyses on the subject. The entire story was very balanced and informative, providing extensive analysis on a range of issues from numerous perspectives. I agree that the foreign policy challenges facing Obama in his second term are insurmountable and will be much harder to address. Not only does the U.S face a looming economic crisis and a dubious healthcare law, the recent elementary school shooting also



raises concerns of domestic violence. On the foreign policy front, President Obama will have to take decisive action against Iran, address the issue of terrorist safe havens in Pakistan, and show solidarity with the people of the Middle East who continue to fight for their democratic rights. Most importantly, however, he will have to conduct a timely and responsible NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, all the while ensuring that the country does not implode. These are challenges that would intimidate any president but it is for the better that President Obama is the president of choice. Obama is well-versed in political diplomacy and has gained much experience working with volatile countries

on sensitive topics. He also has an enhanced understanding of military affairs as opposed to his presidential rival, Governor Mitt Romney. While the challenges are magnanimous, President Obama is well equipped to handle them.

Mark Seidel
New York, USA

No Good End

Although President Obama has secured a second presidential term, it is unlikely that this will be any different from his first stay. A Republican-dominated Congress will undoubtedly stall or halt any major progress that may be possible, domestically or internationally, essentially paralyzing Obama. The President faces serious challenges ahead and some analysts predict that since he will not be able to run for another term, elections are no longer a priority and Obama will push his agenda more decisively and aggressively. While the President may feel more emboldened to take bigger steps in the realm of international politics, he will still require the approval of Congress and will find his hands tied tightly. There is no easy withdrawal strategy from Afghanistan and President Obama is no longer in a position to decide how to withdraw responsibly. It may be too late for that. The most he can do is to chart out an exit strategy with minimal losses and maximum guarantees to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a failed state yet again. Either case, with challenges so magnanimous, even Obama's second term might not be good enough to offer a concrete solution.

Matthew Orfeld
Kabul, Afghanistan

Wielding Influence?

It is very impressive that of all the political leaders to have been invited to speak at the Hindustan Times Leadership Summit in New Delhi,



former President Pervez Musharraf was the chosen guest. Despite the fact that Musharraf no longer resides in Pakistan, he nonetheless commands great influence and relevance in national politics. Musharraf's era stands in stark contrast to the difficult times being faced by the people of Pakistan currently. Not only is he viewed as a strong leader who understands military strategy but also has a remarkably positive and relatively stable era to show for his period of government. Today when Pakistan's leaders exploit the country for their own personal gains and degrade its reputation on an international platform, it is refreshing to hear a man like Pervez Musharraf advocate Pakistan's cause and brighter future, even in the darkest of times. Improving relations with India is of paramount importance if Pakistan is truly committed to improving its socio-economic position. While the Army has, time and again, been accused of playing a double game, Musharraf's thinking could signify somewhat of a shift in national security strategy. This will however remain marginal until the General does not return home to physically promote his agenda.

Mehrukh Khan
Karachi, Pakistan

At the End of the Road

It seems that President Karzai's days in government might truly be over. Your story examining his political

future and the legacy he will leave behind was beautifully presented. While Karzai may have been the right man at the right time in the right place, he is no longer the right choice. Afghanistan has gone through a plethora of changes in these past ten years and the next six years will be the country's litmus test for stability. Much will be changing and while Afghanistan and its people slowly attempt to stand on their own feet with minimal international intervention, they will require a strong, committed and honest government that will devotedly lead the way. Karzai's government is notorious for corruption; a trait increasingly troublesome for an already weak government functioning in an unstable country. The Afghan civil society is flourishing and there is much hope that the next elections will occur in a fair and stable manner. Holding safe and fair elections will also be a big responsibility on the international community's shoulders. Whether Karzai stays politically relevant or not, what is certain is that Afghanistan has too much at stake to make an impulsive mistake.

Maleeha Adnan
London, UK

Source of Pride

Your interview with Namira Salim, Pakistan's first astronaut was very enlightening. Very few Pakistanis con-

sider space exploration as a possible profession and it is very heartening to see a Pakistani represent the country on such an international scale. Having already traveled to the North and South poles and becoming the first South Asian to skydive over Mount Everest, Salim is a symbol of pride for Pakistanis worldwide. While reading her interview, I was surprised that not many Pakistanis had heard of Salim's achievements previously. Space exploration not only demands strict training, dedication and focus but also strong resolve and determination. To see a Pakistani woman rub shoulders with her international counterparts and become one of the founding members of Virgin Galactic, is tremendous! Pakistan's younger generation is delving into unconventional professions and excelling at attaining their dreams. Icons like Namira Salim serve as inspirations for younger Pakistanis to follow their dreams and leave an impact, making their country swell with pride.

Abdul Rahman
Islamabad, Pakistan

Bringing Knowledge

The Bangladeshi trend of Info Ladies has had a transformational effect on social awareness within the country. The women who carry laptops and tech-gadgets on their back, ride their bicycles to remote villages and spend days transmitting information, creating social awareness, assisting with vocational training or very simply, opening young minds to the power of the internet and the reach of the global community. Not only do the Info Ladies serve as a source of communication but they also serve as mentors, friends, advisors and in some cases, mediators. This initiative has had a phenomenal effect on a society that still remains largely uninformed.

By many estimates, Bangladesh is enhancing its IT sector and the gov-

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ernment is making a conscientious effort to establish the country as the next technology hub. However, the bitter



truth is that such advancements are increasingly confined to urban centers alone. Rural areas, which form the majority of the country, remain backward, marginalized, illiterate and uninformed. In such circumstances, Info Ladies provide an excellent alternative to dissipate technological knowledge and transform the Bangladeshi society into one that is wholly relevant to a changing world and in control of its destiny. The program has seen paramount success and could be an excellent model to emulate in other parts of the region, including India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, where strong urban-rural technological divides plague social and moral advancements.

Prithika Raj
Dhaka, Bangladesh





"I have no doubt that our resolve to provide education to all, in particular to the millions of schoolgirls, is the best strategy to defeat the forces of violence."
Asif Ali Zardari
President of Pakistan



"We know that this man who came in the name of a guest to meet with Asadullah Khalid came from Pakistan."
Hamid Karazi
President of Afghanistan



"Innovation can only sprout in an atmosphere of tolerance, diversity, and curiosity."
Muhammad Yunus
Founder, Grameen Bank



"If we take a look at the top 20 States in terms of human development, Gujarat ranks 18th. You must think what the reason behind this is."
Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India



"I never met [Pankaj Roy]. But I've heard a lot of stories about his contribution to cricket. It's an honour to launch a book written on him."
Sachin Tendulkar
Indian cricketer



"Those who did nothing for the delivery of basic rights to the people of South Punjab are raising hollow slogans for creating a Seraiki province."
Imran Khan
Chairman, PTI



"We will continue to produce steel of the highest quality in France."
Laxmi Mittal
Chairman and CEO, ArcelorMittal



"[Nasheed] deceived not only GMR, he deceived his own people."
Mohammed Waheed Hassan
President of Maldives



"Some elements with vested interests, who could not achieve what they wanted through 30 years of conflict, are trying to achieve their sinister moves through Hulftsdorp (courts)."
Mahinda Rajapaksa
President of Sri Lanka



"Every nation in the region has a stake in Afghanistan's future and a responsibility to step up and help secure it."
Hillary Clinton
U.S. Secretary of State



"The future of the country is dependent on young students."
Baburam Bhattarai
Prime Minister of Nepal



"A way to grow the beverage business is to take foods and drinkify them."
Indra Nooyi
CEO, PepsiCo.



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PAKISTAN

Return of the Revolutionary

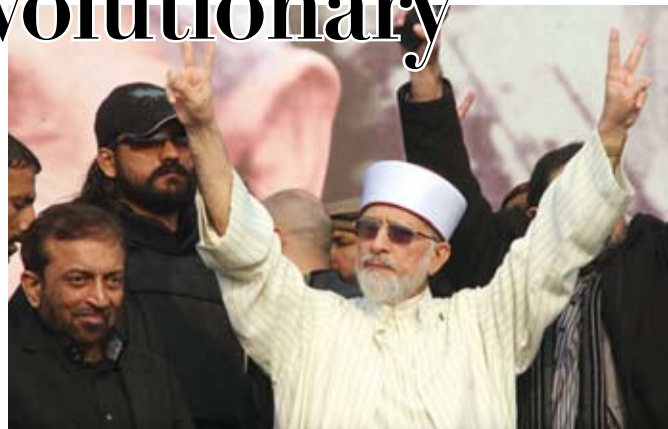
Tahir-ul-Qadri's unexpected return to Pakistan has sent shockwaves across the political spectrum. His intention to bring electoral reforms ahead of the 2013 general elections has presented him with a platform to voice his opinions on change in a politically unstable Pakistan. Moreover, ready support from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) has given him a political advantage.

Upon his return, Qadri has assured to free Pakistan from its many predicaments and introduce reforms in all sectors, with electoral reforms being a priority. Most Pakistanis are perplexed at the timing of Qadri's return. In addition, rumors are afloat of western support for

Qadri's politically charged homecoming. Qadri's inspiration for change emanates from the Egyptian Revolution of 2010. He believes that a similar change is necessary to bring absolute democracy in the country. Moreover, he wants the government to accept his demands of appointing a caretaker government that also includes influence from the Army and Judiciary, which he believes will carry out electoral reforms ahead of the elections.

Although the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has resolved to hold

elections on time, Qadri's entry in the political arena says otherwise. The way Qadri has exposed the flawed system pours further doubt over the democratic government and its ill practices, earning Qadri the title of savior, in many quarters. **S**



AFGHANISTAN

Revising Agendas



President Hamid Karzai recently met with U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington to discuss the future of Afghanistan. The two countries have been fighting the war against terrorism

for over a decade now, with Afghanistan serving as the base for U.S. forces in the South Asian region. The meeting took place at a time when both countries are anticipating a smooth transition of power in Afghanistan following NATO withdrawal in 2014. The meeting comes at a time when the Obama administration publicly announced a "zero option" strategy signaling a security strategy shift whereby the U.S. will pull out all troops from Afghanistan.

During the four-day visit, President Karzai also held meetings with U.S. Defense Secretary, Leon Panetta and U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who has recently returned to her job. President Karzai's meeting with his U.S. counterpart is the first after President Obama won a second term in office.

According to sources, the Obama administration is struggling to determine the best strategy to withdraw from the combat mission in Afghanistan, which costs an estimated \$28 million a day.

As per earlier statements, the Obama administration was planning to maintain a residual force of nearly 9,000 troops in Afghanistan to oversee a peaceful transition and provide training and assistance to Afghan troops. Though performing a non-combatant role, a residual force was seen as necessary to prevent the country from imploding as it had earlier, following the Soviet withdrawal in the 1980s. With a financial crisis looming in the US and strong public opposition to prolonging the war, perhaps America's priority to not repeat mistakes, has dwindled. **S**

INDIA

Slashing the Military Budget



In a desperate attempt to balance its budget, the Indian Finance Ministry has slashed military spending by US\$2 billion. The decision came amidst economic instability and a soaring fiscal deficit of 5.8 percent, leaving analysts with no option but to reduce the military budget by five percent. Budget cuts will not only affect the country's defense sector but will also hamper the acquisition of military aircrafts and equipment in the near future. In particular, the budget cut is likely to affect the acquisition of 126 French Rafale fighter jets worth \$20 billion, which India planned to acquire under the medium multi-role combat aircraft project.

India's military build-up began in 2010 following the infamous November 2008 New Delhi attack. A wave of paranoia and anti-Pakistan sentiment dictated the national security establishment's demands for increased funding. Although the budget cuts will favor India's long-term monetary goals, it will however reduce the country's ability to invest in purchasing machinery, equipment and military weapons. India's national security threat is also not simply confined to Pakistan. The country perceives serious competition and threats from China as well.

The reduction in India's military budget coincides with the correspond-

ing rise of its security challenges. The country's defense outlay of \$35.09 billion seems trivial as compared to China's expenditure of \$106.41 billion. Previously, India had sought a 30 percent budget increase to counter the rapid development in the military sector by China. It seems it will now have to wait before executing any such plans.

Following the cut, several key acquisition plans have been pushed for the next fiscal year. Analysts predict that this will cause serious concern in India for the country is continuously expanding its arsenal to maintain its hegemony in the region. **S**

BANGLADESH

Harnessing Support

Bangladesh and China recently signed MoUs to promote mutual trade and investment in the textile sector. The deal will enhance cooperation in trade and investment, education, delegation exchange, and transferring technology between the two countries. The signing ceremony took place in Bangladesh during a recent visit by a

Chinese delegation to explore avenues for apparel sourcing and investment. China views Bangladesh as a progressive country that manufactures quality products with appropriate machinery and management. Moreover, given Bangladesh's flourishing garment industry, China has shown increased interest in establishing trade ties in the textile sector.

The Chinese delegation's visit comes at a time when the rising labor costs and shortage of workers are hindering the progress of the textile sector in China. Although the country has dominated the global market by producing quality prod-

ucts where the apparel industry is no exception, it views Bangladesh as a key regional destination. China's domestic clothing market has also seen substantial growth. This gives Bangladesh an opportunity to enter into unexploited Chinese markets and increase its own standard of living.

According to the agreement, China will shift some of its textile production to Bangladesh to make use of cheap labor, which the South Asian nation readily offers. This will help China invest in areas where Bangladesh has immense potential but lacks direction and capacity. Furthermore, according to the agreement China can also take advantage of the duty-free access that Bangladesh enjoys for its exports to the EU, Australia and the Far East. **S**



SRI LANKA

Forging Diplomatic Relations

In his recent visit to Sri Lanka, Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr. Zalmay Rassoul, met with Sri Lanka's External Affairs Minister, Prof. G.L. Peiris to sign a number of significant agreements covering economics, education, defense, and technology. Both foreign ministers are confident to forge sustainable political and economic relations in sectors of defense and education. Moreover, these agreements will constitute the building blocks for cementing a bilateral economic relationship.

Dr. Rassoul is the first foreign minister from Afghanistan to visit Sri Lanka. His visit comes at a time when Afghanistan is rebuilding its

infrastructure after suffering immense damage over the past decade. In this attempt, the country is looking to its regional neighbors for assistance. Development work is already underway ahead of the December 2014 withdrawal of NATO troops. During his maiden visit, Dr. Rassoul held meetings with the Sri Lankan Minister on bilateral relations and discussed regional and international issues of common interest.

A Memorandum of Understanding on cultural cooperation was also signed at the meeting. The Sri Lankan minister was of the view that both countries share common ideals and face similar challenges to sustain

peace. Furthermore, Sri Lankan delegates were hopeful of establishing a mission in Kabul that will further bridge the diplomatic gap between the two countries. The Afghan foreign minister stated that the South Asian region will prosper once the diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and Sri Lanka flourish. **S**



MALDIVES

Strengthening Defense Ties

The Maldives Defense Minister, Mohamed Nazim recently visited China to meet with the Chinese Defense Minister, General Liang Guanglie in an attempt to deepen bilateral military ties. Both countries currently enjoy positive diplomatic engagements but hope to facilitate stronger defense relations. The visit from the Maldivian minister comes at a time when the island country is facing a diplomatic row with India over the cancellation of GMR Infrastructure's contract to build the Male International Airport. However, Maldivian President Mohamed Waheed Hasan has denied any influence from China to oust the project.

China views the Maldives through its strategic location in the Indian Ocean. In an attempt to diplomatically

and economically intimidate India, China has forged deeper ties with most of India's neighbors and given South Asia's largest democracy much reason to fret. The Maldivian Defense Minister believes that cementing relations between China and the Maldives will provide the island nation with the military skills it desperately needs. However, General Liang has expressed his views to maintain mutually beneficial relations with the Maldives and not to interfere in internal affairs. The Maldives has maintained peaceful relations with all its South Asian neighbors but creating military ties is a necessity. Furthermore, the Maldives holds a strategic location in the Indian Ocean as China's Middle Eastern oil shipping routes from the Persian Gulf pass near the Maldiv-

ian sea border. Therefore, the Maldives could be used as a shield to protect China's maritime oil imports from the Middle East.

Though Sino-Maldivian diplomatic relations commenced in 1972, they were particularly strengthened during President Mohamed Nasheed's tenure. Apart from the growth in the tourism industry, capital inflows from China are also a reason why the Maldives is anticipating a long lasting relationship with China. **S**



Bridging the Political Gap

President of Nepal, Ram Baran Yadav recently met with the Commerce Minister of India, Anand Sharma in New Delhi to strengthen bilateral business ties. Yadav also held meetings with Indian President Pranab Mukherjee and Indian Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid. In addition, the Nepalese President also held delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in an attempt to bridge the political gap between New Delhi and Kathmandu.

Nepal is facing a political crisis after the Constituent Assembly missed a deadline to formulate a new constitution. Both Nepal and India enjoy a

flourishing trade relationship where the former depends on India for trade and supplies of food and fuel.

Previously, the two countries made efforts in reducing their political gap however, no substantial results bore fruit. Albeit a similar Hindu culture prevailing in both the countries may bring them closer but border disputes have created a standoff in the past. In this regard, the Nepalese President's visit to India ushers hope in rebuilding bilateral relationships and easing tensions to flourish trade activities.

Although both countries have been trading partners for long, the

politically combustible situation of Nepal has distanced it from forging close ties with India. **S**



International Investments

Bhutan is showing enhanced interest in forging cooperation with the Indian state of Haryana in agriculture, livestock, and technology. This will be the first time that an Indian state will fund projects in Bhutan. Prospects of such a relationship were revealed in a meeting led by Bhutanese Secretary of Economic Affairs, Dasho Sonam Tshering.

The minister showed strong resolve to build friendly ties with Haryana as the Indian state has illustrated tremendous progress in various fields. Bhutanese officials are hopeful to learn from Haryana and create avenues for



transferring technology. Furthermore, forging a partnership with Haryana will provide Bhutanese businessmen opportunities to invest in the Indian state.

Officials from Haryana visited Bhutan in 2010 to identify the key ar-

eas of cooperation. The first attempt at building ties between Bhutan and Haryana materialized when the Indian state approached Bhutan to provide hydel-power in its bid to resolve the power crisis. India wishes to invest in hydel-power plants, which are cheaper

than coal-based power plants. According to sources, Haryana plans to purchase 2,000 MW power from Bhutan, which will ensure uninterrupted power supply of nearly 20 hours to rural consumers in the Indian state. **S**

South Asia faces a looming crisis of depleting water resources, resulting partly from mismanagement and partly from environmental degradation. The issue of water scarcity is not confined only to the South Asian region but rather plagues the entire world. The matter is so sensitive that the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in a report, signed by twenty Senators across party lines, has stressed the need to better understand “where precisely water fits into American foreign policy.” On the other hand, the countries in South Asia, though alive to the threat, have not yet taken any concrete measures to avoid what experts call ‘Water Wars’ in the region.

The intricate problem of environmental degradation is endangering the natural water support system - the most fundamental aspect of human security. Water scarcity is generally defined as the non-availability of required amounts of water at the right time and right place for human and environmental use. According to various tools used - one of which is the Falkenmark indicator - South Asia currently faces a serious threat of water scarcity that can lead to no access to potable water in rural areas where more than 50% of the population lives. Less water for agriculture means shortage of food production as well as acute shortage of electricity, as there is considerable reliance in the region on hydro-based resources. Water depletion poses even greater threats to the ecosystem, of which air, water and soil are essential elements and an imbalance of any of these can damage human survival.

Furthermore, a callous human attitude is responsible for continuous environmental degradation. Higher industrial emissions of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide pollute the atmosphere, making the earth warmer and gradually damaging its ozone layer through greenhouse gas emissions. The never-ending deforestation, desertification and scarcity of

water resources further contribute to environmental degradation.

We live on a planet where 99% of water resources are either saline or frozen, thus human life is dependent upon the remaining one percent of water for its survival. Tragically, even this one percent of usable water is becoming scarce. The situation is worsening in South Asia where populations are increasing and temperatures are rising. In the next few years, South Asia will constitute the most populous region on earth, with average temperatures rising to four to six degrees Celsius.

According to a recent study titled ‘Water Scarcity in South Asia’, “South Asian countries share a huge treasure of water resources, which, if they become physically scarce, may lead to conflicts in the region. For instance, India and Pakistan share the waters of the Indus basin system. India, Bangladesh and Nepal share water from the Ganga River basin. The Indus Basin, which has sustained civilizations across millennia, presents new challenges to the people and states of the region. The way these challenges are addressed will shape the economic future of the people who share the Indus waters.”

Three trends have been identified by Dr. Akmal Hussain: “first, the per capita annual water availability in the Indus Basin has declined from 5,121 cubic meters in 1962 to 1,396 cubic meters in 2011. The total annual river flow of the Indus Basin has declined from 119 million acre feet

(MAF) in 1960 to 113 MAF in 1997. The rate of decline accelerated in between 1998 and 2011 with the annual flow of rivers in the Indus Basin falling to 102 MAF by 2011. In the case of Chenab, the average annual flow has declined by 12 per cent between 1960 and 2011, while in the river Jhelum it has declined by 17 per cent. The decline in river flows could quite possibly be due to the lower precipitation in Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, which constitute the watershed region of these two rivers. In any case, the declining river flows and increased seasonal fluctuations in these flows create the imperative for Pakistan to improve its water management and increase water use efficiency. Collaborative efforts by India and Pakistan for afforestation and management of the watersheds could slow down the increased sedimentation of rivers, which reduces the life of dams downriver. Reforestation in the watershed could also prevent devastating flash floods downstream during heavy downpours in the

A Looming Crisis

While the U.S. is rapidly embarking on corrective measures for water security, South Asia seems almost oblivious to the looming threat.

By Huzaima Bukhari & Dr. Ikramul Haq

catchment areas.”

“Second, the monsoons have shifted from the eastern part to the western part of what is Pakistan today, while the timing is delayed compared to the past. There is also reduced glacial melt in August, a month in which glacial melt historically was high. The increased variability in the timing and location of monsoons and the change in the temporal pattern of glacial melt will further accentuate the observed shortages of water in the Indus Basin during planting seasons. It is therefore, crucial for the people and the Government of Pakistan to realize that Pakistan has shifted from being a water surplus to a water-deficient country and that this shortage is likely to get worse in the decades ahead. This has urgent implications for policy and public action to improve the irrigation efficiency as well as the water use efficiency.”

“The third important dimension of water shortage is the imperative to improve the extremely low water use ef-

iciency in the Indus Basin. In the case of the top five food producers in the world (Brazil, China, France, Mexico and USA) the water use efficiency is \$23.80 per cubic meter of water used. In the case of the Indus Basin, water use efficiency is as low as \$3.34. This suggests the need to devote greater crop acreage to high value-added farm products such as fruits, vegetables, flowers, inland fisheries, livestock and dairy products. Facing the challenge of water shortage in the Indus Basin requires new initiatives in public policy and interstate cooperation.”

The defense and intelligence communities in the U.S. increasingly acknowledge the links between natural resource degradation and national security. The first stressor acknowledged by the CIA’s ‘Environmental Indications and Warnings Program’ for example, is freshwater availability. Unconventional factors (now and in the future) will drive conflict, from poverty to local pressures to resource scarcity. CIA’s report says that though

Central and South Asia have so far avoided “water wars,” the United States should be prepared for local and regional tensions caused by the poor governance of water resources and competition for limited supplies.

It is an undeniable fact that many of the world’s water problems emerge not from the physical absence of freshwater, but from poor governance and lack of investment in basic programs. The U.S. government currently pursues a “Five Streams” approach with “five different focus areas” that together form a “comprehensive strategy.” These include capacity building, coordination with the UN and other multilaterals, financial support, technology and public-private partnerships. According to experts, despite this and other “signature” projects in Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere, the United States still lacks a fundamental “clarity and long-term focus on the relationship between water and national security.”

While the U.S., its allies and UN continue to push for water security, there is little hope for South Asian countries to treat it as a priority issue. The region is hostage to multiple and fundamental issues like wars, internal conflicts and poverty. These and other traditional concerns are likely to dominate their national agendas for the foreseeable future. Poor governance and lack of investment in basic water infrastructure plague almost all South Asian states—coupled with adverse climatic changes, the problem is bound to exacerbate. Non-existence of broader regional cooperation and lack of an effective, forward-leaning strategy on water and national security in South Asia can lead to ‘Water Wars’ in the future, if corrective measures are not taken soon. **S**

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The Water Crisis

Water mismanagement and related hazards could have detrimental effects on the survival of South Asian communities. Having suffered previously, it is appalling that governments still remain unconcerned about the water crisis.

By Ehsan Pasha



South Asian countries today are unabashedly depleting their water resources, with most heading towards alarmingly low levels of per capita water availability. The region's geographical location means that nature plays a dominant role. The equatorial climate and low annual precipitation serve almost as a precondition for physical scarcity. In addition to the harmful effects of the environment, the huge population of the area, approximately one fifth of the world's population, is exerting larger amounts of pressure on an already strained water resource supply. The lack of infrastructural development for water resources is not only a result of the regional government's lackadaisical attitude but is also an illustration of the crippling financial scenario plaguing the region. Most South Asian countries lack the finances to develop their water resources in a sustainable manner. Surface water is primarily used for irrigation in South Asia and the increasing demand for food has a significant effect on the water resources of the region. Due to lack of education and vocational training, irrigation itself is not practiced under scientific guidance, with the result being over and under irrigation in most parts of South Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan.

A country can have water scarcity when its resources fall to below 1000 cubic meters per capita per year. Under this criterion, the most notably scarce country in South Asia is the Maldives, which by most estimates has only 100 cubic meters per capita per annum. With a population of close to 0.4 million, the amount of water withdrawn each year in the Maldives is a lot higher than the sustainable limit. The Maldives has no surface water and its people rely solely on groundwater for their supply, which is prone to contamination. Recent estimates have indicated that the Maldives wa-

ter supply may be exhausted in the near future; population increases have created a wastewater crisis in the surrounding waters that greatly effects the environment and ecotourism of the archipelago of 1,192 islands.

In the case of Pakistan, which had abundant water resources at the time of partition, mismanagement of water resources have succumbed the country to physical scarcity with the per capita availability falling at around the 1000 cubic meters per year mark. This figure is projected to fall below 700 cubic meters in the next decade. Most of the streams, emanating from the mighty Indus, run dry for several months of the year while industries and influential landowners take more than their share of water at little or no additional costs. Since government authorities do not develop or manage ground water, the cost of draining out aquifers beyond the sustainable limit is only the capital cost of installing a tube well, which in labor-intensive South Asia is close to nothing. Consequently, the groundwater table has fallen between 30 and 50 feet in different parts of Pakistan, and that too only in the past 15 to 20 years.

India has a per capita water availability of approximately 1600 cubic meters per year. While this figure may be high for an already over populated country, by no means does this imply that India is not suffering from scarcity as the figure varies considerably in different parts of the country. For example in some basins like Sabarmati, per capita availability of water is only around 250 cubic meters per year. South Asia in general has several regions that are prone to droughts that include over one third of India, particularly its western parts, the Rajputna desert and the State of Gujarat, all of which are inhabited by over 260 million people. Furthermore, almost two thirds of India's cultivatable area relies on rainwater for its supply.

As is the case in several other South Asian countries, rainfall is limited to approximately 40 days per year. With the knowledge that climate change will affect rainfall patterns, India's agricultural sector is under tremendous vulnerability.

Afghanistan too is an agricultural dependent country. Plagued by war, there has been little to no investment in water resource development. A rapidly growing concern looms over the availability of water as decades of armed conflict and mismanagement coupled with several years of drought have put incredible pressure on the country's water resources. Afghanistan suffers from droughts every 35 to 40 years, which last several years at a stretch. One of the country's worst droughts that left up to ten million Afghans without food or water, ended only last year. Surface water levels have fallen drastically causing a subsequent decline in irrigated land and prompted some Afghans to start cultivating opium poppy instead. Not only does opium trade thrive internationally and specifically in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the crop is also drought resistant and offers an extremely high return. As NATO troops gear up for a "responsible" withdrawal in December 2014, Afghanistan's development framework is rigorously contested. While the international community debates over allocating international aid, water is not considered a fundamental development sector. Less than 5 percent of aid has gone into developing the water sector in the past decade. Complicating matters further, diplomatic objections (mainly from Pakistan and Iran) have hindered international investments in developing Afghanistan's water resources, leaving the burden of addressing the challenges of this sector on a hostile region and an already stretched local government.



The 2007 South Asia floods, which destroyed parts of India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh, claimed the lives of 2000 people and displaced almost 30 million. In July 2010, almost one fifth of Pakistan's total land area was under water, directly affecting close to 20 million people and costing the country up to \$43 billion in structural and socio-economic damages. Over half of Bangladesh is prone to flooding and a quarter of its land mass is inundated every year. More recently, in 2011, devastating floods displaced over 16 million people in South Asia due to heavy and prolonged monsoon rains.

Apart from heavy monsoon rains that more than often bring floods,

South Asia faces another looming crisis in the rising sea levels due to climate change. Approximately two-thirds of Bangladesh's land mass is below 5 meters above sea level and the predicted half-meter water rise before 2080, will inundate almost 4700 square kilometers; the size of Karachi and Delhi combined. Bangladesh's problems are compounded by the fact that many of its rivers originate outside the country and a large portion of the flood causing flows are due to surges in these trans-national rivers. The Maldives are particularly susceptible to rising sea levels as most of the islands are less than 2 meters above sea level and even a moderate rise will mean coastal flooding. The possibility of ground-


water contamination due to salt water makes the issue even graver. In 1987, high tides flooded the capital city of Male, prompting the government to build breakwater structures around the city and seriously start considering the threat of global warming. While former President Mohammad Nasheed spearheaded diligent efforts, including purchasing land in Australia in the event of an evacuation, few headways have occurred under President Waheed Hasan's government. More than half the residents of one of the islands, Kandholhudhoo, have already volunteered to evacuate their homes in the next decade and this could be the fate of many more citizens of the Maldives, over the next century.

Apart from water quantity, the quality of South Asia's water resources is another pressing concern that requires immediate attention. Several malpractices contribute to the contamination of surface and groundwater resources in South Asia. Firstly, municipal wastewater is often discharged into surface water bodies without adequate treatment. Secondly, due to the agricultural dependency of the region, extensive chemicals are used to increase productivity and feed a rapidly growing population. These chemicals, which include fertilizers and pesticides, contaminate groundwater reserves.

Additionally, the shift towards industrialization in the region has occurred in the absence of proper governance leading to a high proportion of untreated industrial wastewater being discharged to surface water bodies. An over exploitation of groundwater reserves leads to

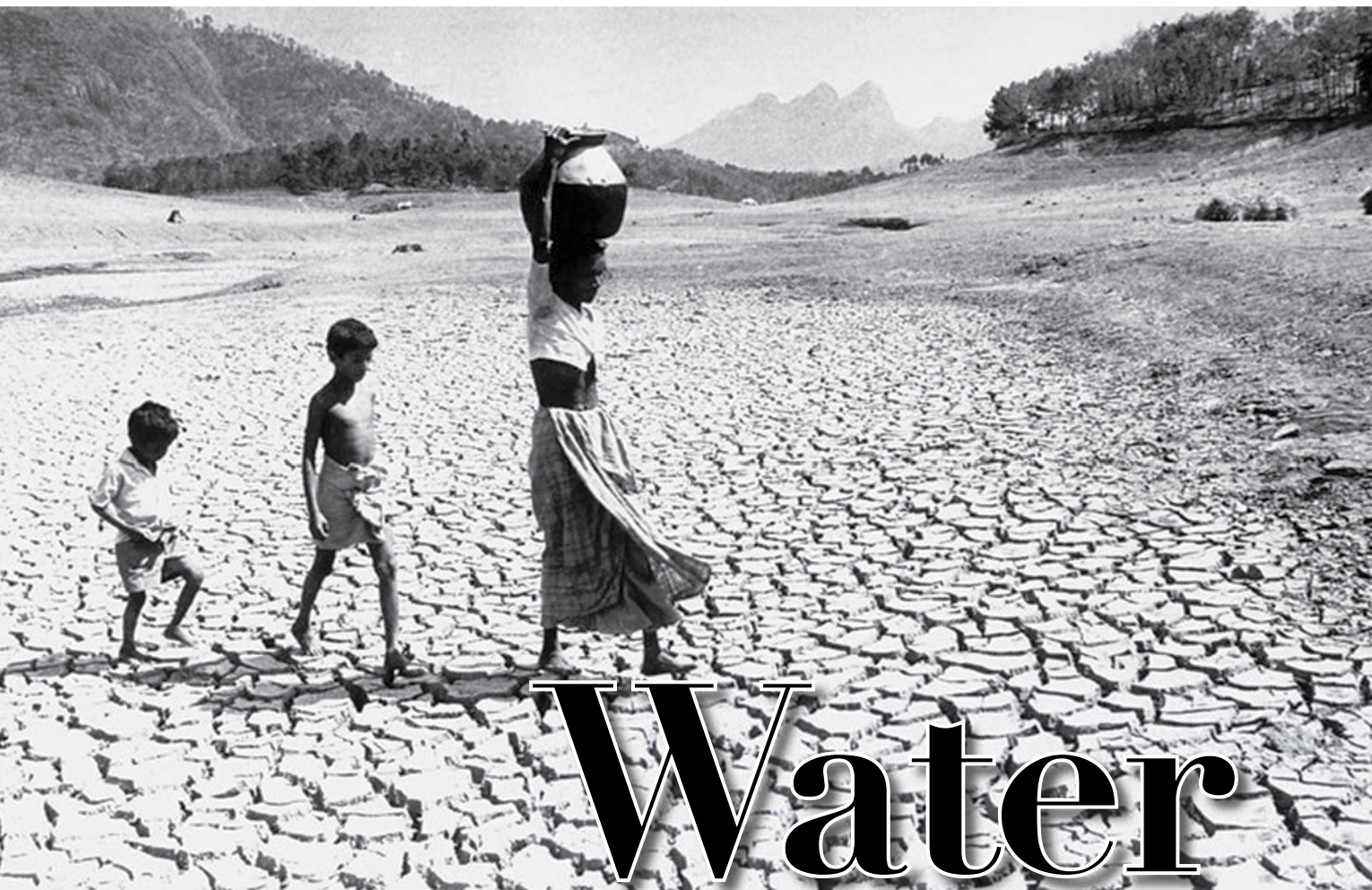
arsenic contamination, which poses a serious concern for water quality and public health in the region. In Bangladesh, thousands of people suffer from chronic arsenicosis poisoning, with millions of others at risk. The WHO went as far as to predict that one out of every 10 people in Southern Bangladesh could die from cancer induced by exposure to arsenic in the future.

By official estimations, 250,000 children die each year in Pakistan due to waterborne diseases and just under half of the nation's hospital beds are occupied by people suffering from diseases related to poor water quality. Two independent studies found that the majority of groundwater wells in Pakistan were bacteriologically contaminated, with approximately one third of the collected samples being contaminated by either arsenic or pesticides.

Water remains a complex yet critically important subject in South Asia and the challenges are multi-faceted. Water issues in South Asia have historically been viewed through a political lens but the environmental hazards of water mismanagement pose a threat to the livelihood of the millions of people that inhabit this region. Though the challenges are ecological, the solutions will lie in the region's understanding of the balance in nature, and the regional actors' ability to utilize this balance in providing adequate potable water to all in a sustainable fashion. 

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Water

Water wars between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have hampered the peace process and have also hinted at the grave issue of water scarcity that severely plagues the region.

By Sijal Fawad

The South Asian region is one of the most densely populated in the world, and water needs for the huge populations in major countries are equally large. Sitting at the pinnacle of water sharing and water management issues are the trio of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; the latter two having had some serious disputes with the former.

Any citizen of Pakistan will readily

testify to the antagonistic feelings held against their Indian counterparts. The fact is that besides partition-related historical enmity, water disputes have added to the turbulence in diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Earlier leaders of the two nations had anticipated animosity over water and therefore the Indus Water Treaty was signed in 1960, delineating control over rivers in the region, as well as

principles of cooperation between the two. Under this treaty, control over the eastern rivers – Beas, Ravi and Sutlej – was given to India, while western rivers – Indus, Jhelum and Chenab – were under the control of Pakistan. The catch, however, is that the source of all rivers, including the ones over which Pakistan has control, is India, giving Pakistan reason to argue that India's upstream dams and projects

are the cause of the acute water scarcity the country currently faces.

Pakistan's stance is not entirely baseless either. What has been called India's 'mad rush' for hydro projects on western rivers has led to great insecurity in Pakistan regarding water diversion from its rivers, making Pakistan and its agro-based economy vulnerable to Indian decisions. Hydro projects such as Salal, Dul Hasti, and Baglihar on the Chenab River have given birth to considerable controversy and bitterness between the two neighbors. Jhelum, meanwhile, has seen the interruption of its water flows from 13 hydel projects, while quite a few small, medium and mega projects are in the pipeline. As for the mighty Indus River, nine projects have already been identified by India, while

enough water being stored by India to affect Pakistan's water availability during the crucial growing season.

Clearly, India's hydel projects frenzy will put immense pressure on the already-strained relations between the two countries. That the matter was taken to the International Court of Arbitration in 2011 for the Kishanganga project, the first time in the history of the IWT, shows the gravity of the issue.

Though Pakistan's grievances against India are justified, with conflict resolution between the two countries seeming like the most obvious solution, there are some measures that can be taken at home to alleviate the problem. Better water management, developing more productive agricultural practices, pumping up infrastructural support and working

Subsequent to that, fresh water supply in the Ganges decreased considerably, leaving many undesirable ecological and economical effects. A 30-year water treaty was again signed between the countries in 1996, recognizing Bangladesh's rights as a lower riparian country. However, water diversion from India continued to create problems.

In the case of Bangladesh, greater regional cooperation, perhaps with the help of regional bodies such as SAARC, the issue can be breached and a regional resolution can be achieved. On a more internal level, Bangladesh ought to ensure better implementation of laws against polluting precious fresh water from the rivers, introduce measures for harvesting rainwater, as well as recycling used water, and increase awareness and implementation of water conservation.

While it is very easy to blame another country for the water woes being faced, some steps have to be taken by the home country as well.

Having said that, recognizing the potency of water-related conflicts is also very important. In 1995, Dr. Ismail Serageldin, then Vice President of the World Bank commented, "The wars of the next century will be over water."

While Dr. Serageldin's comment may seem like a far-fetched thought right now, the Indo-Pak and Indo-Bangladesh disputes are a stark reminder that water wars are very much a possibility. In the case of India and Pakistan, though the possibility of a water war cannot be entertained with certainty, one can definitely say that it does prevent the thawing of the historical animosity that the two countries have been battling for long. **S**

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Wars

two major ones, Chutak and Nimoo Bazgo, are under construction.

Needless to say, India's hydro projects have tested the patience of Pakistani authorities, who have accused India of non-compliance with the Indus Water Treaty vis-à-vis the technical design and storage capacity of the projects and interpretation of various clauses of the treaty. Unsurprisingly, India has defended its stance, claiming that the projects built on western rivers are run-of-the-river projects, which use the flow of water in its natural course, without any storage or pondage. However, the cumulative effect of all the projects could lead to

towards more efficient water storage will go a long way in reducing water scarcity for Pakistan.

A similar fiasco over water has been breeding on the other side for India with Bangladesh, a lower riparian country. Just as in the case of Pakistan, India is alleged to have constructed various dams on rivers such as Teesta, Gumti, Khowai, Dharla, Dudkumar, Monu, etc., diverting water flowing into Bangladesh.

Just three years after the signing of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission (JRC), India constructed the Farakka barrage in 1975 to aid in the navigability of the Calcutta Port.

A Peaceful Transfer of Power

General elections in Pakistan are scheduled to take place in March 2013; however, the ongoing political instability signals otherwise.

By Raza Rumi





The forthcoming general elections in Pakistan are significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, this is a unique moment in Pakistan when a democratic government under a civilian President is completing its term and preparing for a transition through elections. Secondly, due to the constitutional changes made by the current parliament under the 18th and 20th Amendments, the process

remains firmly in civilian hands. This has caused an unprecedented moment in our history where the elections are not being supervised or managed by the military establishment, which has called the shots over a larger course of the country's history.

The last time a civilian regime managed the election was in 1977 but the results were controversial and were annulled, leading to Gen. Zia ul

Haq's led coup d'etat.

Throughout the 1990s, most political parties were used as puppets by the security establishment against each other. Four elections were held between 1988 and 1999. Each time, a President, who acted at the behest of the military and intelligence agencies, 'engineered' the electoral results by appointing a handpicked and compliant caretaker government.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-N (PMLN) were the two major parties playing this game with the Army. The Musharraf coup and subsequent political developments reversed this trend as these two parties entered into a compact in 2007 and agreed not to approach the military to resolve or fix political disputes. Whilst Musharraf and Gen. Kayani oversaw the elections of 2008, the results surprised everyone, illustrating a clear victory for anti-Musharraf forces. Both parties have liaised with the military between 2008-2013 but have jealously guarded their parliamentary space as well as the continuation of the democratic system. Governance challenges and failures notwithstanding, the record of political parties has been encouraging on this front.

In the spirit of constitutionally mandated agreements, the government and opposition have appointed a respectable former judge as the Chief Election Commissioner. Similarly, other formalities have been taken care of and the rest will be handled in the days to come. The appointment of a caretaker administration is another major step that needs to be taken to ensure that an impartial regime takes over the task of administering elections. In Pakistan, given its bitter history, the legitimacy of an election and the confidence in the caretakers is of major importance.

However, a new development has engulfed this process of election arrangements. A religious scholar, Dr

Tahir ul Qadri who had quit politics in 2004 has re-entered the political arena by holding a mammoth rally on December 23 in Lahore where he spoke of social reforms and opposed the idea of holding elections without necessary electoral reforms. The startling demand he made was that the current procedure adopted by the Parliament, whereby the caretaker Prime Minister was appointed through parleys between the government and the opposition, should be widened to include the military and the judiciary. The Military is constitutionally subordinate to the Cabinet but has immense influence due to the historical power it enjoys. The Judiciary on the other hand is designed to be separate from the process of executive governance. Dr Qadri also announced a Long March to Islamabad and a sit in by 'millions' who would pressurize the government for reforms. While protest and political assemblies are a democratic right, the aim of Dr Qadri's movement is beyond the constitutional parameters, which the representatives of the Pakistani people have set and refined during the last five years.

Qadri's movement has been bolstered by the support received from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a party, which is popular in urban Sindh and a few parts of Pakistan but is more known for its power to bring Karachi to a halt and act as a bargainer in the numbers that can form coalition governments. The party has also enjoyed untrammelled power in the Sindh province and the Center for nearly a decade now. After its troubled relationship with the Army during the 1990s, it has now settled into a comfortable accord of coexistence as well as cooperation when needed.

The military's PR wing has denied that it is backing Dr Qadri. In addition, the US and the UK governments had to deny the rumors, which Pakistanis are quick to spin when such political developments take place. Therefore,

uncertainty when it did not actually exist has been engineered once again by these unusual developments. Elections due in early 2013 are now uncertain given this situation.

Having said that, the nature of power arrangements is such that it would be extremely difficult to delay the elections. The Supreme Court has already remarked that constitutional deviations are not going to take place while they are in charge. Similarly, the media – noisy, vigilant and ubiquitous in today's Pakistan – will be another hurdle to cross in an election-less Pakistan during 2013.

By default then, Pakistan is likely to edge towards a timely election. As these lines are being written, political parties are preparing for elections, pre-electoral alliances as well as writing their manifestos. But the real question is what would be the likely electoral outcome?

By all accounts the ruling PPP is in a difficult situation. Its federal status notwithstanding, several analysts have pointed out to its disconnect from urban Pakistan especially in the populous Punjab province where its rival PML-N is in a better position to bag seats. The rising fortunes of Imran Khan and his not-so-young party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will play an important role in mobilizing the youth but not enough to majorly dent PML-N's strong hold in urban Punjab.

In the southern districts of the Punjab and rural Sindh, the PPP is likely to retain its support base due to its policies during the last five years. The debate on a separate province for the marginalized population of the South resonates with the locals, especially the Seraiki speaking population. Furthermore, the focus on the rural income enhancement strategy through increased agricultural support prices has resulted in considerable income transfers from the urban to the rural population. Similarly, the cash transfers under the Benazir Income

Support Program are likely to benefit PPP in the areas where disadvantaged communities are clustered.

Insurgency and the rise of sectarian militias have greatly affected Balochistan. The nationalist parties, which boycotted the 2008 elections, might enter into the contest thereby adding another group to contend with after the elections are completed.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement retains its strong position in urban Sindh, especially Karachi and Hyderabad and is likely to emerge as a King-maker party after the elections. The critical factor here is that a majority party will not dominate the next Parliament. Both PPP and PML-N will bag seats to claim a coalition. Given that the Punjab has 148 seats in the 272 to be contested, the electoral outcome (already swinging in favor of PML-N)

will determine the final composition of the next coalition.

The former King's Party – PMLQ – formed under Musharraf's dictatorship is already struggling to retain its electables and it is likely to shrink. Similarly, the Awami National Party may lose some seats to Imran Khan's party as well as the religious parties, which are making a comeback due to their stance on achieving 'peace' in the militancy-hit Pakistan.

The MQM and PTI will be the two parties, which might make or break a coalition in the future. Pakistan, not unlike India, has entered into an era of coalitions where regional and local interests will inform and impact national governance priorities.

At the start of 2013, violence and uncertainty loom large on the political horizon. Elections – fair and free – are

the best way forward to ensure that there is a regime change through constitutional means. The events in January will determine where the nation is headed. Elections, if held on time, are going to result in another coalition with competing interests and priorities. But that is the strength of a democracy for it gives voice to dissent and diversity; and ensures that governance does not remain the preserve of unelected institutions, which are not directly accountable to the people. After 65 years of crises and fatal experiments, Pakistan needs stability and wide agreement on the principle that its people's will must remain supreme. **S**

Raza Rumi is a Lahore-based public policy expert and the Director of Jinnah Institute. He is also an editor at weekly Friday Times.

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A favorable outcome for Chief Minister Narendra Modi in the December 2012 Gujarat state assembly elections was a foregone conclusion. Even his detractors' admitted that the electoral battle was Modi vs. Modi and the only thing to watch out for was whether he wins by a landslide, a convincing majority or registers a narrow win.

With a vote share of 47.9 per cent, the Bhartiya Janata Party won 115 seats in a 182-members assembly against the Indian National Congress's 38.9 per cent vote share and 61 seats. The BJP's tally went down by two seats compared to 2007. This time Modi had to battle the BJP and the Sangh Parivar dissidents, that too in a drought year and with the former BJP CM Keshubhai Patel entering the electoral fray with his GPP party.

Modi's excellent governance, development record, and growing popularity with the people have created a pro-incumbency wave, which helped him register a third straight win. The two phases of polling on 13th and 17th December generated unprecedented hype for a state election as a resounding victory for Modi was viewed as his springboard to national politics.

Modi is the most popular leader amongst the Indian urban middle class, the core constituency of the BJP. He is a dedicated, non-corrupt, pro-growth leader who has delivered goods in the much-maligned Indian administrative set up and garners support from the industrial lobby for his business-friendly approach. Modi consistently tops the polls as the people's choice for the next PM for he has the potential to revitalize the BJP cadres and understands the pulse of India having traveled extensively within the country during his RSS days. Above all, he is a brilliant election strategist, which makes him a favorite. What's more, during the 2012 Gujarat state assembly elections, Modi won 17 out of 28 seats comprising of more than 15% Muslim population and four out of six seats with one-third Muslim voters – showing that the Modi-Muslims narrative has moved beyond the 2002 riots.

These facts should make Modi an automatic choice for the BJP top job, but it does not. In fact, his rise disturbs the dynamics within the BJP, the BJP-RSS relationship and the BJP's equation with its partners in the National Democratic Alliance

coalition.

It is no secret that the clashing ambitions in the BJP are causing the party's downfall. It lost Himachal Pradesh due to bickering on candidates' selection and party rebels. It could have lost Gujarat too, if not for Modi's cult following in the state. Last year, the BJP lost BS Yeddyurappa, former Chief Minister of Karnataka, who won the BJP its only foothold in South India. Rajasthan's leader Vasundhara Raje too was on the verge of leaving the party.

Modi, who created history by becoming the first BJP Chief Minister to win a third term, faced a lukewarm response from the BJP headquarters. The official BJP spokesperson called Modi's close to 2/3rd majority, a modest win; the BJP President Nitin Gadkari welcomed it by saying that the state will continue to flourish under Modi, implicitly indicating that the popular leader will stay where he is.

Gadkari faces corruption charges, however, the Nagpur-headquartered RSS is busy securing his second-term as the party president thereby ensuring that the BJP loses the moral advantage over the scam-ridden Congress-led UPA government in the

Race to Win Delhi

Narendra Modi has secured another term as Chief Minister of Gujarat. But his political acumen and popular support makes him a formidable threat to the PM candidacy.

By Semu Bhatt

centre. Modi himself is a RSS man, and was offered the BJP presidency in May, but he declined, as he wanted to deliver Gujarat. The RSS abhors Modi's brand image eclipsing that of the BJP's in Gujarat, but is likely to be the first one to come to terms with Modi's inevitability as the PM candidate.

On his part, Modi has begun to make tactical moves. Soon after the results were declared, he showed signs of rapprochement by seeking archrival Keshubhai's blessings and by meeting senior RSS leader, Bhaskar Rao Damle who supports Patel. Modi's victory speech, which he made in Hindi and not Gujarati, highlighted that he is just a spoke in the giant BJP wheel. He even offered an apology for his mistakes – a veiled reference to the 2002 riots.

In the meanwhile, the Congress has formed the party's 2014 polls co-ordination committee with its scion Rahul Gandhi at the helm. After the Uttar Pradesh debacle, the Himachal Pradesh verdict is a shot in the arm for the Congress that was looking increasingly listless. The Congress has rolled out a direct cash transfer scheme, under which the Central and state grants

for as many as 34 welfare programs will be directly transferred to the recipients' bank accounts. The populist scheme starts on a trial basis in 51 districts spread over 16 states from this month and is likely to be a game changer for the UPA in the 2014 elections. The Congress will try its best to increase the reach of this scheme in 2013 to gain maximum electoral benefit out of it.

Given the abysmal state of the ruling Congress-led UPA and the BJP's failure to get its house in order, the possibility of a third front cannot be negated. Regional parties are thus likely to adopt the policy of wait and watch before getting into pre-polls coalitions with either of the two main parties.

Modi's ascent to Delhi is certain - if not in 2014, than in 2019. It therefore makes sense to accommodate him now and take the advantage of his popularity and political acumen. Instead of focusing on the risk of losing the secular/Muslim votes with Modi, the BJP should focus on his ability to consolidate middle class and Hindu votes. Modi will inspire hope and confidence among the youth who are protesting against issues that plague

the nation – be it corruption or law and order. Besides, Modi with his excellent track record and charisma will score heavily over Rahul Gandhi who is still to get his political act right.

There are eight poll-bound states in 2013, including Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. If the BJP takes a quick decision on Modi, he can begin working on election strategies in these four states with a total of 90 parliament seats.

It is a given that a realignment in the NDA will take place if Modi is promoted as the face of the BJP. Parties like Bihar CM Nitish Kumar's JD(U) will leave the alliance, but will be more than compensated by Jaylalitha, Navin Patnaik, Raj Thackeray and even Yedyurappa, with whom Modi shares personal equations. It remains to be seen whether the central leadership manages to project the BJP as a party with a difference or continues to be a party with lots of differences. ■

Semu Bhatt is a Mumbai-based independent political analyst specialising in security and governance issues. She is the author of the upcoming book, "The modification of Gujarat."

A Chance at Redemption

Repatriating Pakistani detainees from the Bagram prison in Afghanistan and guaranteeing them justice could be Pakistan's only chance at making some positive headway. But both governments show little resolve in doing so.

By Omran Belhadi

Bagram prison lies adjacent to the Bagram Airfield, 40 kilometers northeast of Kabul. In the early days of the Afghan war, Bagram started out as a collection point where U.S. troops would bring captured militants before transporting them to Guantanamo. As controversy over Guantanamo Bay grew and court chal-

lenges to the Cuban base's detention scheme progressed, Bagram became a more critical permanent facility for indefinite U.S. detention. According to a report titled, "Detained and Denied in Afghanistan," published by Human Rights First, from January 2009 when President Obama came into office to mid-2011, the total detainee popula-

tion in Bagram nearly tripled, from 650 detainees to 1,900.

On March 9, 2012, the U.S. and Afghanistan signed a memorandum of understanding, transferring official control of detention centers and Afghan detainees to Afghan hands. While the great majority of Bagram detainees are Afghan nationals, ap-



proximately 50 of them are citizens of third countries. Of those, more than 30 are Pakistani citizens, some of whom have been detained since 2002.

Detainees at Bagram continue to be denied their most basic rights. They have no access to lawyers or any court. Over the years, allegations of abuse and torture at Bagram have abounded.

A wide array of inhumane methods have been used including beatings, exposure to extreme temperatures, sexual and religious humiliation and using dogs to frighten and attack detainees. With poor media scrutiny and little public outcry, Bagram gradually became a legal and political black hole. Denied due process by U.S. au-

thorities, the only hope for the Pakistani detainees is assistance from their home country.

Afghanistan has vehemently opposed the maintenance of U.S. detention operations in Afghanistan and senior officials have called on the U.S. to end what they perceive as a violation of Afghan sovereignty. Hamid Karzai

declared that “keeping Afghan citizens imprisoned without trial violates the country’s constitution, as well as international human rights conventions.” In striking contrast, Pakistan, despite having the largest non-Afghan detainee population, has remained silent on the repatriation of its citizens from U.S. detention in Afghanistan.

Earnestly pursuing the repatriation of Pakistani detainees from Bagram provides an excellent opportunity for the government of Pakistan to boost its image at home and abroad. By working diligently to return its citizens to their rightful home, the government can dispel the image that it cares little or not at all about the fate of Pakistani citizens. Repatriation is a multi-faceted process, which requires engaging with the U.S. government on security and human rights policy. Swift and efficient repatriation will be a testimony to Pakistan’s dedication to human rights and the protection of its citizens from the scourge of terrorism.

Time is short if Pakistan is to make full use of this opportunity. Afghanistan’s unwillingness to take control of third country nationals and the impending U.S. withdrawal make the future of Pakistani detainees extremely precarious. As the U.S. winds down its Afghan operations in the coming months, it will begin to speed up the issue of repatriation of third country nationals to their home countries. Should Pakistan delay repatriation of its citizens until the U.S. is bending its arm, a potential ‘David versus Goliath’ Pakistani success story could be replaced by the all-too-familiar image of a Pakistan bullied into action by foreign pressure.

Although U.S. authorities are eager to complete the bureaucratic dance required for repatriation to take place, their Pakistani counterparts have been dragging their feet in fulfilling their

part of the necessary procedure. Only through litigation filed by Justice Project Pakistan was the initial and crucial step of confirming the nationalities of Pakistani detainees completed by the Pakistani government. Confirming the nationality of a detainee unquestionably indicates to the U.S. which government they must negotiate with. For the detainee, it constitutes an admission that the government is now responsible for ensuring his safe return and proper treatment.

What remains to be completed, according to court files, are humanitarian and security assurances, both of which Pakistan must provide on behalf of each detainee before the U.S. government can transfer them. Providing these assurances is not unprecedented for Pakistan. At the height of the U.S. led ‘war on terror’, Pakistan succeeded in repatriating as many as 60 of its citizens from Guantanamo Bay between 2003 and 2004.

In providing humanitarian assurances, Pakistan declares that a detainee would not be subjected to torture upon their return. More than mere promises, the U.S. requires implementation and oversight of these assurances, giving Pakistan a golden opportunity to prove its human rights detractors wrong. Allowing its treatment of repatriated detainees an independent and impartial scrutiny will not only guarantee their safe return but will also mark a reversal in the unfortunate apathy if not hostility to human rights organizations.

With security assurances, Pakistan commits to ensuring the transferred detainee does not pose a threat to the U.S. or its allies. Measures of its enforcement remain unclear but presumably they would include monitoring, surveillance and potential prosecution. Recent high-profile attacks create doubt regarding the govern-

**Detainee 1433:
Yunus
Rehmatullah**



Yunus Rehmatullah hails from a village near Quetta, Balochistan. In 2004 he traveled to Iraq to find work. In early 2005, he was captured by UK forces in the outskirts of Baghdad. He was then handed over to the U.S. military who sent him first to Abu Ghuraib prison before rendering him to Bagram.

While in detention, Yunus’ health has gravely deteriorated. He has shown signs of depression and his knee was operated on for no apparent reason. His family is very worried for his health and safety. They have been in touch with Yunus since 2009, through letters, calls and video conferences organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Yunus Rehmatullah is a party to the petition filed by JPP in October 2010 before the Lahore High Court. Yunus has been repeatedly cleared for transfer to Pakistan by the Detainee Review Board, a panel of military officers which recommends a detainee for continued internment at Bagram, prosecution by the home country, mandatory participation in a reintegration program or release. On January 20th 2012, Justice Khalid Mehmood Khan of the Lahore High Court ordered the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to commence negotiations for the return of Yunus and six other Pakistanis. On October 31, 2012 the UK Supreme Court held his detention to be in violation of international law. To this day, he remains in U.S. custody not knowing whether he will ever return to Pakistan.

ment's capacity to effectively combat terrorism. Implementation of security assurances is a chance to demonstrate the effectiveness of the existing framework and reassure both its citizens and the international community of Pakistan's continued commitment in the fight against terrorism.

Furthermore, successful repatriation of its Bagram detainees would provide a key victory for a beleaguered Pakistan. Despite starting a three-year term as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, Pakistan is racked by domestic human rights issues. The rise of sectarian violence, allegations of enforced disappearances in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and rumors of abuse during military operations in militant held territories are some of the many difficulties facing Pakistan. Putting an end to one of the most egregious violations of human rights in the 21st century will give Pakistan a much needed counter point to its multiple liabilities. Additionally, repatriating its citizens provides Pakistan with solid standing in diplomatic and human rights circles, which can serve to further other foreign policy goals such as readjusting Pakistan-U.S. relations.

Most importantly, success on the issue of Bagram detainees would boost the government's image in the eyes of its own people. Miscalculations in engaging on contentious issues with the U.S. have hurt the civilian government's credibility. Its attitude towards American drones access to Pakistani airspace has been wildly unpopular domestically. When Raymond Davis was arrested for multiple homicides, Pakistanis witnessed the operation of enormous U.S. state machinery committed to securing the release of a U.S. citizen. After Davis' release, the government of Pakistan, once again, looked powerless to

prevent extraordinary incursions on Pakistan's sovereignty. Leaving aside what might have been done to prevent these embarrassments, Pakistan should at least be working to mitigate the damage to its reputation by pursuing issues which actually present a higher chance of success. Failing to pursue such issues will deal consistent blows to an already fragile civilian government.

For the government to maintain its ambition towards long-term democratic stability it must do more to protect its legitimacy in the eyes of its people. It must prove itself capable of making difficult decisions without relinquishing Pakistan's sovereignty. Successful repatriation of the Bagram detainees is an important first step in that direction. Not only does it show the government of Pakistan having influence on the international stage on a contentious and complicated issue, but it displays general governmental competence and its concern for an indigent group of citizens.

A simple chat with the family members of the detainees demonstrates the government's interest in the Bagram detainees repatriation thus far: never has a government representative contacted the families of the detainees to update them, nor even to inform them, of their relative's detention. "They don't care about the average citizen" is the family's common refrain. Engaging in earnest in the Bagram repatriation process is the best current opportunity for the Pakistani government to start reversing that expectation. ■

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Detainee 3718: Hameedullah Khan



In June 2008, Hameedullah Khan was sent by his father to Waziristan to gather the family's belongings and bring them back to Karachi, where they reside. He called his father from a PCO and told him he would be returning within a few days. After a week, his father called his cell phone but there was no answer. In attempts to locate his son, he called a friend's phone and a PCO but no one knew where Hameedullah was. In 2009 the ICRC contacted Hameedullah's family and told them that Hameedullah is being detained by the U.S. at Bagram. He was only 16 at the time of his disappearance.

Hameedullah has deeply suffered during his detention. He is being held alongside adults, in blatant contravention of international law. He has lost much weight and the stress of detention has caused him to go bald. His absence has also taken a toll on his family. Hameedullah's mother has diabetes and is losing her eyesight. She has fasted every day since her son disappeared and prays daily for his return.

Hameedullah Khan is a party to the petition filed by Justice Project Pakistan in October 2010. In that very year he was cleared by the Detainee Review Board for release. On January 20th 2012, Justice Khalid Mehmood Khan of the Lahore High Court ordered the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to commence negotiations for the return of Hameedullah and six other Pakistanis. On October 16th 2012 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced Hameedullah's return before the Lahore High Court. He remains detained at Bagram to this day, unaware of when or how he will see his family again.

Abusing the System



In its mad vengefulness, the Bangladesh government is making a mockery of international law and procedures.

By S.G. Jilane

“There is a risk not only of a miscarriage of justice affecting the individual defendants, but also that the wrongs which Bangladesh has already suffered will be aggravated by the flawed process of the tribunal. That would not heal the country’s wounds, but deepen them.” - The Economist

These are prophetic words. The

journal alludes to concerns with regard to the International War Crimes Tribunals in Bangladesh. The title itself is a misnomer. These are not international courts founded on international law nor are they sponsored by the UN or have any foreign judges as in the case of Rwanda and Cambodia. The accused are top ranking leaders of

the ruling Awami League’s (AL) rival political parties: Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). The trials then look, prima facie, like political victimization. In addition, Prof. Ghulam Azam, ex-chief of the JI, is 90 years old. Hanging him is certain to inflict a deep and abiding wound on a large section of the people.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman enacted the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act in 1973 to punish those who had allied with the Pakistan army in 1971. No trials were proposed though, for the Bangladeshis who massacred, raped and drove thousands of Biharis out of their homes in the aftermath of independence. The Act remained in cold storage, until Sheikh Hasina, after coming to power, revived it in 2010, amending some its clauses and formed the International Crimes Tribunals. Some of the provisions of the Act are unique: the appointment of Judges cannot be challenged on the ground of bias. Section 23 of this Act bars the application of the Criminal Procedure Code, (Cr. PC) and the Evidence Act, in any proceeding, although that is contrary to "Article 11(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 11(1) of the Rome Statute."

The established principle of presumption of innocence for the accused is denied. But newspaper reports are made admissible as evidence. More interestingly, a report that Nizamul Huq, chairman of Tribunal No.1, wrote in 1994 when he was a practicing lawyer, accusing the current suspects of war crimes, "forms a key part of the prosecution evidence." Section 265C, Cr. PC says that if upon consideration of the record of the case and documents submitted therewith, and after hearing the submissions of the defense and the prosecution in this behalf, the Court considers that there is no sufficient ground for proceeding against the accused, he shall be discharged.

Section 561A Cr. PC allows the accused to make an application where the proceedings against him constitute an abuse of the process of the Court. But by making the Cr. PC inapplicable, the accused is denied

these reliefs. On the contrary a death sentence can now be executed directly because a confirmation by the High Court under Section 374 Cr. PC will not be required.

Being tried by the two tribunals are 14 accused including Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami, its Secretary general, Ali Ahsan Mujahid, Nayeb Ameer, Delawar Hossain Sayeedi, as well as ex-Ameer Kamaruzzaman, Qader Mollah, Prof. Ghulam Azam, BNP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and former BNP minister, Abdul Aleem.


Nowhere else in the world -- Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Cambodia -- did political parties agitate in the streets or the government pressurize the judges to speed up the trials. Bangladesh is the only exception. Here, every other day people take to the streets to demand "speedy trial." Often such demonstrations are sponsored by the government and addressed by its ministers. What they actually mean by "speedy trial" is a death sentence without any procedural ado.

A talk between Justice Nizamul Huq, ex-chairman Tribunal No. 1, and Ahmad Ziauddin, director, Bangladesh Centre for Genocide Studies in Brussels, cited by The Economist reveals the extent of government pressure. "The government has gone totally mad," says the judge. "They want a judgment by 16th December, I am telling you. ...it's as simple as that." In fact the stage was all set for Prime Minister Hasina to present the first scalp to the nation as a V-Day souvenir, on December 16. Arguments had been completed. Newspapers were already screaming, "Judgment expected any day!" And Sayeedi's detractors had been waiting in excited suspense.

Then, suddenly The Economist dropped a bomb. It claimed to have heard "17 hours of recorded telephone conversations and seen over

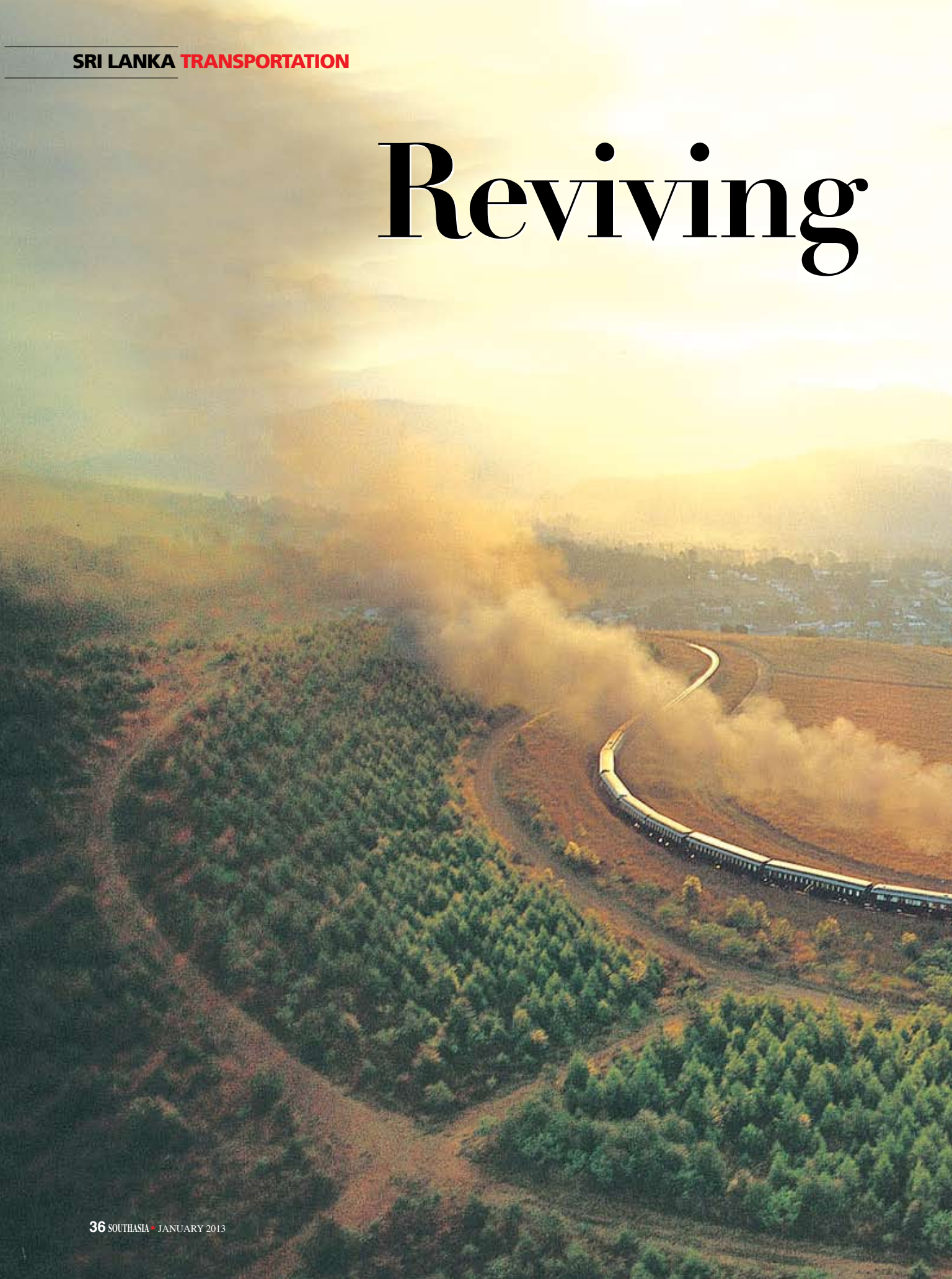
230 e-mails" between Justice Nizamul Huq and Ahmad Ziauddin, regarding Sayeedi's case. It had also questioned Nizam and Ziauddin. From the evidence attained, it transpires that Nizam had been consulting with Ziauddin as the case proceeded. And Ziauddin had also been counselling both Nizam and the prosecution on conducting the case. After The Economist questioned Nizam and a Dhaka daily, Amar Desh, published his private e-mails to Ziauddin, which cast doubt upon his role and upon the court proceedings, he resigned. The material with The Economist suggests that the government tried to put pressure on the judge. It points, particularly, in Sayeedi's case "to the possibility that, even before the court had finished hearing testimony from the defense witnesses, Nizam was already expecting a guilty verdict."

The verdict is foretold. In fact the minister sans portfolio, Suranjit Sen Gupta, is so certain about the judgment that, at a government-sponsored "speedy trial" rally last month he announced: "The next year is 2013. Verdict of 14 identified war criminals has already been finalized. Trial of these 14 war criminals would be completed anytime within 2013. Their verdict of execution will also be implemented. None would be able to resist it."

He may be right to surmise. Sheikh Hasina has whipped up public fury to such a pitch that any sentence less than death may expose the judges to public wrath. In every speech she vows to continue with the trials, ignoring both the watchful eyes of the international community and the unpredictable fallout of the verdicts and their execution. It is in this context that The Economist's warning makes sense. 

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

Reviving



Transportation

During colonial times, Sri Lanka was said to have the most modern transportation system in the region. Today, it is rapidly decaying. Will the country be able to reclaim its lost glory?

By Mashal Usman



An under-developed and poorly designed infrastructure can have adverse effects on the lives of any country's citizens. The problem is particularly magnified in developing countries where inefficient design is combined with corruption and malpractices. Sri Lanka, a country where Rs200 billion are lost annually due to corruption in the public transport system, is a case in point.

A number of reasons explain why the Sri Lankan government has failed to modernize its transport infrastructure. Governments of developed countries have unabashedly invested in 'Intelligent Transport Systems' that while soaking up millions of dollars, offer advanced technology, making life easier for their citizens. Developing countries like Sri Lanka are shy of undertaking large-scale projects because of financial shortcomings as well as the fear that greater investment might perpetuate an existing inefficient system by offering a greater margin for corruption. Perhaps the most pertinent critique of the Sri Lankan public transport system is the lack of a holistic vision in its creation.

For many Sri Lankans, coping with an inefficient transport system has become an ordinary way of life. Most of the country's highways are routinely clogged due to traffic jams; poor roads mean that vehicles must compromise on speed; buses do not meet international safety regulations; many of the streets in the main cities do not have a proper drainage system and apart from the inconvenience they cause to travelers, they also pose a serious health hazard. A large number of Sri Lanka's population is concentrated in rural areas and the lack of invest-

ment in roads means that these areas are increasingly alienated from city centers where most schools, hospitals and offices are located. Thus, the imbalance in the economic development of various parts of the country is perhaps the worst result of poor infrastructure. According to Amal Kumara, chairman of the National Transport Commission, Sri Lanka loses 1.5 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product annually due to the transport system. The number of vehicles in the country is expanding at the rate of 10 per cent while the capacity to carry them is increasing only at the rate of 3 per cent, he added.

Apart from dilapidated road conditions, the country's ports and railways have also considerably declined in quality due to the two decade long civil war. Although the Sri Lankan Railways was a very popular means of transport till the late 1920s, its share in the country's transport fell due to increasing competition from roads. India, which is also grappling with high population growth and an inefficient transport system, has been increasingly expanding its railways.

In addition to launching new rail lines, Sri Lanka's two main railways: the Northern Line and the Talaimannar Line should be expanded. The country's ports, including Colombo, Galle, Trincomalee, and Kankasanturai, should also be expanded to reduce the pressure on the roads. Additionally, upgrading the country's local and international airports to meet international standards could not only reduce the country's infrastructural woes but also transform it into a major air traffic hub between Dubai and Singapore.

With regards to Sri Lanka's public

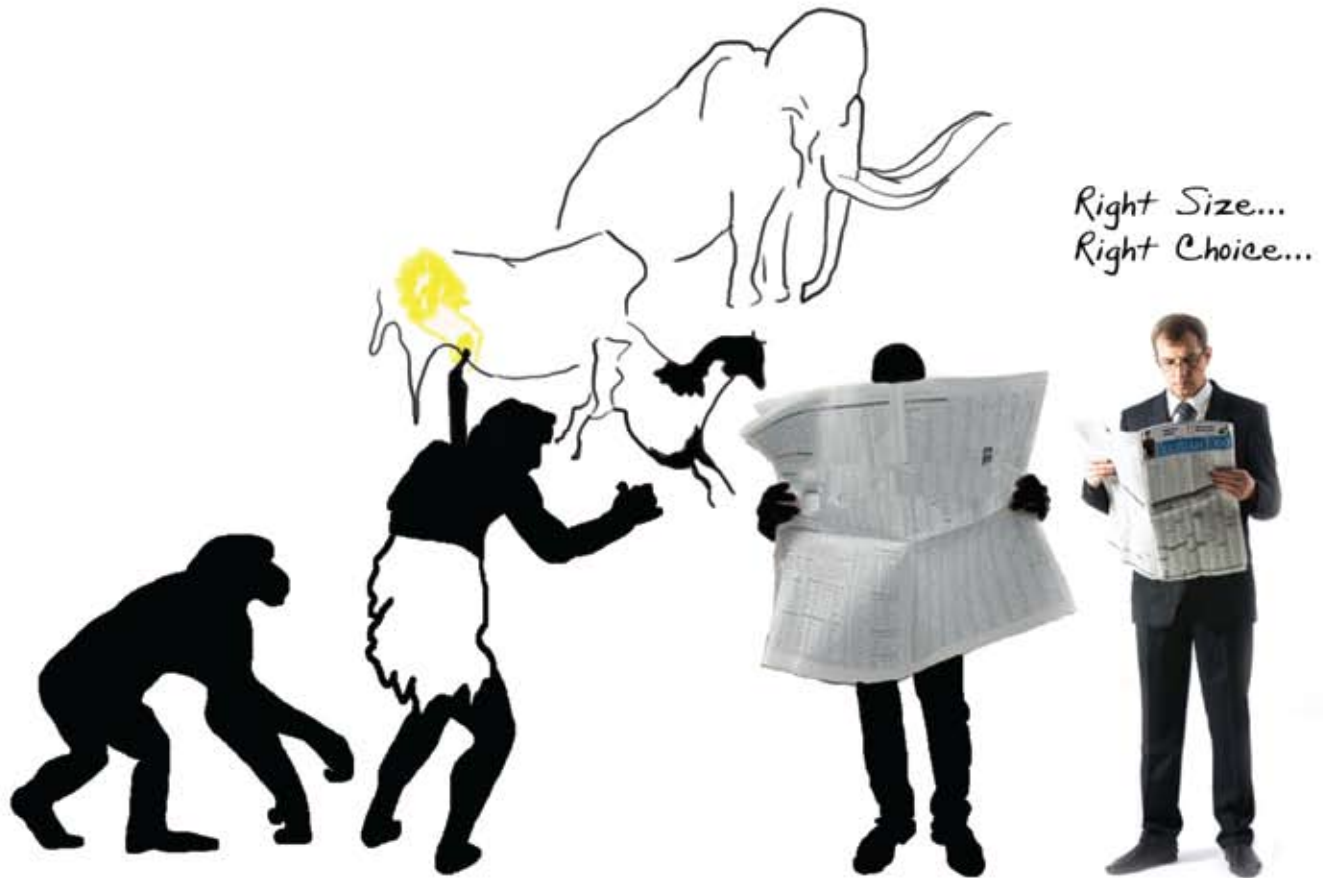
transport system, side lanes should be added to the main highways so that heavy vehicles can adhere to one area and not disrupt other flowing traffic. More locomotives need to be attached to the railways and the existing ones need to be upgraded. If buses are made more comfortable for travelers, the use of private vehicles can be decreased. Parking, ticketing regulations and the maintenance of roads needs to be delegated to private companies so that it can be done more efficiently. The government should also collaborate with private companies in designing and constructing new roads and railways.

Creating and implementing a unified program to uplift the country's transport system is the only way forward. The country's population has already crossed 20 million with 300 people per square km and there couldn't be a better time to modernize the infrastructure. During the colonial era, Sri Lankan tramcars and railroads were known to be the best in the region. With some major changes, the transport system will be able to return to its former glory.

While speaking about the future of Sri Lanka's public transport, Kumara added, "We are attempting to put right something that has been neglected probably for well over 30-40 years, giving public passenger transport its due place in the economy." This is an onerous burden to bear and the coming decade will show to what extent the Sri Lankan government succeeds. **S**

Mashal Usman is a researcher with the Economics and Political Science department at Lahore University of Management Sciences.

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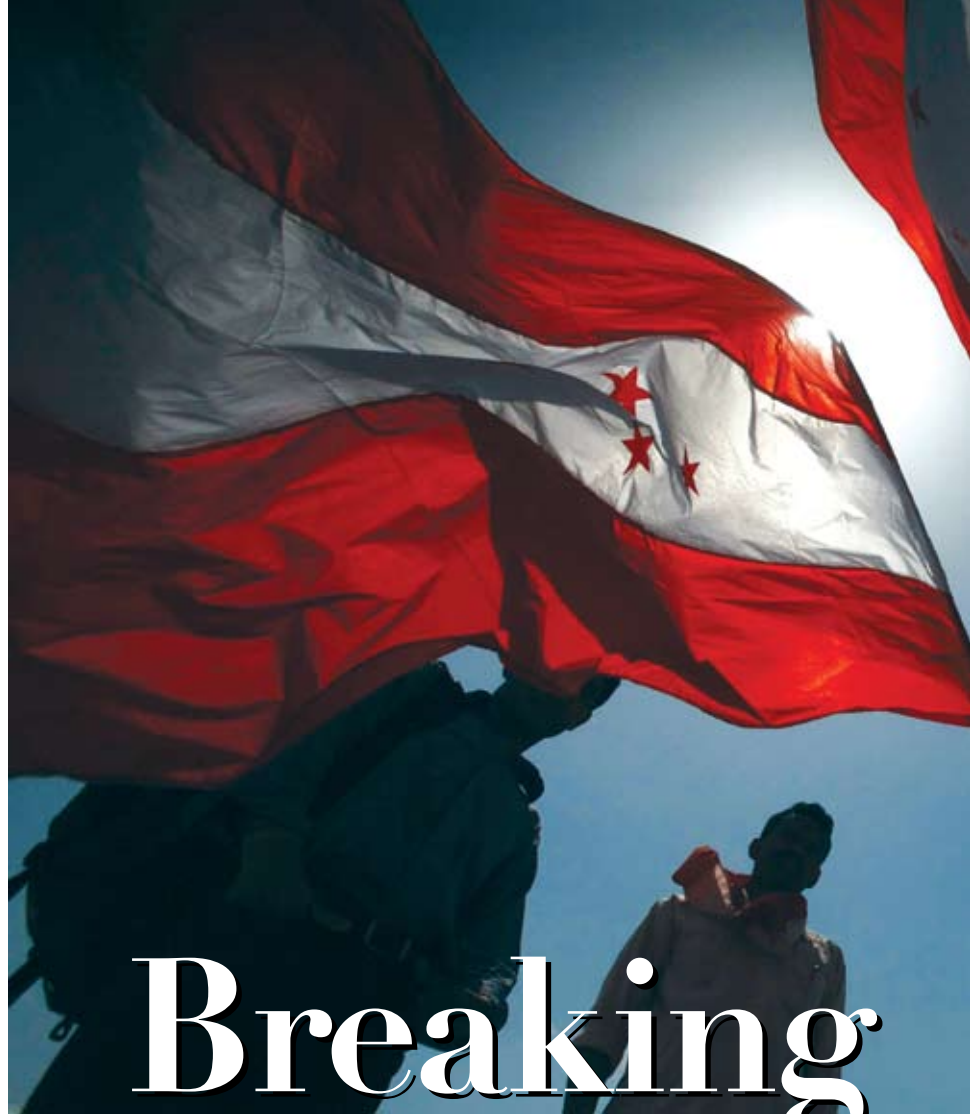
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Our analytical views and impartial news give you facts and insights which are unparalleled.

The absence of a constitution in Nepal has significantly undermined the basic tenets of democracy and responsible government. Owing to frequent delays in drafting a constitution, the country is still struggling to secure a coherent framework for political governance. Although the Interim Constitution of 2007 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006 have offered some guiding principles, they have failed to address internal conflicts and determine the fate of federalism across the country. Anxieties over ethnic strife and the preservation of cultural identity cannot be mitigated without a consistent method of managing disparities. The political and constitutional deadlock that threatens to weaken the sovereignty of Nepal is a direct consequence of the failure to produce a written constitution. The existence of a constitution would provide a specific code of conduct for grappling with these concerns and mobilise political parties in the right direction.

Nearly two days before Nepal's Constituent Assembly term ended on May 27, 2012, the major political parties were embroiled in a heated debate over the issues of federalism and the implementation of a new constitution in the country. The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) and the United Democratic Madhesi Front initially agreed that a system of identity-based federalism should be introduced. The Nepali Congress and the Unified Marxist Leninists disagreed with this proposition, stating that the issue of federalism in Nepal should be decided by a 'transformed parliament'. They argued, on the other hand, that a constitution with some agreement on the issue of federalism should be promulgated with the promise that the is-



Breaking

Mired in political instability, Nepal continues to struggle to write a new constitution. As faith in the political framework diminishes, the people emerge as the only possible savior.

By Taha Kehar

sue will be subsequently revisited and reviewed.

There is arguably a growing need to guarantee certainty on the status of federalism and ensure that cultural and linguistic diversity is preserved. However, in recent months, the issue has emerged as a moot point and is significantly undermining the scope for political compromise. Since November 2012, President Ram Baran Yadav has urged leading politicians of Nepal to reach an agreement on a new government. However, the decision

has been delayed several times and political leaders have not delivered an effective solution. On the contrary, they have merely paid lip service to the idea of restoring democratic principles in Nepal. At this critical juncture the political process in Nepal has reached a breaking point. There is no consensus on how free and fair elections can be conducted and a growing wave of scepticism over how the democratic process can be restored is impeding the sovereignty of the state in Nepal. In addition, there has been a



Point

fundamental change in the electorate, which raises countless challenges for political actors. Only the implementation of a constitution can provide the necessary checks and balances to alleviate these issues and ensure that the basic civic functions of the state are not compromised.

Following the political instability generated by the debate over 'ethnic states' and the unwillingness of the Maoists to propagate further ethnic divisions in Nepal, the need to draft a constitutional framework has become even more acute. The political and economic uncertainty that has resulted from this debacle suggests that Nepal is in desperate need of reinvigorating its national spirit and re-assessing its goals to deal with this political crisis. Owing to the increasing political unrest over whether Nepal should be transformed into a federal

that requires administrative competence. In order to transform the country into a federal state, the constitution will need to identify the geographical areas, which will constitute federal units and the identity of their population. It must also specify a provincial administrative structure and tackle practical issues such as the demarcation of state boundaries, the allocation of power, the selection of a federal system of governance, fiscal management and resource distribution in each province. More significantly, Nepal can only be transformed into a federal state once elections are conducted for the provinces and proper administrative structure is in place to oversee the democratic process. Political parties and the state can only achieve these ambitious goals through effective cooperation with one another.

Unfortunately the current politi-

polity, the new constitution will also need to take measures to accommodate this objective. Delegating the task of determining the fate of federalism to a 'transformed parliament' may produce a series of ambiguous results. It would be prudent to resolve the matter and enshrine it within the framework of a constitution since we cannot be certain whether the parliament will adopt a serious approach to addressing this problem.

Although federalism appears to be the most popular solution to internal conflicts in Nepal, it is a fairly new strategy

cal climate is a major impediment to such collaborations. After the monarchy was abolished in 2008, political parties have put forward competing visions on how to foster democracy and social advancement in Nepal. The political scuffle between the Maoists and Marxists has further exacerbated the scope for political compromise. It has been noted that the major political parties are prejudiced against one another and are reluctant to negotiate their own sectional interests for the sake of good governance. As a result, it is unlikely that they will be able to meet the needs of the citizens of Nepal. Democratic principles can only be restored if change is stimulated at a grassroots level and more citizens participate to assist political actors and the state to mitigate the political and constitutional deadlock.

The internal conflicts in Nepal have become extensively politicized and have generated an overwhelming desire for federalism in the region. Before the state succumbs to popular opinion and creates federal units within the country, it must give priority to devising a constitutional framework. Only then can Nepal be transformed into a federal polity. The major political parties must reach a consensus on the issue of suitable governance. More significantly, citizens must play a more proactive role in ensuring that a federal constitution is achieved through grassroots campaigning and the administrative competence of the state. ■

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.

Learning

Of all the neighbors of India, the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan is the only country, which does not maintain relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC). In recent days, however, there has been a move to establish diplomatic ties with the PRC for the first time in its history. For years Sino-Bhutanese relations were strained; the causes being Tibet and border issues, which have plagued Bhutan and the PRC, who share a contiguous but un-demarcated and not officially recognized 470 kilometers border. Following the 1959 Tibetan Rebellion, about 6,000 Tibetans fled to Bhutan and were granted asylum, much to the chagrin of the PRC.

In the early sixties, fearing adventurism by the PRC, which had laid claims on some Bhutanese territory, Bhutan imposed a cross-border trade embargo, closed its borders with PRC and established extensive military ties with India. After India's defeat at the hands of PRC in 1962, Bhutan felt exposed thus while retaining its ties with India, it officially established a policy of neutrality. However, until the 1970s, India continued to represent Bhutan's concerns while addressing Sino-Indian border conflicts in talks with the PRC. Following the confirmation of its membership in the United Nations, a confident Bhutan began to profess a more independent foreign policy, voting in favor of PRC filling the seat illegally occupied by Taiwan (Republic of China) and openly supporting the "One China" policy. During the 1974 coronation ceremony of Jigme Singye Wangchuk as Bhutan's monarch, in a symbolic overture, Bhutan invited the Chinese Ambassador to India to attend the proceedings. More contact followed in New York in 1983; the Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian and Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering



Will Bhutan succeed in striking a balance between maintaining its relationship with India and fostering new partnerships with China?

By S. M. Hali

carried out parleys on establishing bilateral relations. Since 1984, China and Bhutan began annual, direct talks over the border dispute.

In 1998, the two countries signed a bilateral agreement based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence for maintaining peace on the border. The budding relationship was strained with PRC's construction of roads within Bhutanese-claimed lands, which was in violation of the 1998 agreement. In 2002, negotiations resulted in an interim agreement after China presented claims of evidence regarding ownership of disputed tracts of land.

Bhutan and India's relationship is based on the 1949 Treaty of Friendship, updated in February 2007 during King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk's visit to India. In 1949, the government had agreed "to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations." The revised version states, "the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Government of the Republic of India shall cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests." India expects Bhutan to consult with India on the matter of holding bilateral border talks with China considering that they are linked to India's national interests in the Eastern Hima-

Diplomacy



layan region. Earlier, Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigmi Thinley acknowledged having a special relationship with India. However, ground realities are that India is wary of the PRC and despite the developing Sino-Indian trade relations, it is apprehensive that building ties with China can adversely affect Bhutan-India relations.

Recently, India's national security adviser, Shivshankar Menon, held a brainstorming session with eminent analysts to take cognizance of the developments and work out India's strategy on Bhutan.

Its candidature for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council in 2013 has motivated the June 2012 meeting between Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigme Thinley and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on the sidelines of the Rio+20 Summit. Handicapped by its limited diplomatic relations with other countries, Bhutan has to reach out to make new friends; it has invited envoys of all foreign missions

in Delhi to its capital, Thimphu. In New York, Bhutan sponsored a widely attended event on its USP – "gross national happiness." India is supporting and lobbying for the Bhutanese candidature since Bhutan needs all the support it can muster, competing for the Asian seat with the more influential and opulent South Korea.

Indian concerns stem from the possibility of a Bhutan-China settlement on the boundary issue, which may involve the border stretching from Dhoklam in the west to the grazing grounds in the north. Alarm bells are raised in India because China wants those grazing grounds, closest to the strategic Chumbi valley tri-junction, which is of great importance to India, being in proximity to the vulnerable "chicken's neck" near Siliguri Corridor, linking the northeast passage and can be severed by the PRC.

In order to allow for adjustments to the latest developments, Indian economic assistance programs to

Bhutan are being sped up. Bhutan has benefitted by becoming a hydropower exporter to India, albeit with Indian assistance; aiming to export 10000 MW of power to India by 2020.

Meanwhile, China's presence is increasing inside Bhutan. According to reports, the PRC plans to extend its railway network from Lhasa to Zangmu, as well as Shigatse and, perhaps, to Yadong, at the opening of the Chumbi Valley. Many Chinese businessmen have shown a keen interest in touring and investing in Bhutan. Chinese economic support may be lucrative for Bhutan but India's 63 year influence continues to have large economic and security stakes in Bhutan and elevates India as a close partner and neighbor.

Bhutan is at a crossroads; though India would like to maintain the same vigor of cooperation and trust with Bhutan, much will depend upon how Bhutan decides to maintain and conduct its relationship with the outside world. Bhutan must act smartly, and shouldn't complicate its bearings either with China or India. China may genuinely be a matter of economic attraction, but Bhutan is still deeply ingrained politically with India. The institutional Indo-Bhutanese cooperation is still vital for Bhutan's future but it will have to tread carefully and learn to run with the hare and hunt with hounds and avoid becoming a pawn or buffer between its two powerful neighbors. Other South Asian states will be watching the progress with interest while the Sino-Indian tug of war for influence in the region persists. ■

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.

The Iron Lady

India's third prime minister, Indira Gandhi, was one of the country's most powerful, controversial and prominent politicians of her time.

By S.G. Jilanee

The first woman to be India's prime minister as well as "the first woman ever to be elected to lead a democracy," Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, was born at her family home Ananda Bhawan in Allahabad on 19 November 1917. She was the only child of Jawaharlal and Kamala Nehru and granddaughter of the famous barrister-political leader, Motilal Nehru, a Kashmiri Brahmin.

She attended primary school in several institutions in India and Europe, including Ecole Internationale in Geneva, Ecole Nouvelle in Bex, and St Cecilia's and St Mary's convent schools (both in Allahabad). Though she later enrolled at Somerville College, University of Oxford, she did not take any degree.

Contrary to the perception in some circles, the "Gandhi" in her surname does not signify any relationship to Mahatma Gandhi. This was her Parsi spouse, Feroz Gandhi's surname. She knew him from Allahabad and during her stay in the UK frequently met him. Feroz was then studying at the London School of Economics. They married in 1942 and she bore him two sons, Rajiv and Sanjay.

In 1936, Indira lost her mother, who died in Switzerland after fighting a long battle with tuberculosis. Indira was then just nineteen. Her father was devastated and she became his confidante, secretary and nurse.

It was as Indira Nehru, at the age of eleven when she first displayed her leadership ability, by creating the *Vanara Sena* (Army of Monkeys) movement for young girls and boys. The children "conducted protests and flag marches, and helped Congress politicians circulate sensitive publications and banned materials," because, they were not suspected by the police. During the chaos at the partition of India in 1947, Indira helped organize refugee camps and provide medical care for the millions of refugees coming from Pakistan. This was her first exercise in major public service.

After independence, when Jawaharlal Nehru became the first prime minister, Indira Gandhi managed the official residence of her father and accompanied him on his numerous foreign trips.

Indira had joined the Congress in

1938. In 1959 she was elected Congress President. After her father's demise in 1964, she was offered the premiership but she declined and instead opted to become minister for information and broadcasting in the government of Lal Bahadur Shastri.

Following Shastri's death in 1966 when a split occurred within the party between conservatives and socialists, Indira emerged as the consensus candidate and consented to become prime minister. Party leaders decided upon her because they expected her to be pliable. Ram Manohar Lohia labelled her a *gungi gudiya* (dumb doll). But she proved them wrong as she took tough decisions such as nationalising banks in 1969.

Indira Gandhi was elected a record four terms as Prime Minister from 1966–77 and again from 1980 until her assassination in 1984.

In 1971, Gandhi was re-elected using the slogan, "Abolish Poverty." India's triumph in the war against Pakistan later in the same year gave her unprecedented popularity among the masses, who began to deify her. The explosion of a nuclear device in 1974 and the annexation of Sikkim in 1975 boosted her popularity further among her people as a tough and shrewd political leader, earning her the title, "Iron Lady."

In June 1975, the High Court of Allahabad found Prime Minister Gandhi guilty of employing a government servant in her election campaign and Congress Party work. Since technically this constituted election fraud, the court removed her from her seat in the Lok Sabha and banned her from running in elections for six years.

Not one to take it lying down, she appealed the decision and at the same time declared a state of emergency. The emergency lasted two years until 1977. During this period, "her political foes were imprisoned, constitutional rights abrogated, and the press placed under strict censorship," while she made some lasting changes in the Constitution of India. The emergency, which was squarely condemned by all prominent political leaders including Jai Prakash Narayan, caused a severe dent to Indira's political image.

In June 1984, some Sikhs started a secessionist movement. The Iron Lady re-

sponded with the military operation code-named Blue Star to dislodge them from the Golden Temple where they had been hiding. Their leader, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was killed and the rebels suppressed. In the process the holiest Sikh shrine was desecrated. Four months later, on 31 October 1984, two of her Sikh bodyguards shot Indira Gandhi to death, as she was leaving her residence.

Indira led by example. When the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 broke out, she was vacationing in Srinagar. Even after the Army warned her that Pakistani insurgents had penetrated very close to the city, she refused to move to a safer location, demonstrating her courage and resolve thus reassuring the nation. She strongly promoted science and technology. She also worked to improve relations with neighbors, including China and Pakistan, when she released Pakistani PoWs as a friendly gesture. Gandhi's agricultural innovation programs, launched in the 1960s, came to be known as the Green Revolution. This transformed India from suffering from chronic food shortages to becoming an exporter of food. Similarly, the White Revolution was an expansion in milk production that helped to combat malnutrition, especially among young children.

Indira Gandhi was insecure from her childhood. She was four years old when her father and grandfather were first jailed for their political activities. Thereafter it became a regular feature in their lives, which left an impact on her particularly because as the only child she was lonely. This also prevented her from developing her own independent personal interests and lifestyle. The world of politics was where she felt most at home. Unfortunately, this did not make for a particularly healthy and well-rounded life. Therefore, except political associates, she had no friends. Indira Gandhi was largely known for her political ruthlessness and unprecedented centralization of power. Though a cultured woman, she rarely tolerated dissent.

Yet, withal, she has left as indelible a mark on India's history as her father, Jawaharlal Nehru. **S**

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

Jolted to

The United States once again finds itself embroiled in a controversial gun control debate following the recent mass shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

The sole shooter, Adam Lanza, 20, entered the school premises in the morning carrying three guns, registered in his mother's name. By law, the guns were obtained legally. The shooter then proceeded to open fire on a class of first graders. First responders later confirmed that the class of 20 children was shot multiple times before the shooter exited the classroom and shot himself. In addition to the children, 7 adults were also gunned down. Though media reports originally floated the possibility of multiple shooters spread around the school campus, law enforcement officers later confirmed that Lanza was restricted to one area of the school, and used only a semi-automatic rifle to conduct what has been termed as "America's most horrific mass shooting."

In the U.S., guns may be bought

The Newtown tragedy re-sparked the controversial gun control debate in the United States. However, it remains uncertain whether the U.S will be able to introduce concrete and stringent measures to actually address the problem, this time around.

By Ayla Joseph

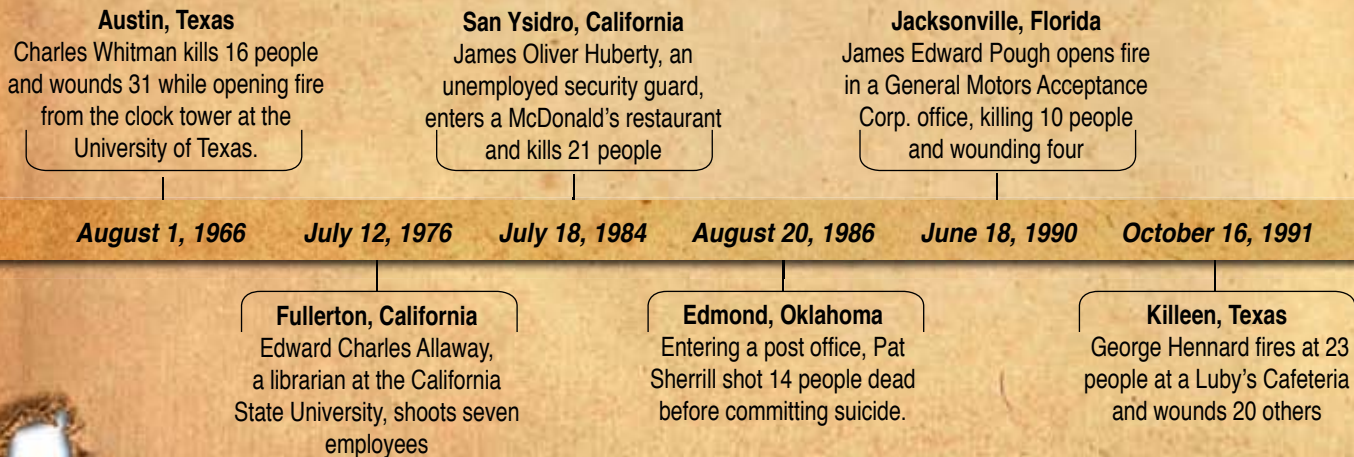
and registered legally, however, their use is debatable. While purchasers have to undergo written tests, submit fingerprints, undergo background checks and submit letters of reference, unlike in Japan, the United States does not rigorously conduct medical and psychological examinations before clearing a citizen to purchase a gun. Again, this varies state to state. Gun control remains a controversial debate and some argue that since President Obama will not be seeking re-election, his fresh mandate will allow him to push certain policies more aggressively.

Whether it was an unprovoked

attack on children that sent chills throughout civil society in America or whether this was simply the tip of the iceberg when it comes to gun control, the debate has erupted in full force. It is uncertain, though, whether any concrete measures in favor of gun control will take place.

In 1994, President Clinton managed to introduce gun control laws pertaining to certain semi-automatic rifles. Though no sweeping legislation by any chance, the move did, however, deal a strong blow to the National Rifle Association (NRA), the strongest and most influential gun lobby group in America. It was

U.S MASS SHOOTING TIMELINE



Reality

perhaps due to consequent discontent that the NRA voted heavily in favor of a Republican-run House and Senate. The ban lasted for 10 years, expiring in 2004 and since then has had gun control lobbyists trying their utmost to get it reinstated.

Vice President Joe Biden recently talked about the need to monitor arms selling shows, introduce more stringent measures to obtain licenses for guns and form special federal units to track arms dealership. However, according to Federal Law, U.S citizens are not prohibited from obtaining handguns for self-defense purposes. Reality, however, dictates otherwise and the rise in mass shootings over the past five years is illustrative of that fact. In 2011, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was shot in Arizona and earlier this year a mass shooting occurred at the premiere of *The Dark Knight Rises* in Colorado as well as at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin. Previous incidents include the Fort Hood shooting (2009), the Virginia Tech massacre (2007) and the Columbine High School shooting (1999).

Following the Newtown shooting, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a leading gun control advocate, publicly announced, "It is time to pass an enforceable and effective assault weapons ban." Seizing the opportunity, Democrats on Capitol Hill were quick to introduce legislation to ban the weapons in late December. However, with a Republican-dominated Congress and the NRA's increasing influence, it is highly unlikely that any such move will succeed.

Public opinion does not favor a complete ban on assault rifles. In fact, the NRA reports a surge of 100,000 supporters following the Newtown shooting. The most troublesome incident immediately following the shooting occurred in Utah, when a sixth grader was caught with a gun while in school. Speaking to administrators, the boy and his parents argued that the child needed to be armed to defend himself, in case of a similar assault like in Newtown.

Official statistics reveal that as crime decreased, so did the public

interest in gun control laws; in 1990, 78 percent favored stricter gun laws compared to only 44 percent between 2010 and 2012. However, a Gallup poll taken a week after the Newtown shooting found that 58 percent of Americans wanted gun laws to be stricter, as opposed to the 44 percent who said the same when polled a few months earlier.

Gun control laws have always been a bone of contention in American politics, often leading to nothing more than a deadlock and breakdown in talks between the Democratic and Republican parties. More than likely, enhanced security measures will be installed to monitor activities in public places but the ban on gun dealerships will not occur. As a result, fierce public opinion will gradually diminish and the problem will remain unaddressed till another mass shooting incident occurs and civil society activates itself momentarily, again. **S**

Ayla Joseph is a freelance journalist based in New York, USA.

Littleton, Colorado

Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, students at the Columbine High School, open fire killing 12 classmates, a teacher and wounding 26, before killing themselves in the library.

Alabama

Michael McLendon kills 10 people including his mother, four other relatives, and the Deputy Sheriff's wife and child, before shooting himself.

Aurora, Colorado

A gunman releases a canister of gas and opens fire in a movie theater, killing 12 people and injuring dozens, at the premiere of *'The Dark Knight Rises.'*

April 20, 1999

April 16, 2007

March 10, 2009

January 8, 2011

July 20, 2012

December 14, 2012

Blacksburg, Virginia

Seung-Hui Cho shoots 32 people at the Virginia Tech campus.

Tucson, Arizona

A gunman shoots U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, killing six people and injuring 13 others, at a grocery store. Giffords survives the attack.

Newtown, Connecticut

A sole gunman kills 20 children and 6 teachers at the Sandy Hook Elementary School before shooting himself in the school corridor.

The Ultimate

By Asif Noorani



Indiscriminate use of adjectives by copywriters in advertising and hackwriters in journalism has robbed them of their meaning, which is why when one has to write about a person whose contribution in a particular field is worth its weight in gold, one is at a loss for words. This is what has happened to this writer when asked to pen a piece on the greatest film actor in South Asia, Dilip Kumar, who turned 90 in December.

Thespian



I think a very appropriate compliment was paid to the thespian by no less a person than the megastar of Bollywood, Amitabh Bachchan, who has time and again praised Dilip Kumar. He tweeted “The history of Indian actors shall be written [in two chapters] before Dilip *sahib* and after Dilip *sahib*.”

One can't agree with Bachchan more, for the style of acting before Dilip Kumar appeared on the scene was theatrical, a trend that came to the cinema from the Parsi theater. The high priests were Sohrab Modi and Prithviraj. Motilal and Ashok Kumar deviated to some extent, but it was left to Dilip to evolve a completely natural style. He under-acted somewhat, communicating eloquently through facial expressions and movement of his hands. There were meaningful pauses in his delivery of dialogue.

A number of clones surfaced on both sides of the Wagah border, some of them remained so all through their careers. The most noteworthy being Rajendra Kumar, who had several silver jubilee hits to his credit, but he is hardly remembered for he could never evolve a style of his own.

Lord Meghnad Desai, a member of the British Parliament, who wrote

a very well-researched book on Dilip Kumar, unearthed some reviews of the thespian's films by the subcontinent's first serious film critic, Clare Mendonca. Writing in the most widely-circulated English daily of South Asia about performances in Mehboob's *Andaz*, where Dilip shared the marquee with Nargis and Raj Kapoor, she said “Dilip Kumar runs away with acting honors

fifties, Dilip Kumar did 13 films, most of which were successful at the box-office, but in no film was his acting less than outstanding for he had realised that familiarity bred contempt. By appearing in about sixty films in a fruitful career that spanned 54 years, he got the time to study in depth each character he was to portray and infuse life into. Thus, the spineless lover in

Dilip shared stellar honors with a good number of talented female actors – Kamini Kaushal, Nargis, Madhubala, Meena Kumari, Waheeda Rahman, Vyjaynthimala and Saira Bano, to name a few. He enjoyed a rare chemistry with Madhubala - more than with anybody else.

in the central role, which he portrays with an inimitable grace of which his entire naturalness and spontaneity are the chief ingredients. He does not act but lives the role, displaying the genius of the born actor, who is unaware that he is acting...” (March 26, 1949).

From the late forties to the mid-

his earlier movies like *Babul*, *Dagh* and *Devdas* was vastly different from the Mughal Prince in *Mughal-e-Azam* and the rustic characters in *Naya Daur* and *Ganga Jumna*. What was common to all his performances was the finesse with which he approached each character.

Normally, successful actors are too reluctant (read afraid) to change their style and assay completely different characters, but not so Dilip Kumar. When he was termed the 'Tragedy King' of the Indian screen who more often than not met with death at the end, he opted for comedies, winning four out of his record eight Filmfare Best Actor trophies in lighter roles. Never once did he cross the thin line that divides acting with over-acting in non-serious roles. Even in the slapstick mirror scene with Jeevan in *Kohinoor*, or in a scene where he mimics a Parsi character in *Ram aur Shyam*, he did not go overboard. And when he graduated to what are called character roles, he played the lead, be it in the company of the great Amitabh Bachchan (*Shakti*), the actor par excellence Naseeruddin Shah (*Karma*) or the sensitive Raj Kumar (*Saudagar*), he got an edge over them. His grace and poise remained unmatched.

Dilip shared stellar honors with a good number of talented female ac-

tors – Kamini Kaushal, Nargis, Madhubala, Meena Kumari, Waheeda Rahman, Vyjaynthimala and Saira Bano, to name a few. He enjoyed a rare chemistry with Madhubala - more than with anybody else. He is on record to have said that he enjoyed working with her, as also with Nargis, Meena Kumari and later Saira Bano, but he thought that his most competent co-star was Nalini Jayant. "She'd be quite extraordinary even in the first rehearsal we would have. She was highly professional," commented the inimitable actor.

As someone who has interviewed a number of luminaries, from I K Gujral, when he was the prime minister of India and Mohammed Yunus, a Nobel laureate, to music director O P Nayyar and renowned social workers like Prof Adeebul Hasan Rizvi, this writer regrets not having had the chance of interviewing Dilip Kumar. I came quite close to doing so, when I met him at Kardar Studios in Bombay in 1965. He had promised to meet me

after his return from Madras, where he had a shooting stint scheduled, but sadly three days later war broke out between Pakistan and India and there was no question of meeting a man who was falsely accused of spying for Pakistan. However, years later when I met him on the sets of *Shakti*, it was a pleasure listening to him. Two other members of his audience were Amitabh Bachchan and Javed Akhtar, who too listened to the charming conversationalist with rapt attention. Now I believe he doesn't talk and when he does he is incoherent. What a pity!

I can't think of a better way to end this piece than by recalling Shabana Azmi's birthday greetings to the thespian "Happy birthday Dilip Sahib. There has not been another like you. We continue to draw inspiration from your performances and your commitment." **S**

Asif Noorani is a seasoned journalist and writes on art, literature, travel, music and movies.



UPCOMING B2B EVENTS ...



26 - 28 February 2013,
Pak-China Friendship Centre, Islamabad
9th International Safety & Security Exhibition
Website: www.safesecure.com.pk
E-mail: info@safesecure.com.pk



28 - 30 March 2013, Expo Centre Lahore
11th Edition of the International Machinery
Exhibition of Garment & Textile Technology
Website: www.megatechpakistan.com
E-mail: info@megatechpakistan.com



9 - 11 April 2013, Karachi Expo Centre
8th Information & Communications
Technology Exhibition and Conference
Website: www.connectit.com.pk
E-mail: info@connectit.com.pk



23 - 25 April 2013, Karachi Expo Centre
2nd International Multi-Modal Transportation,
Logistics & Material Handling Exhibition and Conference
Website: www.intertranspakistan.com
E-mail: info@intertranspakistan.com



16 - 18 May 2013, Expo Centre Lahore
11th International Exhibition for the Energy Industry
Website: www.pogee.com.pk
E-mail: info@pogee.com.pk



5 - 7 September 2013, Expo Centre Lahore
11th International Plastics & Packaging
Industry Trade Fair
Website: www.plastipac.com.pk
E-mail: info@plastipac.com.pk



5 - 7 September 2013, Expo Centre Lahore
10th Edition of the International Food, Beverage
& Packaging Technology Trade Fair
Website: www.foodtech.com.pk
E-mail: info@foodtech.com.pk



5 - 7 September 2013, Expo Centre Lahore
2nd International Food, Beverages &
Hospitality Trade Fair
Website: www.foodtech.com.pk
E-mail: info@foodtech.com.pk



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Epitomizing Glory

The Badshahi Mosque remains one of the most iconic Mughal era structures till date and serves as a source of pride for Pakistan.

By F. D Sheikh





The historical city of Lahore has seen remarkable ages and empires. From the early Muslim dynasties to the Mughal Era, Lahore preserves a rich and majestic history, the traces of which can still be seen. Even today, while walking through the narrow lanes of the old city one can envision the grandeur of bygone times. Imposing structures brimming with cultural inheritance, majestically illustrate Lahore's glory and enchant visitors

and tourists from all over the globe.

Amidst these historical structures, the Badshahi Masjid (Royal Mosque) stands prominently in the city's center, boasting its grandeur and rich, cultural history. Visitors and tourists flock to the second largest mosque in South Asia and the fifth largest mosque in the world every day, offering prayers and paying homage to the splendor of the Mughal Empire.

The construction of the mosque commenced in 1671, under the affluent patronage of the sixth Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb (the Conqueror of the World). The mosque's calculated structure was completed in 1673. However, the vicinity around the mosque area soon flooded during monsoon season, explaining why the mosque was consequently constructed on a raised platform, opposite the Lahore Fort. The construction was supervised by the then Master of Ordinance and foster brother of Aurangzeb, Muzaffar Hussain (also known as Fidai Khan Koka). Constructed with bricks and compacted clay, the design and structure of the mosque illustrates the splendor of the bygone Mughal Empire. Additionally, the use of red sandstone tiles and white marble on the domes gives the mosque an artistic touch.

Adorned with stucco tracery and fresco work, the main prayer hall of the mosque consists of seven splendidly carved arches. Clad with marble and red sandstone, four out of eight prestigious minarets, approximately 14 feet taller than those of the Taj Mahal, can be seen from a far distance. The Badshahi mosque courtyard can easily accommodate

close to 95,000 worshippers at a time. Together with the main prayer hall and porticos, 100,000 worshippers can collectively pray in this royal mosque.

Inside the main gateway entrance, the government of Pakistan maintains a small museum that contains the relics of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), his cousin and son in law, Ali and the Prophet's daughter, Fatima. The Fakir Family of Lahore that held numerous prestigious posts during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule, donated generously to these relics.

Since its construction, the Badshahi Mosque has seen vicissitudes

garrison. During this time, Muslim resentment flamed furiously, leading to sporadic volatile outbreaks throughout the country. Realizing the gravity of Muslim sentiments, the British set up the Badshahi Mosque Authority to supervise the restoration of the grand mosque as a place of Muslim worship. Minor repairs to the devastated areas of the mosque commenced gradually. Keeping in view the requirements of the time, further amendments to the structure of the mosque, suggested and designed by an architect of Hyderabad Deccan, Zain Yar Jang Bahadur, were also made. The res-



through various eras of different rulers. In 1799, when Ranjit Singh invaded Lahore, he disdained the mosque by using its courtyard as a stable for his army horses. Later in 1841, Sher Singh, son of Ranjit Singh, used the minarets of the mosque to bombard his enemies from the pinnacle. After 1857, when the British dominated the subcontinent, they continued disregarding the mosque by using it as military

restoration work continued even after the independence of Pakistan and the mosque regained its royal majesty by 1960.

Today it stands prestigiously in the heart of Pakistan, Lahore, and proudly epitomizes the glory of the Mughal Empire. ■

F.D Sheikh is a freelance writer. He currently works as an Assistant Auditor at A.F. Ferguson.

Fashioning a Sustainable Future

Promoting ethical fashion is quickly becoming a new fad in South Asia.

By Ayesha Mustafa

The South Asian fashion industry is growing rapidly and socially responsible fashion is opening doors for woman artisans to earn competitive livelihoods, translating into improvements in their households and communities. Fashion ComPassion, an ethical fashion retailer, has been set up to provide a worldwide platform for apparel and accessories in the ethical fashion genre.

South Asia as a region is prone to patriarchal attitudes and more than often confines women to traditional roles thus stunting, and in most cases preventing, any scope for entrepreneurship or education. In other cases, where women run small-scale enterprises from their homes, they are often financially exploited and earn meager wages that fail to meet their basic needs. The region as a whole harbors

considerable potential but initiatives that promote female empowerment are largely absent.

Promoting ethical fashion in South Asia, Fashion ComPassion has received considerable support and recognition from the international community. By working from this platform, brands from the developing world effectively gain access to new markets. Enhanced communication and distri-

BESHTAR, Dari for 'more,' is also an Afghan ethical fashion brand. Founded by Carole Naim, it signifies that more should and can be done for Afghanistan -- and indeed, for the developing world. The label earned international recognition after Livia Firth, wife of Oscar-winning actor Colin Firth, wore a Beshtar burqa dress featured by the Observer as part of Vogue's Green Carpet Challenge in 2010.

Beshtar reinterprets traditional Afghan textiles with a modern lens including vintage pieces to create handmade burqa dresses, shirts, jackets, capes, harem pants and bags, and an eveningwear collection of long silk dresses and evening gowns with Afghan embroidery and adornments. All craftsmanship and material sourcing takes place within Afghanistan to help uplift the crafts industry. Revenues are donated to charitable Afghan organizations that help Afghans become independent and self-sufficient by providing microfinance, vocational training and employment opportunities. These include Aschiana that funds the education of children, Gardens for Life that promotes literacy among women, and the Afghan Womens Education Center, created to aid Afghan refugees.



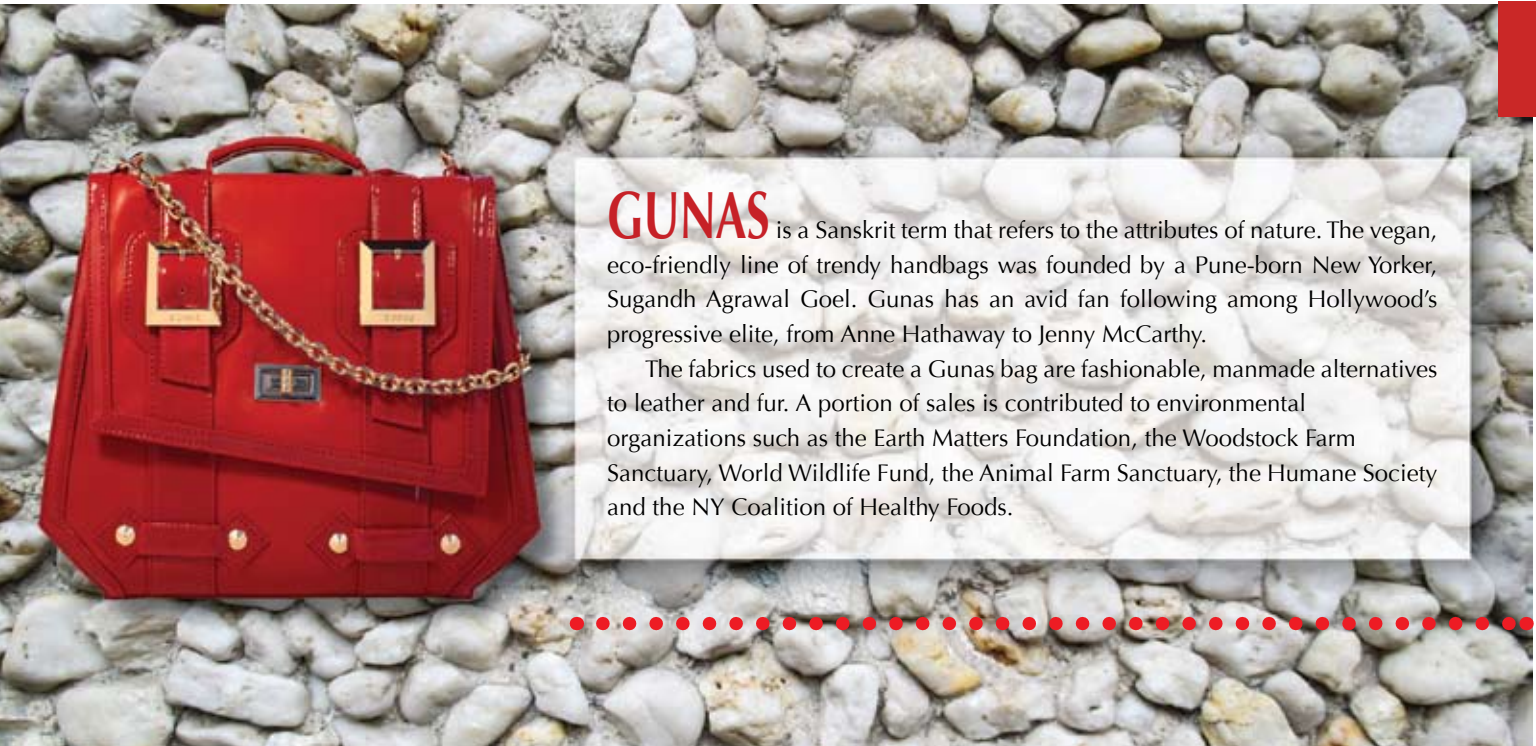
BHALO, Bengali for 'good,' was co-founded by Shimul Minhas Uddin from Bangladesh and Jess Priemus from Australia as a fair trade design label to empower disadvantaged communities, particularly women. By providing healthcare, education and childcare, rural Bangladeshi artisans are trained to create hand embroidered apparel in ethical working conditions. The apparel and accessories collections have an eco-friendly focus, often produced without electricity using naturally dyed, azo chemical-free cotton. Both cottons and silks are hand loomed and hand embroidered and mostly sewn using foot-pedaled sewing machines.



bution introduces skills training and product development thus equipping artisans to become self-sufficient and gain prosperity, education and professional dignity.

aimed to create a sustainable fashion company that could generate a positive influence, while remaining a profitable business instead of a charity that depends on 'pity' buying.

er women while donating a percentage of sales to charities. This year, it is linking with the United Nations World Food Program. As per the partnership, each purchase provides underprivi-



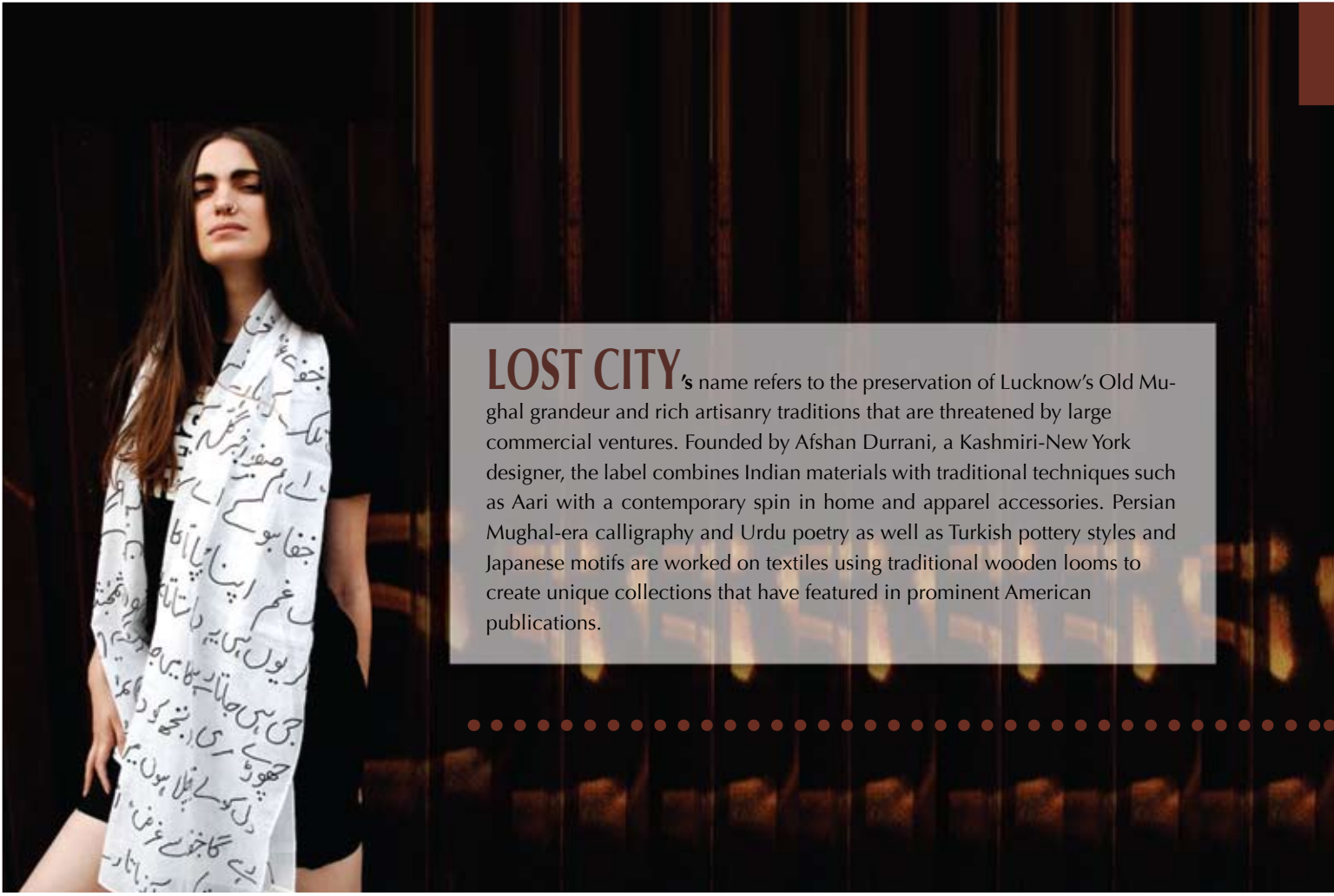
GUNAS is a Sanskrit term that refers to the attributes of nature. The vegan, eco-friendly line of trendy handbags was founded by a Pune-born New Yorker, Sugandh Agrawal Goel. Gunas has an avid fan following among Hollywood's progressive elite, from Anne Hathaway to Jenny McCarthy.

The fabrics used to create a Gunas bag are fashionable, manmade alternatives to leather and fur. A portion of sales is contributed to environmental organizations such as the Earth Matters Foundation, the Woodstock Farm Sanctuary, World Wildlife Fund, the Animal Farm Sanctuary, the Humane Society and the NY Coalition of Healthy Foods.

Ayesha Mustafa is the brain behind the initiative and draws her inspiration from an internship experience at Grameen Bank at age 16. Mustafa

Inspired to merge fashion and business to usher in positive change in entrepreneurship and consumerism, Fashion ComPassion aims to empow-

leged women of the Neelum Valley in Pakistan with vocational and skill development training. In addition, the participating brands also contribute



LOST CITY's name refers to the preservation of Lucknow's Old Mughal grandeur and rich artisanry traditions that are threatened by large commercial ventures. Founded by Afshan Durrani, a Kashmiri-New York designer, the label combines Indian materials with traditional techniques such as Aari with a contemporary spin in home and apparel accessories. Persian Mughal-era calligraphy and Urdu poetry as well as Turkish pottery styles and Japanese motifs are worked on textiles using traditional wooden looms to create unique collections that have featured in prominent American publications.

directly to their communities in efforts such as reviving the traditional crafts in Lucknow, providing employment for widows in Bangladesh and raising money for various Afghan NGOs.

Fashion ComPassion works with social enterprises to promote education, employment and self-sustainability, while providing training to otherwise marginalized and underprivileged women artisans. Exquisite, hand-crafted products highlight rich indigenous cultures and techniques, which are packaged in a contemporary style and palette. Brands featured in Fashion ComPassion's lineup have been worn by A-list celebrities like Livia Firth, Eva Longoria and Anne Hathaway and have received coverage in leading international publications and TV shows.

Fashion ComPassion works with notable socially responsible luxury brands from South Asia such as Beshtar, Bhalo, Gunas and Lost City.

Fashion ComPassion launched in Pakistan this October featuring Middle Eastern brands such as PaleStyle, Nawa and Sougha made with premium leather and high-end design sensibilities. The products are available at multibrand boutiques such as Ensemble and L'Atelier and online at Labels' E-store, with a portion of the sales going towards the UNWFP.

In addition to providing retail access, Fashion ComPassion's footprint in Pakistan is also geared to positively affecting the Pakistani fashion industry to develop a more socially responsible attitude with fair wages so that brands can be luxurious with a strong social mandate to positively impact communities, social entrepreneurship and the environment. Through its own example, the initiative aims to illustrate that labels can provide artisans with training, healthcare, education and childcare so that they can compete with the world's finest fashion brands

as well as become entrepreneurs in their own right, all within the cultural framework of each community.

Consumers who purchase from Fashion ComPassion's website, pop-up stores and retail displays directly contribute towards the socioeconomic development and mobility of developing communities. Ethical fashion covers many aspects that contribute towards prosperity and sustainability as well as the preservation and promotion of endangered techniques handed down over generations. With the expansion of globalization, it becomes increasingly important to safeguard hereditary art by exposing it to new markets and new economic opportunities. **S**

Ayesha Mustafa is the Founder & Director of Fashion ComPassion, a socially responsible company that provides a platform to brands that are eco-friendly and socially conscious.

Legend of



“A raga,” said Ravi Shankar, “is a scientific, precise, subtle and aesthetic melodic form with its own peculiar ascending and descending movement consisting of either a full seven-note octave, or a series of six or five notes in a rising or falling structure called the Arohana and Avrohana. It is the subtle difference in the order of notes, an omission of a dissonant note, an emphasis on a particular note, the slide from one note to the other ... that demarcate one raga from the other.”

phenomenon. As a performer, composer, teacher and writer, he did more for Indian music than any other musician. Though he is well known for his pioneering work in bringing Indian music to the West, he did so only after long years of dedicated study under his illustrious guru, Ustad Allaudin Khan.

As early as the 1950s, Shankar began collaborating with violinist Yehudi Menuhin and jazz saxophonist Coltrane. He presented shows in concert halls in Europe and the United

ing Europe and India with the dance group of his brother Uday Shankar. He gave up dancing in 1938 to learn the sitar under Ustad Allauddin Khan. He subsequently worked as a composer of film music and worked on the music of the Apu Trilogy produced by Satyajit Ray and later on Charly and Gandhi. He also served as a music director at All India Radio in New Delhi between 1949 and 1956.

His touring career began in 1956 when he started presenting Indian classical music performances in Eu-

Legends

By J. Enver

Known as the sitar player who hobnobbed with the Beatles, presented a rock benefit concert for Bangladesh and later became known as the estranged father of popular American singer Norah Jones, the late Ravi Shankar was a man of many facets.

He was known for having made appearances at non-classical events, such as the original Woodstock and 1967's Monterey Pop Festival. It was his close friendship with the “Quiet Beatle,” George Harrison and his band mates that really helped to popularize sitar music worldwide. He also had musical connections with John Coltrane, Yehudi Menuhin and David Crosby.

Described as the “legend of legends” by Shivkumar Sharma, a noted santoor player, Ravi Shankar played a valuable role in universalizing music of the subcontinent to the world through the instrument of sitar.

He was India's most esteemed musical ambassador and a singular

States, but faced a constant struggle to bridge the musical gap between the West and the East.

Describing an early Shankar tour in 1957, Time magazine said. “U.S. audiences were receptive but occasionally puzzled.”

Always ahead of his time, Ravi Shankar wrote three concertos for sitar and orchestra. He authored violin-sitar compositions for Yehudi Menuhin and himself, music for flute virtuoso Jean Pierre Rampal, music for Hosan Yamamoto, master of the Shakuhachi and Musumi Miyashita - Koto virtuoso and collaborated with Phillip Glass (Passages). George Harrison produced and participated in two record albums, “Shankar Family & Friends” and “Festival of India” both composed by Ravi Shankar. Ravi Shankar also composed for ballets and films in India, Canada, Europe and the United States.

Born in Varanasi, Ravi started his career in the performing arts as a dancer and spent his youth tour-

ing Europe and the America. This is when his association with violinist Yehudi Menuhin and rock artist George Harrison commenced. The best thing about Ravi Shankar was that he could relate the sitar and Indian classical music with Western music which made his tours quite popular around the world in the 70s and 80s.

In the tradition of Indian political patronage, he served as a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, the upper chamber of the Parliament of India, from 1986 to 1992 and was awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, in 1999. He also received three Grammy Awards and continued to perform into the 2000s, sometimes with his younger daughter, Anoushka. He died at the ripe age of 92, leaving a rich tradition of music behind. **S**

J. Enver is a freelance writer who writes on international affairs, media and communication, and culture and society.

The Place of a Woman

Title: Hidden Women –
The Ruling Women
of the Rana Dynasty

Author: Greta Rana

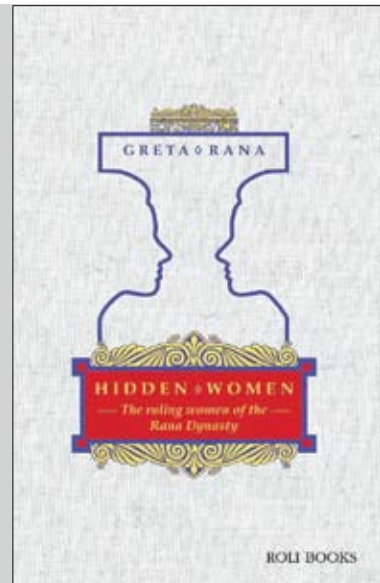
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Reviewed By Arshi Saleem Hashmi



Greta Rana, in her book 'Hidden Women' takes us into the personal stories of women of the aristocracy in Nepal by presenting a portrait of their intricate lives, their thoughts and their dreams.

The title Hidden Women is interesting because the book introduces the stories of women who are unknown to the rest of the world. People outside Nepal know very little or nothing about them. Their lives are a shadow of the life of Jung Bahadur Rana, the founder of the Rana dynasty that ruled Nepal for 104 years.

Though the strong women who lived with Rana had great influence on him, they were largely portrayed as his wives who committed sati when he died. These women enjoyed a prominent place in his life and ironically, the one he admired most tried to kill him.

The book is unique because a person, who is no stranger to the family or royal politics under the Rana dynasty, narrates it. It is the first time the story is being told through the eyes of the women in Rana's life.

The author, Greta Rana, had an unusual life after falling in love with a Nepali student from an aristocratic

family of Nepal. Since 1971, she not only settled in Nepal but contributed to the English language literary scene in the country.

Due to her interest in the history of the Rana family who ruled Nepal with powerful prime ministers between 1846 and 1951, it struck her that people knew little about the Ranas beyond their two-dimensional, historical representations. In Hidden Women, Greta delves into the lives of the "ruling women" behind the charismatic, Jung Bahadur

The book is full of metaphors delving into stories of patriarchal areas where men play cards once the ploughing is over and women carry out the rest of the agricultural work. Greta beautifully writes that the attitude towards women for a long time has been quite chauvinistic. Good women are supposed to be weak and obedient, while bad women are treacherous and of course, strong and independent women are not admired by a conservative and traditional society. As elsewhere in South Asia, here too, the endurance to sustain and bear pain is taken as the strength in women.

In the words of Greta Rana, "I

chose Kadam's story because a significant event in my life gave me an epiphany — that it is those who serve dynasties who perpetuate the aura of the ruling clans rather than the clan members themselves." History and mythology are rich with references to the sacrifices women must make for honor and genealogy, and the social and economic baggage they are forced to carry.

Greta begins with the story of young Kadam from a poor family in a remote village and then shifts to the characters of Ganesh Kumari and Jung Bahadur, and eventually to that of his wives and concubines. Later in the subsequent chapters, the author reinforces the general perception about the aristocracy in Nepal. For a reader not familiar with the social and political dynamics of Nepal, it gives a picture of a highly corrupt and chauvinist system within the country. There may be exceptions but that does not come clear in the writing. Her narration of Jung Bahadur's actions to remain in power gives an impression that even if he made certain decisions which otherwise cannot be justified, the reason was to safeguard the family's honor, which he successfully did it.

Western and some regional South Asian influences have transformed traditional mountain societies. The development paradigm and the rapid economic diversification has caused the change. Women's value in their households, communities and societies is declining as traditional mountain societies are being transformed by the prevailing values belonging to lowland religious, nationalistic and cultural paradigms. The marginal status of most mountain societies makes resistance to more powerful forces difficult, and the process of mainstreaming mountain cultures into national identities may negate the stronger positions of women from these traditional communities.

Though Nepali society is patriarchal in nature, the great palace conspiracies always had a women calling the shots. Royal wives and concubines schemed for favors. Greta reminds us of the role of the "ruling women", supplementing her theme with the

characters of Kadam, Jung Bahadur's clairvoyant wet nurse, and his mother, Ganesh Kumari. She adopts a feminist tone early on in Kadam's story when Kadam's mother-in-law sums up the relations between men and women: "That's all they do, plough ... They plough the land and they plough us and we have to look after everything that grows."

The book is an interesting read as it depicts the situation full of alliances and rivalries that animated the Kathmandu court. The strength of the book is Kadam's character, which links the affairs of a feudal state with the mundane realities of the peasants it exploited. Kadam was a significant character though it is hard to say to what extent the hidden women of the Rana dynasty were its ruling women. The way Greta has narrated the story of Kadam, readers tend to empathize with this intelligent but sensitive woman who was sent to Kathmandu's royalty to earn for her husband's fam-

ily and to serve Jung Bahadur.

'Hidden Women' unveils the secrets within the walls of the royal palace in Nepal but at the same time, it informs that despite the development and modernization, societies are not different from Kadam's Nepal. Greta through this book gives another message that women are instrumental whether serving as a wet nurse like Kadam or a modern, empowered woman anywhere in the world, they have a common bond and not recognizing this bond is a tragedy of our time. **S**

Arshi Saleem Hashmi is Assistant Professor, Peace and Conflict Studies Department at the National Defense University, Islamabad. She is a member of Women in International Security (WIIS) Edmund A. Walsh School, Georgetown University and has also worked at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Pew Forum on Religion and Public Policy and Middle East Institute, Washington DC.

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Cracking a Nut with a Sledgehammer

By Anees Jillani

One of the most obvious traits of a wise man is that he or she does not try to reinvent the wheel and learns from the mistakes of others. It appears that Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa does not fall in this category as he is bent upon making the mistake that General Musharraf made in Pakistan. President Rajapaksa first dismissed the Army Chief and incarcerated him and now desires to impeach the first female head of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake.

On November 23, she appeared for the first time before a parliamentary select committee considering an impeachment motion against her filed by the government. Just like in Pakistan, the proceeding has raised the risk of a destabilizing clash between the government and the judiciary and lawyers.

There are 14 charges against the Chief Justice, including the allegation that she misused her position and failed to adequately declare her assets. Her supporters of course say that the accusations are politically motivated and see it as an attempt by the President to curb the independence of the judiciary and consolidate his power.

The tension between the judiciary and the President is rising. Just a few days before the start of the impeachment proceedings, the Supreme Court blocked efforts by the President to centralize certain powers at the expense of elected provincial councils. The government's proposed change would have meant that one of the president's brothers, a current cabinet minister, controlled more than \$600 million in development money.

President Rajapaksa's governing coalition dominates the Parliament. He was re-elected to a second term in January 2010. His critics lament that the President is constantly trying to broaden his powers. His government already controls both the executive and legislative branches, and according to the critics, he now wants to control the judiciary.

The fact is that the background to the impeachment process is not as innocent as it may appear, just as it was the

case with the Musharraf's attempt to disqualify Pakistan's Chief Justice. Prior to the current crisis, the Supreme Court bench, of which the Chief Justice was the head, declared some Bills submitted to it by the government as being in conflict with the Constitution. This move has been seen by almost everyone as the reason behind the impeachment.

The Chief Justice does not see the constitutional process dealing with impeachment as a just and fair one. The UN Rapporteur for the Independence of Lawyers and Judges and many international authorities have expressed serious concerns about the impeachment issue and have requested the government to reconsider the matter.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur, while expressing serious concerns about reported intimidation and attacks against judges, warned that they might form part of a pattern of attacks, threats reprisals and interference in the independence of the justice system in Sri Lanka.

The US State Department spokesperson said that the move would impede the efficacy and independence of Sri Lanka's judiciary, and stated, "it seems to me rather like taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut. What makes it worse is that those responsible for the impeachment motion seem to be going after the wrong nut."

The crisis is further complicated by the fact that some of the judges other than the Chief Justice who have dared to challenge the government's writ or even expressed any sort of disagreement have been beaten. The Rajapaksa's government has failed to take adequate measures to ensure the physical and mental integrity of the judiciary and allow them to perform their professional duties without any restrictions, pressures, threats or interferences. Why does it sound so familiar to us in Pakistan? **S**

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

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