

INDIA

On the Wrong Track

SOUTHASIA

July 2013

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INSIDE:

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The Risky Business of Addiction

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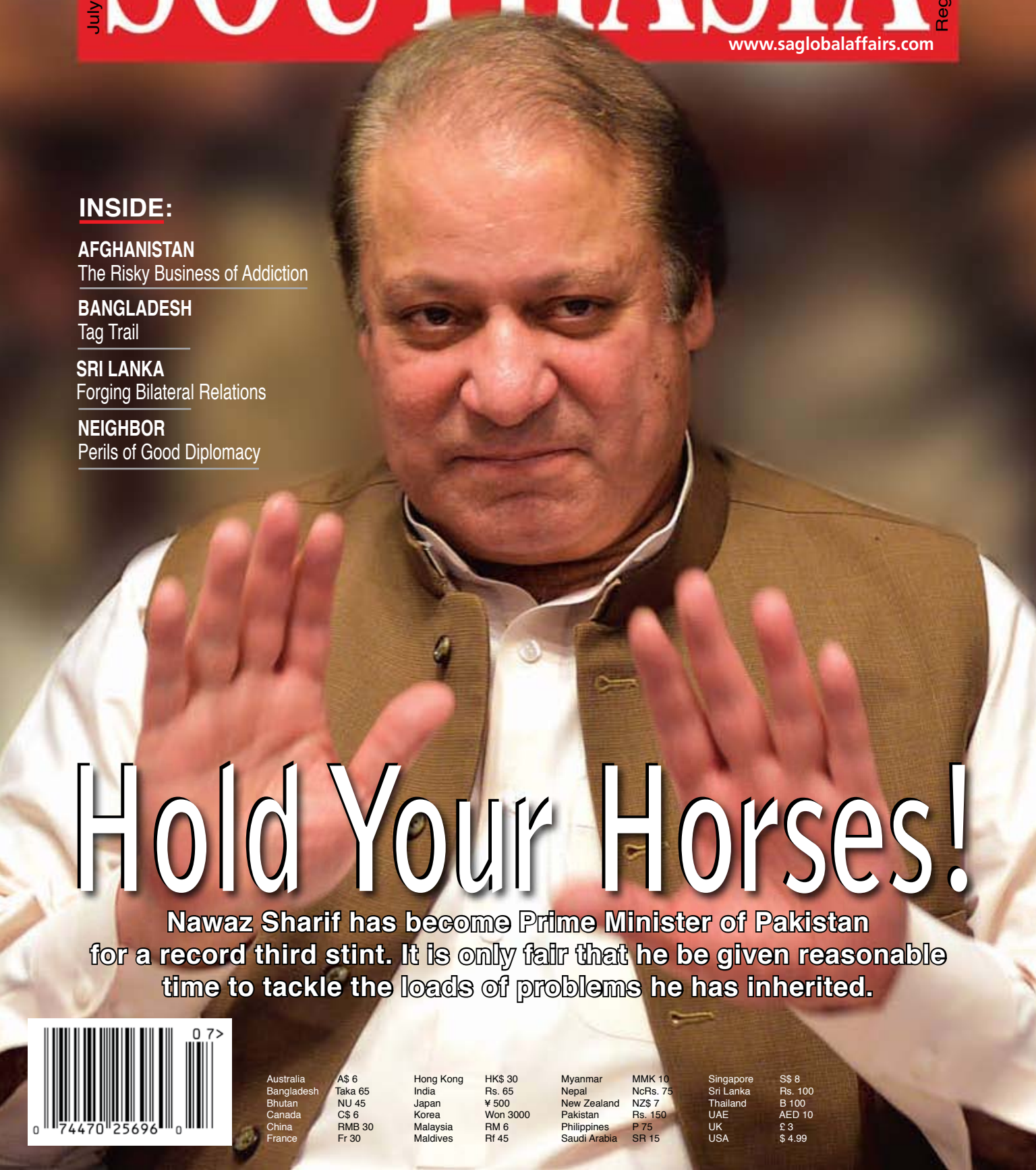
Tag Trail

SRI LANKA

Forging Bilateral Relations

NEIGHBOR

Perils of Good Diplomacy



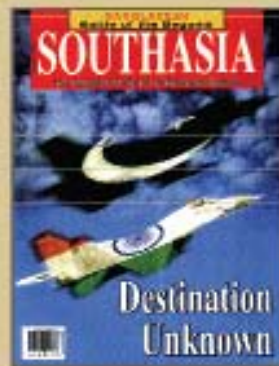
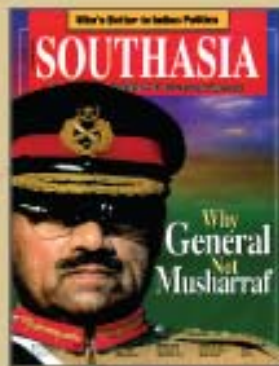
Hold Your Horses!

Nawaz Sharif has become Prime Minister of Pakistan for a record third stint. It is only fair that he be given reasonable time to tackle the loads of problems he has inherited.



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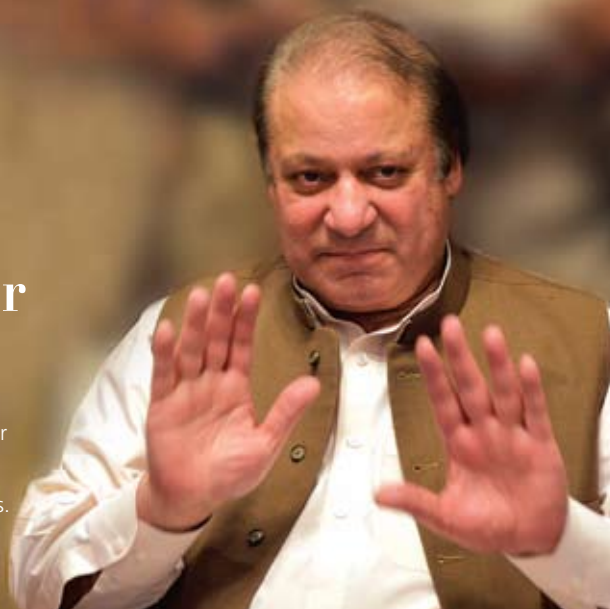
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Assuming power for the third time, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif needs sufficient time before making any big decisions.



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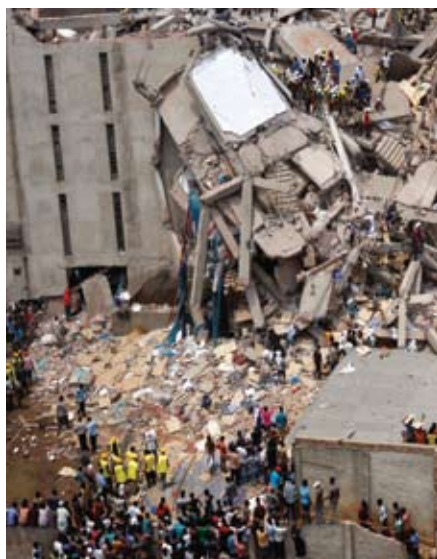
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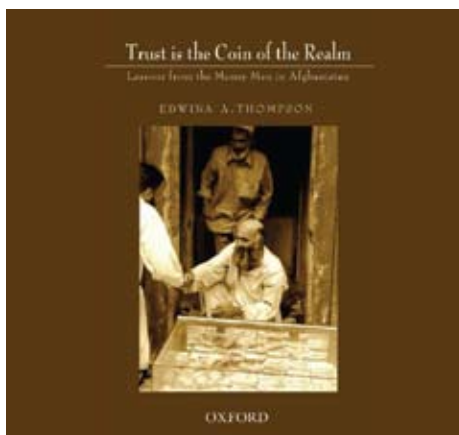
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Be Careful, Mian Sahib!

There were many who joined the political chorus urging Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to institute high treason proceedings against former President Pervez Musharraf. It is quite strange though that the PPP government did not bring about such legal action in its own five years of power, though there were people in its fold like Raza Rabbani, one among the last few remaining genuine and honest PPP ideologues, who still believe in the political philosophy of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto, who called for such action.

Perhaps there was a hidden agenda behind PPP's strategy or maybe there were other machinations at work then and are in evidence now as the incumbent prime minister and his PML(N), which commands almost two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, has been encouraged to commence legal proceedings against the Nov. 3, 2007 actions of Gen. Pervez Musharraf when he is said to have subverted the Constitution by imposing emergency in Pakistan. It almost sounds as if various interested quarters are repeating to Mr. Nawaz Sharif the popular aphorism: '*Charh Ja Beta Sooli Par, Ram Bhali Karey Ga.*' (*Go and climb the gallows son, God will help you*). In his enthusiasm to act on the bidding of others, Nawaz Sharif has also conveniently forgotten that matters go back to Oct. 12, 1999 and Pervez Musharraf would not have been around to impose Emergency on Nov 3, 2007 if he had not been given the reason to take over power as a result of events set in motion following Mr. Nawaz Sharif's personal actions on an October day eight years earlier.

It is obvious that in the present circumstances, his spirits riding high following the historical success of his party in the general elections, Mr. Nawaz Sharif has been sweet-talked and mollycoddled by the higher judiciary which itself harbours a penchant for judicial activism. Since the Constitution of Pakistan does not empower the judiciary to institute *suo moto* action under Article 6 against an act of alleged high treason, the government of Nawaz Sharif has been 'encouraged' by the self-styled judicial activists to approach the courts for proceedings against General Musharraf under relevant provisions of the Constitution and thus settle many a personal score.

In trying Musharraf for high treason, the government and judiciary are setting a dangerous precedence for a country like Pakistan where democracy is still at a nascent stage and has not attained maturity in both concept and practice. There is also a need to remove the misconception in certain political quarters that by proceeding against Musharraf, the message will go loud and clear to future adventurists in uniform that the days of Martial Law are over. Senior politician Chaudhry Shujaat may not be recognized for spewing out many gems of wisdom but the one valuable quip that he is known for is to the effect that all it takes for those in uniform to take over power is 'one jeep and two trucks'.

As the Musharraf trial proceeds and the government becomes further embroiled in it, there is no doubt that other pressing matters of state will be thrown to the winds, which will further magnify the travails of the already suffering masses rather than reducing them. Nawaz Sharif and the do-gooders around him should fear the day when, after having sent Musharraf to his 'logical' end in the midst of loud applause, they will turn around and find themselves alone in the cold because the clapping spectators, their ends having been achieved, would have quietly disappeared by then. That will be the time when Nawaz Sharif and his political partners may not have enough time to stop the trucks because they would have ignored delivery of good governance and law and order to the people. They would then also realise that the applause was not to welcome the arrival of the boots but to celebrate the unceremonious exit of the politicians. Be careful, Mian Sahib!



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

Third Coming

Your cover story discussing the 2014 elections in Pakistan was informative and detailed regarding the key players and mismanagement conducted by the Election Commission. The writer explained in detail the rigging and mismanagement that was prevailing across the country on Election Day. With Nawaz Sharif becoming Prime Minister of Pakistan for the third time, people will expect him to take wise decisions which will bring the country out of its many predicaments.

Sharif will need to address Pakistan's energy crisis, curb terrorism, maintain friendly relations with South Asian neighbors, create a viable foreign policy with the West, and revive the country's stalled economy. Although political leaders are hailing the efforts of the Election Commission of Pakistan in holding elections on time, it is the unprofessional conduct witnessed on polling day which has created doubts among the Pakistanis over the legality of these elections.

Moreover, people and policy makers alike will carefully observe Sharif's first 100 days of power during which

previous PPP-led government, Sharif will have his hands full in proving his worth as Prime Minister during his third term.

Shahid Younis
Islamabad, Pakistan

Foreign Language

Your article "Beyond the Lingo Barrier" was an interesting read with the writer discussing how the Afghanistan-China relationship will benefit



Afghan children by teaching the Mandarin language at Kabul University. China is an economic giant in the making and has been striving to maintain healthy relations with South Asian countries.

Cultures and traditions do play a significant role in bringing two countries closer and cultural diplomacy will move the Sino-Afghan ties in a new direction. However, China's interest to teach Mandarin in Afghanistan is a strategic decision and goes beyond the idea of maintaining cultural diplomacy. In reality, China is eyeing the nearly \$1 trillion of unexploited mineral reserves in Afghanistan and China's single track policy of non-interference has kept it in Afghanistan's good books.

Analysts are of the view that China's attempt to forge relations with Afghanistan may affect Pak-China ties. However, it is unlikely to happen as

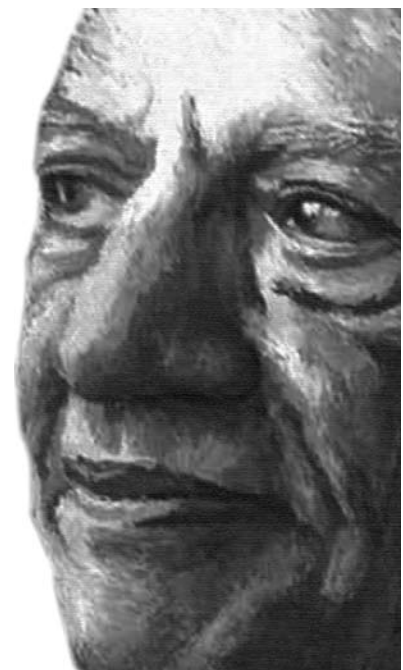
Pakistan and China have a brotherly bond that transcends all boundaries. China is also making heavy investments in Afghanistan as it wants to play an influential role in the war-torn country once the U.S. troops make their withdrawal in 2014. The writer aptly mentioned in the article that it would be wishful thinking for Afghan students to learn and understand the Chinese language and the project might not get underway. However, as the world is turning into a global village, the project just might become a success.

Ali Ahmed
Kabul, Afghanistan

An Extraordinary Personality

Your profile on Faiz Ahmed Faiz was well-written, summarizing the life and work of perhaps one of the most influential personalities commanding an artistic flair in South Asia. Faiz Ahmed Faiz is certainly a treasure for Pakistan whose poetry is still widely read across the country and the world. Not only was Faiz an intellectual but, the Lenin Peace Prize which the government of Moscow bestowed upon him is a testimony to his intellectual capabilities.

Becoming a successful poet and



he will decide upon key issues to determine the course of Pakistan's political and economic future. After serving as the opposition leader during the

an intellectual while belonging to the middle class requires patience, intelligence and perseverance which were part of Faiz's personality. A person of Faiz's caliber needs to work with freedom. However, he was sent to jail following the failure of Major General Akbar Khan's coup in 1951. Faiz was imprisoned for the second time for publishing pro-communist articles which showed his inclination towards Russia. Apart from being a poet, Faiz also enjoyed a post at the Information and Broadcasting Ministry in 1965 where he gathered support for the Indo-Pak war. It is also notable that his famous poem "*Lazim hai keh hum bhi dekhengay...*" has been sung by Pakistani singers and has become famous especially among the youth of Pakistan.

Faraz Haider
Karachi, Pakistan

Social Media in India

Your article "Socializing Politics" aptly mentioned the importance of social media as the fastest growing trend in recent memory where anyone familiar with the Internet knows the importance of this new media.

The wave of social media is taking over India's political circle by storm as it helps to gather public responses to political activities. This is reducing the gap between the public and the government which will impact the functioning of the state. It is expected that social media will influence the 2014 Indian election as millions of Internet users in India will voice their opinion in reshaping the country's political leadership. Social media has gained such popularity in India that all political leaders have a Facebook page with tens and thousands of followers who interact with them on a daily basis. An interesting statistic mentioned in the article was that Prime Minister

Manmohan Singh has 62,900 fans on Facebook while Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi have nearly 77,000 followers.

Moreover, election campaigns will target the 140 million internet users of India by disseminating election campaigns, party manifestos, and other digital content so that voters get details of all candidates and their political parties.

Rahul Balaji
New Delhi, India

Vision with Wheels

Your article "Four Wheels and a Vision" was not only interesting but it summarized the activities by international NGO's in community building and providing the Afghan children with a better future. It was heartwarming to read that Australian skateboarder, Oliver Percovich initiated Skateistan in Afghanistan which has been giving skateboarding lessons and classroom learning to children since 2010. This is a ray of hope for the Afghan children as the country needs to build a peaceful society following a decade long war.

Skateistan's mission to educate Afghan children who lack professional direction or career counseling is highly commendable. International NGOs and companies have provided

Write to SouthAsia

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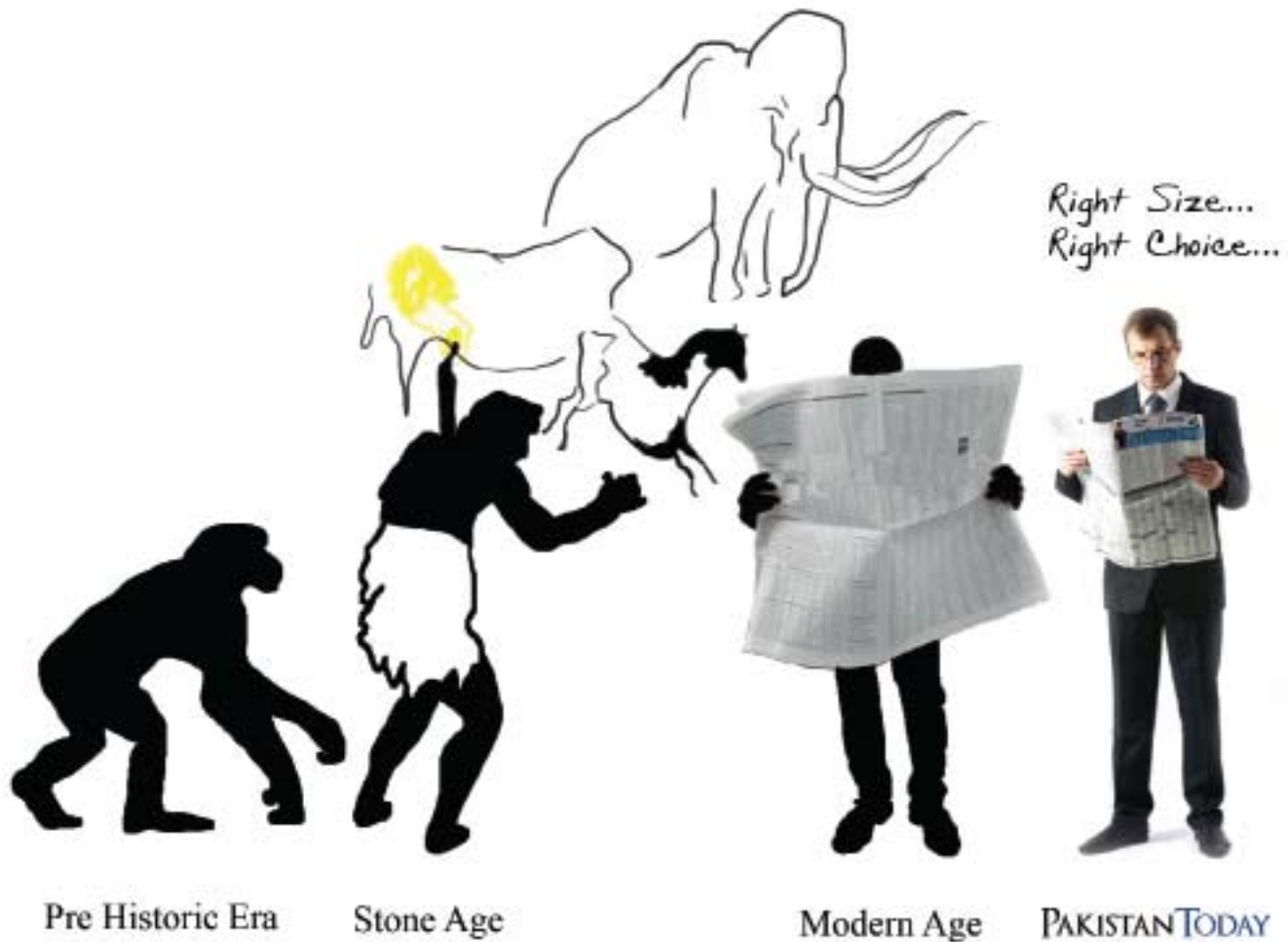
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monetary support to Skateistan which is a testament to the originality of the project. It is evident that Afghanistan is slowly accepting innovation and Skateistan's success verifies that the country is making an effort in promoting educational opportunities for children, who belong to diverse social classes. This also reduces class differentiation and ethnic isolation as children belonging to Hazara, Uzbek, Pashtun, and Tajik backgrounds attend the school. Such educational projects should spread across the country because children are Afghanistan's future and with instability looming over Afghanistan, the country must protect its future at all cost.

Faiza Dawood
Islamabad, Pakistan



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"There are hands at work trying to prevent the countries that have oil and gas reserves from using renewable energy sources."

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
President of Iran



"It is sad that the Opposition is acting against the interests of the poor. I can understand politics but I cannot understand political parties hurting the poor."

Rahul Gandhi
VP, Indian National Congress



"Bangladesh now is a place for good conditions for the investment."

Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister of Bangladesh



"We can agree to give them (the U.S.) the bases – them staying on after 2014 is for the good of Afghanistan."

Hamid Karzai
President of Afghanistan



"The party couldn't fight on multiple fronts simultaneously."

Asif Zardari
President of Pakistan



"The Maldives National Defence Force is also assisting with flood relief. They take firefighting equipment to islands and help pump water."

Mohammed Waheed Hassan
President of Maldives



"We have always had good relations with India and we have always acted to promote the goodwill."

Mahinda Rajapaksa
President of Sri Lanka



"The spot fixing scandal was a bad thing for Pakistan cricket."

Misbah-ul-Haq
Captain, Pakistan Cricket Team



"I just feel that the Indian film industry has its own identity, so I'd rather call it 'the Indian film industry', especially now we celebrate 100 years of the Indian film industry this year."

Amitabh Bachan
Indian Film Actor



"The US stands with all Pakistanis in welcoming this historic, peaceful and transparent transfer of civilian power, which is a significant milestone in Pakistan's democratic progress."

Barack Obama
President of the United States



"I had sent information of fixing in IPL to IPL Commissioner but it was ignored."

Lalit Modi
Indian Businessman



"The publishing industry does not exist in Pakistan in any meaningful sense."

Musharraf Ali Farooqi
Pakistani Writer

PAKISTAN

Chinese Premier's Landmark Arrival

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang made a historic two day visit to Pakistan and held talks with President Asif Ali Zardari, caretaker Prime Minister Mir Hazar Khan Khoso and the then prime minister-elect Nawaz Sharif, to discuss options to boost trade.

Trade between China and Pakistan hit the US\$12 billion mark for the first time last year, up by 18 percent on the previous year. The two sides are committed to raising this to US\$15 billion in the next two to three years.

Li, who was on his first overseas tour after being elected prime minister in March, assured officials that both

countries would cooperate on power generation as Islamabad makes efforts to end its energy crisis which has brought the economy to a standstill.

During Li's visit, the two countries also signed agreements related to energy, technology and space; inked the Agreement on Boundary Management System between Xinjiang and Gilgit-Baltistan; signed a MoU on maritime cooperation, border ports and their management system, and agreed on establishing the Confucius Institute at Karachi University. Other agreements covered an economic corridor plan and satellite navigation.



Li assured that the friendly relations between Pakistan and China will benefit their economic ties. The Chinese premier was confident that the two countries can promote the building of the China-Pakistan economic corridor to boost trade and economic activity. ■

AFGHANISTAN

Exit of U.S. Military Hardware

The U.S.-led NATO troops are moving their military equipment back to the U.S. from Afghanistan after over a decade long combat mission in the

war-torn country. The U.S. and its allies invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 following the 9/11 attacks to overthrow the Taliban government. Since then the U.S. forces along with its allies have been stationed in Afghanistan, which is a key South Asian country due to its strategic location. According to sources, the first NATO convoy carrying weapons, armored vehicles, and trucks reached the Pakistani city of Quetta from Kandhar amid tight security in May.

The equipment was then transported to the

U.S. from Karachi's Port Qasim. Security was put on high alert across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border during the days when the equipment was being transported. According to sources, the withdrawal of U.S. equipment is in itself a daunting task as the military hardware amounts to more than 600,000 pieces worth \$28bn.

The withdrawal of equipment comes a year ahead of the scheduled U.S.-led NATO troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan, which is expected to take place in 2014. Afghanistan will face a deeper crisis once the U.S. mission in Afghanistan ends as the country's national security apparatus might not be adequate enough to keep the extremist factions at bay. ■



Karzai's Shopping Visit

During his recent visit to India, Afghan President Hamid Karzai held talks with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh where the two discussed the deepening political situation in the

region. The focus of the talks was on U.S. troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. Karzai was keenly interested to enhance defence cooperation with India and receive a supply of lethal and non-lethal weapons, which India is ready to supply.

In addition, the Indian government bestowed the Afghan president with a Doctorate Honoris Causa. Analysts suggest that the visit will build close relations between the two countries and help fortify bilateral ties and resolve regional issues.

Afghanistan and India are strategically important neighbors with the ability to address

all issues under the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), which they signed in 2011. According to the Afghan government, mechanisms are available to resolve key issues and diplomatic channels will also come into play to bring the two countries closer.

During Karzai's visit, India offered more aid to Afghanistan in the wake of U.S. troops' withdrawal next year. According to an official statement, India is prepared to increase bilateral relations and will help Afghanistan strengthen its military and security institutions. This is not the first time that India will provide military training assistance to Afghanistan as it has been doing so since 2011 under the SPA. **S**



Iran Supports Bangladesh

In his recent visit to Bangladesh to attend the Fifth Joint Economic Commission Meeting, the Iranian Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade, Mehdi Qazanfari, held a meeting with the Chairman of Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce, Kazi Akrameddin Ahmed to emphasize the need to expand bilateral ties and trade relations. During the meeting the two officials also agreed to opt new avenues to broaden their bilateral trade.

Both nations are hopeful that the private sector in both the countries can play a pivotal role to promote trade and economic ties. In addition, the two officials agreed to increase the current \$101bn worth of mutual

trade cooperation by organizing exhibitions and exchange of delegations, which will provide the much needed

impetus for economic growth.

Minister Qazanfari also met with Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and explored the possibilities of expanding bilateral ties between Dhaka and Tehran. The Iranian minister called for the formation of an expert group to administer the implementation of agreements made by the two countries at the Iran-Bangladesh Joint Commission meeting. Furthermore, Qazanfari also pledged to transfer engineering and technical services to Bangladesh. The meeting proved productive as Bangladesh assigned several railway projects to Iranian contractors and the two sides held talks on commercial banking transactions. **S**



SRI LANKA

SL Fights Extremism

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa has renewed his pledge to fight against the extremist factions that are disrupting the country's peace. While addressing the fourth anniversary celebration of winning the three-decade war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), Rajapaksa indirectly put the blame for Sri Lanka's crisis on the western forces.

Recently, certain international groups have called to investigate Sri Lanka's human rights record and to carry out an independent investigation into the alleged war crimes the country committed during the last stages of the war against the LTTE. President Rajapaksa was of the view that these investigations and allegations are at-



tempts to destabilize the peace process and assured that reconciliation

is taking place. He said that the Sri Lankan government had freed most of the high ranking LTTE officials despite the carnage committed by their rebel organization.

Rajapaksa also condemned the Tamils in assisting the international community in maligning Sri Lanka's image. Tamil groups have supported Canada and Britain to vote against Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council that approved two resolutions on Sri Lanka and placed the country under pressure. The Sri Lankan government has raised criticism against the Global Tamil Forum that has been lobbying internationally on allegations of war crimes committed in Sri Lanka during the last phase of the war. **S**

MALDIVES

U.S. Status in Maldives

The U.S. has asked the Maldivian government to sign a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to build military bases in the island country. This is a noteworthy move by the Obama administration which is looking for an aggressive pivot in its Asia strategy and envisions encircling China in the Indo-Pacific region.

Following a number of agreements signed between the U.S. and the Maldives in 2010, the former has access to Maldivian infrastructure. Washington signed an Acquisition and Cross Service Agreement in 2010 with Male allowing the U.S. to gain access to its airport and seaport facilities. It is expected that the SOFA will expand on

the previous agreements.

According to the SOFA, the U.S. will enjoy physical presence in the Maldives, including access to military bases and to the island's sea routes. Moreover, the strategic location of the Maldives is of interest to the U.S. as nearly 80 percent of the world's seaborne trade in oil passes through Indian Ocean checkpoints. U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean can potentially threaten countries which depend on sea lanes

for the transport of raw materials and energy supplies. It is obvious that the U.S. is increasing its naval activity to keep a check on China, which enjoys a vast demand for oil and minerals from the Middle East and Africa. **S**



Constitutional Crisis in Nepal

Nepal is facing a constitutional crisis since 2008 which is hampering its transformation to democracy. Although an interim government is in place, the country is still facing uncertainty over the formulation of the Constituent Assembly. Lack of proper representation is delaying the passing of laws necessary to vote for the new assembly. This political crisis comes a year after the dissolution of the previous assembly as the party leaders have failed to agree upon a federal model.

Nepalese politicians fear that the new assembly will be more regressive, less inclusive, and more anti-federal. This raises concerns for a stable Nepal

following years of indecisiveness on the part of party leaders to write a constitution.

If political representation is a serious issue, then women politicians are also demanding appropriate representation in the new assembly. Nepalese women politicians have called to discard the election process and launch a struggle movement if the parties reduce women's participation below 33 percent. This will raise another crisis in Nepal which will take its toll on the country's path to democracy.

Moreover, the size of the new assembly is also under debate as 601 members in the previous Constitu-



ent Assembly was a burden on the country's budget. This time, however, politicians have drafted a law that calls for reducing the number of members to 491. **S**

Hydropower Generation in Bhutan

It is expected that Bhutan's yearly revenue from energy and hydropower exports to India will touch the Nu 45bn mark by 2018. According to sources, hydropower projects of Punatsangchu I, II and Mangdechu will be commissioned and operational by that time earning an annual revenue of Nu 34bn. These projects have a combined capacity of 2,940MW and will generate nearly 12,951 million units of energy every year. In addition, the existing projects of Tala, Chukha, Kurichu and Basochu would give the country earnings of nearly Nu 11bn per annum.

The government determined the

estimated revenue figure after evaluating total generation by each project and unit price of energy generation. The revenue generated by hydropower projects will help Bhutan reduce its short-term liabilities which mainly constitute borrowings made by the Indian government and the Indian commercial banks.

The Bhutanese government will increase its pace of constructing 10,000 MW hydropower projects during 2017. Bhutan will commence selling power to India once all projects are completed, which will strengthen their bilateral ties. Bhutan also has to



pay off its debts and the hydropower projects will help the country lessen the burden.

According to estimates, after paying debts in 2018, the country will be left with Nu 22bn. However, the economy will get a boost when its hydropower projects will operate at maximum efficiency by the end of 2018, which will assist the country in repaying the loan it took for constructing Punatsangchu I, which has a repayment period of 12 years. **S**

Law and Order
Regional Issues
Energy Crisis
Foreign Relations
Drone attacks
Economic
Growth

Hold Your Horses!

All eyes are glued on Nawaz Sharif, and how he performs.

By S.G. Jilanee

nic

**Industrial
growth**

Inflation

Trade

**Pak-Afghan
relations**

North Waziristan

**Peaceful relations
with India**

**Pervez Musharraf's
treason case**

Pakistan-U.S. Relations

Gwadar Port

Economic Policy

Military ties



In the case of convicts, fourteen years is the period of imprisonment, often called the "transportation for life." But 14 years in political wilderness can prepare one to perform a hat trick for the prime minister's office as Mian Nawaz Sharif has recently demonstrated.

After his fall in October 1999, Sharif suffered many ups and downs of fortune. He was detained. He was prosecuted. He spent time in self-exile. Through adversity he learned his lesson in democracy. Today it is a different Mian Sahib who is in power.

Though how far he has changed will be discovered only after he starts working as prime minister, but it is expected that he will no longer be on a fighting binge with anyone perceived to be crossing his path; no repetition of his deadly combat with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan; sending raiders to chase Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah out of his court; easing President Leghari and Army chief, Gen. Karamat out or preventing the plane carrying the army chief from landing anywhere in Pakistan. Nor will journalists be harassed, abducted, and charged with preposterous allegations as during in his second stint.

Signing the Charter of Democracy with his political *bête noire*, Benazir Bhutto was a clear indicator that his sufferings had made Nawaz Sharif realize the virtue of democracy. In fact, it was his devotion to the "Charter," that led him to refrain from attempting to rock the PPP government's boat despite many standoffs thus allowing an elected government to complete its term for the first time in Pakistan's history.

The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) has won 126 general seats in the National Assembly in the May 11 elections. Adding 18 independents, who have since joined

PML-N, 32 women and five minority seats, the party's total number has jumped to 181 in a house of 342. With this simple majority it has decided to form the government, though Sharif is angling for JUI (F) chief, Maulana Fazlur Rahman to coalesce.

Sharif's election victory has set off a deluge of comments, analyses, gratuitous advice from kibitzers in newspapers, and endless debates on TV talk shows. Congratulations have been received from foreign heads of state. President Obama, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Rahul Gandhi are among those who spoke with Sharif to felicitate while the Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang made a personal visit, his first since being elected.

In an unprecedented move, Gen. Kayani made an informal visit to Sharif at his Lahore residence; "informal," because he was dressed in mufti instead of fatigues. Their talk for a full three hours could certainly not have been about the weather. Kayani is completing his term in few months. His successor has to be chosen. He favors fighting the Taliban while Sharif supports talks. The army is chary of India's rising clout in Afghanistan while Sharif has vigorously shaken the olive branch in Manmohan Singh's face since his election victory.

A mountain of formidable challenges await Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, both on the home and international fronts. Compounding them is a judiciary and media different than what he had known in the past. Inside the NA, he will encounter a robust Opposition, comprising Imran Khan, Sheikh Rashid, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, Khursheed Shah et al. Moreover, PPP has the majority in the Senate, which means that any legislation originating from the National Assembly could die in the upper house.

A prevailing countrywide energy crisis is the most urgent and immediate challenge. Next and extremely complicated is dealing with the Taliban. Sharif supports the policy of negotiations but the U.S. is deadly opposed to the idea and is eager to sabotage it. For example, recently, when there was some progress on the TTP's offer for talks, a U.S. drone attack killed TTP's second-in-command, Waliur Rahman. In consequence, the TTP promptly withdrew their offer.

Another intriguing issue relates to the fate of General Pervez Musharraf and whether Nawaz Sharif will illustrate political maturity and suppress his urge for revenge.

Interestingly, while PML (N) has swept the polls in Punjab, its representation in other provinces is nominal. This immediately creates an image problem for NS, making him look like the prime minister of Punjab. For Sharif to once again prove his legitimacy throughout Pakistan, the new Prime Minister will have to make some tough yet critical decisions that reverberate throughout the nation as opposed to being confined to a particular province.

Drone attacks present both domestic and diplomatic dilemmas. Mass feelings against drone attacks are strong. Shooting them down if America persists, is Imran Khan's election vow. Solving this issue satisfactorily will be a test for Sharif. One possible alternative could be to negotiate stopping the attacks as a quid pro quo for allowing transit of millions of tons of U.S. military hardware through Pakistan for shipment back home.

Other domestic issues include choosing a successor to Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, slated to retire in a few months, and resuscitate the economy in the shortest possible time.

On the international front,



Sharif's interest in cultivating peaceful relations with India has been evident from his statements since the elections. He wants to pick up the thread from where it had snapped following the Kargil episode. This augurs well because, "India is ready to lead a 500MW transmission wire over the border into Punjab. By extending its own pipeline network, it could also help supply natural gas, easing Pakistan's reliance on oil." (The Economist: May 16 2013).

Moreover, besides benefiting from direct trade with India, Paki-

stan may also be able to export its goods to Bangladesh and Nepal through India if it allows a transit route for Indian goods to be transported to Afghanistan and Central Asia through its land. But, here again is a caveat. As America sabotages talks with the Taliban, Hafiz Sayeed or any other "non-state actor" may throw the spanner in the work by staging an action replay of the Mumbai attacks.

In Afghanistan, the U.S. is "retreating." Indian influence is increasing. Karzai is friendlier with India.

Towards Pakistan he is hostile. What will happen after America's departure? Would Karzai be dispatched like Najibullah? These are questions that will call for cool deliberation and sound decision from the "third-time-lucky" Mian Nawaz Sharif.

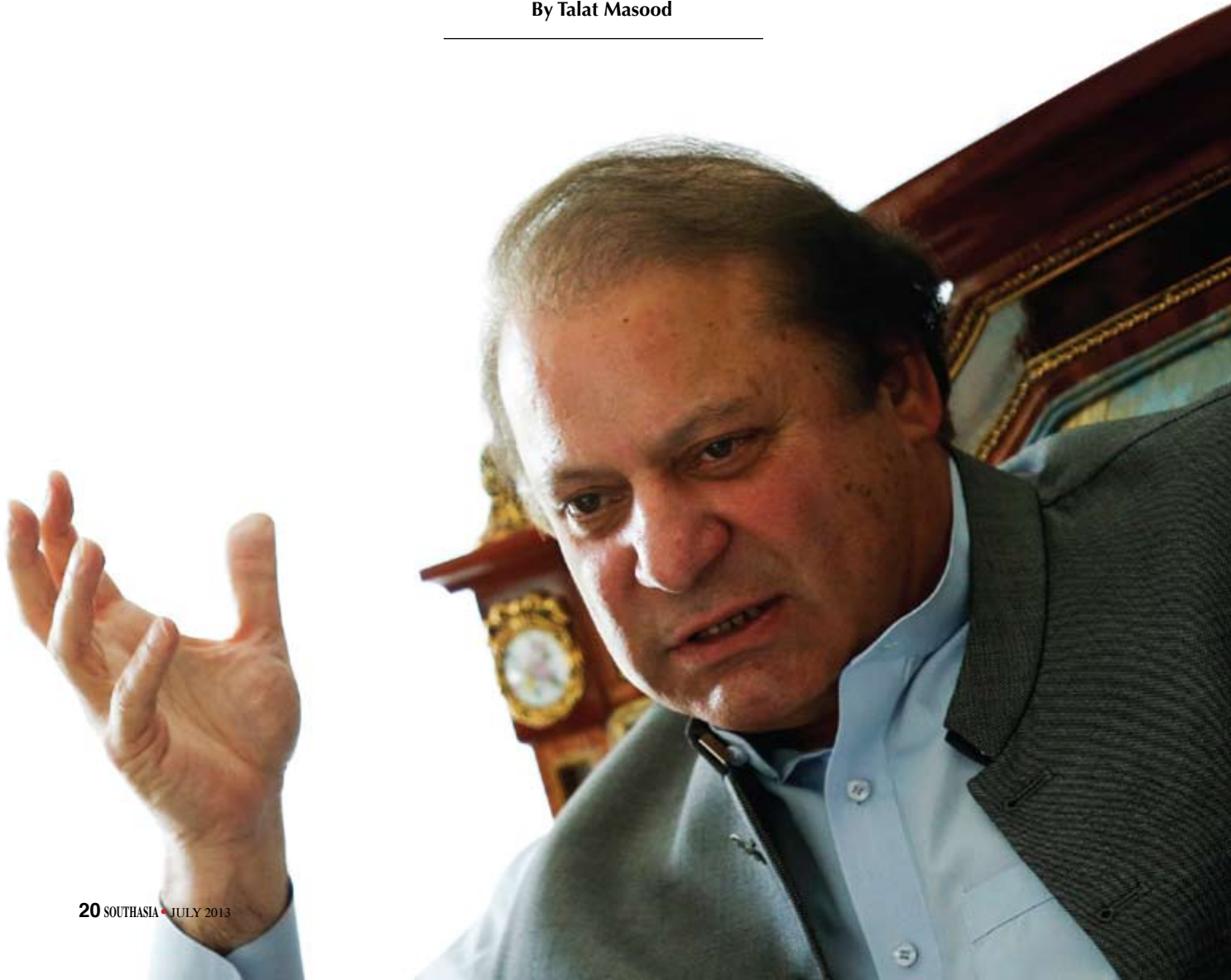
He has taken the oath. He has stepped on to centre stage. How he performs is what all eyes are glued to. **S**

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

Tough Decisions

Major foreign policy challenges lie ahead for Nawaz Sharif and it remains uncertain whether he will be able to maneuver them in Pakistan's favor.

By Talat Masood



In his two previous incarnations, our third time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been heavily preoccupied with domestic issues. He has engaged in foreign policy when circumstances practically forced him, otherwise his interest was minimal and it was mostly reactive. There were however a few occasions such as when Pakistan conducted the nuclear tests in 1998 or when the Kargil fiasco triggered a serious international crisis.

This time the PML government of Nawaz Sharif is assuming power when the country is faced with acute domestic and foreign policy challenges. On the domestic front is the ongoing insurgency in FATA, increasing terrorist attacks, an acute energy crisis and a faltering economy. Combating these domestic issues will need peaceful borders and international support both at the economic and political level. Equally demanding attention of the government is the external scenario; especially relations with India, Afghanistan and the US. And the external and internal situation is intertwined.

From the recent statements of Nawaz Sharif it is amply clear that he has accorded high priority to moving forward with India on the peace process. He plans to build from where his efforts at reconciliation were abruptly cut off in 1999, following the military coup. The Indian leadership has responded positively, but cautiously. It seems they would be closely watching the political government's control over foreign policy and especially matters that affect India. In his pre election interaction with the Indian media, Nawaz Sharif has expressed his determination to pursue the judicial case against the perpetrators of the Mumbai incident and control the jihadi elements in Pakistan. To what extent he would succeed in taking

along the military on these sensitive issues would be of great significance for the Indian leadership. If Nawaz Sharif can demonstrate that he can take calculated risks on the India-Pakistan track and move faster than other politicians it would be reassuring for the Indian leadership. He has strong credentials to build a positive relationship with India and be a reliable partner in the quest for peace. If he is able to build a reputation for better governance, is personally uncorrupt and takes incremental steps to bring the military under institutional control of the executive then

elections was good signaling and a welcome development that needs to be followed up.

With the ongoing withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, managing relations with Afghanistan and the U.S. for the new government would be crucial. President Karzai's rather aggressive and unpredictable behavior toward Pakistan, especially since the last few months, makes matters more complex. By scape-goating Pakistan for all of Afghanistan's woes, President Karzai, whose term of office expires in 2014, hopes he will rehabilitate

The peace overtures and offer of talks to the Pakistani Taliban by Nawaz Sharif would be welcomed by the Afghan regime provided these result in their joining the political mainstream and not be diverted to fight side by side with their Afghan counterparts.

he will manage to facilitate building bridges with India.

It is expected that Nawaz Sharif will impress upon his Indian counterpart that no substantive and enduring relationship can be forged without movement on core issues, even if these are kept on the backburner for a few years. With Indian elections not far away in 2014, Prime Minister Singh's space for maneuver on the core issues of Jammu & Kashmir, Siachen and Sir Creek in the near term will be very limited.

Meanwhile, the two countries should press forward on less contentious issues of trade and commerce, easing of the visa regime and cultural exchanges and create an amiable environment. The visit of Mr. Lamba as a back channel emissary of PM Manmohan Singh, soon after the

his political standing and deflect attention from his government's poor record in governance and corrupt reputation.

No doubt, President Karzai has certain expectations from Pakistan that remain unfulfilled. He has been pressing Pakistan to release the Afghan Taliban and use its influence to bring them to the negotiating table. About ten to twelve Taliban leaders were released last year but the process has since stopped. The Taliban leadership refuses to engage in dialogue with the Afghan government and wants to deal directly with the U.S. More importantly, President Karzai wants Pakistan to ensure that the Pakistani Taliban do not join the fight with the Afghan Taliban in the event that peace efforts fail. Nawaz Sharif will try to improve relations

with President Karzai and reach out to the Northern Alliance and other power centers in Afghanistan. Addressing the concerns of Afghan leadership would be a difficult task for the new government.

The peace overtures and offer of talks to the Pakistani Taliban by Nawaz Sharif would be welcomed by the Afghan regime provided these result in their joining the political mainstream and not be diverted to fight side by side with their Afghan counterparts.

From the PML (N) government's side, it will be wary to any excessive strategic space being provided by Afghanistan to India. Already agreements exist whereby the Indian military is providing training and supplying weapon systems for the Afghan security forces. Despite the restricted space for maneuver, the new government will make serious efforts at improving relations with Afghanistan.

At a time when U.S. forces are withdrawing from Afghanistan, relations with it acquire special significance. The use of drones will be a major irritant. The policy on drones announced recently by President Obama restricts its use worldwide with the exception of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Despite protests from our political leadership, drone strikes in the tribal region will continue during the withdrawal phase from Afghanistan to keep pressure on the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda residing in the sanctuaries of the tribal region. The responsibility of their use will rest with the CIA. It is possible that the frequency of strikes may be reduced to partially mollify the political leadership, but will not completely stop.

Pakistan will have to come up with a more holistic approach towards dealing with the TTP. Nawaz Sharif opposes the use of drones and is in favor of dialogue with

the Taliban. If Washington were to accede to Pakistan's demand on drones, which of course is unlikely, and the government engages in dialogue with the TTP unconditionally, it would be giving them complete freedom to expand and consolidate their position.

The ability of Pakistan to provide safe passage to weapons and equipment of U.S. and NATO forces during the withdrawal phase will be an important factor in building confidence and trust with these countries.

The U.S. also expects that the Pakistan army undertake military operations in North Waziristan against the Haqqani network but of late has been restrained in pressing on this demand in public. Unless Pakistan regains control over these ungoverned areas, the relationship with the U.S. and Afghanistan will remain tense and unpredictable. The sanctuaries in North Waziristan and other parts of the tribal region have become the haven of terrorists and criminals that are destabilizing the country and are a threat to its neighbors. No responsible government can afford to ignore these hard realities.

The new government will have to effectively address these issues if it wants to sustain the support of its people and regain credibility abroad. ■

Talat Masood is a retired Lieutenant General of the Pakistan Army Corps of Engineers. General Masood holds a Masters degree in Defense and Strategic Studies and has also served as a visiting fellow at the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. He was a consultant for the leading U.S. defense manufacturer United Defense Limited Partnership (UDLP) for five years. He currently writes on national security, weapons proliferation, and has been covering Pakistan and India's nuclear program.



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The clock has turned full circle and fourteen years after having been unceremoniously deposed and exiled, Mian Nawaz Sharif has assumed the mantle of power. During his previous rule as Prime Minister, Sharif had an uneasy relationship with the military. He sacked three services chiefs, was forced to play along the Kargil misadventure, ultimately swallowing the bitter pill of approaching the US President to mediate a ceasefire. Unfortunately, when he chose to sack his own handpicked Army Chief in an unconstitutional manner on October 12, 1999, attempting to replace him with Lieutenant General Ziauddin Butt at the whims of his father, “Abba Jee”, he paid the ultimate price of being unseated and suffered incarceration.

Mian Sahib has been bitter in expressing his disdain for the Army but he will have to behave like an elderly statesman after becoming the chief executive of Pakistan. The circumstances have changed exponentially since his previous term. The country is embroiled in a deadly war on terror (WoT), which has taken a heavy toll of human life and there have been doubts as to the ownership of the war. So far the political dispensation had delegated the responsibility of executing the WoT to the military. In his historic address on “*Yum-e-Shuhada*” (April 30, 2013), General Kayani, the current Army Chief, who is serving an extended second term, had announced that the WoT is Pakistan’s war and must be fought to the logical end. Mian Sahib made major promises in his election campaign about extricating Pakistan from the WoT, re-ascertaining Pakistan’s sovereignty and bringing Pak-U.S. relations on



Friends

an even keel. The scarlet thread here is restoring the civil-military balance in favor of the civilian dispensation.

Even before he took oath of the premiership, Mian Sahib received

a three-hour briefing from the Army Chief on the ongoing WoT and military matters. Nawaz praised the role of the army in strengthening democracy and providing security during the elections. The PML-N



or Foes?

What dynamics will the new Prime Minister develop with the military forces and what challenges will he face?

By S. M. Hali

president also presented the National Charter to General Kayani, who gave the former assurance of his full cooperation. This was the first meeting between General Kayani and Sharif since the PML-N emerged victorious in the May 11 general elections.

While pursuing his avowed goal of restoring civil-military relations, Mian Nawaz Sharif will be plagued by a number of pitfalls.

First, he will have to curb the urge of immediately clipping the wings of the military as General Kayani has enjoyed unprecedented powers for nearly six years. In 2012, Forbes magazine named him the 28th most powerful person in the world. Fortunately, for Mian Sahib, General Kayani's term of office expires on November 28, 2013. There may be pressures on him to extend General Kayani's term of office at least till 2014 end, when the U.S. and NATO forces withdraw from Afghanistan, but Sharif should desist from this. In his nomination of Kayani's successor, the PM should avoid repeating his previous mistake when he appointed General Pervez Musharraf, sacrificing seniority and merit to a supposedly benign personality and the apolitical background of Musharraf.

During the election campaign, Nawaz Sharif claimed that after becoming PM, he will be the army chief's "boss" while General Kayani would be replaced by the next "senior-most" general when he retires in November. If we go by Mian Sahib's words, the current Army seniority list reveal Lieutenant Generals Muhammad Haroon Aslam and Rashid Mahmood as being the senior most. In the beginning of the current calendar year Lt Gen. Muhammad Haroon Aslam, who had

been serving as Corps Commander Bahawalpur, was given the charge as Chief of Logistics at GHQ and Lt Gen. Rashid Mahmood was appointed as the Chief of General Staff (CGS), which is the senior most position in the army after the COAS. It is among the most important and coveted positions within the military, since the CGS is the institution's operations and intelligence head. Both are due to retire on 9 April 2014.

At present, the Pakistan Army has 2 full generals, 23 lieutenant generals and around 160 major generals. Seven lieutenant generals, including Lieutenant General Raheel Sharif, Inspector General Training and Evaluation (IGT&E), GHQ, Lieutenant General Tariq Khan, Commander, I Corps, Mangla, Lieutenant General Muhammad Zaheerul Islam, DG Inter-Services Intelligence (DG ISI), Lieutenant General Salim Nawaz, Inspector General Armaments (IGA), GHQ, Lieutenant General Khalid Rabbani, Commander, XI Corps, Peshawar, Lieutenant General Muzammil Hussain, Commander, XXX Corps, Gujranwala and Lieutenant General Sajjad Ghani, Quarter-Master General (QMG), GHQ, are due to retire on 1 October 2014 while General Khalid Shameem Wyne, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) is also due to retire on 6 October 2013 and a suitable replacement from one of the three Services is mandatory.

Once Mian Sahib has nominated the new Army Chief, he should make sure that the incumbent remains subservient to the civilian leadership as the constitution of Pakistan requires.

The second challenge that Mian Sahib faces is the case of General Pervez Musharraf. The shoe is now

on the other foot. It is the General, who is currently incarcerated and facing trials while Mian Sahib is back at the helm of affairs. He will have to be magnanimous as most of the cases against the General are trumped up and flimsy. It would be befitting to let the judiciary give General Musharraf a fair trial and drop the cases if they have no substance.

The third challenge will emerge when Mian Sahib attempts to restore better relations with India. The Pakistan Army, whose *raison d'être* is maintaining vigil against an Indian threat, will be wary and may oppose peace overtures. Mian Sahib needs to strike a meaningful balance between the need to normalize relations and war preparedness. After all India's new war doctrine "Cold Start" is Pakistan-specific. In the recent past, Indian forces have upped the ante across the Line of Control, violating it on numerous occasions and despite claims to the contrary, remain poised in a hostile posture towards Pakistan.

Overall, Mian Nawaz Sharif will have to restrain his natural impetuosity to dominate the military and call the shots in daily affairs. He would be best advised to keep the military in its rightful place, respect its professional competence and not interfere in its working. After all, the military is a pillar of the state and should be a source of strength to the elected government and not be allowed to become its Achilles' heel. ■

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.



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Divided but United

With Nawaz Sharif back in power, Pakistan needs to stand united despite ethnic and political differences.

By Fakhar Ahmed

During the last sixty five years of independence, Pakistan has fought three wars with India, suffered 30 years of military rule, faced feudal-biased democracies, endured the fall of East Pakistan and the rise of Bangladesh, survived some of the severest floods and earthquakes in history, and handled international conspiracies. At present, the country faces the worst economic, political, security and energy crisis; has to reach a consensus over Kashmir and deal with a combustible situation brewing up in Afghanistan. Despite a torrent of such calamities, the nation has survived.

Following independence on August 14, 1947, the influential lobby consisting of local feudal lords and the upper class that rendered their support to the British Colonial empire in the sub-continent, became a part of Pakistani politics. India, however, ensured that the land holdings and feudal estates were cut to size for its own good. The 2013 general elections in Pakistan saw the rise of a similar lobby of feudal and upper class actors. With the dust settling on May 11, Nawaz Sharif and the Pakistan Muslim League (N) emerged victorious. The unsettled question of being elected based on regional, ethnic and respective provincial vote count despite a grave possi-

bility of rigging of the elections cannot be ruled out. The smaller provinces of Sindh, KPK, and Balochistan are facing a wave of terrorism and violence, and are left out on the national front. Akin to the 2013 elections, the elections in the 70s also created a political divide between the political groups of East and West Pakistan, hence fueling the separation of West Pakistan and leading to the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state.

Today, the smaller provinces express their dissatisfaction over the unequal distribution of their political rights. Where the Urdu speaking community of urban Sindh made tremendous sacrifices and migrated from India to Pakistan in 1947, in Balochistan, tribal leaders led Baloch nationalist's parties to believe that their basic rights as citizens and political freedom are being suppressed. Pakistan's largest province, Punjab, has been subjugating the smaller provinces over the years. A similar situation exists in areas of rural Sindh where the majority voted for feudal lords. Political leaders from Punjab believe that the political parties in Sindh and Balochistan possess armed groups and provide safe havens to miscreants for their political existence.

The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which neighbors Afghanistan, has its own plethora of problems and is

a victim of terrorism. The province largely voted for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led by Imran Khan, who has made lofty promises to change Pakistan's status quo. Extremist groups continue to exist and function along the porous borders between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The nation stands divided yet united. The newly elected democratic government of Pakistan will have to face serious challenges during its first 100 days in power. From a rotten economy and a corrupt political system to a looming energy crisis and permeating terrorism, the new government faces an uphill battle.

With international forces gearing up to withdraw troops from Afghanistan in 2014, the situation validates that influential and international players supported the long military tenures in Pakistan, and many foreign interest groups continue to play an active role in Pakistani politics. The country has a long way to go before it can attain political maturity, sovereignty in foreign policy, or a sustainable economy. Interestingly enough, Western democracies supported General Zia ul Haq when they wanted the Taliban and the Mujahideen to fight against the Russian invasion in Afghanistan. Similarly, international democracies supported General Pervez Mushar-



raf when they planned to conduct the War on Terror in Afghanistan, against the Al-Qaida. Even though Pakistan tends to benefit from a 7% to 8% GDP growth rate under military regimes, it is often during the same time that western powers suddenly value the tenets of democracy and exert pressure for power to be handed over to feudal and rich influential ‘democrats’ who, with few exceptions, have no professional competence of good governance. It is no surprise then that the country often falls at the brink of going bankrupt during democratic regimes.

Today nearly 34% of Pakistan’s population is living below the poverty line as defined by international standards; more than 5 million children do not go to school; lack of potable water, power shortages, and an ever increasing population is making the country a victim of social injustice, bad governance, and corruption. Thousands of mothers die each year while giving birth and thousands of children die of basic illnesses due to lack of proper health facilities.

Unfortunately in Pakistan, the election-based democratic mechanism and state machinery is beyond the reach of a professionally competent, middle class, honest leader. The process to elect parliamentarians in Pakistan is managed by the Election Commission of Pakistan but the lower cadres of the judiciary and teachers from the state’s education department manage the election process. These officials depend on feudal lords and influential groups to receive promotions and transfers. Therefore, they are unable to control rigging, even if no corruption comes into account. However, with the influence of a strong judiciary and a vibrant electronic, digi-

tal and social media, the dynamics of the democratic electoral process in Pakistan have changed.

It is imperative that power brokers and authorities make decisions on merit and understand public perception, as Pakistan can no longer sustain feudalism, a single province-led democracy or a military rule. The power brokers of Pakistan view the emergence of Imran Khan as a popular leader but not as an experienced or mature politician who can address Pakistan’s current turmoil. Khan’s dialogue-based strategy to tackle the war on terror failed to impress the Pakistan military or certain Western interest groups who have been embroiled in this war for over a decade. Pakistanis are waiting to see if Imran Khan can deliver in KPK, which will prove to be the first test of his campaign rhetoric.

Karachi, generating more than 65% revenue for Pakistan, has been at the center of Pakistani politics, held staunchly by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). MQM, by virtue of powerful but small numbers of parliamentarians, has to co-exist and form an alliance with the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) that previously had a stronghold in Sindh but conceded defeat in the 2013 elections because of its poor performance.

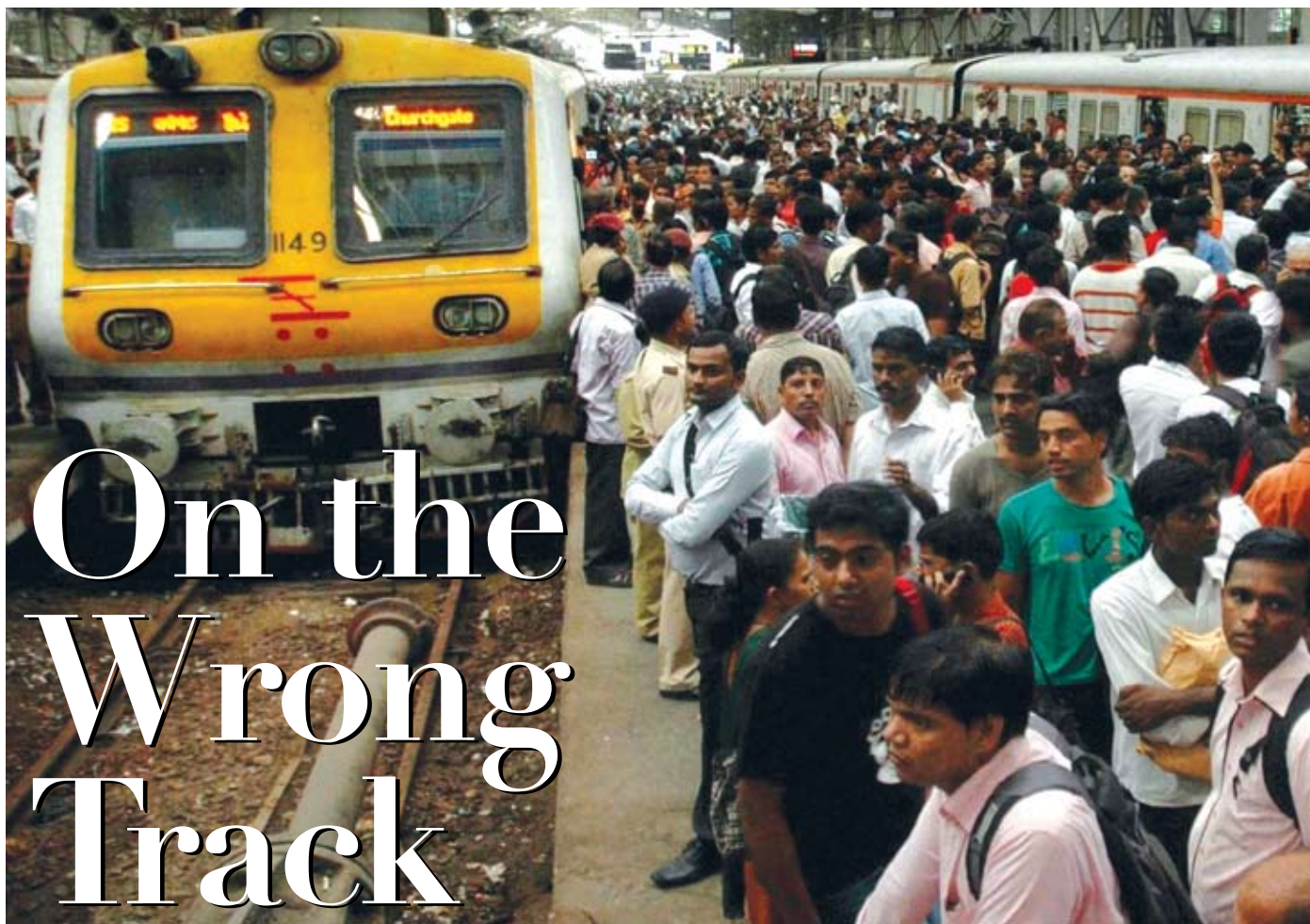
Nawaz Sharif is the first prime minister in Pakistan to take office for a third time and has formed his cabinet with a majority of politicians belonging to Punjab along with some old faces claiming to have professional credentials but having failed to deliver in the past.

Pakistan’s three major institutions: the military, the judiciary and the media, have an almost larger than life in-

fluence over the state of affairs and the ruling party has to carefully select its future course of action. A large group of intellectuals in Pakistan are temporarily willing to support Nawaz Sharif’s government for the time being; closely monitoring his performance depending on the first 100 days of the new government.

A fierce, independent and free media has allowed for political maturity and is adamant to uncover corruption, missteps and injustices conducted by the new government. Shahbaz Sharif, the current third time elected Chief Minister of Punjab has a better image for being a good administrator and illustrates the capacity to deliver. This time, however, the delivery has to benefit across the board and not the pro-government Punjabi elements alone. The new government will also have to show supreme leadership with regard to two new avenues of economic development; firstly with China, to manage and develop the Gwadar port and secondly, to focus on the Iran Pakistan Gas Pipeline project which the West continues to oppose. Another key issue is to manage the strategy on the War on Terror and define the role, which Pakistan will assume in the region. Political analysts claim that Nawaz Sharif is a changed man and is expected to handle things in a more mature fashion. This makes the first 100 days crucial for his leadership. Sharif has gathered enough numbers in Parliament to enjoy power but power has to support provincial autonomies and respect ethnicities so that Pakistan stands united. **S**

Fakhar Ahmed is a seasoned columnist who has been contributing to various national and regional publications.



On the Wrong Track

India is at the verge of becoming a global economic power. Though already an influential South Asian country, its railway sector remains in dire straits.

By Sijal Fawad

Independent research studies show that the Indian Railways provide employment to 1.54 million people and carry 30 million passengers a day. It is also true that the railway system is one of the most dangerous in the world – a significant number of rail accidents occur every year and there are close to 15,000 deaths on railway tracks alone because of the lack of pedestrian crossings.

Loss of human lives is just one aspect of the dire straits that India's railway system is in; there's also the loss of millions of rupees that the state-run enterprise incurs in compensations, repair work and hefty maintenance

charges due to inefficiency. For a transport system serving the second most populous country in the world, mismanagement and operational inefficiencies are not just a menace but a reality that the citizens of the country have to bear the brunt of.

The system desperately needs some modernization. Locomotives running on out-dated components are fuel-inefficient, leading to significant losses. About 15 percent of the railway system's annual working expenditures are spent on diesel, which is getting pricier by the day. Paying so much on fuel expenses alone, the Indian railways could benefit from even a 10

percent reduction in diesel consumption which could save about Rs10 billion (Rs1000 crores) every year.

But it is the system's overall safety that leaves a lot to be desired. From unmanned railway crossings to unanticipated fire accidents, there's something or the other leading to countless deaths that can be avoided by having a workable safety mechanism. Influential politicians further deteriorate the flailing sector. Railways ministers have been accused of corrupt practices and misusing the allocated funds for the sector. Only last month, Indian Railways Minister, Pawan Kumar Bansal resigned from his position for alleg-



edly accepting Rs90 lakhs in bribery from a senior railway officer.

Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP) had become the mainstay of the Indian government for rescuing one of the world's largest railway systems. However the responses from private players have been rather lukewarm. The R3i (Railway Infrastructure Investment Initiative) policy had been initiated a few years back, but bureaucratic bottlenecks and complex legal procedures acted as deterrents for many private participants. The Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) project was also initiated to enable better management of higher freight volumes, as well as to improve energy efficiency as far as transport of goods and trade goes. However, the progress on this front has been tardy at best. This year's budget also announced the introduction of the Train Protection Warning

System (TPWS), which is more of a warning system rather than a protection system. The TPWS is based on the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), but that the TPWS has malfunctioned in the past says a lot about its efficacy in India. It's also a rather expensive option at a cost of about Rs70 lakhs per km.

Last year in September, a High Level Safety Review Committee was set up to help reduce the occurrence of train accidents. A report by this committee called for setting up pedestrian bridges across railway lines to avoid deaths of people crossing railway lines. "No civilized society can accept such a massacre on their railway system," quoted the Huffington Post, regarding the crossings deaths.

In the wake of grave concerns arising about the dire straits that its railway system is in, India turned to China, seeking some knowledge exchange vis-à-vis the country's recently modernized and expanded railway system. The selection of China as a learning partner becomes even more interesting considering that the country recently dissolved the Ministry of Railways (MOR). The MOR's administrative functions have been transferred to the Ministry of Transport, and the newly formed China Railway Corporation (CRC) will be handling the commercial aspects of running the system.

Just as in the case of India, China's railway system had also fallen prey to corrupt practices and indifference of those in power. The sheer size of the two railways meant that the organizations wielded a lot of power and clout in the government machinery, making them even more susceptible to the nonchalance and self-interest of policymakers. In fact, China's railway system even had its own police force and its own courts. Needless to say, the powerful ministries found a way around any needed government reforms, with the common man suffering the most in the end.

When parallels are being drawn, it is inevitable that the fate of the

Ministry of Railways in India will be questioned. For a country that had been enjoying stupendous economic growth recently, the railway system ought to facilitate further progress rather than hinder that growth. Analysts are pressing that it's time for the Indian Railways (IR) to be freed from the government's chains, as direct government control is affecting both financial and operational efficiency of the organization. Commercially, IR has found a non-conventional competitor in road transport, and to overcome this imbalance, high-speed trains and revival of ignored projects such as the DFC is urgently required. This can be facilitated only if some restructuring that passes on commercial activities to another company sees the light of the day.

The ministry could be split such that planning, policy-making and regulation stay under its control while the new company manages commercial operations such as freight tariffs and passenger fares. Private operators can bid for passenger and freight markets, helping bring competitive efficiency to the system. Similarly, private investment for projects such as high-speed trains should be encouraged to enable better operational efficiency without fiscal concerns for the government.

Overall, any proposed restructuring should follow some basic principles. Firstly, commercial and non-commercial operations should be separated; secondly, competitive bidding needs to be encouraged as far as passenger and freight operations are concerned; and finally, some involvement of the private sector for state-of-the-art projects should see the light of the day.

Even if the ministry follows these principles in some essence, an optimal balance of efficient commercial operations and strategic policymaking could be achieved. **S**

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The Risky Business of Addiction

Afghanistan is infamous for its unending chaos and unchecked poppy production. As international forces gear up to leave, concerns are mounting about escalating ethnic tensions and an ever-expanding drug market in the aftermath.

By Tahera Sajid

The projection of the 2013 report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is that Afghanistan's contribution to the world drug market will be about 92% of the total opium production by 2014. This report, *Afghanistan Opium Risk Assessment 2013*, rightly refers to the trend as a "worrying situation."

Historically speaking, the earliest account of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan was seen around 300 years ago. Over the years, fluctuations of stability in Afghanistan have generally shown corresponding increase and decrease of poppy cultivation trends. After joining the UN in 1946, Afghan King Zahir Shah placed a ban on poppy production temporarily and Afghanistan moved steadily towards prosperity and modernization with extensive economic and technical support from the U.S. in

the 1950s. This lasted till 1979 when the Soviet invasion halted the process. A decade of war claimed heavy loss to life and infrastructure – destroying roads, irrigation canals, food processing factories, cotton gins and fruit markets – and the ensuing chaos ruined major economic activity creating an environment of desperation and crime, ideal for growth and use of opium. As the Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, warring tribal factions fought for control and by 1994 the Taliban had emerged as the dominant force controlling almost 80% of the land. Not much economic or social progress happened during Taliban rule and by 2000, Afghanistan's opium production reached 75% of the world's total. Helmand province in the South took the lead with almost 52% and Nangarhar province with 24% of total opium production





in the country.

In July 2000, Mullah Omar, Afghanistan's de facto head of state, surprisingly placed a ban on opium production. Enforced with strict measures, even threats to life and property, this resulted in unprecedented reduction in poppy cultivation. The UNDCP Donor Mission recorded complete success of the ban and confirmed the result in the Annual Opium Poppy Survey. At the October 2001 session of the UN General Assembly, it was acknowledged that, "...This year's production [2001] is around 185 tons. This is down from the 3300 tons last year [2000], a decrease of over 94 per cent. Compared to the record harvest of 4700 tons two years ago, the decrease is well over 97 per cent."

Later, however, the agencies observed that the ban's real objective was to create an artificial shortage to hike prices of heroin, not eradication. The UNDOC report cautioned, "If Taliban officials were sincere in stopping the production of opium and heroin, then one would expect them to order the destruction of all stocks existing in areas under their control." Although, no hard evidence was found of stockpiling on a large scale, the fears expressed by UNODC were widely shared in the international community. After the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the fall of the Taliban, the warlords and drug dealers once again exploited the chaos and soon enough the opium production rose up to 85%, and has only increased since.

Some reasons for this persistence include the farmers' reliance on what they consider dependable income necessary for survival. The poppy crop pays for all the food their families need, the stalks serve as firewood, its ash is used to make soap and the seeds are utilized for cooking oil. The farmers also lack trust in their government's credibility and ability

to build roads, bridges, and canals, and alternate livelihoods. Officials are accused of letting foreign aid for agricultural projects disappear into corrupt government coffers, and letting the people starve while buying fancy property in Dubai and the U.S. for themselves.

This corruption allegedly reaches the top levels of government, including the President, Hamid Karzai himself. His late half-brother, Wali Ahmed Karzai, was ironically also on CIA payroll (New York Times, July 2009). The report also alleged that

Finding an effective solution to issues like opium production in Afghanistan is a complicated task. As a nation, Afghanistan constitutes a mix of several ethnic, linguistic, and regional groups fighting for control over territory and resources.

President Karzai is reluctant to check drug lords in his political power base in Southern Afghanistan where most of the opium production takes place and Wali Karzai, who was killed in 2011 by a trusted commander presumably over a drug related dispute, was openly accused of eagerly filling in the vacuum created by removal of other drug lords by the U.S. military and the Karzai government.

Finding an effective solution to issues like opium production in Afghanistan is a complicated task. As a nation, Afghanistan constitutes a mix of several ethnic, linguistic, and regional groups fighting for control over territory and resources. The current Afghan government's jurisdiction is largely ineffective outside Kabul. Deep ethnic divisions tear apart the societal fabric, millions are displaced, disabled and struggling to survive, lawlessness is a way of life, no worthwhile educational or healthcare

system stands, and there is a huge dearth of professional, skilled personnel. Hence, there are no short cuts or quick-fix solutions possible in the current scenario. The opium problem cannot be seen as an isolated issue, but rather a part of the larger broken system.

For any program to be successful, it would have to be community based and not seen as being imposed from outside. The government needs to work sincerely and deliver on its promises to build its credibility and help the Afghan people move forward.

The Afghan government will also need all the help it can get from the international community. The world community needs to acknowledge that besides the poverty and corruption factor, it is the demand in the First World that encourages the heroine business; a simple question of supply and demand. The opium benefits the international drug markets more than the producing countries, as acknowledged by U.S. State Department, and quoted by the Voice of America in a 27 February 2004 broadcast, "Afghan heroin sells on the international narcotics market for 100 times the price farmers get for their opium right out of the field." Clearly, eradicating opium production is a collective responsibility. ■

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Tag Trail

The recent factory fire in Bangladesh has once again raised concerns of workers' safety and has sparked the attention of international labor groups to demand accountability from major brands and countries that provide cheap labor.

By Daniah Ishtiaq

On April 24, 2013, family members waited with baited breath outside a pile of rubble, crushed machinery and trapped bodies, some standing for up to seven days to hear news of their loved ones. The rubble is what remained of an eight-story building known as the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh. As emergency services struggled to rescue trapped survivors and pull out the dead, stories emerged regarding the working conditions that were rampant inside the building, comprising five garment factories. Sources stated that large cracks had appeared on the walls the day before and employees had been warned not to work. However, managers forced the workers to continue. This is not the first incident in Bangladesh as factory fires and structural failures have occurred a number of times before. This is, however, considered to be the deadliest building collapse in recent history. The incident has raised international concerns over Bangladesh's ability to ensure worker's safety. Some 1,127 individuals perished that day and nearly 2,500 were injured.

The Bangladesh government's enforcement of both labor and safety laws is weak, bordering on non-existent. Ali Ahmed Khan, the head of the Bangladesh Fire Service & Civil Defense, has stated that the upper four

floors of the Rana Plaza had been built without a permit, while Masood Reza, the architect stated that the structure was not meant to house factories. Two of the five Bangladeshi factories that were in the building had cleared an audit by the Business Social Compliance Initiative, set up a decade ago by the Brussels-based Foreign Trade Association, an entity comprising well-known retailers such as Hugo Boss and Adidas. The BSCI stated that its auditors are not building engineers and did not take the state of the edifice into account when they conducted the checks. While they agreed that they can contribute to safety, they were of the opinion that it is up to local authorities to ensure that construction and infrastructure are safe.

Within hours of the collapse, the United Nations offered its assistance to send expert rescue teams with dogs, micro-cameras and other equipment to the site but Dhaka authorities promptly refused the offer. It later also came to light that the government had rejected offers of international search and rescue assistance, including a formal offer of sending a team of specialists from Britain. International authorities maintain that the Bangladeshi government was slow to respond to their repeated offers before putting them down.

In a country like Bangladesh, the

substandard working environment that garment factory workers are confronted with is the dark side of the globalization success story. Bangladesh has become one of the world's leading exporters of clothing and has thereby generated millions of jobs. These have, in turn provided nutrition, housing and education for some of the poorest people on earth. The industry has been refashioned and engineered in a way that suits the sourcing model of international business which labor advocates call profoundly exploitative, as it courts foreign investors with some of the world's cheapest skilled workers.

What Bangladesh needs to realize is that soon the tag of 'Made in Bangladesh' may signify labor exploitation to the outside world and for a country heavily dependent on such exports, this needs to be taken with a sense of foreboding. This is not to say that businesses will divert their resources to countries with labor safety laws but they may be inclined to shift to countries with cheap production models similar to Bangladesh so that their brand names are not dragged into dirt due to industrial problems.

Regardless of the lack of action on the government's part, the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) in Bangladesh recently held a press conference in Dhaka to mark the one



month anniversary of the collapse of the building which killed mostly female garment workers as well as the fire that struck the Tazreen factory killing 123 workers. The president of the trade union, Amirul Haque Amin laid out the trade unions' demands in the aftermath of the disaster and called on international brands to share the

responsibility for building safer workplaces. The Union's opinion is that the onus of such tragedies does not only lie on the government and the factory owners but international stakeholders as well. Demands have been made to the international brands and retailers that source from the factories involved in the disasters. It was stated that ev-

ery company that bought from the Tazreen factory and the other factories in the Rana Plaza must provide full compensation for lost earnings to the injured and the families of those who died. Wal-Mart and Gap were singled out during the conference for their failure to sign the Bangladesh Safety Accord to ensure safety for workers



across Bangladesh.

Amidst the reverberations of the Rana Plaza disaster, international labels are scrambling to protect their reputations, devoting substantial energy and time to the cause. Certain major European brands pledged to abide by a legally binding package of factory standards aimed at improving

workplace safety in Bangladesh. This is the effort that Walmart has declined to participate in while announcing its own program to boost worker safety.

If Bangladesh continues to be lax about its safety measures, the number of unsafe workers will only grow rendering a lot of families desolate. As oppressive as the conditions may

seem, for many laborers the garment business is their only source of income and survival and they would rather see the industry stay and raise its standards than be shut down altogether. **S**

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Forging Bilateral Relations

Sri Lanka and India, two strong South Asian neighbors with a mutual history, are adamant to strengthen bilateral ties for more than one reason.

By Asma Siddiqui



Sri Lanka's Economic Development Minister Basil Rajapaksa (standing second from left) and Indian High Commissioner, Ashok K. Kantha (standing third from left) witness the signing ceremony that launched an Indian-funded housing project in Sri Lanka.

In May 2013, Indian High Commissioner, Ashok K. Kantha and Sri Lankan Economic Development Minister, Basil Rajapaksa launched an Indian-funded housing project in Sri Lanka's predominantly Tamil Eastern Province. The initiative calls for the construction of 4,000 housing units.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh first announced the housing project during Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's state visit to India in June 2010. The announcement

of this project is part of India's overall commitment to build 50,000 houses in Sri Lanka at a cost of approximately US\$270 million; the largest investment by the Government of India abroad. 12,000 homes have already been built, with an additional 10,000 to be completed by the end of the year.

In earlier times when communication between countries was minimal, the only significant foreign impact in Sri Lanka was that of India. Of course

the greatest gift to Sri Lanka from India was Buddhism, which consequently became the fountainhead of Sinhalese literature.

The profound cultural influence of India on Sri Lanka has been underpinned by political and economic links. The Sri Lankan Independence movement drew inspiration to a certain extent from the Indian Independence movement. It was mainly as a consequence of India's freedom struggle that the less militant Sri Lanka won its independence. In the sphere of economics, India is currently Sri Lanka's biggest trading partner and major investor. In addition to normal trade, a Free Trade Agreement exists between the two countries. The interaction between India and Sri Lanka in every sphere – cultural, economic and political – is now more intense than ever before, while at the same time both countries are more open to influences from other countries as well.

But these commonalities have not managed to evaporate the differences. From 1983 to 2009, Sri Lanka was torn apart by a bloody civil war, which saw the government fight the Tamil Tigers rebel group. The conflict broke out after Tamil nationalists decided to create an independent state



in the northeast of the island, eventually turning into an ethnic clash that left tens of thousands of people dead and more than 200,000 internally displaced. Since the civil war ended in 2009, there is severe loathing for India. The Sinhalese are angry with India for funding and training the Tamil Tigers in their infancy while the Tamils are angry that India did not intervene to stop the massacre.

India's offering of expertise on constitutional, legal and federal institutional governance to Sri Lanka is not viewed with much importance. The Tamil Nadu factor in the Government of India's decision-making process has already served to constrain Sri Lanka's movement. It is only in the areas of security and cultural exchanges as well as in the economic domain involving the enhancement of entrepreneurial and manufacturing skills, where the merging of Indian and Sri Lankan interests can be possible and bilateral relations be made strong.

India must strive to bring about a sustainable trade balance that is not adverse to Sri Lanka. According to the Ministry of Finance and Planning's Ex-

ternal Resources Department's 2012 'Global Partnership Towards Development' report, India was the second largest development aid giver to Sri Lanka, providing over \$700 million to the island nation. Even as the anti-Sri Lanka mood in Tamil Nadu intensifies, the Center has increased its annual grant to the Sri Lankan government in the Union Budget. The allocation has gone up to Rs 500 crore for 2013-2014 from Rs 290 crore last year.

The Indian Budget has allocated Rs 5,550 crore as aid for foreign governments and organizations. The grants for Sri Lanka are meant to assist Tamils but parties in Tamil Nadu have accused the government there of diverting the Indian aid for other purposes. In May 2013, in a bid to enhance access to the former war-torn north, the Sri Lankan government opened the first phase of a \$650 million northern railway project after 30 years of suspension. While inaugurating the service, Minister for Economic Development, Basil Rajapaksa, was of the opinion that India had supported Sri Lanka at every stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction of north Sri Lanka.

Railway services to the north were suspended in 1983 after the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) blew up key railway bridges connecting the northern peninsula to the mainland. This created civil unrest in the country. Since the war ended in 2009, the Sri Lankan government has set in motion plans to reconnect the north via rail and invited assistance from foreign countries. In 2010, the Indian government agreed to fund the project. The project is being executed by the Indian Railway Ministry's IRCON International Limited to restore the 252 km-railway line that would connect different parts of the country.

With these ongoing projects aided by India there is an increased chance of restoring the common bond that the two countries shared with each other. India needs to invest further while Sri Lanka should genuinely cooperate. Only with close coordination can the two countries solve their mutual problems and create a better future and good relations in times to come. ■

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The Growing Political Divide



Although Nepal has become a democratic country, its internal political crisis and indecision to hold elections places it in jeopardy in terms of political stability.

By Dr. Moonis Ahmar

Nepal is standing at a political crossroad, following years of political crisis, instability and popular discontent. Elections for the constituent assembly, which were scheduled several times, had to be postponed because of a lack of consensus among Nepal's major political parties. As a result, Nepal, in the post-monarchical period, has democratized its institutions to provide good governance to its people and is currently facing serious political upheaval in view of deep rooted political and ethnic divide in the country.

Sandwiched between the two giants, China and India, and with a population of 26 million, Nepal has

nearly 100 ethnic groups and castes. The violent civil war that lasted from 1996-2006 between the Maoists and the security forces loyal to the monarchy killed more than 13,000 people. In November 2006, the Nepalese government and the Maoists signed a comprehensive peace accord to deal with issues emanating after the demise of monarchy.

The abolishment of monarchy by the Nepalese Constituent Assembly in May 2008 and the assumption of power by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) in April 2008 transformed the political landscape of Nepal. For nearly a year, CPN-M remained in power under the premiership of Puspa

Kamal Dahal also known as 'Prachanda.' On May 4, 2009, Prachanda resigned from his post after developing differences with the President over the sacking of the Army chief. The split in CPN-M and the subsequent political crisis over holding elections for the constituent assembly further galvanized political schism in the country with no political party in a position to provide a viable road map for a smooth democratic process. The first democratic elections in Nepal for a constituent assembly were held on April 10, 2008 in which the CPN-M emerged as the single largest party followed by the Nepali Congress Party and Communist Party of Nepal (Marx-

ist-Leninist) respectively. Unfortunately, the assembly failed to formulate a constitution and elections to elect a new constituent assembly were postponed twice.

Four major factors are widening the political divide in Nepal. First is the growing identity crisis in Nepal along ethnic lines as there are around 100 ethnic groups and sub-groups in Nepal. A major ethnic flash point in Nepal is the country's southern region bordering India, called Terai, where the Madeshi people resent the domination of Brahmins and those representing 'hill' districts. Second, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), a breakaway faction of United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), has refused to register as a party with the Nepali Election Commission arguing that it cannot contest in the elections under prevailing conditions. CPN-M has a sizeable following and its boycott from the elections may further deepen Nepal's political predicament. Third, the growing Hindu extremism in Nepal, influenced by Shiv Sena and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has resulted in attacks on the Muslim community, which comprises 4% of the total population. Despite being a predominantly Hindu state, Nepal for centuries followed moderate and tolerant values. Fourth, the division of Nepal along caste lines with the upper caste (Brahmins) still holding the reins of power contributes to the deepening social divide within the country.

Following the fall of the monarchy, the non-Brahman people, who constitute the majority in Nepal, demanded an end to centuries of caste-based exploitation. Interestingly, the Maoists, who are waging the struggle for a classless society in Nepal, are in a paradoxical situation; they are struggling for a caste free Nepal but their leadership is primarily from the

Brahmin caste. It is this type of a dichotomy which has put a question mark as far as the Maoists struggle for a people's rule is concerned.

According to sources, Nepal's Election Commission has registered 135 political parties for the election of a new Constituent Assembly which is overdue and is expected to take place in the near future. Out of these 135 political parties, 76 are new and had not participated in the 2008 constituent assembly elections. In the 2008 elections of constituent assembly, however, 84 parties had applied for registration but only 74 parties were registered, 54 parties took part in the 2008 elections and 25 were elected into the constituent assembly. As per the election laws, parties gaining 1% of the total cast votes would get a seat in the constituent assembly under the proportional representation system. The reason for continued delays in holding elections for the constituent assembly is twofold. First, Nepal is passing through a critical and transitory phase because of centuries of monarchical rule and the absence of a viable democratic process. Basic issues that have surfaced include the question of who should be allowed to contest elections; whether there should be a caretaker government to supervise elections and the process of electing a new prime minister.

Second is the external factor hindering Nepal's political process. The Maoists have accused New Delhi of pursuing an anti-Maoist approach because of its fear that Chinese influence in Nepal may surge in case the Maoists assume power. Since long, Nepal faces the problem of Sino-Indian ambitions to bring the landlocked Himalayan country under New Delhi's influence. India's tilt in favor of Nepali Congress Party is considered a clear evidence of India's age-old political

ambitions in Nepal. Furthermore, many Nepali circles lament that their country has enormous water resources but is facing serious energy shortfalls because of New Delhi's lack of support to generate electricity from hydel power plants. Nepal has the potential to generate around 50,000 megawatts of electricity from its water resources but is unable to achieve its targets because of lack of funds and non-cooperation from its powerful southern neighbor.

Since 1996, Nepal's political elite has failed to forge a consensus on holding general elections, formulating a constitution, maintaining the rule of law, and running the affairs of the government in a productive fashion. Four major political parties of Nepal, the Nepali Congress Party, Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist), Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), and *Madhesi Jana Adhikar Forum Democratic*, are unable to hold mutual consultation to break the political impasse as far as holding elections for constituent assembly are concerned. Since Nepal lacks the experience of a functional democracy, its civil society is not that assertive. Furthermore, the lack of ownership for the country and its major unresolved issues is evident among the major stakeholders, both political and non-political.

In order to pull Nepal out of its political quandary, there is an urgent need to pursue a 'multi-stakeholder' approach in which political parties, the Election Commission, the President, civil society groups and the military need to sit together and reach a consensus to bring Nepal out of its years of political impasse. ■

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Fate in Balance

The September 2013 elections in the Maldives will make or break the country which has already been struggling to embrace democracy for a long time.

By Huzaima Bukhari & Dr. Ikramul Haq

"Fairness at a minimum requires a level playing field. Thus, the existing culture of misuse of public resources by the incumbency to their electoral advantage must stop"

-- Pre-election Report by Transparency Maldives

"Our society is generally very moderate. That's why they elected me. That's why they want to elect me again. [The Islamists] contested us in a parliamentary election and did not get a single seat. They contested us in local council elections and did not get a single seat. But after the coup they have three cabinet ministers"

-- Maldivian ex-President Mohamed Nasheed

Despite uncertainty, a growing influence of radical elements and interference from foreign powers, the Maldivians are determined to choose a President in the forthcoming elections, to be held on 7 September 2013. These elections promise much hope. Yet the realization of this hope hinges on holding free and fair elections of which arise serious question marks.

A detailed pre-election report released by Transparency Maldives says, "assuring" freedom for the upcoming elections requires sustaining an electoral environment for voters to freely choose a president without fear, intimidation, and undue influence, but through the opportunities to fully exercise freedom of expression, association and assembly."

Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Af-

fairs of the United Nations, during his recent three day visit to the Maldives, encouraged all stakeholders to ensure conditions for free, fair, inclusive, credible and non-violent elections. Multi-party presidential elections were held in the Maldives for the first time in 2008, ending 30 years of one-party rule. Mohamed Nasheed, who was elected in those polls, resigned in February 2012 in contested circumstances and was succeeded by his former deputy, Waheed Hassan. The Government under Waheed set up a 'National Commission of Inquiry' to probe the events leading to the regime change. The report released last August contradicted Nasheed's claim of a coup conducted against him. However the report, and later Nasheed's arrest and trial cast a dark shadow on the impartiality of the judiciary and the holding of free and fair elections in the tiny island. The

UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Gabriela Knaul, found during her visit to the country in February this year that "judicial officials are not sufficiently independent from external pressures and interferences."

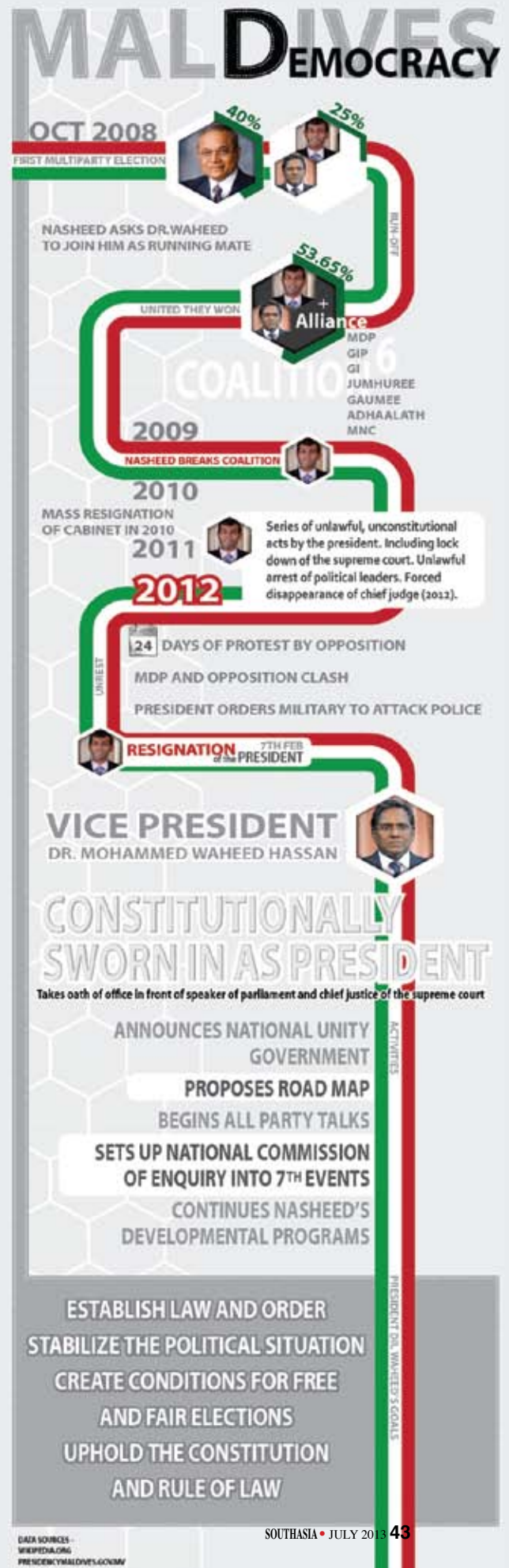
In February 2013, in the wake of continued political turmoil, Nasheed took refuge in the Indian High Commission for about two weeks after a court ordered his arrest for failing to appear to face charges of abuse of power. As a result of a deal brokered by India, Nasheed left the Indian sanctuary on 23 February 2013 – was arrested and brought to court to face trial a fortnight later on 6 March 2013. If convicted, Nasheed faces disqualification from the presidential polls, which will further give credibility to his allegation that the trial against him is "politically motivated."

Apart from the myriad of internal political tussles and polarization plaguing the Maldives, foreign states are perpetually interfering in domestic politics. India and the United States share concern about the growing Chinese influence in the region. In 2011, China announced setting up its embassy in Male amid growing military and economic ties. Western democracies are also worried about the growing influence of Salafist parties such as the *Adhaalath* Party, coinciding with the rising radicalization of the island nation. This became evident when a bomb attack in Male wounded 12 Western tourists in September 2007 followed by a suicide attack in May 2009 on the headquarters of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Lahore by Ali Jaleel, a Maldivian member of Al-Qaeda. Close on the heels of that attack, Pakistani troops arrested nine Al-Qaeda operatives at a training camp in South Waziristan in 2010, all of whom turned out to be Maldivian citizens. This explains why USA, EU, India, China and other South Asian nations are voicing loud support for elections in the Maldives.

The U.S., EU and India are pressurizing the Waheed government not to bar Nasheed from contesting the September elections as it would further polarise and radicalise the nation. India has already taken a strong stance towards the Maldivian government by cancelling a \$500 million contract awarded to a consortium led by Indian firm GMR to modernize and operate Male's international airport. The growing anti-Indian sentiments promoted by Islamist parties such as the *Adhaalath* Party, allied to Waheed's Gaumee Ithihaad Party (GIP), is a real cause of concern for New Delhi. The U.S. has provided \$2.5 million "for participation in democracy", but analysts claim that the real aim is to promote moderate elements. Both the U.S. and EU consider Nasheed's participation imperative to free and fair elections -- the former president predicts the country will be plunged into violence and political turmoil if he is prevented from standing in elections. Nasheed, a human rights campaigner, gained global attention for his activism on the issue of global warming during his tenure in office. He held a cabinet meeting underwater in diving gear to dramatise the threat posed to the low-lying Maldives by rising sea levels.

The uncertain scenario of elections in the Maldives is aptly explained by Transparency Maldives observing that "democracy consolidation is impossible under a context where legitimacy [of the government] is contested by a substantial segment of the population. Thus, key to successfully addressing the ongoing legitimating crisis is holding elections in which candidates of all major political parties are free to contest". Time will only tell whether this materializes or the Maldives plunges into further political turmoil. ■

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Perils of Good Diplomacy

Political reforms have come at the cost of severe human rights violations in Myanmar. How long can the international community ignore such atrocities in the favor of engaged diplomatic ties?

By Taha Kehar

Diplomatic relations between Myanmar and the U.S. were established in 1947. Despite an initial eagerness to maintain strong bilateral ties, both countries have failed to demonstrate a consistent focus on international diplomacy. Attempts to consolidate political relations have been exacerbated by General Ne Win's coup that was geared to-

ward a socialist agenda and economic isolation. However, over the last two years, a grave lacuna in foreign policy has been filled through commendable political and economic reforms. The release of political prisoners such as Aung Sun Suu Kyi is a glaring testament of the restoration of democracy in Myanmar.

Recognizing these efforts to im-

prove relations, President Obama welcomed former military commander and President Thein Sein to the White House for bilateral talks on May 20, 2013. Thein Sein is the first Burmese politician to visit the White House since 1966. The growing improvement in political leadership in Myanmar was the key talking point in favor of strengthening ties between

the two countries. President Obama commended the Burmese President for a commitment towards democracy. However, he expressed concerns about the ethnic tensions and discrimination against Muslims in the region. What is particularly interesting to note is Obama's decision to refer to the country as Myanmar - the name adopted by its military rulers in 1989 - rather than Burma. While this move stands the risk of condoning the long-standing wave of militancy and ethnic strife, it also serves as recognition of the country's turbulent political history.

Democratic principles can only be fostered if a progressive attitude is adopted and a coherent framework of political and social reforms is introduced. Thein Sein acknowledged the numerous challenges faced by the administration to facilitate a smooth transition towards democracy. Changes to any democratic systems involve risk-taking and a constant process of trial and error.

Although the Burmese administration can be given the benefit of the doubt, this is a carefully disguised excuse for discrepancies in maintaining good governance. The lengthy process of democratic change cannot justify the human rights violations triggered by an unpredictable and volatile political climate. Prolonged ceasefires with the Karen ethnic minority and the liberty given to the army to attack ethnic rebels in Kachin demonstrate the reluctance of the current administration to induce positive change. The road towards democracy is the cornerstone for strengthening foreign relations between the U.S. and Myanmar. If the Burmese administration were to compromise on this fundamental political principle, no amount of good diplomacy will succeed in restoring bilateral ties.

President Thein Sein's visit to the U.S. serves as a beacon of hope in the South Asian context. Public opinion in the West deems South Asia to be a volatile region. A commitment

to engender democratic values into a region dominated by ethnic violence will encourage peace-making initiatives and put an end to political uncertainty.

President Obama's decision to rehabilitate Myanmar has, however, been criticized as a reckless step. The country has witnessed several decades of military rule and will need time to climb out of its predicament. International groups and human rights activists have voiced reservations about the extent to which ethnic cleansing against Muslims in Myanmar will come to a halt. Over 40 Muslims were killed in central Myanmar, only in the last month. Political upheavals between Buddhists and Muslims in the Rakhine state have resulted in the displacement of countless Rohingya Muslims. Republicans have been skeptical of President Obama's decision as rewards cannot be given to the Burmese administration if it cannot bring progress to mitigate the risks of bad governance.

The U.S. administration has failed to account for various aspects of its bilateral relations with Myanmar. Describing the region as a success story that requires careful attention, President Obama has adopted a narrow approach to the issue. While the Burmese administration's decision to release political prisoners and curb restrictions on media censorship are positive steps, it would be risky to justify U.S. foreign policy changes on such pretexts.

Ethnic violence in Myanmar has resulted in political instability. On March 22, 2013, a state of emergency was imposed in Meiktila, a small town in central 'Myanmar', following a spate of anti-Muslim riots. Armed Buddhist nationalist demonstrators drove the Muslim community out of Meiktila. Anti-Muslim agitation in the region can be likened to the ethnic cleansing against Muslims in Bosnia during the early 1990s. They stand the risk of undermining the scope for development

in Myanmar as most deepwater ports and energy projects funded by India and China are concentrated in cities where anarchy prevails.

India has funded development projects in Sittwe, a deepwater port located north of the offshore natural gas fields, as a part of its 'Look East' strategy. These initiatives are geared towards improving accessibility between East India and Myanmar through the construction of sea, river and road routes. However, Sittwe is billed as a dangerous city where ethnic violence against Muslims has been increasingly difficult to manage. Economic development in the port city will be severely compromised if Muslims seek the assistance of jihadist groups to combat militancy. In a similar vein, China's strategic investments in the region are at a greater risk. China has been developing a land accessible port to rival India's deepwater port in Sittwe. It has constructed oil and gas pipelines to transport energy from Kyaukphyu to the Yunnan province to provide an alternative route to transport oil to China. Since the incidence of ethnic violence in Kyaukphyu is also particularly high, the fate of this project remains uncertain.

Foreign direct investment from India and China has enabled Myanmar to ignore protests from ASEAN and the United Nations about the ongoing violence. But if jihadist militancy is allowed to infiltrate the political sphere, India and China's strategic interests would be threatened.

President Obama's decision to provide pre-mature support to Myanmar could potentially be a means of thwarting these interests. It is an obvious attempt to promote the sectional goals of the U.S. under the guise of improving diplomacy and democracy. ■

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The Leading Lady

Sheikh Hasina faces political turbulence over many of her decisions; the forthcoming elections will decide her fate.

S.G. Jilanee

The eldest of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman's five children, Sheikh Hasina is the current prime minister of Bangladesh. She was born at her ancestral home in the Tungipara village of the present Gopalganj district on 28 September 1947. In 1968, she married M. A. Wajed, a nuclear scientist, who died in 2009. Hasina graduated from the Dhaka University in 1973.

Actively involved in student politics in her college and university days, Hasina was elected as chief of the Student's Union of Eden Girls College, and was a member of the Awami League's student arm, the Chhatra League of Dhaka University.

In 1975, her entire family, including her parents and brothers were assassinated in Dhaka. She and her sister Rehana escaped, providentially, because they were in Germany at the time. When they landed in India on return, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took them under her protection --an act of grace for which Hasina continues to remain ever beholden to the Indian government.

In 1981, Hasina was unanimously elected president of the Awami League while still living in India. She returned home on 17 May 1981. By a curious coincidence, President Ziaur Rahman, who had granted amnesty to her father's killers, was assassinated on 30 May, just thirteen days after her return.

Hasina's Awami League, along with the BNP led by President Ziaur Rahman's widow, Khaleda Zia, advo-

the democratic elections held the same year. Although the two ladies had struggled jointly to bring Ershad down, after the elections they soon fell out and the acrimony has continued ever since.

Hasina's politics are based purely on self-interest. In 1996, for example, she supported an abortive military coup, led by Lt. General ASM Nasim against the legitimate BNP government. In 2007, Hasina supported Army chief, Moeenuddin's takeover of the government, declaration of emergency and postponement of the elections. At her bidding, the Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil, signed a deal with Jatiya Party to make its leader H.M. Ershad, president of Bangladesh. Another agreement was signed with *Khelafat Majlis* that included banning Ahmadis in Bangladesh and framing an anti-blasphemy law. However, after becoming prime minister in 2009, Hasina reneged on all her above agreements without any qualms.

A glaring example of Hasina's lack of principles is provided by her shifting stand on the issue of the caretaker government (CG) to hold elections. At the end of Khaleda's term in 1996, it was in response to Hasina's agitation that a provision for the CG to manage elections was incorporated in the constitution and elections were held. Unsurprisingly, she won the elections to serve as prime minister from 1996 to 2001.

In 2001 she lost the elections to Khaleda Zia. But when Khaleda's term

claimed at least 40 lives and led to an army takeover. The 2008 elections were also held under a CG, this one sponsored by the army, which Hasina won to become prime minister for the second time.

But in 2011 her own government repealed the provision of the CG in the constitution that had been inserted at her own demand.

Hasina has also betrayed a despotic streak. Two Islamist TV channels have been shut down, because, they telecast "live images of the security forces' attacks" on *Hefazat-e-Islam* demonstrators on May 5 that left an unknown number dead.

In mid-April, the government sealed a very popular newspaper, *Amar Desh*, and detained its acting editor, Mahmudur Rahman on sedition charges. But the Economist says that the real reason for the action might lie in the ad run by the paper, a day before his arrest, regarding the possible publication of a translation of a series of "damning American embassy cables on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman" from the Wikileaks trove. In addition to this, Hasina's government has drawn flak for the mega graft scandal in the World Bank sponsored, Padma Bridge Project and the issue of forced disappearances.

While Hasina can count on sending her father's killers to the gallows and prosecuting *Jamaat-e-Islami's* top leadership for war crimes in 1971, how she fares in the elections at the end of the year, remains to be seen. ■

of Bangladesh

cated for the restoration of democracy during Gen. Hussein Mohammad Ershad's rule in the 1980s, until he stepped down in 1991. The BNP won

ended in 2006, Hasina plunged the country into violent political unrest over the issue of who would head the caretaker government. The violence

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India is one of the most populous countries of the world. With a rising population, the country's energy demands have also accentuated, posing new challenges for India, to fulfill the needs of its energy starved urban population. India's economic growth is expected to overtake that of China within the next three years. India's English-speaking middle class is increasing annually with over 125 million English speakers and an expected increase in the middle class from 50 million to 583 million by 2025. This will significantly impact consumer demands for electricity and is likely to provide opportunities for foreign investment in infrastructure and technology. According to recent estimates, nearly 400 million people in India do not have access to electricity.

India is the third largest electricity consumer in Asia, after the People's Republic of China and Japan, and demand has grown at an average of 8% per year since 1995. However, supply falls well below demand, leading to regular blackouts and electricity shortages which are understating the country's economic and social development. Moreover, much of the electricity is generated from increasingly uncertain domestic sources of coal or from imported coal.

India is a tropical country where sunshine is available for longer hours per day and in great intensity. Solar energy, therefore, has great potential. According to a report published by the WorldWatch Institute, India is among the fastest growing nations, after China, Brazil and the U.S., in the renewable energy sector with investments rising to 62 per cent - the highest growth rate for any single country over 2010. The solar power program, now a part of the National Action Plan for Climate

Change, began as an off-grid clean energy source to enhance self-sufficiency and reduce the consumption of kerosene, particularly in the rural areas.

While it was initially promoted as a means to achieve energy security, it now helps in mitigating the

currently provide a projected 500 MW of clean, reliable energy under the NSM. Given the short time frame of the Mission, these numbers are impressive, but India has a long way to go in fostering a sustainable solar energy market. CSP projects involve systems of mirrors that focus a large

The Solar

With energy needs on the rise, India is fast emerging as a leader in solar power generation.

By Asma Siddiqui

impact of climate change. The Remote Village Electrification Program (RVEP) began in 2001 by the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (MNES), later renamed as the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) in 2006.

In 2009, the Indian Government allocated US\$932 million to expand its solar power infrastructure through the Nehru National Solar Mission. The program is one of eight national strategies to address climate change, and is a bid to secure the country's energy supply and contribute to its 'ecological security.'

Under the country's ambitious solar program, the National Solar Mission (NSM), India has jump-started its solar energy industry, fostering growth in both photovoltaic (PV) projects and CSP, also known as solar thermal. Before the Mission began, CSP projects only provided 8.5 megawatts (MW) of energy. India's large-scale CSP projects cur-

area of sunlight onto a small area of contained liquid. The liquid after heating up, emits steam, and a turbine and electrical power generator converts that steam into electricity. CSP would help India meet its base-load energy needs and could be called upon for supplemental electricity during times of peak usage.


As of June 2012, 31 percent of India's energy came from renewable resources, including hydroelectric power. In a 2009 survey, McKinsey & Company rated India as the top producer of solar energy in the world, just above the U.S., with an annual yield of 1,700 to 1,900 kilowatt hours per kilowatt peak (kWh/KWp). In addition, India has one of the world's largest solar cooking venues in Tirupati, which provides food for more than 15,000 people each day.

The Indian Government's Twelfth five-year plan starting from 2012-17 also targets a capacity grid con-

nected solar power addition of 10 GW. Out this 10 GW target, 4 GW would fall under the central scheme and the remaining 6 GW under various state specific schemes. During Phase-II, it is envisaged that the development of Off-Grid electricity generation projects will cover

around 20,000 villages/hamlets/*basti/padas* through the 'Energy Access' scheme. Additionally, a Deployment Target of 10 Lakh (1 Million) exists for off-grid lighting systems. Phase II of JNNSM would focus on the development of solar cities, which will lead to the inclusion of more cities

under the project.

There are plans to formulate special schemes to promote the use of solar telecom towers, which would target around 25,000 solar integrated telecom towers. Phase II would target at-least 15-20 cities where solar water heaters would heat water to replace electric geysers. Considering the progress of Phase I, it is anticipated that Phase II would target 8 million square metres of collector area by the end of 2017. 

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

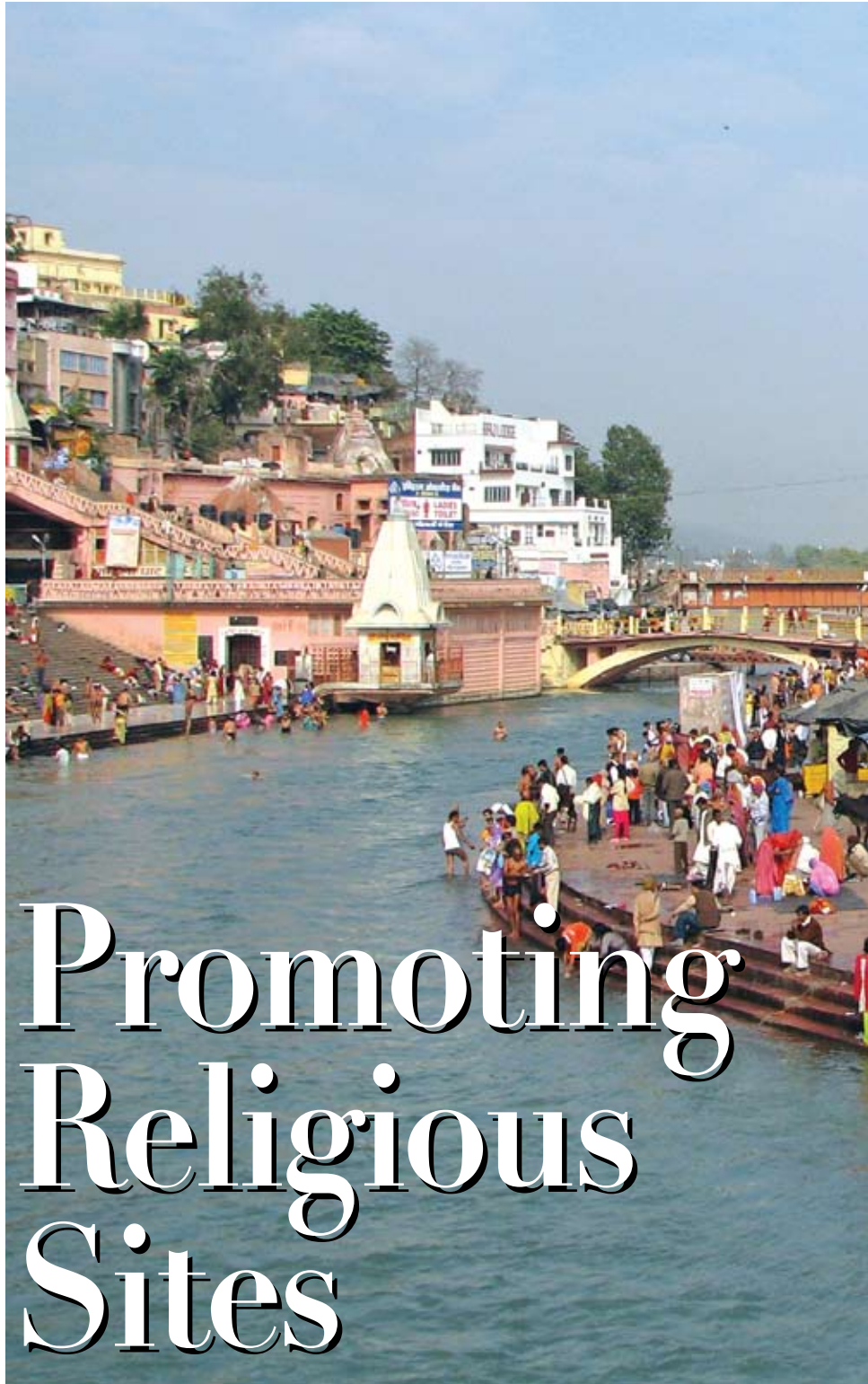
Frontier



South Asian countries, while unique in their own ways, tend to share a common culture. The norms and values prevailing in Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism, are deeply rooted in South Asian societies. Though the number of followers varies from country to country, their presence and influence in local arts, cultures, and traditions are distinctly visible in every society in the region. Nepal too has its unique geography, history and cultural heritage, which makes it an integral part of the broader cultural history and tradition of the Indian sub-continent.

Nepal and India share numerous similarities in cultural traditions. Both countries have made great contributions to enrich the regions' religious and cultural heritage. Lord Buddha, born in Nepal, left his footprints not only in South Asia but all across the world. Sita, the daughter of Nepal and wife of Ram, the crown prince of Ayodhya in India, is highly regarded by Hindus all over the world, which reflects the cultural bonding between India and Nepal. Indian philosophers and saints have made significant contributions to evolve, develop and spread the heritage known today as the South Asian culture.

Nepal and India share a versatile cultural link where religion has played a significant role in shaping cultural relations between these two countries. This is evident by the fact that thousands of Nepalese visit pilgrimage sites in India each year. Similarly, certain sites in Nepal are of religious significance for the Hindus such as Pashupatinath in Kathmandu, Lumbini (Buddha's birth place) in Rupandehi district,



Promoting Religious Sites



Nepal and India share a common religious and cultural history, which, if projected properly, can increase tourist traffic in both countries.

By Madiha Bilal Kapadia

and the *Ram-Janaki* temple in Janakpur (the birth place of Janak and Sita). The cultural ties between the Nepalese and the Hindus are further strengthened due to a common religious faith, philosophy, and practice of worship.

Language is another component of the Nepal-India cultural affinity. The different languages shared between the Nepalese and the Hindus include Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Hindi and Awadhi of which Sanskrit is the root. In addition, both countries use the *Devnagari* script in writing and religious texts. The same script is used to write the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas* and *Tripitak*.

People from Nepal and India have had a frequent exchange of ideas and personalities representing art, culture, music, literature, and sports. The religious traditions and mythologies have given life to norms and values in Nepal and India and the art forms prevailing in these two countries also share a similar history.

Tourism, being Nepal's largest industry, is also a major source of foreign exchange and revenue. A popular destination among mountaineers across the world, Nepal is home to 8 of the 10 highest mountains in the world. The government of Nepal has reached out to different countries, especially India's travel companies, to promote its tourism sector. The country enjoys popularity with Indians as a recreational, shopping and pilgrimage destination. Its reputation as a tourist destination in India has increased vastly in recent years. Transportation links between the two countries have further bridged the divide as 55 flights operate be-

tween Kathmandu and the Indian cities of Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai, every week. Other reasons include a pleasant climate, easy road access, no visa requirement, a common language, and a favorable exchange rate.

Popular among the tourists is trekking, mountaineering and safari tours. This includes white-water rafting, biking, fishing, rock climbing, paragliding, hot air ballooning, pony treks, and boating to name a few. Nepal also has ten national parks, six conservation areas, three wildlife reserves and a hunting reserve.

The tourism industry is the largest and fastest growing industry

in the world, accounting for more than ten percent of global spending. For Nepal, it generates foreign revenue and provides employment opportunities as well. The Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) conducted a Nepal-India Tourism Mart in Lumbini in January, where the participants discussed the idea to jointly promote Buddhist religious sites in Nepal and India. Government officials and travel industry representatives discussed strategies to promote a travel circuit comprising all major Buddhist sites. The main objective of the Tourism Mart was to promote Buddhist sites, boost interaction between tourism entrepreneurs, and expand business net-

works in both countries.

The tourism industry is equally important to India, which receives over a million tourists annually who visit its Buddhist sites, whereas Nepal has, in the past, received less than 100,000 tourists a year at Lumbini. According to the Nepal Tourism Ministry, Nepal's "Visit Lumbini Year" campaign in 2012 attracted nearly 509,073 tourists from 92 countries who visited Lord Buddha's birthplace, including 113,195 from India, 52,672 from Sri Lanka and 28,480 from Thailand. **S**

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

Anum Fatima goes to Harvard

Seven years ago, Anum Fatima from Ismail Jhokio Goth near Steel Town, Karachi, became the first girl in her family to complete her Matriculation. Today she has earned the opportunity to study at Harvard. Anum Fatima's life changed when she got admission to a school run by The Citizen Foundation (TCF). After completing her Matriculation, she got admission at the Institute of Business Management (IoBM) from where she completed her Bachelors in Business Administration (BBA) in Human Resource and is now enrolled in the MBA program.

She tried her luck by applying in the summer program at Harvard Uni-

versity and succeeded. Fatima, 23, was jubilant when she was accepted by the top U.S. university. Fatima's education has brought the best out of



her and she has made goals for her life. She says, "I want to be the CEO of a leading company, but before that I want to spend a few years at TCF to pay them back for all they have done for me." If TCF had not paid her university tuition fee, a degree at a private-sector institute would have been a distant dream.

It became a daunting challenge for Anum to switch over to the English language, as her medium of education had been Urdu all her life. Every day, after school, Fatima would go to the TCF head office where teachers helped her with her English and translated lessons for her. And here she is! **S**

UPCOMING B2B EVENTS ...



27 - 29 August 2013, Karachi Expo Centre
2nd International Multi-Modal Transportation,
Logistics & Material Handling Exhibition and Conference
Website: www.intertranspakistan.com
E-mail: info@intertranspakistan.com



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



26 - 28 November 2013, Karachi Expo Centre
8th Information & Communications
Technology Exhibition and Conference
Website: www.connectit.com.pk
E-mail: info@connectit.com.pk



25-27 February 2014
Pak-China Friendship Centre, Islamabad
10th International Safety & Security Exhibition
Website: www.safesecurepakistan.com
E-mail: info@safesecurepakistan.com



POGEE

28 - 30 May 2014, Expo Centre Lahore
12th International Exhibition for the Energy Industry
Website: www.pogee.com.pk
E-mail: info@pogee.com.pk



2014, Expo Centre Lahore
12th Edition of the International Machinery
Exhibition of Garment & Textile Technology
Website: www.megatechpakistan.com
E-mail: info@megatechpakistan.com



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Located in the Himalayan mountain range with India situated in its south, east, and west, and the Republic of China in its north, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal has a rich geography, featuring the world's eight tallest mountain ranges.

Nepal is situated in one of the most climate-sensitive regions of the world. Its eco-system is fragile and is mostly dependent on rain-fed agriculture. Similarly, the uncertain topology makes the country more prone to flooding. The dilemma is that even if Nepal's contribution of gas emissions (CO₂ emission) is negligible, these drastic climatic changes make it one of the most badly affected countries in the world.

Climate changes increased the occurrence of flashfloods in the country, which mainly occur due to intense rainfall and rapid snowmelt. Furthermore, Nepal's temperature on average is increasing by 0.6 degrees per decade, which further raises concerns of the increased frequency of flashfloods. Glacier lakes outbursts also cause water eruption from the trapped marines resulting in subsequent flooding that badly affects the lower lying areas.

It is ironic that Nepal experiences water scarcity even with water streams and lakes running across the country. An inappropriate irrigation and water storage system is the main cause behind this predicament. Most of Nepal's poor communities reside near the Ganges basin areas. Although there is abundant water available in the country the irregular distribution decreases water discharge from the rivers and causes water scarcity. There are nearly 6,000 rivers in Nepal but only 72% of the population has access to safe drinking water and only 24% of the total land is irrigated through proper

Climate Crisis

Nepal's rapidly changing climate is affecting the agricultural sector and the well-being of its people. Can the government take the necessary steps to fight this phenomenon before it is too late?

By Haseeb Ahsan



irrigation mechanisms. Life expectancy of 63 years is one of the lowest in Nepal. One of the reasons is the improper sanitation system which is available to only 27% of the population. Similarly, 75% of pregnant women are anemic and 50,000 children die every year due to curable diseases, where contaminated water is the cause of such ailments.

Nepal is among the least developed countries across the globe and hence suffers from food security. The country's population is dependent on agriculture for their living. Nepal's agriculture sector, which is dependent on weather patterns and with no proper irrigation system plus poor water storage mechanism, is adversely affected due to these climatic changes, which in turn affects food availability in the country.

More than 30% of Nepal's population lives below the poverty line. The unemployment rate is 46%, one of the highest in comparison with other nations (190th out of 200).

The country's population is dependent on agriculture for their living. Nepal's agriculture sector, which is dependent on weather patterns and with no proper irrigation system plus poor water storage mechanism, is adversely affected due to these climatic changes, which in turn affects food availability in the country.

The literacy rate is below 60% and the job market heavily lacks a skilled force. Under these circumstances only 13% of the agricultural production reaches the market while the rest is consumed by the growers themselves, which limits the flow of the ecosystem. Similarly, Nepal's reach is

also limited to India which is why it is heavily dependent on food imports from the country.

The above mentioned challenges can only be improved if the Nepalese government is willing to implement effective policies, follows best practices, and takes corrective actions at the earliest. The decade long armed conflict also diverted Nepal's attention from core issues when climate problems were of major significance.

Nepal's critical need is the development of its basic infrastructure for energy, food and water security. Similarly, the government and NGOs should work in the country's isolated communities and motivate and guide the population to access global markets. In addition, research and development is also important to device methods and grow crops which are resilient to climatic change.

Nepal will march towards progress when its leaders and decision makers will think beyond their personal gains and reduce the influence

of a bureaucratic culture. The future of Nepal will brighten only when its leaders will be willing to bring change. ■

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

Leadership isn't just for leaders.

*A message from Carol Bellamy,
Executive Director,
United Nations Children's Fund*



Ensuring the rights and well-being of children is the key to sustained development in every country and to peace and security in the world. Meeting this responsibility fully, consistently, and at any cost, is the essence of leadership.

Yet, commitment and action are required across the board. Not just from governments and organization. But also from community activists and entrepreneurs, from artists and scientists, from religious leaders and journalists and from children and adolescents themselves.

Carol Bellamy
Carol Bellamy

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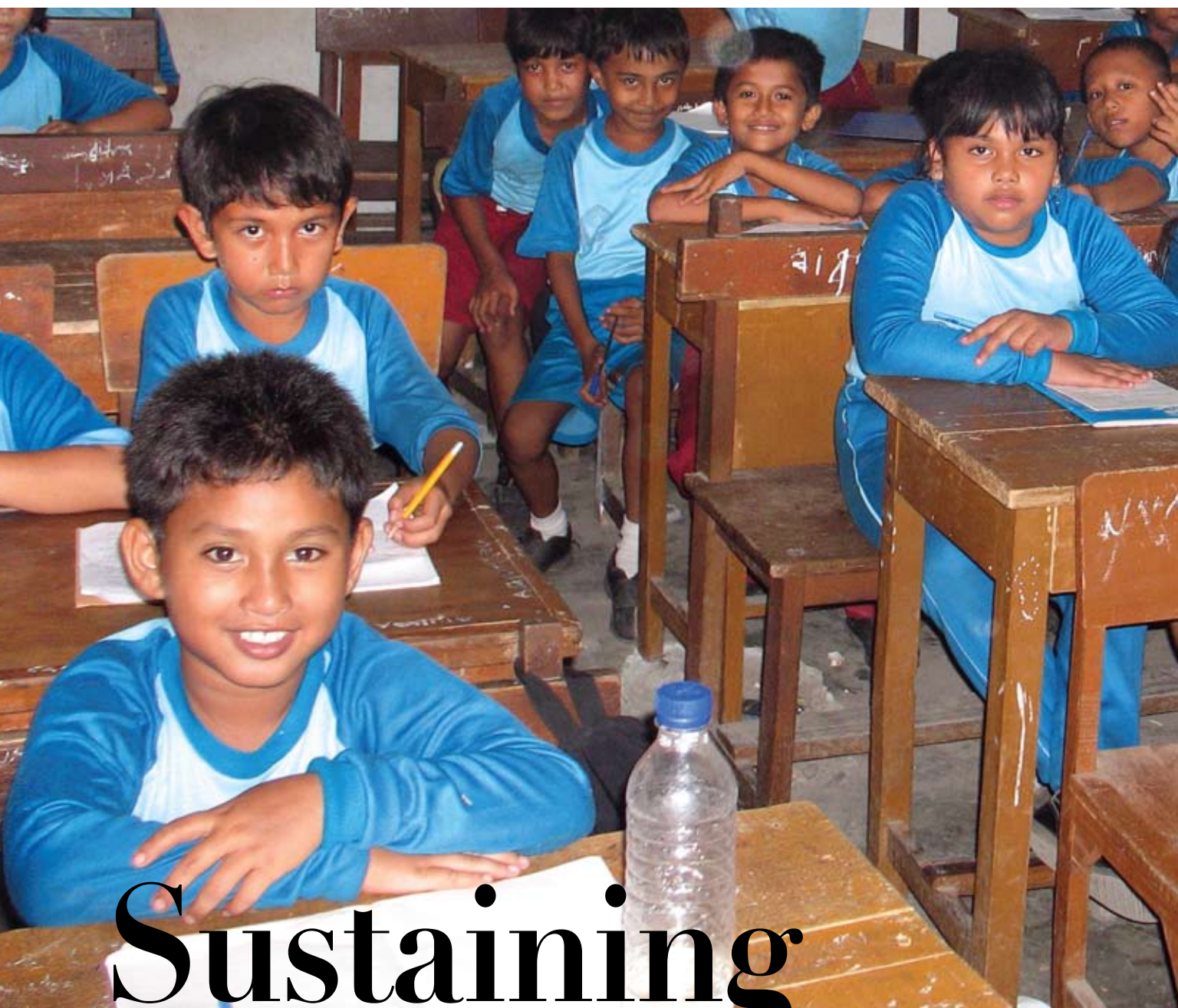
United Nations Children's Fund

For more information,
please contact your nearest UNICEF office
or National Committee for UNICEF.
www.unicef.org

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Sustaining Education

Sri Lanka boasts a 94% literacy rate, the highest in South Asia. But what does that truly mean for a country just emerging from three decades of civil war?

By Arsla Jawaid



Reeling from three decades of a brutal civil war, Sri Lanka today boasts an unprecedented 94% literacy rate; higher than that of any other South Asian nation. Today, the student population of Sri Lanka stands at approximately four million. Despite recording a strong literacy rate, the country continues to remain susceptible to ethnic violence as well as a

troubling unemployment rate.

Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948 and the introduction of free education in the early 1940s created opportunities for the youth, especially those in rural areas. In the 1950s, when the country's economy came under state control, many young students found jobs as lower and middle rung employees. However, as unemployment figures continued to rise well into the 1970s, the government undertook efforts to introduce vocational subjects into the school curriculum to meet the growing demand of skill-based employment. Complicating matters was the fact that in 1956, as a result of post-independence reforms, the official language was changed from English to Sinhalese and as the university education system expanded, it created opportunities of upward social mobility for many students from rural backgrounds. However, Tamil youth viewed this as discriminatory behavior, which eventually led to an ethno-linguistically segregated education system that prevented the formation of a common national identity.

According to Prithviraj Perera, Secretary General of the Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO, the decision to change the medium of instruction from Sinhala, Tamil and English to solely the official language, Sinhala, left adverse long-term effects on development. An entire generation was segregated and grew up with a hostile mindset that eventually culminated in a three-decade long civil war. Unlike the colonial elite, the post-colonial elite were socialized in isolation as a result of language barriers. The change in language gravely impacted Sinhala and Tamil relations, which continue to remain an issue. As a result, President Rajapaksa, on 20 December 2012, announced a new government initiative: the National Trilingual Policy to unite the nation it once divided, and revert to pre-1956 policies of focusing on all three major languages in the aca-

democratic curriculum. However, this is a recent development, one that will take years to yield a trilingual and young workforce.

In 1977, with the change of government, educational policies were also reverted to the traditional focus on academics. Apart from ushering in changes in education policies, the new government allowed the private sector to flourish, which promptly participated in almost every aspect of economic activity, including education. International schools, teaching in English, gained popularity (though remained significantly less popular as compared to privileged, government schools) yet only drew close to 2% of the young, school-going population. The youth continued to aspire for secure government jobs despite the expanding private sector. However, the turbulent years starting from the early 1980s brought in escalating violence, instability and insecurity. As a result, foreign investment halted and public funds were withdrawn from the education sector and allocated to defense thus severely hampering educational growth.

As terrorism became uncontrollable, the LTTE diverted its funds into drugs and war as opposed to development. Furthermore, the brain drain in the country meant that most competent teachers had left, thereby worsening the already low quality of education that prevailed in Sri Lanka. According to the International Organization for Migration reports, close to 1.7 million Sri Lankans are employed abroad and have repatriated Rs 6bn in 2012. According to Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, Sri Lanka Permanent Representative to the UN, "This amount is equivalent to 8.2% of Sri Lanka's GDP, 25% of total government revenue and 35% of total foreign exchange earnings." Over the years, such large scale remittances have become a driving force for poverty alleviation and development within the country, impact-

ing close to 23% of the population. Those employed abroad constitute approximately 17% of the labor force while those who continue to work in Sri Lanka, despite attaining an education, remain employed in the informal sector with unstable and irregular incomes.

According to Professor Hettige, Senior Professor of Sociology at the University of Colombo, by many a stretch, Sri Lanka's high literacy rate is nothing more than a façade. As the country slowly begins to move away from labor-intensive industries to technology intensive industries,

for university admission. Only 40% of children continue their education beyond the post-secondary level (O and A Levels) and of this, only 5% secure university admission. The remaining 35% are dropouts who opt for vocational training or search for jobs in a competitive economy where inflation and poverty remain dominant. Security forces tend to absorb men while garment factories eagerly provide employment for women. Today, there are a total of 15 major universities making it increasingly competitive for students to qualify for admission. According to Perera, the university absorption rate

to tear down the walls of segregation and the isolation it once supported.

In many respects, the Sri Lankan government has revisited its education policies and has launched a new education program titled, the "National Action Plan on Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (EPSD)" to counter the growing ethnic violence and inculcate the values of social cohesion and sustainable development in young Sri Lankan minds. At the very core of this program is the understanding that education is intrinsically about values. Formulative steps such as this are critical to the future of a country where an entire generation has grown up against a backdrop of segregation, dominance, and brutal violence.

The Education for Peace program that strives to meet the Millennium Development Goals through a sustained investment in education is founded on the values and attitudes that foster respect, freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, equality and solidarity. Sri Lanka is faced with the unique opportunity to not merely reconstruct and rehabilitate its society but rather rebuild peace, trust and confidence in the minds of its citizens. Therefore, programs like the EPSD are not merely confined to universities and community centers but strive to penetrate through the public and private sector, local government and mass media to ensure sustainability. These are ambitious goals that are vital to post-conflict development and social revitalization in a war-torn country like Sri Lanka and require regular monitoring, reliable evaluation processes and a strong and consistent commitment from all stakeholders. ■

Arsla Jawaid is Associate Editor at SouthAsia. A Boston University graduate, she holds a Bachelors degree in International Relations, with a focus on foreign policy and security studies.

In 1977, with the change of government, educational policies were also reverted to the traditional focus on academics. Apart from ushering in changes in education policies, the new government allowed the private sector to flourish, which promptly started participating in almost every aspect of economic activity, including education.

the education system must also be revamped to introduce skill-oriented education as opposed to simple academic achievement. The education system lacks innovation and research, belittles creativity and provides little scope for critical thinking. Irrespective of socioeconomic status, education is seen as a means to an end: finding the best possible employment.

Educational attainment is already imbibed in Sri Lanka's culture, making it easier for the government to undertake educational reforms. While the country may boast significantly high literacy rates, the drawbacks of such claims are hidden but severely cripple the young future of Sri Lanka. The country's dropout rate remains significantly high with only 36% of children reaching the GCE O Level and only 35% passing the GCE A Level examination and qualifying

remains abysmally low. Approximately, 300,000 GCE A Level students apply to universities in Sri Lanka, which can only absorb up to 20,000 vacancies.

Careful policy analysis and an immediate reallocation of public resources are needed to create a labor force that can keep up with the demands of a changing economy. There is an urgent need to broaden the general education system that has a strong emphasis on personality development, identity formation and moral and value systems. Many analysts argue that education has not ushered in peace in Sri Lanka but has rather worked counter to that very goal. Today, education is not measured strictly in academic qualification terms but is rather viewed as a strong, socializing mechanism that prioritizes strong values of equality and harmony, striving

Poetry in Stone

Title: The Taj Mahal: Poetry of Love in Marble
Author: Maqsoodul Haque
Publisher: CM Printing Co. Ltd
Pages: 84, Art Paper
Price: PKR 2,634
ISBN: 9781467511261

Reviewed by Sabih Mohsin



A plethora of literature exists about the Taj Mahal: one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The sheer number of books, written over time, have discussed the historical background of the iconic edifice, the details of its design and the team of architects, who undertook great pains leading up to the monument's construction. The book under review, *The Taj Mahal: Poetry of Love in Marble*, discusses these aspects, but from a different perspective.

The book consists mostly of photographs of the Taj accompanied with brief write-ups that shed light on its various characteristics. Most of the literary work about the Taj admires its beauty but also praises the King who built the monument as a symbol of his love for his deceased wife. However, the rebel poet of Urdu, Sahir Ludhianvi, was perhaps the only critic to pass a negative judgment on King Shahjehan's extravagant show of love, when he said:

*Aik shahanshah ney daulat ka sahara
le kar,
Ham ghareebon ki mohabbat ka uraya
hae mazaq.*

[A King of Kings has, on the

strength of his riches, ridiculed the love of we, the poor]

By setting the opulent illustration of love aside, the Taj Mahal is certainly a mystical piece of architecture, which has compelled writers and poets, over the years, to dwell upon and explore the various facets of its construction.

The author of *The Taj Mahal: Poetry of Love in Marble*, Maqsood-ul-Haque, captures the majesty of the Taj through the lens of his camera, which is indeed a breath of fresh air. Maqsood explores the grandeur of the Taj from many angles in his photographs; taking pictures of the structure in different seasons, with various foregrounds, and at different times of the day makes this book a worthwhile read. Maqsood, a skilled photographer with several national and international photographic awards to his credit, visited Agra several times to conduct research on the construction. The result is remarkable, as the book presents some impressive and artistic photographs such as those showing the Taj's reflection in the serene waters of Jamuna, or the early morning Sun rising behind the majestic Taj, making it glitter with all its glory. The photographs that particularly stand out con-

sist of unusual foregrounds, such as a herd of buffaloes walking past the Taj, or the monument photographed from the eastern bank of Jamuna, which serves as a *dhobi ghat*. Images such as these remain memorable due to their juxtaposed nature.

Author-photographer Maqsood-ul-Haque, through his photographs has projected both sides of the Taj: the beauty of the structure and the unattractiveness of its immediate and surrounding environment.

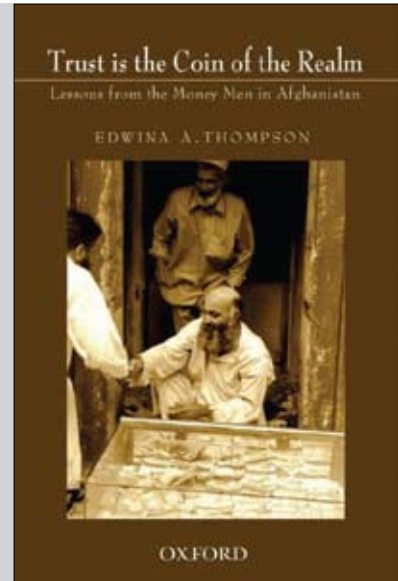
A particular image that catches ones attention is a photograph of the Taj, seen through the arches of the Agra Fort, where Shahjehan (the Emperor who had the Taj built) was forced to spend the last seven years of his life after his son, Aurangzeb, deposed him. History also narrates that Shahjehan spent most of his time at the Agra Fort, gazing at the Taj through the same arches. Pity the King who made the Taj Mahal, poetry of love in marble, which has kept the world bewildered for its splendor yet found himself in uncomfortable solace, observing it from captivity for seven years. ■

Sabih Mohsin is a senior journalist and radio professional with a special interest in book publishing.

Politics of Survival

Title: Trust is the Coin of the Realm - Lessons from the Money Men in Afghanistan
Author: Edwina Thompson
Publisher: Oxford University Press (2011)
Pages: 354, Paperback
ISBN: 978-0199062980

Reviewed by Taha Kehar



A strong cooperation between the international community and local socio-economic networks is required to ensure post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan. However, local variants of financial institutions in the region have come to be viewed with suspicion. *Hawala* - an ancient financial system operating in the Muslim world - has been wrongly condemned for funding terrorist outfits across the world. Despite growing concerns about its questionable political agenda, *hawala* may provide a suitable remedy for the war-torn country to climb out of its predicament and give it a new lease of life.

Edwina Thompson provides a detailed scrutiny on the extent to which the indigenous financial institutions can facilitate reconstruction, development and global economic governance. *Trust is the Coin of the Realm* aims to question and re-define the legitimacy of external mechanisms to enforce political change through unique state-building models. Based on primary research conducted in Afghanistan, the study demonstrates that any form of development in Afghanistan can only occur if the international community engages with socio-economic networks operating within the region. The politics of survival and change is

vested in obtaining trust.

Although the book adopts a largely theoretical focus, discussions on the role of policy add a pragmatic touch to what would otherwise become a purely academic discourse. The author has painstakingly outlined the objective of her fieldwork, the scope of her methodology and the challenges involved in conducting research in Afghanistan. A careful explanation of these details highlights the inter-disciplinary context of the work and allows the reader to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the analysis. However, it is important to note that *Trust is the Coin of the Realm* is based on a series of underlying academic preferences and biases. Thompson's starting point is the concept of the international system of states. While the decision to use this theoretical framework appears convincing, it is difficult to ignore the influence it has on the course of the study. The approach is skewed towards analyzing *hawala* within the sphere of international relations. As a result, the book is neither a comprehensive nor conclusive guide on the workings of one of the world's oldest financial systems.

Conventional wisdom on *hawala* presents an inaccurate view of its scope and functions. By providing a histori-

cal context of its institutional legacy, the author skillfully deviates from these myths and explores the reality of the system. The role of *hawala* in encouraging humanitarian efforts across the world has been used as an example to negate the misperceptions held about such institutions. This serves to show that Western biases about *hawala* need to be revisited and revised.


By turning her focus specifically on the operation of *hawala* in Afghanistan, Thompson has highlighted the social, economic and political issues that have affected its scope and influence. The role of the localized notion of 'bazaar' and 'family firm' has been emphasized as an important means of granting legitimacy to the institutions. Through such sensitive portrayals of *hawala* as a culturally determined system, a fresh and enlightening perspective on the ancient financial system has been achieved. The author has used this motif to highlight the flexible nature of the local financial institutions in the exercise of state-building. It propagates the idea that the 'informal economy' can bring Afghanistan out of its quagmire. While this notion appears to be somewhat controversial, it provides a far more effective solution to the introduction of largely unpopular formal regulatory measures.

A collaboration between the *hawaladars* and the formal structure of the global political economy can strengthen economic governance and encourage reconstruction. Thompson shows the accuracy of this position through a range of astute observations and interviews with 'local money-men' who act as agents to ensure development in the war economy. These observations provide a convincing argument for the overall integration of the informal socio-economic network within formal peace-building strategies. This is an innovative approach as it breaks away from mainstream literature on international relations and adopts a politically sensitive perspective on the issue.

Policymakers have realized that strategies provided by international agencies are gradually falling out of favor. In order to rectify the financial status of a war economy, regulators, aid practitioners and stabilization advisers must account for indigenous factors. *Hawaladars* have enjoyed a limited range of opportunities to bring-

ing their businesses within the legitimate sphere of the formal economy. This is a major setback because *hawala* has served as the bastion of the humanitarian cause. The book puts the traditional financial system within the context of the overall reform program conducted by international agencies. It examines the subtle dimensions of the overall legitimacy of *hawala* and shows how the system operates to positively impact stabilization efforts in Afghanistan through a complex array of bargaining strategies.

Edwina Thompson has provided an integrated model that encourages international agencies to engage with local institutions in the war economies. The approach builds on the essence of trust that arises out of the integration of the political economy with the local sphere of finance. Trust is the key ingredient, which can guarantee economic recovery against the backdrop of counter-insurgency. It can be obtained through a culturally sensitive understanding of the prevailing system

of finance. *Hawala* is a 'complex site of governance and institutional local power' and involves strategies that are based on religious, ethnic, cultural and economic factors. A realistic approach that accounts for socio-economic elements, the study offers various insights into the flexible nature of economic governance. It highlights the risks involved in failing to account for these factors in the overall state-building processes. Economic recovery is essentially a question of survival. There is an urgent need to break away from mainstream discourses on the subject. International organizations must explore the scope and potential of *hawala* to effectively implement post-conflict reconstruction, global economic governance and financial security in Afghanistan. 

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



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Stop Sawing Dust

By Anees Jilani

Soon after winning the 2013 general elections, Nawaz Sharif expressed his desire for the Indian Premier to attend the inauguration ceremony. His wish was reciprocated by the beating up of Pakistan's First Secretary Trade at the High Commission in New Delhi. The Indian Government immediately denied its involvement attributing it to a scuffle between the diplomat and his driver with a couple on the bike that their car had hit. The only positive side is that Pakistan, unlike the past, did not retaliate by beating up an Indian diplomat in Islamabad. I am not in a position to say as to whether the diplomat was beaten up by the Indian intelligence agencies or it was a genuine consequence of a road accident. In the case of the latter, what actions have the Indian Government taken so far against the couple who had beaten up the diplomat?

As if the above was not enough, on the morning of June 11, two Indian Air Force aircrafts violated Pakistan's airspace for about two minutes, which an Indian statement later called a technical violation. If such a violation had been committed by PAF planes, some of the Indian politicians and a section of the Indian media by now would have been asking the government in New Delhi to attack Pakistan with nuclear missiles.

Luckily, we can now claim Pakistan to be a democracy, even a nascent one, while India is proud of being the largest democracy in the world. India is also a huge country with much more established and advanced institutions than Pakistan. One thus expects the country and its citizenry, particularly the educated and intellectual lot, to show a higher degree of maturity in its attitude towards Pakistan. However, it is sad to say that India has repeatedly failed to show such an attitude.

Pakistan came into existence as a result of India's breakup and the Indian bitterness towards this newly formed Muslim state is understandable just as some of


us may feel towards Bangladesh. However, this hostility would have receded if India had not usurped Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh. The other disputes like distribution of assets were minor as compared to the status of these three states. Pakistan did not handle it appropriately at its inception and lost all three states. India then referred the Kashmir dispute to the United Nations but now refuses to implement the resolutions passed by that very organization.

Resultantly, the resentment and enmity shifted to Pakistan and led to unprecedented strengthening of the country's security apparatus, including its intelligence agencies, particularly the ISI. Pakistan cannot militarily defeat India due to the difference in sizes of the armed forces. It accordingly decided to wage a clandestine war of attrition by infiltrating commandoes into Kashmir in the sixties; by supporting the Sikh militants in the Indian Punjab during the eighties; and the Kashmiri militants in the nineties. These moves definitely bled India but Pakistan has also paid a heavy price, most prominently in the shape of the military repeatedly taking over the reins of power.

After six decades of acrimony, the people of Pakistan have realized the futility of this whole rignarole and Nawaz Sharif's public peace overtures to placate India proves it. It is now for the people of India to realize this golden opportunity and to avail it to achieve peace. Failure to reciprocate and continuing to take a hard-line will not serve the interests of either country. Both have made mistakes in the past. Statesmanship demands to not dwell on the past, sawing saw dust, but to move forward with a vision to achieve something positive. ■

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

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