

SRI LANKA
Buddhism vs. The Rest

August 2014

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Hall of Shame

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The Day After

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Back to DARKNESS

The social fabric is in tatters and industrial progress is slowing down across South Asia - and all because power resources are not being adequately exploited.



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PRESIDENT & EDITOR IN CHIEF

Syed Jawaid Iqbal

MANAGING EDITOR

Zeba Jawaid

EDITOR

Javed Ansari

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Javeria Shakil

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

S. G. Jilane

CONTRIBUTORS

Asna Ali - Fatima Siraj - Hussain H. Zaidi
 Huzaima Bukhari - Dr. Ikramul Haq
 Maha Kamal - Mahrugh A. Mughal
 Malik Muhammad Ashraf - Meena Ahmed
 Dr. Moonis Ahmar - Muhammad Ali Ehsan
 Muhammad Omar Iftikhar
 Dr. Omar Farooq Khan - Samina Wahid
 Semu Bhatt - S.G. Jilane
 Shabbir H. Kazmi - S. M. Hali - Taha Kehar

GRAPHICS & LAYOUT

Mohammad Saleem

MARKETING & SALES

Kulsum Sheikh

ADVERTISING

Aqam-ud-Din Khan

CIRCULATION

M. Adeel Siddiqui

DIRECTOR SPECIAL PROJECTS

Muhammad Asif Razaque

EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICE

20-C, Lane 12, off Khayaban-e-Ittehad, Phase II
 Extension, DHA, Karachi - 75500, Pakistan
 Phones: 92-21- 35313821-24
 Fax: 92-21-35313832
 Website: www.southasia.com.pk
 Email: info@southasia.com.pk

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Which Way Palestine?

The latest round of Israeli atrocities in Gaza did not seem to affect governments and people around the world in any moving manner though the way Israel wreaked havoc was simply appalling. The conflict in the densely populated Gaza Strip between the Palestinian Arabs and the Israelis erupts every few years and has all but obliterated the much-talked about Palestinian-Israeli peace process that the late Yasser Arafat initiated and that was taken up by his successor, Mahmoud Abbas. In recent years, there has also been talk of a two-nation solution which would have allowed the Palestinians and the Israelis to live as neighbors but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli military have simply destroyed the possibility of any such development taking place and have continued to pummel the Gaza Strip. To counter this sort of high-handedness, the people of Gaza, assisted by Hamas, have had no alternative but to show their resistance to Israel. The conflict has created nothing but mayhem for the 1.8 million Palestinians who live in the territory and lead lives of penury. The latest carnage has aggravated tensions among the Palestinians to the extent that a third Intifada or uprising may just be in the making.

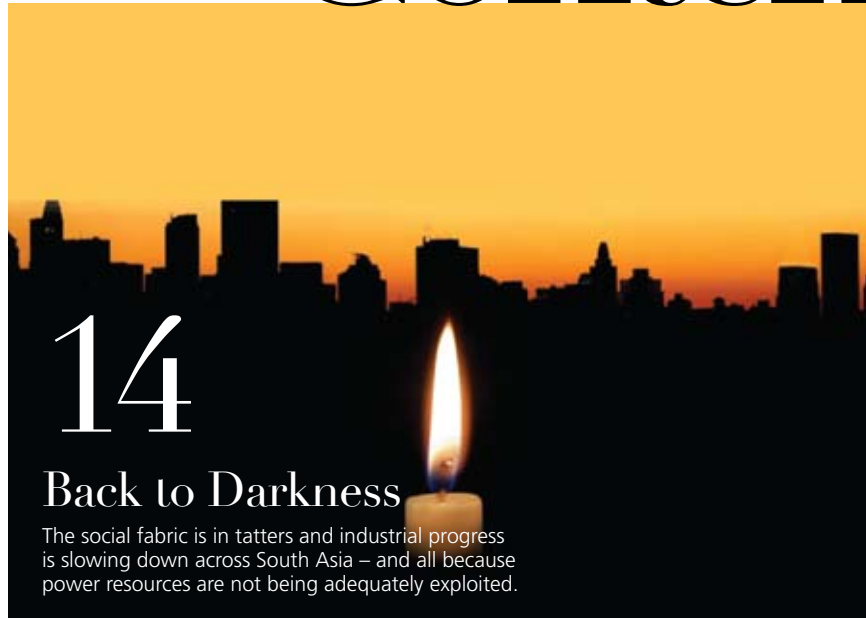
If Prime Minister Netanyahu has his way, any Palestinian state on the West Bank would only exist under Israeli occupation – something that is obviously not acceptable either to the Palestinians or the international community which has always pushed for the two adversaries to make peace and live as two separate nations. For this to happen, the Arabs must accept the existence of Israel as a reality in their midst. At the same time, Israel must also stop its bullying tactics and should not be bolstered by all kinds of support that it gets from the west, especially the United States. It is very much clear that the Israelis are only concerned with their own security and what happens to innocent Palestinian men, women and children is not their bother. Their aggressive junta believes that the country's military might is the only way that peace can be hammered together in the region. In order for them to do that, their foremost priority is to snuff out all militant organizations opposed to the existence of Israel, such as Hamas. Over the years, a good portion of Israeli society has also come to support the hawkish Israeli stand, especially since the 1993 Oslo Accords broke down though they were designed to move a peace process towards a two-state solution. Despite the illegality under international law, Israel has continued to construct settlements on the West Bank. Benjamin Netanyahu has particularly been very active in this pursuit during his tenures. The settlements have continued to sprout and it is obvious that in such an environment, bloody conflicts between the two sides keep occurring from time to time.

Where are Palestine and Israel headed? None of the two sides have come up with a strategy aimed at bringing about a permanent solution to the conflict. They are only engaged in short-term tactical gains and will keep on fighting against each other for these gains in the coming years, without paying heed to the future of the people, especially the Palestinians. A political commentator has rightly described Israel as one of the world's last colonial powers and the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as its unruly subjects. Will this ever change? Perhaps yes, if Israel finds itself suitably challenged, the west develops a more balanced view of the conflict and of Israel's role in the region and the Islamic world displays better ownership of the Palestinian cause.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

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To root out corruption

The Southasia cover story on corruption discussed many facets of this social evil. While most articles presented well-reasoned arguments, I found the idea of launching a new currency and bonds in the country quite intriguing.



This can be a long, tedious and expensive process. But then, to remove this tumor of corruption from society, the cure has to be painful. As far as harassment and bribes are concerned, this cannot be justified in any form. Why should one give a 'fee' for a service one has a right to? Why should the taker of the bribe then get his salary?

I believe one way to stop corruption is to increase the salaries of the lower grade office workers. But it is not limited to the lower bureaucracy only. Higher-ups and big bosses are equally involved and the network is woven together so closely that it is almost impossible to catch the culprit. If the leaders of the South Asian region are serious about eliminating corruption from their countries, they should make the anti-corruption bodies autonomous and fully functional while whistleblowers should be guaranteed protection.

Pushpa Dzebronga
Thimphu, Bhutan

End of terrorism

The Pakistani military's efforts to eliminate terrorism from the country are commendable. It is playing its role to make the people of Pakistan feel secure once again. Operation



Zarb-e-Azb will go a long way in cleansing our country of terrorists. It was uplifting to see the army chief visiting North Waziristan – an area where the control of terrorists was so strong that even the security forces had a hard time establishing their writ. The good news is that the army has purged most of the area of terrorists and has set up effective checkpoints at various locations.

This operation proves beyond doubt that in order to face the problem of terrorism head-on, what a country needs the most is the will to fight. After years of vacillation, the army command finally took the right decision and the result is there for everyone to see. While the threat of a backlash from terrorists looms large, it is nothing compared to the relief of knowing that the areas which were infamous the world over for being terrorist sanctuaries are clean now.

Fatima Amir
Islamabad, Pakistan

Draconian laws

The recently passed People's Protection Law gives police the authority to detain terrorist suspects for 60 days without an FIR or bail. The police can even shoot a suspect at sight. In a country where the police is alleged to be corrupt and unreliable, what form this law can take is difficult to imagine. To give such unbridled freedom to the law enforcement agencies can have harrowing consequences.

The government needs to realize that the police don't believe in the saying that with great responsibility comes great power. There is a great chance that the power vested in the

law enforcement authorities will be misused. Hence, the government should first filter its forces and induct personnel with a creditable reputation for the protection of the people.

Nabeel Baig
Karachi, Pakistan

A brave nation

It lifts one's spirit to see a country like Afghanistan, which the media has portrayed as a constant warzone, moving on the path to a peaceful existence.

People stepped out of their homes to vote in the face of serious threats while the candidates ran their campaigns despite several attacks by terrorists on their rallies and convoys. Eventually, the brave security forces of Afghanistan made it possible for the people to come out and vote by maintaining peace throughout the country.

The economic hurdles that the new government will face seem secondary as compared to the threat of the re-emergence of the Taliban. The government should brace itself for all the challenges it is likely to face.

Gulomoney Wazir
Berlin, Germany



Battle of giants

'Race Across Waves' was an informative read. It is the tragedy of small nations that they are used by the big powers which are fighting each other to achieve their respective goals. It is clear that both China and India are vying to establish some sort of influence over the the Maldives due to its strategically important location.



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Unbridled freedom

shows. I agree with the writer that giving unbridled freedom to the media was one of General Musharraf's biggest tactical mistakes. As long as news channels stand to gain a profit from anything they report, with no consequences whatsoever, their irresponsibility will only increase. While it is important that these channels follow a code of ethics, it

is more important that there should be an effective body to regulate the electronic media. PEMRA should play this role and take strict action against those channels which do not follow the rules.

PEMRA did try to arrest the rot by banning Geo but it was too little, too late. For a long time now, a number of shady channels in Pakistan have taken to unethical news reporting and rumor-mongering in their war for higher TRPs. It is high time the news channels realized that their reckless actions will have negative consequences and that sooner or later they would have to answer for their reckless misuse of authority.

Hadia Mumtaz
Lahore, Karachi

Both countries are trying to outdo each other in the race to arm the island nation.

It is crucial that the government of the Maldives takes stock of the situation. It should not let the country's soil (or waters) be used for the power struggle between the two Asian giants. The Maldives is a peaceful country. This is the reason why tourists from all over the world come here in flocks to enjoy the beautiful beaches and mesmerizing surroundings. It should consider itself lucky that it doesn't have any rivalry with any nation. In today's world, conflicts between neighboring countries are rampant. Instead of building up its arms cache the country should focus on development and the betterment of its people.

David Matthews
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Beastly treatment

The article on illegal poaching in Bhutan and the threat it poses to the wildlife there, was an eye opener. The World Wide Fund and other organizations should consider taking steps to create awareness of endangered species.

The target audience should be the lower class that needs to know the importance of the stability of the ecosystem.

Recently, poachers in Africa butchered the



largest elephant in the world, which was the last of its kind. They not only took its tusks for ivory but also carved out most of its face. Someone famously said that the most dangerous animal in the world is man himself. It is our duty to prove this statement wrong and protect wildlife. The agencies responsible for the protection of wildlife should hire honest and responsible staff. More checkposts should be set up in jungles and wildlife reserves to ensure the protection of animals from poachers.

Nadini Arora
Kathmandu, Nepal

A neglected craft

The piece about the growth of the *nakshi kantha* industry in rural Bangladesh was quite informative. Having seen the work myself, I can say with conviction that it was some of the most beautiful pieces of hand embroidery I've ever seen. It is sad, however, that the hardworking women associated with the *nakshi kantha* industry are struggling hard to find the right means to export their work.

To lend these women a helping hand, the government of Bangladesh should set up proper export channels right in their villages. This will save them from the greedy middlemen who eat into their profits. This step can also help ensure quality



control. If the women are trained to become entrepreneurs, Bangladesh has the potential to turn *nakshi kantha* embroidery into one of its leading exports.

Sameera Ibrahim
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Believe in the ball

It must have been a proud moment for a country like Pakistan to have created the most important object used in an international tournament like the FIFA World Cup. The Brazuca is Pakistan's key to re-establishing its position in the industry of sports goods and to regaining its foothold in the craft of hand-stitched footballs. While the FIFA World Cup was underway, I read many comments, some of them quite humorous, about the quality of Brazuca. People were afraid that it might rupture during a match, destroying Pakistan's reputation.

It's surprising that a large number of Pakistanis didn't realize that the ball had actually undergone rigorous tests by some of the top footballers in the world. Also, Adidas ensured strict quality control before the ball was approved for the world event. My fellow Pakistanis should have a little faith in this million-dollar globally recognized industry and refrain from posting comments on social media that undermine our country's name.

Saqib Mujeeb
Peshawar, Pakistan



"In a globalized world, we cannot remain insulated from external developments. India's trade performance in the current year has been robust, surpassing pre-crisis export levels and pre-crisis export growth trends. We have diversified our export baskets and our export destinations."
Pranab Mukherjee
President of India



"Roosevelt's legacy was overcoming fear, and it was a marginal line, but it became the headline and it defined the legacy of the New Deal. In the midst of that destructive series of events, he found a pattern. And that's the task of leadership: to be able to master calm judgment while living the sentiment, drawing on it, not giving in to it."
Dr. Ashraf Ghani
Afghan Presidential Candidate



"Our two countries have been very good neighbors for a long time. We do not approve undue external pressure over countries. That is why the Maldives consistently stood for Sri Lanka at international forums. We will continue to do so shoulder to shoulder with Sri Lanka."
Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom
President of the Maldives



"The government under my leadership will promote internal capital and external investment. We will create economic opportunities within our country to end poverty and unemployment."
Sushil Koirala
Prime Minister of Nepal



"To offer a blanket response that unfairly treats all asylum-seekers as illegal, and returns them to the country from which they have fled, is both immoral and contrary to our international obligations as a signatory to the Refugee Convention."
Maurizio Pettena
Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



"Afghanistan is not a perfect place (and) it is not America's responsibility to make it one."
Barack Obama
President of the U.S.A.



"Don't forget that Muslims are the minority in India. So, if you attack Hindus here (Bangladesh), minority Muslims may be attacked in India. People of all religious faiths would continue to enjoy equal rights in Bangladesh. I want to warn you not to break the peace of the people, otherwise you have to pay for it."
Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister of Bangladesh



"I am the winner of the clean votes of Afghan people in the two rounds of the elections. The people of Afghanistan are putting pressure on me to announce their elected government."
Abdullah Abdullah
Afghan Politician



"India is the cornerstone of our foreign policy. We do not have a diplomatic relationship with China and it has not prevented us from having cordial ties with them."
Tshering Tobgay
Prime Minister of Bhutan



"The current operation winds down at the end of December. Another operation sets up for at least 2015-16. What happens beyond 2016 and what form our relationship will take with Afghanistan is something for further thinking."
General David Hurley
Defence Force Chief of Australia



"We expect Afghan security forces will either eliminate or handover Pakistani Taliban chief Mullah Fazlullah, who controls his fighters from across the border."
Maj-Gen Asim Bajwa
DG, Inter-Services Public Relations, Pakistan



"Some political elements are trying to create anarchy in the country. How did Imran Khan, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Pervaiz Elahi and Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed win their assembly seats if the 2013 elections were rigged? They are making up these claims to stir up unrest."
Abid Sher Ali
Minister of State for Water and Power, Pakistan

PAKISTAN | Lahore

Volatile Borders

According to data released by the Punjab Rangers, the working boundary between India and Pakistan was violated 75 times by India in the last three years, killing three people and injuring at least 48. This year alone, one person was killed and seven

civilians injured in border violations.

Last year, the Pakistani and Indian forces periodically exchanged fire along the Sialkot region for almost two weeks, forcing the villagers living close to the border to leave the area. At least two people, including a soldier, were



killed and 14 were wounded in border clashes before India and Pakistan agreed to restore the ceasefire. **S**

PAKISTAN | Karachi

Stocks Up

The Karachi Stock Market reached a new all-time high as the KSE Index broke the 30,000 point barrier for the first time in the country's history. The bullish trend was attributed to the growing interest of foreign investors in Pakistan's equities and a positive outlook by Moody that saw an inflow of \$5.59 million. Major investments were recorded in the oil and gas sector (\$1.7million), cement (\$1.5m)



and in banks (\$1m).

Renewed foreign interest in oil stocks and speculations of major earning announcements also played an important role in encouraging bullish sentiments at KSE. The gas discovery and venture plans of Pakistan Petroleum Limited, increase in cement exports and higher international oil prices were some other factors that positively impacted the market. **S**

PAKISTAN | Peshawar

Children of War

USAID has awarded educational scholarships to 2,685 children directly impacted by the ongoing conflict in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Armed conflicts in these areas claimed more than 15,000 lives since 2003, leaving behind scores of widowed

women and orphaned children. The

Conflict Victims Support Program of USAID will provide 4,000 educational scholarships to children who have lost or injured family members due to the conflict.

The program collaborates with Pakistan's telecom sector for the disbursement of scholarship funding

as the grant will be deposited to the mobile accounts of students or their guardians. **S**



INDIA | Delhi

Mobile Mania



A study conducted by a prominent telecom equipment maker has revealed that India has a higher smartphone usage compared to even the U.S. as smartphone users in

India spend over three hours on an average on their devices. According to the study, which was conducted among 4,000 smartphone users across 18 urban cities in India,

Indian users check their phones 77 times daily on an average, with about 26 percent doing so more than 100 times a day.

The phenomenon of watching videos on mobile devices is also on the rise. Forty percent respondents said that they watched videos late

at night in bed, 25 percent while commuting, 23 percent while having dinner and 20 percent said they watched videos while shopping. **S**

INDIA | Mumbai

Flood Prevention



A team of the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay has developed an integrated flood assessment modeling tool which can assess and predict the extent and depth of flooding in a region. This tool can be used in urban coastal areas like Mumbai and Chennai.

Urban flooding has become an

increasingly important issue in several parts of the world. In July 2005, floods in Mumbai resulted in loss of life as well as property to the tune of millions of rupees. If rainfall forecast is available, the IFAM tool can predict the flood almost in real-time. Otherwise, it can be used to design mitigation measures in disaster and risk management as it can give information on possible flood levels, flood patterns and its extent at any location for various rainfall intensities. **S**

INDIA | Hyderabad

Sporty Brand

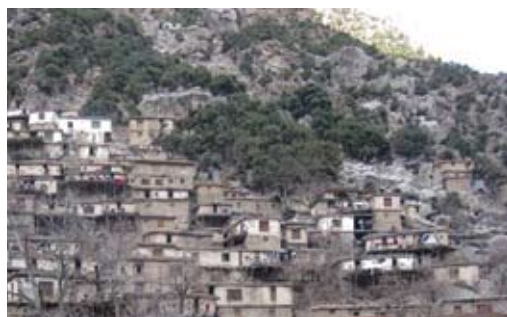
Tennis player Sania Mirza will be the brand ambassador of the newly-formed Telangana state. This was announced by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao of the state who also gave Mirza a cheque of Rs.1 crore for “training new players and preparation for the upcoming tournaments.”

As the brand ambassador of Telangana, Mirza is expected to promote the new state’s interests in India and abroad. On the occasion, Rao said that Telangana is proud of Sania Mirza, a true Hyderabad. “In international tennis, she is ranked No. 5 and we wish she becomes No. 1 very soon,” hoped Rao. **S**



AFGHANISTAN | Nuristan

No Hospital



There is not a single hospital in the remote, mountainous province of eastern Nuristan and its residents have to traverse long distances to neighboring provinces for treatment. People often travel to Kunar or Nangarhar provinces to seek treatment for their ailments.

Nuristan was declared a province about 13 years ago but it still lacks a proper health facility. The provincial capital Paroon used to have a public

health facility but that too was without proper medical equipment, medicine and qualified staff. Under-qualified nurses used to run the hospital.

Acknowledging the absence of a well-equipped hospital in the province, Nuristan Governor Hafiz Abdul Qayyum accused the central government of neglecting the province and said that construction of a hospital for the provincial capital was under consideration. **S**

Seven Dams

Afghanistan's first national park, Band-i-Amir, is attracting a large numbers of visitors. Constructed in 1973, Band-i-Amir comprises seven dams – Zulfiqar, Haibat, Podina, Qanbar, Ghulaman, Barbar and Panirak. According to German

swimmers, the water reservoir of these dams is 90 meter deep. It was registered as a world heritage site in 2009. The park is situated towards the northwest of Bamiyan City. It has lush green mountains and flowing streams. Newly constructed hotels at the site offer advanced accommodation to local and foreign tourists. The park has also benefitted the



families that live close to Band-i-Amir, most of whom serve as vendors, offering local agriculture products such yogurt, curd, cream, handicrafts, carpets and other items of daily use, to the visitors. "Our business is associated with the arrival of tourists. We earn around 20,000 Afghanis per month when the season starts," said a local vendor. **S**

Own Medicine



Three officials of a pharmaceutical company of Bangladesh, who were charged with manufacturing adulterated drugs that killed 76 children in the 1990s, were finally awarded punishment by the Dhaka Drug Court. The culprits were given 10-year rigorous imprisonment while three convicts were

fined 2 lakh takkas each. While delivering the verdict, the judge said that the convicts had committed crimes against humanity.

The adulterated paracetamol syrup caused a fatal kidney disease among children. The tests on the drugs were conducted under direct supervision of an expert consultant from the World Health Organization. **S**

Self-reliance Stories

To make physically challenged people self-reliant through income generation, vocational training was provided to 20 physically challenged male and female persons to enhance their capacity and skills in producing jute-made handicraft. The week-long training course was jointly organized by the Rangdhanu Zila Protibondhi Adhikar Sangstha (RZPAS) and

PPNOUS, under financial assistance of the Ministry of Textiles and Jute. Speakers at the ceremony stressed on creating employment and self-employment opportunities for the physically challenged people through providing them need-based training so that they could groom their capacities in becoming self-reliant. **S**



Best Bank



The National Development Bank of Sri Lanka was adjudged 'Domestic Retail Bank of the Year' as well as 'SME Bank of the Year' for the second consecutive year by the Asian Banking and Finance Retail Banking Awards 2014 – termed as the World Cup of Banking. In addition, the NDB also collected a third award for 'Core Banking System Initiative of the Year'. The NDB was selected for these awards by a panel of judges

representing Price Waterhouse Coopers, KPMG, Deloitte Consulting and Ernst and Young Advisory LLP. Running in its eighth consecutive year, the ABF Awards have established integrity and recognition in the region over time. This year's awards recognized the NDB along with numerous regional and international banks for their performance, based on criteria such as innovation, effectiveness and dynamism. **S**

NEPAL | Khatmandu

Leadership Positions

Nepal has requested the UN that it should be given leadership positions, proportionate to its contributions, in the UN's peacekeeping missions. The request was made to the United Nations Under-Secretary General, Hervé Ladsous, who also heads the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. He assured the Nepalese officials that the UN would positively

respond to its request.

Nepal is currently participating in 13 of the total 16 missions led by the UNDPKO, including one political mission in Afghanistan. It ranks fifth among all countries whose police and troops are part of the mission and has been among the top ten contributors of uniformed personnel for more than a decade now. The country



had complained that the UN was reluctant to give it top positions in the peacekeeping missions despite its huge contributions. **S**

MALDIVES | Male'

Scholarly Ties

India will provide educational scholarships to 74 Maldivian students to study in India for academic year 2014-2015. The scholarships will be provided under a number of different schemes, including the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. It will cover all university level undergraduate



and postgraduate courses in arts, science, engineering, commerce, business administration and law.

Seventeen of the ICCR scholarships – which cover all expenses, including international air passages, boarding, lodging and internal transport – have already been awarded with the rest currently being processed. **S**

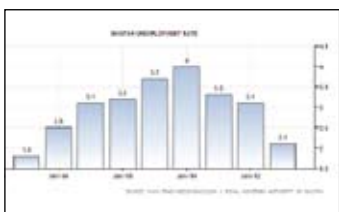
BHUTAN | Thimphu

Out of Work

According to the Labor Force Survey of Bhutan, the number of unemployed Bhutaneese increased to 9,916 in 2013 from 6,900 the previous year despite various initiatives to address the

unemployment issue. Of the total unemployed, about 5,900 are female. With this, the country's overall unemployment rate stands at 2.9 percent today from 2.1 percent in 2012. According to the officials of the Labor Department, the 2,407 fresh graduates who attended the national graduates orientation program in 2013, including several hundred graduates from technical training institutes, added to the unemployment rate. University graduates topped the

list of unemployed people. About 3,001 university graduates are still unemployed, of which 1,627 are women. In addition, there are also about 2,227 class XII graduates registered jobseekers across the country, followed by 1,790 class X graduates. Urban areas have more number of unemployed youth. Of the total 4,283 unemployed youth in the country, 3,010 live in urban centers. With 3,656 unemployed persons, Thimphu has the highest number of unemployed registered. **S**



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Opportunities and Threats

South Asia has ample reserves to meet its energy needs – only if the region's countries could set their differences aside.

By Shabbir H. Kazmi

The term South Asia refers to eight countries namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. These countries are also a part of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), a bloc established in 1985. Afghanistan was included as the 8th member in 2006. China, Iran and Myanmar are also seeking full member status of the bloc.

Despite enjoying millions of acres of fertile land and robust agricultural and manufacturing bases, the bulk of the region's population lives below the poverty line. Often South Asia is termed as the poorest region in the world after Sub-Saharan Africa. While over a quarter of the world's poor people live in Africa, half of them live in South Asia. According to a report, there are more poor people in eight Indian states than in the 26 poorest African countries.

A World Bank report released in 2007 describes South Asia as the least integrated region in the world. Trade among South Asian states was only 2 percent of the region's combined GDP, compared to 20 percent in East Asia. According to analysts, due to similar climatic conditions, soil composition and mindset of the ruling juntas, these countries compete with each other in the global markets. Despite enjoying close proximity and often common borders, they have failed to complement each other due to mutual hostilities.

Three of the largest countries by

population – Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, having elaborate agricultural and manufacturing bases – hardly enjoy cordial relations. This virtually closes doors for economic cooperation, particularly in the energy sector, considered the lifeline of the economy. One of the reasons for the prevailing situation is a 'trust deficit' as the hawks in these countries try to show that any cooperation in the energy sector will make the smaller country subservient to the supplier.

One of the prime reasons for poverty within SAARC countries is an acute shortage of energy products. This becomes all the more pinching because some of the countries are rich in energy resources, fossil fuels as well as renewable energy. The animosity among countries enjoying common borders does not allow them to enter into any meaningful cooperation. Though some of the smaller countries have been more modest, the rulers of relatively bigger countries behave rather strangely and contrary to the expectations of their people.

Bangladesh, India and Pakistan have ample energy resources but the non-commitment of their rulers in exploiting these resources, inconsistent policies and gross mismanagement in the energy sector, have kept their GDP growth rates subdued.

In Pakistan's case, one could say that the energy crisis looming for nearly three decade is the outcome of inconsistent policies and gross mismanagement. The country has an

aggregate installed electricity generation capacity of nearly 30,000MW but the average output hovers around 15,000MW. This translates into 50 percent capacity utilization.

Below optimum capacity utilization is partly due to the non-availability of fuel and partly because of inadequate maintenance of power plants. Lately, gas shortage has emerged because of the failure to undertake drilling of wells due to poor law and order situation in areas that are rich in oil and gas reserves. Added to these is the blatant theft of electricity, hovering around 30 percent, and receivables running into billions of rupees – the mother of inter-corporate debt.

Equally shocking is the news that India also suffers from the same contentious problem. The third largest economy of the world has an aggregate installed generation capacity of 250,000MW but actual generation is around 150,000MW. A point that distinguishes the two countries is that while serious efforts are being made in India to overcome the energy crisis, the

efforts being made in Pakistan are only cosmetic.

India is buying electricity from neighboring countries, has made arrangements to import LNG and also succeeded in acquiring nuclear energy technology for civilian use from the United States, in exchange for deserting the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline.

The other difference

successive governments have failed in constructing any mega size dam or hydroelectricity project since the completion of the Tarbela Dam in the mid-1970s. Water storage capacities of Mangla and Tarbela are on the decline due to accumulation of silt, resulting in the addition of more fossil oil based power plants.

As against this, India has remained busy in constructing dams and often faced allegations from Pakistan that the construction was

in violation of the Indus Water Treaty. It has also succeeded in adding wind and coal-based power generation to reduce dependence on fossil oil. India buys a substantial quantity of hydel power from its neighboring countries.

Bangladesh may not be rich in oil but has substantial reserves of natural gas. However, it has also not been successful in increasing electricity generation. It has one of the lowest per capita electricity consumption among the SAARC countries. As against this, Sri Lanka is a small country that enjoys high GDP but also suffers from an acute energy crisis. Bhutan, having mega hydroelectricity plants, produces surplus electricity which is exported to India. Nepal also exports electricity to India.

Cooperation among Bhutan, India and Nepal presents a model that can be emulated by Bangladesh and Pakistan. Bangladesh and India enjoy a cordial relationship, which gives reason for cooperation between the two countries. However, India and Pakistan are not likely to develop even a good working relationship due to the presence of hawks on both sides.

This leaves only one option for Pakistan: to mend its relationship with Iran which is already supplying electricity to Balochistan. Work on the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline is at a standstill due to Pakistan's inability to

mobilize funds to complete the part of the pipeline falling in its territorial limits.

The insurgency in Balochistan provided India with a reason to leave the IPI project while the TAPI project also faces a bleak future as the pipeline has to pass through war-torn Afghanistan and Pakistan, which India does not consider a reliable trading partner.

South Asia, having a huge population that is growing at a high rate, has to create new job opportunities. This is not possible without overcoming the energy crisis. Drastic structural changes have to be made for increasing availability along with revamping the transmission and distribution networks and coming up with long-term policies to ensure an uninterrupted supply of energy at an affordable cost.

Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal are bestowed with energy resources. Ironically, Nepal uses just 0.3 percent of its massive hydroelectric potential – one of the largest in the world. Only about 40 percent of its population has access to electricity.

In Bangladesh, less than 30 percent of people enjoy access to electricity, despite the country having up to 15 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Many of these blocks have been sold off to foreign companies for extraction and processing. The country still has ample reserves to meet its own energy needs, only if it can overcome the inclination to sell its natural resources to India.

South Asia is rich in energy resources, ranging from hydroelectricity and solar power to fossil fuels including coal. Nepal, Bhutan, India and Pakistan have massive hydropower potentials. Bangladesh has substantial gas reserves. India's coal deposits have been the engine for the country's economic growth, while those of Pakistan are yet to be exploited. Some Pakistani coastal areas have also been identified as having the potential to harness wind power. Diversity of these energy resources and cross-border trade could be a game-changer for the region. **S**

The writer is an economic analyst. He writes for various local and foreign publications.

Energy Future

The South Asian region must focus on the energy issue on a war footing to chart a future course of social and industrial success.

By Maha Kamal



During peak times in the summer, South Asia sees power cuts in a number of areas. Urban centers were gripped with blackouts for hours and hours, halting not only the daily lives of people, but also disrupting industrial processes. Power cuts, which signify a deeper problem of energy shortages in South Asia, are indicative of increasing demand pressures, which current energy supply levels are unable to battle. As population continues to rise, and urbanization levels continue to go up, the demand for energy will continue to rise in South Asia.

About 1.5 billion of the world's population is concentrated in South Asia, with millions of people living in conditions of energy poverty, and lack of access to energy continues to be a barrier to human development. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh fall under the top ten most populous countries, and future projections show that this number is only increasing. Correlated with this is an ever-increasing need for infrastructure development, and mass rapid transit systems, railway infrastructure etc. which are increasing the energy demand for transport in South Asia, a sector which may form the bulk of energy demand in the future. Projections from the Asian Development Bank predict that the energy demand for transport may go up to 192.8 Million Tonnes of Oil Equivalent (Mtoe). Moreover, demand pressures from rising population, industrialization and better energy access will take the total primary energy demand of South Asia to 1558.6 Mtoe by 2035.

For governments and policy-makers in South Asia, this has translated into a renewed focus on Energy Security. Energy Security, defined as a reliable supply of energy, at affordable cost, has been a cause of concern in the region and has seen a number of projects towards securing energy supplies. As the backbone for economic growth and development in the region, the future of energy will determine economic progress in South Asia.

India, as the second most populous country in the world, forms the bulk of energy consumption in the region as the fourth largest energy consumer in the world, after US, China and

Russia . With a GDP growth rate of about 7.5% over the last ten years, India's fuel imports are growing, as demand rises, and security of energy supply is put at risk. In fact, India's example can be seen as a microcosm of the problem that South Asian countries face as a whole, with similar problems in the energy sector because of a dependency on oil imports, which put the region at risk to geopolitics, volatile global market prices and greater geo political international competition . There is a wide range in oil imports in South Asia, with Bhutan meeting 25% of commercial energy consumption while Maldives, which lacks indigenous fossil fuel sources, the percentage is up to 100% . Countries such as India and Pakistan continue to exhaust their indigenous sources, and are looking at import options. In 2013, India imported 152 million tonnes , and with demand increasing, it is expected to go up to 200 million tonnes this year.

Coal is expected to continue to dominate the energy mix in India, as 54% of the total installed capacity for power generation is coal-based. However, coal as a dirty fuel has caused the ire of environmentalists because of its high ash content, mercury levels and greenhouse gas emissions. Coal's negative health and environmental effects for India also have transboundary repercussions. Areas downwind of coal power plants are subjected to the negative externalities of coal power generation. An example of this is the correlation of emissions from coal power plants with smog in areas on Punjab in Pakistan. Clean coal technology may become increasingly important in the region to reduce the negative impacts of coal. It is also encouraging for the region that tariffs for wind energy have reached parity with coal in India, and solar energy is expected to be cost-competitive with coal by 2018, according to an HSBC's 2013 report on renewables.

Before the transition from coal and oil to renewable energy is possible, natural gas, with its lower carbon emissions as a cleaner fuel, may be the mid-term solution for South Asian economies. Increasing demand for energy, and dwindling natural gas reserves will drive a need for natural gas imports in the region.

This is reflected in regional natural gas pipeline projects such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline (TAPI) and Iran-Pakistan (IP) pipeline project. However, success of pipeline projects in the region is strongly dependent on political will, which has not been the case in the past. In 2009, India withdrew from the Iran-Pakistan pipeline project, amid a nuclear deal with the United States. India had planned for 63000 MW of nuclear power capacity by 2032 , but the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011 drew concern over nuclear power in the region.


As South Asian countries' demand for natural gas rises, they will continue to be significant market share holders and will have to present a united front to strengthen their bargaining position on natural gas prices. In fact, the countries should learn from their past as in 2004 when the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline was under discussion, prices were around USD 4/mmbtu, but LNG prices from Qatar at present are now around \$19/mmbtu with shipping costs (estimates vary from country-country, depending on unique LNG price formulae). Buying energy under regional deals may prove to be more astute.

However, progress has been slow on pipeline projects owing to the contrasting political interests between international players, and financial pressures, such as financing and slow renegotiation on oil-indexed prices. As a result, all of India's natural gas imports are LNG-based, with contracts such as the one between the US company Cheniere and India's Gail being more competitive at \$10.5/mmbtu than projected pipeline prices which are oil-indexed. While there are talks of exploration of Shale Gas in the region, such as shale oil in the Cambay basin in India, the future of Shale Gas in South Asia will be determined by the regulatory policies of individual countries.

Power projects continue to be driven by high electricity demands in the region. Bhutan and India continue power trade, with hydropower exports from Bhutan, but there have been disputes between Nepal and India over electricity trade, including on slow of Nepal-India Electricity Transmission and Trade project

and that raises serious concerns for energy trade in the region. However, negotiations were also underway between India and Myanmar for a 500 MW hydropower project. Since 2013, India and Bangladesh have been cooperating on electricity trade with the completion of the first electricity grid interconnection among SAARC countries. South Asian countries will have to develop the tools and frameworks for better energy regulation in the region, since presently there is a vacuum on regional energy regulation. Without addressing the problems in regional energy trade, moving forward will be challenging.

There is no denying the importance of regional projects on energy as tools for increasing regional integration and cooperation, but slow progress shows that countries will have to address some key political and financial challenges. Greater regional cooperation on energy will be possible by recognizing common goals in the region, and the idea of environmental preservation while meeting energy demands will become increasingly important because of South Asia's vulnerability to Climate Change. By recognizing the need for sustainable development in the region, countries will have to move towards cleaner energy sources.

Current Energy patterns will have to change if economic development is to be sustainable in South Asia. South Asian economies cannot continue to be dependent on fossil fuels, such as oil whose prices are vulnerable to external political and economic shocks, and coal which is a cause for environmental concern. South Asian countries will have to diversify their energy mix, with special attention to regional cooperation on renewable energy. Higher efficiency and lower emissions will have to be the way forward for energy security in South Asia. Leadership in South Asia will have to move away from pocket-based short-term energy solutions towards sustainable energy for all. 

The writer is a graduate of Boston University and works as an Energy Analyst at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad.



The Sorry Tale of Power Deficits

**For a region that is developing swiftly, energy problems can only worsen
in the coming years.**

By S. M. Hali



Nature has blessed South Asia with an abundant supply of water, coal, wind and sunlight. Yet, the region faces an acute energy crisis. In some cases, the shortage has reached dangerous proportions. Some reasons for this chronic malaise are

poor planning, corruption, insufficient decision-making and bad governance. For a rapidly developing region, an acute energy crisis can impede growth. Before recommending the measures to resolve the problem, let us briefly examine the issue in the perspective

of the South Asian countries.

Bangladesh, which is estimated to have between 12 trillion and 15 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, provides electricity to only 30 percent of its population. For a country which is endeavoring to establish its name in

global textile markets, energy shortage is like a millstone around its neck. Bangladesh's installed electricity generation capacity was 10289 MW in January 2014; only three-fourth of this is considered to be 'available'. Problems in Bangladesh's power sector include corruption in administration, high system losses, delays in completion of new plants, low efficiencies of existing plants, inefficient distribution systems, erratic power supply, electricity theft, blackouts and shortages of funds for maintenance of power plants. A recent survey reveals that power outages in the country result in a loss of industrial output worth \$1 billion a year. This reduces the GDP growth of Bangladesh by about half a percentage point.

Bhutan produces most of its energy through hydroelectric means. The Chhukha hydel project, which harnesses the waters of the Raidak River, was one of the largest single investments undertaken in Bhutan. It was a major step towards exploiting the country's huge hydroelectric potential. The sale of surplus energy from the Chhukha project to India financed the venture. Since the completion of the Chhukha project in late 1980s, several other hydroelectric dams and generators were put into operation. In a few years, electricity had become the country's top export. In fact, Bhutan is the only South Asian country which has surplus energy. However, if the precious commodity is not managed prudently, Bhutan could face energy shortages in future.

India is accelerating its economy towards industrialization and has become a major power consumer. This has led to a shortfall in supply vis-à-vis demand, creating an energy shortage. India burns coal to produce 55 percent of its electricity. Domestic coal production increased just 1 percent last year while 11 percent additional power generation capacity was installed. Some power producers have been importing coal, but that option has become more untenable since India's biggest supplier, Indonesia, has reportedly doubled the price of coal. The current costs of various fuel options vary from \$4 per mmbtu for coal to \$20 per mmbtu for oil.

The gap between demand and supply in India has increased to 10.2 percent this year from 7.7 percent a year earlier. In some states, such

as Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, power cuts have become so common that many factories report getting more electricity from in-house diesel generators than they receive from the power grid - that too at a much higher cost. Retail rates for electricity are lower than the cost of producing and delivering it and the difference is made up by subsidies given by the Indian government. These subsidies run into hundreds of billions of rupees annually. India's civil nuclear energy accord with the U.S. is likely to reduce some of this shortfall but the country's voracious appetite for energy is insatiable.

The Maldives has no conventional energy resources (e.g. oil and gas) and utilizes imported petroleum fuel to meet its energy needs. Most urban households use LPG and kerosene for cooking. In the outer islands, the main source of energy for domestic purposes is biogas. Being dependent solely on tourism, the Maldives cannot afford power outages. Hence it meets its energy requirements through generators.

Nepal, which has the potential of producing 42,000MW economically viable hydropower, is currently producing less than 15,000MW electricity. This is far below the country's energy needs and results in frequent power outages. As a result, industrial growth is hampered. The country plans to generate 25,000 MW hydropower by 2030 to have 18,000MW exportable surplus energy. The long Maoist insurgency has also dealt a heavy blow to Nepal's energy plans. Hopefully, the bleak period is behind it now. India, a major trading partner of Nepal, has lent a helping hand in the area of power production with the aim to absorb the surplus energy produced by Nepal.

Pakistan is the worst hit of all South Asian countries as far as energy shortage is concerned. Poor planning and lack of timely decisions in executing power generation projects have propelled the country to a situation where 12 to 18 hours of load shedding is the norm in most parts of the country. Besides badly affecting the quality of life, the energy crisis has hit the economy and the industry is the worst victim.

A number of options are being exercised to reduce the shortfall. The gas pipelines from Iran and Turkmenistan, import of LNG from

Algeria, establishing nuclear power plants, utilizing coal reserves, construction of more dams and the energy hub at Gwadar, are some viable options. For the time being, the problem is so acute that it is endangering the current political dispensation's continuance in power.

Sri Lanka also suffers from power shortage but the causes are varied. The coal power stations suffer frequent breakdowns, while the country is dependent on rainfall for hydel power. The situation forces Sri Lanka to purchase power from private power plants at exorbitant rates. Sri Lanka's electricity tariffs are among the highest in the world with a kilowatt hour, or a household unit, costing up to 35 U.S. cents.

For a region that is developing swiftly, energy problems can only worsen in the coming years. To deal with the situation, swift institutional changes in the form of basic energy management, better transmission infrastructure, greater efficiency and something as rudimentary as the drafting of countrywide energy strategies are essential.

South Asia needs to address the problem of energy shortage on a war footing. Besides utilizing hydel sources where available, ample attention must be given to harness natural power sources, such as sunlight and wind. There is also a need for organizing the import of energy on more rational lines for the region to progress. Since the problem is common to all South Asian countries, collective action will be a practical option. The ideal platform for this would be the SAARC Energy Trade Study (SRETS), which has been completed with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank. It has identified four trade options which will be considered by the relevant SAARC mechanism in order to make a road map for implementation. The problem is the trust deficit between the member states. Bangladesh can benefit from India while Bhutan is keen to sell surplus energy to Pakistan but the latter is wary of India, from which the power cables will be routed. Close cooperation and mending differences to fight the energy crisis will benefit all. ■

The writer is a practising journalist. He contributes to the print media, conducts a TV show and produces documentaries.

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4-6 September 2014, Expo Centre Lahore
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Exhibition of Garment & Textile Technology
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23 - 25 April 2015, Karachi Expo Centre
13th International Exhibition for the Energy Industry
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Energy for Growth

Industrialization being the key for development, the hunger for power in South Asia is burgeoning.

By S.G. Jilane

The South Asian subcontinent has a population of about 1.6 billion. This huge mass of humanity needs an enormous amount of energy not only to light their homes and use comfort gadgets but, more importantly, for agricultural and industrial growth. Industrialization being the key for development, the hunger for power is burgeoning.

The problem of energy shortage is more acute in India and Pakistan because they are comparatively more industrialized. The main source of power generation in Bangladesh is its natural gas reserves. Currently, around 88 percent of the energy used for producing electricity in the country is obtained from natural gas, 4 percent from coal, 6 percent from oil and 2 percent from hydroelectric power. In 2011, Bangladesh reached an agreement with Russia to build a 2,000 MW nuclear power plant with two reactors, each of which would generate 1,200 MW.

India currently has an installed power generation capacity of 248,510 MW. Of this, 171,376 MW are generated by thermal sources and 72,354 MW by renewable means, out of which coal-fired plants account for 59 percent, renewable hydropower 17 percent, other renewable energy 12 percent and natural gas about 9 percent.

The average per capita consumption of electricity in India is estimated at 883.6 kwh. In 2009, it was 96 kwh in rural areas and 288 kwh in urban areas. This shows a significant increase in demand. Yet, more than one-third of India's rural population and 6 percent of its urban population lack electricity.

The figures available for 2010-11 show that the demand for electricity in India far outstripped supply. The

base load requirement was 861,591 million units against the availability of 788,355 mu – an 8.5 percent deficit. During peak hours, the demand was 122 gigawatt against the availability of 110 gw, a 9.8 percent shortfall. India's electricity demand is estimated to be at least 1392 tera watt hours by 2016-17, with a peak electricity demand of 218 gw.

Yet, India surpassed Japan and Russia to become the world's third largest producer of electricity in 2013 with a 4.8 percent global share in electricity generation. It is also among the world's most active players in renewable energy utilization.

Presently, 70 percent of its energy is generated from coal based power plants. Coal reserves in India are estimated at around 293.5 billion tonnes, natural gas resources 1330.26 billion cubic meters (as of March 2012) while renewable energy generation has a potential of 89,774 MW.

According to India's Planning Commission, by 2016-17, the country will manage an approximate 6.7 million tonnes of oil. But this will meet only 70 percent of the expected demand.

Pakistan's daily energy demand is around 15,000 to 20,000 MW against the supply of 12,000 MW. On a daily basis, there is a shortfall of approximately 8000 MW. This shortfall is responsible for economic destabilization in the country. Industrial production suffers because of long power outages. Some industrial units have installed private generators, but this increases their cost of production and they end up losing their competitive edge. Besides, long spells of darkness often bring people on the streets in violent protests.

The total installed capacity of electricity in Pakistan is 30,000 MW, of which 65 percent is obtained from fossil fuel, 31 percent from hydropower and 4 percent from nuclear power. Wind energy is a recent development with high promises.

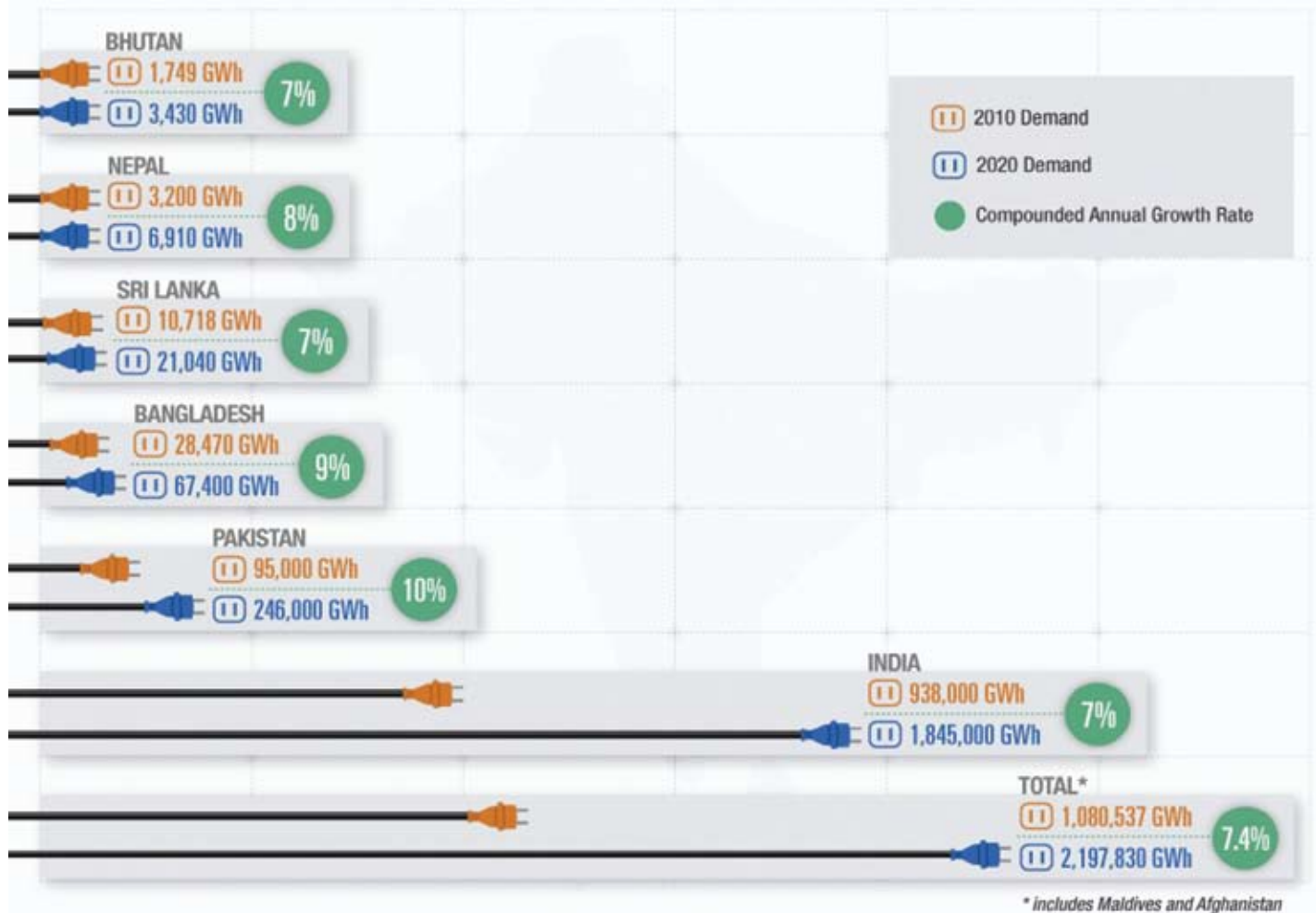
Pakistan's energy policy suffers from a lack of urgency, leading to slipshod planning and, above all, corruption. For example, there is an estimated 185 billion tonnes reserves of coal in the country, which is equivalent to 400 billion barrels of oil. But decades have passed since its discovery and yet no significant attempt has been made to tap this resource. Wind and solar energy are some other viable sources.

Pakistan has an ability to generate electricity up to 50,000 MW from wind power, especially in the coastal areas of Karachi, Thatta, Jiwani, Ghoro and Keeti Bandar, etc. where wind power has the production capacity of about 35000 MW. A beginning has been made with the installation of wind turbines at Jhimpir in Thatta but it will take a long time before the country fully exploits this resource.

Solar energy is one of the cheapest and important sources of power generation. Pakistan has a potential of generating "more than 100,000 MW" of electricity from this source. Many projects of developing solar energy plants are underway in Kashmir, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. The Alternative Electricity Development Panel has installed 20, 000 photovoltaic mineral water heaters in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Earlier, the PPP government, in a show of alacrity, went for rental power projects (RPPs) almost in a crazy fashion, signing contracts and

ENERGY DEMAND IN SOUTH ASIA BY 2020



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dishing out massive advances. The plan was to generate 2,700MW of electricity to reduce the shortfall. However, of the 19 RPPs that the government committed to, only one became operational as scheduled, adding only 62 MW of electricity to the national grid. The government paid Rs.16.6 billion to the RPPs in advance and created a liability of \$1.7 billion for itself through these contracts.

Ultimately, in May 2012, the Supreme Court declared the RPPs illegal and ordered them to be shut down. It also ordered those involved in the scam, including former Water and Power minister, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, to be prosecuted for massive corruption and causing huge losses to the public exchequer, by making 7

percent to 14 percent down payments amounting to about Rs22 billion to RPPs and purchasing electricity on higher rates. Accordingly, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and six others were indicted by an accountability court last January.

There was some hope that the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline would solve the problem of energy shortage. But it remains in the doldrums because the U.S. has threatened Pakistan with sanctions.

An alternative to the Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline Project is offered by the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas supply project. This has assumed renewed importance because of the energy crisis in Pakistan.

The project was started in 1995

but remained dormant due to internal instability in Afghanistan. This 1735 km pipeline with a maximum discharge of 33 billion cubic meters per year is still feasible and has been committed to by both Pakistan and Turkmenistan through a memorandum of understanding signed by the four countries in 2010. However, any progress on the project would depend on the political situation in Afghanistan.

South Asian countries, especially Pakistan, must improve electricity generation capacity on an immediate basis for their industrial development.

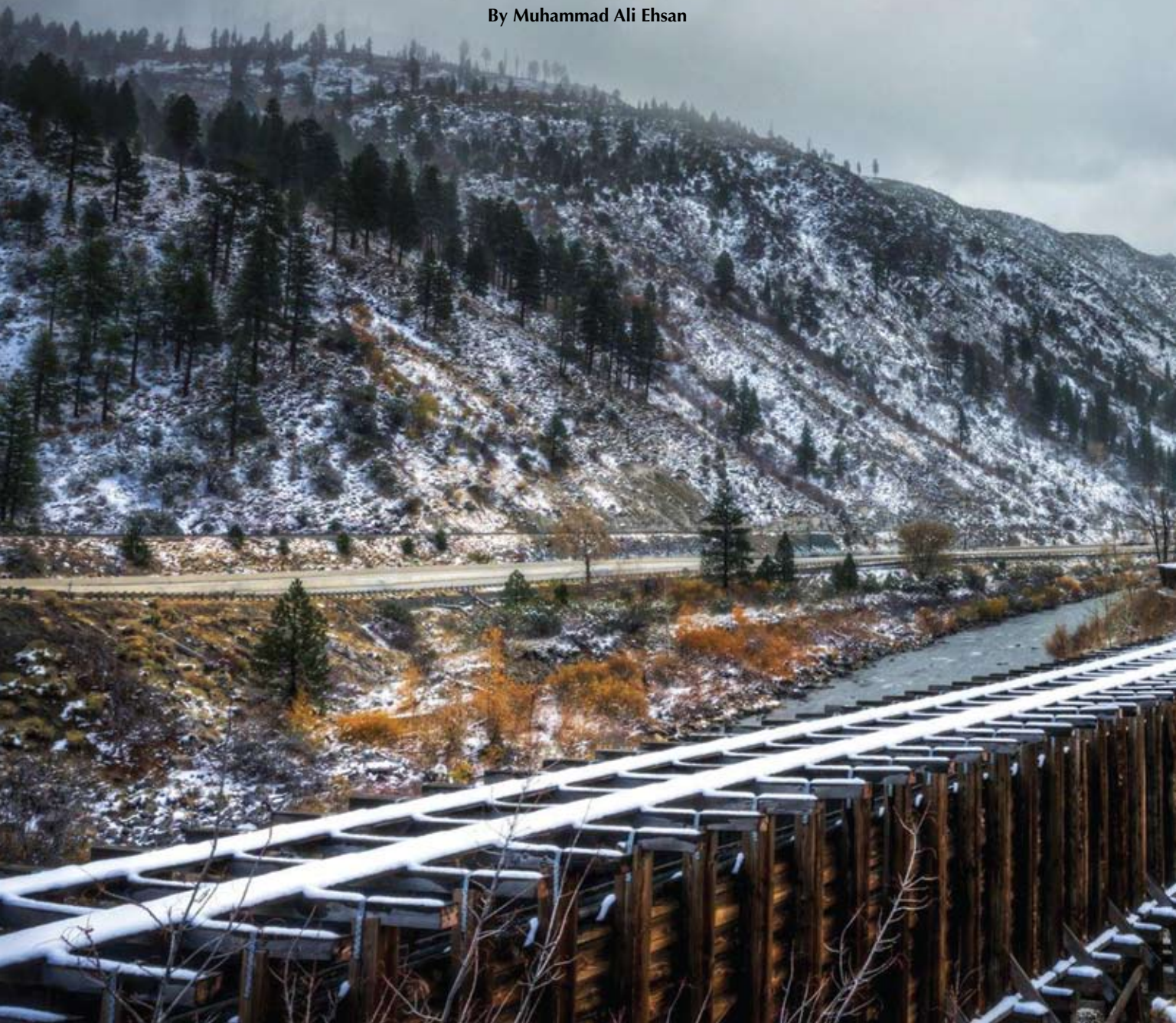
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The writer is a senior political analyst and former editor of Southasia Magazine.

Mega Rail Link

The proposed Pakistan-China railway line will usher in a new era of economic prosperity in the region.

By Muhammad Ali Ehsan





When it comes to Sino-Pak relations, India hardly ever looks favorably at the coziness between the two countries. In fact, many in India consider Pakistan as China's Israel in the region. Whenever faced with a difficult situation, Pakistan has always looked to China which almost always responded favorably to Pakistan's needs. The 'Beijing bend' towards Pakistan has a history.

If the pursuit of friendship and cooperation between China and Pakistan has been a never-ending goal, India's concerns about the two countries have been equally unrelenting. Whether it was the Pak-China demarcation and border agreement signed in 1963 or the construction of the 1300-km-long Karakorum Highway in the 1970s, India has never looked at such developments constructively, always objecting to them for being against Indian interests.

The Sino-Pakistan relations are viewed by India as a relationship that is more anti-Indian and 'military and strategic oriented'. India believes that the military-to-military contacts between the two countries are too deep. Little doubt that such a belief is based on some solid evidence. Had it not been for China's military assistance, Pakistan would have never been able to match India's conventional military capability.

It was China that became the largest supplier of military hardware to Pakistan when the Americans imposed sanctions in the 1990s.

Since then, Pakistan's missile program took an upward surge. The missile and nuclear capabilities of Pakistan have a lot to do with the technological assistance provided by China. In addition, Pakistan has handed over the control of the Gwadar Port to China – a move that gives tremendous strategic leverage to China, providing it an opening towards the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf as well as a view into India's western coast including Gujarat and Maharashtra.

It is against this backdrop that one should view the reported 'preliminary research study' undertaken by China to build an international rail link connecting the Chinese border province of Xinjiang to Pakistan. Acting as the latest strategic irritant, this 1800-km-long China-Pakistan

railway line is slated to be constructed in two phases over a period of the next five years.

In the first phase a 700-km-long rail link passing through the Karakoram Mountain ranges and the 4000-meters high Khunjareb Pass will be laid. Originating from Kashgar in China, this link will end at Havelian in Pakistan. In phase two, the railway line will be further extended. Passing through Islamabad, Lahore, Multan, Sargodha, Faisalabad and Karachi, it will reach its final destination – the Gwadar Port in Balochistan. The project has a completion time of five years. Obviously India is not happy and views the project as a joint attempt by China and Pakistan to undermine India's influence in Kashmir.

Since the railway line passes through Azad Kashmir, it would enhance the political and economic power status of China and Pakistan in a disputed territory. From India's perspective, this will undermine its claim on the Azad Kashmir territory. What makes

to 5000 meters above sea level. But then China has already achieved the feat of constructing the world's highest railway – a 710-mile-long line built at a height of 16000 feet that connects China with Tibet.

Will such a railway line usher in a new era of economic resurgence and prosperity in the region? How much damage will the project inflict on Indian interests? These are some of the questions asked by those who consider the commissioning of this railway line as an important game-changer in the region's future.

Some past 'Kashmir-specific actions' by China are the reason that the Indians feel little assured about the true nature of Chinese intentions. In 2008, China started giving stapled visas to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, suggesting that it considered Kashmir as a disputed territory. In September 2010, it refused a visa to Lt. Gen. Jaswal, the head of the Indian Army's Northern Command, on grounds that he was commanding

American announcement of the 'Asia-Pacific Pivot'. It will enhance the status of China which seeks direct access to the Arabian Sea through the Gwadar Port and strategic stability against both the U.S. and Indian navies in the Indian Ocean. Currently, 80 percent of the oil imported by China travels through the Indian Ocean and the Strait of Malacca. Being the world's second largest oil consumer and the largest oil importer, China needs to ensure that the oil supply from the Gulf continues into mainland China without going around India. More than anything else, the rail link will result in the loss of the strategic upper hand of the Indians and the Americans in the Arabian Sea.

For Pakistan, both the military and economic benefits of this ambitious project are tremendous. The country can construct and logistically support defense structures all along the railway line in Azad Kashmir. The project is likely to create thousands of jobs and economic activity and will go a long way in accommodating the aggrieved Baloch nationals in mainstream Pakistan. After its completion, Islamabad could actually emerge as the regional hub of economic activity.

However, there will be huge obstacles and challenges for both Beijing and Islamabad in materializing this mega project. Security challenges to the infrastructure and the security of Chinese engineers will be the most important concern. Baloch separatists, who enjoy the support of their external benefactors, may also not want the railway's commissioning in Balochistan. India would not like the military leverage the railway line will give to Pakistan in quick mobilization and transportation of its military along the 772 km-long LoC between India and Pakistan.

The Asia-Pacific region is on the threshold of a massive change. The China-Pakistan railway line, with all its known and unknown challenges and uncertainties, is a project whose completion will certainly enhance Pakistan's economic stature in the Asia Pacific region. ■

The writer is a retired lieutenant colonel of the Pakistan Army. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D in civil-military relations.

The construction of this railway line is going to be a difficult task as it passes through the Karakorum Range which has an altitude of 4000 to 5000 meters above sea level. But then China has already achieved the feat of constructing the world's highest railway.

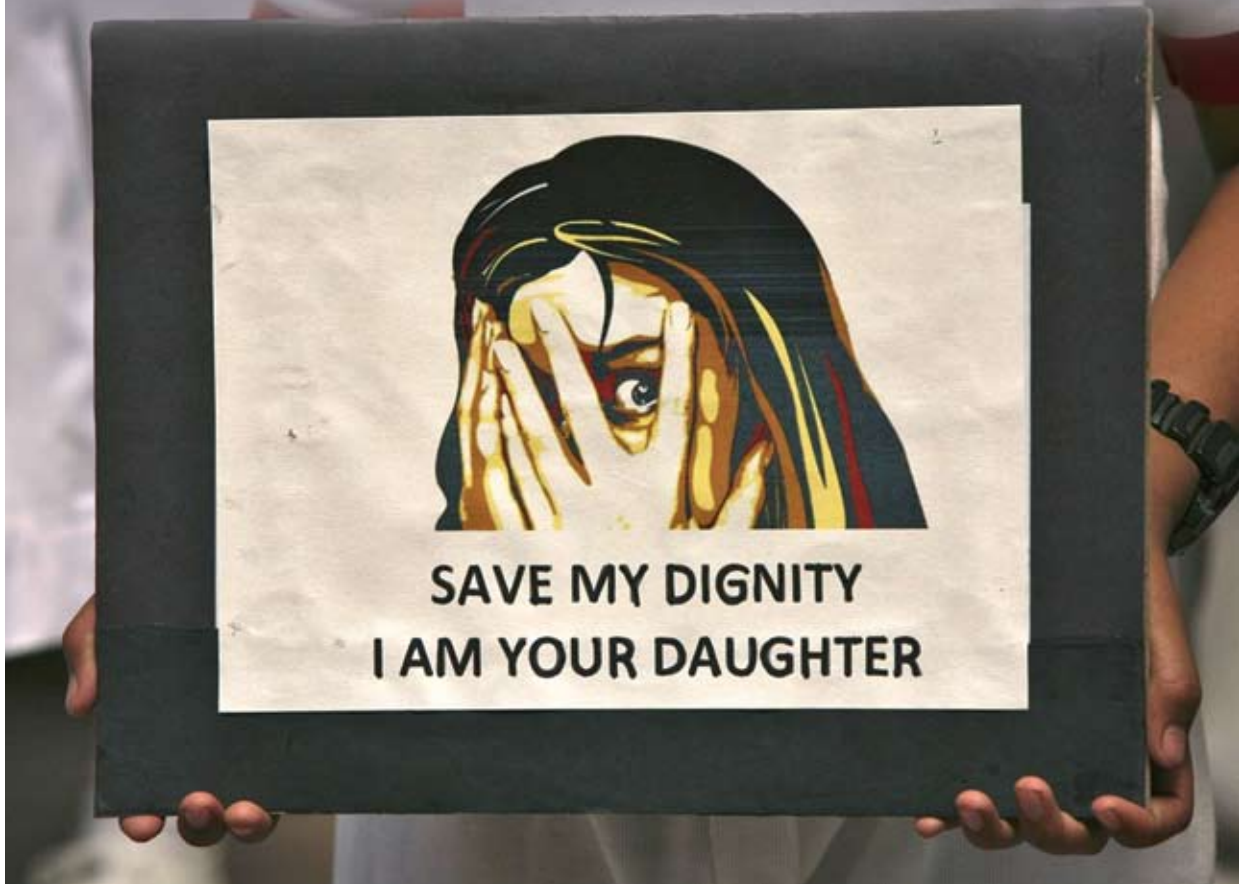
the situation more complicated is the fact that China occupies one-fifth of the original state of Jammu and Kashmir which makes it an important third party in the Kashmir dispute. In the 1962 war, China took control of some 38000 sq km of territory in Askai Chin, an area located in the western part of China, adjacent to the Xinjiang province. Pakistan further ceded 5180 sq km of northern Kashmir to Beijing in a border demarcation agreement in 1963.

Technically, the construction of this railway line is going to be a difficult task as it passes through the Karakorum Range which has an altitude of 4000

troops in a disputed area. Recently, China has shown Arunchal Pradesh as its own territory in the latest published maps, to which the government of India has officially protested. China even extended an invitation to Mirwaiz Farooq to visit China. It was deemed as a cold reminder to India of what China could do if the Indians didn't avoid interfering in matters related to Tibet. China has already stationed more than 50,000 troops in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

This proposed rail link between Pakistan and China has assumed immense strategic and military importance for China after the

Hall of Shame



With increase in sexual crimes against women, there has also been an increase in the number of politicians who have made thoughtless remarks about rape.

By Semu Bhatt

In 1995, in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a mob consisting of members of the Samajwadi Party attacked a guest house where the chief of the Bahujan Samajwadi Party, Mayawati, was staying. She locked herself in a room fearing rape. The chief of the SP Mulayam Singh Yadav infamously retorted, "Is she so beautiful that anyone should want to rape her?" Two decades later, this April, Mulayam showed that he is not a changed man when he trivialized rape by saying,

"Boys will be boys. Mistakes happen."

As if to prove right the saying 'like father, like son', Mulayam's son Akhilesh Yadav, the current Chief Minister of the northern state of UP, showed a casual approach to the horrific gang rape of two minor girls. The girls, aged 12 and 14, were raped and hanged from a tree on May 29 in the Badayun district of UP. The young CM alleged that the families of the victims were influenced by a rival political party. When a female journalist

inquired about the rise in sexual crimes in the state, Akhilesh snapped at her, "You haven't been harmed, have you?" His uncle, Shivpal Singh Yadav, who is also a minister in the UP government, blamed the media for blowing the story out of proportion.

In response to the comments made by SP leaders on the Badayun rape case, a Congress party leader Nitish Rane tweeted, "All potential rapists, please contact Samajwadi Party female members and family members as it's

ok to rape them. Enjoy." He deleted the tweet later, but justified it by tweeting that SP leaders should be spoken to in a language they understand.

The Badayun rape case and the controversial comments made by a string of political leaders, including those of the Bharatiya Janata Party, forced Narendra Modi to urge the lawmakers to stop psychoanalyzing the reasons behind sex crimes. In his first address to the Parliament after becoming the prime minister of India, Modi said, "We are playing with the dignity of women. Respect for women,

sexism, gender discrimination and apathy along with the foot in the mouth syndrome permeate the political class of India.

Those entrusted with lawmaking and safety of women hold a derogatory attitude towards women, make thoughtless references about rapes, stigmatize rape survivors, reinforce stereotypes and treat sexual violence against women in a flimsy manner. On the one hand, they ignore village councils ordering retributive rapes and forceful marriages to rapists; on the other hand, they use rape survivors

in the streets after two in the morning. BJP leader Banwari Lal Singhal believes that wearing skirts in schools leads to sexual harassment. It hardly occurs to them that none of these excuses explain the rape of children as young as two years old.

The solutions offered to control sex crimes are equally bizarre. Om Prakash Chautala, the former CM of Haryana, said that marrying off girls at an early age will prevent rape. The administration of Gurgaon, a town close to New Delhi, asked women not to venture out of home after 8pm to ensure their safety. BSP leader Rajpal Saini said, "There is no need to give phones to women and children. It distracts them. Why do women need phones?" The Anjuman Muslim Panchayat in a Rajasthan town pronounced that girls should not be allowed to use mobile phones in order to prevent them from getting involved with guys.

The appalling mindset of some male politicians is also evident from the way they have targeted women in politics. In 2012, Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam called Smriti Irani, the then national secretary of the BJP and currently the human resources development minister in the Modi government, a "thumke waali" (a derogatory term for a dancer). When Mayawati got herself a short haircut, Mulayam crassly called her "par kati aurat" (woman with no wings). Congress Party's Digvijay Singh referred to a female MP of his own party as "tunch maal" (pure goods). In December 2012, Anisur Rahman, a Communist Party of India (Marxist) MLA from West Bengal, mocked the TMC government's rape-compensation policy by asking how much CM Mamata Banerjee would charge for getting raped. Recently, TMC's Tapas Pal threatened the women of a rival political party with rape.

Women politicians are no better. Mamata Banerjee initially dismissed a 2012 gang rape in her state as a concocted incident to tarnish her government's image. Her party's MP, Kakoli Dastidar, termed the same incident as a deal gone wrong between the woman and her client. Asha Mirge, a member of the Nationalist Congress Party and the Maharashtra State Women's Commission, said, "Rapes take place also because of a woman's clothes, her behavior and her being at

The solutions offered to control sex crimes are equally bizarre. For instance, the administration of Gurgaon, a town close to New Delhi, asked women not to venture out of home after 8pm to ensure their safety.

their security should be the priority for all 1.2 billion people."

Sexual violence has been a hotly debated topic in India since the brutal gang rape and murder of a young physiotherapy student in New Delhi in December 2012. The incident sparked nationwide outrage and prompted the government to impose tougher laws against sex crimes. The protestors braved lathi charge, water cannons and tear gas shells in Delhi winter to demand women's safety. The success of mass protests in the Delhi gang-rape case inspired demonstrators in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh to join the movement against sexual violence and call for legal reforms and an overhaul of attitudes towards women in these countries.

Unfortunately, even harsher punishments and renewed protests from time to time have failed to cause a decline in sex crimes or to develop a political culture of intolerance to sexual violence. In a nation where a rape happens every hour, and where almost 90 percent of the rapes go unreported, political indifference to violence against women is endemic. Misogyny,

as political tools for mudslinging and settling political scores.

Sickening remarks like 'understandable crimes', 'unintentional', 'rapes do not happen on purpose', etc. emerge and go unchecked. Many times, sympathy too comes in an inappropriately worded fashion, like BJP's Sushma Swaraj's comparison of the Delhi gang rape victim with a living corpse.

Politicians give outrageous explanations for the rise in sexual violence in the country. Woman's behavior, her clothes, her lifestyle, her stars, television programs, mobile phones, lingerie-clad mannequins and even chowmein and meat get blamed for the rise in the tendency in men to launch sexual assaults. Many question the propriety of women wearing short skirts and going out of the home late at night. Botsa Satyanarayana, a Congress party leader, said in 2012, "Just because India achieved freedom at midnight does not mean that women can venture out after dark." Ashoke Ghosh of the Trinamool Congress criticized a Kolkata rape survivor, claiming that no woman from an ordinary family is out

inappropriate places."

Rape apologists are not limited to the political class only and can be found even among those who claim to champion the cause of women. This was evident in the high profile case of Tarun Tejpal, a highly influential and powerful editor, who was accused of rape by his young colleague last year. The well-wishers of Tejpal orchestrated a media campaign that revolved around character assassination of the young journalist.

The scrutiny of sexual violence in India has grown since the Delhi gang rape and the people are increasingly getting impatient with the state's lax attitude towards women's safety. Yet, there is a long way to go before India witnesses a drastic fall in sex crimes, as the menace needs to be addressed on multiple levels. Change in the political attitude, though a must, cannot be achieved without addressing the underlying cultural and social issues plaguing the nation, as

politicians are also a part of the same society. However, the huge popular outcry, especially over the social media, ensures that the political parties distance from the views of their leaders and are forced to retract and apologize for their insensitive comments. In a country like India, this is no mean achievement. **S**

The writer is a Mumbai-based independent strategic analyst and author.



Sushilkumar Shinde
Congress leader

"This kind of rape should not occur."



Mamata Banerjee
Chief Minister of West Bengal

"Rape cases are on a rise in the country because men and women interact with each other more freely now."

"Many crimes against women happen within the confines of homes. Is it possible to have a policeman in every household?"



R. R. Patil
Maharashtra State Home Minister

"Rape is a social crime which depends on men and women. Sometimes it is right, sometimes it is wrong."



Babu Lal Gaur
Madhya Pradesh Home Minister

"The rape of grown up girls and women might be understandable, but if someone does this to an infant, it is a heinous crime and the offenders should be hanged."



BJP MP
Ramesh Bais

"In many places, when the relationship between girls and boys comes out in open, it is termed as rape."



Ram Gopal Yadav
Samajwadi Party leader

"They are dented and painted women chasing two minutes of fame, giving interviews on TV."



Congress MP
Abhijit Mukherjee

Panchsheel Politics

Although the Chinese project the Panchsheel as the cornerstone of their foreign policy, many in India are questioning the relevance of the five principles.

By Huzaima Bukhari & Dr. Ikramul Haq

On June 28, 2014, India and China, being signatories of the Panchsheel Agreement, celebrated its 60th anniversary, exchanging greetings and pledging to promote its aims. The concept of the Five Principles (Panchsheel) – mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence – has special significance for the Chinese as they project it as the cornerstone of their foreign policy.

For India, it is more a matter of ritualism. Therefore, many critics question its relevance. The majority of Indians consider the Panchsheel as unfavorable while only a few think that it can improve the equation between India and China – two fast-emerging powers that share long physical borders but conflicting geostrategic interests.

For the 60th anniversary of the Panchsheel, India and China decided to set the year 2014 as the India-China Friendship and Exchange Year. Both countries will hold a series of events to commemorate this important milestone. The Vice President of India, M. Hamid Ansari, while addressing the Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of Panchsheel in the Great Hall of People in Beijing, said that it was a very special occasion.

While Ansari expressed optimism about the future of the Panchsheel, a large majority of Indian analysts are rather skeptic and have reservations about what they call 'the real intentions of China'. Some have already asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reconsider his scheduled visit to China in September 2014. A section of the Indian media has alleged that "while the Indian VP was in Beijing, a new map showing Arunachal Pradesh

as part of China was released along with the Chinese Army's incursions in Ladakh."

In a hard-hitting article, R. N. Ravi, a former special director of the Intelligence Bureau with 20 years of experience of China, asserted that "the Panchsheel Agreement is *damnosa hereditas*, a dark legacy bequeathed by Nehru to India."

Similarly, Ram Madhav, a member of the Central Executive Committee of the RSS and author of *'Uneasy Neighbours: India and China after Fifty Years of the War'*, observed that "the biggest problem in Sino-Indian relations is the utter lack of ingenuity and innovativeness." He said that even after six decades of the Panchsheel and five decades after the bloody disengagement due to the 1962 War, leaders of both countries could not find

"new and out-of-the-box answers to the problems plaguing their relationship."

Ram Madhav says that the Panchsheel was signed as a treaty of peaceful coexistence over the obituary of Tibetan independence. That was why parliamentarian Acharya Kripalani said that the agreement was "born in sin." According to him, the Panchsheel met its end when the Chinese were found violating Indian borders in Ladakh. A formal death note was written by Mao Zedong a few months before the 1962 War, when he told Zhou that what India and China should practice is not "peaceful coexistence" but "armed coexistence."

The war that followed ended with humiliation and loss of territory for India, leaving behind a massive border dispute that continues to haunt the two countries. However, this did not deter



Essence of the Panchsheel Agreement

The 1954 Panchsheel Agreement came at the peak of the 'Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai' (Indian-Chinese brotherhood) phase in bilateral relations. Five years later, Delhi and Beijing began to squabble over Tibet and fought a brief war in late 1962. Nehru was unwilling to renew the agreement, which lapsed after eight years in early 1962. Speaking a few years after Nehru's death, his close confidant and defense minister, Krishna Menon criticized the deification of the five principles. If the Panchsheel, in Menon's words, became "a mantra, slogan and a prop" for India, it was very central to communist China's worldview.

The essence of the five principles figured prominently in Mao Zedong's proclamation of the new republic on October 1, 1949. Mao was cautioning the west against intervention, reassuring them that the new China would not destabilize Asia. When it came to India, the five principles had great salience, for Mao had no reason to accept Delhi's special relationship with Tibet and the multiple privileges that the government of India had inherited from the Raj. For Mao and his able premier, Zhou Enlai, the Panchsheel was about getting India to accept Chinese sovereignty in Tibet.

The Panchsheel formed the basis of India-China relations since the early 1950s and was officially expounded on April 28, 1954 in the agreement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India on trade between the Tibet region of China and the Republic of India. The basic objective behind signing the agreement was to promote trade and cultural exchanges between Tibet and India and to facilitate pilgrimage and travel for the people of China and India.

Additionally, these principles became the main reference point in the China-Myanmar bilateral relations and later, in April 1955, these five principles were also incorporated in the 10-point declaration on 'the promotion of world peace and cooperation' issued in the Bandung Conference. The significance of the Panchsheel can be gauged from the fact that these five principles were unanimously adopted by the United Nations on December 11, 1957, as a code of conduct in international relations.

the Indian and, to some extent, the Chinese leadership in continuing with what Madhav called "the deception of the Panchsheel." The history of Sino-Indian relations in the last five decades, he says, is replete with instances of violations of sovereignty,

mutual animosity, attempts to upstage each other and a general ill-will. The Chinese have mostly been on the wrong side of the so-called Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

Though expressing his disillusionment with the Panchsheel,

Ram Madhav still believes that India and China can cooperate with each other on the principles of sovereign equality and mutual sensitivity and Modi and Xi can chart a new course in Sino-Indian relations "if they are prepared to unshackle themselves from ritualism and symbolism. Both have the ability and the support to do it."

Seema Sengupta, a Kolkata-based journalist and columnist, observed that "perhaps no other Sino-Indian treaty had such a significant impact in evolving an environment of mutual trust, security and confidence than the Panchsheel Agreement of 1954." However, she said it was not conceptualized as a confidence building measure in terms of security given the fact that the treaty was all about streamlining Sino-Indian trade cooperation in Tibet. It entailed movements across the border by local traders and pilgrims without passports and visas. In reality, the agreement effectively put an end to Tibet's existence as a distinct nation state. She says that skeptics argue that the Panchsheel left the door ajar for China to militarily dominate the strategic Tibetan plateau and, in fact, the Chinese military establishment wasted no time in building a vast network of roads and airstrips that stretched up to India's northeastern frontier. This is what India perceives as Beijing's continued 'aggressive posture'.

One may safely conclude that commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Panchsheel Agreement seems to be nothing more than an attempt by the Chinese to refute theories associated with the so-called China threat and convince India and other countries of its 'peaceful development'. It is still doubtful whether the Panchsheel can help resolve long-standing differences – in this context it has certainly lost its relevance. However, Delhi and Beijing can agree to modernize the infrastructure at the Nathu La Pass connecting Tibet and Sikkim and initiate full-fledged trade along with finding ways to expand the current limited opportunities for Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims who want to visit places of worship on both sides of the border. ■

The writers, partners in law firm Huzaima & Ikram, are adjunct faculty members at the Lahore University of Management Science.

After the failure of its military misadventure in Afghanistan, that cost well over \$350 billion and the lives of 1400 U.S. and 400 British soldiers, the Obama administration seems to be in a hurry to exit Afghanistan, leaving behind a legacy of anarchy and threat of a potential relapse to the internecine warfare witnessed in late 1990s. Hamid Karzai, who was catapulted as a leader of Afghanistan and was often called 'the man of the hour' after the defeat of the Taliban in the wake of U.S. blitzkrieg, would also leave his position after 13 years. When he steps down, many in the west would be relieved to see him clearing the deck.

An educated person and head of a strong Pashtun tribe, Hamid Karzai was surrounded by pro-west followers. In western capitals, he was seen as the new Afghan hero. His anti-Taliban credentials before 9/11 and lobbying for international assistance to dislodge them endeared him to world leaders. But as time passed and the events turned out quite differently from what the U.S. administration had expected, the marriage between Karzai and his western benefactors was jeopardized and ultimately ended with a painful divorce. Perhaps a recap of the events that led to this transformation would not be out of place to understand the current situation in Afghanistan and what the future holds for it.

Karzai was installed as president of Afghanistan in December 2001 after the defeat of the Taliban. His position was the result of both the U.S.' approval and consultations among representatives of major Afghan tribes. The Afghan Loya Jirga endorsed his appointment as president of the Afghan Transitional Administration in 2002 and he became the full-fledged president of Afghanistan in 2004 after the elections. Initially, international leaders were impressed with him and felt that he was capable of delivering. However, their perception waned by the next elections in 2009. The U.S. administration wanted him out and even tried to manipulate the results, but couldn't achieve its objective.

The nosedive in the relations between Karzai and western leaders, especially U.S. leaders, is attributable to the failure of the international community to honor its commitments in Afghanistan. The relations between the U.S. administration and Karzai were much more convoluted than



The Day After

Many in western capitals will be happy to see Hamid Karzai leave the presidency.

By Malik Muhammad Ashraf





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they seemed. However, despite the ever widening gulf between the two sides on the purposes and modalities of achieving the ambitious objective of rebuilding and reconstructing Afghanistan, they continued to work together. In the early years of Karzai's presidency, millions of refugees returned to their native land, the economy showed signs of recovery, schools reopened and a number of NGOs participated in the socio-economic development of Afghanistan. A semblance of peace also returned to the country.

The relations between Karzai and the west started to strain when the Taliban staged a comeback due to weak administration in Kabul and inability of the coalition forces to maintain peace. By 2006, militants had reclaimed territories in southern, eastern and central Afghanistan. Karzai, who had turned into a maverick from being an errand boy of the west, was involved in a row with the British government over its political and military strategy to contain the Taliban onslaught. He became increasingly critical of the unfulfilled promises of the world community. Karzai also raised an accusing finger at Pakistan, blaming it for the re-emergence of the Taliban. He was bitter about the U.S.' inability to stop Pakistan from allegedly supporting the Taliban – a charge which Pakistan vehemently denied. Karzai survived four assassination attempts on his life between September 2002 and April 2008.

To push back the Taliban, the U.S. and NATO forces made excessive use of air power. That caused enormous civilian casualties, which irked Karzai very much. During the air raids in 2007, 1500 people were killed whereas in 2008 more than 2000 people lost their lives. Karzai threatened to ground the U.S.-NATO war planes and helicopters that were being used to massacre civilians. Another element which contributed to the straining of relations between Kabul and the west was the system of government chosen by Karzai.

Instead of relying on building institutions, he put his faith in influential individuals and power brokers. That was quite contrary to what the west had wanted him to do. Karzai also had repeated rows with Washington about aid to Kabul, subsidies for the security forces and the number of U.S. soldiers and bases in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the U.S.-NATO forces;

a major reason for his refusal to sign the BSA. The U.S. administration also accused Karzai's younger brother of involvement in drug deals.

The dilemma of western leaders was that they had no alternative to Karzai. Apparently, Karzai's change of mind and his refusal to play the game according to the rules drawn up by his western mentors stemmed from his desire to change the perception of his being a U.S. puppet and his conscious effort to remain relevant to the future political scenario in Afghanistan.

To get even with Pakistan, his government – that enjoyed the support of Indian intelligence agencies – provided sanctuaries to the TTP leadership in Afghanistan and encouraged it to launch attacks on targets within Pakistan, notwithstanding the invaluable role of Pakistan in bolstering intra-Afghan dialogue by releasing a number of important Taliban leaders. During the 8th Trilateral Summit in Ankara, Karzai had himself acknowledged the positive role played by Pakistan and promised to make sure that Afghan soil would not be used for launching terrorist attacks on Pakistan. Consequently, there was a little lull in his anti-Pakistan rhetoric.

However, earlier this year, during his visit to India to participate in the oath-taking ceremony of the Indian prime minister, he again accused Pakistan of being involved in an attack on the Indian consulate in Afghanistan. Pakistan, on the other hand, fulfilled its commitment to remain neutral during the presidential elections and also sealed the Pak-Afghan border.

Although Hamid Karzai will no more be at the helm of affairs once the new Afghan government takes charge, there is no denying the fact that he has been able to refurbish his image to a great extent. He has emerged as an influential player on the political chessboard of Afghanistan. With a strong tribal backing and support of powerbrokers, all of which seems to have worked in favor of Ashraf Ghani in the run-off stage, Karzai would still be in a position to exercise his influence in the future scheme of things, provided the wrangling over the rigging issue in the run-off stage is amicably resolved before the scheduled transfer of power this month, failing which the country is likely to plunge into yet another unending conflict between different factions, with the Taliban already having upped the ante. **S**

The writer is a freelance columnist.

Social Diary

I define beauty as
'Confidence'
#Makeup artist #Interview

MATHAM

The
ridiculous
rush for

Benefits of
vegetable
juices in winter

5 tips to take care
for expensive
oil paintings

It is the mag of
modern era

Pakistan
OBSERVER

A Matter of Religious Freedom

A group of monks seems to have turned the values of Buddhism upside down by resorting to militancy in the name of religion.

By Hussain H. Zaidi

The contemporary world is characterized by two conflicting phenomena. On the one hand is globalization, which seeks to create a global culture based on North American-West European values, such as liberal democracy, free market economy and multilateral economic integration, regardless of creed or ethnicity. The other phenomenon, which, in part, is a reaction against globalization, entails assertion of particular identities, such as religion, sect, race and language.

Referred to as identity politics, this phenomenon embodies a claim to power based on a particular creed or ethnicity. In its softer forms, identity politics stands for safeguarding the rights of a community, usually a minority or a marginalized one, by a peaceful, constitutional struggle. At times, however, identity politics goes berserk and fanatically seeks power for a community by means fair or foul, peaceful or sanguinary. And if that community already happens to be in a pre-eminent position, it may seek total domination even if it means annihilating the weaker identity. A case in point is the organization named Bodu Bala Sena based in Sri Lanka.

Before throwing light on the BBS, it seems in order to look at the ethnic and religious demographics of the island state.

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is a multicultural society with regard to both creed and ethnicity. Buddhism is the dominant religion practiced by nearly two-third of the population. It is followed by Hinduism (12.6 percent), Islam (9.7 percent), and Christianity (7.4 percent). Though not a state or official religion, Buddhism has been accorded a special place by the

Sri Lankan Constitution.

Article 9 of the Constitution reads: "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Articles 10 and 14(1)(e)."

Article 10 states: "Every person is entitled to freedom of thought,

conscience and religion, including the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice." Article 14(1)(e) supplements this provision by adding that every citizen is entitled to "the freedom, either by himself or in association with others, and either in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

Thus the Constitution of Sri



Lanka makes it obligatory upon the state to give preferential treatment to Buddhism, while at the same time it is the constitutional duty of the state to ensure freedom of conscience and its expression for the followers of other religions. While the state is to protect and promote only Buddhism, the same should not be done at the expense of other religions. For example, the state may set up Buddhist monasteries but it should also see to it that mosques, churches or (Hindu) temples are not demolished for sectarian reasons.

Ethnically, the island nation is divided into two main groups: the Sinhalese and the Tamils on the basis of Sinhala (an Aryan language) and Tamil (a Dravidian one), respectively. The former make up 75 percent while the latter account for 11 percent of the population. The Sinhalese, the biggest ethnic group, and the Buddhists, the predominant creed, are mutually inclusive: About 93 percent of the Sinhalese profess Buddhism and more than 99 percent of the Buddhists speak Sinhala. Sinhalese folklore enthrones

Buddhist heritage as the very pillar of the cultural and political edifice of Sri Lanka.

Likewise, a close connection exists in Sri Lanka between the Tamils and the other two major religions, Hinduism and Islam. About 80 percent of Tamils are Hindus. More than 90 percent of Muslims speak the Tamil language.

Thus, if we combine ethnicity and creed, Sinhalese Buddhists are easily the dominant community in Sri Lanka. And it is the Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism that the BBS (translated as Buddhist power) espouses. The nationalism entails supporting militancy against the minorities, particularly the Muslims, to preserve the dominance of the Buddhist-Sinhalese majority. Like the Buddhist Arakanese in Myanmar, the BBS alleges that the Muslim population is growing at an 'alarmingly' high rate thus posing a threat to the Buddhists. It also charges the Muslims as well as the Christians with converting the Buddhists to their respective creed.

Thus harping on the theme of an 'impending' threat to Buddhist-Sinhalese domination, the BBS is whipping up anti-minorities' (read anti-Muslim) sentiments. In utter disregard of the country's multicultural credentials, the BBS wants to set up a monolithic polity. In the words of BBS General Secretary Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara, "This is a government created by Sinhala Buddhists and it must remain Sinhala Buddhist. This is a Sinhala country, Sinhala government. Democratic and pluralistic values are killing the Sinhala race." Few statements can be more destructive for pluralism as this one.

Accordingly, the BBS has sought to replace the multiple legal systems being practiced in the country with a single legal system. It has also campaigned, and with a lot of success, against halal labeling on food, which it sees as an attempt to impose Islamic cultural values on the majority

community; it has also demanded boycott of Muslim-owned businesses. It has carried out attacks on mosques and has supported Muslim persecution in Myanmar. As a perfect index of the BBS mindset, the organization's Facebook page depicts a lion, which traditionally symbolizes the Sinhalese, as devouring a wild boar carrying a crescent and star on its forehead.

Critics allege that the government has been soft on the BBS, if not in connivance with it, so that the ruling party may keep intact the electoral support of the majority Buddhist-Sinhalese community. They point out that the BBS' cultural and training centre in Galle District was officially opened on March 9, 2013 by Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, who is the brother of President Mahinda Rajapaksa. It is also alleged that Gotabhaya Rajapaksa is the patron of the BBS.

Aptly branded as an "ethno-religious fascist movement from the dark underside of Sinhala society" by a Sri Lankan diplomat, the BBS is undermining the very fabric of the Sri Lankan society. It's hard to understand why in a country in which Sinhalese-Buddhists are already clearly dominant both numerically and politically, an organization needs to champion their cause and that too in such a violent and fanatical way.

For a multiethnic society in particular, such as Sri Lanka, few things are as lethal as a 'church' gone militant. Religious fanaticism if not checked can wreak havoc. Sri Lanka itself was the theater of a three-decade long ethnic war, which claimed thousands of lives before coming to an end in 2009. This makes the activities of the BBS a dire threat to the island state's long-term stability. Human rights organizations have also warned that the BBS' anti-Muslim campaign may stoke 'Islamic fundamentalism' in the country.

Like other great religions of the world, Buddhism preaches tolerance and puts its complete trust in non-violence. In Buddhism, the word 'Sila' refers to principles of ethical behavior and the first principle or precept is to refrain from taking life. But by resorting to militancy in the name of religion, a bunch of monks seems to have turned the values of Buddhism upside down. ■

The writer is a freelance contributor.



The Big Question

By standing on the sidelines to maintain neutrality, Nepal will gradually lose its usefulness to its highly competitive and ambitious neighbours.

By Asna Ali

Today's world is vastly different from what it used to be a few decades ago. The era of a polarized world in which smaller countries aligned themselves with one superpower or the other is gone. Instead, regional powers are emerging in all parts of the globe, amassing political and economic clout in the power vacuum left by the United States. Granted, the U.S. is still a heavyweight to be reckoned with but the war on terror and the recent financial crisis has left it somewhat crippled.

Meanwhile, post-Cold War Russia is on a mission to regain its influence and the first step towards achieving this goal is to become important regionally. India and China are also following a similar path so it is not surprising at all that these countries are coming together to form various trade and security organizations and forge cooperation agreements.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is one such block. Previously known as the Shanghai Five, the organization is composed of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan joined the body in 2001 while Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Mongolia and Iran have observer status in the body. In terms of resources and geographical mass, the sheer human population covered by the SCO is formidable. If some or all of the observer states become members, the SCO will comprise half of the world's population living in countries that are becoming important on the world stage for one reason or another. As India, Russia and China continue with their quest to become military and economic giants, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan are viewed with

trepidation because of the potential threat their volatility poses to the world.

By conducting frequent joint military exercises and negotiating security treaties to work against the threats of 'terrorism, separatism and extremism,' the SCO has shown its desire to increase its military standing both in the region and internationally despite claims that there are no plans to form a military bloc.

However, the SCO has not restricted itself to security related agreements only. Economic cooperation is also high on its agenda. The global financial crisis presented a good starting point to the SCO to come up with a more resilient banking and financial system. Member states have also expressed their interest in acquiring a bigger quota in the IMF. More recently, the New Development Fund has been formed by BRICS nations - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

The NDF has its headquarter in Shanghai and seeks to become an alternative to the World Bank and the IMF. While such an ambitious plan may take time, the NDF does have a close link with the SCO and this will further strengthen the position of its member states in the region. It will also encourage smaller nations in Asia, which are currently dependent on international funding for economic survival, to forgo help from the IMF and turn to neighboring countries for bailout money and development funds.

The SCO has certainly been positioning itself as an alternative to the west since its inception. Its show of military might could be construed as a way to discourage entry of western



forces into Central Asia. There have been no direct threats to western powers but in its observer status, Iran has used the platform to express hostile views towards the United States. Currently, no western country has membership or observer status with the SCO.

Given this scenario, several regional countries have been angling for the membership of the SCO. Nepal is among them and has a very strong rationale for joining the organization. After wading in the democratic process for the past several years, Nepal is finally finding its feet by establishing ties with several nations. It is felt by analysts that Nepal's image has suffered in recent years due to internal discord after the abolishment of the monarchy and the country's initial forays into democracy.

Nepal is well on its way towards establishing a firm democratic process and its success in this regard will be partially measured by its ability to take on board the international community in a manner most suitable to its own particular needs. The government



has shown a willingness to pursue diplomacy as a means to furthering Nepal's international interests.

As Nepal has both China and India as its neighbours, there is simply no way for it to avoid dealing with them. Also, it wouldn't be a prudent foreign policy tactic if either one of these heavyweights was ignored. Both countries have the political and economic clout to help Nepal in its bid for progress. They also have a greater interest in Nepal's well-being than western powers for whom the country may be relatively insignificant.

Inside Nepal, there is a desire for the country to take up a clear foreign policy stance and position itself in alliances that can support it through economic upheavals. In the wake of the war on terror and the global financial crisis, the world stage is uncertain in terms of both security and economic stability. Any sudden change in conditions could sweep away smaller countries with the tide since they do not have the depth of military or monetary resources necessary to withstand such pressures.

Threats to the stability of countries are not just appearing on the ground these days. International boundaries have become more fluid since the world has become digitally connected. This has led to an increase in cyber crimes and has also helped those who use the internet to carry out their illegal activities. The SCO has taken an active stance in protecting its member states from such threats and its capabilities in this area could help Nepal as well.

However, while there has been talk of Nepal joining the SCO for the past several years, this cannot take place without collective political will and a strong foreign policy. For a fledgling economy, it is just not possible to flourish in the current climate without the help of trade and cooperation agreements. Globalization, like everything else, works on the principle of give and take. By standing on the sidelines in an effort to remain neutral, Nepal will gradually lose its usefulness to its highly competitive and ambitious neighbours.

Under the circumstances, the best

course of action for Nepal is to make active and concrete efforts to join the SCO and fully take advantage of the various benefits offered by its member states. In the future, the NDF could also serve as a useful monetary resource for the country.

The rationale for joining the SCO is very strong and it is up to Nepal's current leadership to prove to the organization's members that by accepting it into their ranks they will not just be taking on dead weight and that Nepal will be able to actively contribute towards the greater good of all member states.

A broad political consensus among various stakeholders of the Nepalese government is the key to the success of its foreign policy. In addition, there is also a need to overhaul and improve the country's diplomatic infrastructure to build a more positive international image. ■

The writer is a business graduate. She has interest in political and social issues.

CONDOLENCE



(1928-2014)

APNS expresses profound grief over the sad
demise of A Towering Figure of the Print Media
in Pakistan, Our Veteran Colleague

Majid Nizami
(Former President APNS & CPNE)

Publisher / Chief Editor of

Nawa-i-Waqt Group of Publications

May Allah the Almighty rest his soul in eternal peace
and grant courage to the family to bear the loss.



All Pakistan Newspapers Society



Critical Times

A successful nuclear deal between the six powers and Iran would have helped the country develop the capacity to fight the ISIS threat.

By Taha Kehar

The deadline to reach a comprehensive agreement on the future of Iran's nuclear capability was set for July 20. However, the constant tussle of priorities and the iron hand of diplomacy have undermined

the negotiation period. The six world powers – the U.S., Russia, France, China, Germany and Britain – have failed to adopt a concrete policy to prevent Iran from building a nuclear bomb.

Despite the growing concern over Iran's nuclear program, there have been many gridlocks in reaching a compromise. The sticking point is that the key players are making a concerted effort to avoid liability.

Iranian and U.S. officials have paid lip service to the significance of the nuclear deal. Although these press statements reflect the willingness of the negotiating parties to cooperate, they are inevitably a sign of inactivity.

Some of the key players have already made unrealistic demands that have weakened the scope for an agreement.

Recently, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif categorically stated that western powers were playing “a game of chicken” by making last-minute concessions. According to Zarif, the west wants the Iranian people to succumb to pressure and submit to its demands. The Iranian foreign minister insists that the six powers must accept Iran’s proposed nuclear enrichment program. If they fail to do so, Tehran will not assist them in combating militancy in Iran.

At this critical juncture, it is important to break through the political impasse and reach a cohesive solution. The six world powers and Iran have exacerbated the negotiation stage.

Moreover, there is a question of priorities that continues to loom over the nuclear talks. The fundamental motive of striking a deal is to reduce international sanctions on Iran’s economy on the condition that the country does not enhance its nuclear capability. Interestingly, Iran has denied any intention of building a nuclear bomb. There is a growing concern that the talks will follow a similar rhetoric and provide no hope for a tangible solution.

President Barack Obama has identified the nuclear deal as a major national security priority. However, there are many elements of the agreement which have not been finalized. For instance, the negotiating parties have failed to ascertain the number of centrifuges Iran will be allowed to operate to enrich uranium under the deal. Moreover, the overall duration of the agreement remains a mystery and the timetable for the removal of sanctions that have weighed down the Iranian economy have not been chalked out.

Although a six-month extension for the negotiations can be sought under the interim nuclear deal ratified last year, there is no justification for adopting such measures. All the negotiating parties will achieve is more time to defer any form of concrete

decision-making and issue empty promises.

The absence of direction is not the only setback that Iran and the six powers are facing. There is domestic pressure on both the Iranian and western officials to develop an agreement that is not entirely lenient. This serves to explain the rather ambitious demands made by the negotiating parties.

The six powers have insisted that Iran should only be permitted to operate a nominal amount of centrifuges to run its power plants. On the other extreme, Iran wishes to operate several centrifuges at its own discretion.

Mired in the constant power tussle, the negotiating parties can lose the capacity to reach a compromise. Eventually the issue may fall prey to diplomatic silence and inaction.

In order to reduce the chances of failure, President Obama sent envoys to strike a deal. Deputy Secretary William J. Burns and Undersecretary Wendy Sherman attended the nuclear talks in Vienna. Even U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry joined the bandwagon and tried to initiate progress. However, the pace of negotiations has not increased and the deadline has been prolonged.

Under initial agreements, Iran must convert the low-enriched uranium gas into an oxide form that is less suitable for making bombs. It opened a facility in Isfahan for this purpose. But the operations at this facility have yet to begin. Driven by western concerns, Iran has kept its uranium enrichment scheme on the pending tray.

Extending the deadline potentially gives effect to a secret agenda of thwarting Iran’s development potential. More importantly, it comes across as a disguised attempt to buy more time until the crisis can be resolved.

A nuclear deal would have served an important purpose, especially in light of the fast-changing political scenario in the Middle East. The rise of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq, which was previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, is producing countless problems for Iran. The IS intends to strengthen its rule by declaring an Islamic caliphate. This may serve as a political and ideological challenge to Iran. According to columnist Mahan Abedin, Iran has the “deepest strategic investment in the region”. By adopting a sectarian rhetoric, the IS is intentionally trying

to displace Iran’s strategic interests that have been maintained for over three decades. Iran has struggled to undermine sectarian clashes to sustain its position.

With the surge of Sunni militancy across the border, Iran finds itself in yet another predicament. The country’s primary goal has been to drive out the U.S. and resist Israel’s attempts at sabotage. By recognizing a sectarian conflict, it stands the risk of undermining this purpose. However, silence may be construed as a sign of weakness.

As a result, numerous Iranian residents have shown their support to challenging the IS’s stronghold. Interestingly, Iran has dressed up the skirmish as the secret agenda of the U.S. to destabilize the country’s monopoly. Many supporters have also urged Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to issue a religious edict allowing them to fight the IS.

Iran believes that the Islamic State is an attempt by the U.S. to reassert its authority in Iraq. In order to demonstrate their willingness to thwart such attempts, Iranian volunteers have gone to Syria to fight on behalf of the government of President Bashar al-Assad. Recently, an Iranian general has become a key tactician in Iraq’s fight against Sunni militants.

Unfortunately, Iran’s interference can intensify the sectarian rift. At a time when the U.S. is trying to encourage the Iraqi government to account for the Sunnis, Iran – which has invariably been a Shiite-led state – could be accused of exercising dominance in Iraq. This could escalate tensions and give rise to a wave of militancy.

Had the nuclear deal between the six powers and Iran reached fruition, the resulting agreement would have helped the country develop the capacity to combat the challenges posed by the IS.

Unfortunately, the negotiating parties have erased the nuclear deal from its list of priorities. They are simply buying time to compensate for the lack of progress. If Iran’s suspicion can be relied upon, the nuclear deal may have been scraped to leave the country in a deadlock. As a consequence, it would not be able to respond to the challenges that have plagued the region. ■

The writer is a poet and author. He is a law graduate of SOAS.



Islands Standoff

China's confrontation with Japan over the control of islands in the East China Sea will jeopardize its dream of becoming the world's leading economic power.

By Dr. Moonis Ahmar

It is feared that the tug of war between China and Japan over the control of the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea can escalate into a full-scale war. The controversy started when Beijing claimed its sovereignty over the island. Japan, which calls the same islands Senkakus, responded by rejecting the Chinese claim, making it clear that it ruled the islands in the past. Taiwan also claims the ownership of the islands, which it calls the Diaoyutia Islands.

What is the nature of conflict between China and Japan? More importantly, if it is not managed, what will be the implications of a possible Sino-Japanese standoff?

The root cause of the Sino-Japanese conflict on the disputed islands in the East China Sea is the establishment of the Air Defense Identification Zone (AIDZ) by China, which covers an area of more than 600 miles from north to south, above international waters. The implementation of AIDZ stipulates that all aircraft entering the zone must notify the Chinese authorities beforehand or face "emergency defensive measures." China has not clearly stated what such emergency defensive measures would be.

Beijing's decision to establish AIDZ over the Diaoyu Islands has two major objectives. First, to prevent the military

presence of Japan or any other country on the islands; second, to exploit their natural resources. Predictably, China's decision to enforce AIDZ was severely criticized by the United States and Japan. U.S. Vice President Joe Biden held a joint press conference with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to announce that the United States and Japan would work together to prevent any attempt by China to change the status quo in the Asia Pacific region. Biden also asked Beijing to revise its decision while a White House spokesman termed the Chinese announcement as "a provocative attempt to unilaterally change the status quo that increased the risk of inadvertent confrontation."

There are four major realities which need to be considered while analyzing the Sino-Japan row. First, since the end of the Second World War, there exists a U.S.-Japan defense treaty under which Washington is bound to help Tokyo in times of crisis. China also knows very well that it has its limitations as it attempts to strengthen its control over the Diaoyu Islands. The United States has refused to recognize AIDZ. In order to deter the Chinese, it sent B-52 bombers to the zone without informing China about them. Predictably, China is not in a position to confront the United

States for any violation of AIDZ.

Second, China's territorial ambitions in the South and East China Seas are well known. Almost all the countries of the region, Vietnam, Taiwan, Philippines and Japan, are wary of Beijing's intentions in the Asia Pacific region. But China seems to be firm over the implementation of AIDZ as it claims that the zone will promote peace and cooperation. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman even argued that China is not responsible for the crisis and blamed some other countries for "playing on the issue for their selfish gains." The spokesperson said, "We urge Japan not to look down on the Chinese government's determination and resolve in defending China's territorial sovereignty."

China may be able to get away with AIDZ but its attempts to consolidate its influence in South and East China Seas will deepen mistrust and hostility among regional countries. However, the patrolling of Chinese naval ships around the Diaoyu Islands may deter Japan from taking any offensive measure against what it calls "Beijing's aggressive and militaristic designs in East China Sea."

Third, since the end of the WWII, Japan has tried to project itself as a peaceful nation having no militaristic



or aggressive designs in the region. Japan also lost the Kurile Islands to the Soviet Union which occupied them after the Second World War. But it will be unrealistic to expect Japan not to react against what it sees as China's territorial ambitions over the islands which remained under Japan's control till 2012 and are believed to be rich in mineral resources.

During Biden's visit to Japan this year, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told the media that "China's declaration of an air defense identification zone is an attempt to unilaterally change the status quo which can invite unexpected situations and is an extremely dangerous act."

Japan fears that after the Diaoyu Islands, China will try to establish its influence over other islands located nearby, such as the islands of Amamiyoshima, Miyako and Ishigaki. The U.S.-Japan defense pact restrains Tokyo from maintaining an offensive military posture since the Japanese security is guaranteed by Washington. China, however, rejects the scope of this pact.


Finally, the absence of a regional organization in East Asia and North East Asia deprives the countries of the two regions of a conflict management and

resolution mechanism that comes with the presence of regional organizations. For instance, the Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU) and the Organization of American States (OAS) ensures a degree of regional approach to deal with conflicts. This is not the case in East Asia and North East Asia. The military presence of the United States in Japan and South Korea and its military engagement with Taiwan is another major factor which deepens the security predicament of the two regions.

The Sino-Japanese conflict is a major flashpoint in today's global political scenario. Japan also carries a 'historical baggage' in Asia because of its past expansionist, aggressive and militaristic behavior. Its imperial thirst for land and resources became its official policy and Korea became the first victim of Japanese aggression when it was occupied by Japan in 1910. Japan's military drive in Manchuria in 1931, attack on China in 1937 and its occupation of huge territories in South East Asia during the Second World War reflected its imperial policy to grab more and more land. The defeat of Japan in the Second World War and its occupation by the U.S. forces

changed the geo-political landscape of Asia. As a defeated country, Japan was punished heavily and had to accept the deployment of U.S. forces on its soil.

China, Korea and other countries of South East Asia have not forgotten Japan's atrocities and certainly will unite if Tokyo tries to pursue its expansionist ambitions. It is rightly said by many analysts that the past will continue to haunt Japan for many years. Even a slight act on Japan's part which reflects its political ambitions in the region will be met with fierce resistance from its neighbors. But Japan's historical baggage does not justify Chinese aggression and expansionist designs in East and South East Asia.

Prudence demands that a political solution is sought of the Diaoyu Islands controversy because despite the creation of AIDZ, China will not be able to achieve its enforcement, particularly by the United States. Furthermore, China's confrontation with Japan and the United States over the issue of controlling islands located in the East China Sea will also jeopardize its dream of becoming the world's leading economic power. 

The writer is Dean, Faculty of Arts, at Karachi University.

Plight of the IDPs

The burden and pain of the displaced people of North Waziristan must be shared by the rest of the country.

By Mahrukh A. Mughal



The Pakistan Army has launched a comprehensive operation against the terrorists holed up in the mountains of North Waziristan. The offensive was given the code name of Operation Zarb-e-Azb after a sword of the same name used by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in one of his battles. The operation is being projected as the beginning of the end of terrorism in Pakistan.

The country has suffered terrible losses, both in men and material, at the hands of militants who have been terrorizing the people of Pakistan for over a decade. The armed forces have been tasked with eliminating militants who have killed thousands of Pakistanis, civilians and soldiers, destroyed mosques, shrines and schools, attacked government and military installations and kidnapped hundreds of people for ransom. It

is for these reasons that a victory against terrorists is crucial because if this operation fails, Pakistan's security problems will increase manifold.

So far, the measures taken by the armed forces have been appreciated by national and international observers. One of the challenges faced by the army is to ensure that the terrorists do not flee their sanctuaries through the various routes that connect the tribal areas with the rest of the country. It has also been reported that many militants tried to flee the areas in disguise of displaced people who were leaving the operation-affected areas in hordes. The escaping militants were spotted and arrested by the security agencies at the checkpoints made on the routes leading from North Waziristan to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is also feared that a large number of militants had left North Waziristan before the launch of

the operation and fled to Afghanistan.

The other important challenge for the state is to take care of the displaced persons who have taken refuge in KP. The number of IDPs has crossed 800,000 and the figure is increasing with time. It is the responsibility of the provincial and federal governments as well as the people of Pakistan to help these people in their time of hardship. Otherwise, if not handled properly, the humanitarian crisis can further worsen.

Sadly, the government has not done proper planning to ensure a smooth relocation of IDPs, even though it had dealt with a similar situation in the past during the Swat operation. Hardly any political party of Pakistan came forward to alleviate their sufferings. The people of North Waziristan have become refugees in their own country. They are living



in excruciating circumstances in the camps. The government announced cash handouts of Rs.7,000 or a food basket worth Rs.6,000 for every displaced family with an average size of 13. However, this gesture went in vain as reports emerged that food and other items reserved for the IDPs was being sold in the local markets.

The worst affected victims of this situation are women. Their miseries have increased as they are the women who hardly stepped outside their homes in their villages. Now, they can be seen standing in long queues, waiting for their turn to receive food. The problems of these tribal women multiply due to lack of female paramedical staff at the camps. Many women can't receive food and aid because they do not have NICs.

The threat of attacks by the TTP also looms large as even before the

launch of the operation, the TTP had distributed pamphlets among the residents of North Waziristan, forbidding them to live in IDP camps since the Taliban deemed it "immodest and against the teachings of Islam." The pamphlets also instructed people not to accept the aid offered by the state, particularly by the army.

The response of the provinces has been disappointing too. As a large number of displaced persons tried to migrate to other parts of the country, the three provinces – Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan – reportedly sealed their borders, banning the entry of IDPs into their territories. The initial reaction of the government of Khyber Pakhtunwa was discouraging as well. It blamed the federal government for not taking the provincial government into confidence regarding the operation. However, it changed its

approach soon and has been trying to facilitate the IDPs in this time of crisis.

It is time the government and the political parties realized their responsibility towards the IDPs and supported them in the same way as they are supporting the armed forces. The government's dream of winning the war against terrorism will remain elusive unless it wins the hearts and minds of the people of the tribal areas. Victory can't be achieved unless the people of Pakistan embrace the IDPs with the values of humanism, love, plurality and tolerance. It is time to share their burden and feel their pain as the people of North Waziristan have made innumerable sacrifices for the sake of the sovereignty of Pakistan. ■

The writer contributes articles on topics of social and political interest and also appears on TV talk shows.

India suffered a great loss in the first half of 2014: the demise of the Ambassador, the Grand Old Lady of Indian roads.

The white curvy car that became a hallmark of India is regarded as the oldest vehicle to be made in the country. Manufactured by Hindustan Motors – India's pioneering carmaker owned by the C.K. Birla Group – the car's production started in 1958. Its design was inspired by the English Morris Oxford III that was made by the Morris Motors Limited from 1956 to 1959. Since its production, there was little modification in the Ambassador's design.

It remained India's favorite car for decades and held its own in the face of stiff competition from its newer and sleeker rivals. However, in the last few years, there was a steep decline in its sales. The situation became so dire that the manufacturer had to announce that it would suspend its production from April 2014. The company reported sale of only 2,200 cars in the financial year that ended in March 2014.

This is sad because for a very long time, the Ambassador was the only car available in India. Its demand was such that people had to wait for months to get their cars. In fact, at one point, buyers had to wait for up to a year after placing the order.

But that was the time when governments in India functioned under the influence of socialism. As the country relaxed its policies and moved towards economic liberalization, new automobile players entered the market. With their swanky cars, they gave tough competition to the plain-looking Ambassador and definitely made a dent in its sales. The Ambassador's first rival was the 800cc Suzuki Maruti, which was economical, fuel efficient and more comfortable, not to mention more good looking as compared to the Ambassador.

However, even after the arrival of Maruti and other luxury cars, the Amby, as it was lovingly called, continued to reign the automobile industry. A reason for the Ambassador's popularity was its use by Indian officialdom, including presidents, prime ministers and top-ranking army officers. It may now seem unbelievable, but the Ambassador was considered a status symbol for a long time.

Politicians, premiers and even diplomats took pride in using the car. Outside India, however, especially

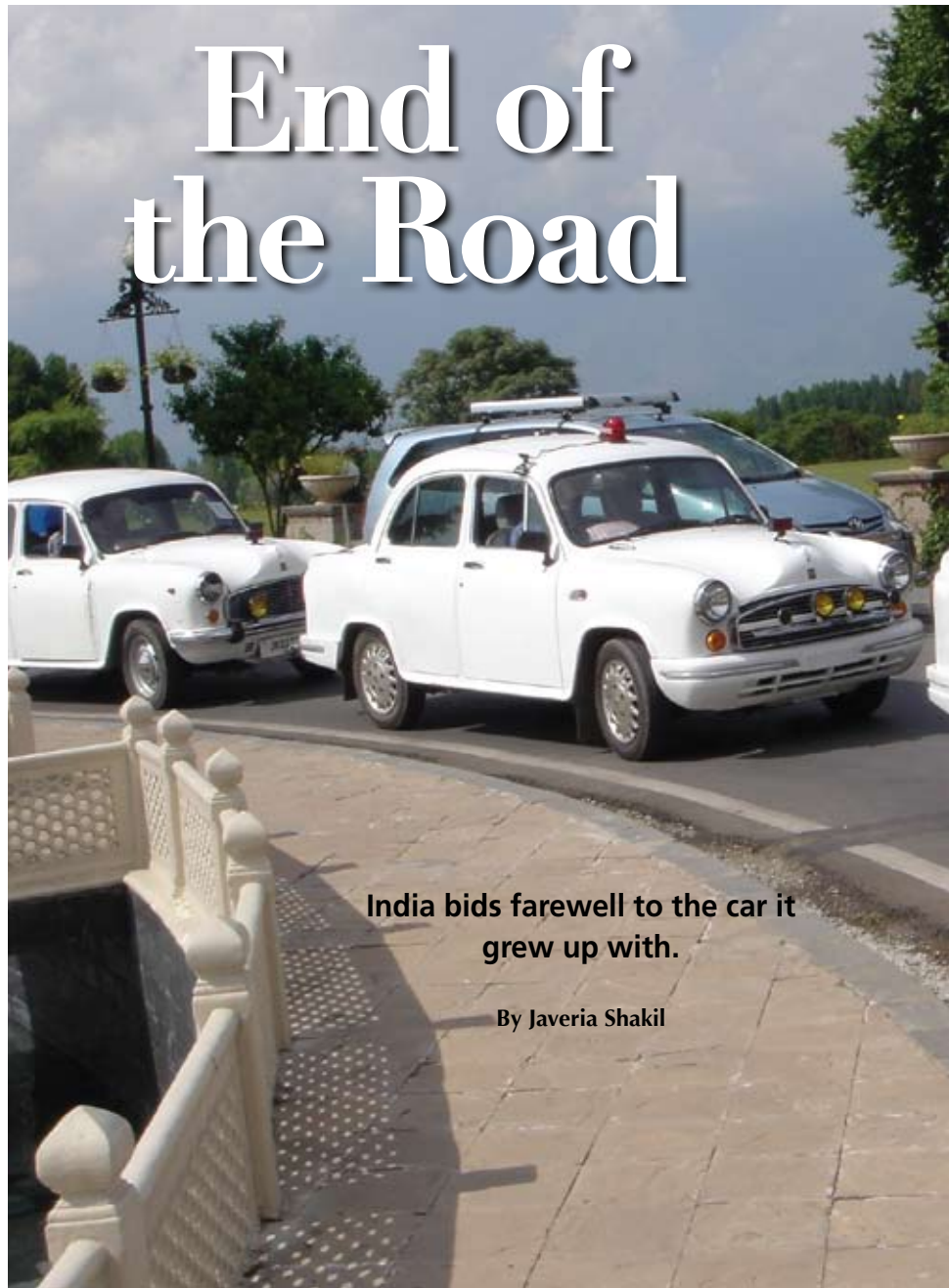
in Pakistan, the car was considered a symbol of simplicity. Preaching the rulers the importance of leading a simple life and saving the national exchequer, journalists and columnists in Pakistan frequently gave references to the use of the Ambassador by Indian politicians. They instructed Pakistani politicians to emulate the example of their Indian counterparts.

The Indian film industry also played an important role in promoting the boxy car. From politicians to wealthy businessmen to industrialists to police chiefs to mafia lords, everyone in the movies used the white car. In politicians' case, there would be a convoy of 15 or so Ambassadors with the main character sitting in one of

them. To further establish its grandeur, there would invariably be a long shot of the convoy speeding on a narrow dirt road, leaving behind clouds of dust as people on both sides of the road watched the passing entourage in awe. This, as the movies made their audience believe, was the height of authority.

Similarly, industrialists and business tycoons in the movies would be shown disembarking from their Ambassadors outside their palatial houses, wearing crisp white *latha* clothes. Also, the wedding scene of the son of a politician/businessman/mafia boss was not considered complete if it didn't include a long line of chauffeur-driven Ambassadors delivering the

End of the Road



India bids farewell to the car it grew up with.

By Javeria Shakil

happy, chirpy guests outside the wedding hall.

The police chase at the end of every second movie was always done in Ambassadors. The policemen would go after the bad guys in their Ambassadors with the customary blue police sirens fixed on the top. Incidentally, the villain would be driving an Ambassador as well. More often than not, such movies ended with the victorious hero driving off into the sunset with the heroine – in the Ambassador, of course.

However, as time passed and new cars made their entry into Indian society, the Ambassador was replaced by swanky BMWs and SUVs. Only the honest, and therefore poor, people

were shown driving an Ambassador. The transformation was not limited to movies only. The change was witnessed in society in general. As the general masses switched to the more affordable Maruti, the wealthy opted for imported luxury cars. The politicians also followed suit.

The first Indian premier who stopped using the Ambassador was Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He changed his car when his security staff complained about the unpredictable nature of the car that would develop sudden problems and stop working. This, according to security experts, made the car vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Therefore, in 2002, Vajpayee switched his Ambassador for a bullet-proof

BMW SUV. His successor Manmohan Singh and the current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi followed the trend.

It is said that all good things must come to an end and the statement issued by the Hindustan Motors about the Ambassador's suspension marks the formal end of the snub-nosed car. However, the car does not seem to be disappearing from Indian roads any time soon. It is omnipresent in all metros and cities of India in the form of black-and-yellow taxis. In Kolkata alone, there are approximately 33,000 Ambassador taxis. In fact, it is the most favorite car of taxi drivers who find it easy to maintain as its simple design can be fixed without much hassle. Also, since it single-handedly ruled the automobile sector of India for decades, its parts are easily available in the markets.

With its use as taxis, the Ambassador, which enjoyed the status of being the choice car of the who's who of India, has completed a full life circle. It is now a purely common man's car and is often called the Sick Lady of the roads.

Although the car has largely been abandoned by the people who matter, there was a strong reaction to the announcement of Hindustan Motors. People from all walks of life reminisced about their experiences with the Ambassador. Some remembered it fondly, describing its sturdy nature and narrating how they travelled in the car in difficult terrains. Others complained about its fuel-guzzling design while some expressed relief on the decision, calling the car a relic of the past.

There were also calls for its revival and although the company has stated in its official statement that it is suspending the car's production for the time being, a revival is highly unlikely considering the situation on the ground. There is a lack of demand for the Ambassador. According to Reuters, the 2,200 Ambassadors sold in fiscal year ended March 2014 "made up only a sliver of the 1.8 million passenger cars sold that year in India."

While people may often go all nostalgic about the Ambassador, it has practically become a thing of the past as nobody would like to buy the Old Lady anymore. **S**

The writer is assistant editor at Southasia. She focuses on issues of political and social interest.



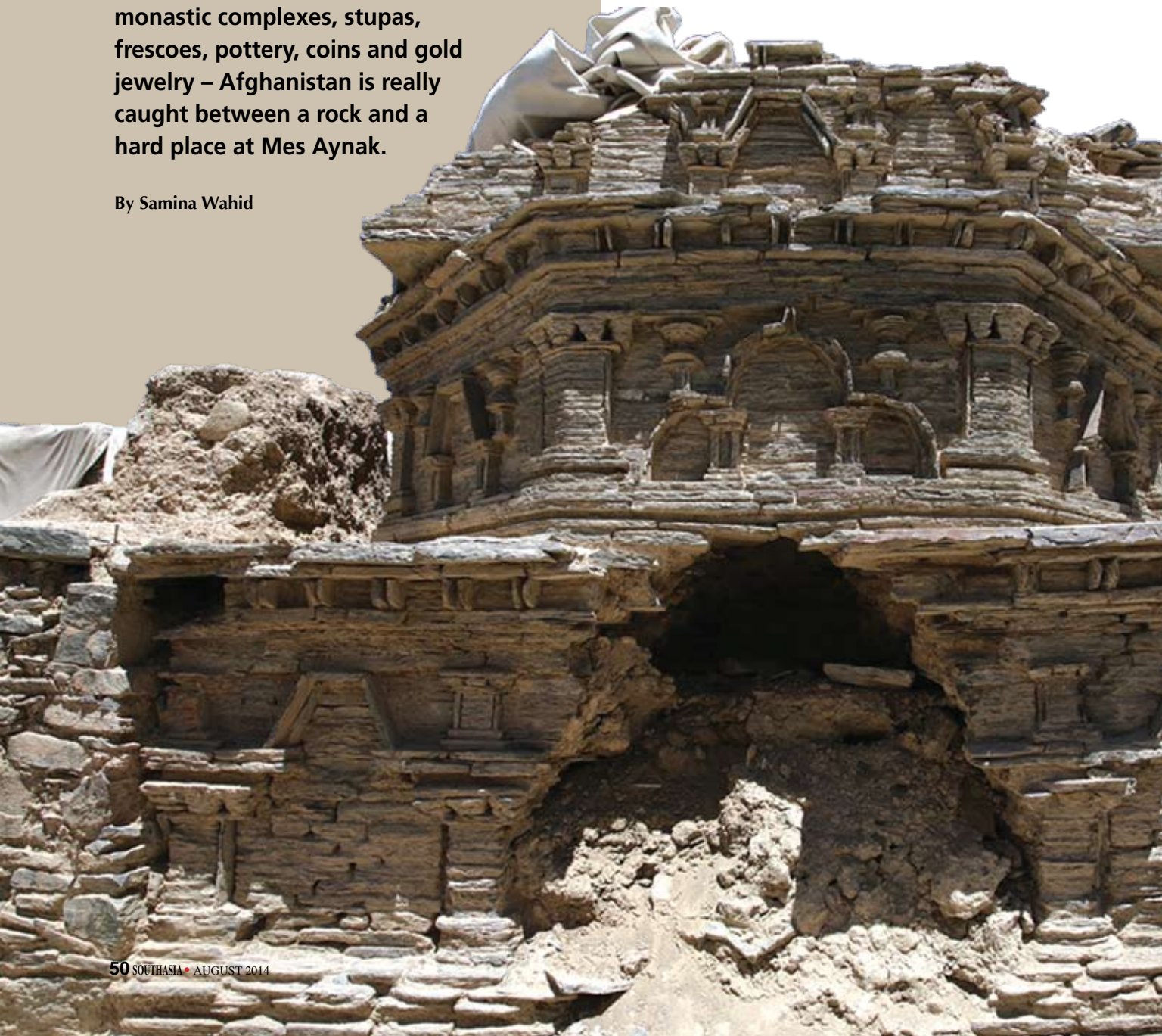
Difficult Choice

Copper versus Buddhist statues, monastic complexes, stupas, frescoes, pottery, coins and gold jewelry – Afghanistan is really caught between a rock and a hard place at Mes Aynak.

By Samina Wahid

Afghanistan lost a rich piece of cultural heritage in 2001 when the Taliban blew up two huge Buddha statues in Bamiyan, northern Afghanistan. The statues, carved in sandstone cliffs, were over 1,700 years old and a testament to the cultural influence on Afghanistan over the centuries. Today, the country finds itself in a somewhat similar predicament. Only this time, it isn't Bamiyan; it is the Mes Aynak site in the Logar province, southeast of Kabul, and it isn't the Taliban; it is the cash-strapped government that is looking to mine the vastly underdeveloped copper deposits below the soil.

Here's the problem – Mes Aynak is also home



to one of Central Asia's oldest Buddhist artifacts that date from the time of Alexander the Great. A Dari phrase, Mes Aynak means the 'little copper well' and contains within its mountainous folds Buddhist statues, monastic complexes, stupas, frescoes, pottery, coins, gold jewelry and, of course, untapped copper reserves. Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MMP) has signed a 30-year, \$3 billion contract with the China Metallurgical Group, a state-owned mining enterprise based in Beijing. The deal is the largest foreign investment in Afghanistan to date. The Chinese have already spent close to \$200 million on payments to the Afghan government and on preliminary work on the site. But the mining project is at a standstill until the archaeological dig is completed.

According to archaeologists, some 25 years are required to complete the excavations before mining can begin at the site. Unfortunately, time is not a luxury that the Afghan government can afford. At best, a partial excavation of the high-priority area, known as the

red zone, can be completed within 14 months and that too with a lot of assistance. Reports indicate that there are around \$40 billion worth of copper reserves under Mes Aynak, so the government is unlikely to wait much longer. In fact, the Chinese firm is scheduled to take over and begin digging by the end of this year.

In a recent interview, Deputy Minister of Mines Nasir Ahmad Durrani said that he was caught between a rock and a hard place: "On the one hand, my people need food. We are poor people. My national budget needs to generate revenue. But on the other hand, I have to protect the international heritage." It is said that Durrani visits the site once every two weeks and claims that the MMP is doing what it can to help archaeologists complete the excavation in time.

That isn't the only problem that the MMP is dealing with. There are security challenges that must be met as well. Back in 1999, Al Qaeda was reported to have used Mes Aynak as a training camp while Osama Bin Laden hid in the mines during the 1970s. As a result, the site is replete with land mines (IEDs) endangering the lives of mine workers. In fact, in April this year, one of the excavators stumbled upon a bomb in the red zone, which fortunately, did not go off.

The MMP has hired more than 1,750 guards of the Afghan Public Protection Force to secure the area. Green mesh fences snake up the mountains and curve along the rocky slopes and terrain, marking the territory claimed by the Chinese. About 200 Afghan workers – the majority of whom are Pashtuns from the surrounding villages – are busy removing soil at the Mount Aynak, a rocky area in the red zone, to uncover the ancient walls. The site also contains ancient industrial features such as furnaces, kilns, mining shafts and ore-processing sites, making this the biggest rescue operation in the history of Afghan archaeology.

Meanwhile, archaeologists are rushing to save the artifacts as best as they can. They continue to identify and record the existence of the items that they may not have the time to save via a process known as preservation by record. They are also tasked with the arduous job of safely

removing around 20 stupas, over 150 sculptures and wall paintings from a few sites in the red zone. This requires specialized equipment and hiring of more archaeologists and diggers – resources that just aren't available to them. Senior archaeologists have continuously complained about the lack of manpower since there are only 10 international experts and less than 20 Afghan archaeologists. A team of seven Tajik archaeologists has also arrived in May, but that is still insufficient.

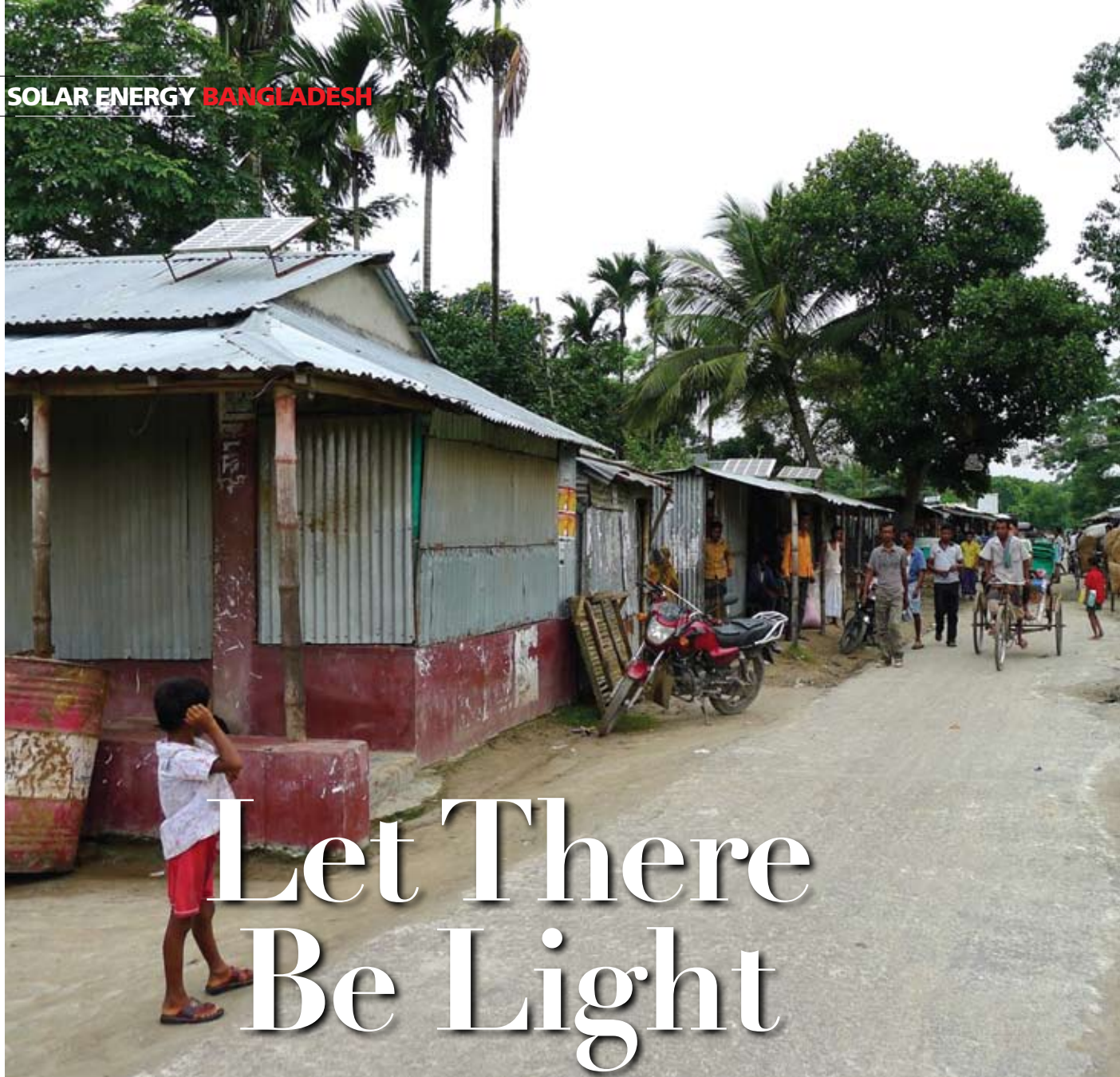
There is also a lack of security in the area which is causing several archaeologists and workers of the China Metallurgical Group to leave Mes Aynak, especially since U.S. troops are likely to depart the country by the end of the year. On June 10, gunmen killed eight miners working for the Afghan Detection Center in Mes Aynak. Local officials blamed the Taliban for the attack.

Sadly, several statues have already been destroyed or damaged due to severe weather conditions and looters present in the region. The art from the time of Mes Aynak's existence, from the second to the early ninth centuries, is popular and considered of high standard. After the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, the prices of Buddhist sculptures like those at Mes Aynak rose from \$10 million to \$100 million on the black market. Illegal sales are a serious problem in Afghanistan, especially in the areas bordering Pakistan. The ancient artifacts are shipped and sold illegally to buyers in Japan, Europe and the United States.

Some archaeologists are of the view that had the copper reserves not been discovered, the excavation at Mes Aynak would have never happened. The fact is, while the reserves were identified in 1963, the Chinese deal came much later. However, the deal may be a blessing in disguise because it has catalyzed the unearthing of a cultural treasure trove. Of course, if mining starts at the end of the year as scheduled, these treasures may not be salvaged at all. **S**

The writer is a freelance journalist who contributes regularly to various leading publications.





Let There Be Light

Bangladesh has surprised everyone with its high penetration rate for solar home systems.

By Fatima Siraj

Since 2007, the World Bank has been consistently increasing the percentage of its total energy financing towards non-renewable projects. No country has shown the kind of receptiveness to these projects as Bangladesh. The Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (IDCOL), which is owned by the government of Bangladesh, has implemented a massive Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development Project (RERED)

with funding provided by the World Bank. Under the project, around 3 million home solar systems (SHS) have been installed in the country.

The IDCOL operates with the help of 30 local partner organizations that sell and install the systems as well as carry out their maintenance. A typical 50 watt solar home system costs around 25,000 Takkas which equals to less than 250 Euros. One solar home system produces enough energy to

run low-power DC appliances, such as lights, radios, sockets for battery rechargers and even small TVs for about three to five hours a day.

Munawar Misbah Moi works as managing director of a Dhaka-based company that manufactures photovoltaic units. He believes that being able to power even these relatively small appliances makes a huge difference to the people's lives. "It's unbelievable, and until you see



it, it's very difficult to explain. Let's say, you go to a remote rural home where they're burning kerosene lights. Suddenly, overnight (because it only takes four hours to install a typical system), that home has proper lights and a connection to TV – it's transformational. And the quality of life keeps on improving, especially in terms of late hour education," says Moin.

Those who want to buy solar home systems either pay cash or use the option of paying monthly installments through microcredit schemes that make solar home systems an affordable option for the average rural family. The greatest benefit of the program is its easily accessible partner organizations that have a permanent presence in

rural areas. They offer microcredit facilities as well as technical assistance. Interestingly, most of their technicians are women who install the system, offer guarantees and perform free maintenance.

The success of this well-established network has prompted the World Bank to lend further support to the government of Bangladesh. It has offered \$78.4 million in order to finance some 480,000 solar home systems.

Solar home systems are standalone equipment that use batteries powered by photovoltaic units. These units consist of solar cells that directly convert sunlight into electricity. This has proved a cost-effective method of supplying electricity to remote households that are out of the grid's reach.

Nearly 60 percent of Bangladeshis do not have access to electricity generated by the grid. The government aims to bring this number down to zero by providing 100 percent access to electricity through solar home systems by 2021.

The solar home systems have significantly contributed towards the improvement of the standard of living of Bangladeshis by facilitating access to information and communication. Many clinics use them to provide electricity during check-ups and even surgeries. Women benefit the most from owning a solar home system. They feel safer after dark and it also increases their mobility.

Apart from social benefits, the solar home systems also offer significant income-generation avenues. Many women have used the increased working time provided by solar home systems to start small businesses such as handicrafts and poultry. Many businesses can remain open for longer durations, including grocery shops, restaurants and tailoring shops. These systems have also increased production in areas such as rice processing, fishing and poultry farming.

Furthermore, they have resulted in the creation of a multitude of jobs, ranging from those which deal with assembling solar panels to the ones that involve selling, installing and maintaining them. The number of solar home systems in Bangladesh has jumped from 25,000 to 2.8 million in the last ten years, resulting in the creation of over 114,000 jobs. In fact,

the number of jobs related to this industry has doubled in the last two years. It is expected that the industry will further expand in the coming years.

However, this high penetration rate is a recent phenomenon and became possible largely due to the support of the World Bank. In 1996, when solar systems were first introduced in Bangladesh via the Grameen Shakti program, spearheaded by the Grameen Bank, the cost of the solar modules was US\$7 per watt - far too high for the average rural person to afford. But as the cost reduced and financing became easier, the interest in solar home systems grew. The Managing Director of Grameen Shakti, Dipal Barua said that the key factor was bringing the amount spent on a solar home system closer to the cost of kerosene used every week. The prices did not have to match because the solar home system provided benefits that kerosene didn't. "You can't watch television on kerosene," said Barua.

By 2003, there were 20,000 solar home systems in Bangladesh but the penetration rate was still minimal, considering the large population of more than 150 million people. It was during this time that the World Bank, looking at the growing interest in solar-powered energy, started granting soft loans to NGOs and microfinance organizations. By 2011, about 30 organizations were installing more than 40,000 solar home systems a month. Today, this figure stands at more than 70,000 - the highest penetration rate for solar home systems in the world.

Domestic manufacturing, partnerships with local organizations and establishment of microfinance facilities have contributed towards this overwhelming success of solar home systems in Bangladesh. While domestic manufacturing helps in keeping the costs low, the involvement of local organizations and the introduction of microfinance help in the implementation and reach of these systems. Such a model can be replicated in developing countries and across the world to ensure a more sustainable and cost effective future in terms of fulfilling energy requirements. 

The writer is currently pursuing a BBA degree. She focuses on marketing and social issues.

Circus of Courage

Circus Kathmandu, a group of young Nepalis who were rescued from human trafficking, is wowing audiences in Nepal and other countries

By Meena Ahmed

Laxmi was only 14 when she was sold into prostitution. She never went to school because her family could not afford it. She was kidnapped one day when she was herding her cattle. Her abductors took her to a person – a manager – and she was informed that she had been sold. She was forced to entertain a room full of clients. Laxmi was not the only girl to face such hardship. This is the story of thousands of women in Nepal, where human trafficking is very common.

A report on human trafficking in Nepal stated that around 12,000 to 15,000 girls are sent each year from Nepal to India where they are sold to brothels and forced to become prostitutes. Their average age is 15 years. UNICEF reports that around 7,000 women and girls are sent out of Nepal in this way every year.

In 2010, Sky Neal, an artist working for an Indian circus for 20 years and a filmmaker, went to Nepal on a rescue mission. During her trip, she heard of several Nepalis trapped in a small circus in Assam. Neal went there with a camera to document the trip for an NGO. On her return to Nepal, one of the trapped girls, Saraswoti, who



is now a leading circus performer, inquired, "What will I do? All I know is circus?" Saraswoti had spent 13 years of her life performing in a circus.

Five months later, Neal returned to Nepal with her colleague and a close friend Robyn Simpson and five other circus professionals, including a social circus specialist. They worked with a group of 25 street children and young adults using play therapy and social circus techniques. Neal planned to volunteer for three months and carried out play therapy workshops to teach circus skills.

That's how Circus Kathmandu was launched in January 2011, following an extraordinary month of social circus, play therapy and show creation workshops with a team of world class performers and trainers. Meeting international circus artists for the first time, the people who worked for Circus Kathmandu regained their confidence in themselves and this form of art. At this moment, Circus Kathmandu is a 13-strong team of committed and talented circus artistes who are also activists working against human trafficking.

These talented people were rescued from human trafficking and other vulnerable situations, especially from Indian circuses where they were sold as children. Although they were rescued from human trafficking, they did not go back to their homes due to financial constraints. Instead, they started living in a shelter, where the first play-workshop was conducted.

"Their skills, the way they learned and the joy they showed in performing made us wonder if there was something we could do to provide career choices for these young people. With some top quality training and around 50 volunteers, they have become international performers, have turned their lives around and are now helping other young people to do the same through our innovative anti-trafficking program. They have created Nepal's first and only contemporary circus to help show Nepal to the world," says Robyn M Simpson, Creative Director, Choreographer and a Co-Founder (along with Sky Neal) of Circus Kathmandu.

These Nepali artists collaborate with international circus and performing arts professionals to

combine the traditional Nepali art of story-telling with innovative circus and theatre techniques. "The ones who wanted to keep learning and exploring their creativity quickly regained their self-esteem. It was obvious that they had a lot of potential," says Simpson.

Circus Kathmandu's high-quality performances are perfect for raising awareness of important issues such as human rights. Their outreach program

Circus Kathmandu is hopeful about raising funds from the Nepali business community and the government.

The young Nepalis working for the circus are also given the opportunity to work as international performers and community outreach workers in rural Nepal. The latter is a difficult task as circus is still perceived as low-level entertainment in rural areas. But the team is hopeful. "There's still stigma

The Nepali artists of Circus Kathmandu collaborate with international circus and performing arts professionals to combine the traditional Nepali art of story-telling with innovative circus and theatre techniques.

is more overtly anti-trafficking because their performers have experienced it firsthand. The group conducts workshops, vocational training, community outreach, social circus and human rights projects to create awareness of modern day slavery among their audience and inform them about the local anti-trafficking infrastructure. This is indeed a unique way to engage families and communities in a worthy cause.

"The current show 'Swagatam' has been created through a year long process in which these young people explored aspects of their past, making it a part of their present and future. The performers and the performances are inspiring and we hope they give other young people the courage and hope to create their own pathways, as the group has the passion and strength to do it. And they are members of what is becoming a successful social enterprise now," says Simpson.

The group has been able to perform its functions because of generous funding from the international circus community. It has received the support of Philip Holmes (initially the Esther Benjamin Trust), Freedom Matters, Tris Forster and also incubation grants from McKinsey Consulting and The Backstage Trust. This year,

attached to being a circus performer in rural areas, but we're trying to change the perception. All over the world, high-quality circus is incorporated into different means of communication. There's no reason the industry can't thrive in Nepal! Instead it can create lots of jobs," remarks Simpson.

Recently, Circus Kathmandu attended a fundraising evening at the UK's House of Lords which was well attended by several Nepali businessmen. The business community is extremely proud of what Circus Kathmandu is doing and how it is representing Nepal. Circus Kathmandu received standing ovations after their shows in Dubai and Glastonbury, making it the fourth complete standing ovation in the history of Glastonbury.

The group hopes to perform in the Middle East and Asia in the future. It also plans to do more tours and shows across Nepal. "We want to make Circus Kathmandu sustainable – we need to keep the momentum up and hopefully, one day, we can start a school for this performing industry," declares Simpson. **S**

The writer contributes articles on society and culture and has worked on special projects with the UNDP.

For centuries, Bhutan remained shy of global recognition, maintaining a low profile. One reason may be its geographic location since it is a landlocked country. Its rulers were wary of placing it in the limelight because of various cultural barriers.

However, the situation changed after Bhutan adopted constitutional monarchy in 2007. The Bhutanese society has undergone a number of changes since then. Old is giving way to the new. Among other facets

of life that have seen a remarkable transformation, the Bhutanese media is one which has progressed in an outstanding manner. However, it is still in its infancy and is largely controlled by the state. At this stage, it will be unjust to compare the media of Bhutan to that of its South Asian counterparts – especially India, Pakistan and Bangladesh – but the progress it has made in a short time is noticeable.

Bhutan's first step towards establishing a media sector came in

1967 with the publication of *Kuensel*, the country's first newspaper. Since Bhutan had scarce resources to print a newspaper, it had to buy a press from India. By 1986, *Kuensel* had become a weekly publication and the official voice of the Department of Information that worked under the Ministry of Communication. In 1973, the National Youth Association of Bhutan (NYAB) began radio programs. However, the government took over the control of NYAB in 1979. By 1986, NYAB was renamed as the Bhutan Broadcasting



Enter the Media Dragon

Growth of media in Bhutan could affect its cultural and traditional values.

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar

Service (BBS).

Despite the restrictions imposed by the government, Bhutan's print media has thrived. Today, there are eleven newspapers in the country. Among them, seven are published in English while four are in Dzongkha, Bhutan's official language. *Kuensel, Business Bhutan, The Bhutanese, The Journalist, and Bhutan Times* are some of the newspapers that have made a name with their high quality work.

Compared to newspapers, magazines are a recent phenomenon. *Yeewong* began publication in 2008 while *Druk Trowa* and *Drupka* followed in 2009. *The Student Digest* and *Bhutan Timeout* started publication in 2011 and 2012, respectively, while the country's first travel magazine, *Voyage*, started in 2013.

After the arrival of the BBS, Bhutan's radio industry has witnessed a great surge. Five radio channels have started transmissions since 1973; BBS Radio (1973), Kuzoo FM (2006), Radio Valley (2007), Centennial Radio (2008) and Radio Waves (2010). BBS Radio and Kuzoo FM broadcast nationwide while the other three stations are heard in Thimphu only. According to a survey, nearly 77 percent of the country's population listens to BBS while in the remote areas of the country where newspapers and TV haven't reached yet, radio is the only source of information.

It is interesting to note that Bhutan introduced television quite late - in 1999 - with the BBS launching satellite television which reaches over 40 Asian countries. The people of Bhutan also have the facility of cable television, which covers nearly all urban areas.

Recently, Bhutan witnessed an evolution of ideologies and traditions that compelled the government to promote its media. The progress of the media sector is likely to transform the country's socio-economic system as well.

It is believed that the purpose behind the government's restrictions on media affairs is to keep intact the essence of the culture and traditions that have defined Bhutan for centuries. Although tradition is giving way to modernity, the country has to push the limits of media freedom even further to achieve its basic purpose: create awareness among the masses. Although the royal decree passed in

1992 to make media an independent entity paved the way for the growth of the industry, the sector hasn't yet achieved independence in the true sense.

Among other means of communication, the internet is another phenomenon that is gaining popularity among the Bhutanese youth. Though the internet arrived in Bhutan in 1999-2000, it has become a rage in the country in the last few years. In the internet the Bhutanese youth has found a great medium to express their opinions and views. For a highly conservative society like

shortage of drinking water.

Following the arrival of TV and the internet, the UNDP did a Human Development Report in 2002 which stated: "It is important to note that bridging the 'digital divide' is not simply an issue of building an information infrastructure nor of buying and handing out computers and modems to everyone in a society. Providing information alone will not work. It has to be done alongside person-to-person communication. The mass media, on its own, may reach people with key messages but the personal outreach is necessary to

It is believed that the purpose behind the government's restrictions on media affairs is to keep intact the essence of the culture and traditions that have defined Bhutan for centuries.

Bhutan's, the internet indeed provides a great sense of freedom.

The government harbors fears that allowing foreign television content will affect the cultural values of the country and will be a bad influence on the youth. These fears are not completely unfounded. While the international media has its benefits, such as providing new avenues of learning and information, it also has its share of disadvantages. Children spend too much time watching television and do not pay attention to their studies, the lifestyle of viewers changes as they begin making their schedules around the timings of television shows, consumer habits alter and teenagers look up to actors as role models.

Moreover, television has created a gap between the rural and urban population as the latter has access to TV while the former only has radio at their disposal. Analysts also believe that the global advertising industry is now targeting Bhutan and this may affect the buying habits and core values of the people, considering the economic limitations of the population. One example is that of Pepsi, which has hoardings in villages where there is a

affect behavior change."

Over the years, Bhutan has been following good governance through transparency, accountability and efficiency. The development in the media has forced government officials to pay heed to public opinion while devising policies. Various government departments, especially the Ministry of Information, have enforced e-governance to connect people with organizations; websites provided efficient feedback.

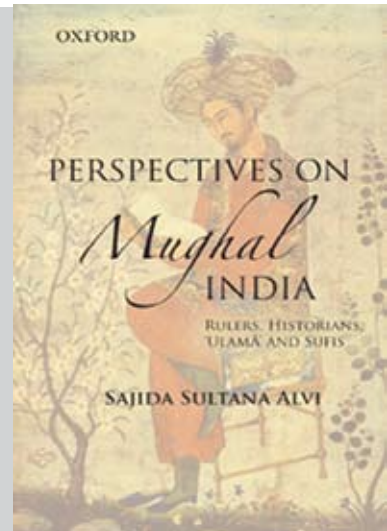
How much freedom the Bhutanese government will grant to its media is yet to be seen. However, the country's information infrastructure must cater to development planning. With the youth pursuing modern ideologies in a country that has followed strict Buddhist principles for centuries, the media in Bhutan is likely to face some resistance before it achieves full freedom. However, the government of Bhutan must make a conscious effort to promote the media while protecting the country's cultural, social, traditional and religious identity. ■

The writer worked as assistant editor at Southasia. He writes on topics of social interest.

Revisiting History

Book Title: Perspectives on Mughal India Rulers, Historians, 'Ulama' and Sufis
Author: Sajida Sultana Alvi
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Pages: 297, Hardback
Price: Rs.850
ISBN: 9780195476439

Reviewed by S.G. Jilane



'*Perspectives on Mughal India*' is a collection of ten scholarly essays by Sajida Sultana Alvi that were published in various journals from time to time. The author, a professor emeritus of Indo-Islamic history at the Institute of Islamic History, McGill University, Canada, has delved deeply into rare, hitherto untapped, sources. The profusely annotated essays are the product of arduous research, especially when exploring unknown or lesser known subjects. They are also independent of one another, but collectively present a picture of Islam in India, particularly during the Mughal period.

The collection is divided into three parts. The first, titled 'History and Historiography' has four essays. It is an overview of Indo-Islamic history from the time Mohammad bin Qasim set his foot in Sindh through Ghaznavi and Ghauri, the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal rule, to the partition of India in 1947 and the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

Talking about how Islam spread in India, the author contends that there were no forced mass conversions under the Islamic rulers. "Islamisation was a result of multiple influences – social, cultural and religious." Sufi influence also played an active role in the "adoption of Muslim identity by the non-Muslim population, primarily in the rural areas." Though the rulers were generally tolerant towards their non-Muslim subjects but it was only under

Mughal rule that serious attempts were made in a big way to cultivate the Hindu religion and culture, with Dara Shikoh translating the Upanishad. It was also during the same time that Urdu's status was elevated as the language for literary expression vying with Persian due to the sincere efforts of Siraj Aql-Deen Khan Arzu.

The next essay is a literary criticism of *Mazhar-e-Shahjahani* by Sindhi writer Yusuf Mirak. Mazhar is a book on political ethics and statecraft, prompted by the plight of the Sindhi people, who were "not treated well by the Mughal administration." The book was written during the reign of Shahjahan. This work has been compared to similar writings by Al Ghazali, Nizamul Mulk and others with regard to its theme, style and contents. It is a manual on administration, drawing particular attention of the ruler to the situation in Sindh.

Chapter three is an attempt to compare a little-known source, *Mir'at al-Alam* with two recognized sources of the history of Emperor Aurangzeb, namely, *Alamgir namah* and *Ma'asir-e-Alamgiri*. The author painstakingly makes a "detailed, word-by-word comparative study of the *Mir'at* and *Alamgir Namah*" to conclude that the former work is concise and contains much factual data, whereas the latter is panegyric and verbose.

These two works, especially the *Mir'at*, are invaluable sources of authentic information about

life and times under Aurangzeb's rule, because, both are "eyewitness accounts" chronicled by men who held high positions and were close to the emperor. A study of the *Mir'at*, for instance, should set at rest the controversy around Aurangzeb's attitude to music. The factual position as revealed in the *Mir'at* was that earlier in his life Aurangzeb enjoyed music but abstained later.

In the fourth essay the author examines *Tarikh-e-Husayniyyah*, "an unknown source for the history of Awadh," in threadbare detail and considers it a more reliable source of information for the seekers of truth, because unlike other similar works, it was not commissioned by the East India Company. The writer of the *Tarikh* is, therefore, more objective in his approach.

The second part is devoted to 'Islam, Sufism and Religious renewal'. Discussion on *Tajdid* and *Mujaddids* is spread over three chapters. The first, 'The *Mujaddid* and *Tajdid* traditions in the Indian subcontinent' explores "the concept of *tajdid* which amounts to renewal and reform in understanding Islamic faith and practices" and "the scope and nature of the *mujaddids*' activities in their respective socio-political contexts."

It examines the teachings of the four *Mujaddids* – Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Shah Waliullah, Syed Ahmad Shaheed and Shah Ismail Shaheed – and their impact on the community. It concludes

with the rebuttal of Landau Tasseron's thesis that reform activities indirectly recognize the imperfection of Islam because the mujaddids did not reform Islam; they only reformed the practices of the Muslims.

The second is a discourse on the Naqshbandi Mujaddids. It highlights the "significance of the sheikh in the Naqshbandi order" as well as its basic principles with reference to the manuals of conduct for the disciples (*adab-e-muridab*) and concludes with a narrative on the lives and teachings of two famous sheikhs of the time – Khwajah Masum and Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan.

The third relates to the spread of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sufi Order in Central Asia between the 17th and 19th centuries. These three essays provide a deep insight into the principles and practices of the Naqshbandi order and the lives of its leading sheikhs.

The last essay is devoted to Qadi


Thana Allah Panipati, an eminent aalim who flourished in the 18th century, but is not famous like his contemporaries, Shah Waliullah and Shah Abdul Aziz. The 18th century was a period of upheaval, due to the transition from Mughal to British rule and the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali. The religious scholars had a great responsibility in guiding the flock. And Thana Allah, who was also a Qadi, fulfilled this obligation with his prolific writings in Arabic and Persian.

Part three has two essays; one on religion and state during Jahangir's rule and the other on Shi'as in his court, with special reference to Mohammad Baqir Najm-i-Thani.


In the first essay, the author, relying on original sources on the life of Emperor Jahangir, argues that he was neither communal nor a theocrat. Thus, "he did not claim to be the protector of Islam, nor did he promise to implement shariah through his

office." Jahangir had "numerous private meetings" with a Hindu hermit Gosain Jadrup. The execution of the Sikh Guru Govind Singh was prompted not by communalism but the latter's support for the rebel Prince Khusraw.

The last chapter illuminates the penetration of Shi'aism in the imperial household during Jahangir's rule, besides a commentary on the profile of a prominent Shia soldier and scholar who was also a relative of Nur Jahan by marriage - Muhammad Baqir Najm-i-Thani.

This work with its wealth of information is like the proverbial caviar to the general. For researchers and scholars of history, it would be a treasure trove but the common reader would find it largely beyond their ken. 

The writer is a senior political analyst and former editor of Southasia Magazine.



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Nawaz Sharif to leave for Saudi Arabia

Zardari to have Iftar with US vice president

Second tier minds the 'store' as top leaders meditate



Why foreign junkets?

They all went abroad while the people suffered and the Pakistan Armed Forces were engaged in Operation Zarb e Azb against the TTP and other terrorists in North Waziristan. Lt. Gen, (R) Abdul Qadir Baloch, the man grappling with the IDP situation, said the nation was engaged in a war that was of a greater intensity than the 1965 and 1971 conflicts with India.

Why then did important players in the country's top leadership choose to go on foreign junkets at such a crucial time?

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