

INTERNATIONAL  
The Crimean Crisis

May 2014

# SOUTHASIA

Reg. ss-973

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## INSIDE

### PAKISTAN

A Delusion of Infallibility?

### INDIA

Winds of Political Change

### AFGHANISTAN

Voting for a New Vision

### BANGLADESH

The Politics of Revenge

# Cricket Fever in South Asia

The game of cricket in South Asia transcends borders and binds almost one third of humanity in a sport that may even be politics to some or a religion to others.



Afghanistan	Afg. 50
Australia	AS 6
Bangladesh	Taka.65
Bhutan	NU 45
Canada	CS 6
China	RMB 30
France	Fr 30
Hong Kong	HKS 30
India	Rs. 65
Japan	¥ 500
Korea	Won 3000
Malaysia	RM 6
Maldives	Rf 45
Myanmar	MMK 10
Nepal	NcRs. 75
New Zealand	NZS 7
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# SOUTHASIA

MAY 2014

VOL.18 ISSUE 5

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SouthAsia is published every month  
 by Syed Jawaid Iqbal for and on behalf of  
**JAWZ Communications (Pvt.) Ltd.**  
 and printed by Shabbirsons, Karachi.

Views expressed by the contributors are  
 not necessarily shared by the editors.

Published since 1977 as *Thirdworld*, the magazine  
 was re-launched in 1997 as *SouthAsia*.

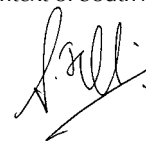
# The Straight Path to Prosperity

This is clearly a time of great dynamism across South Asia, with elections and transitions unfolding across the region. These developments offer many opportunities and create new imperatives for the future of US policy. While the prosperity agenda in South Asia is critically important, it is also important to enhance political stability and security in the region. A big constraint has always been the barriers that exist between the two major countries of South Asia - India and Pakistan. It is certainly encouraging to see that the democratic polity in Pakistan has changed from one political party to another through the democratic vote. It is also encouraging to see the economic progress made by Pakistan in recent months though the country still continues to face serious challenges. India also finds itself in the eye of continued vulnerability, the most important being the outcome of the ongoing general elections. Described as the longest elections in India's history, the final outcome of the exercise will be evident in the second week of May. The results will then determine which party or a set of parties takes charge in the country and who will be the leader of India that the world, including the U.S., will do business with.

This is also the year of presidential elections in Afghanistan. Much of the country's future will depend on who gets into the driving seat. The US stands a good chance to work with Abdullah Abdullah. As opposed to Hamid Karzai, he offers more opportunities to lead the country towards an era of consolidation and explore those areas of progress that had heretofore been neglected. The US also cannot ignore the security challenges posed by the drawdown of NATO forces in Afghanistan. According to latest reports, the number of U.S. troops to be left behind in the country may drop well below 10,000 - the minimum demanded by the U.S. military - as the longest war in American history winds down. It has to be accepted that while NATO and the US forces entered Afghanistan in 2001, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, there is nothing that these forces have succeeded in achieving. In fact, if anything, the Taliban have demonstrated a clear resurgence. If there was a desire on the part of the US to set its boots on the ground in Afghanistan, it succeeded in doing so on the pretext of 9/11. It managed to dig its heels in Kabul, to develop the Bagram airbase and to establish various listening posts to monitor Pakistan, China, Russia and the Central Asian States - but this is as far as US success went. The 'residual' force that the US intends to leave behind now will enable it to man these installations and, of course, 'train Afghan forces.'

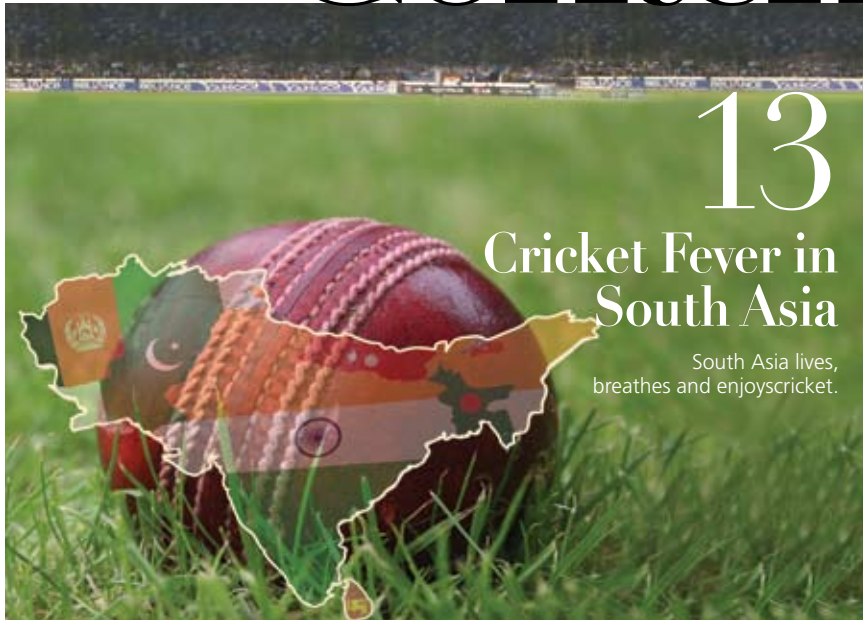
The US is, nevertheless, encouraged that the countries of the region are now choosing policies that promote economic growth and social development so that the millions can be lifted out of the morass of poverty and look towards a more prosperous, healthy and secure life. The future, both in the near and long term, offers a whole spectrum of challenges and opportunities for the U.S. to assist and guide the countries of South Asia and help them join the mainstream of global development. The path is, as usual, twisted and meandering but there is an enormous potential for continued expansion of relations between the U.S. and South Asia.

More than two decades back, I was at the Pentagon in Washington D.C., attending the International Visitor Program on U.S.-South Asia Relations. I was in a group that comprised Mrs. Abha Dixit, Dr. Gopal Ji Malviya and Mr. M.N. Verma from India and Mr. Rashid Ahmed Khan and myself from Pakistan. We were being conducted to another area within the Pentagon by a smart and charming young lady who was our facilitator. Considering the long, unending corridors of the Pentagon building, I asked her how long would it take for us to follow the straight path, which seemed quite cumbersome after a heavy lunch. "Oh dear, there is nothing straight at the Pentagon," I was very matter-of-factly told. Since then, I have constantly found that the quip had for me many more connotations in the context of South Asia - and I still wonder how right the young lady was!



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

# Contents



# 13

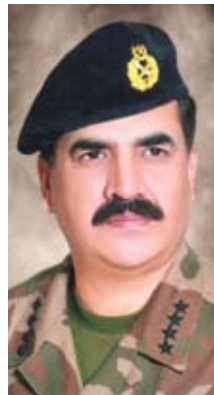
## Cricket Fever in South Asia

South Asia lives, breathes and enjoys cricket.

## Pakistan 26

### A Delusion of Infallibility?

The nation must unite and for that to transpire, sensational allegations against state institutions must stop.



## India

# 30

### Winds of Political Change

As India prepares for a BJP win in the current elections, Pakistan watches the situation closely.

## Bangladesh

# 34

### The Politics of Revenge

It is time Bangladesh came to terms with its past.

## Sri Lanka

# 36

### The Numbers Game

Analysts have questioned the accuracy of Sri Lanka's glowing growth figures.



# 32

## Afghanistan

### Voting for a New Vision

The Afghan nation has proved that it believes in a democratic and peaceful country.



**The Crimean Crisis**

Can the U.S. and its western allies thwart Russia's expansionist designs?

42

INTERNATIONAL



48

**Afghanistan**

**Railroad to Prosperity**

Afghanistan's mineral deposits, estimated at about \$3 trillion, remain untapped in the absence of a railway network.

**Bangladesh**

**New Economic Opportunity**

The BCIM economic corridor can make Bangladesh a hub between South and Southeast Asia.

50

**Bhutan**

**Digitalizing History**

Bhutan's ancient scriptures may become a thing of the past if the country does not use modern means to preserve its cultural heritage.

52

46

**Aviation**

**Revival of a National Flag Carrier**

With various revitalization measures, PIA is climbing to new levels of success.



**REGULAR FEATURES**

Editor's Mail	6
On Record	8
Briefings	9

**COVER STORY**

Cricket Fever in South Asia	13
Interview	16
Loss of Innocence	19
Sports Sans Borders	22
The Game that 'Bowls Over'!	24

**REGION**

<b>Pakistan</b>	
A Delusion of Infallibility?	26
Civil Nuclear Deal: the Pros and Cons	28
<b>India</b>	
Winds of Political Change	30
<b>Afghanistan</b>	
Voting for a New Vision	32
<b>Bangladesh</b>	
The Politics of Revenge	34
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	
The Numbers Game	36
<b>Nepal</b>	
Whither Progress?	38
<b>Maldives</b>	
Fall of the MDP	40

**INTERNATIONAL**

<b>Russia</b>	
The Crimean Crisis	42

**SPECIAL REPORT**

Woman Empowerment	44
-------------------	----

**FEATURES**

<b>Aviation</b>	
Revival of a National Flag Carrier	46
<b>Progress</b>	
Railroad to Prosperity	48
<b>Trade</b>	
New Economic Opportunity	50
<b>Culture</b>	
Digitalizing History	52
<b>Tourism</b>	
Paradise on Earth	54

**BOOKS & REVIEWS**

A Peek into the Past	56
----------------------	----

**BETWEEN THE LINES**

58

## Lessons in democracy

SouthAsia's coverage of the Indian elections was extensive, to say the least. It covered almost all facets of the election scenario including statistics, predictions, party positions, the minority and money factors and the glamour quotient added by the participation of celebrities. Indian elections, no doubt, are a raucous affair. But the coolness with which the country goes about the task of conducting elections on such a massive scale never ceases to amaze me.

It is not that the elections are conducted in a most transparent manner under peaceful circumstances. That's far from being true. There are incidents of violence before and after the elections. Allegations of rigging and misuse of authority are rampant and candidates use unfair means to manipulate the result. But despite all this, people take immense pride in the process and in democracy. They enthusiastically participate in the polling and express their opinion through their vote. Perhaps it is this belief in the democratic system that makes India different from the rest of the South Asian nations. I hope the other countries learn some lessons in democracy from India.

**Seemi Mehtab  
Lahore, Pakistan**

## Faux secularism?

It is true that the Bangladeshi nation is very sensitive about its secular identity. But some recent developments in Bangladesh give away its insecurity rather than showing the country's wish to consolidate its identity as a secular

nation. First, there were calls for a complete ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami. Then the Cricket Board of Bangladesh issued an order that stopped Bangladeshi cricket fans from flying flags of any rival country during a cricket match. Although the order was taken back after it received harsh criticism from international as well as some national quarters, it said a lot about the thinking of the higher-ups sitting in the board.

If anything, the afore-mentioned steps point to a growing tendency of authoritarianism. I am sure the government of Bangladesh wouldn't want to earn this title. The most prominent characteristic of a secular entity is its freedom. If Bangladesh wants to establish its secular credentials, it should give the masses the freedom to choose. The JI has been in Bangladeshi politics for a long time. How many times did it rule the country? Not even once. The Bangladeshis are a nationalist people by nature – their separation from Pakistan proves this fact. They will not allow a party with obvious religious leanings to rule them. Instead of banning the JI, the government of Bangladesh should let the people refuse it in elections.

**Suleman Riyaj  
Chittagong, Bangladesh**

## Troubles of the Tamils

The article 'Time to Move On' makes a case against the U.S. and the U.K. for pressurizing Sri Lanka to investigate the war crimes committed by its armed forces. In support of her stance, the writer quotes human rights abuses committed by the two world powers and the warnings given by the UN to the Tamil Tigers in the end months of the civil war. But the matter is not as simple as the writer thinks.

Subjugation of the Tamils is a problem as old as the country itself.

The Tamil population suffered discrimination at the hands of the Sinhala majority for a very long time. Governments after governments took steps that made it difficult for the Tamil youth to acquire higher education and get good jobs. They resorted to militancy only after all other means had failed to give them their due rights. In the decades-long civil war, it was the Tamils who suffered the most. Thousands were killed while one-third of Sri Lankan Tamils were forced to leave their country. After the end of the civil war, their condition has not changed much. There is a need for a thorough inquiry into the crimes committed by the Lankan Army regardless of who raises the demand.

**David Balasingham  
Toronto, Canada**

## A ban-loving nation

With a sudden increase in voices protesting against the ban on YouTube, I had become hopeful that the government would finally lift the ban. It was useless after all. Even though the website was banned, people still used it through various means – by using proxy servers and by changing their proxy settings. Anyway it was time the foolish decision was taken back. My hopes were further raised when there was talk of discussing the ban in the National Assembly.

So I can't express in words how disappointed I was when I learned that the MNAs of the ruling party opposed tooth and nail the lifting of the ban. I do not understand what they achieved by doing it. Nations around the world



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## The peace talks charade

The charade that is taking place in Pakistan under the guise of 'talks' with the Taliban is bewildering. The government has reportedly released 12 (24 according to some media reports) 'noncombatant' Taliban prisoners. What the country got in return was a number of bomb blasts

in different cities in which many innocent people were killed. None of the hostages in the Taliban's custody, including Professor Ajmal Khan, Shahbaz Taseer and Ali Musa Gilani, were released in exchange. So what exactly is going on?

The prisoners released by the government were 'Taliban' prisoners for a reason. They were not ordinary criminals. The law-enforcement agencies must have had some reason to arrest them. Now that they are free, God knows what havoc they will wreak. Analysts have been crying themselves hoarse about the dangers of talking to the militants from a position of weakness. And now we have seen the result of doing so. Should we brace ourselves for more violence in the days to come?

**Anum Fatima**  
*Peshawar, Pakistan*

have struggled for years and made innumerable sacrifices for their right to freedom of expression. We, on the other hand, are a nation that loves to restrict its freedom and is always looking for ways to curtail it. What a shame indeed.

**Hooria Sultan**  
*Lahore, Pakistan*

## Balancing between old and new

Everywhere in the world, old is giving way to the new and this is happening in Bhutan too. The Dragon Kingdom successfully preserved its traditions and culture for centuries. But it is now opening up to the world. And modernity has its own price. So instead of lamenting the fact that traditional architecture is fast disappearing from the cities of Bhutan, there is a need to understand the ground realities. The people of Bhutan need modern residential facilities. The need for residential complexes with all the modern accessories becomes even more important if one takes into account the growing number of tourists who are visiting Bhutan.

Therefore, to save the historical architecture and to find a solution to the country's growing need for new residential blocks, the government of Bhutan should mark the buildings according to their historical and religious importance. All those buildings that have any kind



of significance should be preserved while the rest should be demolished to build new structure. This can keep both the traditionalists as well as the modernists happy.

**Raj Hirani**  
*Thimphu, Bhutan*

## All hail democracy

The Afghan nation has proved that it believes in democracy by holding relatively peaceful elections in the face of threats. For a country that is regarded as a highly backward nation in the international arena, a 58 percent turnout is a remarkable achievement by any standards. What is more heartening is the fact that a large number of women came out of their homes to exercise their right to vote. These are encouraging signs. And although the majority of voters voted along ethnic lines, the election process itself shows that the people of Afghanistan are willing to move forward instead of remaining stuck in the medieval times. They want to come out of the morass and change their condition for the better.



It is hoped that the new leadership will lead its people in the right direction. Its foremost responsibility should be to spread education to every corner of Afghanistan. An educated nation will be in a better position to fight militancy and backwardness. No amount of foreign

aid can achieve this result.

**Muhammad Taha Asapzai**  
*Kabul, Afghanistan*

## Towards extremism

This is with reference to the article 'A case for Aid?' by Dr Ikramul Haq and Huzaima Bukhari. The government of the Maldives may not realize it yet, but it will commit a big mistake if it lets foreign forces interfere in its internal matters. It is moving on a path of religious extremism and the consequences of taking this course can be disastrous. I wonder why it does not learn from Pakistan's example. During the war against Russian occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistan accepted aid to prepare a ragtag army of militants to fight against the Russians. Most of the members of this 'army' were inducted from religious seminaries. A large portion of the aid also went into promoting religious education and opening new seminaries in the country. The Russians were defeated and the war ended. What the armies created to fight the infidel forces have been doing since then is known to all.

The Maldives earns most of its revenues through tourism and tourists visit the country in large number because it offers enchanting scenery and a peaceful environment. If the peace is disrupted, no one would come to the Maldives. This, in turn, will ruin its economy. I'm sure the government and the people of the Maldives do not want to suffer this fate. They should decide soon what is best for them.

**Fathima Najeebulla**  
*Male, Maldives*



"Let me remind you that without a strong economy, democracy, rule of law and containment of terrorism, a credible defense system cannot be sustained. We, therefore, have to work together as a nation to achieve these goals."

**Nawaz Sharif**  
*Prime Minister of Pakistan*



"The lead we were expecting, it didn't come as a surprise, but perhaps we were expecting a bigger lead."

**Dr. Abdullah Abdullah**  
*Afghan Politician*



"Those opposing Narendra Modi are looking at Pakistan, and such people will have a place in Pakistan and not in India."

**Giriraj Singh**  
*BJP leader*



"During the tenure of the incumbent government, the rule of law has been so badly damaged that the opposition activists are not only being implicated in false cases but are also being robbed of their rights to seek legal resolution."

**Khaleeda Zia**  
*Chairperson of the Bangladesh National Party*



"The job of government is not to lead the debate; it is to implement the principles at home. The world should not expect too much from us, and we should not expect too much from ourselves."

**Tshering Tobgay**  
*Prime Minister of Bhutan*



"Political ideology should not enter the ranks of soldiers. The state wants to make soldiers professional. The security of the state depends on the professionalism of soldiers."

**Abdulla Yameen**  
*President of the Maldives*

"The representation of only Punjab has been considered so far during the prime minister's foreign trips. Nawaz Sharif treats only Punjab as Pakistan."

**Amir Haider Khan Hoti**  
*MNA of the Awami National Party*



"Hitler was elected from a democratic set up. He concentrated power in himself and the whole world has seen how he misused authority. Today, the examples of Advani, Joshi and Singh illustrate how power has started concentrating in Modi's hand. It's just the beginning."

**Sharad Pawar**  
*Indian Politician*



"I disapprove any such irresponsible statement and appeal to those making them to kindly refrain from doing so. Petty statements by those claiming to be BJP's well-wishers are deviating the campaign from the issues of development and good governance."

**Narendra Modi**  
*Chief Minister of Gujarat*



"Whoever the extremists, they are a threat to national reconciliation. We see one group shouting from one end and another shouting from the other end. They don't want to reach a middle ground."

**Keheliya Rambukwella**  
*Spokesman of the Sri Lankan Government*



"Consensus and coordination would bail the country and people out from the crisis. But the Koirala-led government is incapable of sorting out issues through consensus."

**Bahadur Rayamjhi**  
*UCPN-Maoist Leader of Nepal*



"The 'Zaliman' (Taliban) are not trustworthy and should not be treated leniently."

**Rehman Malik**  
*Former Interior Minister of Pakistan*



PAKISTAN | Islamabad

## And Now, 3G/4G

Pakistanis will be able to use third and fourth-generation mobile technology as the long-awaited spectrum auction was finally held in the country. The auction fetched \$1.1 billion. Telecom giant Zong managed to secure licences of both 4G and 3G spectrums while Mobilink, Telenor and Ufone secured only 3G licences.

The event received extraordinary media attention since the auction process was

postponed on three different occasions in the past. However, many people questioned the wisdom of introducing 3G technology so late in the country since 3G is a decade old technology now. The technology now more in evidence is 4G as it provides faster speeds, ultra-broadband and data-intensive services. Research is also being conducted on 5G which is expected to be introduced soon in many parts of the world.



Users in Pakistan will not be able to use 3G and 4G connectivity immediately since the timeframe agreed upon between the PTA and mobile operators calls for a rollout in six months of the auction. Also, initially, the services will be available in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta only. **S**

PAKISTAN | Karachi

## Back Again!

After months of rumors and speculations, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement finally joined the PPP-led government in Sindh. The party received two ministries, two slots of advisors and one for a special assistant. Rauf Siddiqui and Dr. Saghir Ahmed took oath as minister of industries & commerce and health, respectively.

Faisal Sabzwari and Adil Siddiqui have been inducted as advisors to the Chief Minister Sindh while Abdul Haseeb has been appointed as special assistant to the CM.

According to reports, several leaders and party activists of the MQM were against the decision of joining the government. Last June, the party held



a referendum and asked its workers whether or not the MQM should join the government. The result of the referendum was not made public. **S**

PAKISTAN | Peshawar

## Helping Polio Campaign

The Pakistan Army will help the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the eradication of polio from North and South Waziristan. The decision was taken in view of the recurring polio cases in these areas. Now, all teams of health workers will be accompanied by army personnel. There are three regions of concern with regard to the polio eradication program – the Bara Tehsil



of Khyber Agency and North and South Waziristan.

North Waziristan has recorded 33 polio cases in Pakistan's total tally of 47 in 2014. South Waziristan had two cases, Khyber Agency one while Bannu had two cases. The army's help has been sought in view of non-vaccination of over 300,000 children in these areas where the militants had banned vaccination in mid-2012. **S**

INDIA | New Delhi

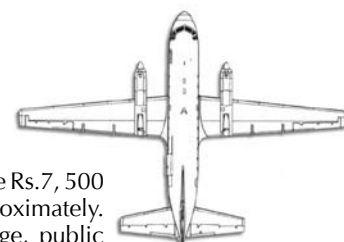
## Own Plane

India is all set to build its first indigenous civilian aircraft. Hindustan Aeronautics, the country's sole manufacturer of military aircraft, will collaborate with the state-owned

plane designer, National Aerospace Laboratories, to design and develop a turboprop aircraft capable of carrying up to 70 people.

The total cost of the project is

expected to be Rs.7,500 crore approximately. At a later stage, public and private-sector companies, such as Tata Technologies, Samtel Avionics



and Taneja Aerospace, may come on board as equity partners in the project. It is expected that the venture will take

off soon after the formation of the new government in Delhi. India's first locally made plane was

the Saras, a 14-seater aircraft that took over two decades to develop. It is yet to win local certification. **S**

INDIA | Ferozpur

# New Trade Links

After the successful establishment of the integrated checkpoint at the Attari-Wagah border, politicians in the Indian Punjab focused their campaign on thawing Indo-Pak ties and the prospects of developing trade through rail and bus between the two countries. Sunil Jakhar, a Congress candidate from the Punjab constituency of Ferozpur, promised the farmer community

"a broad-gauge freight service to Pakistan". Speaking at a gathering, Jhakar said, "We will open the gates to Pakistan. We will restart the train service here."

Ironically, while some BJP leaders kept spitting venom against Pakistan in their election speeches in other parts



of India, Sher Singh Ghubaya, the joint candidate of the BJP and Shiromani Akali Dal in the Ferozpur constituency, took a different stance. "Modi has brought new hopes for businessmen

in Gujarat. Like he took his state's port to a new level, we will ensure that he helps us forge links with the Karachi Port," he reportedly said in a rally. **S**

INDIA | Mumbai

# Friendship Film

Famous Indian poet, lyricist and writer Gulzar will write the script of a film, *Kya Dilli Kya Lahore*. The story revolves around Indo-Pakistan relations. It will be Gulzar's first film after 13 years. The film is the directorial debut of actor Vijay Raaz. The narrative takes place in the course of a day and revolves around two characters – a

Pakistani soldier played by Vijay Raaz and a cook of the Indian Army, a role enacted by Manu Rishi.

The Pakistani soldier is sent to retrieve a secret file from an Indian chowki on the border where he meets the cook who is the only one left behind there. The film's *mahurat* took place on the Wagah border. **S**



AFGHANISTAN | Kabul

# Residual Force



Washington may leave less than 10,000 troops in Afghanistan

for the training of the Afghan Security Forces beyond 2014. According to media reports, the decision to consider a small force, possibly 10,000 U.S. troops, reflects a belief among White House officials that the ASF is a robust enough force to contain a still potent Taliban-led insurgency. The report quoted an unnamed U.S. official who confirmed that the discussion is very much alive among the White House, State Department and Pentagon

officials regarding the residual U.S. forces to remain in Afghanistan after 2014.

He said that a small residual consideration by the U.S. is partly based on Afghanistan's surprisingly smooth elections which have won international praise for the high turnout. However, the presence of U.S. forces in Afghanistan beyond 2014 will be subject to the signature of the Bilateral Security Agreement between Kabul and Washington. **S**

# Oil's Well

An oil refinery worth \$1.3 billion will be built in the Sheberghan city of the northern Jawzjan province of Afghanistan. The construction work of the oil refinery has been finalized with a Chinese firm. The refinery is expected to produce 6,000 barrels

of oil per day. A power generation system will also be installed at the site with a capacity of producing up to 50 megawatt electricity.

Afghanistan is estimated to have \$3 trillion worth of mineral deposits, which remain unexploited. Gold,



iron ore, copper ore, emeralds, lapis, rubies as well as natural gas are found in the north of the country. **S**

# Tragedy Fund



One year after the Rana Plaza tragedy, retailers and brands have deposited a total of \$17 million so far with the Rana Plaza Donor Trust Fund to compensate victims of the building collapse that took the lives of at least 1,135 people. Some 29 retailers and brands that sourced garments from the five factories in the Rana Plaza are a

part of the compensation.

The British brand Primark will pay \$9 million to the 580 workers of the New Wave Bottom Ltd, a factory that was located on the second floor of the Rana Plaza. The Swedish retail giant H&M donated \$0.1 million to the trust fund on humanitarian grounds, although it did not source garment items from any factory in the Rana Plaza. **S**

# Sharing the Waters

The water distribution issue of the Teesta River has gained considerable importance in Bangladesh. India's unilateral withdrawal of water from the Teesta River in the upstream has badly affected more than 20 tributaries in Bangladesh. Many of the tributaries in the northern part of the country have

dried up. In the past, the rivers had water flowing all the year round, but now water is not available in most of these rivers during the dry season.

This has also affected the ecological balance of the region. About 80 to 90 percent of the mango and jack-fruit trees do not bear fruit anymore. There



are calls for initiating bilateral talks with India regarding the sharing of the water of the Teesta River immediately to save the region. **S**

# Regrouping Rebels



The armed forces of Sri Lanka killed three LTTE suspects who were allegedly trying to revive the rebel movement in the country's Northern Province. Sri Lanka's defence

establishment has expressed concern over a possible regrouping of the LTTE, five years after the Sri Lankan armed forces defeated them. The Sri Lankan police has arrested 60 persons, largely from the island's Tamil-speaking north, over the last two months.

The Sri Lankan military has raised

surveillance measures in the Northern Province, after the UNHRC adopted a resolution against Sri Lanka, which

calls for an international probe into the alleged war crimes and rights abuses committed by the Sri Lankan Army.

Residents in the Northern Province have been raising concerns about heavy militarization there after the war. **S**

SRI LANKA | Kandy

## More Rooms



The city of Kandy will get its first mixed-development project by 2016 in the form of a US\$ 24 million residential apartment complex along with a US\$ 36 to 40 million 21-storey hotel. The project is the vision of a US-based Sri Lankan investor. Given the Sri Lankan government's target of achieving 2.5 million arrivals by 2016, there is need for luxury hotel

rooms in Kandy, which is one of the main tourism spots in Sri Lanka.

The complex would have 40 service apartments and a further 70 rooms along with a conference room and an international spa. Kandy-born Mohan Chandra Mohan, one of the investors of the project, is among the richest businessmen in the U.S. **S**

NEPAL | Kathmandu

## Dwindling Membership

After facing a humiliating defeat in the Constituent Assembly polls, the membership of the UCPN (Maoist) is likely to decrease significantly. It may be reduced by almost one-fourth during the eighth general convention. According to party leaders, this decline is because of the fact that several of its members have joined the CPN-Maoist while others have not renewed membership.

The party had 330,000 members till its seventh general convention held in Hetauda last year. However, active members have decreased during the membership renewal campaign. Party spokesperson Dinanath Sharma said that the total number of party members would reach around 250,000 by the end of the campaign despite the fact that the party has extended the membership



renewal deadline twice. The UCPN (Maoist) has attributed the decline in membership renewal to party split and migration of party cadres to foreign countries. **S**

BHUTAN | Thimphu

## Education Initiative



The first iSchool initiative in Bhutan was launched at a school in Thimphu by Prime Minister Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay. The iSchool project was launched with the aim of making quality education accessible to all students, including those who belong to the remote areas of Bhutan. Appreciating the initiative, PM Lyonchhen said that the event is about private and government schools, the corporate sector and the multinational

corporations working in Bhutan coming together and collaborating in harmony.

The project is expected to revolutionize the education system in Bhutan through an ICT-enabled learning environment. It will make quality education accessible to students across Bhutan as the initiative will be spread throughout the country and students would be able to interconnect and learn from each other. **S**

# Cricket Fever in South Asia

South Asia lives, breathes and enjoys cricket. Here is a Look at the game – and its growing impact in the region.

By Javed Ansari

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Cricket has come to South Asia in a big way. No other sport has made its presence felt in the region with as much pomp and hype. The fact is that the sport may have been a 'gora' affair as a part of so many other British exports that found their way into those regions of the world where the Brits established colonies but long after the sun set on the British Empire, the game of cricket still continues to enthuse and bind people not only in the former British colonies but much far afield. Cricket is now played with as much enthusiasm in Canada as it is in Nepal, Afghanistan, Holland, the UAE and Ireland, to name a few. None of these were former British colonies.

The manner in which South Asia has taken to the game is rather interesting. There are ten Test cricket playing nations in the world. Of these, four belong to South Asia – India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Also, among the ten Test nations, only two are Muslim countries – and both belong to South Asia – Pakistan and Bangladesh. The cricket teams of Afghanistan and Nepal, countries located in South Asia, are also coming up fast. They may not have earned Test status yet but both have thriving cricket followings. A proof of this is that both were among the 8 qualifying nations that competed for a place in the Super 8 slot in the

2014 T20 World Cup. While these teams did not make it this time to the Super 8s but if they have the official nod and continuing mass passion to back them up, it will not be very long when they will be fit and ready to compete with the top cricket playing nations of the world.

It is a fact that somehow the masses of South Asia take to cricket with more eagerness than other games. They could have adopted field hockey or football with as much fervour because these games are relatively inexpensive to play, they do not take up too much spectator time and offer all that crowds are looking for in terms of thrills and highs both on the field and through TV broadcasts. But we all know where these games stand as far as the masses are concerned. It is for this reason that neither have advertisers put in too much money behind these sports and nor do media outlets create all that hype when hockey or football matches are played.

With cricket it is different. The best part is that while the five-day Test Match or even the One-Day 50 overs game weighs down on the cricket enthusiast's time, he is pretty much free to watch the 20 overs version which takes just three hours. It is a game full of adrenalin highs and the enthusiast can let his hair down watching the likes of Shahid Afridi,

M.S. Dhoni, Kumar Sangakarra or Shakibul Hasan in full bloom. It is a pity that the common sports lover in South Asia has not been fed the same thrills where hockey, football or other sports are concerned. For example, football is South Asia does not drum up the same kind of crowd fever as it does in England, Italy or Brazil. India and Pakistan may have excelled in other sports at one time or the other but none have succeeded in capturing the fire and zest of the sport loving masses in the same way as cricket. Were cricket to be included as a game in the Summer Olympics, the top medal slots would perhaps go to countries from South Asia.

It is unfortunate that the common cricket follower in Pakistan has been deprived of watching the game in his own country ever since the terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore in 2009. The Sri Lankans were in Pakistan as a replacement for the Indian team which had pulled out after the 2008 Mumbai attacks. In order to persuade the islanders to visit, the Pakistan government had offered them the same security arrangements as they would make for a visiting President. The series was the first Test tour of Pakistan since South Africa visited the country in October 2007. But it looked like the terrorists would have none of it – and they managed to succeed in their intentions, with



international cricket staying away from Pakistan to this day.

It is a fact that the safety of touring cricket teams in Pakistan has long been an issue. In May 2002, New Zealand abandoned their Test series in Pakistan after a suicide bomb exploded outside their hotel in Karachi. It is good though that the Kiwis returned in the 2003 season to meet their commitments. Other teams have since then refused to tour Pakistan on safety grounds.

It is by default then that the UAE has developed its cricket grounds in Sharjah, Dubai and Abu Dhabi and these cities now serve as Pakistan's 'home' grounds for staging cricket series in various formats with other cricket playing nations. There has been some talk recently of cricket tours being arranged wherein India would play against Pakistan in Pakistan or in the UAE but this appears more like a pipedream of Najam Sethi, the sitting Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board and may never even see the light of day.

However, where Pakistan has been on the back foot, so to speak, in holding 'home' cricket involving top teams, India has taken full advantage of the situation in the form of IPL – the Indian Premier League - and is already holding the 7th edition of the tournament this year.

Designed on the lines of England's Football Premier League, the IPL is one cricket T20 event anywhere in the world that symbolizes in a very important way the spirit of modern-day cricket. Far from the laid back and sober game that cricket originally started out as, back in England, T20 today presents the same thrills and crowd involvement as a football match, say between Manchester United and Arsenal on a weekend afternoon or a fixture between Real Madrid and AC Milan.

Attracted by the lure of IPL, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka too have launched their own 'Leagues'. Not as successful as the Indian Premier League, both the BPL and the SCL have, nevertheless, succeeded in capturing the imagination of the masses and are turning out to be important events on the cricket calendar.

Because of its very 'instantness', the T20 format captures the exhilaration and excitement that the masses want from any sports event. This was more than evident from the T20 World Cup which was played in Bangladesh recently. The Test format does not offer any thrill whatsoever and neither does One Day in the same manner as T20 which creates in the cricket spectator the same hair-raising expectation that a close-fought

football match would. Television broadcasts also make full use of the opportunity and, thanks to lots and lots of advertising sponsorship money, TV manages to drum up such immense public interest in the various competitions that cricket becomes almost a national fever across South Asia.

All the way from Afghanistan to Bangladesh and from Nepal to Sri Lanka, these countries have their respective national sports. In India and Pakistan, hockey is the national sport. Kabbadi is designated as the national sport in Bangladesh and volleyball is the national sport in Sri Lanka. Bukashi is treated as the national sport in Afghanistan. Only Nepal counts cricket as a national sport along with football. It is obvious that, despite the symbolic significance of other sports, it is only cricket which commands maximum popularity across South Asia – and steamrolls all other sports.

Cricket is a fever that sweeps the subcontinent with a fury that gathers speed with every passing day. Life comes to a standstill when a team from South Asia is playing. Is there an end to this addiction? **S**

*The writer is Editor of this magazine and a regular contributor on political subjects.*





# The Evolution of Cricket

Chishty Mujahid talks to Javeria Shakil in this exclusive interview.

## How has the game of cricket impacted the South Asian region?

The answer to this question in detail will require a considerable amount of time and space and we are faced with acute paucity of both. So let me give a brief introduction in order to put the developments of this so-called game of gentlemen in the correct perspective. I shall make every effort to be as brief as possible (a difficult proposition in my case). If your readers, after going through this piece, have any queries, I shall be more than happy to try and answer them.

Cricket, as we were talking earlier, started in England in the 1300s and even Prince Edward is said to have played it. Even in those days, wagers

were put on the results of these games by their sponsors and there may have been some sort of “fixing” or “bribery” going on.

The only time England did have a republican form of government was during the days when the “roundheads,” led by the Puritanical Oliver Cromwell governed the country. I will give here a quotation from British history as testimony to the fact that cricket was also the focus of attention of the Commonwealth.

“Contrary to other answers, Cromwell did ban the playing of cricket on Sundays – along with many other sports (games of chance) – and his law was not repealed until 1748. He had indeed played cricket in his youth, there

existing documentation from 1617 and 1620 relating to this.

“I suppose you could say that Cromwell was indirectly responsible for cricket coming to the attention of the moneyed gentry. Until he had his civil war and his puritans saw cricket exiled from public life, it had been a game of the poor. Cricket was killed off in all the big cities and was only played in the countryside. The remaining royalists (who had also left London for their country estates) started to play the game as a form of rebellion against the Commonwealth, and to encourage the game amongst their staff, which of course swiftly led to betting on the outcome. With the re-establishment of the monarchy, the game spread

among the elite as a basis for all kinds of gambling. Important people began to sponsor teams and even provide playing areas for them. We know the rest...

"Also, the mass immigration caused by the Civil War took cricket to the British colonies in the West Indies for the first time, if local history is to be believed. Jamaica was also seized from the Spanish at that point."

If you study the history of the game in detail, you'll know that it is played only in the countries where the British ruled. It's not the game of choice in Europe, South America, Middle East, South East Asia, China and most of Africa. It is mostly played in the Commonwealth countries.

In the beginning, in order to formalize the game and make rules, the ICC (Imperial Cricket Council) comprising England, Australia and South Africa as its original members, was formed. Over the years, other countries, including those comprising the West Indies and New Zealand in the early 1930s and undivided India in 1932 were admitted to the fold, followed by Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Zimbabwe and Bangladesh and the organization was renamed the International Cricket Council. South Africa, because of its apartheid policy, was suspended in the late 60s and re-admitted in 1992 after having abandoned apartheid. Even today, all the full members or Test playing nations are members of the Commonwealth. Formal Test cricket started in 1876, One Day Internationals (50 overs a side) in 1971 and the 20/20 variety in the middle of the 21st century.

With time, the ICC (like most things English) expanded and the members increased and today it has around 120 member countries, 10 being full members and the others divided into two categories the Associates and the Affiliates. With the increase in the popularity of cricket, its impact has also grown in the South Asian region. From being a passion, cricket has now become an addiction for the people of South Asia. The game gradually became commercialized because of its growing popularity.

Broadcasting, telecasting, reporting and streaming assumed huge proportions and vast sums of money. Gone were the days when broadcasting rights for bilateral series were on a reciprocal, complementary basis. Kerry Packer, the Australian media mogul among his other businesses and interests, revolutionized cricket by starting his own "cricket circus" (named

## About Chishty Mujahid

*Chishty Mujahid is a well-known figure in Pakistani cricket journalism and broadcasting. He was born in 1944 in New Delhi and was educated at Karachi*

*Grammar School, National College, Karachi, Selwyn College, Cambridge (Law Tripos 1966) and the Middle Temple, London. He was conferred the President's Award for Pride of Performance in 2003 and also served as Chief Executive of the PCB (2012-13).*

World Series Cricket, roping in the top names in cricket and making them wear coloured clothing, playing under lights at night and using white cricket balls.

A similar venture was started by Abdurrahman Bukhatir in Sharjah under the banner of Cricketers Benefit Fund Series (CBFS). This was meant to benefit Indo-Pakistani former players. This was a brilliant idea and was very beneficial to cricketers and cricket fans. CBFS was initially restricted to Indo-Pakistan contests but was expanded into a globally popular programme. It hosted Asia Cups, Australasia Cup, Wills Trophy and Rothman's Trophy. Most international teams and players played here. Sharjah Stadium developed to the highest international standards and today holds the world record for having staged the highest number of ODIs. Seeing the success and popularity of Sharjah, Dubai and Abu Dhabi also jumped on the bandwagon and invested millions in making two state-of-the-art stadia which now serve as "home grounds" for Pakistan and also for some ICC minor tournaments. For reasons, which we will not delve into at this juncture, India refused to play in Sharjah, and even at Dubai and Abu Dhabi from around 2006 to date when the IPL matches are being staged there.

But unfortunately commercialization has its fallouts and betting, match-fixing and speculation, etc., increased manifold. Billions were lost and won. It is rumoured players were "bribed." I cannot comment on this as I do not believe that "this is cricket." But reports are rampant about players and even officials being involved. Do we need an Oliver Cromwell instead of the ICC?

**Do you think the Big Three phenomenon will change the sport in a drastic manner?**

I am not sure why they are called Big

Three (self-christened or the creation of the media). As far as money is concerned, yes, India dishes out 70 percent, if not more, of the money in cricket. England and Australia contribute sufficiently. But so far as performance in cricket is concerned, all three have been pretty mediocre in recent times. England have hit rock bottom, India were on a losing spree until the T20 World Cup in Dhaka and Australia fared badly in Dhaka after bulldozing England in the Ashes and ODIs.

The concept of Big Three reminds me of the original Big Three of the ICC, England, South Africa and Australia. I have a feeling that it must have emanated from the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board).

The other Boards followed the adage "If you can't lick 'em join 'em." Pakistan, who were left stranded, have now, through their new Chairman Najam Sethi, done the right thing by joining the nine others. And this may have paid dividends because the Three have made alterations and amendments to their original plans.

Pakistan will now get bilateral series against the others as in the past. They, we are informed, also stand to get the Vice Presidency of the ICC next year. The Future Tours Program, which they had finished off, has now been restored. They have restored a few other things like the Test Championship. So far as the money is concerned, there is no denying the fact that the Indian cricket board has more money than all the cricket boards of the world combined. Smaller countries like England and South Africa are viewing the situation in the context of revenue potential in terms of television coverage and media rights which can make them rich. Unfortunately, in the game of cricket, it is the money that talks and India has got that money. Its influence is evident from one example. We have an Indian Cricket

Board chairman who's been asked by the Supreme Court of India to step aside. This person had been representing the BCCI in the ICC meetings and there was not even a twitter. So the Three will go on for a few years and then it will die its natural death.

As for the Three affecting the game, there is one thing we must know. The rules of cricket, or the laws of cricket, are not made by the ICC. They are made by the Marylebone Cricket Club, which is based in the Lord's Cricket Ground in London.

### **So where does the ICC stand now?**

The ICC, which is the regulatory body, is a toothless tiger. It is not what it used to be or what it should be. Now, after the arrival of the Three, it will become a servile body to them although it is trying to make itself useful by spreading cricket all over the world. But sadly, it has reduced itself to a money-spinning organization.

### **Has limited overs cricket added to the game's popularity, both among fans and sponsors?**

The limited overs games, the One-Day Internationals and the T20s, have emerged mainly because of the commercialization of the sport. The ODIs started in the early 1970s by accident when a Test match was to be played between Australia and England in Sydney. The match couldn't be played because it rained continuously for four days. But the fifth day was better weather-wise. The captains of both teams decided to play 50 overs each and the game became quite popular. Even then, 50-over matches were already in vogue in England in the weekend Leagues and were quite popular among the people. So when its popularity increased, the trend started to catch on and the business-minded people saw a great opportunity to make money out of it.

The famous tussle in the 1970s, involving Australian media tycoon Kerry Packer, over the broadcasting rights of a cricket series to be held in Australia also played an important role in the popularity of One-Day cricket.

### **How did the element of corruption creep into the game?**

Greed, I think, is the main culprit. The element of temptation is there. And it is given by bookies. I do not know the modus operandi of how these things work but there are reports that match fixing and spot fixing and fancy fixing

are rampant. There are eyebrows being raised and fingers pointed at some fixtures in Dhaka 2014.

I am at a loss why players get roped in. There is no cause as they are so well provided for. They are looked after extremely well. The Pakistani players, for example, are paid handsomely, they have good contracts, they travel business class and are paid daily allowances when they go on international tours and stay in five-star hotels. All their needs are taken care of and they have the best of everything. But everyone wants more. It's the greed which makes them fall prey to bookies and other such corrupt elements. All boards need to counsel their players and have sessions in the academies to prevent our heroes from being involved not only in betting but other forms of misconduct.

The ICC is not lenient towards players who are caught in these activities. It has an Anti-Corruption & Security unit and if it catches anyone, it punishes them. However, unfortunately this cracker-jack unit has not been able to "catch" even one culprit. It is the policemen of various countries who have done so.

### **Would you like the rules that govern cricket to be given a big shake-up?**

The rules are just fine. They keep changing and evolving.

### **Are you happy with the amount of technology that has crept into the game?**

I think the use of technology should increase. Technology should be used uniformly by all the cricket playing countries. At the moment India does not use many technologies and the ICC can't do anything about it. That's why I say it's a toothless body. Technology should be developed and used throughout the cricketing world. Technology is very expensive and instead of the "host" boards picking up the bill, expenses should be paid by the ICC.

When we use technology, there are no accusations of cheating and favoritism. No one can say that the Sri Lankan or Pakistani umpires are biased or the Indian umpires are useless or the West Indian umpires are scared or the English and Australian umpires are incompetent.

### **What are the causes that have led to cricket's decline in Pakistan?**

Who said cricket is on the decline in Pakistan? It is not. We have some of the finest players in the world. We have the best bowling attack. We have

Saeed Ajmal as the off-spinner, Shahid Afridi as the leg-spinner and Zulfiqar Babar as the left-arm spinner. Our fast bowlers are among the best in the world. Some of them are old and a bit unfit but we have their replacements – Junaid Khan and Muhammad Talha. In fact, Sami is still going strong. We have some really good pace bowlers at the domestic cricket level too. Then we have good all-rounders. Muhammad Hafeez, for example, is a very fine all-rounder.

On the batting side, our openers and middle-order batsmen are good. We have Azhar Ali and Asad Shafique. Then a number of talented youngsters are coming up – Sami Aslam, Inamul Haq, Ahmed Shahzad and Sharjeel Khan, to name a few. So it's not true that cricket is on the decline. Our cricketers are in such demand throughout the world because they are great crowd-pullers. They may not be registered with the IPL – for non-cricketing reasons, obviously – but they are in demand everywhere else. They are in the Big Bash, the Caribbean League, the Sri Lankan League and the Bangladeshi League.

### **How can we improve the functioning of the PCB?**

The PCB should be run like a corporation. It should have departments, departmental heads and it should have job descriptions, key tasks and accountability. Annual appraisals should be done and people should be paid and promoted accordingly.

The cricketing aspects such as coaching and selection matters should be decided by senior and experienced cricketers. As far as the management of the Board is concerned, we must have professionals to run these affairs. Some of the successful leaders in the world of cricket were non-cricketers. Jagmohan Dalmiya of India, Sir John Anderson of New Zealand, Air Marshal Nur Khan of Pakistan, Percy Sonn of South Africa and David Morgan of ECB. Also the Presidents of ICC, apart from a couple, have been non-cricketers. Malcolm Gray, Ehsan Mani, Percy Sonn, Jagmohan Dalmiya and Sharad Pawar. The list goes on. Even the heads of the ICC are not former cricketers although they are associated with the game in some manner. Being a cricketer has its advantages as far as the technical aspects of the game are concerned. But it has its disadvantages when it comes to the management because there you carry a lot of baggage with you. **S**



# Loss of Innocence

**The claims of the Indians are exaggerated and manipulative when it comes to their contribution to the cricket world's spoils. But it's undeniable that they are the Wall Street of Cricket.**

By Sohaib Alvi

On a rare, sun-sparkled day in Lord's – on the first day of the first ever cricket World Cup in 1975 – Sunil Gavaskar opened for India after England's 334-4 and returned to the pavilion 60 overs later unbeaten – on 36 with India on 132-2. Known as an ascetic stonewaller, some felt he had registered his protest that One-Day cricket was an insult to the classic game.

The previous summer, India had been whitewashed 3-0 in the Test series, including being bowled out for 42 after following on, again at Lord's.

That was Indian cricket four decades back. In the subsequent years, India avoided ODI cricket like the plague and played no internationals at home until November 1981. By then, they had played 25 ODIs in other countries, including two World Cups. They were regarded as the most insipid team out of the six that played cricket in both formats at the time. When all the top players of Australia and the West Indies, the world's top two teams, were plucked by Kerry Packer in 1977 for his private Test matches and ODIs against a World XI containing the top players from the

remaining four countries, he did not give a second look at an Indian. In fact, he opted for the top cricketers from the recently exiled South Africa.

So what has transformed the tortoise into the hare, that today India is the citadel of limited-overs cricket, especially in the shorter version? The genesis can be traced, ironically, to another summer game at Lord's in 1983. It was then that Kapil Dev's Indians created the greatest upset in World Cup history by bowling out the still impregnable West Indies for 140 in the final to win by 43 runs. No one was more surprised than the over 700 million Indians. The players were feted by Indira Gandhi and Lata Mangeshkar sang 'Bharata Viswa Vijeta', a song written in honour of the world champions by the legendary Indeevar.

The winning moment had come at the stroke of



midnight back home, and it gave Freedom at Midnight a new perspective as it let loose an inspired generation which till then had been brought up on banal draws and the odd ODI win. Cricket in the country had gone from the drab black and white to multi-colored horizons, appropriately in the year when color TV was introduced in India.

It was no fluke as India also won the 1985 World Championship in Australia, comprehensively beating Pakistan, which had stormed through to the final as favorites; the metamorphoses in the mindset could not be better epitomized than by the fact that Sunil Gavaskar wrote a book titled One-Day Wonders.

India's flirtation with ODIs was soon

consummated into owning the format. The advent of cricket in Sharjah, hosting the World Cup in 1987 and 1996 and the coming of Sachin Tendulkar rolled the cricket world under its feet. Indian conglomerates and top MNCs ploughed billions into the game in India and Indian players were soon the most expensive commodities in world cricket. The gentlemen at Lord's bewailed what they had helped create.

What they had created, of course, was the most powerful cricket board in the world. Though the claims of the Indians are exaggerated and manipulative when it comes to their contribution to the cricket world's spoils, it's undeniable that they are the Wall Street of Cricket. You can live without them, but it's not the lifestyle you have been elevated to. Like the United States, to whom Europe owes a debt for saving and then helping rebuild the continent in and after the Second World War, the cricketing coterie knows it would be thrown back to the 1930s if India was to pull out. It would be suicidal for the BCCI as well but it would be all about who blinked first – and the BCCI is still staring.

But just as Europe allowed Nazi Germany to become powerful, so has the rest of the cricket world been acquiescing to Indian ambitions at hegemony for several years. Now that they have launched their blitzkrieg in the shape of the IPL, they rule the world. They have their Mussolini and Hirohito on their side in the form of the ECB and the CA and there has been no attempt by them to disguise India's demand to be the emperor of the cricket world. It had come through an ultimatum that mirrors that of General James Outram to the Nawab of Oudh, Wajid Ali Shah, which was to surrender or be vanquished.

Ironically it was given first to the British, then to Australia and after taking them on board, to the rest of the world. You can say that Pakistan proved their Bahadur Shah Zafar, long on talk and short on armory, as its dominion lay split between warring factions within.

Behind the façade of the BCCI, of



course, is the betting mafia. Fed up with ICC's policing, they masterminded the takeover this year, preempting the probability of independent directors running the ICC as was proposed in the Woolf report. An initiative of Haroon Lorgat, then CEO of the ICC, the report was an incisive analysis of the policy and procedural flaws that were allowing match and spot-fixing. The amendments it recommended were pragmatic and would have taken away the power from the BCCI and hence the mafia. Now, any charge of fixing has to be submitted to the ICC Executive Committee, where India, England and Australia will decide whether or not to take it forward. Needless to say, it'll be consigned to the dustbin no matter what the merit.

But the Indians have reached such commanding power also due to weakening structures of other countries. The advent of the Premier League Football and the overpowering marketing of its charisma, glamor and world's top footballers drew an entire British generation away from cricket. While before they were aligned to both, which teenager would now want to work towards making a few thousand quid a month playing seven hours a day, six days a week? And then working odd jobs to get through the winter months, when he could make tons of money playing 90 minutes once a week. And if you made it to the top, there is no comparison between the prospects of living three months away from family on distant continents with that of a weekend trip to the continent at most.

That England have risen again as a team to contend with is due to their imported cricketers from South Africa, where post-apartheid white cricketers have limited seats. This adds up to players coming in from the Asian and Caribbean communities. Today's England team is an assortment from the lost British empire, far removed from a combination of the fashionable counties up until the 1970s.

In the West Indies, the underprivileged used to bend their backs on streets and on the beaches with cricket as their sole road to superstar appeal. But by the late 1980s, Florida was attracting the tall and well-built Calypsos to basketball; similarly the Kiwis to rugby inspired by the All Blacks. It was only in the South Asian countries that young men from deprecated villages and middle-class urban neighborhoods were willing to sweat it out to play cricket. Perhaps they had no choice as the game remains the singularly lucrative sport here. Or perhaps they are made for cricket more than the rest of the world.

If England and Australia are going to retain their sponsors at the levels they are charging, they need the Indians, both at home and abroad, as there is no such thing anymore as a local company with a local market. India's market of billions beckons to the Fortune 500 toppers just as a lantern does to the ship in the perfect storm. Whether it is title sponsorships, rights, endorsements, ground merchandising or air time during the games, it's the gateway to India.

Pakistanis can only look on jealously as they do the making of the Far East, whom they taught to fly in the 1960s and built their business models. Right to the 1970s, the Pakistan cricketers were the toast of the English counties and crowds everywhere because of their brand of cricket, a cocktail of fire and elegance.

But the match-fixing in the 1990s tore the team apart. The men Imran and Miandad had so carefully put together splintered into groups, each chasing their own greed and power. The administrators wanted to play Caesar, having never been in the battle, when actually they were being played by the soldiers. Pakistan's cricket was led by a general, a bureaucrat, a doctor and eventually a second-grade cricketer of old times. Eventually, it has a banker and a journalist jostling each other to steer the patched-up ship of dreams.

Such was their callousness for the game that they left the one friend they had left in cricket to the mercy of the gunmen. The Sri Lankans had been drawn in with the promise of a presidential-level security. But it was left to their bus driver to rescue them once the two police mobiles had

been dealt with by terrorists within minutes. The ICC demanded a report that was not sent to them for months. Previously, too, the PCB would not send audited reports to the ICC for

front of a packed ground. Another was called a buffoon by a former ICC CEO and we could only protest to the walls, such was the cowardice.

With them came their private


If England and Australia are going to retain their sponsors at the levels they are charging, they need the Indians, both at home and abroad, as there is no such thing anymore as a local company with a local market. India's market of billions beckons to the Fortune 500 toppers just as a lantern does to the ship in the perfect storm.

2 to 3 years at a time, primarily because there was no audit worth the name.

They were losing the forest for the trees and the other ICC members laughed at the delusional intelligence of our chairmen in meetings when they weren't ignoring them. One chairman stood helplessly on the ground as his team refused to come out to play in

wazirs, whose prime job was to front the king while running palace intrigues. The courtesans running, or rather ruining, the crucial functions of cricket development were obsessed with personal benefits and TA/DA, leaving the next generation of cricketers to fend for themselves any which way they could.

Taking advantage of this were the 'Last of the Mohicans', arguably the greatest talent ever accumulated in one team, Inzamam and Yousuf. They misused their genius, combining to ensure no one would threaten their place. Merit was the least consideration, loyalty was paramount. While other countries built their infrastructures, systems and academies, Pakistan cricket crumbled under the weight of its own incompetence. Like children of warring parents or abandoned, our young cricketers were left to be tempted and crucified by the ways of the world.

Despite precocious talent, we have reached a stage where we have no idea where we are and where we have to go. Pakistan cricket and cricketers have reached some high points over the past 15 years not because of the PCB but despite it. It can get worse unless we get our act together. As Macbeth says in his poignant soliloquy, "Present fears are less than horrible imaginings." 

*The writer is a strategy and marketing consultant and corporate trainer with a passion for cricket.*



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# Sports Sans Borders

**Political interventions and favoritism mars the beauty of sports and harms the sportsman's spirit.**

By Saad Amanullah Khan

In the subcontinent, cricket is a fever, it is a frenzy, it makes us forget all our problems and cheer for our teams like we have never cheered for anything in our lives before. It is heartening to see the amazing ways in which citizens of a country get together – regardless of their ethnic differences, provincial rivalries and religious contradictions – when their national team is playing in a major tournament. All are one and cheering for a single team made up of players belonging to different provinces, religions and ethnic backgrounds.

Besides supporting our own country, we also enjoy cricket matches between other teams, sometimes even cheer for them, especially when they are playing against our rivals. And so cricket, one of the most amazing games in the subcontinent, continues to inspire and unite over one and a half billion people across Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Notice how people do not care which religion the players belong to or which ethnic class they represent as long as they have the right skills and competence to win a game. We respect players who are good in what they do and what they deliver on the field irrespective of their nationality and race. Players like Sachin Tendulkar, Javed Miandad, Adam Gilchrist, Brian Lara and Jacques Kallis are revered and respected across the globe in every cricket-playing nation.

Such behavior sends out a strong message, loud and clear, that deep down at the core of our hearts, we really don't care about religion,

ethnicity, political affiliation; we want to enjoy life, we support merit and love camaraderie.

Merit and ability, which unfortunately have been sidelined in many South Asian societies, especially in government circles, have been replaced by nepotism and favoritism that takes precedence in the minds of cricket fans. Those who have spent their entire lives supporting preferential treatment and discrimination, sit in stadiums or in front of their TVs and pray with their hands clasped and eyes shut tight, hoping fervently that competent players have been selected by the selection boards. Unfortunately, they know in their heart of hearts that the selectors are also a part of the same society where merit does not define selection criteria.

Sports and a sportsman's spirit gives us hope that we, human beings, do have a heart; we do have the passion to enjoy life without borders and without nepotism. The world, unfortunately, has changed drastically. Now, governments are ready to kill over border infringements and people are at each other's throat on minor ethnic and religious differences. Why have we – the civil society, the educated, the opinion-makers – lost the ability to put some sanity into international relations, into our societies where senseless violence and terrorism has made life difficult and adversely affected business growth and its sustenance?

Governments do disrupt the amazing world of sports where merit and only merit is the name of the

game. An example of government interference in sport is that of India banning the Pakistani team from touring the country. A more recent example is of a ban placed by the Bangladeshi Cricket Control Board on Bangladeshi fans, stopping them from waving flags of any country other than their own. Thankfully though, the ban was lifted after a few days.

One of the worst examples of



mixing politics and sports is that of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow when the U.S. and its allies stopped their players from attending the games. This was followed by a tit-for-tat reaction by the USSR when the country and its allies disallowed their players from attending the Los Angeles Olympics four years later.

These actions ruined the careers of many deserving athletes, depriving them of a chance to prove their mettle. As a result of political realities taking precedence, the Olympics did

not showcase the best athletes from across the globe. Political rivalries hurt the very spirit of the sport.

A ray of hope still exists that sports have the ability to provide the opportunities or the avenues where the entire humanity can get together and where merit can prevail. If sports get tainted due to political intervention or favoritism, it will harm the sportsman's spirit of citizens supporting their teams.

Unlike sports, the impact of nepotism and favoritism is quite

blatant and obvious in government circles and businesses. The damage in these sectors is severe and broad-based. In underdeveloped societies, the impact of nepotism is deeper and lasts for decades, giving impetus to other problems such as poverty and weaker institutions. Let's support sportsmanship and merit in each and every aspect of our lives. **S**

*The writer works in the corporate sector and is active on various business forums and trade bodies.*



# The Game that 'Bowls Over'!

An overview of cricket in South Asia.

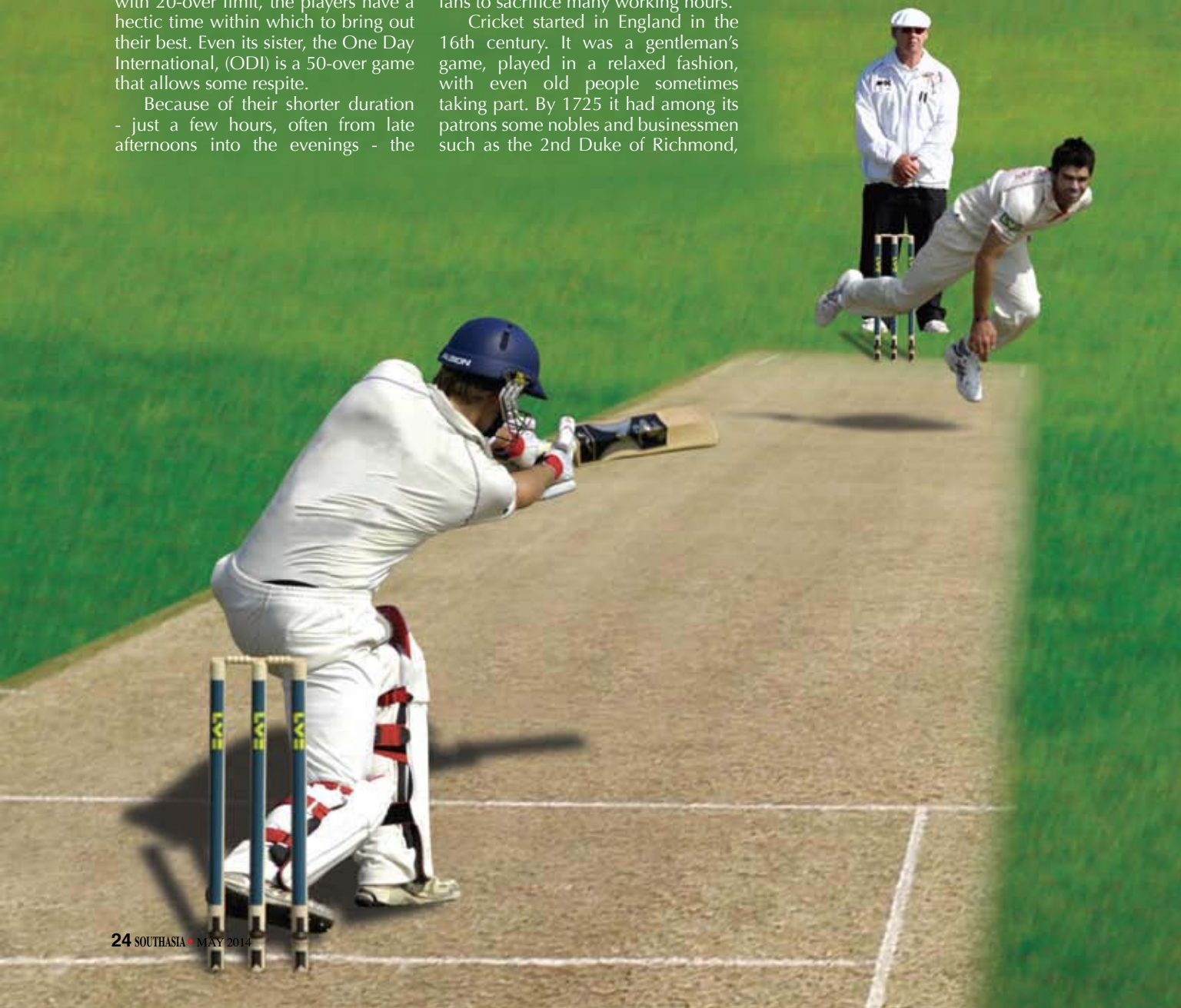
By S.G. Jilanee

With Sri Lanka winning the T-20 World Cup in a thrilling final against India, the frenzy ignited among cricket fans has ebbed. As usual, the play offered many nail-biting moments because with 20-over limit, the players have a hectic time within which to bring out their best. Even its sister, the One Day International, (ODI) is a 50-over game that allows some respite.

Because of their shorter duration - just a few hours, often from late afternoons into the evenings - the

ODI and Twenty-20 are very popular because people can throng to the stadiums after the day's work. This factor has also lent these an edge over test matches, which are played for five days during daytime and require the fans to sacrifice many working hours.

Cricket started in England in the 16th century. It was a gentleman's game, played in a relaxed fashion, with even old people sometimes taking part. By 1725 it had among its patrons some nobles and businessmen such as the 2nd Duke of Richmond,



Sir William Gage, Alan Brodrick et al.

Instantly popular, by the end of the 18th century, cricket had become England's national sport. The British introduced it in their colonies, - South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, India and the Caribbean islands (West Indies). However, it never caught on in the United States and Canada.

The Laws of Cricket were codified in 1744. Originally it was played with a four ball over. The five-ball over was introduced in 1889 and the current six-ball over in 1900.

Some exclusive features set this game apart from any other. It even has its own idioms. For example, "having had a good innings" means having had a long and successful life. To be "hit for six," means being shocked. Being "bowled over" stands for being left speechless; an awkward situation is called a "sticky wicket." To be "stumped" is to be clueless about how to solve a problem; to "catch out" means to outwit and "hitting off one's own bat" means acting independently. And the piece de resistance that reminds one of the game's noble origin is to call an unfair dealing as "not cricket."

Cricket is also a game of records. Who played how many matches, runs scored, including fours and sixes, number of wickets taken when and where is all faithfully chronicled. Further details include the highest number of consecutive wickets taken or consecutive sixes or fours made, and much more. Some of the records include Prince Ranjit Singhji's 2780 runs in a season in 1899 - "which was the highest aggregate ever made!"

Other famous names are Don Bradman of Australia and Sachin Tendulkar of India. Bradman had a Test average of 99.94 and an overall first-class average of 95.14, records unmatched by any other player. Sachin Tendulkar was rated by Wisden Cricketers' Almanac in 2002 as the "second greatest Test batsman of all time, behind Don Bradman."

Gambling in cricket is nothing new. Only match-fixing and ball-tampering are new. Otherwise, even in the earliest times there used to be heavy betting on the game.

The traditions of luncheon and afternoon tea introduced by the gentlemen cricketers of 18th century England are still observed in Test cricket. The game is played between

11 a.m. and 6 p.m. with a 40-minute lunch break from 1 p.m. and another 20-minute break for tea at 3:40 p.m. besides short breaks of about 5 minutes for drinks, usually after an hour's play.

Though cricket started in India in 1721 it was granted official status in 1932, in which year India played its first Test cricket match from 25th to 28th June against England at Lords' in London.

Prince Ranjit Singhji a.k.a. Ranji was the first Indian to play Test cricket with his Test debut for England in 1896. India's most prestigious first-class cricket tournament - Ranji Trophy was named after him. The competition was launched as "The Cricket Championship of India" in 1934 and is still played in India.

Parsis took to the game first, followed by Hindus and Muslims. Each established their cricket clubs in Bombay in the 19th century. At first, cricket matches were played among Europeans, Hindus and Parsis, which was called the Triangular tournament. When Muslims joined in 1912, it became "Quadrangular." In 1937, with the addition of a new team called the Rests, it became the Pentangular Tournament but was abandoned in 1946 due to political unrest.

Some of past Indian cricket legends such as CK Nyudu, Lala Amarnath, Merchant, Manjerekar, Mankad, Umrigar, Nawab of Pataudi and Maharaja of Vizianagram, still stir happy memories of first class cricket. Among the present lot are, Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Virender Sehwag. Virat Kohli is another promising batsman who gave some thrilling performances in this year's T-20 championship.

Pakistan has taken long strides in the game since its debut with a five-match Test series in India in 1952, producing some famous cricketers. Abdul Hafeez Kardar, who had been playing test cricket in India before partition, was the first captain of the Pakistani cricket team. In the 23 matches he captained, Kardar won the distinction of leading his team to victory over all the Test playing countries of the time, except South Africa with which Pakistan did not play. It was under his captaincy that Pakistan won a stunning victory against England at the Oval in 1954 with Fazal Mahmood, taking 12 wickets at the Oval.

Javed Miandad is another player who made history in 1986 in AustralAsia Cup final in Sharjah, with his last-ball victory when he hit for six - only four runs were required off one ball.

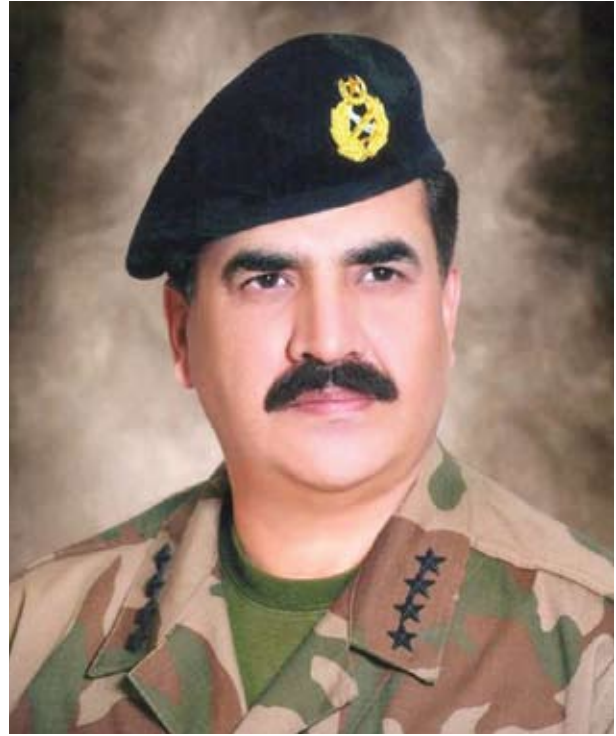
Imran Khan led the Pakistan team to World Cup victory in 1992. Hanif Mohammad became the first Asian cricketer to score a triple hundred in a match with 337 runs in 970 minutes against the West Indies in 1958. This was also the longest innings in Test history. Shoaib Akhtar is reputed as the fastest bowler in the history of cricket and has bowled his fastest delivery officially recorded at a speed of 161.3 kph. Zaheer Abbas, Waqar Yunus and Waseem Akram are among other well-known Pakistani cricketers. In the limited over games, Shahid Afridi has already become a sort of a legend as a batsman. Among others are Hafeez, Akmal and Ajmal. But, alas, international matches are no more played within Pakistan since the Sri Lanka team was physically attacked in Lahore in 2009.

Bangladesh became an Associate Member of the ICC in 1977 and a regular member in 1997. The same year it won the Sixth ICC Trophy in Malaysia. In 2000, it attained Test status. Within this short span, it has thrown up some promising players such as Mushfiqur, Ashraful, Tamim and Habibur Bashar, while Shakib is regarded as "the best cricketer that Bangladesh have ever had."

In Sri Lanka, the first recorded cricket match was played as far back as 1832. In 1905 it was playing first class cricket. Sri Lanka made its international debut in the 1975 World Cup inaugural. It won the ICC Trophy in 1979. On July 21, 1981, Sri Lanka was admitted to full membership of the ICC and was awarded Test status. In 1996 it won the Cricket World Cup.

Lasith Malinga became the first bowler, ever, to take four wickets in four consecutive balls in the 2007 World Cup match against South Africa. He also took six wickets in his very first match in 2004 against Australia. Among other famous Sri Lankan cricketers are Jayasuriya, Muralitharan, Dilshan, Sangakara and Jayewardene. **S**

*The writer is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia*



# A Delusion of Infallibility?

**Pakistan's most popular TV channel has taken a direct hit at the ISI.  
True to its form, the ISI has struck back, demanding a ban on the channel.  
Is this really what Pakistan needs?**

By Arsla Jawaid

Tensions between Pakistan's civilian government and the country's armed forces seem to be escalating at a break-neck speed. The animosity, though not always explicit, comes at a time when neither side, especially the civilian command, can afford it. Peace talks that have been accorded second chances, more than twice, are still in the works with no resolution in sight. The state remains weak and dithering for clarity while its citizens are targeted regularly. The militant narrative has gained increased space in the public consciousness, courtesy the wide coverage accorded to it, partially due to fear of attacks on the media but largely due to a shameless race for high ratings. While

the frequency of militant activities reduced, the 40-day ceasefire initiated by the TTP failed to bring a complete halt to militant attacks, prompting serious concerns regarding the 'loose affiliation' of groups under the TTP banner and raising concrete questions regarding a military operation to safeguard the integrity and future of the state.

Against this backdrop, the civilian government seems to have been more pre-occupied with establishing its superiority and command over the Army rather than focusing on the real issues of national security that plague the nation. Pursuing the politically motivated trial of General Pervez Musharraf, the PML-N federal

government blatantly and categorically rejected the general's application against putting his name on the Exit Control List (ECL). Publicly terming Musharraf a 'traitor', vilification of the former COAS, and by extension the army, ensued in the media.. As a result, severe discontent began to brew in the army ranks. There is no doubt that the media has established itself as a powerful fourth estate but it fails to act like one. Devoid of objectivity, the media now serves as an opinion-maker in a country that remains impressionable, nevertheless. There is also no doubt that the military prefers to control the narrative. Though under General Kayani, and now General Shareef, the military has maintained a

somewhat non-interference approach in politics, it does still prefer that the state play by the military rule-book.

General Sharif, cognizant of military sentiment, met with the Prime Minister to express the army's disapproval of the handling of Musharraf's trial and to discuss a safe passage for the general's exit. In a rare show of decisiveness, Prime Minister Sharif rejected the demand and Musharraf remains in Pakistan today, unable to visit his ailing mother in the UAE.

While the PML-N government, politically motivated by its need to seek revenge from the general who deposed it in 1999, may be terming this a triumph of democracy, it seems to forget that now is not the time. Despite the government's obsequious attempts to appease the militants, very few in Pakistan are expecting the peace talks to succeed. In the likely event that they fail, the Pakistan Army will become the only institution that the country will rally behind. At a time when the Army requires public support to boost its morale in what seems to be an unending war against militancy, the government seems to care little.

Perhaps emboldened by the government's bold actions and the need to establish superiority, the media exploited its own position to add salt to the wounds. On April 19, Hamid Mir, a prominent anchor at Geo (the biggest private media group in the country) survived an assassination attempt in Karachi. As Geo News went into editorial overdrive, within minutes, Mir's brother (also a journalist) appeared on the channel claiming that Hamid Mir had received threats from the ISI and had informed family and friends that Director General ISI, Zaheer-ul-Islam, should be held responsible in the event of any untoward incident. For hours the channel pounded the ISI and as pictures of the DG ISI flashed on the screen, a GEO TV analyst demanded the public resignation of the ISI chief.

Geo News has carved a sensationalist reputation for itself. To not only level an allegation but to also issue a verdict lies far beyond the ambit of the media. As public outcry emerged, many channels and analysts accused Geo News of indulging in irresponsible behavior that could have a far-reaching impact on the Pakistani state. Intoxicated with the influence and power it wields, the media in Pakistan has become an unchecked, irresponsible beast. While accusing



the ISI of believing it is above the law, the media too has deluded itself into believing that it is infallible. Lacking an ethical code, it relies on sensationalism, hungry for higher ratings.

As the fire burned, the government conspicuously remained mum, refusing to throw its weight behind the army and issuing a categorical admonishment of the drama. Though the interior minister termed it a 'slandorous campaign against state institution' the premier made no statements. This is no surprise though. Prime Minister Sharif has remained vague and largely quiet on the issue of a military operation against militant hideouts, prompting many to accuse him of being an ambivalent and indecisive leader. Again he refrained from taking a strong position on the media coverage and commentary against the ISI, allowing the matter to snowball into a major crisis. Ironically, the one time Sharif has been vocal and decisive has been over the issue of the Musharraf trial. Some circles believe that Sharif's decision to stay silent on the ISI matter stems from his own desire to see the military and intelligence agencies be taken to task, even if by a seemingly irresponsible organization.

The ISPR issued a prompt notice praying for Mir's recovery and stating that an independent inquiry must be held immediately, "However raising allegations against ISI or head of ISI without any basis is highly regrettable and misleading." Against the backdrop of the allegations, COAS General Shareef visited the ISI headquarters, perhaps to send a strong signal to the civilian government, informing it of the strength and power the two organizations wielded together. As public opinion against Geo News reckless and accusatory commentary intensified, the Ministry of Defense

issued a defamation notice to PEMRA asking for the cancellation of the media group's license over its baseless and malicious reporting that both disrespected Pakistan's premier intelligence agency and "harmed national interests." Geo News has been banned in certain government and army offices and has been pushed further down on cable providers' lists.

The matter seems far from settled. However, the ban on Geo will most likely not be supported by the media or political parties, prompting yet another collusion with the military. TV channels have criticized Geo News commentary following the attack on Hamid Mir and have thrown overwhelming support behind the ISI's arguments, perhaps hoping to bring down its strongest rival. However, a ban on a popular news channel will be seen as a strong infringement of freedom of speech. Censorship like this will undoubtedly attract more international attention and outrage. If the ISI succeeds, news channels united against Geo News must remember that in the future, they too will be prevented from exercising freedom of speech, as they know it now.

Pakistan is facing a far greater national security crisis that requires urgent attention. There is no time for irresponsible and malicious practices by the media, whether conducted independently or at the behest of certain "high-level" orders. In this scenario, the nation must unite and for that to transpire, sensational allegations against state institutions must stop. In the same breath, censorship curbing freedom of expression, and bans against the media are no solutions to a crisis either. Make no mistake - it will backfire on both camps. **S**

*The writer is Managing Editor, Strategic Studies at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.*

When a civil nuclear deal was signed between the U.S. and India, all eyes automatically drifted towards the possibility of a similar pact between the global superpower and Pakistan. The expectation was only natural, considering the traditional rivalry

between India and Pakistan on most political issues, as well as the strategic significance of the two nations in the South Asian region. However, such anticipation does not come without doubts and question marks as to whether such a deal will ever see the light of day.

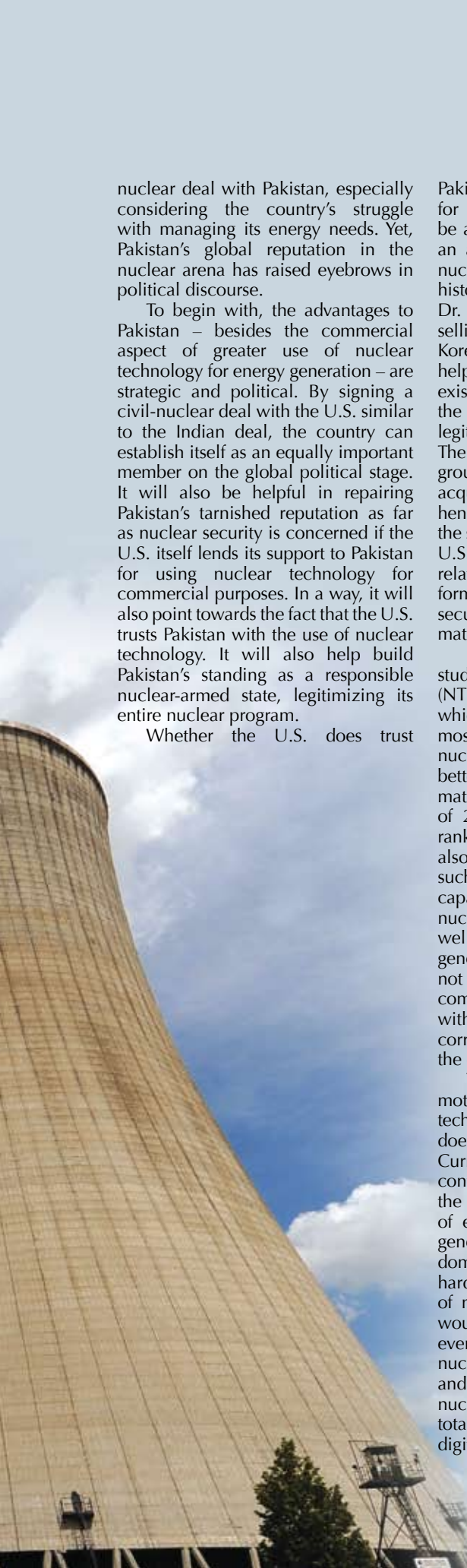
The civil nuclear deal with India was signed based on New Delhi's rationale to increase the nuclear component in the country's overall energy generation mix. Proponents of a similar agreement between Pakistan and the U.S. cite the same reason for encouraging a commercial

# Civil Nuclear Deal: the Pros and Cons

**While the U.S. continues to dither over signing a civil nuclear deal with Pakistan, China has lent its support to the use of nuclear technology for energy generation in the country.**

By Sijal Fawad





nuclear deal with Pakistan, especially considering the country's struggle with managing its energy needs. Yet, Pakistan's global reputation in the nuclear arena has raised eyebrows in political discourse.

To begin with, the advantages to Pakistan – besides the commercial aspect of greater use of nuclear technology for energy generation – are strategic and political. By signing a civil-nuclear deal with the U.S. similar to the Indian deal, the country can establish itself as an equally important member on the global political stage. It will also be helpful in repairing Pakistan's tarnished reputation as far as nuclear security is concerned if the U.S. itself lends its support to Pakistan for using nuclear technology for commercial purposes. In a way, it will also point towards the fact that the U.S. trusts Pakistan with the use of nuclear technology. It will also help build Pakistan's standing as a responsible nuclear-armed state, legitimizing its entire nuclear program.

Whether the U.S. does trust

Pakistan's use of nuclear technology for energy generation continues to be a major bottleneck in allowing for an affirmative action towards a civil nuclear deal with the U.S. Pakistan's history of nuclear proliferation, with Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan admitting to selling nuclear technology to North Korea and Iran in 2004, is not of much help. In addition, in the wake of the existing security threats in the country, the safety of nuclear resources is a legitimate concern with Washington. There are speculations of terrorist groups in Pakistan interested in acquiring nuclear materials illicitly, hence posing a serious hindrance to the signing of any similar deal with the U.S. At the same time, India's hostile relations with Pakistan also allow the former to raise concerns about its own security if a Pak-U.S. nuclear deal ever materializes.

In Pakistan's defense, a recent study by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) Index is worth mentioning in which Pakistan has been declared the most improved state in safeguarding its nuclear weapons. It has been ranked better than India in terms of nuclear material security and stands at 22 out of 25 countries, versus India's 23rd rank. At the same time, many experts also believe that terrorist groups, such as the Taliban, do not have the capability to overtake Pakistan's nuclear resources, which are quite well safeguarded. In spite of this, the general perception about the nation as not being trustworthy enough when it comes to nuclear warfare, combined with the openly known high levels of corruption amongst public officials, put the country at a severe disadvantage.

These issues aside, the commercial motive for greater use of nuclear technology for energy generation doesn't have much backing either. Currently, Pakistan's nuclear program contributes a meager 3.8 percent to the energy mix, with other sources of energy largely dominating power generation in the country. Given the dominance of these resources, it is hard to conceive that the contribution of nuclear power to the energy mix would receive any substantial boost, even following a possible commercial nuclear agreement between Pakistan and the U.S. But then again, India's nuclear power contribution to the total energy generation is also in single digits, rendering this a weak argument

against proposing a Pak-U.S. civil nuclear deal.

This leaves mainly strategic and political motives standing in the way of such a deal. Signing a civil nuclear deal with India holds more significance for the U.S. than what can be conceived by an ordinary mind. In the past, the U.S. has used India to counterweight China's growing economic and political influence on numerous occasions. India is considered an equal force to be reckoned with as an emerging economy in the Asian region, other than China. The U.S.' support for India and its assistance to the latter in the commercial use of resources is seen by many as a strategy to overshadow China's rising prominence on the global stage.

In the wake of doubts and qualms regarding the possibility of a nuclear deal with the U.S., China's commitment to cooperate in commercial nuclear use in Pakistan adds an interesting twist to the picture. While the U.S. and India may raise security concerns about a Pak-China commercial nuclear deal, the fact that China has endorsed the commercial use of nuclear resources in Pakistan goes to show that the latter controls its nuclear resources strictly with proper safeguarding measures.

Using nuclear technology for commercial purposes is the right of a nation, provided the safety standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency are being followed. It is encouraging that China is supporting Pakistan with a more widespread use of nuclear technology for energy generation. While security concerns and strategic motives should be considered, the commercial advantages of an additional source of energy cannot be downplayed. More important than debating the possibility of such a deal, nations such as the U.S. and China should first work on helping a country like Pakistan strengthen its safeguard methods and technology for nuclear resources. This may become a prerequisite for signing any possible civil nuclear deal, following which there should be minimum qualms about helping Pakistan out with a more productive use of nuclear technology and resources. **S**

*The writer is a postgraduate economics and finance student at the School of Oriental and African Studies.*

# Winds of Political Change

India prepares for a BJP win in the current elections and Pakistan watches the situation closely.

By S.G. Jilane

**O**n April 7 India went to the polls for the Lok Sabha. The voting process took six weeks and nine stages in a country where the average constituency size was 'bigger than the entire population of

Estonia (1.3 million)' according to The Guardian.

Campaigning saw many innovations. Narendra Modi, the BJP nominee for the prime minister's slot, was projected through 3D hologram

technology to 100 locations across the country simultaneously to speak to voters. The party billed the digital rally as the "first of its kind in the history of global electoral campaigning."

The air was thick with high-octane



speeches. Vitriol-laced barbs were exchanged between rivals and new revelations were made. Rahul Gandhi said about his rival Narendra Modi that he can do anything to become prime minister. "He will cut people to pieces and make people fight each other..." This was an oblique reference to the Muslim massacre in Gujarat under Modi as chief minister.

Wine and cash flowed like water to seek votes. The Election Commission reportedly seized "over \$32.5 million in cash and 2.7 million litres of liquor in countrywide raids since the polls were announced on March 5."

In another development, the Aam Admi Party (AAP) chief, Arvind Kejriwal was slapped on two occasions, once by a motor-rickshaw driver and the next time by a young man. He met both, forgave them and still declined state security.

Meanwhile, Narendra Modi exploded a bombshell by publicly revealing for the first time in his life that he is a married man. And, Azam Khan of Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party (SP) created another stir by asserting that it was Muslim troops of the Indian army that successfully defended Kargil in 2009 against Pakistan.

As expected, the BJP played the communal card. Modi's aide Amit Shah urged the Jats in Muzaffarnagar (UP), which was the scene of bloody riots between Jats and Muslims, to vote for "revenge." He allegedly repeated the same remarks in Bijnor and Shamli districts.

It also exploited Hindu religious sentiments by reviving the issue of Ram Mandir, because in the past, the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign, promising to build Ram Mandir over the site of the razed Babri mosque, had paid dividends. For instance, the BJP expanded from just eight Lok Sabha seats and 7.58% vote share in 1989 to 51 seats and 32.82% votes in 1991 in consequence of that campaign.

As if construction of the Ram Mandir was not enough as an irritant to Muslims, the BJP also promised in its manifesto to promulgate a common civil code for all people and abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution that confers a special status on Jammu-Kashmir. In consequence, Muslims in general and those of Jammu-Kashmir, in particular, distanced themselves

from the BJP. Arif Majid Pampori, BJP candidate for Lok Sabha from Jammu-Kashmir "refused to file his nomination paper and resigned from BJP" in protest. Meanwhile, in reaction to Amit Singh's "revenge" call, Muslims displaced by the riots in Muzaffarnagar went in hordes from their camps to their villages to vote for BJP's rival candidates.

Modi's candidature for prime minister sparked a wave of protests among secularists and liberals. As many as 26 eminent people of diverse calling, -artists, film directors, scholars, economists, a barrister, as well as Salman Rushdie and four British MPs, -Mike Wood, John McDonnell, Fiona Mactaggart and Imran Khan, sent a joint letter to the Guardian saying, inter alia, that, "Were he (Modi) to be elected prime minister, it would bode ill for India's future as a country that cherishes the ideals of inclusion and protection for all its peoples and communities."

Actually, it is the specter of the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat "overseen" by Modi as chief minister that haunts every thinking mind in India. Worst case scenarios include a spate of countrywide communal violence targeting Muslims. Nonetheless, Modi himself has said nothing in his speeches to stoke Muslim fears.

However, while the promises in the BJP manifesto listed in the afore-stated relate to domestic issues, the declaration to give up the doctrine of "No first use of nuclear weapons" is something that would make Pakistan's policymakers sit up and take notice.

Islamabad is naturally watching the Indian elections with bated breath, not only because it is the next door neighbor, but primarily because, the countries remain in a state of perpetual standoff, interspersed by wars. Yet, whichever party forms the government, Pakistan will have to do business with it. That is what Abdul Basit, Pakistan's High Commissioner in New Delhi, told the media a few days ago.

Fears and apprehensions in the context of the expected victory of the BJP may, however, be unjustified. History is witness that during the five years of the Congress government, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

never visited Pakistan despite repeated invitations, nor did Indo-Pakistan talks to settle disputes make any progress. On the contrary, during the BJP-led NDA government, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Pakistan twice.

Manmohan Singh used the Mumbai massacre, allegedly engineered by Pakistani elements, as an excuse for not visiting. But Vajpayee was not deterred by the militants' attack on the parliament building. He took the famous bus journey to Lahore and made another trip to Islamabad, later. He even invited President Musharraf, the "architect of Kargil," to a state visit, the first by any Pakistani head of state or government, to India.

The BJP manifesto explicitly asserts that "where required we will not hesitate from taking strong stand and steps." And in a speech once, Modi accused his political agents of being "agents of Pakistan and enemy of India." In another speech he was quoted as saying that "our soldiers, who live and die for this country, were brutally shot by Pakistan to death" referring to a clash on the Line of Control sometime ago and critiqued Manmohan Singh for "silently taking it all." He also promised that "we will take tough actions against Pakistan."

Yet, all this high voltage rhetoric should be treated as the result of the election fever, and discounted. The first question is whether the BJP will be able to muster at least 273 seats in a house of 545 that would give it a simple majority. Although the latest NDTV poll gives it the required number but there may yet be many slips between the cup of overall victory and BJP's lip. Elections in the most populous state of UP and quite a few other states are yet to be held. The process will go on till almost mid-May. How the ballot may sway during this period is still rather early to speculate. If the elections lead to a hung parliament and Modi has to form a coalition, so much of his wings may be clipped.

Nonetheless, Pakistan must take a realistic view and prepare itself to engage with the new government with sincerity of purpose to overcome hurdles and settle disputes. **S**

*The writer is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia*

Notwithstanding complaints of rigging and other flaws in the electoral process, the participation of almost 60 percent of the 12 million registered Afghan voters in the presidential polls in Afghanistan is a clear indication that a vast majority of Afghans see the future of their country in peace and democracy, instead of war and bloodshed.

In the days leading to the elections, the Taliban launched several deadly attacks, including an attack on a luxury hotel in a high security zone. They also targeted a voters' registration center in Kabul.

According to the Afghanistan Independent Election Commission, the body responsible for conducting elections, as many as seven million Afghans, both men and women, cast their votes despite Taliban threats of killing anyone who dared to go to polling stations.

Apart from showing the people's trust in a democratic and peaceful Afghanistan, and their opposition to infighting and war-lordism, the April 5 polls also put an end to the speculations that Hamid Karzai was reluctant to quit office.

Under the Afghan Constitution, a person could serve only twice as the elected president of the country. Thus, Hamid Karzai was the first leader who followed the constitution and stepped down from his position. Presidents and kings have been overthrown, sometimes in violent coups, over the past 113 years. Some of them were killed while others were forced to go into exile.

In the presidential elections, with the dismal performance of Dr. Zalmay Rasul, the man believed to be Hamid Karzai's favorite candidate, the real contest was fought between former foreign minister, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, an ethnic Tajik and the former finance minister and ex-employee of the World Bank, Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. The latter is an ethnic Pashtun.

According to the preliminary figures released by the AIEC on April 20, Abdullah was leading by almost 11 percent by gaining 44.9 percent votes. Ashraf Ghani followed with 31.5 percent votes. As predicted by a vast majority of pundits, the elections have gone in the second round as



# Voting for a New Vision

**Seven million Afghans cast their votes despite Taliban threats, proving that the nation believes in a democratic and peaceful Afghanistan**

By Daud Khattak

none of the two leading candidates could win over 50 percent votes in the first round.

Under the Afghan Constitution, a successful candidate must win over 50 percent of the total polled votes. If any candidate fails to gain over 50

percent votes, the constitution calls for a second round between the leading candidate and his runner-up. In 2009, the second round was averted at the eleventh hour as Karzai's then key rival, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah agreed to withdraw his claim of large-scale



rigging.

In the second round, Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani will be contesting one-on-one. The latter will have more chances of victory mainly because the so far divided Pashtun vote bank would prefer to rally behind an ethnic Pashtun just as the majority of ethnic Tajik prefer Dr. Abdullah over Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.

Out of the nine presidential hopefuls, eight were Pashtuns. Since Dr. Zalmay Rasul, the third-most popular candidate who apparently enjoyed the backing of President Hamid Karzai, will be out of the second round along with the six other Pashtun candidates, it will be Ashraf Ghani's golden chance to bag the majority of votes that were earlier divided among several candidates.

Though both of the leading candidates kept the country's economy, development and peace and security on top of their agendas during their election campaign and never propagated the ethnic issue, it is most

likely that the second round would be automatically overshadowed by an appeal to their respective ethnicities.

Unlike Hamid Karzai, none of the Afghan presidential candidates, including Dr. Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, opposed the signing of the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the United States.

In their interviews and election speeches, all candidates stressed the need for signing the security pact with the United States under which the latter is likely to keep an estimated 10,000 troops in Afghanistan for training the Afghan National Security Forces and dealing with the threat of terrorism.

From Afghanistan's point of view, the BSA is a guarantee from a strong backer, supporter and financier that Afghanistan is not going to be abandoned – both on the military and economic fronts. However, the agreement is not going to be signed till July-August this year.

Many analysts see a doomsday

scenario with the withdrawal of foreign troops by the end of 2014. But one needs to look at the transformation of Afghan society and its thinking over the past 10 years before jumping to any conclusion.

Besides, the Afghan National Security Forces are leading the operations after taking charge of security from the international troops last year and they have successfully thwarted several Taliban attacks in the recent months. It is a fact that 2013 was deadly for the Afghan forces, but the casualties suffered by the Taliban were higher. According to the annual UN Sanctions Committee report, there were 10,000 to 12,000 insurgent casualties during 2013.

Secondly, the Taliban have so far failed to capture a single city or district even in their former strongholds of Kandahar, Ghazni or Helmand. According to Borhan Osman, an Afghan journalist working for the Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN) in Kabul, the southern and southeastern cities of Kandahar, Lashkargah and Khost, which once used to be a stronghold of the Taliban, have become safer in recent years as compared to 2008-2010.

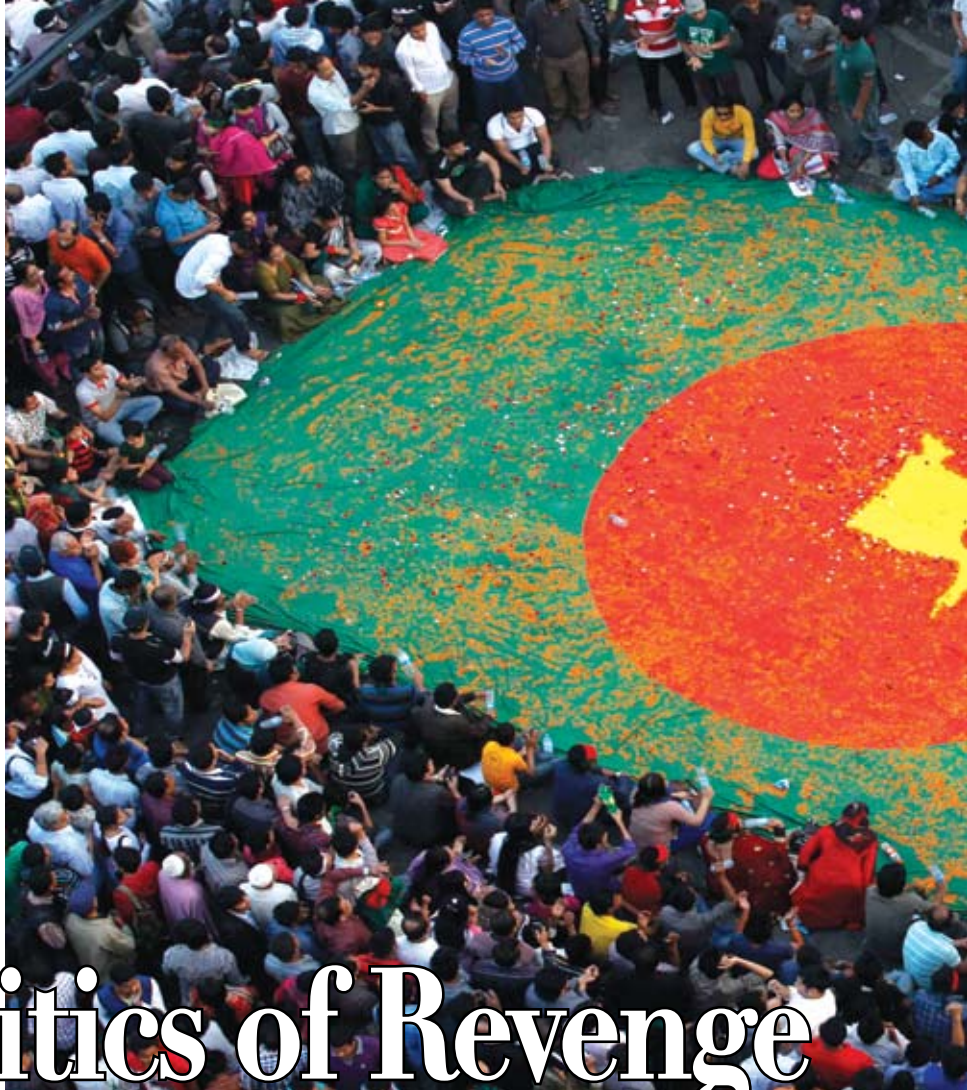
Borhan says that another weakness in the Taliban ranks is their incapability of engaging in a frontal battle. "So far, they have rather focused their efforts on hit-and-run attacks," he wrote in one of his reports after visiting the southern cities of Afghanistan for several days.

There is another important issue that demands attention: the country's shaky relationship with Pakistan. The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has mostly remained an on-again, off-again affair over the past 10 years. This was partly because of Hamid Karzai's unnecessary finger pointing at Pakistan. The Pakistan military's dominance over the country's civilian authorities on Afghan policy has also been an issue. As a new government is in place in Pakistan, which intends to take control of foreign policy, a new government in Afghanistan is likely to be looking with hope towards its eastern neighbor. **S**

*The writer contributes to the Christian Science Monitor and Sunday Times.*

**T**he move to outlaw the Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest religious party in Bangladesh, by the government of the Awami League in the wake of a report of the International Crimes Tribunals has caused a furor inside and outside Bangladesh. Having a significant presence in a number of Muslim countries, the supporters of the Jamaat-e-Islami are protesting against this intended action. Many human rights agencies have also expressed their concerns over the lack of transparency in punishing political opponents, by using ‘war crimes’ as a tool. The government, however, claims that it has been working within constitutional and legal frameworks and following the orders of the courts.

The ICT, constituted in 2009 to investigate and prosecute suspects for the genocide committed in 1971 by the Pakistan Army and its local collaborators, the Razakars, Al-Badr and Al-Shams during the Bangladesh Liberation War, has found seven counts of crimes committed by the



# The Politics of Revenge

**Bangladesh needs to come to terms with its past but not by embarking on the path of political vendetta.**

**By Huzaima Bukhari and Dr. Ikramul Haq**

Jamaat-e-Islami, its associate bodies and mouthpiece, daily Sangram. During the 2008 general elections, the Awami League pledged that it would establish the war crime tribunal after coming to power, claiming that “there was a long-demanded popular call for trying war criminals”.

After winning elections in 2009, Shafique Ahmed, the Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, announced that the trials would be held under the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act 1973. The Act was later amended to incorporate the International Crimes Tribunal Rules of procedure and evidence.

On January 3, 2010, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh restored Article 38 of the Constitution, banning the use of religion or communal connotations in politics. Soon after this verdict, the

Election Commission of Bangladesh asked the three Islamic parties – the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan and the Tarikat Federation – to amend their charters that were in conflict with the supreme law of the country.

Giving reasons for banning the Jamaat, Abdul Hannan Khan, the Chief Coordinator of the ICT’s investigation agency, revealed that the probe against the party and its associate bodies had been completed and confirmed their ‘crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes’. The decision was intentionally announced on the day when Bangladesh was observing ‘Black Night’ to commemorate what it calls ‘the Pakistan Army’s Operation Search Light - the beginning of the genocide on unarmed civilians in Dhaka on March 25, 1971’. According to Hannan Khan,

substantial evidence is now available against the Jamaat and its associate bodies that proves their war crimes and violation of humanitarian rules of the Geneva Convention of 1950 that apply in any armed conflict.

Hannan Khan claimed that the probe report would be submitted to the chief prosecutor of the ICT to seek a ban on the Jamaat and its affiliates. He also claimed that although the government could ban the Jamaat-e-Islami through an executive order, it preferred to follow the legal process. The government, he said, wanted the total dissolution of the Jamaat and its affiliates. Comparing the Jamaat to the Nazi party, Hannan said that being a secular party, the Awami League was committed to punish war criminals and the ICT has convicted more than a dozen Jamaat leaders.



In the wake of the execution of a senior Jamaat leader in December 2013, a wave of deadly protests by Islamist supporters erupted in the country. Many people have died since January last year when the verdicts were first handed down. The Jamaat was banned from contesting the general elections held in January which were boycotted by other opposition parties and marred by bloodshed. Even, the apex court of Bangladesh ruled last August that the Jamaat be banned because its charter followed Islamic laws that conflicted with the nation's official secular constitution, although the party was allowed to hold rallies.

The opposition alleged that the judiciary was influenced by the government to hand down political decisions. The Economist, in its December 2010 edition, published the contents of leaked communications between the Chief Justice of the ICT, Mohammed Nizamul Huq, and Ahmed Ziauddin, a Bangladeshi attorney in Brussels who specializes in international law and is director of the Bangladesh Centre for Genocide Studies. After the leaked communication was published

in a local daily, Huq resigned from the tribunal. He was revealed to have "prohibited contacts" with the "prosecution, government officials, and an external advisor". After the exit of Huq, Fazle Kabir was appointed as the chairman of the ICT.

The Human Rights Watch has expressed concerns over the maneuverings in the ICT. By 2012, nine leaders of the Jamaat and two of the Bangladesh National Party were indicted. The first person to be convicted was Abul Kalam Azad (Bachchu), who was tried in absentia as he had left the country. He was awarded the death punishment. The supporters of the Jamaat and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, called for a general strike nationwide on December 4, 2012, which triggered violence across the country. They demanded disbanding of the ICT and release of their leaders.

After Abdul Quader Molla, Assistant Secretary General of the Jamaat, was convicted in February 2013 and sentenced to life imprisonment rather than capital punishment, a peaceful demonstration started at

the Shahbag intersection in Dhaka. Tens of thousands of mostly young demonstrators, including women, demanded that those convicted of war crimes should be given the death penalty. Non-violent protests supporting this position took place in other cities as the country went ahead with the trials. This showed a clear polarization in society.

The student wing of the Jamaat attacked police officers throughout the country. Numerous vehicles, including one of the U.S. Embassy, were torched and vandalized. On February 2, 2014, Jamaat-e-Islami leader AKM Yusuf, who was facing trial before the ICT, died in prison. He was indicted on 13 charges of genocide and crimes against humanity.

On January 5, the AL, that has been ruling Bangladesh since early 2009, won a three-quarters majority in the parliamentary election that was condemned, both at home and abroad. The main opposition party, the BNP boycotted the polls and the U.S. and the EU refused to send election observers. According to the Bangladesh Election Commission, the turnout was a mere 40 percent compared to well over 80 percent in the previous elections held in December 2008. Diplomatic sources in Dhaka estimated the turnout to have been much lower, amounting to only around 20 percent. It showed the voters' lack of trust in the AL.

The questionable conduct of the polls, the persecution of the Jamaat and its affiliates and lack of democratic credibility of Sheikh Hasina's regime is weakening the state of Bangladesh. The conflict over the trials of political opponents and the tussle over the question of whether political Islam should be granted a legal space in the country's democratic system shows that Bangladesh severely lacks a culture of tolerance. Also, the hysteria of the 'War of Independence' does not seem to be receding any time soon. The country needs to come out of the past and follow the example of South Africa's Truth & Reconciliation Commission. The policy of revenge and political vendetta will lead it to further chaos and conflicts. ■

*The writers, partners in law firm Huzaima & Ikram (Taxand Pakistan), are adjunct faculty members at the Lahore University of Management Sciences.*

# The Numbers Game

**Analysts have questioned the accuracy of Sri Lanka's glowing growth figures, deeming them slightly inflated.**

By Maria Kamal

**T**he World Bank in its Global Economic Prospects report of June 2011 commended Sri Lanka's post-war economic recovery. The report also predicted that Sri Lanka and India would be at the forefront of growth in South Asia.

Only a few years after a long-drawn war came to its conclusion, the Sri Lankan economy registered an annual growth of 6.4 percent from 2003 to 2012.

If official statistics are to be believed, Sri Lanka has been living up to its glowing reputation. The country's Census and Statistics Department announced in its report a phenomenal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 7.3 percent in 2013, and placed economic growth at 8.2 percent in the final quarter of the year.

According to the details of this report, the industrial sector registered a 9.9 percent year-on-year increase, followed by the services sector with a 6.4 percent rise.

That is not all, though. The agriculture sector grew at a rate of 4.7 percent. Meanwhile, in the services sector, tourism flourished and the hospitality industry grew by 22.3 percent. Furthermore, the port and telecommunications sector marked a growth of 11.4 percent.

Why is there so much interest in GDP and why should we care? Simply put, GDP is the market value of all officially recognized goods and services produced in a country in a year. The GDP per capita indicates a country's standard of living. Significantly, the GDP per capita is not a measure of personal income. Instead, it exactly equals the Gross Domestic Income (GDI) per capita. However, GDP is related to national accounts.

Dampening the celebratory mood

in Sri Lanka are accusations of 'number fudges' leveled against the department of Census and Statistics. Analysts and leading Sri Lankan publications have

questioned the accuracy of these glowing figures and deemed them at least slightly inflated.

Speaking at a media conference



in Colombo, Deputy Governor, Central Bank, Dr. Nandalal Weerasinghe rubbished charges of data manipulation. He argued that inflating figures is no small task as the numbers are linked with the data of various other sectors. Tampering with figures will inevitably reflect itself the next year, he reasoned.

The Sri Lankan press reported that the Census and Statistics Department Director General, DCA Gunawardena also denied allegations of misreporting the GDP. He defended the process through which data is collected, citing reliance on scientifically designed surveys, census, special studies and administrative records.



Even so, an official in-charge of GDP computation of the Census and Statistics Department appears to have been selected to take the fall. Gunawardena clarified that the said official failed to comply with the department's regulations while performing his duties. The officer has since been transferred and penalized for his mistake. Gunawardena nonetheless defended the department's practices and the reliability of its methods. "Our Department and officers play by the rules and do not have any hidden agenda. Hence, the data released is not inflated or manipulated as claimed by opposition politicians including JVP Parliamentarian Anura Kumara Dissanayake," he said.

"All the calculation processes are done and figures are computed in accordance with international criteria and UN manuals. Computation of statistics is carried out in accordance with the relevant recommendations of the United Nations, World Bank, IMF and several other international agencies," Gunawardena said.

But the IMF also appears to have expressed its concerns about the calculation process. In a report released last year, the IMF made clear that there is room for improvement in Sri Lanka's GDP calculations and that the country does not yet comply with the highest data dissemination standards.

"The national accounts suffer from insufficient data sources and undeveloped statistical techniques," an IMF country report said. "The country does not have periodic comprehensive benchmarks or a system of regular annual surveys of establishments. A statistical business register, which would serve as the main basis for conducting sample surveys, is not available. As a result, the few surveys that are conducted do not have good sample frames."

The report further said that estimates of gross value added are prepared by directly relying on outdated fixed ratios established from the base year 1996, often with outdated studies or adhoc assumptions. Moreover, the report declared the methodology for deriving GDP at constant prices as unsatisfactory.

The IMF said fiscal statistics could also be improved and there would be technical missions in 2013 and 2014

to help in this regard.

In Sri Lanka's defense, it has to be said that analysts accept that most countries are guilty of tinkering with data. In fact, developed countries often use incredibly sophisticated mathematical methods to understate inflation.

Economic commentator, Kevin Phillips has addressed data manipulation in the United States. He went so far as to say that the country is living on "borrowed prosperity."

In a recent report on the South Asian region, the World Bank projects that Sri Lanka would continue to grow at 7.3 percent this year, thanks to infrastructure investments and post-conflict rebuilding.

Sri Lanka has taken definite strides forward and its progress is not just all hype. There is good reason to believe that the country has outperformed other South Asian countries when it comes to its success in pursuing the Millennium Development Goals. According to the World Bank, Sri Lanka has met the MDG target of halving extreme poverty. The country is said to be on track to meeting most of the other MDGs as well.

However, overall indicators for South Asia remain worrisome. A World Bank report presents grim statistics that underline an infrastructure gap in the region. What this means in effect is that a large mass of humanity in this part of the world does not have access to basic infrastructure including roads, toilets, electricity, clean water and telecom.

The report further says that 41 percent of South Asia's population defecates in the open while 75 percent does not have access to piped water. The report concludes that South Asia needs to invest up to \$2.5 trillion to bridge its infrastructure gap over the next decade.

The controversy surrounding Sri Lanka's GDP isn't just a matter of numbers; it highlights a lack of transparency and credibility when it comes to official data – a type of distrust that exists all over the world and says more about governance than it does about economic growth. ■

*The contributor is a teacher, writer and researcher. She is a Dag Hammarskjöld fellow and Fulbright alumnus.*

# Whither Progress?

The government of Nepal would do well to shed the feeling of lassitude if it doesn't want the people to take to the streets.

By S. M. Hali

Nepal's tryst with democracy is hardly a decade old and is still considered 'work in progress.' The centuries-old monarchy was toppled following a decade-long civil war involving the Communist Party of Nepal, commonly known as the Maoists. On May 18, 2006, the House of Representatives unanimously voted to curtail the power of the King and declared Nepal a secular state, ending its time-honored official status as a Hindu Kingdom. On December 28, 2007, a bill was passed in the parliament to amend Article 159 of the Constitution – replacing 'Provisions regarding the King' by 'Provisions of the Head of the State' – declaring Nepal a federal republic, and thereby abolishing the monarchy.

The ensuing elections for the Constituent Assembly on May 28, 2008 saw the Maoists elected to power but serious charges of bad governance led to their ouster and a virtual game of musical chairs followed. As a result, the Constituent Assembly, which was charged with writing Nepal's permanent constitution, failed to deliver. Under the terms of the Interim Constitution, the new constitution was to be promulgated by May 28, 2010; but the Constituent Assembly changed the deadline by a year because of many points of disagreement between political parties.

On May 25, 2011, the Supreme Court of Nepal ruled that the 2010 extension of the Interim Constitution was not in order. The deadline for a

new constitution kept getting extended. Eventually, on May 28, 2012, the then Prime Minister, Baburam Bhattarai dissolved the Constituent Assembly after it failed to finish the constitution in its last extension, ending four years of constitution-drafting and leaving the country in a legal vacuum. Elections to a second Constituent Assembly were held on November 19, 2013 under the supervision of Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi but no party managed to secure a clear majority. After much political wrangling and backroom manipulation, Sushil Koirala was sworn in as the new Prime Minister on February 11, 2014 and all political leaders pledged to draft a new constitution within a year.

It is an uphill task, which will require a Herculean effort. Prime



Minister Sushil Koirala, who is a septuagenarian and a veteran Nepali Congress leader who spent 16 years in political exile in India after Nepal's royal takeover of 1960, leads the coalition government. But the question that whether he will be up to the task lingers in many minds. Once a vibrant and energetic politician, Sushil Koirala was involved in the hijacking of an aircraft for political purposes but time has mellowed him down. He has a prestigious name in Nepalese politics. One of his cousins was the country's first elected prime minister, before he was ousted in a coup in 1960. Another cousin, Girija Prasad Koirala orchestrated the afore-mentioned hijacking in 1973, to finance a planned armed insurgency that came to naught. He went on to become prime minister four times between 1990 and 2008.

Known for his austere lifestyle, Sushil Koirala does not possess any property and resided in a two-room rented house till he was elected as prime minister. He doesn't own a car or a motorbike nor does he have a bank account. Recently, he returned \$650 paid to him by the government as traveling allowance for a visit to Myanmar, stating that since he did not spend the amount, it should go back to the treasury.

Unfortunately, the same is not

true of his nineteen-member cabinet, which mostly comprises the old guard of Nepalese politics. The cabinet, including the finance and home ministers, served in the 1990s, too, which is not comforting, since the era is remembered for corruption, ineffective

up in a marriage of convenience. If the nuptials have to last, they must overcome the mistrust. Independent analysts and observers have said that despite having been convened for over two months, the parliament appears to be sans any agenda and the members

The coalition partners are stuck in the quagmire of dealing with petty issues such as who would be responsible for authenticating the bills relating to the new constitution rather than pondering over the bigger question of framing the new constitution.

rule and the brutal mishandling of a nascent Maoist rebellion which prolonged the strife. The Maoists ultimately ended up waging a decade-long civil war.

The ouster of the monarchy was followed by the promise that the lower castes would be given equal opportunities. Ironically, the current ruling party appears oblivious to the aspirations of the lower castes. Most of the powerful ministries have been given to men belonging to the high-caste. This is reminiscent of a return to the past and a failure to reflect the country's diversity. Nepalese Dalits, formerly known as untouchables, comprise one-sixth of the 28 million population of Nepal. Mr. Koirala did not give a party ticket to any Dalit, nor has he appointed a single Dalit to his cabinet.

Commenting on the deliberate sidelining of the lower castes, popular Maoist leader, Devendra Raj Pandey said, "It's as if there was no movement in 2006 and no Maoist insurgency for ten years before that." Like other intellectuals, Pandey says that he would like to support the Nepali Congress, but is put off by the party's failure to share power with lower castes or devolve it to local bodies.

The Nepalese cabinet may have taken up the task of drafting the long-delayed constitution and then hold a fresh election for president – all within a year – but there are numerous impediments. To achieve the task, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala will have to reduce the trust deficit between his Nepali Congress and its coalition partner the UML. Politics makes strange bedfellows and the duo have ended

appear to be in a mode of lethargy. The government is yet to announce its policy and programs. Without a clear roadmap, there are no parameters for taking decisions. The coalition partners are stuck in the quagmire of dealing with petty issues such as who would be responsible for authenticating the bills relating to the new constitution rather than pondering over the bigger question of framing the new constitution.

Twenty six seats in the assembly are still vacant because of jockeying for influence by vested interests. Local council elections have not been held in Nepal for the last 16 years, yet there appears to be no urgency to hold them because of objections by some parties. The question of the continuation of the present incumbents in the chairs of president and vice president has been left in abeyance with the hope that the issue will be addressed along with the promulgation of the new constitution. Consequently, nearly all political leaders have expressed reservations about achieving the target by the year's end.

One would expect the government of Prime Minister Sushil Koirala to shed the feeling of lassitude that currently prevails in the country or the people would lose confidence in them and take the issue to the streets. In order to reinforce assurance, PM Koirala should get his act together, set his cabinet into motion and attend to the task of framing a new constitution without further ado. ■

*The writer is a practising journalist. He contributes to the print media and produces documentaries.*



# Fall of the MDP

**One reason for Nasheed's defeat in the parliamentary elections is said to be his opponents' success in painting him as a pro-western, anti-Islam leader.**

By Asna Ali

Like many of its South Asian neighbors, the Maldives is a fledgling democracy. After the Sultan was deposed in the 1960s, the country was ruled by Mamoon Abd al-Gayoom who was continually re-elected through referendums. The first democratic elections in the Maldives were held in 2008.

In the decade preceding these elections, the Maldivian public was slowly becoming amenable to the idea of a democratically elected government. Concerns were raised by international watchdogs, including the Amnesty International, regarding the treatment of those who dared to criticize the government. There were reports of torture and long prison sentences. Eventually, anti-government riots, said to have been provoked due to human rights abuses, prompted President Gayoom to introduce certain reforms to the political system. These included formation of political parties and limiting the number of years of the president's term in office.

Following further protests by the public, coupled with jail terms for prominent political leaders and the slowly loosening grip of President Gayoom on power, a presidential system of government, to be contested by multiple political parties, was approved by the parliament as well as the public. It was in these circumstances that Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldivian Democratic Party defeated Gayoom to become the country's first democratically elected president. His party's mandate was heavy on the sanctity of human rights and he promised transparent, corruption-free governance.

Nasheed and his party faced an uphill battle in introducing and implementing their promised reforms. Ex-president Gayoom and his supporters, who still had much influence on the electorate, took various actions to undermine the authority of the new government. Officials not loyal to the MDP ignored the official directives, protests were organized against the MDP and Nasheed was painted as a pro-western, anti-Islam leader. His policies came under heavy criticism from religious conservatives and there were accusations against the MDP of secret collusive ties with foreign forces to undermine the influence of Islam in the country.

The rising unrest finally resulted in Nasheed's resignation on February 7, 2012. He has been insisting since then that he was forced out at gunpoint in a *coup d'état* though his successor, Mohammed Waheed,



claims otherwise.

Presidential elections in the Maldives took place in the autumn of 2013. These too were mired in controversy with claims of corruption and intimidating tactics quickly flying from all sides. But, finally, Nasheed conceded defeat to Abdulla Yameen, the half-brother of Gayoom.

That was not all. The MDP and Nasheed faced further defeat in the parliamentary elections, when the party lost out to a coalition led by the Progressive Party of the Maldives. The MDP now faces an uncertain future. There have been calls, all the same, for restructuring the party and the Maldivian public has been encouraged to give suggestions.

It has been suggested that Nasheed is part of the reason for the MDP's failure and that he should step down from his position as party president. The MDP has also been advised to revamp its image which, whatever the facts may be, comes off as disrespectful towards traditional Islamic values. It is believed that one of the reasons for Nasheed's defeat was his opponents' success in painting themselves as more religiously inclined than Nasheed. Furthermore, the Maldivians believe that the MDP failed to deliver on its mandate and it was anything but transparent in its dealings during its tenure.

Meanwhile, concerns have been raised about the status and future of democracy in the Maldives now that the lobby supported by an ex-dictator is back in power. It is believed that the country might sink into a religiously conservative dictatorship once again or continue to struggle with political upheavals for many years before leaders with the will to move within the democratic process emerge.

Since the Maldives' economy is heavily dependent on tourism and investment, its internal matters are both influenced and closely watched

by international powers. India, which had developed close ties with the country, is losing its influence. There is dismay over the closure of various projects funded by India and the country's growing ties with Pakistan are being viewed with suspicion. It seems to signify the country's move towards greater conservatism.

Also of concern is the increasing influence of Saudi Arabia. Earlier this year, many tourists were outraged to discover that their plans to visit the Maldives had been disrupted because the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia had booked three resorts. Saudi Arabia has promised investments in the Maldives and there are plans to build mosques around the country with Saudi money.

However, due to its reliance on tourism to keep the economy afloat, it is felt that the Maldives cannot completely give in to conservatism. Some level of moderation must be maintained if foreign tourists are to be convinced to visit and spend their money in the country. Many of these tourists are Chinese which just might be one reason for India's reduced status as an ally.

The Maldives is also one of those countries where religion has been used for political gains. It has been an age-old tactic to whip up public emotions by declaring moderate leaders as being anti-religion in order to erode their support base. Gayoom pursued conservative policies and it has become increasingly apparent that his half-brother is following in his footsteps.

So what is to become of the MDP and Mohamed Nasheed in this kind of political climate? Perhaps they too have become wiser to the fact that liberalism as a political strategy is not going down well with the masses these days – hence the call for the restructuring of the party. It is likely that the MDP will

take steps to appease religious leaders and tackle some of the more serious allegations levelled against it.

It is very important for the future of moderate forces in the Maldives that the MDP does not lose further ground to conservatives. Unfortunately for it, the party has not just lost because of its overt liberalism.

Due to being new to the democratic process, the Maldives suffers from a problem that is typical of such countries: lack of political leadership that the people can get behind. Some sections of society believe that the only feasible course of action for continued stability is a shift back to either complete dictatorship or something akin to the Singaporean model of one-party leadership.

It will, of course, be much easier to introduce and implement conservative policies through a dictatorial regime that will most likely come down very hard on criticism. Unfortunately, due to the unrest in recent years, the general public might be more inclined to trade in their democratic freedom for some peace of mind.

It can only be hoped that the moderate forces in the Maldives get their act together soon enough to prevent this from happening and that the people accept that political upheaval is an unavoidable part of becoming a mature democracy. Rather than giving up so soon, the Maldivians should continue to strive for a politically independent future in which both moderate and conservative forces have a chance to air their differences openly without any fear of recrimination. Whatever analysts may say, the final decision regarding the political and social future of the Maldives lies with the people. ■

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

A close-up portrait of Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, looking slightly downwards and to the left with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark blue suit, a light blue shirt, and a dark blue tie.

# The Crimean Crisis

Can the U.S. and its western allies thwart Russia's expansionist designs?

By Jamil Nasir

**T**he sense of euphoria that gripped the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union is fast fading. In his book 'End of History and the Last Man', Francis Fukuyama advanced the thesis that the triumph of liberal capitalism over communism will bring an end to wars and bloody revolutions. This theory is now under question due to the Ukrainian crisis.

The annexation of Crimea has badly jolted the West, particularly the U.S. They are describing the Crimean annexation as an act of aggression by Russia. On the other hand, Russia's viewpoint is that it has taken back what essentially belonged to it and no

violation of international law is involved as Crimea was made a part of Russia only after the Crimeans expressed their will through the referendum held on March 16. The total population of Crimea is about 2.2 million out of which 1.5 million are Russians. More than 82 percent of the electorate participated in the voting process and over 96 percent voted for uniting the Crimean Peninsula with Russia.

Despite such an outcome of the referendum, the majority of the observers have described the annexation of Crimea as a serious flouting of international law. For example, Professor Jeffrey Sachs in

his article 'Ukraine and the crisis of International Law' describes Russia's actions in Ukraine as a flagrant violation of international law. But, at the same time, he also castigates the U.S. and NATO for serious contraventions of the same law. For example, the U.S. and its allies went to war in Iraq without the support of the UN Security Council. Drone attacks violating the territorial sovereignty of Pakistan are another example of breach of international law. More recently, NATO's actions in Libya to topple the government of Muammar Qaddafi and U.S. actions in Syria are also serious violations of international law and norms. "International law itself

is at a crossroads. The U.S., Russia, the EU and NATO cite it when it is to their advantage and disregard it when they deem it a nuisance," writes Sachs.

However, the annexation of Crimea raises some other questions as well besides the violation of international law. What were the motivations for Russia to annex Crimea and divide Ukraine? Will Russia stop at Crimea and not add more states to the Russian Federation? Will the world powers allow this to happen? Will the Ukraine crisis unite the West? There are three possible motivating factors behind the Russian moves in Ukraine: (1) geopolitical (2) regaining its lost glory and status and (3) a sense of betrayal and humiliation.

During Soviet times, the distance between the Russian capital and the western military alliance was 1800 kilometers. In case Ukraine becomes a member of NATO, the distance would be reduced to less than 500 kilometers. If this happens, Russia will lose the strategic distance that allowed it to survive the invasions of both Napoleon and Hitler. Reordering of Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War has strengthened this fear in Russia.

Just within eight years of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary joined NATO. Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the three Baltic states joined NATO in 2004. Albania and Croatia followed suit in 2009. In 2008, U.S. President George W. Bush proposed to extend NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine and that was perhaps the point when Russia felt really pinched. The enlargement of NATO meant that Russia has lost its influence in the region.

Some observers claim that Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine stem from its ambition to regain its status of a global power. The annexation of Crimea may thus be an imperial project. Russian President Vladimir Putin is on record to have described the dissolution of the Soviet Union as "the greatest geopolitical disaster of

the twentieth century". According to Harvard University Professor Joseph S. Nye, "Putin often has been described as angry with the West, beset by a sense of betrayal and humiliation from what he perceives as unfair treatment of Russia. The overthrow of Libya's Muammar Qaddafi and the ongoing efforts to undercut Kremlin client - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad - have only made matters worse."

However, we cannot say anything with certainty about the 'imperial project interpretation' until Russia makes its next move. But some guesswork can be done. The dominant narrative for Russian intervention in Crimea from the perspective of Russian nationalism is that it acted out of 'primordial attachments' with ethnic Russians in Crimea. But the question here is that in the past 20 years Russia has never intervened outside its borders on behalf of the ethnic Russian Diaspora. The Euroasianism ideology, which believes in the reacquisition of the Russian Empire, may be the real reason.

However, the annexation of Crimea cannot be attributed to any single reason. NATO's presence in the neighborhood, a sense of humiliation and betrayal and a desire to gain the status of a global power – or all these factors combined - explain Russian overtures in Ukraine. "Our Western partners, led by the U.S., prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies but by the rule of the gun. They are constantly trying to sweep us to the corner. Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptized...the graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea," said Putin in his Crimean annexation speech.

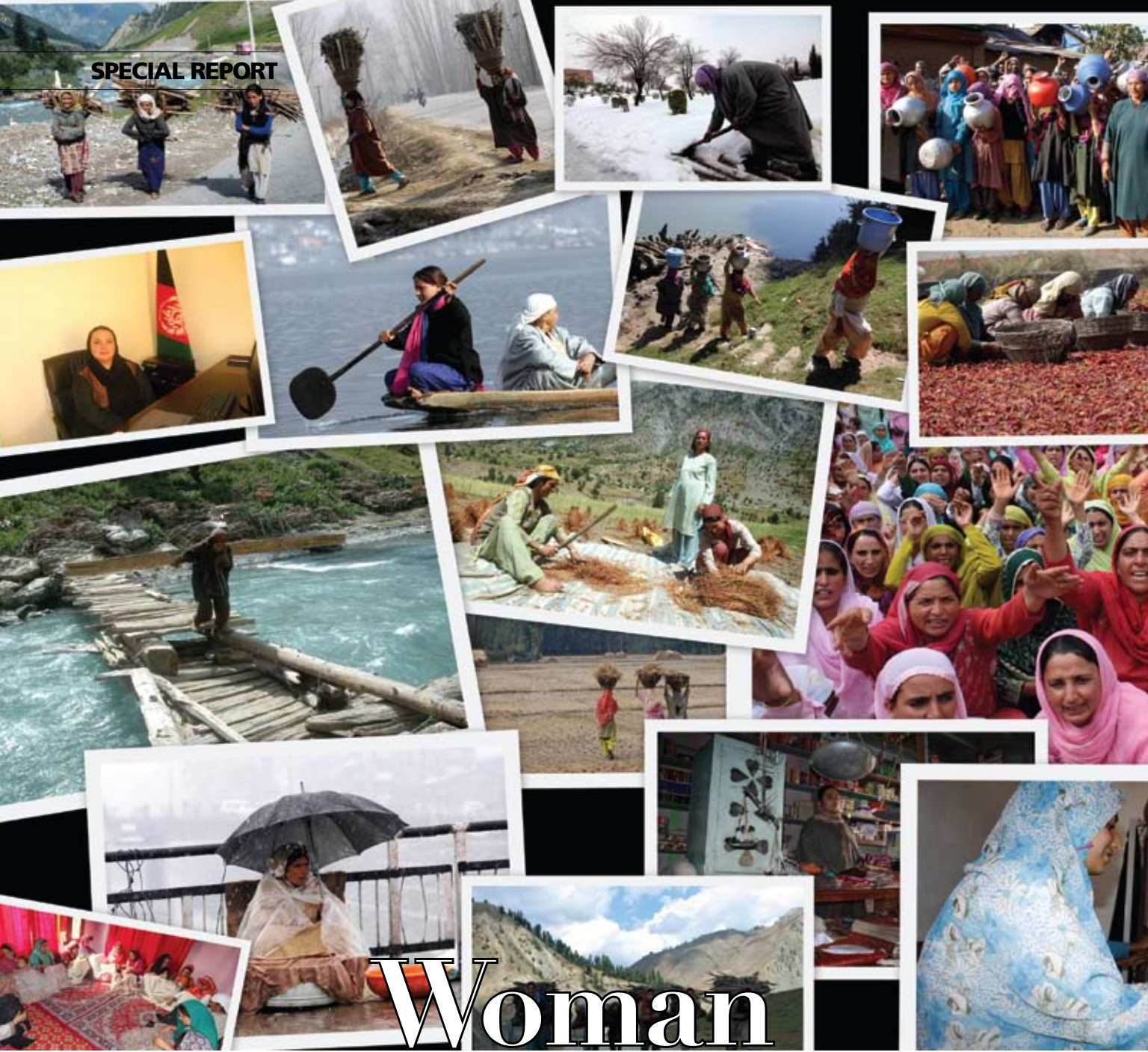
But another important question here is whether the U.S. and its western allies can thwart the expansionist designs of Russia. The answer to this question depends on two factors. First,

whether Western Europe will stand united against Russia. Second, whether the U.S. still enjoys the status of the sole world power and has got the will and power to stand against Russia. Some observers have claimed that the Ukraine crisis will unite divided Europe. Is it possible in view of the dependence of Europe on Russia's natural gas?

The EU receives about 30 percent of its natural gas from Russia. Here lies the difference between the U.S. and the EU. Just 1 percent of American trade is conducted with Russia and the country does not rely on Russian oil and natural gas. On the other hand, for example, Germany conducts 3 percent of its trade (valuing at 76.5 billion Euros) with Russia. One-third of Germany's oil and natural gas is imported from Russia. If the U.S. wants a united Europe to stand against Russia, it will not be possible without loosening Russia's grip over energy since much of its power in the region is the result of its control of energy supplies and distribution systems, according to a paper of the Heritage Foundation.

If the U.S. and the EU do not unite against Russia, it is most likely that Putin will use pro-Russian groups and economic pressures to further destabilize Ukraine. A civil war is very likely. Ukraine is highly reliant on Russia, which is the destination of about 25 percent of Ukrainian exports. About 10 percent of the Ukrainian budget is financed through remittances sent by Ukrainian workers in Russia. A Russian boycott simply means an end to the present Ukrainian government, which seems to be a fait accompli unless the U.S. and the EU lend their full support to Ukraine, which includes financial support as well. Will such support be liberally forthcoming to diminish the economic leverage of Russia in the region? 

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# Woman Empowerment

The majority of countries with a significant presence of women in parliaments have more equitable laws and social programs that benefit women.

By Mahrukh Mughal

**W**oman empowerment can be the most effective means for social change. From a broader perspective, it is also a prerequisite for the fight against

global poverty. Today, there is greater awareness of the need for empowering women, who represent 51 percent of the total global population. There is a growing realization that a person's

rights, responsibilities, opportunities and dignity should not be determined on the basis of their gender.

However, in most underdeveloped countries, women are denied their



due rights. They are offered limited education and work opportunities and if they dare to protest against the injustice, their voices are silenced. Women are treated like animals - in some cases even worse than animals. Just as cattle, they can be bought and sold and are considered a reproduction machine. The constitution treats women as minors, incapable of making decisions.

Today, approximately two billion people live in abject poverty around the globe. Of them, 70 percent are women. Education is the most important driver of human development. Women make up two-thirds of the estimated 876 million adults worldwide who

cannot read or write. In their various capacities, women play an important role in supporting the economies of their respective countries. But unfortunately, they own less than one percent of the world's property. Laws and customs prevent women from owning land or other productive assets. In many countries, women do not have the right to inheritance. According to the United Nations Millennium Campaign, women work two-thirds of the world's working hours but are paid lower wages than men and are forced to work on lower positions.

The number of women who are a victim of physical and sexual abuse is increasing by the day. Human trafficking of women and their sexual exploitation is also rampant. Those who fall prey to trafficking are mostly forced into sexual slavery and prostitution. They are also sold as domestic labor and are held hostage in homes where they cook, clean and take care of children for many hours a day, receiving little or no pay for their work. In some cases, they are not even allowed any contact with the outside world. To curb human trafficking, there is a need for all stakeholders to come together and take the necessary steps to put an end to this inhuman practice.

On the political front, women do not have the opportunities that men do. Around the world, less than 10 percent women are a part of parliaments while in many countries there is no concept of female representation in legislatures. Participation of women in politics is fundamental to democracy and essential for the achievement of sustainable development. It has been observed that countries with a significant presence of women in the legislative bodies have more equitable laws and social programs that benefit women, children and families.

According to the Gender Empowerment Measure Index, which takes into account factors such as the role of women in politics, economy and decision-making, women in the developing countries are living in worst circumstances. Norway tops the list of countries where conditions are most favorable to women, while Yemen is regarded as the least favorable country for women where they do not have any decision-making authority in political and economic

matters. According to the Gender Relative Development Index, which is based on women's health, education and income status, Iceland tops the list of 157 countries where women enjoy maximum health, education and employment opportunities, whereas Sierra Leone is at the bottom of the list.

If we take a look at the Human Poverty Index, which takes into account women's health, education and living standards, Barbados is ranked first among 108 countries where women are provided adequate health and education facilities and their standard of living is also satisfactory. Chad is ranked last on this index.

In every country and region, women want their voices to be heard in times of peace, conflicts and transitions. Today, a large number of women in the Islamic world lag far behind their western counterparts. Some of the problems faced by Muslim women are limited or no access to education and employment opportunities, restriction on freedom of movement and a patriarchal setup that is hostile to women. Men are regarded as the custodian of families and women cannot do anything without their permission.

Taking all the aforementioned factors into consideration, it is imperative that women are given their due rights and empowered in their respective fields. At workplaces, they should be given the same salaries and status as their male colleagues. As the issue of women empowerment is receiving more attention around the world, global institutions such as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality are working towards achieving the goal of a high-level corporate leadership for gender equality. They have also undertaken steps to promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy and have even set out basic principles such as the implementation of enterprise development and supply chain and marketing practices.

It is time to prioritize gender equality in national plans to make sure that women play a central role in the development of a country. **S**

*The writer appears regularly on TV talk shows. She writes on politics and economics in leading publications.*



# Revival of a National Flag Carrier

**Pakistan International Airlines is cutting losses, inducting various revitalization measures and climbing to new levels of success.**

It has been the objective of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the government of Pakistan to recover various state-run units and transform them into commercially profitable organizations. The Pakistan International Airlines is one company that the government wishes to restore to its past glory and make it profitable

once again.

To this end, the Prime Minister has appointed Capt. Shujaat Azeem, an aviation expert, to serve as Special Assistant on Aviation and revive PIA. Capt. Azeem has set about the task in a purposeful manner in association with the Secretary Aviation and Chairman PIA, Mr. Muhammad Ali Gardezi

and the PIA Managing Director, Muhammad Junaid Yunus. The Board of Directors has been further enhanced with the addition of Mr. Yawar Ali and Mr. Aslam Khaliq.

#### **Financial Highlights**

The Pakistan International Airlines has attained an operating profit of

Rs1.67 billion for the first quarter of 2014 – January 1 to March 31 – as against a loss of Rs5.65 billion of the corresponding period last year. The national flag carrier has attained the operating profit for the first quarter after a lapse of four years. This was declared in the board of directors meeting, chaired by Mr. Muhammad Ali Gardezi.

According to the results of first quarter 2014, the total revenue of PIA stood at Rs28.0 billion as against Rs25 billion in 2013. However, the net loss after paying financial costs and taxation stood at Rs1.98 billion as against Rs8.62 billion last year, which shows a remarkable decline of almost 77 per cent in losses.

The loss per share has dropped from Rs2.86 to Rs0.56. From the first quarter of 2014, PIA's total revenue has increased to PKR 27.9 billion. This was PKR 25 billion in the corresponding period of 2013.

Losses in the first quarter of 2014 were reduced to Rs. 2 billion from Rs. 8.5 billion in the corresponding period of 2013. Without financial charges on the legacy loans, PIA's profit for the first quarter would have been 0.5 billion as compared to 6 billion in the corresponding period. The airline's average revenues increased from PKR 7.5 billion to 9.3 billion. Due to various cost-cutting measures, the airline is saving approximately PKR 800 million per month.

### Fleet Expansion

While focusing on PIA's finances, Capt. Shujaat Azeem and his team have also set about addressing the various other problem areas that beset the airline and are attending to them in a way that they would have an impact both on the near and long-term operations of the national carrier.

Currently PIA has 34 aircraft – four Boeing 747-300, nine Boeing-777, 3 Boeing-737, twelve Airbus-310 and six ATR-42.

From July 2014, PIA plans to add 48 more aircraft to its fleet. These would comprise 14 Boeing-777 for long routes, 24 A-320 for short and medium distance routes and 10 ATR-42 and 72 for domestic, socio-economic routes. Since December 2013, PIA has acquired four aircraft on wet lease. It has also pressed six of its heretofore grounded aircraft into service. LOIs have also been signed for induction (on

dry lease) of more fuel-efficient narrow-bodied jet aircraft to enhance revenue. Agreements in this respect are being finalized.



Capt. Shujaat Azeem



M. A. Gardezi



M. Junaid Yunus

### Route Restoration

PIA has restored 96 of its domestic and international routes and has significantly improved its schedule reliability.

This has improved passenger confidence in the airline which has increased revenues by Rs. 900 million per month. The new measures have also reduced fuel cost while 46% reduction has been achieved in technical flight delays.

PIA has also closed many loss-making routes and has saved Rs. 902 million on that count. It is currently in the process of reviewing all existing agreements with the help of neutral external lawyers to determine if any loss-making commitments have been made and how these can be rectified.

### New Routes

PIA has introduced various new routes to further facilitate passengers.

One route connects Lahore-Quetta-Mashad-Quetta- Lahore, another is based on the Multan-Jeddah-Multan sector while a third route covers the Multan-Madina-Multan sector.

### Other Measures

PIA has rationalized its manpower at international stations by recalling or retrenching 123 employees. Non-performing offices of the airline in Glasgow, Chicago, Sydney, Yanbu and Amsterdam have also been closed.

Further, the SOP governing fuel management has been revised to optimize fuel utilization with the target of achieving an annual fuel saving of Rs. 500 million.

Employment through fake degrees is a major problem that the airline faces. It has so far dismissed 330 fake degree holders and has established a Task Force to identify more fake degree holders on a fast track basis.

As a progressive airline, PIA has encouraged its pilots to use the iPad,

thus making aircraft cockpits paper-free.

To further economize, the airline has surrendered surplus office space at many international stations and has achieved substantial savings.

It has also established a dedicated task force at all major domestic destinations to facilitate passengers and has activated an SMS service to inform passengers of flight timings.

It has been decided that in future all spares will be procured by the airline only from Original Equipment Manufacturers(OEMs).


### More Approaches for Revival

There are many more ways in which PIA intends to move towards revival. For example, all promotions are now being channelized through the NTS (National Testing Service) on a mandatory basis.

The performance of GSAs is also under review by the Board and Management across the entire network and will be completed in 60 days.

PIA has also completed training of 150 cabin crew who will be positioned on the new dry leased A-320 fleet of aircraft. It has also introduced new menus on both domestic and international flights.

The Airlines Integrated Management System (AIMS), which will cost 1.5 million dollars, has also been put into use to bring more efficiency and better accountability to the airline's flight operations. The airline also intends to outsource its Strategic Business Units (SBUs) in the next six to 8 months. These would include Speedex, Flight Kitchen, Technical Ground Support, PIA (E&M), Airport Services, Cargo and the PIA Training Centre.

While the new measures are producing positive results for the airline, there is a lot more to be done. The coming months will tell how high PIA is flying. 

**T**hroughout the 19th century, the British Empire was worried that Russia might invade India through Afghanistan, thereby threatening the former's rule in the subcontinent. Even though a full-scale Russian invasion and occupation of India was unlikely, there were concerns that any such move towards India would tie up the British sources in dealing with both the Russians as well as a possible Indian uprising. For Great Britain, the Indian North West Frontier, now part of Pakistan, had great strategic importance. Thus, it was imperative to limit access to the Indian subcontinent and allow only one route into Afghanistan with the sole purpose of deployment of troops from Karachi to counter any threat to India. So while the railway network in India developed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Afghanistan was left to make do with a road network.

Today, there is a rail service between Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan in the north. The Afghan government expects to have the line extended to Kabul and then to the eastern border town of Torkham, connecting it with the railway network in Pakistan. The work is being carried out by China's Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) and is expected to be completed this year. The project was paid for with a \$165 million grant from the Asian Development Bank. Another 330-km railway project between Mazar-i-Sharif and Turkmenistan was launched in June 2013. Similarly, India is finalizing a plan to construct a 900-km railway line that will connect

the Chabahar Port in Iran, being built with India's help, to the mineral-rich Hajigak region of Afghanistan.

It is important that these ambitious railway plans are completed because now Afghanistan needs a proper railway network more than ever. Consider, for example, the Naibabad freight terminal near the northern Afghan town of Mazar-i-Sharif where wheat and construction materials that come from Uzbekistan are unloaded. These are then loaded onto trucks that carry the cargo through the Hindu Kush Mountains to the rest of the country because Afghanistan has only 47 miles of rail track.

The Karzai government had hoped to change this by constructing a 2,237 mile national railway line to transport not just food and other goods but something more vital to the struggling nation's economy: its vast natural resources, including iron, copper, and gold. In 2010, the Pentagon estimated that Afghanistan is sitting on mineral deposits worth about \$1 trillion. In 2011, the Afghan government put the value at \$3 trillion. This potential wealth has remained untapped because there is no way to safely and reliably ship the minerals from the country's mines.

Reports indicate that Afghanistan's 25-year economic plan aims to connect the country to the outside world via an established railway network – tracks that run through Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. "The need to

develop a railway network that carries Afghanistan's minerals to countries with seaports is growing by the day," said Joji Tokeshi, Country Director for the Asian Development Bank in Kabul. In fact, the ADB provided a \$165 million grant that covered most of the cost of building the short railway network from Uzbekistan's border to Mazar-i-Sharif in 2011. Even so, the construction of a national railway has proved to be an impossible task, given the volatile political and law and order situation in the country.

Government officials say that it has become increasingly difficult to protect trains and tracks from attacks by the Taliban and other militants – an issue that will become more pressing after the Afghan forces take over from the U.S. forces later this year. A U.S. army major claims that this is probably the biggest challenge that the new government of Afghanistan is faced with – that is, having security while building the network and then later maintaining the rail line. At the moment, there are 470 police officers assigned to protect Afghanistan's existing rail track which is about 0.02 percent the length of the proposed rail line. The U.S. forces have recommended that the villagers along the proposed routes should be given a stake in the project and also provided



# Railroad

**Afghanistan's mineral deposits, estimated at about \$3 trillion, remain untapped in the absence of a railway network.**

By S. Khalique

monetary assistance to improve their living conditions. This way, they will help in keeping the tracks safe. So, while security may be a challenge, it is not impossible to overcome.

Then there is also the matter of acquiring the money to finance the rail network which Afghanistan doesn't have at the moment. The government has tried to get foreign corporations to foot a portion of the bill. Companies that win lucrative mining contracts in Afghanistan must agree to build tracks connecting the mines to rail lines in neighboring Iran and Pakistan. That hasn't worked out very well.

When Chinese investors, led by the state-owned China Metallurgical Group, won a \$3 billion bid to mine copper at Mes Aynak, 31 miles south of Kabul, they pledged to lay a stretch of rail track. Yet, seven years later, the

project is stalled amid security concerns and the discovery of Buddhist artifacts at the site. Geological surveys last year also found that Afghanistan lacks the reserves of phosphates necessary to smelt copper, pushing the project back further. According to Abdul Jamil Hares, the former Afghan Deputy Minister of Mines, negotiations were underway to find a way around this.

An \$11 billion iron ore project in Bamiyan province, 62 miles west of Kabul, is also delayed. A group led by India's state-controlled Steel Authority of India won't begin construction in part because it wants the Afghan government to contribute to the cost of the railroad. Although the Indian group remains committed to the mining project, it also expects the Afghan government to provide them with some basic facilities, such as the

rail network connecting the mine to the port.

Meanwhile, donor agencies such as the ADB along with the U.S. advisory team are trying to get things moving by drawing up plans for a 209-mile section of railway line in the north. Laying rail tracks nationwide will cost about \$2 million per kilometer on flat lands and as much as \$17 million per kilometer through mountainous regions, say officials.

Only time will tell whether or not these projects will see the light of day but one thing is for sure: Afghanistan needs these railway networks if it hopes to establish itself as a trading hub in Central Asia. **S**

*The writer is an analyst based in Karachi and contributes on security and economic issues.*



# to Prosperity

# New Economic Opportunity

The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor can make Bangladesh a hub between South and Southeast Asia.

By Haroon Janjua

In recent years, there has been much interest in exploring the historical links between the countries and peoples of South Asia and the people of China. There are calls to establish closer bonds between the Yunnan Province in South West China, north-east India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Yunnan has a particular interest in reviving links with Assam as this could provide it direct access to Indian and western markets, which otherwise would involve a 7,000-km detour

via Hong Kong and Singapore. There is an understanding that Myanmar and Bangladesh too could reap the economic benefits through mutual cooperation.

This growing interest has given birth to the proposed Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC). It includes two fast-growing economies – India and China – and two developing economies – Bangladesh and Myanmar. The proposal received formal endorsement through the

first inter-governmental study group meeting that took place in Kunming in December 2013.

The BCIMEC draws its inspiration from the concept of growth zones. The idea of growth zones is relatively new in development economics. It involves cooperation between three or more countries for the development of a geographically contiguous region consisting of a part or the whole of each of the participating countries. Growth zones bring together resources of the



member countries and provide a unique opportunity to use mutual cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, transport and communications in a planned way.

The major objective of this initiative is to promote economic cooperation among the countries of the sub-region through deeper integration of their economies. The corridor forms a thriving economic belt in the region to enhance people-to-people contact. Greater connectivity among Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar, for example, could open new opportunities for trade and investment.

Viewed from the perspective of Bangladesh, the deepening of BCIM cooperation is of special interest as it can greatly benefit from the markets of China and India. As is known, Bangladesh has a significant bilateral trade deficit with both India and China. For example, Bangladesh's exports to India were \$564.0 million as against imports of \$4740 million in FY2013. The corresponding figures for China were \$458.0 million and \$6310.0 million. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that bilateral trade between India and China has been growing at an accelerated pace – from less than \$5.0 billion in 2000 to \$60.0 billion in 2010 and about \$70.0 billion in 2012. The target is to take this figure to \$100.0 billion by 2015. However, intra-regional trade in the BCIM region continues to remain at a low level.

Therefore, the politicians and government officials of Bangladesh are striving hard for a major breakthrough over the BCIM corridor as it can open doors to a transnational highway that will eventually turn Bangladesh into

a hub between South and Southeast Asia. It will also help Bangladesh get the optimum returns from its proposed deep-sea port that could be used by all four countries. In addition to that, the country can benefit immensely from regional cooperation on energy, as it can purchase surplus electricity from Sikkim in India. Moreover, Bangladesh can increase trade with Myanmar, as the two countries share a border of 160 miles. It can also gain similar benefits from China and India.

However, it needs to be kept in mind that the BCIM countries are already members of a number of regional treaties. Bangladesh and India are members of the South Asian Free Trade Area, Bangladesh, Myanmar and India are members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and Bangladesh, India and China are members of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement. However, SAFTA is an offshoot of SAARC which itself is more or less moribund and has not lived up to its expectations. India and Pakistan, the two major members of SAARC, have not yet been able to liberalize mutual trade. The BIMSTEC, which is a recent initiative, is directed more towards combating terrorism, illicit drug smuggling and the challenges posed by climate change. The APTA is a much larger agreement signed in 1975 and includes countries such as Korea, Philippines, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

None of these agreements have contributed much to the economic improvement of the member countries because they do not address the issue of increasing trade from the logistical angle. Unless there are well-constructed highways and freeways to connect the countries of the region for quick movement of goods and personnel, all agreements on tariffs and trade will remain unprofitable. Therefore, regardless of these multilateral agreements, the need for an economic corridor remains a sine qua non for increasing trade and commerce in the sub-region.

This is why the BCIMEC is so important. The four member countries, with their diversified landscape, vast populations, heterogeneous industries, product specializations and coastal access, complement each other. Though the huge trade deficit can be a major area of concern, the high inter-regional trade potential among the four countries remains unrealized.

As far as BCIM countries are concerned, increased market access, diversification and sophistication of products, harmonization of standards and fragmentation are the need of the hour.

India and China constitute 40 percent of the world's population and present enormous trade potential and growth opportunities. China is India's top trading partner while India is among China's top-ten trading partners. India is striving to be included in the list of the top-five trading partners of China. On the other hand, trade has remained more or less static between India and Bangladesh. There is a trade surplus between India and Myanmar, but it needs to be further enhanced. Bangladesh's exports to China are 3.8 percent while imports are 32.8 percent. To the contrary, China's imports from Bangladesh were 0.02 percent. Bangladesh's exports to India are 0.01 percent while imports are 14 percent.

There are historical pathways between Myanmar and the Yunnan province of China such as the Burma Road and the Ledo Road. China is investing heavily in developing ports in Myanmar to gain greater access to the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, Beijing is investing heavily in infrastructure, mining projects, hydropower dams and oil and gas pipelines to help feed southern China's growing energy needs.

Of late, Myanmar has also been looking towards India for developmental assistance. In fact, India's relationship with Myanmar has been amicable despite the military rule in Myanmar and notwithstanding Aung San Suu Kyi's incarceration. Moreover, insurgents from the north-eastern region of India take refuge in Myanmar. Therefore, Myanmar's cooperation is vital to India from the security point of view as well.

Given that the interests of India and China overlap in Myanmar, building the rail-road connection is high on the priority lists of both countries, especially for their land-locked provinces. Thus, the BCIMEC holds prospects of furthering both the political and economic ties among the nations of the region. Investment in building infrastructure will be a major issue and India and China will have to play a major role in this area. **S**

*The writer is a freelancer and independent researcher.*



# Digitalizing History

Bhutan's ancient scriptures may become a thing of the past if the country does not use modern means to preserve its cultural heritage.

By Ayesha Ahmed



Understanding cultural diversity and the sustenance of different cultures has become a challenging task as the world embraces modernization and globalization. One country with a strong sense of identity is the Kingdom of Bhutan. A small country, Bhutan has survived for centuries without being noticed by the world. As a result, it has a rich cultural heritage going back to centuries that

has remained hidden from the world's eye. But it might be a thing of the past soon if Bhutan does not try to preserve its cultural heritage, especially the ancient scriptures. Realizing the dangers that face Bhutanese scriptures, Dr. Karma Phuntsho, a scholar and social worker, has been digitalizing and archiving Bhutanese texts and manuscripts since 2003.

Recreating the past is fundamental

for researchers who want to explore the ancient world. This can't be done in the absence of archives detailing the manner in which people lived in the past. Conservation of official documents and historical records has taken place for centuries. Archives of scores of clay tables dating back to the third and second millennia BC have been unearthed by archeologists in different parts of the world.



These discoveries hold tremendous significance because had they not been made, humankind wouldn't have discovered the prehistoric alphabets, languages, literature, culture and heritage.

Archives were unknown to the world until ancient Chinese, Greeks and Romans introduced the concept. Unfortunately, these archives do not exist anymore as they were transcribed on organic materials such as papyrus and paper which degenerated over the years. On the other hand, archives produced in the Middle Ages, by churches, kingdoms and cities have pulled through and, in fact, have reserved their official status successively to date. They played a pivotal role in facilitating researchers in studying these ages. The modern approach to archiving can be mainly attributed to the French Revolution. The French National Archives, which were created in 1790 during the French Revolution, possess perhaps the largest archival collection in the world, with records going as far back as AD 625.

Back in the day, traditional archiving was the only method to preserve documents of historical importance. It required physical archives consisting mainly of shelves and drawer cabinets for the collection of important records and documents. However, with advancements in technology and a substantial growth in all fields of knowledge, electronic archiving or digital archiving emerged and gradually replaced the conventional method. Instead of occupying physical space, digital documents, as the name suggests, are stored in a digital format on a digital storage medium.

Digital archiving is very beneficial because it requires less space. With state-of-the-art digital technology, access to data files is always a few keys or clicks away. And, most importantly, this method of archiving is disaster-proof. So whether there are floods, earthquakes or cyclones, once the documents are digitalized, they are protected and can be stored in CDs

and internet archives and restored whenever the need arises.

Thus, digital preservation is valued and promoted by scholars such as Dr. Phuntsho who are on a mission to conserve ancient history. However, the difficulties he faced in this project were many. He had to employ great efforts and do comprehensive homework on Bhutan and its rich history when he went on a mission to collect and digitally preserve all the Buddhist archives, which have been lying in remote temples of the country for ages, so that they could be accessed by scholars and masses alike. According to Phuntsho, people generally don't pay much heed to 'poti' or traditional scriptures, which are of great worth as they consist of monastic principles, philosophies and values which are indispensable for a routine life.

What made his task even more difficult was the fact that the majority of Bhutanese do not believe in photographing and documenting these scriptures for preservation purposes or for their wider accessibility to the public. They believe that these activities can tarnish the sacredness and sanctity of their holy documents. Unfortunately though, Bhutan is not left with much spiritual and intellectual heritage because of accidents or natural disasters. In the 2012 fire disaster at Wandgüe Dzong, a four-century-old fortress, a number of historical artifacts and scriptures were damaged. There had been similar losses in the past because of various natural factors. Therefore, Phuntsho considers it extremely important to digitalize and archive the prehistoric texts.

Beginning from Gangteng Monastery, an important monastery of the Nyingmapa school of Buddhism, Dr. Karma Phuntsho's journey has been illustrious yet arduous.

At Gangteng, Phuntsho wanted to obtain a couple of copies of two ancient documents. The task proved much more difficult than he had imagined as the head of the institution refused to grant his request since he believed that the sanctity of the scriptures would

be soiled if their pictures were taken. That was the beginning of the many attempts Phuntsho made to persuade heads of various monasteries to allow him to take pictures of the manuscripts saved there. Phuntsho well understood the advantages of these reproductions and remained persistent in his efforts in the face of continuous refusal. Sometimes, he obtained the approval to document ancient collections after several weeks of persuading.

From Gangteng, he embarked on a project to document manuscripts in Drametse in Mongar, one of the seats of the Pema Lingpa tradition in eastern Bhutan, and Ogyen Choling in Bumthang. By July 2007, the entire collection of manuscripts in Ogyen Choling, covering some 1,700 titles, had been photographed. Among them were 18 volumes of Dorji Lingpa's teachings. From there, the team went further ahead to document and digitalize temple libraries of Nephu, Tshendra, Thadra, Yagang, Prakhar, Sumthrang and Khodung.

Until now, Phuntsho, who is now accompanied by a team, has completed the documentation of 27 temple libraries and two private temples of Bhutan. On the whole, Phuntsho and his team have clicked one million and seven hundred images of the manuscripts and have saved them in JPEG, RAW or TIF formats. This actually makes four million pages! As of now, they have also supplied over 20 'digital libraries' to the National Library and Archives which amount to some 16,953 Gigabyte worth of images.

Dr. Karma Phuntsho is confident about his efforts and the significance of its outcome. He waits for the day when the people of Bhutan will finally recognize the significance of digital preservation of books and manuscripts and instead of his team going to them, the libraries will seek them for digitalization and documentation of their archives. ■

*The writer is a Karachi-based journalist.*

# Paradise on Earth

The Sri Lankans fully understand the importance of the natural gifts their country is blessed with.

By Arif Abbasi



Lush green forests, colorful exotic birds, awe-inspiring leopards and dangerous reptiles – a country has to be exceptionally lucky to have so many varieties of wildlife in as many numbers. Sri Lanka is one such country.

In addition to the wildlife, the country is also blessed with countless varieties of flowers, lovely beaches, butterflies, time-worn castles, monuments and temples. To top it all, the Sri Lankans are a people who understand the importance of these natural gifts.

Shaped like a giant pear, the island country has been likened to a pearl in the Indian Ocean. Connected with the subcontinent by the Adam's Bridge, a loose group of tiny, almost invisible mountains submerged in the sea, the Sri Lankans are not particularly fond of belonging to the subcontinent. The reason for their seclusion perhaps lies in their separate history as well as geographical isolation.

However, they have a deep association with their history. Even the country's name is blended with mythology – it has changed from Serendeeep to Ceylon to Sri Lanka.

In old times, serendipity was regarded as something rather insurmountable – a blend of difficult things, a place far, far away, a hostile and ungainly land. Or all three. Today, it is hard to associate Sri Lanka with such notions.

What is special about today's Sri Lanka is its vast forests and wildlife. The people of Sri Lanka know the importance of conservation of natural and other resources. From an early age, they are taught to respect and revere Mother Nature. There are programs designed for school children that teach them the basics of preserving wildlife.

The policy to promote eco-tourism was adopted in the 1970s. A decade of 'acclimatization' and training of a large number of professionals followed.

This has led to a sufficient number of workers, whose dedication to their work is evident from their behavior. Any visitor to Sri Lanka can vouch for the radical change that has come about after the change in the government's attitude towards tourism. For instance, one will never see a tour guide or any other person related with the eco-tourism industry as much as throw a



matchstick, a piece of paper, a wrapper or leftovers of a fruit anywhere except in the garbage bin.

All places of tourist interest wear a new look after the stress on eco-tourism by the people and the authorities. Whether it is the main city Colombo, the nearby city of Livinia, the small place called the Adam's Peak, Annuradhpora in the north or Galle in the south by the Indian Ocean – they all wear a festive look – clean and bedecked – the stamp of eco-tourism writ large on their profiles.

Beginning from the Adam's Peak, green mountains abound in the country, covering a large area that has many streams, rivulets and small lakes. These places are as clean as one can imagine and may fool one into thinking that not many people have visited them. The fact is, each place is visited by hordes of tourists.

There are about 25 national parks in the country and it would take an endless stock of brochures to describe their beauty. The national parks offer tranquility and peace. Most of them have great varieties of flora and fauna.

The best time to visit the parks is early in the morning, because if one is lucky, one may spot a majestic leopard sprawled on the dewy green grass. Elephants can also be seen bathing in the many rivers that pass through the country like brown veins, full of aquatic life.

There are bird sanctuaries where one can feast on watching hundreds of species of exotic birds. These places have the tendency to turn one into a bird lover. In the national parks, herds of deer can be seen grazing in the lush green forests. The only sounds that are heard there are those of birds, rhesus monkeys, small buffaloes, elephants or an occasional grunt of a leopard.

For many tourists, the biggest attraction is watching whales and dolphins. The extreme south of Sri Lanka is regarded as the perfect place for this because blue whales, fin whales, sei whale, sperm whales, orcas, dolphins, flying fish, turtles, manta rays, striped dolphins and many other colorful, big and small fishes abound here.

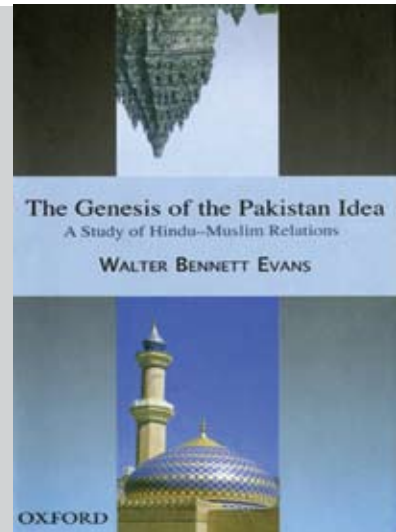
Whether deep inside the country or along the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean, each time a tourist goes to Sri Lanka, he wants more of it. **S**

*The writer is a freelance contributor. He has written extensively on astronomy, travel, tourism and wildlife.*

# A Peek into the Past

**Book Title:** The Genesis of the Pakistan Idea: A Study of Hindu-Muslim Relations  
**Author:** Walter Bennett Evans  
**Publisher:** Oxford University Press  
**Pages:** 382, Hardback  
**Price:** Rs.695  
**ISBN:** 9780199068081

*Reviewed by Dr. Omar Khan*



Despite the passage of over 60 years, the partition of the Indian subcontinent still holds quite a few unanswered questions. The events that led to partition, the struggle, its aftermath and the shape of events that followed in both India and Pakistan after partition have been a part of a never-ending, but interesting, debate.

One major aspect of any discussion on the partition has its basis in the declaration that the two separate religions, the Hindus and the Muslims, required two separate homelands in order to progress beyond their post-colonial destinies.

But, as always, there are a few basic sets of questions that have always intrigued students, researchers, historians and readers in general. Some of these questions are: what was the nature of relations between the two religions? How did the colonial system affect them? And, most importantly, how did the demand for freedom from the colonial powers, and the formation of a federation with autonomous states, end up as a demand for partition and creation of two separate countries?

The book *'The Genesis of the Pakistan Idea: A Study of Hindu-Muslims Relations'* by Walter Bennett Evans tries to answer some of these questions.

Born in Sandstone, Minnesota (U.S.A.) in 1907, Evans got his Masters in History from the University of Minnesota and taught the subject at the East Los Angeles Junior College. The genesis of Pakistan was actually

his doctoral thesis which served as the foundation for the afore-stated book. That is why the book has a research paper feel to its narrative style and referencing pattern. What makes the book an interesting read is the fact that it was written at a time when Pakistan was still in its early stages of life after independence.

Evans' narrative takes us through the multiple aspects of the journey that concluded in the partition of the subcontinent. He argues with examples that it was not just clear cut religious divisions within the subcontinent that led to this demand. A host of other reasons such as different cultures, customs and social orders within the region also played an important role. In various chapters, he explores Hindu-Muslim relations, pointing out that even at the time of the Mughal Empire, when the Muslims ruled the subcontinent, the local cultures of India overlapped with the ones that were bought over by the rulers from their countries of origin. All cultures influenced each other. Furthermore, the political landscape also played a major part in weaving the overall fabric of society. The writer states that although both communities did co-exist, there were numerous instances of strife throughout the history of the subcontinent.

The early Muslim conquerors and rulers such as Firoze Shah imposed restrictions on the non-Muslims. The imposition of jizya (a tax for non-Muslims) was one such example. But later monarchs like Sher Shah and

Akbar demonstrated leniency in such matters and tried to form a nation having loyalty to the empire as against loyalty to a religion or a social order. But, unfortunately, these efforts were not consistent and reforms, rules and regulations were more a matter of personal preferences. A prime example of this behavior was the reinstatement of the jizya by Emperor Aurangzeb.

Thus, it was no surprise then that after Aurangzeb's death and the beginning of the downfall of the Mughal Empire, the Maratha clans tried to establish 'Hindu' rule. But they were unable to do so because they struggled against numerous contenders, such as Indian princely states as well as the French and the British from Europe, with the latter eventually forming an Empire in India.

The book's concluding chapter argues that the Hindu population had been subjugated by the Muslim rulers and later by the British. Thus, their desire for freedom was quite genuine in view of their long history of subjugation. People like Ram Muhan Roy and movements like the Brahma Samraj convinced the Hindu population to accept the technological, educational and, to some extent, the cultural aspects of British rule. The Muslim population, on the other hand, remained backwards for a longer time but was eventually geared towards a Muslim Renaissance. Political figures such as Sir Syed Ahmad, Amir Ali and Iqbal played a prominent role in initiating this desire. But the basis for this was the fact that the Muslims had

indeed ruled the Indian subcontinent for nearly 800 years. According to Evans, "The nationalism in India was plural. The Hindu Renaissance caused the Muslim Renaissance."

The author touches upon the 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms that allowed both Hindus and Muslims separate electorates and weightage. The book also highlights the Lucknow Pact of 1916, which was considered a positive step by nearly all sides, as it was to serve as one of the major building blocks of cooperation between the Congress and the Muslim League. In fact, some cooperation (although mostly artificial in later years) was witnessed after the pact. One example was the Muslim League's acceptance of Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement and the Congress's support for the Khilafat Movement.

Evans further states that both parties tried to curb the rife resulting from the Hindu-Muslim riots in the 1920s and 1930s, but were not successful. The Nehru Report of 1928 demanded 'domination status or independence on the basis of a strong centre and

joint electorates'. The League, on the other hand, demanded a 'weak centre' and separate electorates, stating this as a more viable option to ensuring their autonomy and political freedom.

The book also points out that the 1935 Constitution (Communal Award) was not welcomed by all the local political forces. The provincial self-governance that followed, from 1937 to 1939, further aggravated the fears of Jinnah and the Muslim League about Hindu dominance. Henceforth, these fears led to the formulation of the Two-Nation Theory and the demand for Pakistan.

According to the author, in the end, the only solution to the problem was partition. Further expanding his argument, Evans also quotes the speech of Liaquat Ali Khan (Pakistan's first prime minister) at the United States Senate in May 1950: "Pakistan was founded by the indomitable will of a hundred million Muslims who felt they were a nation too numerous and too distinct to be relegated forever to the unalterable position of a political minority, especially when in the

vast subcontinent which was their homeland, there was enough room for two great nations..."

The author also states that initially the idea of Pakistan was not welcomed even in Muslim circles. Examples of people who opposed the idea included Professor Abdullah Sardar as well as Mohammed Ali Jinnah himself, especially the latter, who had worked tirelessly to unite the Hindus and the Muslims of India to demand more autonomy for their country.

The book is a useful read, considering that it probably utilized limited resources for research since it was written at a very early stage in the life of Pakistan. But it cannot serve as a single, clear-cut document to explain every action that took place, as one has to keep in mind the scale and complexity of partition and the impact it has had in the times to come. **S**

*The writer freelances for numerous publications. He is a medical doctor working as a researcher and knowledge management consultant for maternal and child health projects.*



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# Free Media?

The ISI-Geo News episode has brought to the forefront the many insecurities that the Pakistani media deems itself a victim of – perhaps due to the many liberties that it is now in the habit of taking in the name of free expression.

The attack on Hamid Mir in Karachi on April 19 has pitted Geo News against the ISI in a confrontation which the nation could have done without. Geo News accused the ISI and its Director General for orchestrating the attack but had nothing to put forward by way of evidence to support its allegations. The ISI too, for its part, condemned the attack but invoked the Defence Ministry to approach PEMRA (the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority), to conduct a thorough investigation into Geo's possible violation of certain clauses in its broadcasting license.

While most media houses put in their lot with the Army, Geo too back-tracked on its earlier stand and came out with support for the Armed Forces and the ISI. The episode, nevertheless, brought forward the huge size that Geo has grown into as a media organization, some say with foreign money. The stand-off also set the tone for the future of media-armed forces relations in Pakistan. Strangely, the democratic government witnessed the affair from the sidelines like an innocent bystander.



## ISI chief should step down

Comment

By Ansar Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: Director General ISI Lt. Gen. Zaheer-ul-Islam should step down to protect the respect and sanctity of his institution, which is now burdened with the challenge of catching the real culprits.

Whether or not Gen Zaheer or any member of the ISI is involved in this cowardly attack, Hamid Mir's earlier warning that if an attempt was made on his life the DG ISI and a few others would be responsible has made the institution of the ISI the focus of criticism.

This is too serious an allegation against the top spymaster of the country to be ignored. Since Hamid Mir had pointed his finger directly at Gen Zaheer, his name would continue to be taken as a suspect by the

Hamid Mir survives attack

## Geo's attempt to malign ISI slated

Blaming the sensitive agency served enemy's purpose, say political circles

A OUR CORRESPONDENT  
KARACHI/ISLAMABAD

Political and defence circles have expressed serious concerns over Jang Group's attempt to implicate the national security institutions – particularly the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) – in the gun attack on Geo TV senior anchor Hamid Mir.

Mir was seriously wounded when gunmen ambushed his car on Sharea Faisal around 5:15pm minutes after he flew into Karachi from Islamabad. Soon after the attack, Geo TV blamed the ISI. The allegations did not even take into the account the fact that investigations into the attack had not even begun.

This is not the first time, the group has also been in sim-

'UNDUE CRITICISM'  
ISPR rejects allegations as uncalled for

A OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI: While condemning the attack on Hamid Mir, a spokesman for the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Saturday said raising undue allegations against the ISI was uncalled for.

"We condemn the attack on Hamid Mir and pray for his well-being and recovery. However, raising allegations against the ISI or the head of ISI is without any basis and is highly regrettable and misleading," he said.

An independent inquiry must immediately be carried out to ascertain facts, he said.

ilar ways in the past as well. After former premier Benazir Bhutto's assassination, Geo

## Jang Group respects armed forces immensely

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By our correspondent

KARACHI: The Jang Group issued the following statement on Sunday: "We are thankful to Allah Almighty that Hamid Mir, the pride of journalists across the region, survived a cowardly attack on his life. Three of the six bullets that entered his body are still lodged there and have ruptured his bladder and intestines but his condition is no longer critical.

"The Jang Group clarifies that it has not put the blame on any institution or section of any institution. The Jang Group values and respects all institutions. All including the accused must be presumed innocent until proven guilty. The Jang Group demands an independent and fair investigation without fear or favour.

of the press and suffered losses of billions of rupees and our cases are still pending in the courts in this regard. It is not new to us that due to our independent policy, serious allegations have been levelled against our group; it has been done many times in the past but we have always given a befitting reply and no one has ever proved any allegation against us. We always endeavour to report the truth to our viewers and readers and it is our resolve to stick to this policy in the future also. We believe that it is in the interest of the people and state of Pakistan.

"Hamid Mir had sent written and video statements to his colleagues and friends and members of the family who were in a state of great anxiety and

# UPCOMING B2B EVENTS ...



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