

INTERNATIONAL  
Rise of the IS (Islamic State)

September 2014

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# SOUTH ASIA

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## THIRD UMPIRE

Whether it was PTI, PAT or the government, there was great chest thumping about democracy. But the military again ended up calling the shots.



Afghanistan	Afg. 50
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# Temperatures Rise Again

Relations between India and Pakistan have deteriorated sharply this year, especially after cancellation of the much-anticipated meeting between the foreign secretaries of the two countries. There has been a dramatic rise in cross-border firing along the Line of Control (LoC) that separates the Indian and Pakistani-held sections of Jammu and Kashmir. The cross-border shelling has resulted in many deaths and has terrorized villagers on both sides of the LoC. A meeting was held between the Pakistani High Commissioner to India, Abdul Basit and leaders of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), an alliance of Indian Kashmir separatist groups. This seemed to instigate the Indian government to announce that it was canceling the foreign secretaries' meeting. They justified their decision on the grounds that the meeting constituted "gross interference" in Indian affairs. It needs to be remembered though that such meetings have long been accepted and even facilitated by the Indian government.

This time around, it seemed that India was trying to rewrite the "ground rules" for Indian-Pakistan relations. However, it was obvious that with a Modi-led BJP-government in New Delhi, it could not be "business as usual" between the two nuclear-armed states. When it was revealed after the Sharif-Modi meeting, the foreign secretaries of the two countries would meet, it was said that relations between the two countries would be revived and would lead to a comprehensive peace dialogue which had been stalled since 2008. It was also said that there were efforts afoot for a historic rapprochement with Pakistan. At one level, it can even be said that the Indian Prime Minister was himself instrumental in scuttling the meeting and in revving up the temperature at the LoC. On a visit to the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir, he accused Pakistan of waging a "proxy war" in Kashmir. It is also true that since coming into power earlier this year, Modi and the BJP had repeatedly said they would pursue a more aggressive foreign policy, which included highlighting India as the natural leader and regional hegemon of South Asia and accelerating the Indian military's "modernization" program. The BJP government also seemed to be encouraged by Washington which had again started courting India after the earlier spat involving an Indian female diplomat. The Obama administration had responded to Modi's election by intensifying its endeavours to woo India and involve New Delhi in isolating and strategically encircling China.

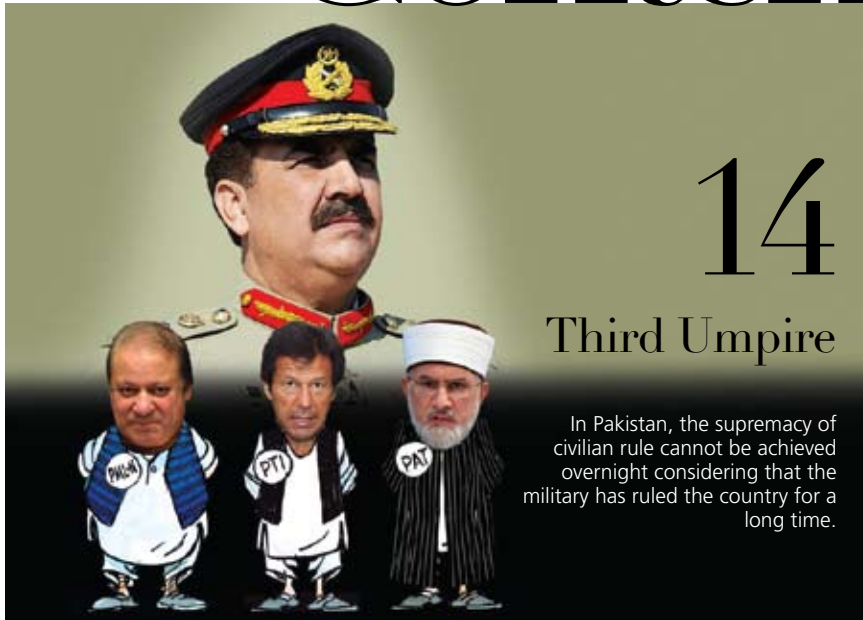
India's new government has also been trying to exploit the grave crisis currently rocking Nawaz Sharif's government, in the hope that concessions can be extracted from it when it is on the defensive. Encouragement can also be emanating from Pakistan's military-security establishment, which resents Sharif's attempt to assert greater control over the country's foreign and national-security policy, Imran Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Allama Tahir-ul Qadri and his Pakistan Awami Tehrik have mounted weeks of protests challenging the legitimacy of Sharif's 15 month-old government. The BJP government's aggressive stance against Pakistan and its ratcheting up of the tensions on the LoC also seems to fall in line with its plans to instigate communal tensions in Jammu and Kashmir in the run-up to state elections. Under conditions where the separatist, pro-Pakistani groups are expected to urge an election boycott, the BJP believes that it is well-positioned to secure a majority in the state legislature. This would then enable it to realize a longstanding goal of the Hindu right to abrogate Article 370 of the Indian constitution which gives Jammu and Kashmir special status within the Indian Union. The US, which counts both India and Pakistan as important allies, has described the cancellation of the foreign secretaries' talks as being unfortunate. But it has not criticized India for seeking to change the diplomatic ground rules. The US, in fact, seems to be urging New Delhi and Islamabad to take steps to improve their bilateral relations. It seems the Obama administration does not want to risk antagonizing Modi prior to his visiting New York and Washington in what will be his maiden US visit as India's Prime Minister.

The flare up in Indo-Pakistani tensions is, nevertheless, a most unwelcome development for Washington. It further complicates the US effort to strategically and politically reconfigure Afghanistan, so it can withdraw most of its troops from the country while maintaining Afghan military bases from which it can project US power across energy-rich Central Asia and threaten China and Russia. The tension on the LoC also bodes ill for an India-Pakistan relationship which was slowly crawling towards some kind of normalcy. Can the two countries afford this kind of rise in border temperatures?



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

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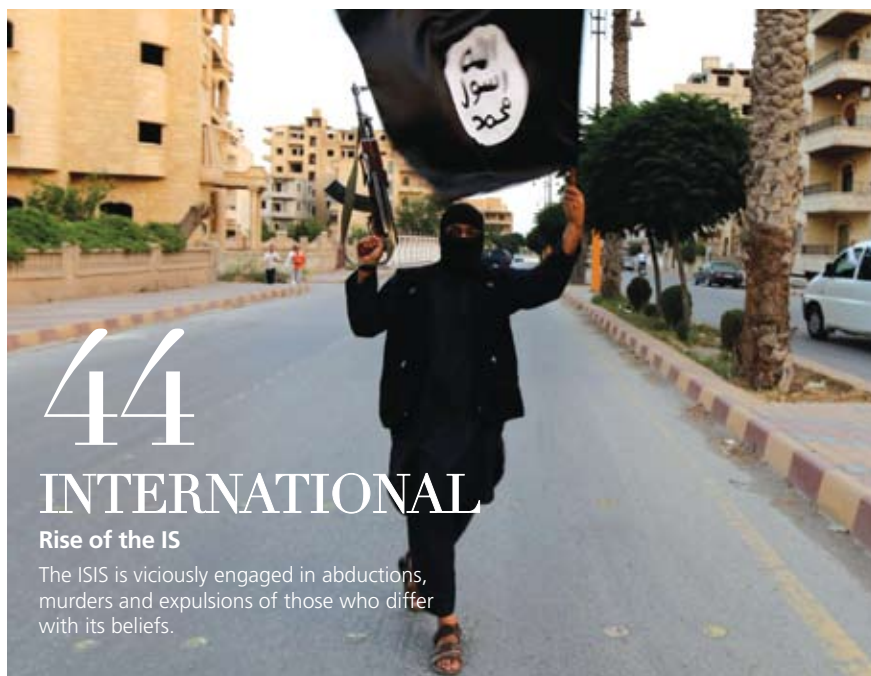
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## Light at the end

Well done, Southasia, for coming up with a highly informative and thorough cover story on the subject of energy crisis in the South Asian region. The articles summed up the prevailing power situation in all regional countries and also attempted to offer solutions. Given the nature of the issue, it may



take years, even decades, to overcome the power crisis, but a solution has to be found. Otherwise, the region will plunge into darkness forever.

The challenge is grave and all South Asian countries need to work together to face it. These countries are fortunate in the sense that they are blessed with many kinds of natural resources which can be harnessed to produce cheap and environment-friendly electricity. Energy produced through hydro, solar and wind sources is the way to go in future as it is sustainable and clean.

Let's hope the countries that lead South Asia in terms of population and technology can come up with innovative solutions to solve the energy crisis and help themselves and their neighbors in dealing with the problem.

**Mahim Sultan**  
*Islamabad, Pakistan*

## Rubbing salt

Semu Bhatt's article 'Hall of Shame' was an eye-opener. While India is making great strides in many fields, it has also gained the notoriety for being a country where 93 women are raped every day. While a number of factors contribute to



this horrendous situation, it is mainly the apathy of the country's politicians towards the serious problem that is to blame the most. It is indeed a shame that instead of taking steps to bring down the rate of sex crimes against women, some politicians issue highly irresponsible statements, making fun of a grave situation.

What they don't realize is that their acts have a trickle-down effect on the masses. Recently, a photographer with hardly mentionable credentials shot to fame for a photo shoot that was allegedly inspired by the unfortunate Delhi bus gang rape incident. Whatever he may say in his defense, such reckless attempts at making light of a serious issue are a result of the collective indifference of society, especially its opinion leaders. If the politicians can't offer a word of sympathy to the victims, they should at least refrain from rubbing salt in their wounds.

**Nimrita Bajpayee**  
*Mumbai, India*

## Difficult choice

Sitting hundreds of miles away from Afghanistan, I'm praying for the protection of my country's ancient treasures. Words won't be enough to describe the way I felt when the Bamiyan statues were destroyed by the Taliban. It hurt more because I remember visiting the place as a kid. Now I tell my children about the grandeur of the graceful Buddha statues and how tiny one felt in front of them. I'm still unable to understand how ruthless one has to be to destroy such a magnificent piece of architecture which is also an important historical artifact.

After reading the article 'Difficult Choice', I've been hoping and silently praying for a miracle that could somehow convince the Afghan authorities that ruining the Mes Aynak site would be a wrong decision of gigantic proportions. Afghanistan is a large country rich with mineral resources. I'm sure when things are better and more stable, we will find many more such places that hide natural wealth inside

them. But once digging begins at Mes Aynak for copper reserves, its centuries-old treasure will be destroyed.

No force on earth will be able to bring it back. Why can't the Afghan authorities understand this simple point? While the need for mining is essential for the Afghan economy, perhaps the government should at least wait for a couple of years till the artifacts that can be saved are preserved by experts. It is hoped that the government will pay heed to this critical matter. The international community also needs to pressurize the Afghan authorities to act sanely and avoid hasty decisions.



**Samar Hikmat**  
*New Jersey, U.S.*

## Not extremists

The article 'A Matter of Religious Freedom' affected me on various levels. Being a Sri Lankan and a follower of Buddhism, I, myself, was deeply disturbed by the violence inflicted on a section of society by some Buddhist monks. But here is what the world should understand. It was (and is) merely a group of radical monks which does not represent the majority of the followers of this faith. The Buddhists believe in peace and coexistence and preach these values extensively.



The people belonging to all faiths, including Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists have lived together in Sri Lanka for centuries. In fact, after the riots, many people who belonged to the Christian and Buddhist communities were at the forefront of relief efforts to help the affectees. So it is wrong to form an opinion based on the actions of a few and suggest that the entire Sri Lankan society is embracing extremism

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## RIP, PTI

Narendra Modi ruled the state of Gujarat as its chief minister for three consecutive terms – almost 14 years. He may be blamed for a number of things - and rightly - but it is hard to deny that he put Gujarat on the road to economic progress. A number of development schemes were initiated and Gujarat's gross domestic product grew by over 12 percent between 2007 and 2012. When Modi ran for the prime ministerial slot, he designed his entire election campaign around his 'Gujarat Model'. Such was the appeal of this success story that today Modi is the prime minister of India. Although his term was not without its share of controversies, the biggest blemish on his reputation being the Gujarat riots, in the end what mattered was the fact that the

quality of life of all Gujaratis, Hindus and Muslims, improved during his rule.

The PTI's dharna in Islamabad reminded me of Modi's example and I couldn't help compare the PTI's victory in elections, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where it succeeded in forming a government, to Modi's rise to power. The PTI could have governed KPK in such a manner as to make it a role model of good governance for the entire country. Then, it could have used its success in KPK to gain votes from all over the country in the next elections. But what transpired in the last few days confirms that the PTI has clearly lost the opportunity. A sad day, indeed, for all those who were hopeful for a positive change in the country.

**Abdul Muqet Arain**  
*Lahore, Pakistan*

and intolerance. That is clearly not the case. However, it is also essential that the majority of the Sri Lankans, who believe in peaceful coexistence, should come out against the perpetrators of violence and denounce them.

**Cyril Fernando**  
*Galle, Sri Lanka*

## Free media

Bhutan is a tiny country which has gained some recognition in the international community only recently. The main reason for Bhutan's seclusion was its location – a small country surrounded by the mountains of the Himalayas. Its status of being a strict follower of centuries-old traditions did not help matters either. However, it started to draw attention when the Dragon King of Bhutan voluntarily abdicated his throne to introduce democracy. Since then, Bhutan has transformed in many ways. Its media, in particular, has flourished a great deal.

Being a regular reader of online Bhutanese newspapers, I must say that they present a complete picture of the country. They keep their readers well-informed and also highlight the problems faced by the people of Bhutan, especially those living in faraway places.

There are interesting and informative news stories, features, commentaries, analysis and pictorials. I particularly like the editorials of the Kuensel



which are very strong and on relevant topics. Although the Bhutanese press is small in size, it is doing a wonderful job of enhancing the country's image while simultaneously keeping a check on the government. I wish the journalists working in Bhutan all the best.

**Matiur Rahman**  
*Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## Circus children

I was highly impressed by the stories of the young Nepali performers of Circus Kathmandu. As mentioned in the article 'Circus of Courage', the youngsters had a rough childhood and were victims of some very disturbing incidents. The fact that they remained persistent and are doing something positive despite all the brutalities they faced is highly appreciable. Also worthy of praise is the organization, and the brave people associated with it, which came to their rescue and freed them from the bond of slavery. It is hoped that they will continue to do the good work.

It is a fact that the curse of child slavery and human trafficking is not limited to Nepal. These societal ills exist in all South Asian countries. Keeping this in view, I hope the circus troupe from Nepal considers visiting the neighboring countries and entertain a wider audience. In addition to



providing quality entertainment to the people of South Asian countries, the group can serve as a source of inspiration for thousands of street children in these countries who want to change their lives.

**Meena Swethi**  
*Bangalore, India*

## Pipedreams?

The writer of the article 'Mega Rail Link' believes that the proposed Pakistan-China railway line will "usher in a new era of economic prosperity in the region." Surely, this view is shared by the majority of his countrymen. I wonder if they realize how far-fetched this dream is - of constructing a 1800-kilometre long railway line that will connect China and Pakistan. Apart from the physical and logistical problems this ambitious project is likely to face, how are the two countries going to cope with the political troubles it will invite?

How do they plan to go about constructing the railway line in Balochistan, a highly volatile region in Pakistan? Isn't it true that the Chinese nationals associated with many projects in Pakistan work under highly strict security? Who will ensure the safety of the people working for the railway line at every step of the project which is estimated to take up to 7 years to be completed? It is my sincere advice that instead of undertaking projects that are difficult to deliver, the government of Pakistan should focus on solving the basic problems of its masses.

**Fakhrul Islam**  
*Montreal, Canada*



"I can't help but laugh at the agendas of these long marches. It hurts and confuses me – who has given them these agendas?"

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



"We could have had another scenario, the winner takes all or has a win, but this situation is a win not only for both camps but also for the people of Afghanistan; they will see the energy, the competence and the effect of both sides utilized for the success of people and that is important."

**Abdullah Abdullah**  
*Afghan politician*



"The agreements that are at par with our national interests are necessary and my government will endorse them under any circumstances. Rather than sparking debates on Nepal-India relationship, we need to look forward for prospects that are benevolent to both the countries."

**Sushil Koirala**  
*Prime Minister of Nepal*



"Through the five jewels that are hydropower, agriculture, tourism, cottage industries and mining, we'll work together in improving our economy. Big industries are important, but most important are small and cottage industries, as they are the backbone of the country's economy."

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



"If the system collapses, the people of Pakistan will suffer the consequences."

**Altaf Hussain**  
*Head of Muttahida Quami Movement*



"Corruption is terrible. But the last few days teach us that of the seven deadly sins, none is as lethal as vanity."

**Mosharraf Zaidi**  
*Pakistani political commentator*



"People said that I did not speak against corruption on Independence Day. But I said that day also that the attitude of 'mera kaya aur mujhe kaya' was harming the country. We have to change it to make the country corruption free."

**Narendra Modi**  
*Prime Minister of India*



"It is unfortunate that some of the very people of Bangladesh, for whom Bangabandhu sacrificed his whole life, killed him."

**Sheikh Hasina**  
*Prime Minister of Bangladesh*



"Foreign investments pose no threat to either Islam or Maldivian independence. It does not mean casinos will be operated in the Maldives and it does not mean the president would have more power than he should."

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



"You have to promise not to embarrass your leader. You have to stay peaceful. Do not break as much as a potted plant. It will be a peaceful march."

**Imran Khan**  
*Chairman, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf*



"The Opposition MPs who say they were brutalized came to Majlis the next day in good health with makeup on. How can anyone who was brutalized get up on their two feet and speak on the Majlis floor (the next day)? Perhaps, the police did not beat them enough."

**Ahmed Nihan**  
*Parliamentary Leader of the Progressive Party, Maldives*



"Hindustan is a Hindu nation. Hindutva is the identity of our nation and it (Hinduism) can incorporate others (religions) in itself."

**Mohan Bhagwat**  
*Head of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)*

PAKISTAN | Islamabad

## No More Talks

The bilateral talks between India and Pakistan have come to an end as India called off the meeting between the foreign secretaries of the two countries scheduled to be held in late August. The decision was taken following a meeting between Pakistani High Commissioner to India Abdul Basit and Hurriyat leaders from Kashmir.

Citing it as the reason for calling off the dialogue, India accused Pakistan of "unacceptable, interference" in its internal affairs. The Modi government was facing harsh criticism, especially from the Congress, for allowing Basit to meet the Hurriyat leaders.

However, Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson defended the meeting



by claiming that it was a longstanding practice that prior to any bilateral talks, meetings with Kashmiri leaders were held. **S**

PAKISTAN | Chitral

## River Power



Six medium-sized hydropower projects having 527 megawatt generation capacity will be constructed in Chitral. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has allocated Rs.8.6 billion for the project which will be undertaken by the Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization.

The power projects include

Shushghal-Jindoli (144MW), Shoghor-Seen (132MW), Arkari Gol (79MW), Lawi Drosh (69MW), Istaru-Booni (52MW), and Muzhigram (51MW). Feasibility studies of the sites have been carried out. The power projects will be fed by the Chitral River through tunnels whose lengths range from 4.5 to 9.3 kilometers. They would be completed in five to eight years. **S**

PAKISTAN | Ziarat

## Residency is Back

The Ziarat Residency, which was destroyed by militants in June 2013, has been restored by a team of architects led by Nayyar Ali Dada. The place served as Mohammad Ali Jinnah's last abode in 1948 when he spent the last few days of his life in Ziarat, located near Quetta. Before razing it to the ground, the militants had burnt the furniture and historical artifacts

and photographs in the building. Three kinds of wood had originally been used in the construction of the Residency; the architects tried their best to restore the historical edifice to its original form.

Work on the Rs.140 million project started in May this year. Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif inaugurated it on August 14. The ceremony was attended by Chief of Army Staff



General Raheel Sharif, Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai, Commander Southern Command, Lt Gen Naseer Hussain Janjua and senior bureaucrats. **S**

INDIA | Mumbai

## Mission Mars



Two Indian university students are part of the global team that won a \$10,000 international contest to design a mission to Mars. It has been

organized by the US-based Inspiration Mars Foundation. Kshitij Mall from Nagpur and Kerala-born Ashwati Das are students of Purdue University in

the U.S., which has produced many astronauts, including Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon.

Some 32 teams from across the world took part in the contest to

design a manned round trip mission to Mars. Their proposals were evaluated by a high-level panel of judges consisting of current and former NASA officials. The non-

profit organization Inspiration Mars Foundation founded by the world's first space tourist Dennis Tito aims to launch a manned mission to fly by Mars by 2021. **S**

**INDIA** | Kolkata

## Midnight Children



**T**here was a rush in hospitals in Kolkata for the birth of midnight children on August 15, India's Independence Day. Requests poured in at hospitals across the city by a large number of parents eager to get Caesarian deliveries done on August 15. Many parents chose August 17, which was Janmashtami, for delivery of their child. The Bhagirathi Neotia Women

and Child Care Centre had six deliveries lined up while the Woodlands Hospital had four. "It's not unusual to ask for an August 15 delivery. Many want their child to be born on Independence Day. But auspicious days like Janmashtami are equally popular," local surgeon, Ramjet Chakrabarty said.

Doctors usually allow a four to six days window for Caesarian sections. Often, parents want this to be stretched to accommodate a preferred day. "This could be risky so we don't allow this," said Chakrabarty. **S**

**AFGHANISTAN** | Kabul

## Bogus Votes

**A**n Afghan news agency reported that of the 29 percent of ballots from the presidential election that were audited, 54,000 votes of Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and 31,000 of Dr. Abdullah were found bogus. As many as 1,170, 107 votes cast for the Ghani-led Change Continuity team were scrutinized by the team. Of them,

54,505 ballots were found fraudulent. Similarly, of the 1,060,709 votes of the Abdullah-headed Reform and Unanimity team that were reassessed, 31,857 were declared bogus.

Most of Ghani's bogus votes came from nine polling sites, where more than 500 ballots were declared forged at each site. Four of these sites



are located in the Panjwai district of Kandahar and three are in southeastern Paktika province. The highest number of bogus votes cast for Abdullah came from two polling sites in central Logar province and one in Paktika. **S**

**AFGHANISTAN** | Helmand

## No Peace



**A**fghan officials are in talks with the Taliban militants in southern Helmand to end the violence which has recently taken the province in its grip. Dozens of people, including members of the Afghan security forces and civilians, have been killed following heavy clashes between the Taliban militants and

the Afghan forces.


Residents of Sangin, Kajaki, Mosa Qala and Nawzad districts complain of sporadic clashes between the Afghan forces and militants despite the government's claim that the latter suffered heavy casualties and were forced to retreat. **S**

# Ladies' Day Out

The women of the Arghandab district in southern Kandahar are soon going to have a women-only recreational park. Spread over 25

acres in the Baba Wali neighborhood of Arghandab, the park will be funded by the municipality. The project will be completed in three months at a cost



of 13 million Afghanis. The facility includes a parking lot, a boundary wall, canteens and toilets. 

# Financing Questions

The government of Bangladesh will investigate how Islamic banks, including the Islami Bank of Bangladesh, and other financial institutions have spent their profits till date to check the financing of militancy in the country. State Minister for Home

Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan informed the media that intelligence personnel have been instructed to check whether there are any inconsistencies in the financial statements of these institutions.

A national committee has been tasked with launching a campaign against



militancy. The campaign will seek help from eminent media personalities. The government of Bangladesh has also decided to intensify the

monitoring of social media websites like Facebook. 

# Controlling Pollution

The National Board of Revenue is all set to impose a green tax on about 2,500 polluting industrial units to force them to cut back on pollution. The industrial units will have to deposit 1.0 percent of their receipts in the state exchequer.


The surcharge, introduced this year, is a part of the government's move to encourage industries to set up effluent

treatment plants and to make them aware of the harmful effects of their activities on the environment.

The Buriganga and other rivers around Dhaka, including the Turag, the Bangshi, Tongi Khal, the Balu and the Shitalakkhya, have become highly polluted due to the dumping of wastes from tanneries, dyeing factories and other industries as well as households.

Among them, the Buriganga, the



lifeline of Dhaka, is the most polluted river, having zero oxygen level in its waters for nine months a year because of the toxic tannery wastes from Hazaribagh. 

# Roads to Progress



The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide \$800 million in stages to connect 1,000 villages of Sri Lanka to the country's major road network. Sri Widawati, Country Director for ADB's Resident Mission in Sri Lanka,

has said that the country would receive \$100 million in September and another \$100 million in December if everything goes well.

The ADB is already in the process of financing the expansion of water

supply systems in key urban areas, including Colombo, with the aim of ensuring 24/7 water supply, higher

quality standards, adequate coverage and lower water leakages. At the same time, ADB also supported the coverage

expansion of urban sewerage to reduce pollution and improve health conditions. **S**

MALDIVES | Male'

# Whale Time

A small group of whale sharks in the waters of a single atoll in the Maldives accounts for nearly 3 percent of global tourism devoted to sharks. Last year the Marine Protected Area (Sampa) in the South Ari atoll attracted between 77,000 and 78,000 tourists on whale shark excursions, bringing in

a direct income of £5.6 million to the operators. At any one time, up to 29 whale sharks are thought to populate the Sampa area, the largest protected area in the Maldives.

The whale shark is the world's biggest fish, reaching lengths of 40ft or more. However, it is a gentle giant that



preys on nothing larger than shrimp-like plankton. **S**

BHUTAN | Thimphu

# Helping Business

The Business Opportunity and Information Center of Bhutan has started accepting applications for loans from entrepreneurs, small businessmen, farmers and ordinary citizens with good business proposals. Of the Nu 1.9 billion allocated for this scheme, 1.5 billion will be for small and cottage industries with bigger projects having a maximum ceiling of Nu 8 million and smaller projects of up to Nu 2 million.

The remaining 400 million is set aside for rural development and business, targeting farmers and the agricultural sector.

The BOIC website has been launched simultaneously and contains operational guidelines to access funds, brochures and application forms for the funds. The centre will also identify viable business opportunities and offer them to the public. These could be



commercial farms, livestock projects, brick manufacturing, furniture units, charcoal projects, agriculture, etc. **S**

NEPAL | Kathmandu

# One Rupee School



A woman in Kathmandu is running a school for street children that offers them free education, one meal a day, textbooks, stationery and uniforms. This one-of-a-kind project was the brainchild of Mala Kharel who was deeply touched by the story of a young street girl who had been raped by a priest who lured her with the promise of a five rupee note.

She started out with four girls, all victims of abuse, and began educating

them. In 2005, Mala opened the Bal Sarathi Academy and paid for everything herself initially. She later got help from an American sponsor for 75 students. The school also gets support from Action Aid and has eight volunteer teachers.

Another peculiar feature of Mala's school is its unique way of gathering donations - the Rs 1 campaign which asks donors to pledge to give one rupee a day to the school. The number of contributors has now grown to 85 and the school raises up to Rs 13,000 a month from the initiative. **S**



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# Which Way Politics?

**Given the army high command's continuous pleas to resolve the political crisis through talks and non-violent means without losing time, nobody can complain they were not warned.**

By M. Saeed Khalid

The twin marches and the sit-ins of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and the Pakistan Awami Tehreek to topple Nawaz Sharif's government took a dramatic turn when Imran Khan and Tahirul Qadri received messages from Rawalpindi to confer with the army chief. Khan's jubilation and Qadri's over-enthusiasm on this development conveyed their belief that the government's fall was imminent and they were proceeding to the citadel of ultimate power to work out its final rites.

But life is never that simple.

In separate meetings, the duo received a damp squib from General Raheel Sharif. They were cautioned that the prime minister's resignation was unlikely and that all parties should try to resolve their contentions through negotiations.

Initially, Khan and Qadri reacted to this differently. The next day, PTI looked more serious about talks with the government. But Qadri was unwavering. His flock, at the edge of physical and nervous exhaustion after two weeks of subhuman existence, was itching for one final push to usher their inqilab.

Khan was left with no other choice but to suspend his daily harangue, combined with song and dance, and follow the PAT caravan in the push towards the ultimate symbols of the state. The entirely peaceful protest thus entered its violent phase.

A curious aspect of the saga is that the principal characters involved in the bitter struggle - Khan, Qadri and Sharif - are all from Punjab. The leaders of the Azadi and Inqilab marches had

to transport their manpower from Punjab. This was matched by the prime minister who brought a large contingent of the Punjab Police to resist the demonstrators.

The Punjabis were fighting it out in the federal capital while Balochistan and Sindh remained aloof from the commotion, and the PTI's chief minister in Peshawar, abandoning his post to join the agitation - these were some bizarre elements of a phenomenon aimed at removing the government only in the second year of its term. Whichever way the dice falls, the whole episode is a bad reflection on some Punjabi lust for power, causing grave dangers for the country.

Before the impasse in Islamabad turned into a violent confrontation, questions were being raised about the real instigators behind the teaming up of Khan and Qadri that first produced the two marches which later metamorphosed into sit-ins.

A particularly intriguing aspect was the insistence by Khan and Qadri on Sharif's resignation. It was incongruent with the ground realities. The PTI and PAT's politics of attrition had failed to arouse the people, with Sharif receiving endorsement from political parties, lawyers and civil society to hang tough.

Many PTI supporters were turning to the view that somewhere along the line, Khan had lost the plot in teaming up with a cleric adept at games of mind control. Inspired by some elements, Qadri - the cult leader and Imran - the 'playboy cricketer turned demagogue politician' - are out to pull the House of Ittefaq down.

In most countries, someone like Qadri may not be taken seriously because of his claims of divine guidance to bring about a revolution. But Pakistan being a deeply religious society with a landscape punctuated by shrines of real or imaginary saints, he has managed to build a strong group of hardcore supporters around him, ready to sacrifice everything, including their lives.

Back in May 2013, foreign as well as Pakistani observers were impressed by the peaceful and credible, if not totally fair, elections.

The election result had something for most parties with the notable exception of the Awami National Party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Pakistan Muslim League-Q in Punjab. Elsewhere, the PML-N, the PPP and the MQM retained their strength.

Nawaz Sharif's party was in a comfortable majority at the centre, which obviated the requirement of coalition partners. However, keeping the posts of prime minister and chief minister of Punjab within the family may have been just the beginning of an attitude of hauteur which many are now openly characterizing as monarchical.

Freed from the need of coalition partners, the Sharifs ran an exclusive show, leading to growing signs of unease and resentment over family rule. This is confirmed by members of the party who felt excluded either because the family kept decision-making within a very small circle or because the old guard continued to monopolize key posts within the government.

Khan was perturbed at the loss of



certain seats in the elections which he claimed was on account of pre-planned rigging. Notable among these were the seats won by Ayaz Sadiq, Speaker National Assembly and Khwaja Saad Rafiq, Minister for Railways. Convinced that massive rigging was done by the PML-N, Khan vociferously asked for a recount in four constituencies.

The course of events could have been different had the government facilitated a recount as demanded by the PTI. Khan was also alarmed by the prime minister consolidating his family rule just as some family members kept on enlarging their business holdings. These two factors appear to have led Khan to consider that a big challenge had to be mounted without further delay to prevent the ruling family from strengthening its hold, particularly in Punjab to unassailable levels.

Qadri's case was different because he had been issuing calls for a revolution and threatening to establish a new system to be run under his guidance based on divine premonitions. He staged a tactical retreat after the first revolutionary march in January 2013, negotiated among others by the Chaudhrys of Gujrat. Qadri sounded more ominous this time because the latest revolutionary bid seem reinforced

by a personal sense of vendetta against the Sharifs, once his main benefactors.

The Punjab government had made matters worse by encircling the Minhaj-ul-Quran headquarters in Lahore by armed police which for reasons still unclear, ended up shooting Qadri's followers, causing 14 fatalities and wounding many. The people still await an explanation for this unprecedented dastardly act. It became a stigma for the PML- N leadership and would not go away unless some visible corrective and punitive measures are taken.

The Sharif brothers have always taken pride in launching mega infrastructural projects rather than building rapport with the masses by looking after their basic needs. It reinforces the sentiment that the government is not only business friendly but has taken upon itself to look after the rich. Being a Lahore-centered party, it is not so popular in the other provinces or in the interior of Punjab.

Imran Khan could have focused on these weaknesses to increase his popularity before the local elections and the 2018 general elections. Instead, he chose a negative one-point agenda of rigging in the 2013 elections and turned it into the main

plank of his Azadi march. He also led himself to the corner by unreasonably insisting on the prime minister's resignation.

Qadri and Khan made a desperate bid to rattle the government by ordering their marchers to advance toward the PM House. This move was put down by the police with tear gas and rubber bullets. The protestors reacted by throwing stones and other projectiles. There were three deaths while hundreds of demonstrators and law enforcers suffered injuries. By August 31, the number of agitators in the red zone had declined but PAT workers continued their forays towards important buildings.

The same evening, a hurriedly convened meeting of the army's top commanders expressed serious concern over the political impasse, warned against the use of force and put the two sides on notice to reach a peaceful solution.

While supporting democracy, the army high command underscored the importance of bringing the confrontation to a close without losing time. Now nobody can complain they were not warned. ■

*The writer is a former ambassador.*

Hardly anybody could imagine even in his wildest dreams that a government which came to power with a thumping majority will be fighting a battle for its survival only after 15 months of taking charge. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's 'Azadi March' and the Pakistan Awami Tehreek's 'Inqalab March' on Islamabad did just that and created quite a stir in the corridors of power. The dice was rolled and political lines were drawn between the proponents of the status quo and those challenging it.

The plot thickened with each passing moment. However, one thing was very much clear: the marches and sit-ins unleashed an 'irreversible process' of political turmoil and political instability in the short-run, while a big change in the political culture and the rules of the game was expected in the long run due to the activism and political mobilization of the middle and lower middle class masses.

What triggered the political turmoil?

Although the immediate causes were the killing of fourteen PAT workers by the police in Lahore – home of the chief minister of Punjab and the prime minister – combined with the unresponsiveness of the government and state institutions to the allegations of rigging in the last elections, reasons for

# Summer of Discontent

**The people do not want a democratic dispensation that does not cater to their everyday needs.**

By Jamil Nasir



the looming political crisis run much deeper. First of all, there was growing discontent with the performance of the government and its policies. Massive infrastructural projects like 'motorways' and 'metro buses' though helped the PML-N in winning past elections due to their 'visibility impact', they did not satisfy the people who expected swift measures which could mitigate their economic sufferings.

The government tried to ensure macroeconomic stability and put the economy on track. It introduced measures to stabilize foreign exchange reserves and reduce budget deficit, etc. The efforts of the government in this regard were well-recognized and lauded by the multilateral and financial institutions though some economists accused the government of jugglery of statistics. While the steps taken by the PML-N setup for macroeconomic stability were well received by the IMF, the World Bank and other financial institutions, unfortunately the man on the street in Pakistan failed to benefit from them. The masses' disillusionment with the government kept on accumulating as macroeconomic indicators failed to have any salubrious impact on their lives.

The promises of the ruling party to end load shedding just within months of coming to power remained unrealized even after more than one year. The conditionality of the IMF regarding 'setting the prices right' resulted in two to three-fold increase in electricity prices while its availability remained as interrupted and scarce as before. Industrial activity which could provide employment to the jobless did not pick up due to the electricity crisis. The prices of essential commodities kept on increasing due to galloping inflation.

And, above all, the government did not undertake any serious structural reforms. Governance remained as neglected as ever. For example, no effective reforms were introduced to enhance domestic revenue mobilization by taxing the rich and the untaxed and to purge the tax machinery of corrupt elements. Traditional methods like increasing the sales tax rate from 16 to 17 percent were applied to enhance revenue but

such measures contributed towards price hike through what the economists call 'the pass through effect'.

Besides the growing discontent over poor performance, many analysts suggested that the military establishment and the government were not on the same page at least over three issues: the trial of Pervez Musharraf under Article 6 of the Constitution; the operation in FATA against terrorist groups and the desire of the government to improve the country's relations with India. It was widely believed that the sit-ins were orchestrated by the military establishment which wanted to cut the ruling junta down to size and create foreign policy space for the military. "Widespread discontent at Sharif's performance in the office to date and the determination of the security establishment to avoid ceding primacy to civilian rule has added to the sense of a looming political crisis," wrote the *Foreign Policy* magazine.

But the point is, the supremacy of civilian rule cannot be achieved overnight in a country where the military has ruled for a long time and is still considered the final arbiter in the national affairs. Even if the government is able to strike a balance between civil-military relations in theory, practically the military will remain the ultimate arbiter if the democratic regimes are unable to muster overwhelming support of the people by changing the rules of the game in society and providing better governance and public service delivery to the people across the board.

The problem with democracy in Pakistan is that too much emphasis is put on elections and too little on democratic values and their essential features. Power, pelf and privilege are unfortunately the hallmarks of democracy in Pakistan. The leaders of the ruling party in a democratic setup try to run the government as a family fiefdom and their personal business empires. Rule of power and money, not rule of law, guide their actions. Loyalists are appointed against key posts without the least consideration to merit and professionalism and the circle of sycophants is further expanded.

Good governance and public service delivery are generally not

the prime considerations of the democratically elected rulers. "When democracy fails to deliver economically and politically, perhaps it is to be expected that some people will look for authoritarian solutions. As long as the military remains the ultimate arbiter, these groups (political) focus their strategies on the military rather than on one another," says Professor Dani Rodrik of Harvard University. Till good governance is in short supply, democratic regimes will fail to garner popular support of the people and consequently, the supremacy of civilian rule will remain a distant dream.

On the face of it, the ongoing political crisis is a threat to political continuity and the consolidation process of democracy in Pakistan. But political democracy becomes meaningless without social and economic democracy in society. The political parties in Pakistan should seize this opportunity to redefine the social contract on the principles of egalitarianism, equality and welfare.

The following words of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, a great Indian politician and architect of the Indian constitution, hold true about the state of democracy in South Asian countries even today: "On the 26th of January, 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote, and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove the contradiction at the earliest possible moment, or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy."

All South Asian countries, Pakistan in particular, should pay heed to the advice of Dr. Ambedkar to make democracy relevant to the man on the street. ■

*The writer is a graduate of Columbia University with a degree in Economic Policy Management and a Chevening Fellow on Economic Governance.*



# A New Media Experience

Television played an important role in the coverage of dharnas and nonstop propagation of the political message of Imran Khan and Allama Tahirul Qadri.

By Javed Ansari

The recent political crisis in Islamabad also proved to be a mega media event. Besides PTV and to some extent Geo, the events in the capital with reference to the dharnas or sit-ins instituted by the PTI and PAT, brought all TV channels in the country to focus on the happenings. In fact, these channels followed the story all the way from Lahore. The TV coverage of the Model Town carnage had even helped the JIT (Joint Investigation Team) identify some of

the culprits.

The channels also covered the so-called Long March of Imran Khan and Allama Tahirul Qadri from Lahore to Islamabad and kept viewers in touch with every step. Pakistani TV channels had experience of covering long marches before, such as that of former chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry or the one that Nawaz Sharif and the lawyers undertook to get Iftikhar Chaudhry reinstated in 2009. But the manner in which the channels were involved





detail the enthusiasm and spirit of the speakers and their supporters.

One camera innovation that was used quite extensively by all the major channels was the 'helicam' or helicopter-mounted camera. While small in size, the helicam provided good overhead views of the crowds that thronged to the dharnas of both PTI and PAT. However, once the protestors moved to close proximity of the more sensitive buildings, such as the Parliament House and the Prime Minister's House, helicam coverage was restricted since the overhead views provided by these cameras enabled the public to see a lot else that they should not have been seeing!

In all the TV coverage though, it was not quite clear why most channels focused on showing female crowds only! Where were the male supporters? Was it that just females attended the sit-ins in large numbers or was it that the channels preferred showing girls and women only because they provided good-looking pictures?

The dharna held by Imran Khan's party was described by political detractors, especially the PML (N) League, as a 'musical concert.' Music and politics perhaps don't go together but music has turned out to be an innovative manner of gathering crowds and Imran Khan has used music time and again at his political gatherings. Music appeals to the youth who comprise a major portion of support for Imran Khan and helps in attracting a lot of people to come out of their homes and attend dharnas and political gatherings. Maybe music is the route through which the masses – at least the middle class masses – will become politically conscious!

TV coverage of political events is going through a metamorphosis as a result of the PTI and PAT dharnas and leading to new mass media avenues. Let's hope the innovations adopted by local media will prove to be a source of new learning for their users and they will find more opportunities to apply their gizmos to other occasions such as music concerts and sports events. **S**

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



with PTI and PAT coverage in the march and dharnas was quite a new experience.

Once the sit-ins of both PTI and PAT got going, the channels also dug in and set up their reporting and camera teams to cover the on-going two dharnas in a more comprehensive manner. Their coverage was further supported by their studios in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad through special transmissions that involved long stints by studio analysts and political 'experts'. All this amounted to non-stop TV coverage and provided an opportunity to many so-called presenters and anchors to undeservedly occupy the air waves for long periods and feed the people with whatever they wanted.

During this time, most channels held back on their regular programming and also minimized their advertising fare, though much to the discomfort of their marketing people.

TV coverage of the political events worked towards building the persona of both Imran Khan and Tahirul Qadri into larger-than-life personalities. By dint of their holding the dharnas and their blanket coverage by the TV channels, both these personalities simply dominated the TV screens for some three weeks. Their massive TV coverage, in fact, added more to the political message-mongering of both leaders and they were able to get their thoughts across to the masses in a comprehensive and all-encompassing manner and in a way that no amount of purchased air time would have

brought for them

In many instances, these long, non-stop transmissions were also a first experience for most of the TV people who were involved in the broadcasts and each one of them had to devise their own methods to keep themselves relevant in the process. The producers devised their own methods and while it was clear that a few of the anchors/hosts stuck to pure reporting and logical analyses, a lot of others resorted to sensationalism in various degrees and even to mis-reporting.

An important high point about the presence of media, particularly television channels, came when TV personnel – reporters, cameramen and technicians – were physically manhandled by policemen on the night of Saturday, August 30 and Sunday, August 31. The police violence was again probably a 'first' for the TV channels and they were quite confused about how to respond to such attacks. Another level was reached when protestors stormed into the PTV headquarters on the morning of September 1 and this was probably the first time in the history of media in Pakistan that a TV channel had been taken over by protestors and its transmissions stopped for no less than 40 minutes.

The dharnas also provided an opportunity for the channels to compete with each other in technical terms. They made comprehensive use of crane-mounted cameras for crowd close-ups and showed in graphic

# Leading Nowhere

**Has Nawaz Sharif brought all this upon himself through his short-sightedness and lack of political vision?**

By S.G. Jilanee

Nawaz Sharif appeared to be doing quite well after his hat-trick as prime minister, following the PML-N's resounding victory in the 2013 elections. With his party enjoying a simple majority in the parliament, his position seemed unassailable. On the economic front, things had started to look up because of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar's economic wizardry. Sharif had also developed a rapport with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi – a prospective that held the promise for better relations

between the two countries.

It all looked hunky dory with the Sharif brothers initiating spectacular development projects such as the metro bus scheme, the tunnels and the overpasses to showcase Punjab as a model of development a la Modi's Gujarat.

Then something snapped.

Imran Khan, who had been agitating against poll rigging and demanding a recount of ballots in disputed constituencies decided to take his protest to the streets when he failed

to get justice from any other quarter. He proclaimed an Azadi march on the capital on the country's Independence Day – August 14.

A horrifying incident took place in Model Town, Lahore a few weeks later. The secretariat of Dr. Tahirul Qadri's Minhajul Quran was barricaded by his workers from security's point of view. The barricades had been in place for quite a long time. But suddenly, on June 17, the Punjab government decided that the barricades must be removed. The Pakistan Awami Tehreek's workers





resisted the move, pelting the police with stones when they tried to remove the barricade. The latter responded with a shower of bullets. Fourteen PAT workers were killed on the spot and many more were wounded.

Unlike the case of Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto, when the police had registered the FIR against him for the murder of Nawab Mohammad Ahmad Kasuri, this time the police refused to register an FIR because it cited the prime minister and the Punjab chief minister among the 21 defendants. PAT then petitioned the court upon which an additional sessions judge ordered the police to register the FIR. Four federal ministers – Saad Rafiq, Khwaja Asif, Abid Sher Ali and Pervez Rasheed – appealed to the high court against the order but their appeal was dismissed. Yet, when the FIR was reluctantly registered, the police doctored it so as to allow the prime minister and his brother to wriggle out of it. Tahirul Qadri dismissed the FIR demanding that it should be registered according to the complainant's version. Thus, even after two months, the issue was still in the doldrums.

In protest against the Model Town "massacre", Dr. Qadri also announced a Revolution March to Islamabad starting on August 14. At first the administration tried to block the marchers. But as tempers rose, the governors of Sindh and Punjab intervened. An ugly situation was averted as the marchers were allowed to proceed.

The two groups converged on Islamabad simultaneously, but remained separate. The government again assumed a threatening posture with thousands of policemen, Rangers and regular troops, besides placing hundreds of containers on the roads to prevent the marchers. But ultimately it gave way. The protesters removed the containers, moved from D Chowk to the Red Zone and held sit-ins on the Constitution Avenue.

It was the exemplary peacefulness of the agitation that prevented the

administration from displaying its muscle. As one analyst observed, even after a fortnight not a single flower pot was broken. This was unprecedented in Pakistan's political history where even the PNA led by the religious parties resorted to wanton destruction in 1977.

Moreover, it was also for the first time that in a mass political agitation, the participants included not only men – young and old – but also a large number of women and children and even babies in arms. Despite heavy showers and scorching heat, they remained calm.

Both leaders addressed separate meetings of their followers and presented their charters of demands. The point on which the two leaders were united was the resignation of Nawaz Sharif and holding of fresh elections under a national government.

The Jamaat-e-Islami chief, Sirajul Haq embarked on shuttle diplomacy between the government and the PTI. Opposition leader Syed Khurshid Shah also formed several committees to engage with the protesting leaders. Altaf Hussain issued appeals to both sides to settle their issues peacefully. Among other political parties, the Chaudhrys of Gujarat – Shujaat and Pervez of the PML-Q – supported Qadri while Sheikh Rashid of the Awami Muslim League chose to stick with Imran Khan. However, the PML-F was conspicuously silent, while Maulana Fazlur Rahman of the JUI-F took out rallies against Imran Khan.

Khan announced a countrywide civil disobedience movement, exhorting businessmen and others not to pay their taxes and utility bills. But the request did not receive any support from the business community. However, PTI lawmakers submitted their resignations on Khan's instructions.

Nawaz Sharif remained unfazed, scorning the size of the protesting crowd. Several rounds of meetings were held between the government and the protesting leaders separately.

Imran even suggested that the prime minister should step aside for at least one month to enable a smooth vote recount in the disputed constituencies. But Nawaz refused the offer and the deadlock continued.

Meanwhile, Shahbaz Sharif met the army chief, and the latter himself held several meetings with the prime minister, counseling a speedy settlement of the dispute. At last, Nawaz Sharif requested the COAS to mediate. The army chief met Imran Khan and Tahirul Qadri but the result was zilch because neither would compromise on their demand of Nawaz Sharif's resignation.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court took a plunge into the fray by admitting petitions against the protests and ruled that the PAT and the PTI should vacate the Constitution Avenue. From the government it was a clear vindication of its policy. The Supreme Court performed what was the primary duty of the police.

As time wore on and nothing transpired even after the army chief's meeting with the protesting leaders, both Imran Khan and Tahirul Qadri directed their workers to march towards the Prime Minister's House. A clash with the police ensued in which tear gas and rubber bullets were freely used. Many protesters were killed and more than 400 were injured.

Meanwhile, the MQM weighed in, declaring a day of mourning against the police action and hinting that it would bring its workers on the streets should the government continue using force against the demonstrators.

As these lines are written, the battle between the demonstrators and the police continues. Neither side is willing to retreat from its position. Meanwhile, after a corps commanders' meeting, the army deplored the use of force and once again asked both sides to settle the dispute through negotiations. ■

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

# Politics in Flux

**There may be some veracity in the people's support for Imran Khan and Tahirul Qadri. It was their modus operandi which was questionable.**

By S. M. Hali

Only fourteen months after the first smooth transition of government through democratic means, which took place with great fanfare, politics has taken a nasty turn. Islamabad was in a state of lockdown for weeks with Allama Tahirul Qadri leading his disciples, including women and children, to his Inquilab (revolution), while Imran Khan led his band of merry men to Azadi. Their demand of seeking a change in regime tested the patience of the government as well as the nation. Until the red lines were crossed, force was not used. For the current dispensation ruling Islamabad, it was only a headache as long as Qadri, the televangelist from Canada, breathed fire and brimstone from his makeshift pulpit atop his luxury container as his relatively disciplined followers listened wide-eyed or shed a tear or two when emotions welled over. Similarly, Imran Khan's youthful followers who would swell in numbers come dusk - swaying to music, dancing to pop songs, and melting away when the day broke - also did not present a major threat initially. The inclement weather, too, did little to dampen the rhetoric. While the two main protagonists, Qadri and





Khan would seek shelter in the safe refuge of their respective temporary abodes, the followers and disciples complained little despite the rain, mud, filth, garbage and stench. It was only when the protesters started inching closer to the Parliament House and the prime minister's residence, defying the ubiquitous walls of containers erected by the governmental security forces, the sitting government started taking them as more than an inconvenience. After all the promised "million march" was way short in numbers even in sum total of the two groups of marchers. Qadri's previous sit-in during Zardari's rule had fizzled out after a few days only two years earlier. Imran Khan's earlier adventure in leading a march towards the capital had lasted just a few hours. The differences between the agendas and approaches of Khan and Qadri would perhaps continue to deter a united stand. The opposition parties, who would love to see the back of Mian Nawaz Sharif, indicated that they would rather "support democracy" than go for any extra-parliamentary means of change because for them Imran Khan, with his

rhetoric of "weeding out corruption" and "bringing back the stolen millions," was the greater threat. The army, which had appeared neutral initially and despite the conspiracy theories that it was colluding with the protesters not to "derail democracy" but to weaken the government so that the GHQ and the ISI could dictate the country's Afghan and Indian policies, was finally called in for support by the government. It had, in fact, been summoned in "aid of civil power" by invoking Article 245 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan to protect Islamabad and "to pre-empt any possible blowback of Operation Zarb-e-Azb". It was to be used for "rapid response, patrolling and checking for a period of 90 days." The signals, however, got mixed somewhere in the middle – whether the role of the army was to "facilitate" only as claimed by the government or serve as a "mediator" as announced by both Qadri and Imran Khan with much glee? It is said that truth is the first casualty in the fog of war. In the current milieu, which ultimately became a theatre of war, perceptions were being clouded and judgment

was passed blindly, depending on which camp one was supporting. The beleaguered prime minister made a statement on the floor of the house that his government had not asked the army to "mediate." But later a Tweet from the army spokesperson belied the claim. A plaintiff filed a lawsuit claiming that the government had lost its capacity to rule because it was no longer *sadiq* (truthful), an essential requirement under the constitution to become a member of the parliament. The constitution, a fig leaf to hide under, was already being flouted by both sides. The government filed counter lawsuits against the duo leading the protest rallies for "terrorism" when they vandalized the boundaries of the Parliament, the PM House and made a forceful entry into the premises of PTV, only to be evicted by force by the state's law-enforcement agencies. The government's resort to the constitution appeared to be a mere smokescreen since the objective was to thwart the protesters from storming the citadel of Islamabad; after all the military operation had commenced on June 15, 2014 and invoking Article 245



with effect from August 1, appeared farcical. Indeed “democracy” in the Pakistani context appears to be a jinxed term. Social scientists may claim that sixty seven years is too short a span for democracy to take roots especially since half of Pakistan’s life was spent under military rule and the remaining with the military breathing down politicians’ neck. But countries with similar background have fared far better because of a sound leadership. There may be a method in the madness and an iota of veracity in the people’s support for Imran Khan, representative of the liberals and Qadri, upholder of a moderate Islam. The ultra orthodox religious parties also took up cudgels against the duo as their brand of extremist ideology and demands of imposing Shariah have not been exactly popular with the youth and the silent majority. Pakistan has suffered far too long with pseudo religious groups exploiting the masses and subjecting them to terrorism, extremism and religious intolerance under the garb of Islam by twisting,

distorting and quoting out of context the verses of Quran. It was their modus operandi which was questionable. Peaceful protest rallies are the essence of democracy. Resorting to violence and challenging the writ of the law or storming the Parliament or the premises of the residence of the head of state is not permitted in any democracy. Protesters may demonstrate outside the White House in Washington D.C. or 10 Downing Street in London but there are definite redlines which cannot be breached. The protesting duo definitely infringed upon the sanctity of the premises they attempted to charge upon. They would have met the same fate had they tried it in any capital of the world. This is not 1789 and the parliament is not the “Bastille”. Qadri and Khan’s demand for equal rights and justice for all Pakistanis including Christians, Hindus and other minorities no matter what religion or what cast or creed they belong to reminded one of Jinnah’s August 11, 1947 speech to the Constituent Assembly of a nascent Pakistan. The duo may have

promised to restore ‘Jinnah’s Pakistan’, but the method adopted by them was in direct contravention to Jinnah’s principles. They conveniently ignored the fact that in 1920, when Mohandas Gandhi, called for Satyagraha (non-violent non-cooperation) against the British, Jinnah opposed Gandhi’s call for law-breaking and resigned from the Congress. As president of the Muslim League, Jinnah continued to press for full independence for India and the creation of Pakistan, and achieved it through a constitutional process, rather than through protests and strikes or ever violating the law. The government’s obduracy in not conducting an inquiry into the allegations of rigging in the elections and its mishandling of the Model Town massacre may have worsened matters. Regardless, the state is superior to individuals. **S**

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

# Social Diary

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

**MATHAM**

The  
ridiculous  
rush for

Benefits of  
vegetable  
juices in winter

5 tips to take care  
for expensive  
oil paintings

It is the *mag* of  
**modern era**

Pakistan  
**OBSERVER**



# BRICS by Brick

**Will the BRICS Development Bank lead to the establishment of more such institutions like a SAARC bank to bolster regional economics?**

By M. Ali Kemal

**T**he BRICS bloc, formerly known as BRIC before South Africa joined it in 2010, is a consortium of five newly industrialized advanced economies which include Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. These five nations have 40 percent of the world's population, account for 20 percent of the global economic output and hold among them \$4 trillion as foreign exchange reserves.

Factors such as the decrease in the

monetary policy by the U.S. during the last recession followed by the reduction in the World Bank's funding forced the BRICS countries to think of an alternative banking system which could finance their development projects. In March 2013, it was decided in the 5th summit of BRICS that the bloc would form a 'BRICS Development Bank'. In July 2014, at their 6th summit at Fortaleza, Brazil, the five countries signed the agreement

to establish the new bank.

Initially, every member country will contribute \$10 billion to raise \$50 billion – the starting capital of the bank – and will gradually increase their share to \$100 billion. The primary focus of the bank will be on providing funds for infrastructure projects, such as roads, energy, education, health, etc. Lending is expected to start from 2016.

The New Development Bank

(NDB) is seen as a competitor to the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the IMF because its main objective is to provide funds to developing countries. On an interesting note, the NDB will not decide on the projects that come up for lending. It will only choose from among the projects that ask for its lending support. Moreover, unlike the World Bank and the IMF, the NDB will not frame its own conditions for loans. This will help countries to follow their own policies.

Apart from providing World Bank-type lending, the bank also has the provision of lending IMF-type loans. This type of lending is called Contingent Reserve Arrangement. It is a self-managed system to avoid short-term balance of payment problems. It will start with a capital of \$100 billion; China has the largest share of \$41 billion and South Africa the smallest with \$5 billion, while the rest of the countries will contribute \$18 billion each.

Unlike the World Bank and the IMF, where the U.S. dominates the policies by virtue of having the power of veto, in the NDB every country has equal number of votes. Although China, being the largest country in the group, can exercise more control, it wants to stay away from any kind of dominance in the group, making way for the other four countries to work in a democratic way instead of getting bogged down in political intrigues.

Although currently only the BRICS members have access to the funds available with the NDB, they can allow other countries to join the NDB with or without having voting rights. However, BRICS' capital share cannot fall below 55 percent. This implies that if India can ask other countries to join and get their voting shares in the NDB then whosoever has more countries on its side can manipulate the decisions of giving loans by having more votes.

Considering the financial uncertainties in the global markets it is hoped that the NDB will stabilise financial flows to the developing economies which were volatile during the recession. Stability in financial flows will eventually stabilise the economy of BRICS countries. This will, in turn, put these countries on the path of sustainable growth in the long run.

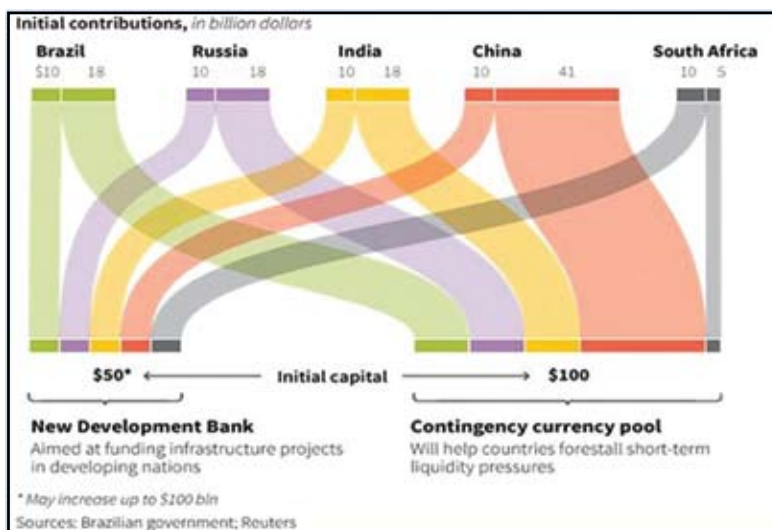
It is a fact that the dictatorial strings attached to World Bank and

IMF loans are so harsh that they don't allow the recipient countries to formulate their own policies. Both institutions put certain conditions to release each instalment of loans. With the emergence of the NDB, the dependence of the world community on the WB and the IMF will decrease over time.

With a higher sustainable growth, India's status in the region, especially among the SAARC countries, is likely to increase. While it will be in a position to provide funds on its own, other SAARC countries can also

flows irrespective of global recession becomes even stronger given the argument that China holds a good amount of reserves and can ensure cash flows if any country is in dire need. China is also the maximum contributor in the CRA fund.

India will get several benefits by obtaining loans for infrastructural development. It could be energy-related projects, roads or educational development. These projects will not only boost India's GDP growth but will also attract people from all over the world as well as from SAARC




benefit from the NDB by joining it, especially to solve their short-term balance of payment problems.

It is still unclear what currency will be used for the bank's reserves – U.S. dollar or Chinese yuan. Apparently, two major countries, China and India, have a good amount of foreign exchange reserves in U.S. dollar. Nevertheless, India's balance of payment is consistently negative, while China has been enjoying a current account surplus for many years now. If Yuan is selected as the reserve currency then the countries can easily borrow from China irrespective of the U.S.' influence to release Chinese foreign exchange reserves held at the U.S. treasury. Moreover, India can boost trade with China and finance its infrastructure projects using Chinese technologies.

Even if the reserve currency is U.S. dollar, for not making China more powerful in the BRICS, the hypothesis of sustainable financial

countries to India – although Pakistan may be an exception. Moreover, it will also raise the standard of living of the ordinary Indian.

Accordingly, India will be in a good position to set up a SAARC development bank which is also on the wish list of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The country can act as an experienced member and take the driver's seat if such a bank is set up.

It is clear that India's status will considerably increase in the region, especially among the SAARC countries, due to the NDB. Thus India needs to be extra careful in formulating its foreign as well as domestic and economic policies as they can affect the smaller countries in the region. And if it wants to further bolster its status in South Asia, what other way to do it than forming a SAARC bank! 

*The writer is a research economist at PIDE.*



# Down But Not Out

Although the Congress has been thumped in the elections, it would be premature, and even reckless, to write it off.

By S.G. Jilanee

India's 2014 general elections were historic and the result was far from any expectation. The oldest political party of the country, the Indian National Congress, came out traumatized after facing an unprecedented debacle. As one party

leader said, "Everyone is shocked. Our internal survey had predicted some 110 seats – but it's a complete rout." Never in its long history did the Cong suffer a defeat of such magnitude. With only 44 seats in a house of 543, it was not even in a position to assume the

role of the leader of the opposition.

A debate is raging about the Congress' future. According to doomsayers, the last elections were the party's swan song. Many believe that it must shed the dynastic hold of the Gandhi-Nehru family and infuse

new blood. Others counter this line of argument by invoking the famous German proverb: "*Aufgeschoben ist nicht aufgehoben*," which means postponed is not abandoned or, in simpler words, down is not out.

To support their case, they point out that the Congress has also been down before – in 1977 – when it was drubbed at the polls after Indira Gandhi enforced emergency rule, and also in 2004, when a BJP-led government swept into power for the first time. On both occasions, the party recovered to win the next national elections. Therefore, it would be premature and even reckless to write it off.

What went wrong is the question on everybody's mind both within the party and outside. The insiders are in an introspective, soul-searching mode. The outsiders seek clues as an academic exercise.

In the first reaction to the defeat, both Sonia and Rahul Gandhi accepted responsibility and offered to resign. But the Congress Working Committee would have none of it. Jawaharlal Nehru set the newly independent nation on a stable course. His daughter Indira and his grandson Rajiv sacrificed their lives while serving the country. Their services and sacrifices are too precious to be forgotten. Moreover, like the once popular slogan 'Indira is India', the Congress is Nehru-Gandhi. In fact, most observers are of the view that the Gandhis act as the glue which keeps the party together. Therefore, a statement released by the committee said, "We failed to read the profound challenges that had taken place in the country during the 10 years" (when the party had been in power).

Questions are asked within the Congress about how Rahul, the party's youth icon and vice president, led the campaign. Rahul Gandhi started his national campaign quite late, almost four months after Modi had set into the role. Modi exploited the people's discontent and anger over price rises, unemployment and corruption. Rahul had nothing to counter these charges effectively.

Moreover, Rahul had little to show for achievement in governance as he had not taken any position in the government despite repeated requests by the party. Modi, on the other hand,

had solid credentials and built his campaign around the Gujarat model of development that he had led as the state's chief minister for fourteen consecutive years since 2001. In fact, he had been chief minister for far longer (14 years) than Rahul has been in politics (10 years).

Rahul Gandhi addressed over 160 rallies during the election campaign. By contrast, Modi – about 20 years senior – addressed three times that number. Older Modi also made the fullest use of the latest communication gadgets like Twitter to reach out to a wider mass of people, while younger Rahul stuck to the old, primitive methods of mass contact.

Among the reasons offered by analysts for the Congress' debacle one was Sonia Gandhi's decision to take a backseat in this election in favor of her son. It did immense damage to the party. Even at her age, she is said to be far more energetic and has greater organizational capabilities than Rahul.

Another reason was the failure of Brand Rahul as he did not display the requisite qualities needed to lead the party or connect with the electorate. Even after 10 years in politics, his communication skills remain poor.

Three, the Congress ran a flawed election campaign. The BJP's simple slogan '*Ab ki Baar, Modi Sarkar*' got home immediately with the public. In contrast, the Congress' message '*Har haath shakti, Har haath tarakki*' was too heavy to make an impact.

The weak state leadership also contributed to the Congress party's defeat, because its local leaders enjoy little or no autonomy. A Congress chief minister, for instance, cannot make any changes in his cabinet before prior clearance from the party leadership in Delhi. In contrast, in the BJP, local leaders have full autonomy in the states and have, therefore, performed much better.

The incumbency factor also mattered. The Congress-led UPA government had been in power for ten long years. Tired of seeing the old team, people wanted to see new faces.

And finally, as a coup de grace, the Congress was dogged by unprecedented corruption scandals,

including the auction of the 3G spectrum and the Commonwealth Games.

Yet, as hope springs in the human breast, one party loyalist observed, "People have written our obituary before. In five years they will be disillusioned by Mr. Modi and will come back to us."

As workers ponder over how to resuscitate the party, various scenarios are being examined. One of them, which is favored by the younger group of party officials, is to bring in Rahul's sister, Priyanka into the field. According to an analyst, "Ninety-nine percent of the Congress members believe that she is the answer. She is touted as the *Brahmastra* – the ultimate weapon."

She is the very image of her grandmother – charismatic and able to pull crowds because people identify with her. This was apparent from the few appearances she made in the campaign trail.

Though her real-estate czar husband Robert Vadra draws flak for (unsubstantiated) allegations of shady land deals, all this is part of the game and it does not rub on Priyanka's reputation.

But Priyanka is careful. She is determined to avoid a family feud in case her brother is sidelined to make place for her. If this is to happen, it must happen peacefully, with Rahul voluntarily abdicating in her favor.

That is why she recently issued a statement to squash the rumors: "The constant conjecture about my assuming various posts in the Congress and the manner in which this issue is brought up at opportune moments is incorrect. I would be very grateful to all concerned if they desisted from encouraging such baseless rumors."

However, the next elections are far away. There is a long way to go. Five years is ample time for the Congress to get back into full gear. Waiting for Modi to commit mistakes to build on them will not do. The party will have to demonstrate its capability to lead and provide answers to popular aspirations. **S**

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



# The Peace Initiative

**The threat of Taliban militancy is no longer limited to Afghanistan as a different version of extremism threatens Pakistan's existence as well.**

By **Ajmal Shams**

**A**s usual, the spring offensive by Taliban insurgents has moved well into the summer offensive. An increasing number of attacks are being regularly executed in different parts of Afghanistan, including the capital Kabul that has suffered a wave of suicide bombings during the past several months. Last month, 14 civilians belonging to the Shia sect were executed in the western Ghor province. The Taliban militants were blamed for the incident but the Taliban did not claim responsibility and the involvement of other groups who might

have intended to trigger sectarian strife could not be ruled out.

Regardless of whether the brutal killing was carried out by the Taliban or not, terrorist attacks are taking place regularly around the country with no apparent indication of an end or at least a decrease in frequency.

In 2013, the Taliban opened a political office in Qatar. For the first time since their collapse in late 2001, the insurgents had a formal address where they could be reached. However, circumstances surrounding the initiative raised suspicions about

the sincerity of the effort. The move was rejected by the Afghan government as the office carried the sign and the flag of the Islamic Emirate. The Afghan government condemned the peace effort, accusing the U.S. of having a hidden agenda and claiming that any peace dialogue with the Taliban should have been led by the Afghan government itself, not by others. To convince the Afghan side to come to the negotiating table, the signboard was removed. Yet, the damage had been done and the effort ended fruitlessly. Since then, there have been

no serious attempts at resuming peace talks with the Taliban.

The country's political scene is now dominated by the election for the office of president to succeed Hamid Karzai. The election season has somewhat overshadowed the counter-terrorism efforts of the Afghan government and its international partners. Yet, the issue is one of the top priorities of the presidential candidates. Both Dr. Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, who faced each other in the run-off elections, consider the peace process an important issue. However, the two have different perspectives on how to deal with the Taliban. While Dr. Abdullah is bent on militarily defeating the Taliban and other insurgents alongside peace talks, Dr. Ghani is more in favor of a political settlement. It is understandable why Dr. Abdullah is against the integration of the Taliban in any future setup. It was the Northern Alliance that defeated the Taliban with the military support of the U.S. forces back in late 2001. The Taliban's defeat ultimately paved the way for the politico-military alliance to take power in Kabul under the leadership of Hamid Karzai. Therefore, Dr. Abdullah's point of view regarding the Taliban issue is quite natural. Dr. Ghani, on the other hand, is more pragmatic in his approach and prefers a political solution by integrating the Taliban militants into the future government.

The Taliban insurgency should be looked at within the larger sphere of global and regional power politics where the victim is Afghanistan the country, due to its geostrategic location. It should be noted that with the killing of the Al-Qaeda chief, Osama Bin Laden, who acted as the major inspiration for the militant group, the organization's infrastructure has virtually been destroyed. For all practical purposes, Al-Qaeda may no longer be a threat to the U.S. and its western allies to launch its operations from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The militant-cum-ideological group seems to be shifting its power base from central and south Asia to the Arabian Peninsula and northern Africa. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that President Obama's new strategy vis-à-vis the U.S.' fight against terrorism may no longer include Al-Qaeda as a part of the equation, at least not in this region. The U.S.'s readiness to negotiate with the Taliban

and its support in the establishment of the Taliban office in Qatar validates this hypothesis.

The threat of Taliban militancy is no longer limited to Afghanistan. A different version of extremism with different goals is threatening Pakistan as well where Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has particularly been the worst victim of unrest. For Pakistan, the cost of human suffering has been huge. Many soldiers and countless innocent people have lost their lives in the ongoing operation against militants in the tribal areas. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced from their homes and many have migrated across the Durand Line to neighboring provinces in Afghanistan.

Any political settlement of the Taliban issue in both Afghanistan and Pakistan should be part of a regional

be overemphasized and has been a common dream of all Afghans. A matter of utmost significance to the new leader in Kabul would be to find a way to open a channel of communication with the Taliban and other insurgent/militant groups to come to the negotiating table.

Although all indications suggest that the Taliban will further intensify their insurgency as foreign troops begin to withdraw from the country, with the right kind of political atmosphere, there is no reason the militants cannot be integrated into mainstream politics. But any such effort cannot be accomplished without active facilitation and cooperation from Pakistan.

While Afghanistan is yet to come out successfully from the election stalemate, U.S. and UN intervention

While Dr. Abdullah is bent on militarily defeating the Taliban and other insurgents alongside peace talks, Dr. Ghani is more in favor of a political settlement.

political framework that paves the way for the countries that have a direct or indirect stake in the issue to reach a conclusion of peaceful co-existence. It is noteworthy though that the entire region is in transition. A combination of geopolitics and economics will determine the political future of the region. The Taliban phenomenon should be looked at as a part of that regional political equation and not as an isolated issue of a group of religious zealots who are bent upon establishing Sharia in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite the fact that the dynamics of Taliban militancy in the two neighboring countries differ, they share a lot on the ideological front.

One of the main challenges for the new administration in Kabul will be to bring peace to the war-ravaged country. No developmental agenda can be implemented without having security and there can be no sustainable security without long-lasting peace. Peace-building in Afghanistan cannot

and mediation has paved the way for the two leading candidates, i.e. Dr. Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah, to form a national unity government in which both the winner and the loser are committed to working together. Dr. Ghani was announced winner in the preliminary result but was challenged by his rival Dr. Abdullah and eventually the two candidates agreed on a complete audit of all votes. Dr. Ghani retained his majority even after the audit. If elected, Dr. Ghani has promised to integrate both the Taliban and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami into a national unity government as he interprets it. If Dr. Ghani succeeds in bringing in both the Taliban and other militant groups into the new government, he will have made history in peacemaking. ■

*The writer is president of the Afghanistan Social Democratic Party (Afghan Millat Party). He writes on political and developmental issues.*

# Taming the Media

The opposition parties and civil society in Bangladesh say the Awami League government is trying to control the media through the new National Broadcasting Policy.

By Dr. Moonis Ahmar

**T**he Editors' Council is concerned that the freedom of expression and free flow of information will be compromised by the recently announced National Broadcast Policy and various steps taken by the government. The council believes that the government wants to control the media with these steps."

*Editor's Council, Bangladesh.*

Bangladesh has a long history of political struggle for democracy and press freedom. But recently, the Awami League government attempted to break away from the tradition by adopting the National Broadcasting Policy 2014 that aims to regulate and control the media, particularly the electronic media. So what convinced the Sheikh Hasina regime to impose curbs on the media, particularly on TV channels that pursue an independent approach? Can the movement against the adoption of the NBP cause a serious threat to the Awami League government?

Earlier this year, the entire country was paralyzed for several weeks because of the political violence unleashed by the opposition following the controversial general elections. The boycott of the elections by the major opposition parties and the pyrrhic victory of the Awami League further deepened the political stalemate. Reservations expressed by the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United States about what they called 'the uncontested general elections' increased Sheikh Hasina's predicament in terms of seeking political legitimacy at an international level. Except India, no other country endorsed the election results.

However, the opposition – the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) – failed

to manipulate the situation in their favor and couldn't launch a successful movement against the elections. The oaths taken by the members of the new assembly and the ensuing calm in Bangladesh's political environment encouraged the Awami League government to launch what is being termed as an "assault" on the media.

According to the new media policy approved by the cabinet, TV and radio stations should not broadcast news "which is contrary to the country's or the public interest, programs which undermine the reputation of the military or law enforcement officers or information which can harm good relations with a friendly country." Furthermore, the NBP states that no information could be broadcast "if it violated anyone's privacy, disrupted state security, went against public interest or hurt religious sentiment. No scene or statement that mocked or demeaned the armed forces and law enforcement agencies could be aired. The news and programs would have to uphold the ideology and spirit of the Liberation War, state policy and ideals."

According to the official position taken by the government of Bangladesh, the new media policy is not aimed at putting curbs on the media and it only provides broad guidelines on how the media should perform according to the country's national interests. Elaborating the official viewpoint, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu said, "The law does not have any provision for punishment. The claim that the policy intends to strangle the media is completely baseless and imaginary." But despite the clarification made by the government, civil society groups and journalists representing various media organizations consider the

policy repugnant to press freedom and term it an attempt to curtail the independent stance of the media on various societal and other issues.

Why is Sheikh Hasina fearful of the media and how do the representatives of various newspapers and TV channels view the government's act? One would recall that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the founder of Bangladesh, had also imposed emergency in the country in 1974, banning all political parties and imposing severe restrictions on the media. Therefore, the perception that Awami League governments do not accept views which are critical to their policies is gaining credence in Bangladesh.

The executive director of Transparency International's Bangladesh chapter, Iftekharuzzaman has strongly criticized the NBP. "The interpretation of the provisions may lead to serious restraint on media freedom. What is in the public interest and in the interest of the country can be subjectively interpreted. The provision in the policy involving restriction on news about the police and military officers can provide them blanket immunity from criticism," he said.

While media persons are critical of the policy for obvious reasons, those having a neutral and non-partisan position have also expressed their reservations. It is widely perceived that after getting away with the sham elections, the AL government wants to eliminate every kind of threat, including the one posed by a free media, to ensure its stay in power. The tolerance level of Sheikh Hasina and other AL leaders was tested when some TV channels pursued a critical approach on the policies of the government and exposed its corruption and repressive acts. Instead of investigating the

charges, the government reacted by establishing its own brand of media commission.

Two major media organizations in Bangladesh, The Editor's Council and the Association of TV Channel Owners, have taken a firm stand on the government's new media policy, expressing their grievances about the government's handling of the media.

One of their complaints is about the increasing number of attacks on newsmen in different parts of the country, including the attack on the office of Daily *Inqilab*. They have also registered their protest against the banning of a newspaper, *Amar Desh*, the arrest of its editor Mahmudur Rehman and the banning of two Islamic TV channels. Although these steps caused much resentment in the media, it was the NBP which compelled civil society groups and the media to pursue a hard line against the government's deliberate attempt to curb the freedom of media.

One cannot deny the importance and relevance of the NBP if the intention of the AL government is to ensure responsibility, decency and ethical behavior. Unfortunately, in

most developing countries, lack of professionalism is quite obvious and those responsible for publishing newspapers, magazines or running TV channels do not understand the importance of ethical journalism. The absence of laws to prevent the misuse of the media has created a culture where rhetoric, sweeping statements, non-serious behavior and unprofessional attitude is very common. This problem is not limited to Bangladesh and is, in fact, rampant in many South Asian countries. As a result, the credibility of many newspapers and TV channels is at stake. A code of conduct covering the print and the electronic media, enforcing basic ethical and professional rules is the need of the hour.

Bangladesh's predicament in the post-election period is twofold. First is the issue of legitimacy of the AL government which is questionable

considering the opposition's boycott of the elections and the low turnout of voters. The second is the perception in the Bangladeshi civil society and in the opposition political circles that the AL government wants to tame the media, both print and electronic, after neutralizing the opposition parties.

This is why the president of the Editors' Council made it clear that the "broadcasting policy would curtail the freedom of press and the people's right to information as guaranteed by the constitution." To express their resentment against the NBP, thousands of protestors belonging to the BNP staged a demonstration in Dhaka in which they blamed the AL government for trying to control the mass media by announcing the new broadcasting policy.

The solution to this crisis rests with the AL government. It needs to withdraw the NBP and come up with a broad policy to deal with the issues pertaining to the local media by taking all stakeholders on board instead of pursuing unilateral measures that are tantamount to curbing the freedom of the press. **S**

*The writer is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Karachi.*



# A Tough Act

Sri Lanka faces the tough job of staying on neutral ground with its bigger neighbors to the north – Pakistan and India.

By Asna Ali



All countries enemies or allies, spy on each other. This is well known and is only brought up when someone ends up with egg on their face – such as when Edward Snowden disclosed the spying activities of the U.S. National Security Agency in countries around the world.

A few months ago, the Indian media broke a story regarding suspicious activities of a Pakistani intelligence agency, accusing it of using Sri Lanka as a home base. According to the expose, one of the diplomats attached with the Pakistan High Commission in Sri Lanka was in

fact an intelligence agent. The person in question, Amir Zubair Siddiqui, was accused of being the handler of a Sri Lankan national who was allegedly arrested with photographs of the U.S. and Israeli consulates in Chennai and Bangalore.

Since then, the diplomat in question has been withdrawn from Sri Lanka. Pakistan has issued a statement denying all allegations and labeling them a ploy to destroy its close relationship with Sri Lanka.

The allegations are serious enough to put yet another dent in Pakistan's international standing and to further cement its image of being

a country which supports terrorist activities. However, the most alarming aspect of the allegations is that the Pakistani intelligence agencies are recruiting foreign nationals and using neighboring countries as home bases for activities from which they wish to conveniently distance themselves later.

How much truth there is in this report remains to be seen. However, its effects are being felt. Sri Lanka has withdrawn its visa on arrival facility for Pakistanis and has started enforcing stricter controls on asylum seekers. Some 88 Pakistanis were deported from Sri Lanka for 'security

reasons'. The number of Pakistani asylum seekers heading to Sri Lanka was increasing at a very fast rate and the Sri Lankan government had termed this influx as a risk both in terms of law and order and healthcare.

However, the deportations are mainly viewed as an attempt to appease the concerns of the Indian authorities about Pakistan-Sri Lanka relations. The majority of the asylum seekers belong to minority groups facing persecution in Pakistan. Although the deportations are not likely to ruffle any feathers in Pakistan, the action has not gone down well with the UNHCR which labeled it as a contravention of international law and is trying to stop them.

If indeed these deportations are a reaction to India's concerns, they amount to little more than lip

recent months.

Sri Lanka and Pakistan enjoy cordial relations. The two countries have a free trade agreement and Pakistan was a major weapons supplier to Sri Lanka during the civil war. In the past, India has also expressed its reservations on Pakistan's increasing ties with the Maldives. It feels that Pakistan's relationship with any country in the region will mark the beginning of that country's descent towards religious extremism and may give rise to terrorist activity directed towards India.

The Indian media has further claimed that a dossier was prepared about the activities of the alleged Pakistani operative which would be handed over to the Sri Lankan government. However, no such document has so far been presented to Sri Lankan authorities. If there were any evidence, it would confirm the allegations and rumors against Pakistan. It would be a fiasco of massive proportions if the Pakistani government had to defend something like this in front of the world.

While the Sri Lankan government will prefer not to have the country's soil used as a breeding ground for terrorism, it can also understand the ramifications of being embroiled in the complicated saga that is the Pakistan-India relationship. In the past, both India and Pakistan have flung allegations at each other that were never substantiated. But there is also an established history of covert acts of sabotage and vicious maligning of each other's reputation in the international community.

Over the past several years, Pakistan has become increasingly isolated. The Taliban have seen to it that foreign nationals are wary of entering the country and of bringing any investment. The inability to eradicate polio has resulted in international travel bans. Even sports have suffered, as no foreign team is willing to visit Pakistan. During the past several months, various airlines suspended their flights to Pakistan temporarily – again because of terrorist attacks.

Throughout this time, Sri Lanka has remained one of Pakistan's steadfast allies. It has been a mutually

beneficial relationship and regardless of various allegations, the Sri Lankan establishment appears to be in no mood to sever its ties with Pakistan.

In fact, in the wake of the Indian newspaper's report and the deportation of Pakistani asylum seekers, several high level meetings have taken place between diplomats and government officials from both sides, including a meeting between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Secretary to Sri Lanka's External Affairs Ministry, Mrs. Kshenuka Senewiratne. During the meetings, both countries affirmed their continued dedication to maintaining cooperation in matters of economy and trade as well as combating terrorism and transnational crime.

Sri Lanka has the tough job of staying on neutral ground with both its bigger neighbors in the north. It must also juggle this with local concerns and the tough choices associated with having open border relationships and the resulting diversity in its populace and economy. The upheaval has not gone down well with certain segments of Sri Lankan society which have turned to violence and discord to express their displeasure at what is seen as a threat to the traditional or the 'real' identity of the country.

However, it is not possible to perfectly preserve the traditional – or 'the right way of life' for some – if a country wishes to benefit from the fruits of international trade. Even nations like Bhutan, that have in the past kept themselves shut off from the world for this very reason, are gradually coming around to the idea purely due to economic necessity. Whether the hardline groups want it or not, Sri Lanka will have to embrace diversity and change and also try to maintain good relationships with its trading partners regardless of their infighting. It is a tough act but one that is essential for the country's economic survival.

For good or for bad, these neighbors are here to stay. It would be far better to leave behind Cold War era tactics of espionage and blame games in favor of economic gains through mutual cooperation. One wonders how many more years all sides will take to understand this. ■

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



service and are not likely to harm Sri Lanka's relationship with Pakistan. The Pakistani government is not expected to show much concern over the members of minority groups trying to get away from their home country. This could also be an effort to quell the concerns of hardline groups within Sri Lanka. These groups have been targeting the Muslim minority in

**F**louting the authority of a court of law is billed as an offence. As a result, every legal system operates on a series of provisions to preserve the sanctity of the judicial process. In the absence of such regulatory mechanisms, the legal framework would lose its credibility, transparency and effectiveness. Flagrant violations of the court's power would navigate the system into a downward spiral.

The writing is on the wall. And yet, Nepal's legal and media fraternity has raised objections to the Contempt of Court Bill 2014.

At a time when the judicial process is in a desperate need of overhaul, the bill served as a beacon of hope. Nepal's judiciary has been snowed under serious pressure over the issue of judicial appointments.

A framework of rules to tackle the contempt of court laws would serve to empower judges and uphold the image of the judiciary. If the bill becomes a law, judges will have the discretion to penalize anyone who acts in a manner that undermines the dignity of the court. Furthermore, these discretionary powers could be used to effectively streamline the justice dispensation process. The Contempt of Court Bill 2014 is a doubled-edged tool that both enhances and curbs the role of judges in the delivery of justice. Under the bill, a judge can be prosecuted if found guilty of committing such crimes.

However, Nepal's lawyers and journalists have found a red herring in the law. They talk about the notion of formulating a separate act on contempt of court but their focus is on how to reduce the collateral damage. Minister for Law, Justice, Parliamentary Affairs and Constituent Assembly Naray Hari Acharya insisted that public opinion should be sought on the bill. Although the minister emphasized the importance of an independent judiciary, he told the parliament that the bill needed to be thoroughly revised.

Section 4 of the proposed bill considers the publication of any false or defamatory material on court cases that potentially erodes the court's credibility as contempt. However, Acharya is of the view that the bill does not categorically define what constitutes false or defamatory conduct. As a result, the law needs to be clear and effective and not serve

the narrow interests of an independent judiciary.

Acharya's proposal to seek public opinion on the bill has been largely shaped by pressures from the Federation of Nepali Journalists and the Nepal Bar Association. Moreover, international press advocacy groups have launched a scathing attack on the legal document. The most popular criticism leveled against the bill is that it curtails press freedom and completely dismantles the freedom of expression.

When the bill was initially presented in the parliament, relations

between the media and the legal community were strained. Acharya's decision to allow the general public and stakeholders to deliberate the matters will serve to improve ties between lawyers and journalists. And yet, the main purpose of the public scrutiny is to gauge whether the bill stifles the freedom of expression.

These are purely extraneous concerns that could further undermine the judiciary's image and frustrate the democratic process. Harihar Dahal – who is the former president of the Nepal Bar Association – has also objected to the bill. However, he has

# Objectionable Bill

The legal community and the media in Nepal have locked horns over the Contempt of Court Bill, with the latter claiming that it would stifle press freedom.

By Taha Kehar

raised a series of pertinent points to justify his position. For instance, the absence of clarity in Section 4 could lead to a dangerous form of judicial dominance that could threaten media freedom. Citing the examples of journalists such as Harihar Birahi and Kusum Shrestha who have been sanctioned by the Supreme Court on charges of contempt, Dahal believes that some checks and balances needed to be developed.

Despite these concerns, the growing emphasis on the incidental effect of the bill has become the order of the day. Yubaraj Ghimire –

who is the editor-in-chief of a leading newspaper in Nepal – has vociferously argued that it is not the right time to promulgate the act because the judiciary is facing criticism over the appointment of judges.

Interestingly, the legal community appears to be divided over the bill. Ram Krishna Timalseña – former registrar of the Supreme Court – has argued that both the media and the judicial system need to be independent.

Moreover, Timalseña has capitalized on the fact that the press does not obtain freedom by simply attacking the conduct of the judiciary.

On the contrary, there is a pressing need for accountability. Timalseña's approach to justify the importance of the bill is a clear testament to how a legal document can be blown out of proportion.

Constitutional law experts have stoked the argument further by suggesting that regulations on contempt are a fundamental element of a democratic society and should not be misconstrued.

Nevertheless, mainstream opinion has decried the bill as an infringement of civil rights and press freedom. The functional autonomy of the judiciary has been pawned away in the face of such false propaganda.

The judiciary has also resisted attempts to undermine its dignity. Recently, the Supreme Court has refused a writ petition challenging the Contempt of Court Bill for curtailing press freedom. Relying on the fact that the bill has yet to be passed, the court decided that it had no jurisdiction on the matter.

On the other extreme, the Federation of Nepali Journalists has requested the government to withdraw its support for the bill. The media appears to have raised the specter of the past and termed the bill as a haunting reminder of the Rana family's dictatorial rule. Several media professionals have vowed to take a stand and prevent the government from making a dreadful mistake.

Unfortunately, the media fraternity has written off the bill as a conspiracy to muzzle media freedom and fail to see how it can produce a sense of order. By viewing the bill as a form of reprisal against the media, journalists have shown considerable disregard for the democratic process. Moreover, it is unfortunate that the legal community has also criticized the bill as an exploitative tool.

Contempt of court laws are the bedrock of a democratic system. They must exist to solidify the legal structure and ensure the continuity of respect for the judicial process. However, it is intriguing to note that the media and legal fraternity have focused more on collateral damage rather than the immediate effects of the bill. Only time will tell how the judicial structure is strengthened and preserved. **S**

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



# Occupational Hazard

The Maldives is becoming a dangerous place for journalists, especially those who are critical of the powers held by the political and religious elite.

By Iffat Alam

One journalist who made headlines in the last few weeks was James Foley, the American freelancer covering the civil war in Syria. He was abducted by the

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria two years ago. A video posted by the terrorist organization in August showed the brutal beheading of Foley, leading to a worldwide uproar against the ISIS.

heading home from work. He lived in Hulhumale, an island near capital Male. According to reports published in Minivan News, the media outlet Rilwan was associated with, he left



As the world mourned Foley's murder, the journalist community in the Maldives had issues of their own to be worried about – Maldivian journalists were trying to come to grips with the abduction of a local journalist, Ahmed Rilwan Abdulla, a 28-year-old reporter, blogger and human rights activist.

Rilwan disappeared in the wee hours of August 8 when he was

his office quite late, sometime after midnight. He was last seen on a ferry terminal in Male where he bought the ticket for Hulhumale. A CCTV camera installed at the terminal recorded his movements.

He was seen going towards the boarding area and although he was not seen boarding the ferry, one of his tweets confirmed that he was on his way to Hulhumale. An active micro-blogger, he kept tweeting stuff for the next 20 minutes – the time it takes to reach the island from Male. Rilwan also sent a Viber message at

2:36 am at a location in Male. A search operation was conducted in both Male and Hulhumale but to no avail.

Rilwan's abduction has yet again brought into focus a rather dark truth about the Maldivian society: the growing radicalism that is gradually casting its dark shadow over all segments of society, including the media. In the recent past, a number of journalists were targeted by extremist groups. In its 2013 'Predators of Freedom of Information' report, the NGO Reporters Without Borders accused "leaders and members of

# Freedom of Expression

*Daniel Bosley, Managing Editor of Minivan News, talks about the abduction of Minivan journalist Ahmed Rilwan Abdulla. Following are excerpts from his interview:*

## **Why was Rilwan abducted? Do you think it was because of his reporting?**

I think Rilwan was abducted because he fitted a profile of the type of freedom of expression that is being targeted by vigilante actors as the authorities fail to take control of the deteriorating situation.

Rilwan had worked for Minivan News – a paper often labeled as producing irreligious content by radical Islamic groups – since December, but was a prolific blogger and Twitter user for a number of years. He was well known amongst twitter users for poking fun at the hypocrisy of the country's political and religious leaders. Perhaps he was targeted simply because he laughed at those in power.

While many are reporting that Rilwan liked to write about religion, this is misleading as he was curious about many subjects. A quick review of his nine months' of writing for Minivan News shows that only around 11 percent of his writing touched on religious news.

## **Had he recently targeted any particular group/individual that could have provoked this incident?**

While Rilwan reported personally on the threats made against journalists earlier this month, all media outlets had reported the news, and nobody at Minivan News actually received threats on this occasion.

One group had taken issue with some of his writing – a supposedly Syrian-based group of Maldivian jihadis called Bilad Al Sham. When Rilwan wrote in detail about the group, they suggested he had misrepresented them. When Rilwan attempted to contact the group, they refused to talk, sending a message via their Facebook page saying 'your days are short.'

This was in May and he has received no specific threats that I was aware of since.

## **What steps are being taken for his recovery by the government? Are you satisfied with the government's actions?**

The police's initial reaction to the incident was slow, and many questions are being asked as to why more was not done when the initial abduction was reported on August 8 (it was another 5 days until Rilwan's family reported him missing). After attempting to consult with the police on investigations carried out by ourselves, his friends and family, we were forced to publish our findings as the evidence suggesting an

abduction was being reported elsewhere.

Since that time, information from the police has been almost non-existent, with police in fact releasing a statement accusing the media of hindering its investigations. However, with the repeated failure to resolve the growing series of attacks and threats made against journalists, trust between the public and police is almost non-existent.

The government's response has been equally weak – best typified by the Home Ministry's failure to invite us – Rilwan's own newspaper – to a press conference regarding the investigation.

In short, while we are keen to trust the police and to work alongside them, we are left in an extremely awkward situation wherein we need to find our friend and we are unsure if the police are willing or able to carry out this investigation properly.

## **Are journalists free to report in the Maldives?**

Journalists are not free to report in the Maldives. This incident is a culmination of a series of assaults on freedom of expression and a culture of labeling by extremist groups that is frequently now being followed up with actual violence.

A threat analysis report by the Maldives Broadcasting Commission (MBC) in May showed that 84 percent of journalists surveyed received threats. Gangs, religious extremists and politicians proved to be the main source of threats – although the three are widely reputed to be inextricably linked. During our efforts to try and work together to raise awareness of Rilwan's disappearance, we have heard countless stories from fellow journalists, including reports of gang members walking into television studios to force journalists to take stories off the air.

Self-censorship is the core aim of those who intimidate, a throwback to the 30-year dictatorship where people learned not to criticize President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. While we are yet to shy away from censoring our output at Minivan News – we were the only outlet in the country to report on a series of vigilante attacks in June – I admit that I now heavily censor the comments we receive on our articles.

With local laws on the defamation of Islam so vague, I dare not publish any comments suggesting criticism of Islam for fear of radical groups who consistently misrepresent readers' comments as the work of our journalists. This is something I feel very guilty about as an editor. But with the government's refusal to clarify or act upon its own religious unity regulations, and the impunity afforded to groups who take this duty upon themselves, I cannot risk the safety of my team.

*This interview was conducted via email.*

fanatical groups in the Maldives of intimidating media organizations and bloggers and threatening them with physical harm in order to force them to exercise self-censorship." In 2012, a freelance journalist and blogger Ismail Hilath Rasheed narrowly escaped death when an attacker tried to slit his throat. Hilath blamed Islamic radicals for the assassination attempt and believed that his public calls for religious tolerance were the reason for the attack. He left the country after the

incident and now lives abroad.

Rilwan may have been abducted for the same reason. His employer believes that Rilwan "fitted the profile of the type of freedom of expression that is being targeted by vigilante actors." The fact that he worked for an organization that has been blamed for "producing irreligious content" does not help matters either. Apart from his journalistic career, Rilwan was also a 'prolific blogger' and a frequent Twitter user. He was known

for his liberal views in the Maldivian blogosphere as he would often raise pointed questions about issues that are best left untouched, such as religion and dogma.

He did not shy away from expressing his opinions despite knowing the consequences, especially considering the growing radical tendencies in the country. Making fun of the double standards of the religious extremists, he writes in one of his blog posts '10 reasons why the World



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Cup is haraam': "Smoking is haraam, movies are haraam, music is haraam, secularism and democracy is haraam, Tom and Jerry and Mickey Mouse are haraam, travelling without a mahram, showing hair and using perfume are all haraam for women. They protest over changes in alcohol regulations, when a Muslim converts, about the new curriculum...they make Facebook

such as Reporters Without Borders, CPJ, IFJ and South Asia Media Solidarity Network and even from the UNHRC.

The picture becomes even more serious in light of the threats received by various journalists, MPs as well as family members of Rilwan after his abduction. Chillingly, all the threats were linked to Rilwan's abduction and the sender of the threats did not

Rilwan did not stop at ridiculing religious leaders. Politicians were also a target of his mockery and condemnation. In fact, it is being hinted that his criticism of some political forces could have landed him in this trouble.

groups against their critics...issued death threats against secularists...etc. BUT! They fail to issue any verdict against the World Cup. They did not protest against it, instead they...bought TVs for their homes/shops, and started enjoying the matches. You heard it. They are ENJOYING a worldly sport."

Rilwan did not stop at ridiculing religious leaders. Politicians were also a target of his mockery and condemnation. In fact, it is being hinted that his criticism of some political forces could have landed him in this trouble. According to Daniel Bosley, editor of Minivan News, Rilwan would poke fun at the hypocrisy of the country's political and religious leaders. "Perhaps he was targeted simply because he laughed at those in power," Bosley said.

And perhaps this is why the powers that be in the Maldives have given a lukewarm response to Rilwan's abduction. On his return to the country after his China sojourn, Maldivian President, Abdullah Yameen responded to enquiries from journalists regarding Rilwan's disappearance in this manner: "A journalist is missing, I think. So work will be done to find the journalist, right? And, God willing, that will be successful." This statement resulted in a barrage of criticism directed at the president for his indifference to an issue that has received considerable worldwide attention, especially from international press freedom groups

try to conceal this fact. Aishath Aniya, a journalist working with Minivan 95, received a message from a sender called 'ISIS' stating, "You are next on our hit list. Be careful when you walk alone. #(expletive)moyameehaa". Rilwan went by the alias 'Moyamehaa' on the social media. Similarly, Adam Haleem, Editor of Vnews, received a death threat saying, "If you keep behaving however you like, we will make you disappear, we will behead you. Keep that in mind (expletive)". A few of Rilwan's relatives also received threats from some unknown people, who warned them not to pursue Rilwan's case.

It goes to the credit of both the Maldivian media and the family of the abducted journalist that they have held their ground and are united in demanding Rilwan's safe return despite such threats and intimidating tactics. Now with the Maldives National Defence Forces coming to the aid of the police authorities in solving what is being termed as "the most complicated investigation ever faced by the service," it is hoped that the trail will end on a positive note.

Rilwan's abduction also calls for introspection by all elements of society – the government, the politicians, the media and the people – of where the country is headed. ■

*The writer is a Karachi-based journalist.*

# UPCOMING B2B EVENTS ...



**4-6 September 2014, Expo Centre Lahore**  
12th International Plastics & Packaging  
Industry Trade Fair  
Website: [www.plastipac.com.pk](http://www.plastipac.com.pk)  
E-mail: [info@plastipac.com.pk](mailto:info@plastipac.com.pk)



**4-6 September 2014, Expo Centre Lahore**  
2nd International Printing, Labeling,  
Paper & Paper Converting Industry Exhibition  
Website: [www.plastipac.com.pk](http://www.plastipac.com.pk)  
E-mail: [info@plastipac.com.pk](mailto:info@plastipac.com.pk)



**4-6 September 2014, Expo Centre Lahore**  
3rd International Food, Beverages &  
Hospitality Trade Fair  
Website: [www.foodtech.com.pk](http://www.foodtech.com.pk)  
E-mail: [info@foodtech.com.pk](mailto:info@foodtech.com.pk)



**4-6 September 2014, Expo Centre Lahore**  
11th Edition of the International Food, Beverage  
& Packaging Technology Trade Fair  
Website: [www.foodtech.com.pk](http://www.foodtech.com.pk)  
E-mail: [info@foodtech.com.pk](mailto:info@foodtech.com.pk)



**November 2014**  
4th International Multi-Modal Transportation,  
Logistics Conference  
Website: [www.intertranspakistan.com](http://www.intertranspakistan.com)  
E-mail: [info@intertranspakistan.com](mailto:info@intertranspakistan.com)



**10-12 March 2015**  
**Pak-China Friendship Centre, Islamabad**  
11th International Safety & Security  
Exhibition & Conference  
Website: [www.safesecurepakistan.com](http://www.safesecurepakistan.com)  
E-mail: [info@safesecurepakistan.com](mailto:info@safesecurepakistan.com)



**2015, Expo Centre Lahore**  
12th Edition of the International Machinery  
Exhibition of Garment & Textile Technology  
Website: [www.megatechpakistan.com](http://www.megatechpakistan.com)  
E-mail: [info@megatechpakistan.com](mailto:info@megatechpakistan.com)



**23 - 25 April 2015, Karachi Expo Centre**  
13th International Exhibition for the Energy Industry  
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E-mail: [info@pogee.com.pk](mailto:info@pogee.com.pk)



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In the aftermath of the elections in July 2013, Bhutan faced many political, cultural, religious and linguistic conflicts. However, after one year of upheavals, the country – known for inventing the term Gross National Happiness as the indicator of growth – is now witnessing signs of economic revival and political stability. After completing its first year in office, the second-ever elected government led by the People's Democratic Party, has taken a number of economic and political initiatives such as offering consumer loans to the public for housing and transport and strengthening trade ties with India.

Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay recently announced that the country's economic expansion in 2014-15 would be driven by hydropower projects. He also pledged to pay special attention to solving the pressing problems of unemployment and the burgeoning external debt. Following the government's policy, the Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan – an independent body like a central bank – has recently announced guidelines for consumer loans for housing and transport to the masses to boost economic activity. This and many other steps show that Bhutan is striving hard to achieve fast economic growth, which had slowed down in the last few years.

According to the Asian Development Bank, growth in gross domestic product (GDP) in Fiscal Year 2014 (ended June 30, 2014) was moderate at 6.5 percent, well below the average growth of 8.4 percent over the past decade. The slowdown, it says, was mainly "due to measures adopted to alleviate the growing shortage of Indian rupee reserves." The measures entailed credit and import restrictions, particularly on import-heavy activities such as construction and transport that required large payments. It is, however, expected that in the coming years, GDP growth will again touch the mark of 8-9 percent as hydropower construction projects are underway under the 11th Five-Year Plan while improved economic conditions are likely to boost tourism. In FY2015, growth is forecast at 6.8 percent as the Dagachhu Power Plant will start functioning and exports are likely to increase.

The report confirms that a higher priority has been placed "on measures to diversify the economy." The public

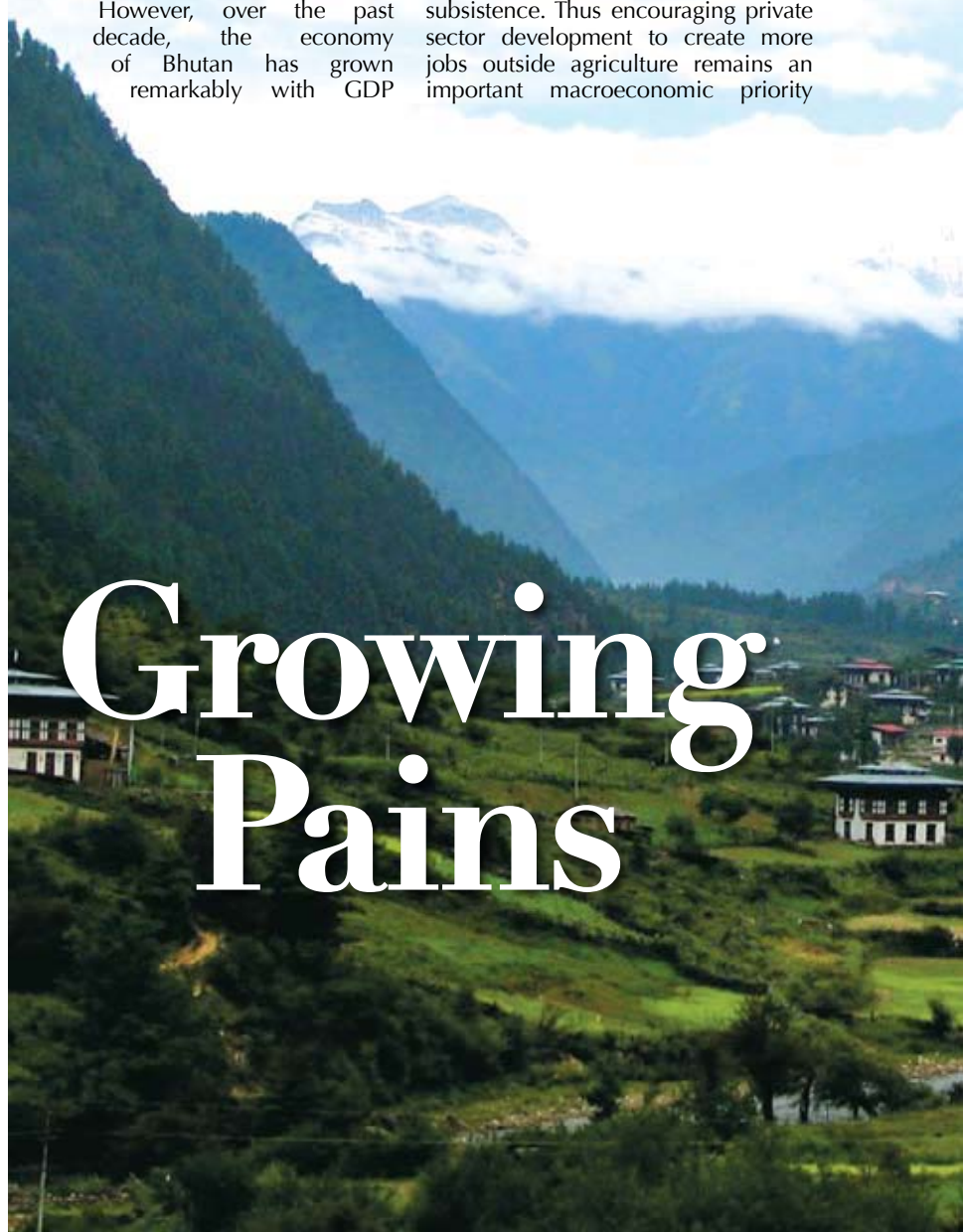
sector, especially hydropower, which was mainly responsible for the strong economic growth over the past five years, has long been the main source of economic expansion. However, with the poverty rate still high, the government has recognized that broad-based development is crucial. Taxation of personal and corporate income is moderate and relatively flexible employment regulations are a potential advantage for private-sector development.

The Himalayan country that made the transition from absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy in March 2008 is one of the world's smallest and least-developed economies. Up until a few decades ago, the country was largely agrarian, with few roads, little electricity and no modern hospitals. Rugged terrain posed a great challenge to infrastructure development.

However, over the past decade, the economy of Bhutan has grown remarkably with GDP

tripling mostly on the back of capital-intensive hydropower development which has contributed 20.9 percent to GDP growth on average from 2000 to 2013. Recent interregional economic cooperation, particularly trade with Bangladesh and India, has also boosted economic growth in Bhutan – though connections to global markets are still limited.

Although the government has harnessed hydropower proceeds to substantially raise the standard of living of the Bhutanese, economic expansion in other sectors remains limited. In the past 13 years, productivity gains are confined to one industry that uses little labor. The ADB's report highlights that in key employment-generating sectors there has been negligible growth, posing a challenge as 62 percent of the Bhutanese people work in agriculture, mainly for subsistence. Thus encouraging private sector development to create more jobs outside agriculture remains an important macroeconomic priority



# Growing Pains

towards achieving self-sufficient and inclusive growth, the ADB report concludes.

In terms of business development, the greatest constraint identified by small and medium-sized firms is the lack of access to finances, cited by over 30 percent of all firms. Accordingly, constraints on domestic credit to the private sector require attention. While deficiency in domestic savings for investment restrains the availability of credit, the distribution of existing credit is hampered by the risk-averse selection of clients in response to limited loan-recovery capacity, little variety in loan products, financial infrastructure shortfalls and client dispersion over rugged terrain. Further, external borrowing by the private sector remains severely restricted by law in terms of the borrower type as well as regarding the use of funds, effectively eliminating this as a source of funds for potential borrowers who face credit constraints in the domestic market.

Bhutan's economic freedom score

is 56.7, making its economy the 116th freest in the 2014 Index. This score has increased 1.7 points from last year, primarily due to improved scores in government spending and freedom from corruption. Bhutan is ranked 24th out of the 42 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and its overall score is below the global and regional averages.

Since Bhutan's economic freedom was first assessed in the 2009 Index, its progress in implementing more targeted reforms to advance economic freedom has been stagnant at best. Although the country has taken steps to modernize its economic structure and reduce poverty, only two of the 10 economic freedoms – trade freedom and freedom from corruption – have recorded improvement. The decline of about 10 points in both investment freedom and monetary freedom has kept the country in the category of "mostly unfree" in the Index.

The government of Bhutan has already

### Quick facts about Bhutan

Population 0.7 million

GDP: \$ 5billion

Unemployment: 3.2%

Inflation (CPI): 9.1%


FDI: \$16million

Joining United Nations in 1971, the Kingdom of Bhutan lies between two powerful neighbors, India and China, and was almost completely cut off from the rest of the world for centuries. Since then, it has been trying to let in some aspects of the outside world while fiercely guarding its ancient traditions. The Bhutanese name for the country is Druk Yul, which means "The Land of the Thunder Dragon". The Wangchuck hereditary monarchy wielded power in 1907 and paved the way for democracy and constitution in 2008.

Premier Tobgay says about the much lauded concept of Gross National Happiness that it is overused and masks the real problems like increasing debt, chronic unemployment, poverty and corruption. Bhutan's ancient Buddhist culture and breathtaking landscapes make it a natural tourist attraction. The country is lucky to have a wise and visionary monarchy that, besides unifying the country, has helped it in its transformation from being a monarchy to a democratic state.

**Although quite late, the government of Bhutan has realized the need for enhancing access to finances to foster private sector development.**

By Huzaima Bukhari & Dr. Ikramul Haq

realized the need for enhancing access to finances as a key policy measure to foster private sector development, employment growth and diversification. Its stimulus package aims to ease access to credit in priority development sectors such as cottage industries and the informal sector. Indeed, it is an important measure. The availability of a reliable credit information system offering a variety of financial products will certainly accelerate economic growth in all sectors creating more jobs and setting Bhutan on the right path to progress. 

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

# Rise of the IS

The emergence of the IS could be the beginning of a new destabilizing force in the Middle East.

By Taj M. Khattak

It is said that the North American cicada nymphs live underground for years before emerging as adults. In much the same manner, the world first took notice of the ISIL fighters about a year ago as they swarmed through large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria (naming it as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) although seeds of Sunni extremism were sown soon after the downfall of Saddam Hussein when the Sunnis suddenly felt disenfranchised of all political power after decades of minority rule over the majority in Iraq. The world's attention was once again focused on the terrorist organization when it recently killed two American journalists both of whom were abducted from Syria during the last two years.

The religious extremism and violence being practiced by the ISIL is metastasizing at an alarming speed. The two key elements of its strategy for rapid ascendancy are the use of terror as the weapon of choice against the vulnerable population and to target those areas for control where the writ of the Iraqi and Syrian governments has weakened due to internal strife.

The ISIL has now renamed itself as Islamic State (IS), chosen Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its caliph and declared an Islamic caliphate in an area between Marea and Al-Bab in northwestern

Syria to around 100 kilometers outside of Baghdad. It has further stated that al-Baghdadi is the 'caliph and leader of Muslims everywhere'. This is clearly an appeal to Muslims across the world and a challenge to Al-Qaeda leadership. It also strikes a chord with many Muslim countries where the Sunnis are in a majority and where generations of young people have been raised on a daily diet of hostile projection of other sects on the electronic media. For historical reasons, the declaration of a caliphate by a Sunni extremist organization will further deepen the Shia-Sunni chasm.

Symptoms of a new destabilizing force emerging in the Middle East were unmistakable when reports first surfaced about the presence of Al-Qaeda elements in the Syrian opposition with financial backing from Saudi Arabia – a U.S. ally which has become estranged after the U.S. balked at driving President Bashar al-Assad out of power. But these signs were ignored. Much to everyone's surprise, the west supplied it the wherewithal to battle Assad's forces for short term objectives, indirectly allowing the IS embryo cells to grow.

The issue with allowing a dangerous phenomenon like the IS to foster as a policy option in the short term is that in

the long term it eventually becomes too big to contain. It is, therefore, no surprise that today the IS is locked in a bitter rivalry with Hamas for a dominant narrative in Sunni extremism in the Arabian Peninsula stretching from the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris in the east to the shores of the Mediterranean in the west.

The leader and self-proclaimed caliph of the IS as well as his organization have been widely condemned by numerous Muslim scholars but that is not likely to protect the average young Muslims from being influenced by his rhetoric. In his statement made after taking control over Mosul, he cleverly reiterated the statement made by the first caliph of Islam after the



demise of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as he urged Muslims to join what he called a jihad. But the IS' perception of jihad is misplaced. Like Al-Qaeda, it is also smearing the good name of Islam in the guise of jihad against infidels, whereas in reality it is viciously engaged in abductions, murders and expulsions of those who differ with its beliefs.

The Quran clearly states in Surah Al-Hajj, ayat 39-40: "Permission to fight (against disbelievers) is given to those (believers) who are fought against, because they have been wronged; and surely, Allah is able to give them (believers) victory – Those who have been expelled from their homes, unjustly only because they said: "Our Lord is Allah." For had it not been that Allah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the Name of Allah is mentioned much, would surely have been pulled down."

Most Muslim scholars acknowledge that this verse holds the principal reason for armed jihad in Islam – which is to resist unjustified aggression against

oneself or others due to a difference in beliefs. An important inference from this injunction is that non-Muslims living in Muslim lands must be protected and it is impermissible to unjustly expel them or destroy their houses of worship. Contrary to the fundamental Islamic teachings which are of profound significance, the IS commits the very acts against those not adhering to the extremist Sunni views which are abhorred in all teachings of Islam.

As to how the future will pan out for the organization, it is very difficult to tell at this stage since the region is engulfed in a four-pronged war. First, there is the intense fighting between the IS and the Syrian government forces. Ironically, it was Assad who had facilitated the rise of the IS by releasing jihadists from prisons and successfully conveying a message to the west that if he was removed, the alternative would be Al-Qaeda rule in Syria. As it happens all too frequently in such cloak and dagger games, the IS turned against its benefactor by attacking the Syrian military forces in Homs, Raqqqa and Hassakeh.

Then there is the war between the IS and the mainstream rebels in Syria. The IS has lately pushed back Jubhat al-Nusra from Dei res-Zur. Jubhat is an Al-Qaeda affiliated group made up largely of Sunni Islamic mujahedeen. It is openly supported by Aymen al-Zawahiri and its goal is also to create a Pan-Islamic state. The IS is competing with Jubhat to win the hearts and minds of the people in the areas under its control so as to present itself as the best option to overthrow Assad.

The third facet of the conflict is the internecine fighting between various militia groups on the one side and Assad's forces on the other. The divisions among rebel groups have emboldened Assad to ignore the IS for the time

being and focus on reclaiming Aleppo, employing the same brutal tactics as in Homs. This is important for Assad because if successful, he could declare victory. This scenario of Assad retaining power in Syria and the IS emerging as the new phenomenon stronger than Al-Qaeda is giving sleepless nights in western capitals and hence the repeat mantra of arming the mainstream rebels.

The fourth and the last prong of this turmoil is the war between the IS and the Syrian Kurdish militia, the Peshmarga. Turkey is caught between a rock and a hard place. If it does not support the Democratic Union Party, the Syrian wing of the Kurdistan Workers Party in Turkey, which is locked in a bitter fight with the IS, the latter will emerge stronger. If it does, the Syrian Kurdish region becomes a reality and a Turkish Kurdish region becoming a reality subsequently can't be a prospect far behind. The emergence of a military alliance between the PYD and the PKK is a new factor worrying Turkey these days. As for now, it seems to turn a blind eye towards the PYD but keeps a sharp one on the IS, the bigger threat.

Of late, President Barack Obama has authorized airstrikes on IS positions to temporarily check its advances which has brought back the U.S. over Iraqi skies three years after it had left the country in a shambles. Obama has admitted that the renewed aerial war in Iraq is unlikely to be over any time soon. A long-term solution to prevent the IS from permanently altering nearly a century old border between Syria and Iraq, however, lies in addressing the very cause which helped its creation – ending the war in Syria and bringing greater stability in Iraq. **S**

*The writer is a retired Vice Admiral of the Pakistan Navy.*

Joko Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi, has been elected the new president of Indonesia. From being the mayor of a small city to the governor of Jakarta, to the head of state, Widodo's political career has been marked by many achievements. But it remains to be seen whether he can emulate his success as a local politician at the national level.

The most important aspect of Widodo's political career is that despite his very humble, lower middleclass background, he rose to prominence by dint of sheer merit and ability. He grew up in a slum-like locality and started with a small business of selling furniture. In a country where an elitist political culture dominates, making one's way to the highest office is a huge achievement. From being an ordinary individual to the most important personality of the country, the successful journey was made possible by Widodo's hard work, perseverance and, above all, his image of being 'the people's man'. He formed this image by making himself always available for public service and by showing a readiness to solve their problems. He regularly demonstrated these traits while serving as governor of Jakarta.

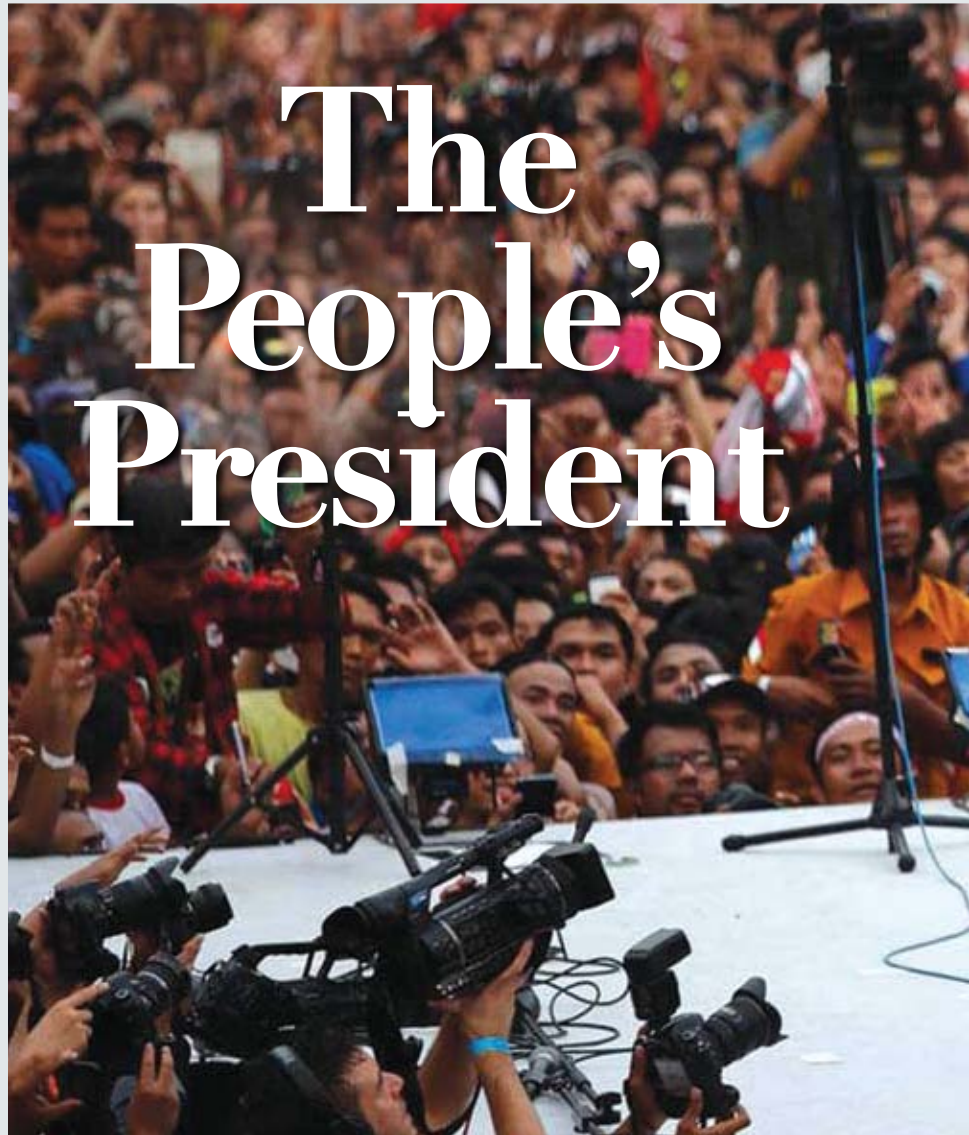
His most important approach to governance was *blusukan* – paying regular visits to low income and poor localities across Jakarta. During these visits, he would wear informal clothes and spend time at markets or walk down narrow lanes to meet and chat with the people about their problems, like food prices, housing difficulties and transport woes. This approach made Widodo highly popular among the residents of Jakarta while he was also noted and commended for his approach by national leaders. Keeping in view Widodo's sweeping success as governor of Jakarta, the Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle (PDI-P) nominated him for the office of president, a position he eventually won.

Widodo has definitely made history by becoming president of a country where such posts are usually held by those who belong to the political and military elite. The rise of a man from a middleclass background to the highest corridors of power is unprecedented in Indonesia's history. In other words, Widodo has not only clinched the highest governmental slot but has also laid the foundation of a new political culture where a common Indonesian can dream of rising to political

prominence.

However, the new journey will not be an easy one for the president as it is expected that he would try to replicate his unique approach to

likely to face many challenges in the crisis-marred country, which badly needs reforms. Introducing reforms is going to be an uphill task for a number of reasons.



# The People's President

**Joko Widodo has laid the foundations of a new political culture in Indonesia where even a common man can now think of rising to political prominence.**

By Dr. Raza Khan

governance at the national level. While it is generally believed that Widodo will use his expertise and sincerity of purpose to serve the country, the office of president has never been a bed of roses in Indonesia. The president is

There is a huge difference in governing a province and ruling a country, especially Indonesia, which is large and populous. Indonesian society is a complex mixture of ethnicities, socio-economic groups and sub-

groups – each with its own aspirations and interests, often conflicting. Catering to the needs, requirements and aspirations of all the people and groups is nearly impossible. In

Prabowo Subianto and its allies. The PDI-P and three of its allied parties control 37 percent of the parliamentary seats. A parliament controlled by rival groups always acts as an irritant for the



addition to looking after the needs of the population, Widodo also has to handle the country's foreign relations, which was not the case when he was running the provincial government. Formulating and executing foreign policy is a difficult task and will be a test of Widodo's diplomatic skills.

Another big challenge for President Widodo is to deal with an antagonistic and powerful parliament known as the House of Representatives (DPR). Currently, two-thirds of the seats in the DPR are held by Widodo's rival party,

ruling party in the way of delivering political promises. As the president is dependent on the parliament for the approval of many policies, it will require a lot of his time and energy to meaningfully engage and manipulate it to achieve results. This will mainly depend on his negotiation skills.

Also, the office of president in Indonesia is not used to the informal approach to governance which was the hallmark of Widodo's administration at the local and provincial levels. Therefore, he is likely to face tough

opposition if he tries to introduce new values to the political and administrative arena. A country where most politicians support the status quo, a reformist leader like Widodo is destined to face resistance. Nevertheless, only a person of his caliber can bring about and lead real political change.

The new president will also have to face challenges on the economic front. The foremost challenge in this regard will be to revive the increasingly sluggish national economy. To convince foreign investors to put their money in the largest economy of South East Asia is going to be a difficult task. Widodo will have to come up with sound economic policies. One challenge for him in the economic arena will be the withdrawal of subsidies on fuel amounting to nearly \$20 billion. For years, the World Bank and other international financial institutions have been urging Indonesia to end fuel subsidies. But none of the past governments dared to take this step for fear of upsetting the middleclass, which benefits the most from the subsidy, and the oil mafia which controls the import and export of fuel.

Although the new president promised that he would withdraw the subsidies, the step would be equal to stirring up a hornets' nest. Phasing out these subsidies is understandable as they are a burden on the national economy. Ending them is also needed so that the money thus saved can be diverted to other sectors such as education, health and physical infrastructure, which are in tatters. But, at the same time, many analysts consider the provision of subsidies necessary as poverty is rampant in Indonesia. Therefore, in order to play safe, Widodo will have to make up for the substantial amount of subsidies through other economic measures. This will prove a Herculean task as the country's fiscal deficit is already quite high and the World Bank has predicted that it might reach 2.4 percent of GDP.

Despite these and many other challenges, Widodo has the capacity and the conviction to deliver – only if the internal and external conditions remain stable enough for him to achieve his goals. **S**

*The writer, a political analyst and researcher, holds a Ph.D. in International Relations. He focuses on regional issues, governance, terrorism and radicalism.*

Pakistani drama is famous for its strong storylines, riveting performances and popularity among TV viewers. Some of Pakistan's finest actors are known for their work in this genre. When the popular drama '*Dhoop Kinare*', were aired, the streets would be conspicuously clear of traffic as everyone would scurry home to catch the latest episode. Drama watching was a national hobby and has remained so. With the mushrooming of private TV channels in recent years and an upturn in production, drama enthusiasts now have a wide array of serials to choose from and the genre continues to thrive in the country.

Now, the Pakistani drama serial has another feather in its cap – it has found a solid fan base among Indian TV viewers.

In the past, the cultural exchange between India and Pakistan was a tad one-sided with Bollywood's movies infiltrating Pakistani homes, Indian film songs blaring at weddings across the country and popular Indian actors becoming household names in Pakistan. Sure, the occasional Pakistani singing talent would strike it big across the border, but aside from Nusrat Fateh Ali, Rahat Fateh Ali, Junoon, Strings, Ali Zafar and Atif Aslam, other Pakistani acts that were exported to India, particularly those affiliated with Pakistani cinema, were little more than footnotes in terms of the larger Indian entertainment experience.

Zindagi TV, an initiative of one of India's largest media empires, has altered this balance and has started showing Pakistani drama serials in India. Now a new wave of Pakistani soaps is being watched on TV in India with interest and a degree of curiosity. Fawad Khan and Sanam Saeed's '*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*' has reportedly become a hot favorite with Indian viewers who have also received '*Maat*,' starring Aamina Sheikh and Saba Qamar, with enthusiasm.

Compared to the local soaps, the Pakistani TV drama presents the Indian viewer with a markedly different experience. Interestingly, this initiative has also tapped into an otherwise little explored market for the Pakistani drama serial – the sizeable Muslim community in India, which shares considerable common ground with its Pakistani counterpart.

Indian journalist Ayesha Aleem says that she's been hearing about

# Exporting TV Drama

The Zee Zindagi initiative taps into an otherwise little explored market for the Pakistani TV drama – the sizeable Muslim community in India.

By Maria Kamal

Zindagi TV for the past few months. The women in her family, including her grandmother, mother, aunt and even her 10-year-old cousin, are regular viewers of Indian soaps. The trend continues in her extended family as well. "The most widely watched Hindi soaps here tend to be very colorful, with loud make-up and sets, dramatic camera work and background music. The characters usually wear plenty of jewelry and OTT clothes," Aleem explains.

Thirty-seven-year-old Noreen Ahmed is an Indian educationalist who believes that all Indian soaps share certain commonalities. "Most of the soaps I've watched seem to follow similar story lines, where the 'super bahu' is battling immense odds while balancing family, extended family and pleasing society," Ahmed says. "The story is often overly dramatic, hard to believe and celebrates a woman's constant sacrifice. Even subtle nuances like camera angles, background music and make-up look over the top and are clichéd. The total effect leaves the audience a little exhausted from trying to focus on all the drama."

Indian soaps mostly tend to portray the country's dominant religious group, the Hindus and the minorities are therefore comparatively underrepresented. "Although we belong to India, there are distinct cultural differences that sometimes we cannot relate to. Most obviously,

that includes things like pujas but it extends to other areas as well like the kind of food they eat and the way in which they interact as a family and as a society," Aleem says.

It's no surprise then that Zindagi TV has been such a hit with this sector of the Indian population.

"All the shows are centered on Muslim families that we share many cultural similarities with. That said, we being Indians, there also are some differences," says Aleem. According to her, a recent Indian soap called '*Qubool Hai*', which showcases a Muslim family, has been similarly successful with India's Muslim viewers, owing to its culturally and religiously familiar subject matter.

Aleem also comments on the general viewing experience and aesthetic value of Pakistani soaps. "The viewing experience is much better," she says. "The color schemes, clothes and camera work are significantly toned down which makes it more pleasant to watch."

The Pakistani drama industry has rapidly transformed into a vibrant, dynamic and technically superior one in recent years. More drama serials are being churned out and some of them, such as '*Humsafar*', have registered unprecedented success with viewers.

While Pakistani drama serials have often showed a tendency to 'borrow' from Indian soaps in terms of




exaggerated zoom shots, heavily made-up leading ladies and the use of Mingslish, the industry has begun holding its own and has gradually established its distinct identity. This, in turn, has given a much-needed boost to Pakistan's entertainment industry and all those whose livelihoods depend on it.

Pakistani drama is equally appealing on account of its depiction of real people and stories. Ahmed, who has watched 'Aunn Zara,' 'Maat', and 'Zindagi Gulzar Hai' says she finds the acting natural and believable. "Even the supporting actors seem invested in their character, which is a departure from a lot of other soaps," she says.

"I like the fact that the themes are the mundane problems faced by the common people, yet each story seems to draw on different experiences," Ahmed says. "The story might include threads of jealousy, relationships of an unusual nature, unwillingness to follow norms like an arranged marriage or student angst and how the character is coping. Also the reactions and interactions of the actors feel more genuine and true to the nature of the character. In a nutshell they feel less like formula films," Ahmed comments.

Zindagi TV may have set out to promote art but while doing so, the venture also has the potential to bridge the gap between the people of the two countries. Ahmed believes

that the soaps help to portray the humanness of the Pakistani people. While there are some interesting quirks and shades of diversity in the language, clothes and interactions with society among the Pakistani people, there are also endearing qualities of similarity of people in the two countries.

"The same family ties and concern over similar issues and, in some forms, the same pressures. I think the quality of the soaps I have seen prove to me the artistic genuineness of the Pakistani people and will create a sense of understanding and tolerance in whoever watches them," Ahmed says. 

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

**W**hen in 2009, the UNICEF revealed that there were an estimated 8 million out of school children in India of ages six to 14 years and stated that 'the world cannot reach its goal to have every child complete primary education by 2015 without India,' the country responded by enacting the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or the Right to Education Act (RTE) in August 2009.

The Act puts forth five main components: 1) In India, every child is entitled to free and compulsory full-time elementary education (first to eighth grade) as facilitated by the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act. This means elementary education of a satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school that complies with certain essential standards; 2) Parents of children covered under the RTE are not liable to pay for school fees, uniforms, textbooks, midday meals,



# The Road to School

**It was claimed that the Right To Education Act (RTA) would greatly contribute to increasing India's literacy rate. There is still a long way to go.**

**By Iqra Asad**

transportation, etc. until elementary education is complete; 3) If a child has not managed to secure admission in a school according to age, it will be the government's responsibility to get him admitted to an age-appropriate class. Schools will have to organize training sessions to allow such a child to catch

up with others; 4) No child shall be held back (failed) or expelled until the completion of elementary education; and 5) Not following the RTE rules could invite a penalty of Rs 25,000.

While the RTE is couched in ideal terms, the reality is quite different. A report on the status of the implementation of the Act was released on its first anniversary by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The report admitted that 8.1 million children in the age group 6 to 14 remained out of school and that there was a shortage of 508,000 teachers countrywide.

Why is there such a discrepancy between the stipulations of the RTE and what is actually happening on the ground? Let us take a look. Firstly, parents prefer to send their children to

work instead of sending them to school so that they can earn some money and contribute to the household income. Education is considered a waste of time. Secondly, parents prefer private schools over government schools, as the quality of education in private schools is better. However, private schools which are affordable for low-income families may not meet the requirements for schools stated in the RTE, as they may not be able to afford the cost of running schools according to the new guidelines. This poses a problem to both the parents and the school owners.

Thirdly, remedial classes are a big problem. The ideal teacher-to-student ratio in a class is one teacher to thirty students. In reality, one teacher is given 60 to 80 students for remedial



coaching, with the result that learning issues are not tackled properly but students are passed on to higher grades without having reached the required level of scholarship in order to comply with the “no fail” policy of the RTE Act. Lastly, there is no proper audit system in place to see whether the RTE conditions are being implemented. As such, the educational system would proceed without any checks and balances.

Of course, the literacy rate in India cannot be expected to soar overnight; parents cannot be convinced to send their children to school, nor will the standard of government schools improve suddenly. However, one benefit of the RTE Act is that it frames a goal for the country’s children and spurs the government to allocate

a larger portion of the budget to education. This allows government schools to be run efficiently according to the guidelines of the RTE Act. But one of the biggest setbacks in this regard is lack of teachers for government schools. Where there are teachers there is either a lack of commitment to the calling or they are overburdened to the point where even well-meaning teachers cannot work with efficiency.

Also, many villages do not have a school at all. The nearest school is miles away. While it is hard enough to convince parents to send their children to nearby schools, convincing them to send them to faraway schools by walking many miles, is highly difficult. It seems that the old stories of “in my time I walked barefoot so-and-so miles to school” are not old anymore; they

are the reality for a number of village children even in present day India.

The RTE Act has also been criticized for not including children below 6 years of age. This is a valid criticism: what about the importance of pre-school education? Children of uneducated parents cannot be expected to know their ABC, counting and other basic pre-school material which is the hallmark of a toddler’s educational growth. This places an extra burden on the teachers of first grade as they have to start from scratch with their students who come to school with practically no preparation. While having a clean slate to work with has its own benefits, the importance of having educated parents cannot be emphasized enough.

Uneducated parents cannot help their children with homework or tell them how to pronounce a difficult word. They usually cannot afford to hire a tutor either. As a teacher cannot singlehandedly be responsible for a child’s entire educational growth – there must be input from parents (or tutors, if parents are not available) – and it is ultimately the child who suffers.

Parents who value the importance of education are willing to send both their sons and daughters to school. The numbers may not be impressive but at some level some children somewhere in India are benefiting from the RTE Act, even if they have to jump through hoops to get admission into schools. Special children and orphans face difficulty in getting admission; special children because of non-availability of special teachers and orphans because they usually do not have a birth certificate, which is required for admission. Then there is the issue of children who are above 14 but require primary school education. They are overlooked by the RTE Act and the schools can deny them admission. Who will provide primary school education to such children?

The RTE Act needs time to become effective. Who knows the children who actually benefit from the law in its fledgling stage may go on to make roadways for future children to have further access to primary school education? Only time will tell. **S**

*The writer is based in Lahore. She contributes to various publications.*

# The Hollywood Connection

**Afghan celebrities may not have too many mainstream Hollywood roles to their credit but they have certainly made their mark with some memorable performances.**

By Samina Wahid

For years now, the entertainment industry in the west has portrayed the Arab world (synonymous with the Muslim world now) as mono-dimensional evil villains. During the Cold War and up until the late 1980s, western media used the Soviets and the communists as the “default villain.” However, in recent years, Muslims – particularly Afghans and Arabs – have taken on this role. Although this phenomenon has historical roots in the United States’ dominant conflict shifting from the Cold War to the Gulf War and then to the Afghan war, it is undeniable that the western media is not doing the Muslims – the Afghans, especially – any favors through their portrayals in the media.

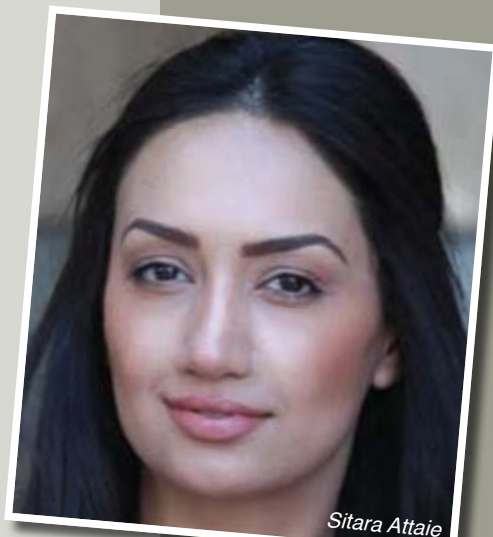
The trend, however, has somewhat changed recently thanks to the presence of many an Afghan actor and director in Hollywood. These men and women are striving to break the stereotypes that exist about the Afghan people in the west and have made their mark in the industry.

Consider, for example, Enayat Delawary who was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, but eventually moved to Germany in 1973 where he got a degree in Political Science. It

was there that Delawary worked in close collaboration with scholars, filmmakers and journalists to translate books and make documentaries. He has worked with some of the world’s most esteemed directors as a dialect coach, translator, cultural adviser and actor on multiple films.

Delawary served in all of these capacities for Mike Nichols’ *‘Charlie Wilson’s War’* and Jim Sheridan’s *‘Brothers’*. He worked closely with both directors throughout all stages of production. “My passion for my homeland and a lifetime of ongoing curiosity has enabled me to provide accurate representation of the Afghan people, Afghanistan and the entire Central Asian region in Hollywood,” Delawary said in an interview after the release of *‘Charlie Wilson’s War’*.

Then there is the acclaimed actor Fahim Fazli who is a man of two worlds – Afghanistan, the country of his birth and America, the nation he adopted and has grown to love. Fahim came to the United States as a refugee where he found his dream profession. While his role in the blockbuster hit *‘Iron Man’* was yet another clichéd portrayal of the Afghans in the western media (he plays an Afghan terrorist who kidnaps



Sitara Attaie



Walid Armini



Fereshta Kazemi



American billionaire Tony Stark and holds him captive for days), his biography 'Fahim Speaks: A Warrior-Actor's Odyssey from Afghanistan to Hollywood and Back' talks about his journey from Afghanistan to the U.S. and back to his homeland and dispels some commonly held misleading ideas about the Afghan nation. He is a man who escaped oppression, found his dream profession and then returned to Afghanistan to work as an interpreter.

Of course, no list of Afghan actors is complete without Ali Olomi who moved to San Diego, California at a very young age with his family before eventually moving to Los Angeles to pursue a career in acting. His lead roles in short films have earned him praise at the Cannes International Film Festival, the Asian Film Festival, the Brussels Belgium Film Competition, the Canada Film Festival, the San Diego Film Festival and other international film events. Besides Hollywood feature films, he has also appeared in independent films, student films, TV series and various commercials.

Also worth mentioning here is actor Walid Amini who is known for his performances in 'Not Today' and 'The Black Tulip'. He won the Best Lead Actor (Breakthrough Performance) at the Monaco Film Festival in May 2012 for 'The Black Tulip'. Amini has yet to make his presence felt in Hollywood but he shows promise as an actor. Critics say that his passion and commitment to the profession is likely to take him places if he is given meatier roles in more mainstream movies.

Afghan women are far and few between in Hollywood. The ones who are working in the industry have carved a niche for themselves. Notable among them is Sitara Attaie who grew up in the Netherlands but took up America as her new home. Sitara received her BFA in English Literature and Theater from the Rijks University in Groningen, and has been formally trained in method acting at the world-renowned Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in West Hollywood and is currently studying at The Actor's Workshop.

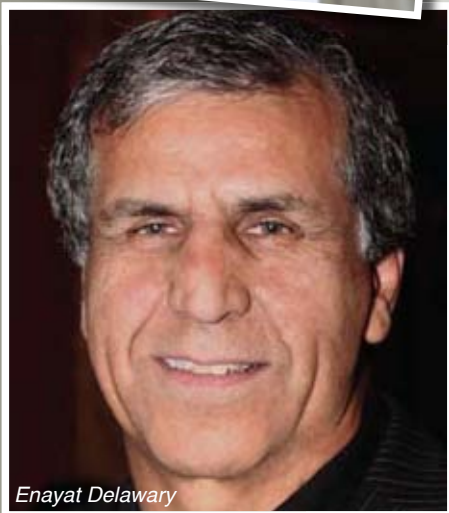
As an actress and voiceover artist,

Sitara Attaie has worked on major productions such as Showtime's 'Homeland' (Emmy Award – Best Drama Series 2012), the Oscar-winning film 'Argo' (Academy Award – Best Picture 2013), 'RED 2', 'The Fault In Our Stars', and popular television shows such as 'True Blood', 'CIS', 'Bones', and 'Nikita'. She has also done several indie movies, commercials and music videos. Her proficiency in five languages has brought her many hosting gigs for live and television shows. She has promoted the European shows of Bollywood megastars such as Shahrukh Khan, Hrithik Roshan, John Abraham and Priyanka Chopra. She is also a choreographer and taught Bollywood dance at the Dansschool Klaassens. Sitara has worked as a journalist, writing for a variety of media and also won beauty pageants in The Netherlands and Turkey.

Award-winning actress Fereshta Kazemi is one of the most successful Afghan actresses in Hollywood. Her energy, talent and continuous fight to bring a fresh view to cinema inspire many. Whether one is in Afghanistan or the U.S., Fereshta carries that special 'aura' to pull any viewer to the screen. She received rave reviews for her performance in her first U.S. feature film 'Targeting' while 'Heal', a movie about Afghanistan, also won several awards and recognized her acting skills. She says her goals are to continue to act in films, in particular socially conscious stories which challenge western perceptions of the world and where one learns something. However, she is also open to the idea of romantic comedies and action adventure films which are some of her favorite genres besides drama.

Be it actors or directors, Afghan celebrities have made waves with their memorable contributions to Hollywood. They may not have too many mainstream roles to their credit but they have certainly helped in dispelling misconceptions about Afghanistan in the western media. **S**

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



Throughout the world, the preservation of historical buildings is given great importance. No matter how developed or underdeveloped a country, the mere presence of historical edifices brings a great sense of value and worth to it. While some countries have unabashedly neglected their historical and cultural heritage, others have strived to restore such sites, petitioning UNESCO to consider making their historical landmarks World Heritage sites. In case of rejection, they adopt

*between Sri Lanka & Netherlands'* that the fort has an odd shape and draws similarities between a smoked ham and the shape of Ceylon. The 'Heel' probably refers to the lower southern half of the island. The Dutch, admiring the aesthetic appeal of Portuguese masonry, chose to preserve it in its original form and style by making it a 17 Gun Fort shaped into an octagon. In 1795, the isolated fort was seized by the British, who used it to quarantine arriving marines.

After Sri Lanka's independence,

# Joy Behind Bars

**Fort Hammenhiel, a prison built by the Portuguese in the mid-17th century on a small island in Northern Sri Lanka, now serves as a boutique hotel.**

By Sarah B. Haider

a peculiar style of self-preservation by turning historical sites into hotels and resorts. One prime example of this innovative method of preservation is Fort Hammenhiel in Northern Sri Lanka, which has been turned into an exotic boutique hotel.

Fort Hammenhiel is located at an islet at the tip of Karainagar, guarding the channel between the islands of Karaitivu and Kayts in the Jaffna Peninsula in Northern Sri Lanka. The fort was built in the 17th century by the Portuguese. In 1658, however, it was captured by the Dutch. W.A. Silva and R.K de Silva, authors of *'Dutch Forts of Sri Lanka'*, write that the fort was initially called Fortaleza Real (Fort Royal) and was later renamed Fort Hammenhiel which means 'Heel of Ham'. R.L. Broheir narrates in *'Links*

Fort Hammenhiel was used as a high security prison following the unsuccessful insurrection by the JVP in 1971. Some notable people imprisoned in the fort included rebel leader Rohana Wijeweera together with other prisoners such as Upatissa Gamanayake, Lionel Bopage, Podi Athula (Victor Ivan), Loku Athula (N. Jayasinghe), Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda and Mahinda Wijesekara. Later, the fort was used as a correctional facility by the Sri Lankan Navy.

The Fort Hammenhiel Boutique Hotel is a luxurious hotel, at par with any other famous boutique hotel in the world. At Fort Hammenhiel, a visitor can enjoy the scenic beauty of the Indian Ocean and bask in the grandeur of the fort's royal atmosphere. The only way to reach the hotel is by a boat.

Surrounded by a tranquil sea, the fort's silhouette reflects a calming serenity. Before the fort was turned into a hotel, civilians and tourists were not allowed to visit it as it was a high security zone. Even now, visitors are required to first sign in at the gate, which is manned by an armed guard, before being allowed to drive through the compound to the reception. The entrance comprises a low vaulted gateway, about 7 feet in height. Upon entrance, the visitors are received by uniformed guards who give them a perfect royal welcome.

The best thing about Fort Hammenhiel is that even though it has been fully renovated, it remains one of Jaffna's five architecturally protected buildings and the conversion to a boutique hotel has not influenced its original design. Another unique



feature of Fort Hammenhiel is that its prison cells have been turned into lavishly designed rooms equipped with air conditioners and other modern necessities to facilitate travelers. However, to maintain the originality of the place, the inscriptions etched by political prisoners on the walls of the prison cells have not been removed. One of the inscriptions reads, 'Beloved

There has been much criticism of the transformation of historical buildings into hotels as such changes can destroy the natural antiquity of a place. However, the supporters of this trend maintain that preserving and repositioning treasured landmarks is the perfect way to provide a unique experience to visitors. Merely visiting a historically important place can never

and the island of Långholmen in Stockholm, which was once a penal colony for women in the 1700s, have been transformed into chic hotels.

However, furnishing these historical buildings into resorts is not an easy job. To preserve the intricate details of their construction is a huge challenge. Moreover, to incorporate modern facilities in these buildings



Hammenhiel, for the last time.' Thus, staying in one of these rooms invokes a crude remembrance of the past.

As for the services, a round the clock room service is provided to visitors. Facilities include a mini bar, satellite television, hot/cold water and concierge service. Tourists can also indulge in a variety of water sports such as boat trips, jet skiing, diving, snorkeling, angling and wind surfing.

Apart from the services offered at the hotel, its isolated location makes it a perfect holiday getaway for those who want to take time off their monotonous lives and spoil themselves. The location, grandeur and architecture of the place makes it exclusive and different from other conventional hotels and thus, it never fails to enchant visitors by its decadent allure.

replace the experience of actually staying and sleeping there. In this way, the people who love to visit such sites can spend their holidays in a peaceful environment, making an emotional connection with the place because of the historical aura that it exudes.

Turning historical buildings or one-time prisons into luxury hotels and resorts is not a new phenomenon. The model has been successfully implemented in other parts of the world. Some famous examples of historical places that were turned into hotels include the Sultanahmet in Turkey, a former Ottoman prison that now stands restored as a well-equipped luxurious resort. Similarly, the Charles Street Jail in Boston has been converted into the luxurious Liberty Boston Hotel. The Het Arresthuis in the Netherlands

while meeting the strict requirements of preservation is both expensive and demanding.

In the case of Fort Hammenhiel, the Sri Lankan Navy has done an excellent job in preserving the historic edifice and providing the visitors with state-of-the-art facilities at the same time. None of the modern facilities installed in the prison have altered the originality of the place.

Modern features surely make Fort Hammenhiel a fine accommodation facility for an unforgettable holiday in Sri Lanka. By visiting the famous fort tourists as well as Sri Lankans are able to witness the aesthetic and cultural prominence of Jaffna. **S**

*The writer is a Karachi-based journalist*

# Beyond the Capital

While Malé is developing rapidly, there is an acute lack of development in other islands and atolls of the Maldives.

By Haroon Janjua

The Maldives is located in the Indian Ocean, consisting of 1,192 coral islands grouped in a double chain of 26 atolls, along the north-south direction. The atolls are spread over roughly 90,000 square kilometers, making the Maldives one of the world's most dispersed

countries. For administrative purposes these atolls are organized in 21 administrative divisions.

The country is unique in many ways. Its surface is 99 percent water and no land point is more than 2.4 meters above sea level. Its population of about 350,000 is spread over 200

inhabited islands. The capital Malé has 35 percent of the country's total population, making the Maldives a country with one of the highest population densities in the world. Though the urbanized capital provides its residents easy access to a wide range of services, this is not the case



for the citizens of the entire country.

In contrast to the rapidly developing capital, there is a lack of uniform development in other islands and atolls of the Maldives. The country also faces problems on the social front due to growing income disparities over the past years that favor Malé and contribute to urban migration.

Despite the promises of holding elections to decentralize administration and build resorts in distant atolls, the government is reluctant to delegate authority and move various offices, departments and even resorts away from the capital. Ignoring offers from foreign airlines and governments, it continues to resist the construction of international airports in the north and south of the country. These areas are heavily populated with almost 70 percent of the total population. But they are economically backward and need avenues for income generation through tourism and other means. The government's obsession with controlling everything has effectively prevented any significant development beyond Malé. The government's fear of losing its grip on power and its greed and a limited vision are the factors responsible for this.

According to statistics released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Maldives has the highest per capita income in the South Asian region, at over \$2,000. But the cost of living in the country is very high and there are significant income differentials between Malé and the atolls. In 1998, which is considered a period of economic boom, Malé's per capita income was 75 percent higher than the per capita income in the atolls. Life expectancy in the atolls is much lower and 30 percent of the country's population lives below the poverty line.

In 2000, the tourism sector made up 70 percent of the Maldives' foreign exchange and generated a third of the country's GDP. But the participation of the Maldivian people in the tourist resort industry is quite low. The majority of the resort staff is low-paid foreign workers from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India, while the resorts themselves are deliberately concentrated around Malé, which houses the country's sole international airport. This ensures that the profits from these enterprises remain in the capital. As a result, some families in Malé have become

extremely rich and all landowners in the capital have greatly benefitted from the phenomenal increase in property value and rents.

Frustration and anger are rampant among the majority who cannot benefit from the tourist bonanza and do not have access to government jobs. Fishing is perhaps the only calling for most of the people living in atolls but all fishery policies are controlled by exporters and officials who are based in Malé. As if this is not enough, the courts in Malé have found it convenient to send convicted

lack of vocational training as pressing issues.

The healthcare sector in all the islands remains weak. The lack of trained doctors and access to medicines are the key issues affecting the masses. Some islands do not have pharmacies and the residents have to travel to the capital to get everyday medicines such as Panadol and Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS).

Lack of jobs opportunities is also hindering the development of these islands. The absence of resorts in various atolls, despite a number of

Despite the promises of holding elections to decentralize administration and build resorts in distant atolls, the government is reluctant to delegate authority and move various offices, departments and even resorts away from the capital.

criminals to jails in atolls because of 'overcrowding in Malé's jails'. This has contributed to the rise of drug networks across the atolls. At the 2003 Atoll Chiefs' Conference in Malé, many complained about these criminals and their negative influence on the youth.

According to the 2006 census, about one percent of the population was living on less than \$1 a day and the government of the Maldives had resolved to halve the number of such people as a part of its Millennium Development Goals. However, inequalities have widened with an alarming increase in poverty in the atolls, particularly in the north and north-central regions. It is vital to ensure inclusive growth. The government claims that it is working to transform the fragmented social safety net programs into a comprehensive, three-tiered social protection system. But the progress so far is slow.

The literacy rate in most atolls is very low. Teachers face difficulties in delivering lessons due to lack of resources such as libraries, science and computer labs and multimedia-equipped classrooms. The dropout rate is increasing and a number of students have quit school to work in the tourism sector. Teachers also identify limited opportunities for further studies and a

islands having been leased out for resort development several years back, has deprived residents of civic amenities such as roads and other infrastructure – a byproduct of resorts.

The involvement of women in the workforce is limited to low-paid, menial jobs. Women in the atolls mostly serve as sanitary workers or help in clearing weeds for road development. Some women weave coconut leaves to make a variety of products that are sold at resorts. But none of these jobs help women in becoming financially independent and an important part of the country's labor force.

Although the Ministry for the Development of Atolls supports local governance, decentralization and administrative reforms, it has done little to implement these measures. As a result, lack of development is obvious in the atolls. The reasons for this are also known and the government is aware of the situation. It may even be trying to address the concerns of the residents of these atolls, but its earnestness and the speed at which it is taking action leaves much to be desired. ■

*The writer is a freelance contributor and independent researcher.*

As the world's top ten highest mountains are located in Nepal, it is only natural that adventurers from around the world seek to travel to the region to trek – a unique experiences for those who like adventurous sports. Trekking is also among the most popular activities in Nepal and is enjoyed by a vast variety of people – both professional mountain climbers and people vacationing with families or friends.

In fact, Nepal is often termed the trekking capital of the world. In some seasons it transforms into a trekking hub when its streets are full of travelers from around the world. When the weather is pleasant, sites are set up and tour guides are in demand to organize trekking tours. A large number of options are available for trekkers based on their age, capabilities, trekking gear and the areas they want to visit. Travelers have been known to spend years planning their expeditions to go to faraway locations. This requires long-term training and a lot of courage and stamina. Even those who have not done any prior planning can enjoy the experience by becoming a part of an organized group if they arrive

in Kathmandu or Pokhara in the right season.

While some people believe that Nepalese treks are uncharted and lofty plains, this is not entirely true. There are several well-marked trek sites and paths. Passersby like to ensure that they have plenty of food, water and other necessary supplies that they can easily pick up as they pass different villages. Trek groups usually consist of at least 15 people and standard trekking gear is necessary for all of them.

There are several villages and teahouses along the path to ensure that trekkers can rest, regain their energy and replenish their supplies. These teahouses reflect Nepal's culture and offer a great opportunity to trekkers to meet the village people and also keep abreast of the movement of fellow travelers. Many trekkers claim that there is an unreserved friendliness and hospitality in the natives which works wonders for the exhausted trekkers who stop by a teahouse after a long walk.

The best trekking season is one when the weather is dry and warm. Travelers and adventurers are under more risk if they go for mountain

climbing and trekking through difficult terrain in the monsoon or in winter. Since there is usually a considerable distance between two villages or shelters, traveling during the wrong season can have dire consequences.

The periods of March to June and September to November are usually the best time for trekkers to go about their mission. The weather in these months is dry and crisp with bearable temperatures and clear blue skies. Sometimes, it rains during May and June and travelers are asked to stay put as rain brings with it leeches and severe cold while the trekking path also becomes muddy and uneven.

There is much to explore in Nepal in terms of new sites and there is a variety of treks to choose from. But crossing higher passes or going into remote regions requires a certain level of physical fitness and an adventurous spirit. There are several trekking peaks as well which cross the 5600-6500m mark. For these experiences, one must have previous climbing experience and plenty of training. Moreover, one must be super fit and have the best trekking gear to go travelling in unexplored locations.

# Trekking in Heaven

With its high peaks and hilly terrain, Nepal offers some of the best trekking locations in the world.

By Aisha Malik



To fully enjoy the wide range of experiences that trekking offers, one must be able to walk uphill and be in a condition to go a while without stopping at shelters. Although there are several trek paths which are easier to handle, and often there are guides to support travelers, it is still important to collect all the relevant information about the trekking mission before embarking on it. However, if needed, teahouses and emergency supplies are never too far.

One can easily purchase everything needed for trekking from the markets in the Thamel neighborhood of Kathmandu and Pokhara. The markets in Thamel offer the best bargains in fleece and button-down jackets, which are essentials for long treks. Other essential trek-gear such as comfortable yet sturdy hiking boots that can handle uneven terrain for prolonged periods, sleeping bags, daypacks, comfortable trekking clothes, gloves, thermals, hiking pants and waterproof jackets can also be bought from these markets. If the trek is to be held away from inhabited areas, it is important to carry everyday

items such as matches, toilet paper, bandages, flashlights, communication devices, water purifiers, cameras or binoculars, maps and so on. These supplies can easily be purchased from local markets before a hike begins.

Trekking in Nepal requires a Trekker Information Management Systems (TIMS) card along with the entry tickets of national parks. There are different categories for different kinds of trekking and the cards are issued accordingly. For example, there are different cards for independent treks as opposed to organized ones. These cards are issued by the Trekking Agents Association.

Some regions such as Dolpo, Manaslu and Mustang require special trekking permits that are only available with trekking agents. There are 33 peaks in Nepal which have heights of 7000m and climbing them is an arduous task. Special climbing permits along with qualified and registered climbing guides are required to go trekking on these peaks. This kind of trekking is considered extremely difficult because the higher one goes the lesser the chances are of finding

support and supplies through other guides or shelters.

Just like commercial mountain climbing, trekking is also becoming a commercial venture. Once the trekker decides the kind of adventure he wants to undertake, he is offered a proper package in line with his requirements. The treks could just be for the mountainous view or can be designed to show the villages and the picturesque locations across the country. Some treks are also designed around a detox/healthy-living program which includes yoga and meditation classes in-between trekking.

Nepal attracts close to 150,000 trekkers from around the world every year. It is home to some of the best and highly qualified tour and climbing guides. The country offers countless trekking destinations with scenic views. If you're an adventurer, you are likely to find some of the best peaks to conquer and personal challenges to beat every time you visit the country. **S**

*The writer is a graphic design graduate who freelances for several publications*





# The Dragon Spews Zero Emission

**Bhutan is eager to reduce its dependence on imported fossil fuels by converting to electric cars.**

By Asma Siddiqui

**B**hutan is a small South Asian nation known for the concept of gross national happiness, an alternative to gross domestic product. For the happiness of its people, the government of Bhutan constantly strives to make policies that can benefit its people. Right now, for Bhutan, happiness includes a fleet of electric cars.

According to the Environment News Service, the King of Bhutan received two 2014 electric Nissan LEAFs on his birthday. These marked the start of a fleet of electric vehicles that will characterize the future of this Himalayan kingdom. King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, 34, known as the 'Dragon King', is popularizing the electric car to inspire

his countrymen to become pioneers in the global move towards clean energy vehicles.

The CEO of Nissan, Carlos Ghosn was in capital Thimphu to present the cars to the King and also signed a partnership agreement with Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay that will chart their cooperation in achieving Bhutan's ambitious clean energy goals.

"We will develop a program," said Tobgay who has backed the electric vehicle project since taking office in July 2013. "We will commit to a program to achieve zero emissions as a nation by a certain target date," he said without naming that date. "We cannot go on this journey ourselves. We need the world to travel with us, and what better partner to have than Nissan LEAF who can help us along the journey," the prime minister said.

To live up to the dream, the government has assigned a memorandum of understanding with Nissan to transform Bhutan into a country with zero-emission cars. All government vehicles have switched to Nissan Leafs while the government is also trying to change the fleet of taxis and personal vehicles to electric cars. This is not difficult as the country is blessed with rivers whose waters have been tapped successfully for producing clean hydroelectric power. Only 5 percent of the clean energy generated is used while the rest is exported to India. In exchange, Bhutan buys oil from India to run its vehicles. But it is eager to reduce its dependence on imported fossil fuels. Prime Minister Tobgay said in December that he hoped to reduce the country's oil imports by 70 percent.

Most journeys inside the country are relatively short and the majority of residents of Thimphu rely on taxis for travel, making the electrification of cars even more significant than any other country where vehicles are mostly privately owned. Turning to electric vehicles will surely curtail the oil import bill which will benefit the local economy.

According to the World Bank, the country has just 2,038 km (1,266 miles) of main roads. What's more, the country ranks 141 out of 189 countries in the World Bank's 2014 "Doing Business" report, an assessment of how easy it is to conduct business in 189 economies based on their regulatory environment.

Bhutan aims to become a zero emission nation and envisages Thimphu as a "clean electric" city in which vehicles are powered by clean energy. It is to achieve this dream that Nissan has supplied the electric Leaf models which have replaced conventional vehicles. In addition, the Japanese car maker has installed


quick charging points across the country to support the new fleet. In this way, the electric vehicles will face no problem while plying on the roads. The government of Bhutan has also considered exempting the EVs from certain taxes. It further plans to implement a carbon credit scheme where the sale of EVs will earn credits that can be traded for tax exemptions for imported internal combustion engine-powered (ICE) vehicles.

According to a report of the Wind Energy and Electric Vehicle Review, "Based on World Bank data for 2009, Bhutan has just 46 passenger vehicles per 1,000 people, meaning that its 742,000 citizens operate roughly 34,000 cars." The opportunity to sell zero emission electric cars was underscored by Nissan's simultaneous announcement that it had appointed a national sales company for the kingdom, named Thunder Motors.

Nissan and Thunder will work together to develop localized versions of the company's electric vehicles specially designed for the terrain in the Himalayan nation, whose average elevation is 8,000 feet above sea level.

Following an economic crisis, the kingdom banned the import of new vehicles in March 2012 and subsequently imposed a "green tax" on all vehicles: 20 percent on those with engines of 1.8 liters or more and 5 percent on those below that mark. The government is now mulling exempting electric vehicles from the green tax, sales tax and import duties to encourage the transition.

According to a news report, "At present, Thimphu's residents depend heavily on a fleet of 3,000 minicabs. The introduction of electric vehicles will have an immediate effect and impact in a small and compact city like Thimphu. A typical taxi driver in the capital presently spends around U.S. \$13 a day on fuel, whereas it is estimated that recharging an electric car would cost just 16 U.S. cents."

This major difference in terms of spending money on transportation will help the people of Bhutan save money. It will build the local economy and the country is likely to move ahead on the road to Gross National Happiness! 

*The writer is a freelance journalist who writes on social issues.*



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# A Visionary Leader

**Book Title:** The Charismatic Leader: Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan.

**Author:** Sikandar Hayat

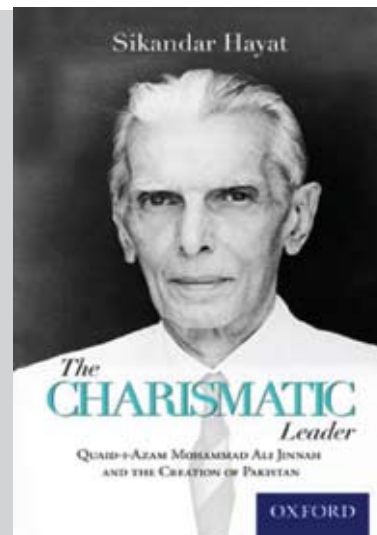
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*Reviewed by Ilhan Niaz*



Sikandar Hayat's *The Charismatic Leader: Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan*, now available in a revised edition from the Oxford University Press, seeks to explain the creation of Pakistan in terms of structures, ideas and personalities. Hayat has long advocated the development and application of theories to South Asian studies and what sets *The Charismatic Leader* apart is the employment of Weber's concept of charisma to the study of Jinnah's rise and the realization of Pakistan.

At first glance, Jinnah may seem to be an unlikely candidate for the status of a charismatic leader. Normally, the use of the term "charisma" conjures up images of totalitarian ideologues such as Hitler and Mao, military modernizers like Mustafa Kemal or, more benignly, the *dhoti*-clad liberator of the Indian realm, Mahatma Gandhi. Jinnah, in contrast, was freakishly alienated from the mainstream Indian culture and never took seriously the populist pretensions of the leaders of the Indian National Congress.

In a society steeped in arbitrariness, Jinnah was the arch-constitutionalist and a liberal consensus builder. In an age of rising religiosity, fueled by the propaganda of Gandhi and the Khilafatists, Jinnah was decidedly out of place and would eventually be accused by his Muslim opponents of being an infidel. In a period where all manners of socialism (from the National Socialism of Hitler to Stalinism and Fabian programs) were in style, Jinnah resolutely resisted the urge to promise an imminent utopia. And yet, Jinnah's achievement as the founder of what was the largest Muslim-majority state in the world in 1947, and as the restorer of

Muslim political sovereignty over those territories of South Asia where they were demographically concentrated, is such that a serious explanation is in order.

Hayat's theoretical starting point is that our understanding of Weber's concept of charisma is flawed since it does not incorporate the post-First World War development in Weber's thought. This development was that, disillusioned by the collapse of Imperial Germany, Weber came to regard rationality and sobriety as the core qualities of an authentic charismatic leadership. The importance of personal charisma being institutionalized in the state or political party was equally important for otherwise charismatic leaders would be little more than demagogues with a death wish. Having clarified this important point, Hayat proceeds to provide the historical and socio-political context in which Jinnah operated and eventually emerged as the leader of the Muslims. In this, Hayat identifies certain conditions that needed to be met for a charismatic leader.

The first condition is the presence of a crisis that has the potential to imperil the core interests of a group or a community. In the context of Indian Muslims, this crisis had several dimensions. First, demographically the Muslims were in a minority. As India headed towards greater representation in local, provincial and, eventually, central, governments, the inferior numbers translated into reduction of their status to a permanent minority in most provinces and in local as well as the central governments.

Second, numbers aside, colonial representation was determined by educational, property and income

qualifications and in the case of Indian Muslims, they were underrepresented even in those territories where they were in a majority due to their backwardness. Third, as the demand for self-governance escalated during and after the First World War, the question of British imperial succession became the central long-term issue of Indian politics. The Congress was quite clear on what it wanted – a British exit accompanied by the handing over of power to a strong central government that would operate on the basis of universal suffrage and pretend that minorities were diabolical contrivances of the Raj.

The local and provincial Muslim leaders had little to say about what kind of India would emerge if the British left. Many hitched their wagons to the Congress, hoping for some magnanimous concessions that might materialize after a centralized, majoritarian democracy had come into existence under the Congress. Hayat makes the case that among the Muslim leaders, Jinnah alone had a long-term perspective on the evolving situation. He understood that the real question was the distribution of sovereign power and that the Muslims needed to be organized so that they too could have a say in what an independent South Asia might look like.

In terms of vision, Jinnah advocated a formula in the form of the Lahore Resolution of March 23, 1940 (dubbed the 'Pakistan' Resolution by its critics). The formula was vague and deliberately so, but it held out the promise that sovereignty would be restored to the Muslims wherever they were in a majority. For Hayat, the ambiguity of the formula led people to read into it their own preferences or fears, and it focused

the attention of the Muslims, and the Muslim League, on a grand objective. Opposition to the “Pakistan” scheme served to lend it more substance and turned it into a key component of India’s political discourse.

Actually, organizing the Muslims to achieve this objective was a very difficult task and one in which Jinnah did not succeed as much he would have liked to. Still, the growth of the Muslim League between 1940 and 1945 was considerable, while the Second World War made it evident that the actual succession to British rule was at hand. Hayat explains in detail the mobilization strategy of the Muslim League, its activation of students, women, traditional elites, businessmen and at least some ulema and the creation of a national coalition. The growth of the League was such that by 1946 it claimed all the Muslim seats at the center and nearly all at the provincial level.

With such a resounding victory, the time for finally working out what Pakistan meant had arrived and here Jinnah was prepared to accept a sovereign Muslim India within an Indian confederation or, failing that, an independent Pakistan with no constitutional connection to India. Once the Congress reneged on the Cabinet Mission Plan, which promised the former, Jinnah had no compunctions


about doing what was necessary to carve an independent Muslim-majority state out of the British Empire in India and moving towards the latter option. For Hayat, the creation of Pakistan and its consolidation meant that Jinnah’s mission had been accomplished and his charisma was routinized in the new state.

So, at a structural level, the demand for Pakistan was the outcome of the internal asymmetries of demography, economy and socio-political consciousness, which had emerged during the British Raj. These asymmetries, barely managed by concessions, reforms and repression, threatened to permanently erase the Muslims as a political community and became unmanageable as the British Empire went into decline after the First World War. The central question was of succession, and here Jinnah picked his idea – which was to advocate the restoration of sovereignty to the Muslim-majority areas of South Asia – and timings perfectly.

The idea resonated and connected with the anxiety and distress of the Muslims, triggering the Pakistan Movement. Jinnah’s leadership in terms of organization of the League, deal-making and negotiating with the British, the Congress and other groups led to extraordinary electoral success in 1946.

This success meant that Pakistan would either come into existence as a vast Muslim-majority sovereign region that comprised the whole of present-day Pakistan and Bangladesh plus the Hindu-majority areas of Bengal and Punjab, or as a smaller but completely independent state.

Acceding to either of these options was galling to the Congress, but Jinnah’s success was that it had to choose between a notionally sovereign united India or an actually sovereign divided India. The Congress’s pain and confusion were evident in its dithering as it went from preferring a loose confederation and then changed its mind and went for the two-state solution.

Hayat’s *‘The Charismatic Leader’* is a fine study of political leadership in South Asia. Historically grounded, theoretically sound and argumentatively plausible, it provides a rich starting point for further debate and scholarship. What sets Hayat apart from other writers is that he seeks to explain Jinnah’s leadership in terms of phenomena and in doing so breaks new ground. Scholars, students, and the general readership can all benefit from the book under review. 

*The writer teaches history at the Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad.*



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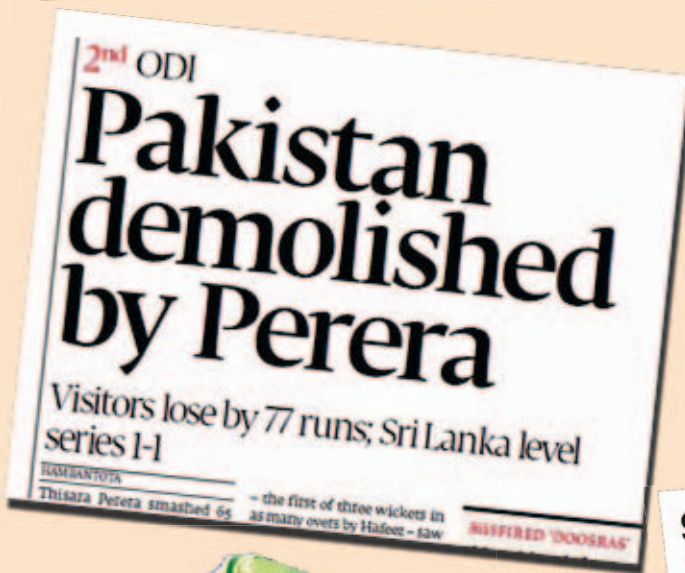
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# Inertia?

Cricket is one game that enjoys mass following in most South Asian countries. But the fortunes of the game are at a dismal low in Pakistan, whether at the level of the team or the Board. Perhaps it is a reflection of the state of torpor that grips the whole nation.

**Sri Lanka hammer Pakistan in 3rd ODI to take Series**



**Sri Lanka routs Pakistan to seal ODI series win**

**Pakistan blown away in Colombo**

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**India hand 29 run defeat to Pakistan, set up final against Sri Lanka**





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