

MYANMAR
A People Adrift

SOUTHASIA

July 2015

Reg. ss-973

www.southasia.com.pk

INSIDE

INDIA
Disturbing the Rhythm

AFGHANISTAN
Protecting the Protectors

NEPAL
The Days After

NEIGHBOR
The Alternate Bank



Whither MQM?

The MQM has made all efforts to voice the aspirations of Pakistan's middle classes for over three decades. Its endeavours may have come to naught in face of the turbulence it has run into. Where does the road lead from here for the great migration that took place in 1947?



Afghanistan Afg. 50
Australia AS 6
Bangladesh Taka 65
Bhutan Nu 45
Canada C\$ 6
China RMB 30
France Fr 30
Hong Kong HK\$ 30
India Rs. 65

Japan ¥ 500
Korea Won 3000
Malaysia RM 6
Maldives Rf 45
Myanmar MMK10
Nepal NaRs. 75
New Zealand NZ\$ 7
Pakistan Rs. 150
Philippines P 75

Saudi Arabia SR 15
Singapore S\$ 8
Sri Lanka Rs. 100
Thailand B 100
Turkey Lira. 2
UAE AED 10
UK £ 3
USA \$ 5

5th Largest
Private Bank

Leading Islamic
Banking Network

Largest Credit
Card Provider

ALL HE WANTED TO HEAR WAS, 'GO AHEAD'



And we heard him. At Bank Alfalah, we are doers, we strive to realise our goals and turn our ambitions into solid results. And we are drawn to people who share the same attitude.

We want to inspire you and help you find your own way in going after what you want. Just as we have. With fresh eyes we seek out new ways to meet your needs. Free of legacy, we have the agility to adapt to challenging environments. Through innovative products and insightful advice, we can help you grow.

Because at Bank Alfalah, we believe that there is only one way - The Way Forward.

111 225 111 | bankalfalah.com



Bank Alfalah
The Way Forward

FREE CATALOGUE
Type your name, address & send SMS to 0322-4410052 or Email to freecatalogue@iwm.com.pk



Starting from
Rs. 49,965/-
Per Person

*With metal pedestal without chair & accessories

Space Grid

WORKSTATION FOR PEAK PERFORMERS



Variety of Partitions



Panel for Accessories



Cable Management

Interwood provides you a comfortable environment to work in with its elegant range of smart workstations having space managing capability and modern designs. Equip your office with our contemporary workstations and make your mark.

Also available in:

- Manager Desk
- Officer Desk
- Meeting Table
- Lounge

Executive | Workstations | Chairs

INTERWOOD
Since 1974

Contents



16

Whither MQM?

The MQM seems to be caught between the devil and the deep sea.

India 18

Disturbing the Rhythm

China does not want the US to gain a stronghold in South Asia.



Bangladesh

24

Blood Relatives

The affinity between India and Bangladesh was further emphasised recently.

Nepal

28

The Days After

A land that continues to suffer.

Maldives

30

Playing Hardball

The Choice is between democracy and the status quo.



20

Afghanistan

Protecting the Protectors

The country is very insecure after exit of forces.



36

International

A People Adrift
They are all at sea, with no place to go.



44

India

Commuting Made Easy
Mumbai finds a solution to the vagaries of daily commuting.

Afghanistan

When Sweetness speaks
Has the thunder of guns been replaced by the softness of poetry? 46

Sri Lanka

Island's Dilemma
It is like being caught between the devil and the deep sea. 48

52

Maldives

Attracting Tourists
Even a pos-card destination needs to love in tourists.



REGULAR FEATURES

Editor's Mail	8
On Record	9
Briefs	10

COVER STORY

Whither MQM?	12
Fight for Survival	14
Which way the Party?	16

REGION

India	
Disturbing the Rhythm	18
Afghanistan	
Protecting the Protectors	20
Pakistan	
Chasing Dreams	22
Bangladesh	
Blood Relatives	24
Sri Lanka	
Turncoats and About-faces	26

Nepal	
The Days After	28

Maldives	
Playing Hardball	30

Bhutan	
Mountain Dynamo	34

INTERNATIONAL	
A People Adrift	36

NEIGHBOR	
The Alternate Bank	38

FEATURES	
Pakistan	
Needs and Priorities	40
Climate Change Tragedy	42

India	
Commuting Made Easy	44

Afghanistan	
When Sweetness Speaks	46

Sri Lanka	
Island's Dilemma	48

Nepal	
Weed Capital	50

The Maldives	
Attracting Tourists	52

Bhutan	
Culture of Color	54

SOUTHASIA 15 Years Ago	58
-------------------------------	----



Jubilee
INSURANCE

HE'S YOUR PRIDE. MAKE HIM PROUD.

Secure his future with **Jubilee's Education Plans**

Making the right decision today can help you secure a brighter future for your child. Jubilee Life, Pakistan's most trusted life insurance company, offers customizable plans with easy processing, making the right decision a simple one!

SMS 'DOST' to 8398 to learn more.

www.Jubileelife.com | UAN: (021) 111-111-554 |  /JubileeLifeInsurance

SOUTHASIA

JULY 2015 VOL.19 ISSUE 7

PRESIDENT & EDITOR IN CHIEF

Syed Jawaid Iqbal

MANAGING EDITOR

Zeba Jawaid

EDITOR

Javed Ansari

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Mahrugh Farooq – Samina Wahid

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

S. G. Jilane

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Raza Khan - Faizan Usmani

J. Enver - Mahrugh Farooq

Majyd Aziz - Malik Muhammad Ashraf

Muhammad Ali Ehsan - Muhammad Omar Iftikhar

Samina Wahid - S.G. Jilane

S. M. Hali - S. Mubashir Noor - Taha Kehar

Zufah Ansari

GRAPHICS & LAYOUT

Kamran Ghulam Nabi

Haroon Rasheed

MARKETING & ADVERTISING

GENERAL MANAGER

Furqan Ali Khan

MANAGER

Aqam-ud-Din Khan

COORDINATOR

Muhammad Rashid

DIGITAL ADVERTISING

Ali Danish

CIRCULATION

Danish Shahid

EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICE

20-C, Lane 12, off Khayaban-e-Ittehad, Phase II

Extension, DHA, Karachi - 75500, Pakistan

Phones: 92-21-35313821-24

Fax: 92-21-35313832

Website: www.southasia.com.pk

Email: info@southasia.com.pk

MIDDLE EAST

REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE

Pirana Advertising JLT

PO Box 486207, 1704, Level 17, HDS Tower,

Jumeirah Lake Towers Cluster F, Dubai, UAE

Phone: +97-14-4508309

Fax: +97-14-3688487

Email: info@piranagroup.com

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

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

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

Silver Lining

The first officially acknowledged peace talks between the Afghan Taliban and the Kabul government concluded recently in Murree, Pakistan, with an agreement to meet again soon. The location of Murree as a venue for talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government raised hopes for a political breakthrough. The United States and China also attended the talks and it was obvious that both countries were taking more than a passing interest in the whole process. Pakistan Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, while on a visit to Norway at the time, said he hoped the talks would be helpful for peace and stability. Pakistan had hosted the meeting as a tentative step towards ending more than 13 years of war in Afghanistan and also as a peace move towards its own terrorism problems. It was being hoped that the budding peace process would end an escalating conflict that had killed thousands of people. For decades, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been marred by mutual mistrust and suspicion. But with the new administration of Ashraf Ghani in place in Kabul and a series of outreaches by Pakistan's military chief, Gen. Raheel Sharif, there were signs of major changes for the long-wary neighbors. Last November, President Ashraf Ghani visited Pakistan and opened a new chapter of mutual cooperation between the two countries. There was more military and intelligence sharing, with Afghanistan launching counterterrorism actions against fugitive Pakistani militants. Afghan officials also acknowledged that Pakistani counterterrorism measures were improving security along their border.

It augured well for everyone that Islamabad was abandoning its past interventionist policy in Afghanistan. Even then, Afghan and Pakistani troops continued to face off along a part of the mutual border and exchanges of fire caused casualties on both sides. As a result, it was being believed that the warming of bilateral relations Pakistan and Afghanistan would be undermined, much to the glee of Afghan chief executive Abdullah Abdullah who does not hold the same views as Ashraf Ghani vis.-a- vis. Pakistan, as well as the Indians who never want the Afghans and Pakistanis to become friends. It is becoming clear now that the Afghan President is under immense pressure and that is why his approach to relations with Pakistan has become somewhat ambivalent. He did start making reconciliation overtures towards Pakistan from the time he came into power but it gave rise to bitter criticism from his own countrymen. Before Ghani became President, there was a long history of rocky relations between his country and Pakistan. Ghani's predecessor Hamid Karzai hardly did anything to improve these relations. In the beginning of his tenure, Ghani made a sincere effort to open a new chapter in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations but his initiative ran into all kinds of glitches. This was compounded by the fact that many of Kabul's high-security zones witnessed a series of terrorist attacks. For instance, a car bomb was detonated outside the national assembly in Kabul when the newly appointed defence minister, Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, was making a speech.

Until recently, both politically and strategically, Ghani could not have afforded to be complacent about the potentially negative ramifications of Pakistan's inability to rein in the Taliban. But it is heartening to note that the Taliban seem to have agreed to a strategy of 'talking while fighting.' An important development that may have focused the Taliban mind is the reported rise of the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan. Clashes between the Taliban and IS have been reported in the eastern part of the country. US drones have been making strikes on the IS in the area and have killed many of their key commanders, the most notable among them being Shahidullah Shahid who had defected to the IS from the Taliban. Now the Taliban seem to be calculating that they can do 'business' with President Ashraf Ghani's government as one of their 'own'. The IS is considered by them a foreign interloper trying to force its way into their space and it is obvious that neither the Afghan Taliban nor Kabul or Islamabad want the IS to enter the region. This is perhaps what has hastened the cobbling together of an understanding between the previously warring forces. That this would also lead to regional peace is a silver lining in the cloud.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

Involving the Army



It was a refreshing to see a new perspective on the everlasting issue of the degree of freedom allotted to the military to involve themselves in affairs of the state in the article, 'Take Them IN to Keep Them OUT'. I agree with the author wholeheartedly as, with the help of the analogy of the camel and the Bedouin, he eloquently talks about the government's need to arrive at a settlement with the army rather than indulge in this endless tug of war.

As a professor of history at a local college, I have studied various incidents in the past in which the Pakistani government has continued to maintain a love-hate relationship with the military; banishing it to the barracks when things are under control and sending it an SOS every time a problem has reared its ugly head. I think it's about time the Pakistan government and the army reach an agreement to 'live and let live' for the sake of sanctity and sovereignty of Pakistan.

Khalid Zaman
Karachi, Pakistan

Terror at Sea

It was horrific to know of the unfortunate Pakistani fishermen who met with their untimely death at the hands of incompetent Indian Coast Guard personnel. I agree with the author of 'Horror at Sea' when he expresses his incredulity at the extremely high level of unprofessionalism exhibited by the Coast Guard who somehow deemed it unnecessary to board the boat to check whether their suspicions were correct and instead chose to sink the fishing boat, killing the four unarmed fishermen onboard.

This incident has definitely put the Indian



government in hot waters as, according to laws stipulated by the government with regard to the entry of a foreign vessel on its native waters, boarding and searching is a standard requirement. Though the author has highlighted anti-Pakistan sentiment as a possible cause behind the incident, I personally feel it is mere carelessness and incompetence on behalf of the Indian Coastal Guard for which they should be punished.

Kiran Rajani
New Delhi, India

A Turnaround

It is refreshing to see that Afghanistan finally has a president committed to enforcing peace in the region and ridding the



country of the menace of Taliban. The way President Ashraf Ghani is going back and forth between peace talks with the Pakistani government and the Taliban regime shows his sincere effort towards establishing peace and harmony for his people in a land ridden with endless violence.

Though the author of the article, 'New Overtures', has expressed concern over the President's strategy of putting 'all eggs in one basket', I believe he is exhausting every avenue that he has to ensure an end to violence in his country. In order to strengthen its position on the diplomatic front, Ashraf Ghani has sought the assistance of its closest and oldest ally, Pakistan. He is trying to reach a peaceful solution that is viable to both parties through negotiations with the Taliban. If this isn't a well thought out strategy towards combating aggression and antagonism in the region, then I don't know what is.

Ahmed Gul
Kabul, Afghanistan

An Endless Cycle of Violence

One statement from the article, 'Merry Go Round', perfectly sums up the sentiment many members from the international community as well as from within Bangladesh itself have of its political affairs; that politics in Bangladesh is not for the faint of heart. The constant tug of war between the two matriarchs, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, has exhausted the country monetarily as well as resulted in hundreds of people losing their lives to riots breaking out across the nation.

It hurts to think of how a great number of years that could have been spent focusing on the development of major sectors of the economy were instead wasted at the hands of two political foes who just cannot see much



beyond their own egos. If what the author says about the U.S being able to incentivize Sheikh Hasina into brokering a deal with Khaleda Zia is true, then perhaps this is the only hope the Bangladeshis have of any peace.

Noor-un-Nabi
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Write to SouthAsia

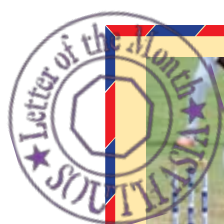
Articles and letters sent to us via email or by post should be in clear characters.

Where required, they will be edited for clarity and space.

Email: info@southasia.com.pk **Website:** www.southasia.com.pk

Post: 20-C, Lane 12, off Khayaban-e-Ittehad,

Phase II Extension, DHA, Karachi 75500



Cricket Might

It is a great thing that two South Asian cricket teams, namely Pakistan and Sri Lanka, played a successful Test series recently and gave to spectators in the ground as well as audiences on television and radio, some very absorbing cricket. It was a well fought series and there were sterling performances from both sides that cricket lovers had the opportunity to relish. Many records were also broken in the process and it all went to the credit of the players that they offered such great entertainment to the public. It is this healthy spirit that the game should always be played. Pakistan won the Test series 2-1 but they did not make an overly big noise about it. Similarly, the Sri Lankans took their defeat in true cricketing spirit and never came across as if they had a spiteful attitude.

It needs to be realized that South Asia has four full ICC status teams in its midst – India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. This makes it the strongest cricket playing region in the world. In addition, two countries that are fast coming up on the international cricket scene are Afghanistan and Nepal. With his kind of representation, it is time that the game of cricket were patronized in South Asia on more healthy lines – paving the way in the near future to even an international-level regional competition.

Faisal Siddiqi
Karachi, Pakistan

Balancing Act

John Kerry's visit to Sri Lanka marked an important turning point for the country as it helped open doors to positive bilateral relations between America and Sri Lanka. John Kerry is the first U.S Secretary of State to visit Sri Lanka in over a

decade, which says a lot about the inclination of the US towards increasing its stronghold in the region.

Although the author of the article, 'Desires and Challenges,' has highlighted America's vested interests, ranging from establishing a strong foothold in South Asia to minimizing China's influence to even looking for basing opportunities for U.S Air Force operations in the region, as the reason behind its sudden interest in Sri Lanka, it still does not undermine the extreme benefit Sri Lanka stands to gain from bilateral relations with the superpower as it is already looking to build a stronger economy as well as effectively counter human rights violators.

Ajantha Kumar Jaffna, Sri Lanka



"Don't attack us, don't challenge our territorial integrity because we are not a small power, we're a major and nuclear power. Don't push us."
Pervez Musharraf, former President of Pakistan



"Peace with Pakistan is our first priority but this peace should be based on conditions from Afghanistan."
Ashraf Ghani, President of Afghanistan



"Strengthening the party at every tier is necessary. We've already formed teams to this end."
Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh



"Electricity is like oil for us and is the most abundant resource. My target for Bhutan is a 70% reduction in fossil fuel imports by 2020."
Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan



"The sooner we realize the importance of the protection of our environment, it is better for the whole human race and also the other subjects that enjoy Mother Nature's blessings."
Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka



"We stand for every one of the 1.25 billion Indians regardless of caste or creed, and we will work for the progress of every one of them."
Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India



"The officers and soldiers of Pakistan army are playing a vital role for the success of operation Zarb-e-Azb and the implementation of the anti-terror national action plan and they enjoy complete support of the nation."
Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan



"We cherish the traditional friendship between the Maldives and China and we stand ready to work with them to boost cooperation in relevant projects."
Abdulla Yameen, President of the Maldives



"Neighbouring countries including India and China have wished for timely promulgation of a democratic constitution and peace and development in Nepal."
Sushil Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal



"Many governments would like to rid themselves of unwanted residents and those that countenance statelessness threaten to increase the problems associated with any who are poorly integrated."
Sadakat Kadri, British lawyer and author

PAKISTAN | LAHORE

Aiding Research

Under the project of 'Centres for Advanced Studies' (CAS), Pakistani and American universities are going to undertake collaborative research to address energy, agriculture and water concerns and challenges. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will invest \$127 million to strengthen Pakistani universities in their research initiatives, which will have a direct impact on long-term economic growth and development of the country.

Participating universities in this international program include



University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar and Arizona State University (in the energy sector), University of Agriculture, Faisalabad and University of California, Davis (in agriculture sector) and National University of Science and Technology (NUST). In addition, Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro and University of Utah will undertake collaborative research in the water sector. **S**

KARACHI

Mega Film Festival

The Karawood International Film Festival (KWIFF) is being held this month in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. It will feature more than 140 films from Pakistan and other countries. The Festival will entertain film viewers with exceptional films and videos produced both nationally and internationally. Best films in different categories will be awarded cash prizes. The mega movie gala will help the local film industry come out of its inertia and promote the positive image of Pakistan. The Karawood International Film Festival will also invite potential filmmakers to display their talents in the international market. **S**



INDIA | NEW DELHI

Common Satellite



There is good news for the eight SAARC nations as they will have their own SAARC satellite by December 2016, which will provide these countries a variety of public services related to disaster monitoring, education, communication and telemedicine, as well as a range of need-based services. Being launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the two-tonne satellite will comprise 12 Ku band transponders, wherein each transponder will be dedicated to one country in the SAARC region. At the last Saarc summit in Nepal in 2014, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed a regional satellite exclusively for the SAARC nations. The proposal was widely endorsed by the SAARC countries, including Pakistan, for having a region-specific satellite similar to the satellites operating in the North American and European regions. **S**

PATHANKROT



Wedding Gift

Think about getting married if you really want to build a toilet at home free of cost. This is what is offered by the provincial government in the Uttar Pradesh, India. Under the 'lucrative' offer, newlywed couples will be given a cheque of Rs. 12,000 as a subsidy for toilet construction, along with four trees. Under the ongoing Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) campaign initiated by the Government of India at the national level, consistent efforts are being made to bring about standard sanitation facilities, particularly in those rural areas where a majority of people tend to defecate out in the open. In addition, the gift of four saplings to the beneficiary couples also aims to fuel the pace of the tree plantation drive and increase the overall green cover manifold. **S**

MALDIVES

Saving Heritage

The Sri Lankan government has recently announced that it will reconstruct two heritage temples that were severely damaged by the earthquake in Nepal. These are the Rato Macchindranath Hindu Temple and the Anandakuti Vihar

Temple. This was made known at the international conference 'Toward a Resilient Nepal', which was held in Kathmandu. Organized by the Government of Nepal, the purpose of the international conference was to synchronize rebuilding efforts among international donor agencies, partner governments and non-governmental organizations involved in the relief and rescue operations and reconstruction phase, following the earthquake. **S**



BANGLADESH



Digitize 'n Deliver

To achieve its coveted Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021, the Government of Bangladesh has signed a partnership with the 'Better Than Cash Alliance' to accelerate rapid transition from conventional to digital payments. Supporting the government's vision to advance national financial inclusion, the historical move aims to deliver the most effective, efficient and instant access to

financial services equally for all citizens in Bangladesh. Under the Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021, the government is working to digitize all kinds of social security payments. This also includes the fees/bills paid by Bangladeshis to the Government for various services. The move also aims to digitize all forms of international and domestic remittances, including financial transactions for ecommerce, thus making Bangladesh the leading South Asian country to achieve this landmark. **S**

AFGHANISTAN

Brave Hearts

It takes a brave heart to hit the glass ceiling while living in the land of mountains. Seema Joyenda, a former member of the Afghan parliament, has done it again as she has been recently appointed as the provincial governor of Ghor, one of the poorest



areas in Afghanistan. Despite severe opposition and political hindrances, Ms. Joyenda, 43, is now gearing up to lead the province as she has been a representative of the region before and knows how to serve her people. After the appointment of a female Supreme Court justice and three female cabinet ministers, Joyenda's selection endorses Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani's prime objective to enhance the representation of local Afghani women in decision-making bodies at both governmental and political levels. **S**

BHUTAN

More Happiness

Categorized as the happiest nation in an agony-filled world, Bhutan plans to add more bliss to life through literary drives and mega festivals. The 6th edition of the annual Mountain Echoes Literary Festival will be held in Thimphu from August 19 to August 22, 2015. An exclusive initiative of the India-Bhutan Foundation, the festival will feature leading poets, writers, curators, artists, literary critics, film reviewers and analysts from all over the world. There will be a series of intellectual dialogues and exchange of ideas at the festival on a variety of subjects related to literature, visual arts and aesthetics. Ashwin Sanghi, Bahar Dutt, the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, Dasho Sherub Gyeltshen, Yonten Dargye, Josephine Chia, Kalki Koechin, Khenpo Phuntsok Tashi, Mayur Sharma, Rocky Singh, Pawo Choying Dorji, Prof. **S**





Whither MQM?

MQM's political future is at stake though it represents an important population segment.

By Javed Ansari

Pakistan is an unfortunate country in the sense that a very important part of its population still follows an estranged existence and is not a part of the mainstream in the true sense of the word. Pakistan came into being because the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent wanted their own homeland. They may have been a minority in the greater sense since the Hindus were much more in numbers and this was the prime reason why the Indian Muslims were not being treated even-handedly. Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah may have been a proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity in the beginning but when he realized that the Muslims were not receiving fair treatment, he changed his views and fought tooth and nail for an independent Pakistan and managed to win a separate homeland.

The news that Pakistan was to come into existence was a time of great rejoicing for the Muslims of India because they would now live in a land which they could call their

very own and pursue their ideals in an unfettered and free manner. That is how the great migration took place and most Muslims abandoned good jobs, thriving businesses and productive lands to migrate to Pakistan in droves. They used all kinds of transport – rail, road, sea and air – and some even walked to their new homeland. Even the tragic massacres they were subjected to on the way, especially on the road and train routes, did not lessen their resolve to reach Pakistan.

The immigrants from India spread to all parts of Pakistan but it was the city of Karachi which bore the greatest brunt of the migration. The immigrants settled in the metropolis, taking up jobs of all kinds and running the industries and merchant segments. The city galloped in size from a population of some three lakhs to millions in a matter of a few years.

The Urdu word for immigrant is 'Muhajir' and this is how those people were known who had come from India. It is a pity though that the word stuck on

a permanent basis and despite some 68 years of independence, the immigrants and their subsequent generations are still known as Muhajirs. What has perhaps further hardened the Muhajir identity are the political trends that had been festering in independent Pakistan over decades and which exploded into an organizational form somewhere in the 80s in the form of a political party devoted to winning the rights of the Muhajirs.

The trends had its roots in how the immigrant community, largely resident in Karachi and responsible for the city's commercial and industrial vibrancy as well of the country, was meted unfair treatment compared to the privileges enjoyed by the 'sons of the soil'. The migrants were subjected to quotas in education and in government jobs. Some political leaders even made a distinct effort to draw a line between those who belonged to the land and had become Pakistani by birth and those who had migrated from across the border after 1947.

This is where a schism occurred between the locals and the settlers and was duly exploited on the basis of 'Muhajir rights.' Since the immigrants were generally a better educated and more enlightened lot, their claim to jobs and educational opportunities was also greater but they were denied what they rightfully deserved. It was this denial of rights that hardened the Muhajirs into becoming a distinctly separate community and into their claiming the city of Karachi, as well as other urban areas in Sindh, such as Hyderabad, Sukkur, etc., where the majority of them lived, as their own strongholds.

The APMSO (All Pakistan Muslim Students Organization) first appeared on the scene and claimed to fight for educational rights of the Muhajirs. The central figure in the APMSO, namely Altaf Hussain, then converted the student party into a political party and called it the MQM – Muhajir Qaumi Movement.

The MQM purported to fight for the rights of the Muhajirs – or the immigrant community that was said to have been sidelined by the rest of the population. It made the middle class its central platform and claimed that it represented their rights in getting them even-handed educational privileges, better employment opportunities and an identity that would establish them on an equal footing with other Pakistanis.

Their ideals and objectives may have been perfect and best suited to the Muhajir milieu. There was a little problem though in the immigrant community continuing to represent the Muhajirs and thus excluding other middle class communities from its folds. It was for this reason that at one point the name of the party was changed from Muhajir Qaumi Movement to Muthaheda Qaumi Movement to make it a more inclusive party for all Pakistanis. The problem remained, however, that the manner in which the MQM operated was not all-inclusive and its overall methodology as well as image continued to be urban Sindh-centric. Other ills also crept in and were largely attributed to the MQM, such as bhatta (extortion money), kidnapping for ransom, etc. It is true that other criminal elements may also have jumped on to the bandwagon and taken to such criminal acts but it is initially the MQM that was identified with these evils.

Another development that did not work well for the image of the party was the fact that its leader, Altaf Hussain, went over to the UK and

took residence in London while his party was left rudderless in Pakistan and was run by committee rather than being propelled forward by the man who had founded it. He resorted to 'dictating' things from afar by remote control rather than instituting a more democratic leadership style with his presence in Pakistan.

If the MQM was or is a party of Pakistan's middle class, it has failed to live up to its claim. The resident of urban Sindh is as lost today as

was the Nazim (mayor) of Karachi. It forgets to mention that this was in the days when Gen. Pervez Musharraf was the President of Pakistan and it was on his behest that the Nazim received an unbroken stream of funds for the developments undertaken in Mustafa Kamal's years.

The party is also subject to a lot of wear and tear from within and outside. It does not seem to have attended with any seriousness to the issue of succession within the party. Altaf

The resident of urban Sindh is as lost today as he was three decades back.



he was three decades back. He is as deprived of the fair right to exist as a respectable citizen of Pakistan. This is of course not to say that other Pakistanis are immersed in rivers of milk and honey because the country's political leadership in general has not done much for the masses. But the MQM had all the opportunity to better the lot of its diehard followers and it has not delivered. It may not be a part of the Sindh or city government at present but it has had very good opportunities in the past to do good for the people. It would perhaps claim that it built quite a bit of Karachi's infrastructure in terms of roads and flyovers when its own Mustafa Kamal

Hussain, though he is a British national now, continues to lead the MQM from the safety of London but what after him? There is no successor of the great leader in view. The MQM is perhaps engaged in a lot of soul-searching these days and in weeding out those evils that it has been identified with from time to time. This is just what is required of it because whatever its current problems, it continues to be a party that represents an important segment of Pakistan's population and it must continue to represent them in a more vibrant manner. ■

The writer is Editor of Southasia Magazine.

Fight for Survival

MQM has fallen on hard times and its very survival is at stake.

By S.G. Jilane

The journey has been long - 23 years precisely. The pilots are also different. First it was Brig. Asif Haroon of the Pakistan Army. Now it is Owen Bennett-Jones of BBC-2.

It was in mid-1992 when the army launched Operation Clean Up (a.k.a. Blue Fox) against MQM, during Mian Nawaz Sharif's first coming, that Brigadier Asif Haroon went public with the claim that the party was planning to break away from Pakistan and form a new state by the name of Jinnahpur.

Amazingly, however, he did not

take any local media person into confidence but invited journalists from the Punjab to break the news. He held out a map of the alleged new state at which his guests looked with wide-jawed amazement. The brigadier claimed that the map of the proposed break-away state and other documents had been recovered from the MQM's offices.

But on October 19, 1992, the media carried an ISPR press release, conveying the Army's denial of the knowledge of the "Jinnahpur" plan.

The ISPR denied that the Army had any evidence concerning the so-called Plan. It also denounced the newspaper stories in that context as baseless and asserted that the Army had neither handed over to the government any document or map as reported, nor was it in the possession of any evidence regarding the alleged "Jinnahpur Plan."

Seventeen years after the incident, the conscience of Brigadier (R) Imtiaz Billa and General (R) Naseer Akhtar who had played a pivotal role in the



1992 operation suddenly woke up and they confessed in a television programme that "Jinnahpur was nothing but a drama against the MQM," adding the military had not found any maps.

Yet, far from making amends and tendering an apology to MQM, no one raised an eyebrow at Brig. Haroon for creating the Jinnahpur stunt exclusively before Punjab journalists, to the exclusion of the local media. Nor did the army institute any inquiry about the source of the Jinnahpur map which Haroon had displayed and take any disciplinary action against the errant brigadier for his malicious propaganda against the MQM.

At that time, as well, the army had made every effort to dismantle and destroy the Mohajir (now Muttaheda) Qaumi Movement. It had lured away a few of the party's office bearers and sponsored a new party under the name of MQM (Haqiqi). The supporters of the original MQM were jailed in large numbers and many of them killed. Homes were raided and floors were dug up to recover imaginary caches of arms. As a result, the party convener Altaf Hussain went into self-exile in London.

This time, during the third coming of Mian Nawaz Sharif, the MQM is again in the eye of the storm. The operation is being conducted by the paramilitary rangers, with the army's fullest backing. The end-game seems the same as before: breaking up the party or, at least, forcing Altaf Hussain out.

The Rangers claim they are acting indiscriminately against all lawless elements. But the MQM complains that the operation is "MQM-specific," because its workers are being detained at random. The detained ones are seldom, if ever, brought before the courts. According to MQM sources, some of its workers have even disappeared. Meanwhile, Dawn has reported that since September 2013, when the Rangers started their operation, they arrested 10,353 suspects out of whom they have so far handed over 4,953 to the police. There is no information about the fate of the rest, nor of any further action with regard to those handed over to the police.

Altaf Hussain's public addresses by telephone have been blocked. MQM workers who approach people for zakat and fitra donations are being hauled up. Even the party's HQ at the famous Nine Zero has been raided. Yet, the morale of

Altaf Hussain's supporters remains unshaken as evident from the result of the by-election for NA-246, shortly after the raid on Nine Zero, when the MQM candidate routed his rival PTI candidate. At this juncture, as if to inject a heavy dose of adrenaline into the campaign against MQM, the BBC has taken a plunge with a special report alleging a nexus between the MQM and the Indian spy agency, RAW.

The BBC claimed it learnt from an authoritative Pakistani source that "officials in Pakistan's MQM party have told the UK authorities they received Indian government funds and that India has trained hundreds of MQM militants over the last 10 years. Taking the cue, some Pakistani TV channels aired a document purporting to be the statement of one MQM office-bearer, Tariq Mir, made before the London

worker has given any demonstration of what he learned. Meanwhile, Indian authorities have dismissed all these allegations with contempt and ridicule, because, RAW is Pakistan's traditional whipping boy.

However, Balochistan home minister, Sarfaraz Bugti, has given the clarion call to ban the MQM. Others were advising the MQM to go to the court to wash off the stain from its image, instead of seeking proof of the allegations against the party and treating it as innocent until its guilt was proved. But, MQM did not go to any court when Brig. Haroon made extremely defamatory charges against it. It just waited patiently till the clouds were blown away. That is what it seems to be doing now: bide the time.

The issue as to why the army remains dead bent upon uprooting the

The end-game seems the same as before: breaking up the party or, at least, forcing Altaf Hussain out.

police. The statement alleges that the "MQM had been receiving funds from the Indian government since 1994 with only four top leaders kept in the loop."

But, BBC Urdu reported that London Metropolitan Police denied that "a purported confession statement by Muttahida Qaumi Movement leader Tariq Mir was an official document which had been leaked." It quoted the Metropolitan Police spokesman, Alan Crockford as confirming that, "after reviewing the purported testimony carefully it was found that they were not official documents of record."

Even otherwise, the authenticity of the document that was aired, appeared suspect, because, except the portions relating to MQM receiving funds from India, it was entirely blacked out.

Yet, it did not deter sections of the media from carrying further fantastic stories about the MQM-RAW connection. One report alleged that MQM cadres traveled from Pakistan to Bangkok. From there they went to the RAW training centre at Daryaganj in Delhi and after due training, returned home by the same route. But, what skills they were taught remains unknown because so far no MQM

MQM, needs the attention of political analysts, particularly because the latter openly supports the army. For example, MQM was the only political party that took out a rally in support of Operation Zarb-e-Azb.

In certain quarters there is talk about letting the MQM function minus Altaf Hussain. But that is a fantasy. Altaf Hussain is the man who instilled dignity and self-esteem among the poorer and middle class sections of the Muhajirs. He gave them a distinct identity. Therefore, Altaf Hussain cannot be separated from the party. He has several times offered to retire but his followers would have none of it. He has also warned that any attempt to use force to remove him might have ugly consequences. Mr. Hussain is facing other problems as well - being a suspect in a money laundering case in London. But that has nothing to do with the MQM as a political party.

However, what remains to be seen is whether MQM will survive the present onslaught as it did the earlier one. ■

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

Which way the Party?

The time has come for the MQM to take a serious look at its workings as a political party and adjust itself accordingly.

By S. M. Hali



MQM, which came into being as the Mohajir Qaumi Movement in 1984 and renamed itself as Muttahida Qaumi Movement in 1997 has always lived dangerously. If conspiracy theories are lent credence, MQM's genesis is owed to former military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq who launched a political riposte to counter Pakistan People's Party's mass appeal post Z.A. Bhutto. Irrespective,

MQM attracted large numbers of Mohajirs (settlers from India), who perceived themselves to be victims of discrimination by the quota system that gave preference to certain ethnicities for admissions in educational institutions and employment in civil services. MQM's founder Altaf Hussain, a fiery orator and scion of a lower middle class family had gained prominence as a student of Karachi University as

founder of the All Pakistan Mohajir Student Organization in late Seventies. The party has a certain nuisance value, since it manages to grab a sizable number of seats both in the national and provincial assemblies (where its hold is limited to urban Sindh only). Unable to lead either house independently, MQM uses its parliamentary presence to leverage for its own positioning in various coalition governments inviting

criticism for its policies of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. Additionally, its militant wing has caused several crackdowns on MQM. Because of its tight stranglehold over Karachi, Pakistan's financial capital, various internal and external forces have either challenged it in turf wars or courted it for their personal objectives.

Besides the use of force, counter balance has also been sought. In his book *The Idea of Pakistan*, Stephen Cohen suggests that MQM Haqiqi, a breakaway faction was created by the collusion of Pakistani Government in power and the Establishment/ISI to weaken MQM and was supported by successive federal governments and the military. In the years to come, federal governments switched between forming alliance with MQM and fighting against it to establish greater control over Karachi.

The 1992 "Operation Clean Up" left thousands of its workers dead or incarcerated and its leader Altaf Hussain has been in a self imposed exile in the UK since there are murder cases pending against him but he continues to control MQM remotely, drawing huge disciplined crowds even for his frequent telephonic addresses. It is ironic that in 1992, the MQM was accused of the "Jinnahpur Conspiracy", i.e. plotting to form a separate state but later senior army officers—Brigadier Imtiaz former DG of Intelligence Bureau and General Naseer Akhtar, then Corps Commander—admitted publicly that Jinnahpur was "nothing but a drama" against MQM for the military operation and there was no map of Jinnahpur.

The US and UK have reportedly used MQM because in the heydays of the US/NATO operations in Afghanistan, the entire logistic support inclusive of weapons, food supply and auxiliary equipment was transiting from Karachi's busy shipyards. MQM apparently facilitated a smooth transit. As Karachi turned into a hotbed of Al-Qaeda and Taliban fugitives, both the CIA and MI-6 found happy hunting grounds for their own covert operations and a close relationship with MQM may have sustained their operations.

Gradually, MQM came under the radar of international systems. In 2006, the Federal Court of Canada declared the MQM as a terrorist organization, prohibiting party members from visiting or residing in Canada, considering it a serious security threat to Canada. The Court declared MQM to be engaged in



the harassment of opponents and using the proceeds of crime to fund the party. Matters became grievous when on 16 September 2010, Dr Imran Farooq, a senior MQM leader, also a British citizen, was murdered in London. Scotland Yard has been investigating the case and a number of suspects have been arrested in Pakistan and the UK. The situation worsened for MQM when In June 2014, the Metropolitan Police raided the London home of its leader, Altaf Hussain, on suspicion of money-laundering. It is paradoxical that on 22 November 2009, Pakistan government had released the limited list of beneficiaries of a legal act called National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), which granted amnesty to politicians, political workers and bureaucrats who were accused of corruption, embezzlement, money-laundering, murder and terrorism between 1 January 1986 and 12 October 1999, the period during democratic governments in Pakistan. None of the MQM personalities were included on charges of financial corruption although two of its senior leaders, Altaf Hussain and Farooq Sattar were named for their alleged involvement in numerous murder cases.

Even more damning was the recent BBC Report charging MQM members with receiving training in subversion and funds from the Indian intelligence agency RAW. The obvious question as to why the Brits, who were privy to RAW-MQM collusion disclosed by the alleged MQM whistleblower Tariq Mir in 2012, remained silent till now. The rationale as mentioned above: MI-6 was using MQM for its own gains, which had now become diminished.

The RAW-MQM nexus exposé has put India on the backfoot since it had moved the UN Sanctions Committee to take action against Pakistan for acquitting the alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks Zakiur Rahman Lakhvi. Chinese veto blocked the Indian move but now

India itself has been put on the defensive. The damaging BBC Report, Narendra Modi's public pronouncement in Bangladesh of India's role in the secession of East Pakistan and Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar's affirmation that terrorists should be used to "neutralise terrorists" and India has been employing this strategy make a very plausible case against India. Pakistan should prepare its law-suit in consultations with the British government. Any half

baked attempt can backfire hence a properly drafted dossier proving Indian machinations, which can stand the test of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, must be presented. Lessons should be drawn from the thirty plus dossiers of evidence presented by India implicating Pakistan in the Mumbai attacks; each of which was based on such flimsy evidence that the local judiciary rejected it.

As far as MQM itself is concerned, it should conduct its own accountability and black sheep if any who have colluded with the enemy or have engaged in unlawful acts, must be weeded out. The government of Pakistan should wait for the British legal system to take its course in the cases against Altaf Hussain. Those politicians, who have scores to settle with MQM, must desist from labeling it as traitors till proven guilty. Treason is a much abused word in Pakistani politics. One is reminded of the 1975 reference brought against the now defunct National Awami Party (NAP) in the Supreme Court. It was a case of personal vendetta by Bhutto against Khan Abdul Wali Khan and the judicial system dismissed the suit since evidence proved that the NAP leader was only guilty of having an irate temper. Leaders like Ghulam Mustafa Khar have claimed of marching in perched on Indian Army's Tanks. Others too have issued unsavoury comments against the state or the army but the charge of treason is made of sterner stuff. Even US Presidents have not escaped being tarnished. Remember the Cold War era, when Senator Joseph McCarthy had accused Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman periods in office of "twenty years of treason." The indictment of MQM thus must come through a transparent legal process and not the media. **S**

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



Disturbing the Rhythm

As China proceeds to share its growing prosperity with many countries in Asia, the US throws the spanner in the works.

By Taha Kehar

Conventional wisdom would have us believe that US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter's visit to India in June heralded a new chapter in foreign relations between the two countries. However,

like all diplomatic arrangements, the recently-revived partnership serves a doubled-edged purpose and represents little more than a marriage of convenience between the US and India.

Earlier in the month, the news of Carter's visit had set rumor mills turning about what the outcome of the meeting would be. More often than not, there was a wave of optimism surrounding the defence

secretary's arrival.

Analysts believed that if the talks were successful, India would enter a new phase in its defence relations with America. A large fraction of the media insisted Carter's decision to reach out to the country would help bridge the gaps that had grown over the years.

Initially, there were only a few people who vehemently opposed the decision. It appeared as if the promise of improvements in defence relations with the US had lulled people into a false sense of security. The main reason for this was Carter's first-hand experience in bureaucracy. Moreover, the fact that he had taken a genuine interest in addressing the problems which plague India was welcome proof that he wanted to bring the country back on the road to progress.

The Indian government had also hoped US assistance would help add flesh to the bare bones of its own plans for development and prosperity in the country.

Fortunately, the expectations were not entirely one-sided. During his visit to Singapore, Carter had promised enhanced defence relations would increase prospects of maritime security, based on aircraft carrier and jet engine technology. Furthermore, he said the United States was working on creating new avenues to complement India's "Act East policy."

However, even before the visit, there were numerous stumbling blocks in the US's commitment to the Indian defence strategy. For instance, there was – and still remains – an imbalance of power over the extent to which the India-US Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) can go. Carter holds the reins and can make most of the decisions on the sharing of technology and equipment.

The likelihood that India will be able to reap any short-term benefits from the arrangement is also limited. In the past, the BJP-led Indian government has held countless meetings with the US over DTTI. However, the process is likely to take a year or more to reach fruition as the race for the US presidential elections is likely to assume center-stage.

Carter's visit came at a time when other countries in Asia are threatened by China's growing dominance in the region. During his time in Singapore, Carter had castigated the Chinese government for reclaiming land in the

Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj voiced reservations about the project and deemed it unacceptable.

South China Sea to establish military bases. Under these circumstances, the defence secretary is likely to act with the intention of establishing stronger ties with China's neighbors to thwart the country's influence.

On the face of it, Carter's visit to India led to the renewal of a 10-year defence cooperation framework to guarantee security and the ratification of a new defence pact. Under the partnership, co-production and co-development of naval defence capabilities will be enhanced and the US will help India design an aircraft carrier and jet engines. There are ample reasons to believe America's mounting insecurities over China's influences have fuelled these developments.

A few days before India signed an agreement with the US, Vietnam also established a partnership with the latter to seek suitable equipment to improve and protect its maritime assets. Some analysts believe these pacts and heightened cooperation between the US and military officials of various countries are welcome proof of an ongoing strategy to sabotage China's plans to strengthen its military influence.

Similarly, Dean Cheng, senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation, has insisted China does not want to see the US gain a stronghold in the region as it could pose a threat to its activities in the South China Sea.

Amid the growing distrust between both countries, there is a limited scope to develop a calm rhythm to foreign relations. Until this senseless blame game comes to a halt, peace and stability are unlikely to return to Asia.

This recurring battle for supremacy has raised the stakes of the US in most Asian countries. Senator John McCain, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has gone on record to say most Asian countries are looking towards America to establish a firm leadership and strong partnership to deal with China's alarming activities in the region.

If Carter's promises to India

are analyzed in light of these developments, there seems very little to rejoice over.

However, India is not a passive victim to this struggle for supremacy. To the contrary, it has only agreed to these arrangements because there is a strong possibility that they will bring progress and prosperity to the country.

At this critical juncture, India finds itself in a weak position in South Asia. Over the last few months, Pakistan and China have been contemplating new avenues for development. In April, the Chinese president visited Islamabad to chalk out the underlying basis of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The \$46 million megaproject, if it materializes, is likely to change Pakistan's fate and strengthen ties between both countries.

Recently, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj voiced reservations about the project and deemed it unacceptable. However, the matter did not end there. After receiving an appropriate rejoinder from the Pakistan government, India shifted its focus to Bangladesh and raised the specter of the East Pakistan imbroglio to win the heart of its neighbor. Both countries collectively blamed Pakistan for promoting terrorism.

Much to its own dismay, India's veiled assault at Pakistan did not generate the desired impact as the latter has already launched a series of military offensives in North Waziristan Agency and Khyber Agency to stem the scourge of militancy.

Faced with a growing sense of insecurity, India might have perceived Carter's visit as a means of restoring its strength in the region. At this stage, it is difficult to say if it blindly trusts the promises made by the defence secretary. However, the fact that the arrangement serves the sectional interests of both countries speaks volumes about the underlying intentions behind this partnership. ■

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

Protecting the Protectors



There are many non-government organizations in Afghanistan that help the suffering population. The government must ensure their protection at all costs.

By Muhammad Ali Ehsan

General Stanley McChrystal was the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010. A man about whom the former US Defence Secretary Robert Gates had said, 'He is perhaps the finest warrior and leader of men in combat I have ever met.' General McChrystal had famously said that 'US could beat Taliban with one hand tied behind its back. But the enemy was not the problem, protecting the people was.'

Whether it is the conduct of a UN legitimized military operation by an international force in a targeted country or the provision of humanitarian relief and aid by the international aid agencies there, the local militants who take up arms against such interventions almost invariably respond by raising the stakes

of the ethical and moral dimension of the war and to do that they target and kill the innocent civilians on one pretext or the other. The Taliban are doing the same in Afghanistan and today, in the crosshair of their gun sights, are the workers of international aid agencies working there.

The job that these aid workers perform is not easy. The mission of the international aid workers is always very challenging and full of dangers. Yet men and women belonging to the aid organizations put their lives at stake to undertake and execute humanitarian relief missions in countries where the war weary people deserve immediate relief. But can international aid workers continue their work in Afghanistan given the increased number of attacks they have come under in that country

this year? What can Afghanistan do about it? Can it afford the numerous aid agencies to wind up their work and leave the country? Would this not have serious consequences for the people who heavily rely on their aid in the absence of aid and services that should be provided by the government of Afghanistan itself? Does the Afghan government have any security plan and do its security forces retain the ability and the capacity to safeguard and protect the international aid organizations in the country? These are some of the critical questions the answers to which will actually determine the continuity or partial and total discontinuity of humanitarian aid work in Afghanistan in the coming days by many NGOs.

People in Need (PIN) had been delivering humanitarian work in



Aid workers in Afghanistan run a feeding program for the undernourished and malnourished children.

the coming months.

Whether it is Americans, Russians, Indians, Iranians, Chinese, Saudi Arabians or Pakistanis, all seem to have their own interests in the war-torn country. Unfortunately, everything these countries have done so far in Afghanistan has remained tactical and has not been able to change the bigger picture which is, that despite the huge aid that Afghanistan continues to receive from some of these countries, it remains very insecure and amongst the fifteen least developed countries in the world.

What could reduce the security threat in Afghanistan is the continuity and sustainability of military to military cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The fight against terrorism has gained impetus but so has the level of cooperation between the two countries since the election of President Ashraf Ghani. The security interest, like the long border of the two countries, is 'shared' and it is not only the Taliban but now the emergence of the ISIS in the region that not only worries these two countries but the whole world community.

However, the assurance of the leadership of the two countries at their joint press conference in Kabul on 12 May 2015 is very re-assuring. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said that 'the enemies of Afghanistan cannot be friends of Pakistan' and President Ghani in return said that 'enemies of Pakistan cannot be friends of Afghanistan.' If this could move beyond the leadership rhetoric and could be seriously implemented as a joint resolution for bilateral military cooperation between the two countries, the criminals and militants on each side will find it very difficult to plan, organize and execute attacks in either country. As much as the aid agencies and their workers are busy in Afghanistan to lay the foundation for the future peace and development of the country, the security forces in Afghanistan also need to provide them the much needed protection and security umbrella to execute their work.

Aid workers in Afghanistan run a feeding program for the undernourished and malnourished children, they provide

medical care, assist people who get displaced from the conflict zones and extend help to almost all the vulnerable and needy people who require such help and assistance. The Taliban who officially espouse a policy that rejects attacks on humanitarian workers need to re-examine the impact of the brutality of such attacks not only against whom they are targeted but against the very people of Afghanistan who will suffer the most when and if such aid work is called off and discontinued.

Besides depending on the central government, the provincial governors of Afghanistan's 34 provinces can also introduce and execute an informal security system in which the over 2460 villages in Afghanistan can each have defence committees that can take over the responsibility of safeguarding and protecting any international aid organization and its workers who set up a camp or a facility in their area. These defence committees could consist of armed men who should take it upon themselves to ensure the physical protection of such organizations.

Easy said than done, President Ghani's government in Kabul is continuously under severe criticism by the various provincial governors for failing to stop the growing insurgent attacks all over the country. The way forward is not criticism but to end the political disagreements and infighting between Kabul and its provinces and proceed to create a security system that encompasses both informal and formal security. Such a system will raise a competent, effective and efficient defence shield against the attacking insurgents and the militants and also lay down a defence strategy that can create those necessary security circumstances and conditions that will encourage the international aid agencies to continue their work in Afghanistan. President Ghani would also do well to announce the much delayed appointment of a defence minister in his cabinet or defence and security of Afghanistan may continue to be neglected. **S**

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

Afghanistan since 2001. Recently, 9 Afghan aid workers belonging to this Czech organization were attacked in their guest house in Zari district of Balkh Province in the relatively peaceful and quiet Northern Afghanistan. The attack was the worst ever on an aid agency in terms of the casualties it inflicted and forced the aid agency to respond by suspending all its work in Afghanistan. The attack came weeks after a guest house in Kabul popular with the aid agencies was attacked and 14 people, mostly foreigners, were killed. Earlier, in April this year, five Afghan workers for 'Save the Children' were found dead after they were abducted in the Afghan southern province of Uruzgan.

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), last year 57 aid workers were killed in Afghanistan. This year 26 aid workers have already died, 17 have been injured and another 40 have been abducted so far. Given the increased militant activities due to the ongoing spring offensive by the Taliban and the poor protection measures provided by the government to the aid agencies the number of attacks on aid workers and the casualties may rise profoundly in

Chasing Dreams

The \$46 billion CPEC will be a game changer for Pakistan. But it will remain a dream if economic targets are not achieved every year.

By Majyd Aziz

For a developing country like Pakistan, the economic constraints are forceful and make a deep impact on the welfare of the citizens as well as on the sovereignty of the nation. The fiscal window is narrow, the debt keeps ballooning, the informal economy becomes monumental and the unemployment figure becomes worrisome. The law and order situation is also threatening, and the corruption scenario is entering menacing proportions. The government is hard-pressed to fulfill its myriad obligations, external as well as domestic. Survivability primarily depends on external sources that further affect the country's limited resource base.

It is natural, therefore, for the government hierarchy in Pakistan to promote stacked up targets to justify or project its roadmap towards economic prosperity. Targets are supposed to be goalposts and targets must be realistic. Chest-thumping targets are seldom attainable within a given timeline and thus, at the end of the year, when they go haywire, there is a concerted rush to spin doctor the ground realities. The Finance Minister is not Merlin the Magician, conjuring up far-out solutions or dipping into his hat to pull out the proverbial rabbit, in this case, revenue.

The usual initial comments of stakeholders after the Finance Minister presents the salient features of the Budget are "traditional," "bureaucratic" and "IMF-dictated." It is but normal for the Finance Minister to hype up the government's great achievements and lay blame for any shortcomings or missed targets on extenuating circumstances or factors beyond its control, in effect, absolving the regime from accusations

that the economy was not managed prudently.

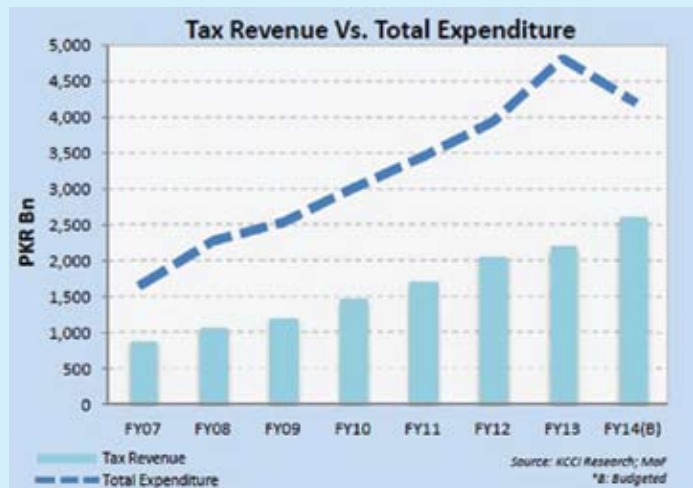
Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, perhaps putting more trust in the capability of the Federal Board of Revenue officers rather than analyzing the global situation as well as domestic dynamics, went for an ambitious target while formulating his Budget presentation in June 2014. Relying on his financial acumen and the power of his office, he was confident that efforts to achieve his vision were doable and that the business environment was conducive and favorable. He probably had more faith in the performance of stock exchanges and the commercial banks. Notwithstanding his penchant for asserting himself as the Economic Czar, he presided over nearly all committees that formed part of the economic regime. His determination to go for the skies, despite the apparent and unforeseen obstacles and detours, were not, net-net, reciprocated by political forces, inefficient bureaucracy and those outside the tax net.

The reasons for non-attainment of the targets, as enumerated by Dar in his Budget speech in the National Assembly on June 5, 2015, gave him and the PML-N the alibi needed to extricate themselves from the missed targets. The prime accusation was the 126-days dharna in the heavily protected Red Zone in Islamabad, orchestrated by PTI chairman Imran Khan. According to Dar, as well as others in the government, the negative consequences of the prolonged sit-in resulted in significant losses to the economy and directly impacted the growth figures. The second reason was the devastation caused by floods that affected the overall economic picture.



Dar also stated that the Army-led Operation Zarb-e-Azb against terrorists and extremists who were holed up around the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and in the mountains put immense pressure on the Treasury while the high cost of taking care of the IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) further compounded the situation. Infrastructure shortages, especially electricity and gas, also struck a severe blow to the economy.

While these reasons have their demerits, the fact is that the intensity of at least three of the main reasons hit hard on the financial resources. Blaming the dharna as the prime cause for the economic downside was, however, hard to fathom. The protest was, for all purposes, limited to the Red Zone where there is no direct economic activity. Industries were operating in Karachi, Lahore and other cities while ships made a beeline to discharge their cargo at both the ports. Operation Zarb-e-Azb gave hope to the citizens and instilled a semblance of confidence in trade and industry. The after-effects of the floods, though damaging, were managed by the concerned authorities, but infrastructure shortages imperiously jack-hammered the nation's exports, resulting in an over



3% drop in export figures.

Did the government really go fast forward to achieve its targets? What was its contribution towards attaining the targets? A recap manifests the shortcomings in reaching the goalpost. For fiscal year 2015, the goal was set to achieve GDP growth of 5.1% ahead of the GDP growth of 4.1% achieved in fiscal year 2014 and 3.7% in fiscal year 2013. However, as per provisional figures, the government only managed to achieve 4.24% GDP growth in fiscal year 2015. During this period, the growth in the services sector (4.95%) outpaced the lackluster growth of the manufacturing sector (3.17%) and agriculture sector (2.88%). These figures reflect the lack of initiative more than other debilitating factors.

The performance of the bloated and wrapped-in-cocoon FBR (Federal Board of Revenue) shows another dismal scenario. The tax machinery may be able to achieve its three-time revised target of Rs 2.6 trillion this fiscal year, whereas during fiscal year 2014, the FBR could not even achieve the twice revised target of Rs 2.2 trillion. Yet, Dar was over-optimistic that with the newly laid-down measures, such as additional taxation, reduced subsidies, roping in non-filers,

and accelerated economic activity, the FBR would collect nearly Rs 3.2 trillion.

For fiscal year 2015, the government had set the budget deficit target at 4.9% of GDP. However, it had reached 3.6% of GDP by the end of the 3rd quarter of fiscal year 2015 as against 3.2% of GDP in the same period last year and was expected to be around 5% of GDP by the end of fiscal year 2015. In the past years, the budget deficit was curtailed to 5.5% of GDP in fiscal year 2014 from previous 8.8% in fiscal year 2013. Inflation nosedived to an average of 4.8% in 10 months of fiscal year 2015 compared to 8.69% in the same period last year. But, again Dar managed to take credit for this even though it had more to do with the global prices.

The decline in current account deficit by 53% to \$ 1.36 billion in July-April 2015 from \$ 2.93 billion in same period last year paved the way for economic improvement. Pakistan's overall balance of payment recorded a negative balance of \$ 2.12 billion till April 2015 as compared to negative \$ 3.8 billion in Fiscal Year 2014. Despite efforts being made by the Board of Investment, Foreign Direct Investment remained abysmal at \$ 0.825 billion during the 10 months of fiscal year

2015 as against investment of \$ 0.879 billion in the 10 months of fiscal year 2014, posting a decline of 6% instead of achieving the investment growth target of 7%-8%. Similarly, balance of trade mostly remained under pressure in the span of last five years as increased imports outpaced exports, making the trade deficit escalate to \$ 13.85 billion during the 10 months of fiscal year 2015 as against \$ 13.71 billion in the same period last year.

The positive news for Pakistan in the coming years is the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The original tag price of the project - \$ 46 billion - is now being estimated to cross \$52 billion after addition of new projects and various revisits to already decided projects. This bodes well for Pakistan. All stakeholders are now on board and any distraction from the mapped out game changing initiative would again compel whoever is the finance minister to keep chasing the macroeconomic targets. As President George Washington had remarked, "We must consult our means rather than our wishes."

The writer is a former President of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce.

Blood Relatives

There is more than meets the eye in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's move to create a mini-Saarc by improving transportation between India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

By S.G. Jilane

Indian prime minister, Narendra Damodar Modi's thirty-six hour maiden visit to Bangladesh on June 5 was historic in many respects. He was visiting a country that India had

midwived and must have heaved a long sigh of satisfaction at his country's "achievement," even though it had been facilitated by Pakistan's own default, because the situation would

have been quite different had the latter not blundered the way it did.

It was also to reinvigorate India's sentimental relationship with Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh



Hasina Wajed because, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had taken along with her sister, Raihana, under her motherly care when her entire family - father, mother and three brothers were mowed down by assassins at home. Subsequently, India's successive governments have been treating her as India's foster child.

The occasion was memorable because of a sheaf of 22 agreements that the prime ministers of Bangladesh and India inked. Among them were

Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and its 2011 protocol, a Bilateral Trade Agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding on Blue Economy and Maritime Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean and many others.

The agreements were rounded off with a Joint Declaration issued on the last day of Modi's visit and reaffirmed the "unequivocal and uncompromising position against extremism and terrorism in all forms and manifestations" of the two countries.

The most important among these agreements was the one relating to the land boundary. It was first signed by founder of Bangladesh and Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1974. Since then, for 41 years it had been languishing because India dragged its feet on the issue of implementing it, obviously, because the resultant exchange of enclaves between the two countries would give more land to Bangladesh.

Now, armed with Lok Sabha approval Modi, signed the historic document under which 111 enclaves stretching over 17,160 acres would go to Bangladesh and 51 enclaves comprising 7,110 acres would go to India. The only irritating problem that still remained to be resolved related to the sharing of waters of the Teesta and Feni rivers flowing between Bangladesh and West Bengal over which the Indian state chief minister, Mamata Banerjee had reservations. But given the new camaraderie, it was being hoped that the issue would be amicably resolved soon.

In fact Mamata Banerjee, whom Narendra Modi included in his entourage, must have been delighted to join Modi and Hasina flag off the new Dhaka-Gwahati-Shillong and Kolkata Dhaka-Agartala bus services. These are happy auguries. The day

may not be far when the old pre-partition rail service between Kolkata and Siliguri (Darjeeling) and between Kolkata and Amingaon across Bangladesh would be revived.

Apart from these formal activities the Indian prime minister also took time to visit the Indian chancery in Dhaka. He prayed at the Ram Krishna Mission temple and addressed a select gathering of media persons, businessmen, political leaders, academicians, artistes and students of the Dhaka University. In his speech he complimented his host for her actions to combat terrorism. "I am happy that Bangladesh Prime Minister, despite being a woman, has declared zero tolerance for terrorism, he said.

"Despite being a woman" was

Modi's remarks sent the Pakistani leadership into a commotion.

an innocent remark made in all sincerity. It acknowledged the hurdles in the way of a woman in a conservative society like Bangladesh to take such bold steps as Hasina has done. But some people made it a gender issue and deplored it as sexist and derogatory. Even Washington Post splashed the story under the headline, "India's Modi just delivered the world's worst compliment."

Modi also took a pot shot at Pakistan, lamenting that it was a cause of perpetual annoyance "Pakistan aaye din (constantly) disturbs India, jo naako dum la deta hai (creates nuisance), terrorism ko badhawa deta hai...ki ghatnaayein ghatthi rehti hain (promotes terrorism so incidents continue to occur)," he said.

In the same context, he recalled that 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war were in India's captivity during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War and proudly observed, "If we had a diabolic mindset, we don't know then what decision we would have taken." The claim, however, exposed the smallness of his mind instead of adding to his stature because those who do a noble deed do not trumpet about it.

Emphasizing India's contiguity with Bangladesh, Modi said that while people thought we were just

paas-paas (side by side), now the world will have to acknowledge that we are not just paas-paas but also sath-sath(together).

Modi also made a reference to India's role in the independence of Bangladesh saying that when Bangladesh progresses, India feels proud because Indian soldiers too have shed their blood for the birth of this country.

However, the statement, at best, was intended to bring home to the people of Bangladesh how much they owe to India for their independence and what they should do to repay the debt. Modi was not making any revelation about India's role in the dismemberment of Pakistan. That role is well-known and well-documented. In fact, Pakistan, by declaring war on

India, itself opened the way for the Indian army to enter East Pakistan openly by land and air.

Yet, Modi's remarks sent the Pakistani leadership into a commotion. The speech was treated as provocative and drew flak from the civil and military leadership, alike from foreign affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz, to formation commanders of the army, while the Foreign Office came out with its own "regrets."

Lost in the brouhaha, though, was Modi's crucial reference to connectivity among India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. He plans to create a "mini-SAARC" which would be geographically compact and mutually cooperative.

In fact, according to a Times of India report, the path has been already broken. "India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh have inked a Motor Vehicles Agreement for the regulation of passenger, personnel and cargo vehicular traffic in Thimpu, Bhutan. The agreement will enable seamless movement of people and goods across the borders for the economic benefit of the entire region."

It is this that other SAARC countries should reflect upon. **S**

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

Turncoats and About-faces

The Sri Lankan political scene reeks of local factionalism and big power rivalry.

By S. Mubashir Noor

The current political crisis in Sri Lanka comes down to one word: "Yahapalanaya" (good governance). On January 9, 2015, a motley coalition brought together by the United National Party's (UNP) Ranil Wickramasinghe dug out the well-entrenched President Mahinda Rajapaksa after almost a decade in office. Spearheaded by Rajapaksa's former health minister and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) turncoat, Maithripala Sirisena: this "rainbow" alliance found an audience in voters tired of corrupt authoritarianism. Bolstered by nationalists, monks and Muslims, Sirisena and Wickramasinghe rode the anti-Rajapaksa wave to electoral success. Rajiva Wijesinha, a junior coalition partner, said his side won because "the last government only cared about cement."

Fast forward to June 5 and 113 members of the 225-strong Sri Lankan parliament filed a no-confidence motion against now Prime Minister Wickramasinghe. They demanded the dissolution of parliament after February's Treasury Bond scandal and the controversial appointment of Singaporean Arjuna Mahendran as the Central Bank Governor. Former President Rajapaksa then happily noted, "The blatant falsehoods, corruption and persecution of opponents under this government is what has led to this."

On assuming office in January, Finance Minister (F.M) Ravi Karunanayke had outlined his mission to not simply "minimizing corruption," but "eliminating it fully." In hindsight, Wickramasinghe's government fell victim to its own lofty ambitions.

In a recent interview with CNBC,

F.M Karunanayke rubbished the motion as something championed by a "handful of extremists in parliament," and concocted by a former President who "lost his political control." He also blamed Rajapaksa loyalists for making "life difficult for the new president and this economic recovery." On March

8, the incumbent President Sirisena had ordered a detailed probe into the Central Bank's dodgy bond sale, which surprisingly cleared Governor Mahendran of any malfeasance. Then, to completely waylay public scrutiny, a Rs.2700 billion "misappropriation" charge was leveled against Ajith



Cabraal, the bank's Rajapaksa-era chief.

The alleged Central Bank cover-up is part of a bigger image problem facing the government. Governor Mahendran is still accused of "insider trading" to help his son-in-law reap illegal profits, while F.M Karunanayke was charged with money-laundering a few years ago and the case remains open. To this effect, Singapore refused to lend \$1.5 billion to Sri Lanka in April, saying it could not make a deal with "two individuals facing charges of financial corruption." Furthermore, Dr. Muttukrishna Saravananthan, a development economist, believes: "crony capitalism and borrowing to fund public investment by the previous regime have caused huge external debt."

Although P.M Wickramasinghe's charge-sheet revolves around corruption, there are other reasons for the impasse. The incumbents came into power promising the dissolution of parliament in 100 days and new elections immediately after. To date, however, no firm schedule has emerged on either promise. There are reports that President Sirisena will dissolve the Parliament in August but this radio

silence may have something to do with Rajapaksa. It is likely Sirisena wants to dismantle his political future and a sure-strike strategy could be brewing in the background.

The proposed Twentieth Amendment also worries the opposition. On June 9, the Sri Lankan Cabinet unveiled its final draft, leaving the smaller political parties both "surprised and disappointed." A high quota of first-past-the-post seats was expected, but the size of the parliament remained unchanged. Whatever political counter-culture thrived under a Proportional Representation system would now become extinct, or be absorbed by the UNP or SLFP. The election watchdog, Campaign for a Free and Fair Election (CaFFE), however, blamed the "extremely corrupt political culture" for sabotaging reforms that could stabilize the Sri Lankan democracy.

Modeled after the French Fifth Republic, Sri Lanka's system of government often complicates things. It puts the President and Prime Minister at opposite ends of the executive seesaw and uses their political weight to provide check and balance. In Sirisena's and Wickramasinghe's case, their respective parties are traditional rivals. A coalition united to oust Rajapaksa may have worked in January, but ideological fault-lines run deep. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, from the Centre for Policy Alternatives, warns that if "the government's popularity keeps eroding, Rajapaksa becomes an obvious choice for disgruntled voters."

Former President Rajapaksa's January defeat is, of course, the main reason for this mess. After ascending to the hot seat in 2005, he got reelected by vanquishing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), thereby ending Sri Lanka's long and bloody civil war. However, by emphasizing Sinhala nationalism, Rajapaksa's goodwill with the minorities gradually eroded. Consequently, the Tamil and Muslim communities largely voted for Sirisena in the elections. Rajapaksa's marked tilt towards China also irked America and India. He would later blame both from his downfall, saying, "The U.S and India openly used their embassies to bring me down."

P.M Wickramasinghe's misfit coalition also got the better of China. During Rajapaksa's reign, China had pumped \$5 billion into the Sri Lankan infrastructure and planned to create a \$1.5 billion "port city" in Colombo. President Sirisena's course correction on foreign policy has seen this project suspended until further

"reexamination." Being a one-party state, China was happy to indulge Rajapaksa's power trip as long as his autocracy advanced its strategic interests in the Indian Ocean. That dream is now dead, after the Deputy Foreign Minister Ajith Perera told Al-Jazeera "It is a priority that Sri Lanka and India return to a close relationship."

There were broad smiles in India the day Rajapaksa lost. Its paranoia at China's growing influence being a mere 35 miles away exploded when Chinese submarines docked in Sri Lanka last year. Working with Chandrika Kumaratunga, Rajapaksa's estranged SLFP matriarch, intelligence agents from India allegedly sabotaged the former President's third term in office. Besides China, India was also unhappy with Rajapaksa's "us and them" attitude towards Sri Lanka's Tamil minority, a people also living in its southern states. President Sirisena's February trip to India, his first state visit, confirmed that the relationship had rebooted. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wholeheartedly agreed: "This is a new beginning for relations between India and Sri Lanka."

America is also happy to be rid of Rajapaksa, not least because of its "pivot" towards the Asia Pacific. The former Sri Lankan president's coziness with China worried the White House and the Sirisena-Wickramasinghe victory was very good news. U.S Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland has hailed the new setup for moving "the country away from divisive politics toward a new path of reconciliation." Ironically, America had heartily backed Rajapaksa's brutal methods against the LTTE until the China connection became bothersome. Then, in a quick about-face, Washington threatened Colombo with sanctions for its "human rights abuses."

P.M Wickramasinghe is playing wait-and-see for now. It is obvious that President Sirisena wants to enact electoral reforms and this parliament may be his best opportunity to do so. The government is likely to dither on a firm election schedule for the same reason. The PM will need Sirisena to lobby the pliable chunks of Rajapaksa's faction so he can survive the no-confidence vote. Till then, his loyalists can use an old American political trick and "filibuster" this opposition move. It all comes down to how badly Sirisena wants a future "national" government, as without Wickramasinghe and his UNP that possibility does not exist. ■

The writer is a freelance columnist and audio engineer.



The Days After

Nepal is limping forward in the aftermath of devastating earthquakes but its own incompetencies are being compounded by donor fatigue and other factors.

By Malik Muhammad Ashraf



The tragedy that struck Nepal in the shape of a severe earthquake on April 25 and then again on May 12 is said to be the worst natural disaster in the country since the 1934 Nepal-Bihar earthquake. The tremors reportedly claimed more than eight thousand lives and inflicted multiple injuries on twenty three thousand people. The strong shakers deprived a big chunk of the population of shelter, including 1.7 million children who, according to UNICEF, were driven out into the open and were in desperate need of drinking water, psychological counseling, temporary shelters, sanitation and protection from outbreak of disease. The first earthquake also triggered an avalanche on Mount Everest, killing some 19 people.

Indian newspaper The Hindu quoted a seismologist Vinod Kumar Gaur who said in an interview in 2013

that “calculations show that sufficient accumulated energy in the Main Frontal Thrust could produce an earthquake of 8 magnitude. I cannot say when but it could possibly happen sometime this century or wait long to produce a much larger one.”

Notwithstanding the fact that the risk of the tremor of this intensity was known, the fact remains that there was not much which could have been done to prevent the onslaught of this natural calamity for a resource-constrained country like Nepal or even countries with all the modern technologies and resources available to them, except for providing quick relief to the people affected by the natural disaster. However, regarding rehabilitation and reconstruction of the destroyed infrastructure with indigenous resources supplemented by contributions from the international community, an affected

country would be in a good position to recover within the shortest time due to the strength, efficiency and honesty of its bureaucratic structure guided by an honest and committed national leadership. However, in case of Nepal all these ingredients are missing.

The damage in Nepal to the infrastructure and cultural heritage sites is reported to be colossal in terms of the resources that would be required to rebuild and rehabilitate them and put the economy back on its feet. According to some estimates it could well be in the vicinity of \$5 billion or nearly one-fourth of Nepal’s GDP of \$19.221billion.. Some NGOs and relief agencies are striving to raise money on their own to bolster the financial support for Nepal. The Asian Development Bank has committed to provide a \$ 3 million grant for immediate relief and a further \$ 200 million for the first phase



of rehabilitation. As is evident, the international financial support is far below the required resources.

As far as the rescue and relief measures are concerned, there was an overwhelming international response. The world community, including neighbors of Nepal, such as Pakistan, immediately sent rescue teams and relief goods. USA, China and other nations also provided helicopters to bolster the rescue efforts at the request of the Nepalese government. The UK has been the largest bilateral aid donor with \$131 million out of a total international financial support of \$294 million. But the Nepalese government has failed to handle the aid due to bureaucratic snags, inefficiency and reported corruption in the bureaucratic echelons. Relief efforts were also hampered by insistence of the Nepalese government on routing aid through the Prime

Minister's Disaster Relief Fund and the National Emergency Center. However, it was after several complaints that the Nepalese government allowed the NGOs already working in the country to continue receiving aid directly and bypass the official agencies. Mistrust over control of the distribution of funds and the relief goods and congestion and customs delays at Kathmandu airport and border check posts were also reported by the aid agencies. The problems were further compounded when restrictions were imposed on heavy aircraft flying in with aid supplies due to the cracks in the runway at the Tribhuvan Airstrip.

Nepal, with a population of 27 million, is ranked among the poorest and the least developed countries in the world. Nearly 25% of the population lives below the poverty line. It heavily depends on remittances which account

for 22-25% of the GDP. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy employing 70% of the labour force and contributing 33% to the GDP. It has an agro-based industry involved in the processing of agricultural products, including pulses, jute, sugarcane, tobacco and grain. Its exports, evidently, consist of low-tech products. Tourism is another source of the national income. The factors that hinder economic progress of Nepal and its progress towards a modern economy are based on political instability, a debilitating business environment that discourages foreign investment, persistent power shortages, a primitive transportation infrastructure and susceptibility to natural disasters. Nepal's economy also depends on tourism and it might lose the income this year as all the mountain expeditions have been cancelled. Nepal hosts the world's ten tallest mountains, including

Mount Everest.

A monarchy throughout its history, Nepal made a transition to democracy in 2008 when the first constituent assembly was elected. The second assembly was installed in 2013 but despite this, the country is still grappling with the issue of agreeing on a consensus constitution. The aforementioned factors clearly manifest that the political and economic profile of Nepal does not present an encouraging scenario as far as the resources required to rebuild the infrastructure and providing shelter to the people rendered homeless by the earthquake, is concerned. The people of Nepal will probably have to endure the impact of the devastation for a long time to come.

To shorten the span of the sufferings of the people and revive the devastated economy, the Nepalese government will have to depend heavily on donations and assistance from the international community and the world bodies financing reconstruction and development, provided it can assure the donors that the money provided would be judiciously and honestly spent. The rampant corruption and filching of the aid provided by the international community, at present, is a major factor and a stumbling block in the liberal flow of international aid.

The other alternative for Nepal, though a long-term undertaking, is



to attract foreign investment in the infrastructure projects, tourism, industry and energy sectors. Nepal has a known potential for generation of 42000 MW of hydro power and at present the installed capacity is in the vicinity of 7000 MW. If the Nepalese government can lure foreign investors to invest in energy projects which are high cost ventures, it could give tremendous boost to the Nepalese economy and generate thousands of jobs besides helping Nepal's transition towards a modern economy. The success of the strategy would surely depend on political stability in the country.


and a small country like Nepal

would have to struggle over a long period to mitigate the effects of earthquake, rehabilitate the destroyed infrastructure, arrange shelter for the people rendered homeless, arrest the negative social fallout and revive the economy. To achieve all this, the international community needs to help Nepal with more generous and liberal contributions. As time progresses, donor fatigue sets in, which is not helped at all by the corruption and bureaucratic lethargy in the country and the impact of the tragedy slowly fades. **S**


The writer is a freelance columnist

Study English at Philadelphia's Ivy League University!

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA



- Improve your Business English at one of the top-ranked universities in the U.S.
- Learn from distinguished faculty in innovative classrooms
- Live on the scenic Penn campus and explore the historic city of Philadelphia
 - Intensive, Super-Intensive & Business Intensive Programs: 8 weeks, offered year round, all levels
 - International Business Communication Program: 4 week program for professionals with advanced proficiency, offered in July, August, November and March
 - Business and Culture Program: 4 weeks, offered in July and August



College of Liberal & Professional Studies
Penn LPS
English Language Programs

For more information, visit www.sas.upenn.edu/elp

English Language Programs
110 Fisher-Bennett Hall, 3340 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6274
Phone 01-215-898-8681 • Fax 01-215-898-2684 • www.sas.upenn.edu/elp

UPCOMING B2B EVENTS...



1 - 3 September 2015, Karachi Expo Centre
13th International Plastics & Packaging
Industry Trade Fair

Website: www.plastipac.com.pk

E-mail: info@plastipac.com.pk



1 - 3 September 2015, Karachi Expo Centre
4th International Food, Beverages &
Hospitality Trade Fair

Website: www.foodtech.com.pk

E-mail: info@foodtech.com.pk



1 - 3 September 2015, Karachi Expo Centre
12th Edition of the International Food, Beverage
& Packaging Technology Trade Fair

Website: www.foodtech.com.pk

E-mail: info@foodtech.com.pk



1 - 3 September 2015, Karachi Expo Centre
International Coating & Specialty Chemicals Exhibition

Website: www.chemexpakistan.com

E-mail: info@chemexpakistan.com



1 - 3 September 2015, Karachi Expo Centre
3rd International Printing, Labeling,
Paper & Paper Converting Industry Exhibition

Website: www.plastipac.com.pk

E-mail: info@plastipac.com.pk



1-3 March 2016

Pak-China Friendship Centre, Islamabad
12th International Safety & Security
Exhibition & Conference

Website: www.safesecurepakistan.com

E-mail: info@safesecurepakistan.com



POGEE

19 - 21 May 2016, Lahore Expo Centre
14th International Exhibition for the Energy Industry

Website: www.pogee.com.pk

E-mail: info@pogee.com.pk



4th International Multi-Modal Transportation,
Logistics Conference

Website: www.intertranspakistan.com

E-mail: info@intertranspakistan.com



Pegasus Consultancy (Pvt) Ltd

2nd Floor, Business Centre, Mumtaz Hassan Road, Karachi - Pakistan

Tel: +(92-21) 111 734 266 (PEGCON) Fax: +(92-21) 3241 0723

E-mail: info@pegasus.com.pk URL: www.pegasus.com.pk



Playing Hardball

There seems to be many a glitch in the Maldives' journey from authoritarian rule to true democracy.

By Faizan Usmani

In an era of regional equality and egalitarianism, small island countries like the Maldives need much more to stand in the neighbourhood. Following the arrest and conviction of the former president of the Maldives, Mohamed Nasheed, over politically-induced terrorism charges, the incumbent government of President Abdulla Yameen is now approaching India for a seamless diplomatic relationship as this will help the Yameen government to stay afloat in the future.

Considering the political crisis brewing in the Maldives, it has become crucially important how India reacts to the situation. The

arrest and conviction of Mohamed Nasheed back in March, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1990, was not welcomed by the Indians. The Maldivian foreign ministry had warned New Delhi not to interfere in the country's political affairs and had made it clear that it would regard any potential interference from a foreign government in the Maldives' internal affairs with doubt and suspicion.

It has been seen on various occasions in the past that India has quite a track record of interfering in Maldivian political affairs. For instance, Nasheed took refuge in the Indian High Commission in Male in February 2013 to avoid arrest but the

Indian External Affairs Ministry refuted any claims of undue interference in Maldivian politics, saying that Nasheed's move was not instigated by India and he had himself approached the Indian diplomatic mission to grant him diplomatic shelter.

It was said to be the result of an Indian intervention which had helped Nasheed become the opposition leader when he was forcibly ousted from the presidency in a coup d'état initiated in February 2012 by the supporters of former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

Led by President Abdullah Yameen now, the Maldivian government has started showing a more careful attitude

towards India and is finding ways to be on good terms with New Delhi through back channel diplomacy. For example, an aide of the Maldivian foreign minister visited India a couple of months earlier to negotiate matters with Indian interlocutors behind closed doors.

This was followed by Abdullah Yameen's invitation officially sent to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the Maldives, considering the fact that Modi's visit to Male had to be cancelled at the last minute in March when Yameen's government arrested Mohamed Nasheed.

As the unraveling situation suggests, the current back channel diplomacy of Yameen's government is bound to hit failure due to many reasons and even if the strategy works, the Maldives will get little out of it.

First and foremost, the vulnerable political status of the present Maldivian government is detrimental to its ongoing diplomatic efforts to bring about a win-win result in view of the resumption of the island nation's friendly ties with New Delhi.

This is mainly because the former president emerged as a democratically elected leader in a country with a democratic setup and his forceful exit from power was perceived negatively by the international community, including the United States.

Secondly, adopting a back channel diplomatic route is often disregarded in modern diplomacy as the practice does not allow the rest of the influential regional and international players to be on board simultaneously. From the Maldivian perspective, this factor mainly refers to the presence of other major Asian powers such as China, which is keen to extend its regional influence in Asia and the Maldives is no exception.

Last year, Chinese President Xi Jinping invited the Maldives to become a part of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR), which is a strategic initiative taken by China to enhance its trade links and promote economic collaboration in the region.

Undoubtedly, the Indian government is working hard to play a decisive leadership role in the neighborhood, but merely relying on Indian support for the moment may deprive the Maldives of the benefits offered by the ongoing Chinese initiatives in the long run.

Being a leading economic power, India enjoys a pivotal role in its immediate neighborhood because of its huge economy and high trade volumes. Having consumed some



The Indian government is working hard to play a decisive leadership role in the neighborhood.

5 percent of the Indian aid offered for development assistance, a small island nation like the Maldives has no options left but to have smooth and trouble-free ties with New Delhi no matter what it takes. This also includes sizeable grants and heavy loans being awarded by New Delhi to the Maldives following its steady transition from an autocracy to a democracy.

To keep things going with no interruptions, Yameen's government has to exhibit much more than mere diplomatic ploys to win India's confidence. If the incumbent Maldivian government manages to restore its status as a long journey partner, they can expect something out of the ongoing back channel diplomacy. This is because the current presidency in the Maldives does not have staying power and is well aware of its fragile political status tainted by its dictatorial background and autocratic attributes.

To overcome these inherited flaws, the Maldivian government needs to beef up its political stance with the help of the Indian government as their close relations with New Delhi will help them stay in power for a longer time despite the current political crisis.

Given that the diplomatic relationship between India and the Maldives has seen highs and lows in the past, the Maldives' current back channel policy has come out as a makeshift scheme devised by the present government to achieve its short-term objectives. In contrast, the political think tanks and decision-making authorities in the Maldives should reconsider their current priorities and work in a hurry to reinstate true democratic rule instead of finding unconstitutional remedies to prolong the status quo. **S**

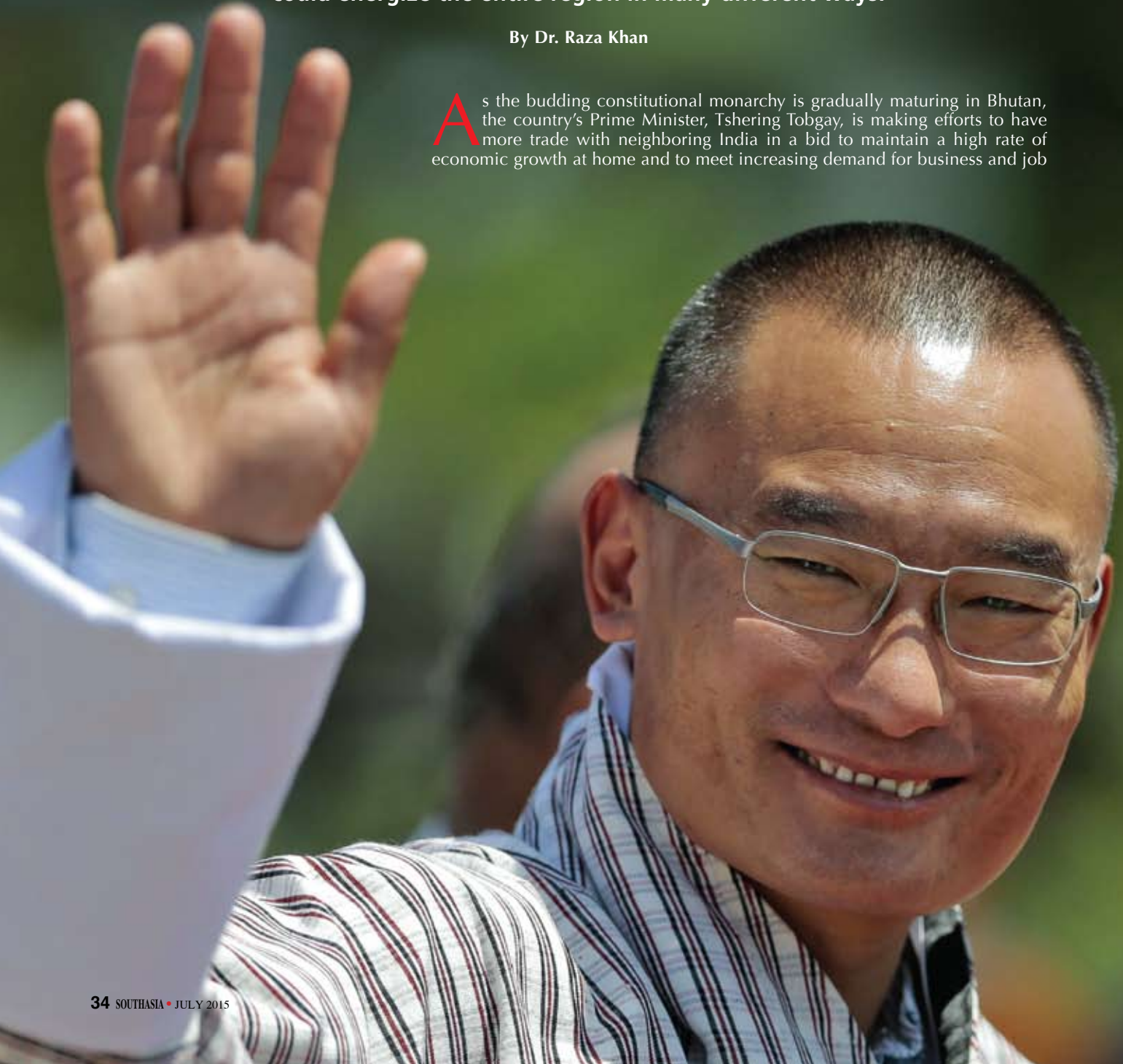
The writer is a staff member.

Mountain Dynamo

Despite its smallness, Bhutan holds a lot of growth potential that could energize the entire region in many different ways.

By Dr. Raza Khan

As the budding constitutional monarchy is gradually maturing in Bhutan, the country's Prime Minister, Tshering Tobgay, is making efforts to have more trade with neighboring India in a bid to maintain a high rate of economic growth at home and to meet increasing demand for business and job



opportunities from the country's youth. In this respect, Prime Minister Tobgay has especially stepped up efforts to have enhanced trade ties with the Indian state of West Bengal, which borders the tiny Himalayan country.

Already, India is the largest trading partner of Bhutan with 99 per cent of Bhutanese exports landing in India and Thimbu also getting 90 per cent of its imports from Delhi. Thus, the Bhutanese economy is almost entirely dependent on India and has extremely cordial relations with New Delhi. This explains the overtures of PM Tobgay towards West Bengal and his efforts to open lucrative trade avenues with the Indian province.

The very reason for Bhutan to expand her economic and trade relations with India and particularly the state of West Bengal is the phenomenal growth of the Bhutanese economy. Bhutan has been maintaining a high rate of economic growth in recent years with current GDP growth hovering above 8 percent. In order to maintain this economic growth, Bhutan needs foreign investment. Keeping in view the Indian state of West Bengal's high stakes in Bhutan, PM Tobgay wants to capitalize on this opportunity to attract as much as foreign investment as possible. He knows that in the present situation, India could be the biggest source of foreign investment in the country. The prime minister, who received his higher education in the United States University of Pittsburgh, even visited the US to seek Washington's investment in his country. However, attracting US investment may take some time to materialize. Against this backdrop, India and the West Bengal state are the obvious choices for Bhutan to explore trade and investment avenues. Having said this, the efforts by PM Tobgay are aimed at diversifying investment in his state.

On their part, India and the West Bengal for that matter also are profoundly interested in increasing trade and economic ties with Bhutan. The foremost reason is that India is an energy-deficient country and critically needs river water from Bhutan to generate hydroelectric power which, in turn, would be instrumental in maintaining a high rate of economic growth in India. The demand for energy and power has been steadily

increasing in India because of the growing population and economic growth. The country would like to have intimate relations with Bhutan so that it could exploit more and more of Bhutanese water resources. For instance, India would earn US\$2

It has been the consistence policy of India to keep Bhutan completely dependent on itself.

billion by investing in the construction of three hydroelectric power projects in Bhutan with a combined installed capacity of 1400 megawatts (MW) and from three other projects, totaling 3000 MW. The fact is that India's water security is nearly dependent on Bhutanese river water. The importance of Bhutan for India can be gauged from the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, after his inauguration last year chose Bhutan for his first official sojourn.

Bhutan has more ice than any place on Earth besides the poles. The region's mountain ice is so large in quantity that it's often called the "Third Pole" or the "Water Tower of Asia." Glaciers from the plateau supply most of Asia's rivers and, by extension, provide water to some 2 billion people. In fact, Bhutan has enough water to generate 30 gigawatts of electricity, which is about a third of the installed generation capacity of the US.

For India there is also a political reason to go the extra mile to keep Bhutan economically stable, which is a guarantee of its political strength. It has been the consistence policy of India to keep Bhutan completely dependent on itself. This is aimed at making mountain kingdom both a 'dependency' and a 'sphere of influence' to the exclusion of all other states in the region, particularly China, Delhi's regional rival.

Indian policymakers are of the view that as long as Bhutan, a theoretically independent state, remains politically and economically stable, it would not go out of India's sphere of influence and China would not be able to exploit the situation to its utter advantage. This has been the fundamental reason that India, which has political issues with all the major regional countries, including Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, has no problems

with Bhutan. At the same time, Bhutan which is situated on the southern tip of Tibetan Plateau, sandwiched between China and India, has a key issue with Beijing - that of an unsettled border. Bhutan has diplomatic relations with 52 nations since it established formal

ties with India in 1968. It has no diplomatic relations with China as well as the US or the other permanent members of the UN Security Council though it is a geopolitical buffer between Asia's two giants. This state

of diplomatic ties of Bhutan raises many questions regarding the true independence of the country and the domineering influence of India.

Bhutan geography and its water resources are the fundamental determinants of the state's foreign policy, if it really has one, as well as that of the policies of neighboring states towards Bhutan. If Bhutan has to survive as an independent state, it needs to establish diplomatic relations with China and the US as well as other countries and also start trading with them. History is witness to the fact that a country that is entirely dependent on a sole or couple of other states, has to compromise its political sovereignty. PM Tobgay's visit to the US and his attempts to attract American investment is a step in the right direction. China and the US must offer attractive terms of trade to Bhutan so that it has no other choice but to allow these countries to have economic ties with them.

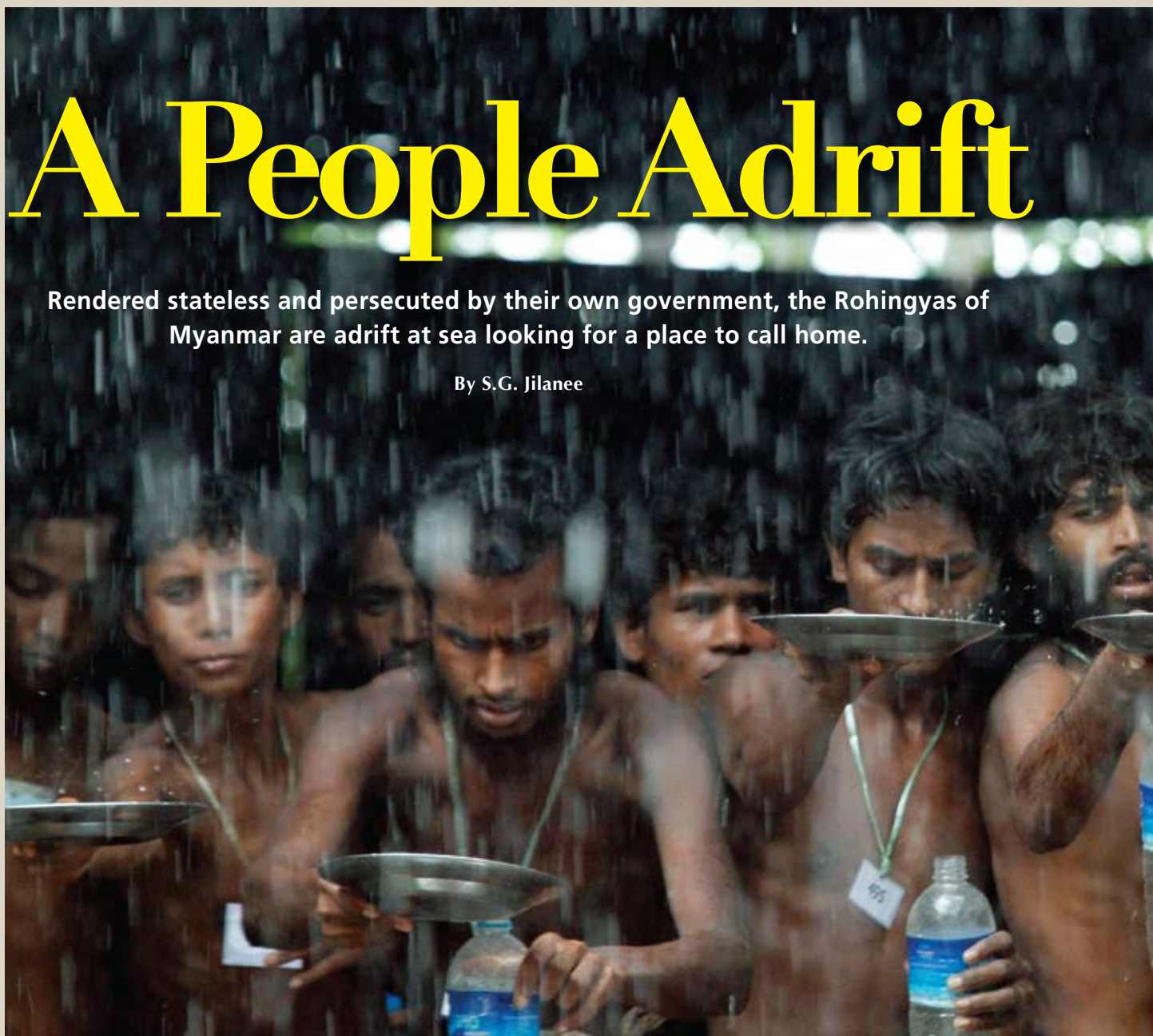
However, in the developing scenario in Asia, where the new US Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, has come up with a new doctrine of containing China and of using India as a tool, both Washington and Beijing would not be likely to cooperate to pull Bhutan out. Under US policy, Bhutan may get increased strategic importance and its dependence on India may further increase instead of reduction. The Bhutanese prime minister's overtures towards the Indian state of West Bengal to have more economic ties would show where the situation is going – and Bhutan could prove to be a tiny regional dynamo powering the larger energy roadmap. ■

The writer has a PH.D in International Relations. He specializes in Political Islam, Political Economy, Extremism, Terrorism, South Asia and Af-Pak.

A People Adrift

Rendered stateless and persecuted by their own government, the Rohingyas of Myanmar are adrift at sea looking for a place to call home.

By S.G. Jilane



Buddha, it is claimed by his followers, preached *ahimsa*, -“cause no injury, do no harm.” A Buddhist was therefore supposed never to injure - far less, kill, anyone, at least unless attacked. But, Sri Lanka and Myanmar belie that concept about Buddhism. Nevertheless, the mistreatment Sinhalese mete out to Tamil and Muslim minorities in Sri Lanka cannot compare with the havoc that the Buddhist government of Myanmar has unleashed on its Rohingya Muslims, in contemptuous disregard of Buddha’s teachings.

Rohingyas are a Muslim community inhabiting Arakan in Myanmar across the border from Bangladesh. They are

said to have been living there since the 16th century. But in 1982, General Ne Win’s government enacted the Burmese nationality law, which deprived 1.3 million Rohingyas of citizenship and stripped them of all rights.

The action was unique. Even when Stalin uprooted the Chechens from their homeland, he settled them elsewhere. They were not denied Soviet citizenship. The Myanmar government on the other hand has turned its hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas into stateless people. More than 140,000 Rohingyas in Burma continue to live in camps for internally displaced persons. They are not allowed to move about freely, work or even marry without state permission.

According to the Myanmar government, Rohingyas are not indigenous Burmese. They do not speak the Burmese language like other Burmese Muslims. They are immigrant settlers from Bangladesh, who speak Bengali and dress like Bangladeshis.

Often described by the international media and human rights organizations as one of the most persecuted minorities in the world, Rohingyas received international attention first, in the wake of the 2012 Rakhine State riots and, more recently, due to the 2015 Rohingya refugee crisis involving their attempt to migrate to neighbouring countries and drifting on the high seas.

The total population of the Rohingyas



Rohingyas are a Muslim community inhabiting Arakan in Myanmar across the border from Bangladesh.

But for want of any follow up action to resolve this crisis, all these efforts have failed to achieve the desired objectives.

For instance, when the Myanmar government ignored the UN resolution, the Security Council ought to have come into action and pass a Resolution under Chapter VII to enforce the former's compliance with the UN call but it did not do so.

Meanwhile, the unfortunate people are being treated as if they were some extra-terrestrial species from an alien planet. Carrying these 'alien creatures,' their 'Unidentified Sailing Objects' (their boats) still continue to wander aimlessly in international waters. And no country seems to be inclined to accept them.

Having already taken a number of them, even Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand are now refusing to accept any more Rohingyas. As a result, thousands of the unfortunate people, including women and children, are helplessly stranded at sea in their boats.

Pitiably, the Muslim world also remains indifferent to the sufferings of their Muslim brethren. The *ummah* is dead as a dodo. Nobody talks about the Rohingyas. Even the OIC has maintained complete silence over the issue.

However, while those who were expected to care, remain indifferent, humanitarian agencies such as the human rights group, Fortify Rights are doing their bit to ameliorate the suffering of the stranded people. Fortify Rights is a non-profit watchdog that documents the plight of the Rohingyas.

In an interview, Matthew Smith, chief executive of Fortify Rights, recently said that "Relief agencies estimate about 8,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar are stranded on the waters in decrepit vessels. They are on the sea off the coasts of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Their location is of no significance because none of those three countries is allowing them to make landfall. Some are drifting in the Sea of Andaman.

"Rohingya have faced systematic persecution in Myanmar for decades. In 2012, there was state-sanctioned violence against the community. So villages were burned down. Rohingyas were shot at and killed, essentially driven out of their homes. And this is part of the reason why we're seeing so

many take to the seas now.

"The Rohingya are one of the poorest communities in Southeast Asia. Their citizenship is denied in Myanmar. So they're a stateless population, and they have been since the early 1980s when Myanmar enacted a law that stripped them of citizenship. Everywhere they go, the Rohingya face abuse - in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere. They have no home.

"Rohingya have been trafficked through Thailand for the last couple of years. At least over 100,000 Rohingyas are in Malaysia right now and over 500,000 in Bangladesh. The U.S. has resettled a few Rohingyas, but generally speaking, they have no safe haven."

Interestingly, according to one report "hundreds of Rohingya families have found refuge in Jammu-Kashmir of all places!

The crisis will continue to fester and may develop into a disaster, unless urgent steps are taken to resolve it. The people floating in the rickety boats would need food and medicines. Unless there is some arrangement in place to provide them with these essential needs, many will perish due to hunger or disease. Or, they may perish due to some natural calamity such as a tornado.

The magnitude of the crisis is beyond the capacity of stray humanitarian agencies to manage. Besides it calls for both short and long term solutions. While the short term solution would require providing them relief in an organized manner, the long term solution would need arrangements for their permanent settlement. And it is only the United Nations that can provide these solutions.

The UNHCR ought to undertake the arrangement for providing food and medicines to the floating people. And the UNSC can persuade or force the Myanmar government to revive their citizenship. At the same time, the so-called Muslim *ummah* should wake up from their slumber to contribute in cash for the Rohingyas' rehabilitation or grant asylum to as many of them as possible so as to wash away this blot from the face of the *Ummah*. **S**

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

is estimated at between two and three million. Outside Myanmar, with about 1.3 million, they are scattered in Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. In Pakistan and KSA they came long ago and settled.

Even the United Nations has been lukewarm towards their plight, despite knowing the nature and magnitude of the current humanitarian crisis. Last year, the UN General Assembly passed a consensus resolution urging Myanmar to provide full citizenship to its Rohingya Muslim minority and to allow them to move freely throughout the country. It has also asked the Southeast Asian countries to respect international law and help the migrants stranded at sea.

The Alternate Bank

New economic exigencies facing the globe could find an answer in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

By S.M.Hali



On October 24, 2014, fifty seven nations became the founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the China-led regional development bank, launched in a formal ceremony at the Great Hall of the People at Beijing.

Before evaluating its pros and cons, it is imperative to mull over its need. Seventy one years ago at Bretton Woods, at the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference, 730 delegates from all 44 Allied nations gathered from July 1 to 22 1944, to regulate the international monetary and financial order after the conclusion of the Second World War. As a result, the

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which is a part of today's World Bank group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), emerged. Bretton Woods was not devoid of disagreements. Brilliant British economist John Maynard Keynes proposed the establishment of an International Clearance Unit (ICU) to regulate the balance of trade. His concern was that countries facing a trade deficit would be unable to climb out of it, paying ever more interest to service their ever greater debt and therefore stifling global growth. He proposed the ICU to bank with its own currency (bancor), exchangeable with

national currencies at a fixed rate. The US, the world's biggest creditor, counter proposed an International Stabilization Fund (now the IMF), placing the burden of maintaining the balance of trade on the deficit nations and imposing no limit on the surplus that rich countries could accumulate.

As additional countries gained economic stability, there was an endeavor for creating a more regional framework. The 1966 establishment of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) dominated by Japan was an early example. The devolution process in Asia was accelerated by the Asian financial crisis of 1997-8 where the IMF's failure

to comprehend the crisis acted as a catalyst for change. The Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI), a multilateral currency swap arrangement among the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong), Japan, and South Korea, was a direct outcome. CMI manages regional short-term liquidity problems to facilitate the work of other international financial arrangements and organizations like the IMF.

In this backdrop, cries for a revamped international system to tackle the problem of unbridled capital flows grew louder while the global economic crunch of 2008 brought major politicians on board demanding economic reform. On September 26,



2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, then also the President of the European Union, called for rethinking a financial system from scratch, as at Bretton Woods. On October 13, 2008, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown echoed the same. Despite tensions between Brown and Sarkozy, EU leaders were united in calling for a "Bretton Woods II", which culminated at the 2008 G-20 Washington summit. Agreement was achieved for the common adoption of the Keynesian fiscal stimulus, an area where the US and China were to emerge as the world's leading actors but there was no substantial progress towards reforming the international

financial system.

The lack of progress prompted Zhou Xiaochuan, the Governor of the People's Bank of China, to make a speech in March 2009 entitled Reform the International Monetary System in support of Keynes's idea of a centrally managed global reserve currency. Dr. Zhou argued that it was unfortunate that part of the reason for the Bretton Woods system breaking down was the failure to adopt Keynes's bancor since national currencies were unsuitable for use as global reserve currencies as a result of the Triffin Dilemma he difficulty faced by reserve currency issuers in trying to simultaneously achieve their domestic monetary policy goals and meet other countries' demand for a reserve currency.

In December 2011, the Bank of England published a paper arguing for reform, saying that the current International monetary system has performed poorly compared to the Bretton Woods system. In August 2012, in an International Herald Tribune op-ed, Harvard University professor wrote that two failures to address European problems around German power had led to world wars in the 20th century and that the current Euro zone crisis was also beyond the capacity of Europe.

In this milieu, leaders of newly industrialized nations like Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa met in St. Petersburg in September 2013 to evolve the BRICS Development Bank with a reserve currency pool worth over \$100 billion. China committed \$41 billion; Brazil, India and Russia \$18 billion each; and South Africa \$5 billion for enabling the countries to pool resources for infrastructure improvements, and serve as a financial institution for lending during global financial crises such as the one in Europe.

Soon, as the largest shareholder with a stake of up to 50 percent support, China launched the AIIB, aiming to provide project loans to developing nations. The US, apparently perceiving it as China's extension of its influence and soft power in the region, strongly urged that AIIB meet international standards of governance and transparency. Refuting the reservations, Chinese President Xi Jinping, declared that the new bank would use the best practices of the World Bank and the ADB while AIIB operations will follow multilateral rules and procedures.

The advent of AIIB will have definite ramifications on the current global geopolitical dynamics. The contemporary unipolar world order, propped up by financial and military might, has created global conflicts.

The BRICS Bank and AIIB are poised to provide an alternative world order, which would seek to resolve global and regional issues pragmatically. The unipolar world order attempted to gain access to or control the scarce energy sources of the developing world. Replacement of this order could have positive consequences like tackling the core issues through a collectivist approach, effect moderation in the use of natural resources and refining consumer appetites.

Although Group of Seven members Britain, Germany and France have jumped on board the AIIB bandwagon, notable omissions are the US and its close allies, Japan, South Korea and Australia. According to the Australian Financial Review, John Kerry had personally asked Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott to keep Australia out of the AIIB. While South Korea is weighing its options and has sought rationality in areas such as governance and safeguard issues, Japan — guided more by politics than pragmatism — has stayed out so far because it perceives the China-led institution to be a rival to the US-dominated World Bank and the Japan-led Asian Development Bank. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has announced a \$110 billion (a slightly higher sum than the proposed AIIB founding capital) investment plan for infrastructure projects in Asia in an apparent move to counter the launch of the AIIB. The Japanese government party LDP, contrarily, is split over the AIIB; its members are still debating the pros and cons while the opposition is largely in favor of membership. Since New Zealand has joined AIIB, Australia is likely follow suit, not willing to let its closest neighbour take the lead in regional ties.

Most Asian countries have welcomed the AIIB but if the US and Japan have reservations regarding its processes, it would be better to have a say in its decision-making from inside rather than criticizing it from the fence. China, on the other hand, should ensure transparency and good practices and also consider giving the AIIB an Asia-Pacific outlook while complementing the World Bank and IMF rather than making the AIIB their counterweight.

On June 24, Australia, which faced U.S. pressure not to join the bank, confirmed it will be a founding member while on June 29, AIIB was formally launched at a ceremony in Beijing. **S**

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

Needs and Priorities

The Pakistan government is spending money on improving public transport. It could also spend with as much generosity on education and health.

By J. Enver

فرض کی پیتے تھے مئے اور سمجھتے تھے کہ ہاں
رنگ لائے گی ہماری فائتہ مستی ایک دن
غالب

By the time the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Metrobus project was completed and opened, it had cost the Pakistan government some US\$ 443 million. The Lahore Metrobus project cost US\$ 298m while a similar project in Ahmedabad, India cost just US\$ 2.4m. The Metrobus project in Beijing, China cost US\$ 4.8m and the one in Leon, Spain cost US\$ 1.8m. The length of the Metrobus system in Rawalpindi-Islamabad is just 23 km while the one in Lahore is 29 km. Compared to these, the longest Metrobus system built so far is located in Sao Paulo, Brazil. It has a length of 104 km and was built at a total cost of US\$ 3.5 million.

The Pakistan government's priorities can be gauged from the choices it makes in terms of its spending on public facilitation. According to the latest edition of the Economic Survey of Pakistan, the country at present has a total of 1,142 hospitals, 5,499 dispensaries, 5,438 Basic Health Units (BHUs) and 669 Rural Health Centres (RHCs). If the country's current population is rated at 200 million, this amounts to one hospital for 175,131 persons and one dispensary for 36,370 persons.

The situation is even worse in the rural areas where over 70% of the people live. They are served by only 669 health centres and 5,438 BHUs. No



wonder then that the total expenditure on health during fiscal year 2014-15 was just Rs114 bn – a paltry 0.4pc of the national GDP. The spending on health is so poor that there is only one cardiology hospital each in the cities of Lahore, Kasur, Sheikhpura, Okara, Pakpatan and Sahiwal. In some areas of the country, people travel for hours and days to reach hospitals for basic medical aid.

But the government must determine where it will spend first. Even under its new budget, just 2.2% of the GDP is earmarked for the education sector. According to one report, Thailand has allocated 28.3% of its budget

for education while Morocco spends 26.4% on education. Among Pakistan's leading assets is its youthful population. An estimated 54.8% of Pakistanis are under the age of 24. Of these, 33.3% are under the age of 14. Without reasonable education, their future looks bleak.

It is true that public transport is one area, especially in Pakistan's urban centres, that needs the government's urgent attention. The growing population of the country must be provided with practical means of transportation. The country is well served by road, rail and air links. The only problem is that these links are not organized in a manner that they would meet the people's

requirements in a more pragmatic manner.

In recent times, however, some headway has been made in providing public transport within the larger cities of the Punjab province. The Lahore BRT was Pakistan's first rapid bus transit system. It operates a fleet of 86 buses which run on a single 28.7 km long Ferozpur Road corridor.

The Rawalpindi-Islamabad Metro-bus project, opened recently, took precedence over the much anticipated Karachi Metro Bus project and most of the funds of the Karachi project were diverted to the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Project. Ironically, while Karachi has a population that is five times bigger than that of Rawalpindi-Islamabad, it still lacks a mass transit system.

tremendous upswing in traffic, the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) prepared a mass transit network for the city with a 2030 vision suggesting two metro lines and six RBT lines, besides the Karachi Circular Railway revitalization programme. The first Green Line Corridor was to be laid from Surjani Town to Jamia Cloth Market (21 km) while the second Red Line Corridor was to cover the distance from Model Colony to Regal Chowk via Safoora Chowrangi (24.4 km). The third Corridor would connect Dawood Chowrangi to Numaish Chowrangi and Lucky Star. The business tycoon Malik Riaz has also offered to build a Metrobus System for Karachi with direct routes from the upcoming Bahria Society on the outskirts of the city to Jinnah International Airport



A Metro Bus system is also planned for the city of Peshawar. It will have a Skytrain and will be initially constructed on 18.4 kilometers from Chamkani to Hayatabad.

The Metro Bus system planned for Faisalabad would have a single line, similar to the system in Lahore. It will connect the Faisalabad International Airport to the City Bus Terminal, passing through some main hubs of the city.

In Multan, construction on the BRT system began in May 2015 and is expected to be completed in 12 months.

Karachi is Pakistan's economic engine of growth with some 20 million people. Since it has experienced

at a 25 minute distance and another route from Bahria to the City Centre, a ride of about 20 minutes.

Once these systems are in place, a good portion of city dwellers across Pakistan will have access to dependable city transport. While this is a priority that the government must attend to with full interest, it must also take steps to control the expenditures being made on these projects and also to set its priorities in a manner that the more urgent needs of increasing spending in health and education are given precedence over public transport. **S**

The writer is a freelance contributor.

Association of MBAs

The Association of MBAs is in the international impartial authority on post graduate business education.

Our accreditation is acknowledged as the global standard for all MBA, DBA and MBM programmes.

We are the only professional membership association for over 9,000 MBA students and alumni, accredited business schools, and MBA employers.

Join us today!
Visit www.mbaworld.com

Knowledge
•
Networking
•
Professional
•
Development
•
Status

Climate Change Tragedy

Karachi experienced one of its worst calamities ever when a lethal heat wave struck the city and left hundreds of people dead in its wake.

By Javed Ansari

When Reham Khan, wife of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan, visited Karachi's Jinnah Hospital on July 4, she did not find a single patient there suffering from heat stroke. Her visit came too late as all patients who were under treatment from the vagaries of heat at the hospital had been discharged.

But the preceding weeks had been a sorry tale of tragedy for the city. As of June 29, 2015, the calamity had claimed 1,400 lives, mostly in Karachi, and in other parts of the southern parts of Pakistan. It was a heat wave that caused the highest recorded temperatures in Karachi since 1979 – up to 45 degrees Celsius. A similar heat wave had killed 2,500 people in India earlier in May this year.

It was said to be a deadly combination of factors that caused the tragedy - poor urban planning, a crippled energy infrastructure, climate change, Ramazan and freak weather conditions. Besides those who died, more than 65,000 people suffered from heat strokes during the two-week calamity that started on June 19.

The number of dead bodies was so high and the heat so intense that morgues



ran out of space and the dead had to be buried without being identified.

Compounding the heat was the mysterious disappearance of the breeze that normally blows in from the Arabian Sea. This was said to be due to low pressure in the sea, which was blamed on climate change.

The heat wave disproportionately affected Karachi's poorest residents. Most of those who died were daily-

wage workers who have to be outdoors and cannot any take days off regardless of weather conditions or sickness. The homeless citizens of the city faced even greater risks.

Due to the sudden and high number of dead, people faced problems with funeral prayers and also finding space for graves. The Edhi Foundation said the city had never seen so many people suffering from heatstroke – and dying. One sordid aspect of the tragedy was that the cost of graves suddenly shot up and was outside the reach of the poor people. Most of those who died or were treated for heatstroke were fasting as the heat wave began two days after the start of Ramazan.

Environmentalists said the number of deaths could have been avoided despite the extreme weather. They blamed both the Federal government in Islamabad as well as the Sindh government in addition to the deficient energy transmission and distribution network of Karachi Electric. Unplanned expansion of the metropolis and the sprouting of kachhi abadis (slums) all over the city was also quoted as a reason. Other experts felt the disaster was due to the utter lack of ability of civic agencies to respond

under demanding circumstances. It is also true that during the past decades, the city's tree cover has been reduced or even altogether removed in many places by the unthinking builder mafia.

Pakistan has suffered massive electricity shortages for years, with blackouts and load-shedding in which the electricity supply is deliberately cut off in major parts of the country. Turning off electricity during a heat wave proves to be all the more fatal, because it cuts off fans, ACs and medical facilities. Karachi's power utility, K-Electric paid no heed to this aspect and continued with its load-shedding schedule. Even before the power outages, many hospitals in Karachi were desperately overstretched and lacked basic facilities. The huge influx of extra patients during the heat wave left them unable to cope even further.

The Sindh provincial government was roundly criticized for responding very slowly to the unfolding crisis but it in turn blamed the federal government and K-Electric for cutting off power during the crisis. For its part, K-Electric maintained that due to the increase in consumption there was a failure of electricity in the city. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also visited Karachi some days after the tragedy but he avoided discussing the matter with local officials and neither did he visit any hospital.

The question constantly being asked was that had Karachi also become a victim of the climate change phenomenon? Where was all the heat coming from? Baffled authorities were wondering what was happening to the weather patterns in the city though there must have been prior indications of the oncoming high temperatures?

In fact, scientists had warned for some time that heat waves would become more frequent and intense in this part of the world due to climate change but the Pakistan government was oblivious to the impending threat. The heat wave, when it came, was further amplified by the high humidity, load-shedding and low water consumption during Ramadan.

Usually, the weeks leading to the start of the monsoon season are the warmest of the year throughout Pakistan. However, Karachi, being on the Arabian Sea coast, is blessed by a sea breeze which moderates the city's weather. But during the week preceding the heat wave, due to a low-pressure system in the sea, the breeze did not blow towards the city, leading to a spike in temperatures. Weather experts said that, consequently, a low pressure system developed over the Arabian Sea and the winds blew towards the low pressure



area - from the coast to the sea.

The sea breeze moderates temperatures in Karachi, which would otherwise rise to 50 degrees Celsius in May and June. A low pressure system over the Arabian Sea is a normal feature for these months and does not last for more than four days. As such, the pre-monsoon season was expected to arrive on the night of June 23 and it was likely that Karachi and the rest of the country would receive rainfall in the coming days.

There are weather experts who believe that this part of the globe is certainly experiencing a climate change. They say the change contributes to the major survival concerns for Pakistan, particularly in relation to the country's water, food and energy security. But how much of these challenges are manageable and up to which degree does the subject need further exploring? They believe that in view of the changes in climate, the government should have been cognizant of what was happening and should have been alert to the impending situation, ready to provide timely advice to citizens on how to deal with the extreme weather conditions.

With hundreds of Karachiites suffering due to the sudden heat wave, understanding weather patterns and how they may be affecting the people's health and their quality of life is becoming increasingly important. It is also important to realize that heat waves have a much greater health impact in urban areas than in surrounding suburban and rural areas. Urban areas typically experience higher temperatures because of the "heat island" effect. It must

also be remembered that given the rising average global temperature, extreme heat waves will become more common worldwide in the years to come.

A burden of responsibility must also be borne by the environmentalists and weather experts in this respect. The Pakistan government has a Ministry of Climate Change led by Sen. Mushadidullah Khan as well as an Environment Protection Agency (EPA) but none of these bodies seem to be bothered about the whole issue.

All is, however, not lost because mortalities during heat waves can be reduced, if not prevented altogether. There is a good lesson to be learnt in how one Indian state responded to the emergency some years back. After a heat wave in 2010 killed an estimated 3,000 people in Ahmedabad, the administration established a "Heat Health Action Plan" that raised awareness of health risks from extreme heat among citizens and trained healthcare workers to recognize signs of heat stress. City officials realized that coordinated action was needed to prepare for the rising threat of extreme heat and scientists worked to develop a forecast system that could alert the administration to impending heat waves several days in advance.

Perhaps the administration in Islamabad and Karachi as well as the Ministry of Climate Change can learn from this example and prepare for future heat waves which scientists say will be more common in the coming summers. ❏

The writer is Editor of Southasia Magazine.

Commuting Made Easy

The Bandra-Worli Sea Link in Mumbai has greatly helped the city counter its growing traffic congestion problems. But is it still viable?

By Mahrukh Farooq

Over the past few years, Mumbai has invested in numerous projects designed to effectively counter its growing vehicular congestion problem. One of

these projects is the Bandra-Worli Sea Link, officially called the Rajiv Gandhi Sea Link, which is a cable bridge with pre-stressed concrete steel viaducts on either side. It links Bandra in the

western suburbs of Mumbai with Worli in south Mumbai. The bridge is a part of the proposed Western Freeway that links the western suburbs to Nariman Point in the city's main



business district. Although this project has greatly helped in speeding up traffic to and from both regions and has reduced overall traffic congestion, questions are being raised over its viability, especially considering the government's growing interest in dropping three upcoming sea link projects in favour of building one big coastal road. With opinions divided on both plans, it has become all the more necessary to give a closer look to the state of population growth in Mumbai so that the feasibility of each can be fully ascertained.

According to a study released last year by the 10th edition of the Demographia World Urban Areas, a regularly published compendium of urban population, land area and density data for cities with a population of more than 500,000, Mumbai is the world's third densest city with over 30,000 residents per square mile. As of June 2014, the sprawling megapolis, which is spread over 600 square kilometers, has seen its population grow at a rate twice that of the state of Maharashtra's and 2.5 times that of the country in the past 100 years. In 2011, Mumbai's population grew to 1.24 crore, which represents a whopping 983 percent increase from 1911.

According to a news report published in the Indian Express, the

Mumbai is the world's third densest city with over 30,000 residents per square mile.

cause of such a high growth rate can be attributed to the city's long history of migration. According to the country's population census figures, since Mumbai has long been viewed as the hub of capitalism as well as the economic capital of the country, nearly 50 percent of migration has been due to an increased availability of employment and business opportunities at large. Census figures between 1991 and 2001 pinned the number of migrants close to around 15 percent of the city's population. This means that Mumbai and its adjoining areas such as Thane and Navi Mumbai may have attracted close to 24.89 lakh migrants. Out of this number, 15 lakh were from outside while 9 lakh were from within the state.

All of the aforementioned factors have led to the creation of one of Mumbai's biggest problems; traffic congestion. As incomes rose, the number of car loans given to the public increased and a total of 1.5 million cars were brought in 2007 alone. This resulted in overall traffic in Mumbai to grow at a rate that is four times faster than its population. Not surprisingly, even though there has been a staggering 100 fold rise in the number of vehicles in the country, the overall expansion in its road network has not been proportionate to this increase. The total number of vehicles in the country has increased from 0.3 million in 1951 to over 30 million in 2004; yet, the country's road network expanded from 0.4 million km to just 3.32 million km. The same holds true for Mumbai as an increasing number of people choose to travel in their own motor vehicles, thus resulting in massive congestion on the roads.

With the Bandra-Worli Sea Link, much of the city's traffic has been diverted from its main roads, resulting in far less congestion than what previous figures established. The sea link, which cost nearly US\$250 million to construct, has successfully reduced travel time between Bandra and Worli during peak hours from about 60-90 minutes to just 20-30 minutes. As of October 2009, the Bandra-Worli Sea Link had an average daily traffic of around 37,500 vehicles.

In spite of all its achievements, the sea-link has had to suffer its fair share of criticism, especially in the wake of a recent increase in the toll price travelers have to pay in order to cross the bridge. As of April 1, 2015, commuters traveling via the Bandra-Worli Sea Link have had to shell out Rs. 60 against the previous Rs. 55. According to an official, the increase is due to a tri-annual hike limited only to the sea link. Therefore, a monthly pass of Rs. 2,750 for each car will now cost Rs. 3,000. In addition, the project has severely exhausted the national exchequer as it has cost nearly 5 times more than its projected cost and has taken over 5 years to construct.

Still, the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC), which is controlled by the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), has continued to work on fresh surveys and moves for clearances on the pretext of uncertainty of whether Mumbai's coastal road will ever materialize. Yet, all of that seems about to change as the coastal road project recently got a boost with the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) agreeing to issue a draft notification to pave the way for a coastal road in Mumbai by June 15. The coastal road, which is proposed to be a freeway along Mumbai's coastline from South Mumbai's Nariman Point to the far western suburb of Khandivali, is expected to provide relief to scores of commuters who currently take up to three hours to travel the distance in peak hour traffic. It also aims to add recreational spaces in the form of open green patches, a sight rarely seen in Mumbai. In addition, the government has promised to create marinas and promenades and provide pedestrians access to the green patches to either walk or cycle.

Whatever the case may be, as long as the people of Mumbai are able to get to their workplaces in time, it may not even matter which project is given more significance. If anything, both may serve to complement each other by greatly reducing the overall traffic congestion on the roads, making commuters' lives easier. **S**

The writer is a member of the staff.

Poetry is a deep-rooted tradition in Afghanistan and one that remains the most accepted despite the war that has ravaged the country senseless. It is one of the most loved forms of art in Afghanistan. Now restive provinces are bringing back the tradition of poetry evenings – popularly

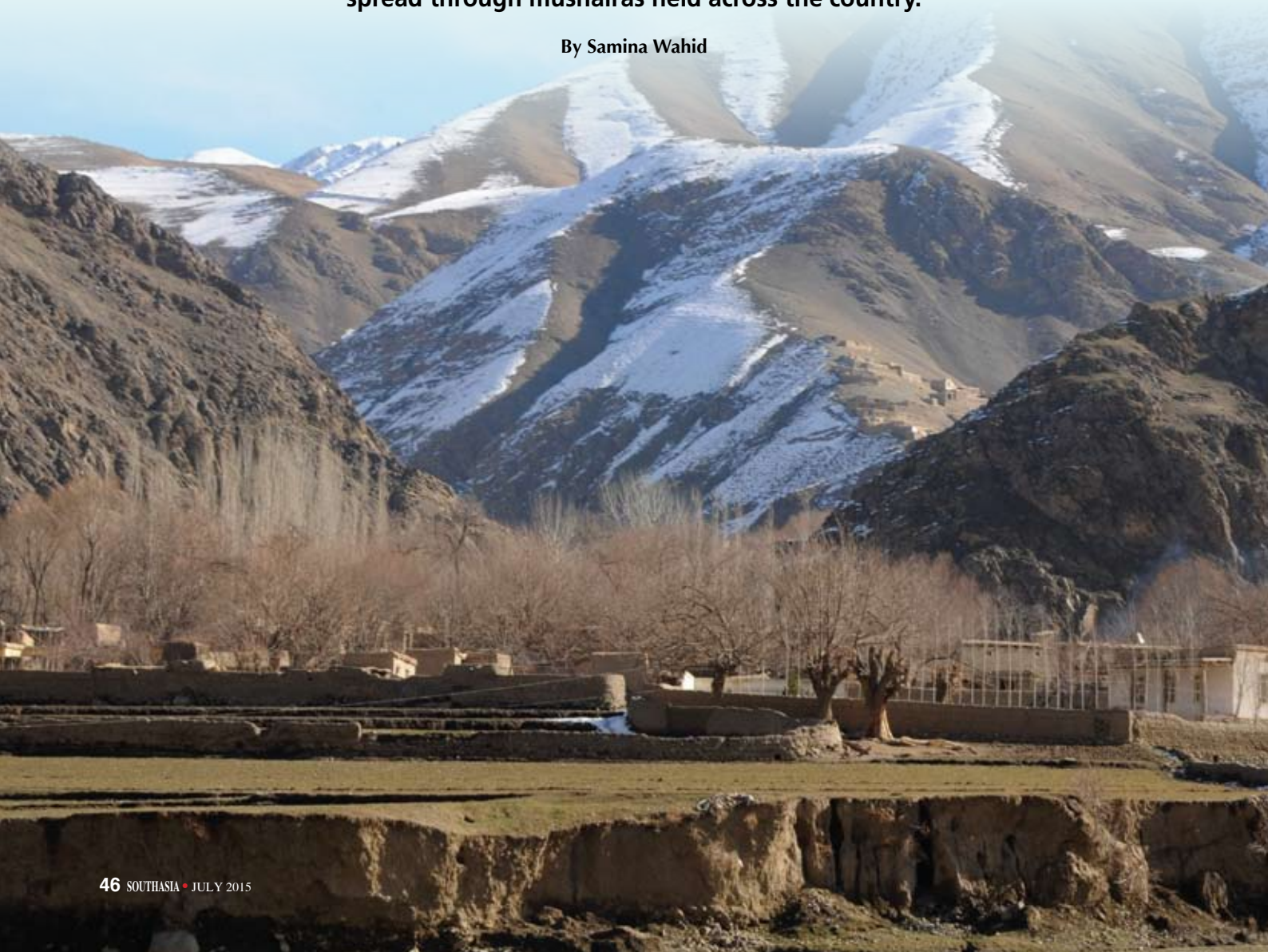
known as mushairas – to the country. This year, these mushairas are all about welcoming spring to the region. The first one kicked off in Kandahar, once the Taliban government's capital, in face of threats and stereotypes of conservatism associated with this southern province.

The history of poetry in Afghanistan is long. It flourished during the reign of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, who ruled from 998 to 1030, and was a man of literature and poetry, with more than 700 poets living in his palace. But 100 years before the Sultan of Ghazni, Persian literature was born

When Sweetness Speaks

The din of war has given way to the sweetness of language that poets spread through mushairas held across the country.

By Samina Wahid



in the court of the first Persian king, Yaqub, in Nimruz, a western province of Afghanistan. It is said that one day a poem was recited in Arabic to praise him, but as Yaqub didn't understand Arabic he ordered that no poem should be recited in a language he did not know. So the literary men of the court were forced to compose poems in Farsi, the language of the king. And the rest is history.

While the tradition is long-standing across Afghanistan, poetry evenings have their own character in every region – usually they are named

year's poetry evening in Kandahar also focused on the desire for peace, love for the homeland and romantic emotions.

Similarly, the mushaira held in Maidan Wardak, situated just a hundred miles from Kabul, was named after the delicious apples in this central Afghan province, given that locals take great pride in their various juicy varieties of apples. Hence their festival is named after the annual apple flower.

Elsewhere in the country, the eastern Nangarhar province has given

the hundreds of sub-ethnic groups, Afghans are threaded together by poetry. Mothers lull their kids into sleep with spontaneous poetry who learnt to be poets from their own mothers. In fact, when these children start going to school, the first Persian text they are introduced to is that of Hafiz. Known as Diwan-e-Hafiz, the tome is by the 14th century poet from Shiraz (modern-day Iran) that details everything from poetry to philosophy. Once the children get older, they are introduced to some of the other poets including Saadi (from Shiraz) and Bedil



after the iconic features specific to the region; for example, a flower, fruit or geographical feature that is unique to the area. Kandahar's poetry evening, for instance, is named after the flower of the pomegranate fruit for which the province is famous. Known as the 'Anargul' mushaira, it saw the participation of more than 500 poets, writers and other artists as well as countless spectators this year.

The country's new Information and Culture Minister Abdul Bari Jahani, himself a well-known poet from Kandahar who wrote the national anthem, had his own message read to the audience in the mushaira this year. "Such evenings play a pivotal role in enriching our culture and promoting the tradition of unity, it is the duty of every poet and other artists to play their role in this regard," said Jahani's message. Much like the spring mushairas held before, this

this honour to the orange flower for which the province is known. "De Narang Gul (orange flower) Mushaira" has been celebrated quite frequently thanks to the relative peace in this part of the country of late. Afghans in the northern Kunduz province enjoy the annual event named after the red tulip flowers that turn the countryside of this province like a red carpet in spring. Similarly, in the south-eastern Paktia province, locals embrace spring by organizing the annual festival named after the pine-tree flowers while in eastern Kunar province it is named after the all-year flowing Kunar River that provides water for life to most parts of this lush green province.

The fact is poetry is everything to the Afghans. Regardless of their ethnicity, whether they are Tajik, Hazara, Pashtun, Uzbek, Turkmen, Nuristani, Baluch, or any other of

(from Delhi). Evening and long nights of winter are dedicated to Shahname (Book of the Kings) by Firdausi. Shahname is the greatest Persian work of poetry and is compared to Homer's Odyssey. It is an epic poem written a thousand years ago with an anti-Arabic ideology, aimed to preserve the Persian language and culture.

Poetry permeates all levels of Afghan society to the extent that when the mullahs want to make a statement but are sometimes unable to back it up by reason, they quote a verse and end the discussion there. Despite the civil war that wreaked havoc in the country for years, it is heartening to note that the much-loved tradition of mushairas is finally making a comeback in Afghanistan – here's to hoping the tradition continues. **S**

The writer contributes regularly to various leading publications.

Island's Dilemma

Big power rivalry could make or break Sri Lanka. It all depends on how deftly the country plays its cards.

By S. W. Perozani



The island state of Sri Lanka's geostrategic position has attracted all kinds of diplomatic courting from a host of regional players such as China, India and

Japan. Under the tenure of former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Colombo paid a great deal of attention to China and accepted Beijing's development assistance. These

friendly relations changed since the Sri Lankan elections in January this year that brought Maithripala Sirisena to office.

The Sirisena government has

shown no hesitation in changing the country's pro-China stance to repair what it claims was the damage done to Sri Lanka's relations with India, the United States and the European Union. In addition, other major megaprojects being funded by Beijing also came to a standstill and the tenders cancelled. The Chinese government was quick to realize the repercussions of such moves and, as a consequence, China's Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs made an official visit to Sri Lanka in February this year. Despite this, relations between Colombo and Beijing were dealt another setback after the Sirisena administration recently declined to grant permission for Chinese vessels to dock in Sri Lanka.

However, ties between China and Sri Lanka may be on the mend in the wake of the China-South Asia Technology Transfer and Collaborative Innovation Forum in Kunming, China. Among the various dignitaries who attended the forum, Dr Sarath Amunugama, the Sri Lankan Minister for Higher Education and Research, was also a participant. According to Amunugama, Sri Lanka and China have reached an agreement to provide assistance to China's science and technology sector. Two universities, namely Moratuwa and Jaffna, alongside the Technical Institute, will be provided assistance by China. Interestingly enough, the minister also implied that Sri Lanka's new ally may also help them realize their desire of developing nuclear technology in the country since he believes Sri Lanka is fully equipped with the right petroleum resources.

It is worth mentioning that China has worked hard to develop and strengthen ties with Sri Lanka, especially during the nine years of President Rajapaksa's rule. The latter's visit to China in 2007 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties with Sri Lanka was an important turn. Sri Lanka was part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's South Asian tour in September 2014, which further highlighted its importance. Colombo realized Beijing's significance beyond bilateral formalities during its crucial battle with the separatists belonging to the Liberation of Tigers Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Beijing provided valuable military, economic and diplomatic support to Colombo in the final battle with the LTTE. According to media reports, China fulfilled the request for almost all the weapons on the wish list of the Sri Lankan government,



A lot will also depend on whether China helps Sri Lanka develop its nuclear assets.

which proved crucial in defeating the insurgency in 2009. China's support continued in the post-war period as well. A section of the international community reacted to the excessive use of force and human rights violations by the Sri Lankan military during the civil war but it was China that deterred any measures against Colombo.

Furthermore, China became the country's leading investor. In the wake of the civil war that hit the Sri Lankan economy badly, Beijing extended various loans and initiated mega projects. Major projects with Chinese help included a \$ 361 million investment in Hambantota port, \$ 1.4 billion for port city Colombo, a \$ 500 million China-owned container terminal at Colombo port, a \$ 455 million coal power plant, highways, expressways and a theater. It was in this context that the former Sri Lankan president reshaped the country's foreign policy and began to develop closer ties with China. During his term, two Chinese submarines and warships visited Sri Lankan ports though India raised its concerns over these developments.

Beijing argues that it won projects through open international bidding. India lost out to China in those deals due to lack of interest and finance. It was only after Beijing started the

construction work that New Delhi began to raise concerns. Moreover, as a sovereign state, Sri Lanka could develop ties with any other country and invite naval ships to visit its ports. Indian war ships call on ports of various countries on a regular basis. The Indian reaction was an attempt to bully a smaller neighbour to dictate its foreign policy. New Delhi has already taken control of foreign and defence policies of another smaller neighbour, Bhutan.

Against this backdrop, it is to be seen what the future direction of Sri Lankan policy would be. Whether it continues with the current policy of a tilt towards the India-US bloc, changes its inclination towards China or follows a relatively neutral path, will be clear after the technology transfer and assistance coming from China. A lot will also depend on whether China helps Sri Lanka develop its nuclear assets, a move that is not likely to sit well with India and the United States. China, India and the US are undoubtedly engaged in a strategic game to control Asia. In this backdrop, the strategic position of the smaller state such as Sri Lanka becomes crucial in establishing an effective strategic and economic strategy that works for all. **S**

The writer is a freelance journalist.



The Maha Shivaratri Festival, with its atmosphere of pure serenity and submission to spirituality, is a sight to behold. It is held every year in reverence of the Hindu god Shiva, god of destruction, specifically to commemorate his marriage to the Hindu goddess, Parvati. The Maha Shivaratri festival, also known as 'Shivaratri' or 'Great Night of Shiva', marks the convergence of Shiva with Shakti. Nearly 1 million devout Hindus from around the world flock to Kathmandu's Pashupatinath Temple to participate in rituals that aim to cleanse the body of sins and help them earn a place in

heaven. Some of the major features of the festival are the naked ascetics; holy men possessing a deep connection with the spiritual world and who, therefore, possess the power to bless pilgrims, their bodies smeared with ash and their hands clutching on to pipes filled with cannabis, a salient facet of the religious event.

Cannabis has traditionally been used as an aid to meditation while male devotees use it as a symbol of fellowship in their frequent bhajans. Though declared illegal in Nepal, cannabis is permitted during the annual religious event of the Maha Shivaratri

festival specifically for the ascetics who are allowed to smoke inside the temple complex, as long as they don't sell or distribute the drug to pilgrims. For many of these holy men, the use of cannabis, in some ways, represents Shiva who, as legend has it, came to the forests near the temple, his body smeared with ash and smoked cannabis, which grows wild in the forests of Nepal, as he wandered, draped in the skin of the tiger and the serpent. As one holy man, Mahant Ramnaresh Giri, puts it, "After I smoke, I get a feeling that I have overcome worldly pleasure and dissolved myself in the universe."

Weed Capital

Nepal's thriving drug landscape has attracted scores of visitors from around the world in spite of mass criticism of the growing practice.

By Mahrukh Farooq

Drugs, such as marijuana, weed and cannabis, therefore, hold a high level of religious significance. This can somewhat be attributed to each drug's native properties which in many cases influences a person's sense (i.e. his sense of sight and touch), gives him an altered sense of time and changes moods. To connect with one's spiritual self requires a certain level of detachment with one's surroundings as well as a deep association with a world beyond the mundane; hence, the traditional roots of such drugs which can be traced back to the time of the gods.

In fact, marijuana and cannabis

began to appear on the commercial front only in the late 60s and early 70s, when Nepal became the glorified hub for hippies, the Freaks, the Flower Children; basically the champions of the counter culture movement established against the hypocrisy of society. The vast availability of such drugs resulted in scores of hippies flocking to Kathmandu to live a life of liberal freedom, filled with drugs, sex and spiritualism. At the time, many small cafes, restaurants and stores along the streets of Jhonchen (also known as 'Freak Street') freely and legally sold hashish and marijuana. This resulted in increased cultivation

and large scale smuggling of the drugs into the provinces of northern India. Over the next eight years, smoking ganja (marijuana) or charas (hashish) became not only an acceptable norm but a mark of sophistication.

By 1973, the government of Nepal had initiated a mass crackdown in order to make it illegal to buy, sell or cultivate cannabis. All dealers' licenses were revoked on July 16, 1973. Many factors contributed to this sudden change. First, locals were alarmed at the increasing rate at which the society's youth was engaging in such practices and, thus, feared that they were being corrupted to the point of no return. Second, Nepal was under a lot of pressure from both the United Nations as well as the United States to join respectable nations in outlawing cannabis and curbing the spread of narcotics. Yet, in spite of all restrictions, many of these drugs are still widely available for use today. The Thamel and Pokhara regions of Kathmandu consist of many groups of people engaged in the production and sale of hashish. Business seems to be booming as, according to some sources, Nepal is ranked 22 out of the 25 best places to smoke weed.

Still, the government of Nepal has in no way let up on its drive to curb the use and sale of such drugs. The law extends to both locals as well as foreigners and the penalty for each is severed. In 2013 alone, 129 foreigners were arrested for the possession and trafficking of drugs in the country. According to the Nepalese Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), a substantial number of tourists are found to be involved in drug smuggling, thus reverting the attention of authorities to the control of drug trafficking networks.

As a result of the curb, Nepal has still had to deal with its fair share of consequences. Firstly, the government now loses revenues worth \$100,000 previously earned from licenses given to dealers. Hill farmers, for whom cannabis was a small, but crucial cash crop, have been hit the hardest as they have no other means of earning an income. Yet, in spite of all this, there has been little outcry against the intervention, though few choose to voice their complaints in private. Many claim that the restrictions work against the interests of poor people as many do not have the money to buy an alternative, alcohol, which is only available at exorbitant prices in Nepal. Perhaps if the government were to slightly modulate the restrictions in a way that poor people are taken care of, the situation would not be so dismal. ■

The writer is a member of the staff.

Legend says that before 265 BC the Maldives was a peaceful community with trade as its prime source of income as the tiny pieces of islands of the Maldives represented benefits for the traders. It was not until the early 1970s that the country realized its economic potential in promoting its tourism industry. In 1960s, a team from the United Nations (UN) had rendered it unsafe for tourist activities to take place in the Maldives because of its geographical location. However, the serenity surrounding the Maldives attracts over 750,000 tourists to the country every year.

Gauging the potential as a source of revenue, the government of the Maldives has launched the Visit

Maldives Year 2016 campaign. It aims to blend the tourists with the culture and tradition of the Maldives and to make visitors feel at home. Probably for the first time, the island country is using social media to attract people as it is guaranteeing a full-year vacation package through social media various competitions. The campaign promises a VIP welcome, an opportunity to become a Visit Maldives Year (VMY) brand ambassador and a surprise for every 100,000th visitor. South Asia's first free sea diving championship will also be a part of the VMY 2016 campaign. The Maldives is also blending nature and human talent for the first time by holding a Tourist Arrival Countdown Show to celebrate

tourism and provide entertainment to visitors.

It is a dream for couples to get married in a serene location and Visit Maldives Year 2016 is providing a once-in-a-lifetime chance for couples to tie the knot in the Maldives after 3 finalist couples will enter the finals where their dream wedding will be telecast online. Any such campaign would be incomplete if the local cuisine were not a part of the promotion. During the VMY 2016, visitors will experience the hospitality of the Maldives through delectable delights prepared by the locals. While savoring these dishes, the visitors will visit nearly 100 islands in 30 days and experience various cultures and



Attracting Tourists

The Maldives hopes to bring in more tourists through an ambitious initiative.

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar



traditions.

A brainchild of the Maldives Marketing & PR Corporation, Government of Maldives, VMY 2016 is destined to take the country's tourism industry to a new level where its global reach is expected to increase by ten folds.

VMY 2016 is expected to hide the country's political turmoil from recent years as they have tarnished its image as a peace loving nation. Officially launched by the President of the Maldives, Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, the purpose of VMY 2016 is to increase tourists to 1.5 million. The figure currently stands at 700,000 to 850,000. Educational awareness programs as well as competitions are planned to attract the additional visitors.

Interestingly, while the Maldives has been building its image as a tourist destination it has not used a proper marketing campaign to do this. As such, VMY 2016 will have social, economic and political benefits. The thousands of visitors coming to the country will create harmony with foreigners while creating a peaceful global community.

Further, VMY 2016 will provide job opportunities for the Maldivians while creating an inflow of capital to better the revenue stream. It is also expected that VMY 2016 will serve to develop the infrastructure in all major

atolls of the Maldives to create more tourist destinations. Moreover, the VMY 2016 campaign and the tourism sector in particular, will create avenues for growth for the country's infrastructural development, leading to developments in the construction sector and adding value to the agriculture and handicrafts sector.

While speaking at the launch ceremony of VMY 2016, President Yameen said, "There is no doubt the tourism sector's contribution to the creation of jobs is unparalleled with any other sector. In fact, the benefits of tourism as a catalyst for job creation go a long way from a mere creation of employment in hotels, resorts and restaurants. Many ancillary businesses throughout the economy gain from tourism, including the retail sector, entertainment arena and transportation industry."

In view of an influx of tourists arriving in the Maldives and because of the growth of the tourism industry, the Maldives has initiated the guesthouse island project. The country will develop a resort in Laamu Atoll Thumburi having 2,100 beds. The Maldivian President has assured that less than 4 percent interest rate would be applied to resort development, which will give higher profit percentage to resort owners. Although the Maldives has enjoyed its share of tourism, some atolls are not

being properly utilized. Moreover, the policy to provide lesser interest rates will propel construction in over 50 atolls. Earlier this year, it was reported that resorts in the Maldives were offering discounts of up to 30% to attract visitors.

In November 2014, the Maldives tourism minister announced plans to introduce the Green Tax or Eco Tax. According to reports, the Maldives is imposing on tourists a green tax of US\$6 per bed from November 2015. This may turn the country into an expensive tourist destination and reduce its appeal as a heaven on Earth. According to the tourism minister, Ahmed Adheeb, the revenue collected from the tax will go into managing the waste from local resorts and other islands.

Where the purpose of imposing the green tax on tourists is to generate additional revenue, the premise could be that since tourists are littering the environment and are polluting the landscape, they must pay the tax for doing so. The Maldives could also use the tax to plant more trees, develop infrastructure and create an effective garbage disposal system. The country can also think about reducing the green tax in future because this may not bode well for its tourism industry in the long run. **S**

The writer is a free-lance journalist.

Culture of Color



Bhutan is known for its rich and colorful cultural heritage which is the main attraction for tourists.

By Zufah Ansari

Bhutan also known as the Kingdom of Bhutan lies in the eastern Himalayas nestling between India and China. Located in the heart of the Himalayas, Bhutan is a land-locked country. The form of government is as unique as the country itself; it is one of the only democratic monarchies in the world with a parliamentary form of government. Bhutan has been a member of the United Nations since 1971. It is a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

The country is a member of 150 international organizations, including the World Bank and the IMF and maintains strong economic, social and military relations with India. Other than India, Bhutan has diplomatic

relations with more than 52 countries and the European Union. By a long-standing agreement, Indian and Bhutanese citizens can travel to each other's countries without the need for a passport or visa; however, they need to carry their national identity cards with them while travelling. Bhutan is one of the world's smallest economies, mainly based on agriculture, forestry and tourism. The currency used in Bhutan is the ngultrum, which is connected to the Indian rupee. The national language is Bhutanese, one of 53 languages in the Tibetan language family.

Popularly known as the Land of Thunder Dragons, Bhutan is famous for its rich and unique cultural heritage and has become one of the main attractions for tourists. Bhutanese tradition



Bhutan's richness and cultural diversity is further enhanced by the many elaborate and colorful religious festivals that are celebrated throughout the country.

is deeply steeped in its Buddhist heritage. Its indigenous population comprises the Drukpas. Three ethnic groups: the Snarchops, the Ngalops and the Lhotsampas make up today's Drukpa population. Most of them are predominantly Buddhist, while Hinduism is the second largest religion in the country. The Buddhist culture has and still plays an important role in the cultural, social and sociological development of Bhutan and its people. Though the urban settlements have moved towards a modern form of living, the majority of the population

still lives in small rural villages where small family farms are the prime form of life and farming, the most common occupation.

Most of the Bhutanese eat their food by hands, keeping up with a simple and traditional lifestyle. Their diets are rich in meat, poultry, dairy, grain and vegetables. The food is first served to the head of the family followed by others; the entire family sits cross-legged on the wooden floor while eating together. Due to modernization, the trends for the traditional Bhutanese are changing; the clay pots used for serving and eating

purposes have been replaced by ceramic bowls. Though the traditional eating habits are still a part of the Bhutanese everyday lifestyle but is most commonly practiced in the rural areas of the country, compared to modern cities.

Bhutanese traditional dresses both of men and women are the most distinctive and unique garments that have evolved over thousands of years. The national dress for men is the gho, a knee-length robe tied at the waist by a cloth belt. Whereas, women wear an ankle-length dress, the kira, clipped at the shoulders and tied at the waist. These dresses provide a unique identity to the people of Bhutan; they also depict the true representation of Buddhism, which is reflected in the Bhutanese lifestyle.

Bhutan's richness and cultural diversity is further enhanced by the many elaborate and colorful religious festivals that are celebrated throughout the country. Each village is known for their unique festival as every village organizes a different festival in which people from other villages and areas



come and spend time with their families and friends. These festivals also serve the purpose of connecting families with one another and distinct relatives, living

in different areas. One of the most widely known festivals is the annual Tshechu, meaning a religious festival. As the Tshechu begins, the villagers and

the general public dress in their finest clothes and congregate at their local temples and monasteries.

Marriages are simple affairs and are usually kept low-key. However, elaborate rituals are performed for lasting unions between the bride and the bridegroom. After the religious ceremony, parents, relative and friends give traditional offerings to the newlywed couple. Love marriages are common in urban areas, but the tradition of arranged marriages is still common in the villages.

The birth of a child is always welcomed in Bhutan. Extended family and guests are discouraged from visiting during the first three days after the birth. On the third day, a short purification ritual is performed after which visitors are welcomed to visit the new born and the mother. For the Bhutanese, children as the progenitors of the future and therefore they do not discriminate about the sex of the child. Traditionally various gifts are offered, ranging from dairy products to clothes and money. **S**

The writer is an undergraduate student with interest in culture and society.

**WE DON'T
PROMISE YOU
ASIA... JUST THE
SOUTH OF IT!**

South Asia is an enormous landmass, almost as large as the United States. Separated from Central Asia and China by skyscraping Himalayas and Pamirs, and crisscrossed by meandering rivers, the region enjoys a temperate climate and endless resources. Today, South Asia is home to about one fifth of the world's population and stands poised for a giant leap in this century.

SouthAsia magazine brings you comprehensive coverage of business, economics and politics in the region, keeping you connected to the news that matters on a wide variety of issues.

If you wish to be updated with news backed by analysis, on a regular basis, please fill in the subscription coupon below and mail it along with your annual fee.

We promise to keep you in touch with the emerging world called South Asia!



Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Tel: _____
 Email: _____

Subscription Rates	
Pakistan	Rs. 1500
South Asia (excluding Pakistan)	US\$60
Rest of Asia	US\$65
Europe, Australia & Africa	US\$70
USA, Canada & South America	US\$75

SOUTHASIA

Cheque/Bank Draft to be made in the name of JAWZ Communications (Pvt.) Ltd. and mailed to JAWZ Communications (Pvt.) Ltd. at 20-C, Lane 12, Off Khayaban-e-Ittehad, DHA, Phase II Extension, Karachi - 75500, Pakistan. Phones: 92-21-35313821-24 Fax: 92-21-35313832 Email: info@southasia.com.pk Website: www.southasia.com.pk

Vol 01-Issue 25
03-09 May, 2015



Weekly Social Diary

25

Things you should know about

ANAM MALIK
SuperModel

Revealed:
Chic Fashion Spotted!
Can Can
Skirts ...

Fashion Designer
Mohsin Naveed Ranjha
of **MINR**
Design Studio
brings up some latest
trends for 2015

Style Notes:
For the real

BELT Lovers!



#Shahid#AbeerRizvi

It is the mag of
modern era

Pakistan
OBSERVER



"NRB is trying to devolve more power to the people of Pakistan"

What are the objectives of NRB?

When the army came into power on the 12th of October last year, the country's institutions were at different stages of destruction. There was bad governance across the country and the lack of public confidence in state institutions established the feeling that we probably couldn't govern ourselves. This is not a good feeling for any nation.

Therefore there was an urgent need to find out from scratch what had gone wrong and in turn initiate measures which can in future be the foundation for a durable good government.

There are of course number of ways of doing that. Among them, democracy, albeit flawed, is still perhaps the best format. The Chief Executive without question is committed to the ideals of democracy. This can be seen from the very fact that although he had the choice of being an autocrat ruler, his first decision was not to impose marshal-law in the country. Instead he opted for a military led government having democratic outlook and approach.

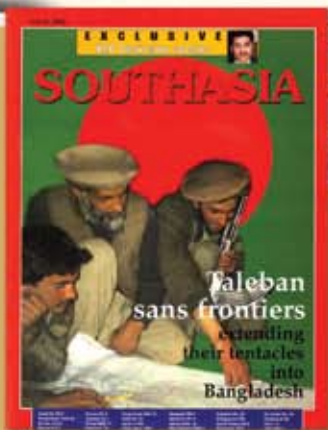
What must be borne in mind is that there are number of democratic ways. The way that we as nation were following for the last 15 years was not working work. The State's institutions were destroyed, indicating that there was an expeditious requirement for reconstruction. Hence the formation of NRB.

Do you support the notion that the current military government is there only because the civilian government failed to deliver the goods?

Military governments, indeed, come on the disqualification of the civilian governments. Otherwise why should there be a military government? If the civilian government is working along the desires and aspirations of the people there would not be any need for a military led government.

Don't you think the NRB is disturbing the existing system?

It is very much disturbing "the system" that has drowned the country. This is not only a statement; I am just... The policies former



Construction Bureau (NRB) aims to establish the real the country by strengthening... While giving an SOUTHASIA, NRB (Rtd.) Tanveer proposed

A page from Southasia, July 2000



TOYOTA

“Finally, a used car
you can depend on”

- Mr. Sure



IAL Saatchi & Saatchi

Terms & conditions apply.



TEXT
8398

SMS "TSURE"
FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Certified by Toyota experts
- 6 months/10,000 Kms nationwide warranty
- After sales support
- 203 points quality checked

TOYOTA SURE

Certified Used Vehicles

Buy.Sell.Exchange.



It's a Promise



KARACHI • TOYOTA CENTRAL MOTORS UAN: (021) 111-786-122 PHONE: (021) 34532246-50, 34536246-49 • TOYOTA SURE CENTRAL UAN: (021) 111-786-122 PHONE: (021) 34150583-4 • TOYOTA SOCIETY MOTORS UAN: (021) 111-786-113 PHONE: (021) 34383213-4 • TOYOTA SOUTHERN MOTORS UAN: (021) 111-876-111 PHONE: (021) 35053119, 35053181-6 • TOYOTA SURE SOUTHERN UAN: (021) 111-876-111 PHONE: (021) 35062478, 35053181-6 • TOYOTA DEFENCE MOTORS UAN: (021) 111-836-836 PHONE: (021) 35888314, 35386022-7, 32020583 **LAHORE** • TOYOTA TOWNSHIP MOTORS UAN: (042) 111-393-939 PHONE: (042) 35885014 • TOYOTA SURE TOWNSHIP UAN: (042) 111-393-939 PHONE: (042) 35843965 • TOYOTA WALTON MOTORS UAN: (042) 111-008-008 PHONE: (042) 36662981-82 • TOYOTA CANTT. MOTORS UAN: (042) 111-828-628 PHONE: (042) 36613401-10, 36613411 • TOYOTA AIRPORT MOTORS UAN: (042) 111-860-990 **FAISALABAD** • TOYOTA FAISALABAD MOTORS UAN: (041) 111-000-052 PHONE: (041) 8718902, 8712002, 8712004, 8722002-7 • TOYOTA LYALLPUR MOTORS PHONE: (041) 8811021-24 • TOYOTA SURE FAISALABAD UAN: (041) 111-000-052 PHONE: (041) 8732055.

Customer Assistance Centre

customer.relations@toyota-indus.com
Toll Free: 0800 11123



Right on Target in Political Grooming

In this day and age of critical and complex public exposure, professional media training and political grooming are necessary ingredients for success.

CMC runs prospective political candidates and company spokespersons through specialized training programs. They are carefully honed to make public appearances with poise, composure and self-assurance.

Media training is also an essential part of this process, based on key steps in handling media, conducting press conferences and responding to media questions. Training sessions include message development, on-camera response and crisis simulation.

We keep you right on target where it matters.

To learn more about our services, contact us at:
20-C, Lane 12, off Khayaban-e-Ittehad, Phase II Extension, DHA, Karachi-75500.
Tel: +9221 35313821-24, Fax: +9221 35313832 E-mail: info@cmc.com.pk
Web: www.cmc.com.pk

CMC
the image marketing company

An exclusive affiliate of  Ketchum

CMC is an exclusive affiliate in Pakistan of Ketchum, USA, one of the world's largest and most geographically diverse PR agencies, operating in 70 countries and winner of the highest number of awards in the global PR industry.