

INTERNATIONAL
Drug Trade in South America

November 2016

SOUTHASIA

Reg. ss-973

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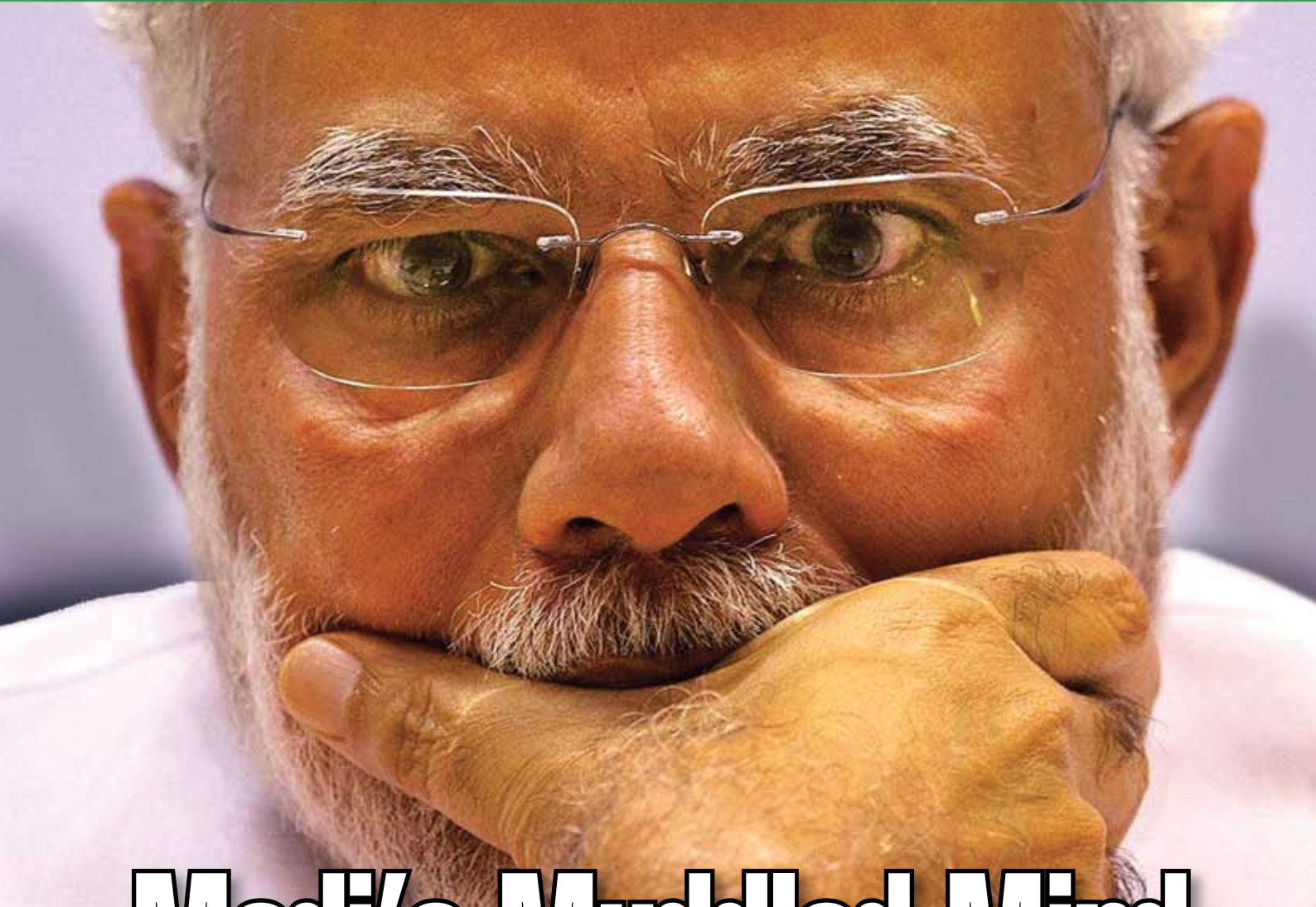
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PAKISTAN
Saarc Future

BANGLADESH
Next Elections

NEPAL
Peace Offensive

NEIGHBOUR
Iran's Options



Modi's Muddled Mind

He leads a large country and has opened many fronts, hoping to prolong his grip over India. But his mind is muddled and as a result the whole region is in turmoil.



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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

SOUTHASIA

NOVEMBER 2016 VOL.20 ISSUE 11

PRESIDENT & EDITOR IN CHIEF

Syed Jawaid Iqbal

MANAGING EDITOR

Zeba Jawaid

EDITOR

Javed Ansari

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Mahrukh Farooq – Faizan Usmani

Feature Writer: Khawaja Amer

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

S. G. Jilane

CONTRIBUTORS

Zeeshan Ahmed - Khawaja Amer - Zufah Ansari -

Muhammad Ali Ehsan - Mahrukh Farooq

Sarah B. Haider - S. M. Hali - Dr. Ikramul Haq

Javed Jabbar - Syed Jawaid Iqbal - S.G. Jilane

Dr. Raza Khan - Taha Kehar - Taj M Khattak

Dr. Syed Ali Madni - Talat Masood

Fatima Siraj - Faizan Usmani

GRAPHICS & LAYOUT

Kamran Ghulam Nabi

Haroon Rasheed

MARKETING & ADVERTISING

Aqam-ud-Din Khan

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Waqas Jan - Syed Ovais Akhtar

Hira Sarwar

COORDINATOR

Shehryar Zulfiqar

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*.

Shooting the Messenger

Press freedom in Pakistan took on a new meaning in the aftermath of a report published in Daily Dawn on October 6, 2016, in which details of a top level meeting held at the Prime Minister's House were revealed. Initially, the government's response to the story was heavy handed, to say the least, and there was even a denial on part of the government that such a meeting had taken place. However, when Dawn 'stuck to its guns' and said it had published the report after stringent fact-checking and cross-checking, the official reaction simmered down a bit but still then, the name of the reporter who had filed the story, Cyril Almeida, was put on the Exit Control List (ECL) and he was barred from leaving the country. It was a case of shooting the messenger for bringing bad tidings.

Whether Dawn should have or have not published the story is a moot point. Some say that in the interest of national integrity, particularly since the story gave the impression that the civilian government was telling the armed forces not to act in a manner that it isolated Pakistan at the international and diplomatic level, the newspaper should have exercised its best judgment and not carried the report. It was, however, clear that Dawn had only used its freedom as a print medium in the now liberated free media environment in Pakistan and printed the report filed by its own staffer after due checks. It was sad that the government refuted the story and subsequently banned the reporter from travelling abroad. In Pakistan's current scenario, where media freedom has crossed many barriers and climbed many mountains, it was quite self-defeating that a democratic regime was behaving like a dictatorial one and abrogating press freedom by placing curbs on the movement of a journalist. As it turned out, the restriction amounted to only a temporary measure since it wasn't an answer to the real source of the leaked story, if indeed it was a 'leak'. It could also have been a deliberate effort on part of certain quarters to egg the newspaper towards publishing the story as a scoop. Even then, it would have been quite surprising had a newspaper of Dawn's stature even considered printing the report had it not been sure of its sources.

It is still not clear as to who or what the 'sources' of the story were. Even then, it is quite obvious that the 'leak' was made on part of certain quarters to malign the armed forces. It is another matter that the ploy did not succeed because the people of Pakistan have much more faith in and respect for the armed forces than they have for the civilian rulers. It is now becoming clear that the source of the story was in the government itself somewhere and privy to the proceedings and contents of the high-powered meeting that took place at the Prime Minister's House. Otherwise, how could have the details of the meeting been shared with the reporter? It would be in the fitness of things now if this whole episode were taken to its logical conclusion and identities of those responsible for the story in the government setup revealed.

Until our going to the press, it was perhaps being safely thought in some quarters of the government that the source of the leak need not be disclosed. The government's thinking seemed to be on the lines that the storm would blow over once the present COAS, Gen. Raheel Sharif retired and the new COAS would be more concerned with other pressing matters. Such a line of thinking ignored the fact that the issue had a lot to do with the institution of the army and that, in any case, the army works as a homogenous body. Whoever the COAS is will not make an iota of a difference. This issue is a very sensitive one as it has serious implications for national security. It was clear that good progress was being made towards getting closer to the person or persons who leaked the story though the interior minister was not aware of any such elements in the government. For its part, the army wished to reach the bottom of the matter so that such media misadventures do not occur in future.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

Poor image of IMF



This is with reference to the story on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Both institutions have been actively working to improve the socio-economic situation in underdeveloped regions. However, despite playing a supportive role, their efforts have often looked with disdain and people of the beneficiary nations consider them a ploy to take control of the entire economy in the name of providing heavy loans and financial grants. Some years before, for example, a protest against rising employment was held in Thailand, in which protesters were carrying banners and placards, which read 'IMF: I am fired.' Having been reduced into a kind of abusive term, the IMF, as well as the World Bank, need to work on their imagebuilding, particularly in those countries where

the majority do not seem to hold a favourable view of them.

Ahmed Ali Khanzada,
Islamabad, Pakistan.

Beyond Propaganda

Propaganda is considered as an inevitable part of any wartime strategy. However, recent moves taken by the Indian government and Indian Army suggest they both can use the propaganda tool, particularly when it comes to dealing with Pakistan. The notion of carrying out surgical strikes across the border can appeal to an adventurous, young mind which knows nothing more than playing Counter-Strike on PlayStation. But in reality, things are not that simple or straightforward. On the real battleground, can special forces enter



silently, assault scores of militants within an hour and return safely without facing any retaliation? One wonders if it is the same army which took more than three days to evacuate a 7-storey building from a couple of militants in Pampore in Indian-Occupied Kashmir. It is a wake-up call for the Indian political and military

leadership that should stop fooling its people.

Upeksha Jayaratne,
Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Welcome António Guterres!



It is heartening to know that António Guterres, former Prime Minister of Portugal, is going to be the next Secretary General of the United Nations (UN). Other than being the premier of his country, he has headed the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from 2005 to 2015. During his term as a UN High Commissioner, he played a central role in providing protection to more than 58 million refugees and internally displaced people in various parts of the world. Considering the magnitude of the ongoing refugee crisis, I hope his appointment as the UN chief will help the organisation deal with the challenge in a better way. The world is also looking at him for the peaceful settlement of many regional and international disputes such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Kashmir problem. I hope he proves

to be a true messenger of peace.

Robert de Souza,
Bangkok, Thailand.

Foreign Policy or Dictation?

Following the Indian Government's move, other countries in South Asia have also decided not to attend the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit, which was scheduled to be held in Pakistan in November. It is a matter of grave concern for a democratic nation like Bangladesh that always fails to act on its own, especially when it comes to forming and maintaining diplomatic relations with other countries. Bangladesh has been over-reliant on India that mostly decides crucial matters for the country. Time and again, history has proved the fallacy of sacrificing national dignity to appease bigger states. Bangladesh seems to be following the same path.

Sajida Parveen,
Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Nasheed Needed

Recently, Mohamed Nasheed, former Maldivian president and leader of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), has asked the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) to help him contest the next presidential elections in the Maldives. As he has been in political exile in the UK for more than a year, Nasheed's future is uncertain. In 2015, he was given a 13-year imprisonment verdict

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Republic of Insomnia

According to an editorial published in Daily Nepal Times, Nepal is emerging as the republic of insomnia. It says insomnia has become a common problem in the country, wherein most patients are diagnosed with stress-related sleeplessness. In Nepal, a mere 3 per cent of the total national budget is allocated to health, wherein less than one per cent is spent on mental health. The deteriorating mental health of the Nepalese is also revealed by the fact that there is a high demand of tranquillisers, sedatives and sleeping pills among the general public. The physical reasons of mental deterioration are obvious, but the Nepalese Ministry of Health looks clueless on the matter and owing to an almost collapsed health infrastructure, no improvement is anticipated in the country in the future.

Ashish Timalina,
Birgunj, Nepal.



under terrorism charges and has been automatically disqualified from holding a political office. The ruling of the Maldivian Supreme Court also made it clear that he cannot lead his party or contest elections till 2031. Since he has been the main political figure in the country for more than a decade, Nasheed's rise and fall as head of the state is not an ordinary matter. The UNHRC must think about his return to the political process of the country, which needs young educated leadership.

Shahab Ali Hamid,
Male, Maldives.



"The inherent weakness of Pakistan is that democracy in the country has not been tailored in accordance with the dictates of the environment."
Pervez Musharraf,
former President of Pakistan



"I want to tell Pakistan that India is ready to fight you. If you have guts, come forward to fight against poverty. Let's see who wins?"
Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India



"Even though we talk about nine provinces in the country, we should go forward as one nation."
Maithripala Sirisena,
President of Sri Lanka



"If Pakistan does not allow Afghan traders to use the Wagah border, Afghanistan will also not allow Pakistan to use Afghan transit routes."
Ashraf Ghani,
President of Afghanistan



"More than 100 people have been killed in Kashmir in the last two months, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi hasn't shown any grief."
Muzaffar Wani,
Father of martyred Kashmiri freedom fighter



"Karachi had become an advertising spot for luring investors to Gwadar, whereas Gwadar has nothing more to offer beyond beautiful images."
Akhtar Mengal,
Pakistani politician



"No power can deter us from supporting our Kashmiri brethren in their just and legitimate struggle for the exercise of their right to self-determination guaranteed by the UNSC relevant resolutions."
Nawaz Sharif,
Prime Minister of Pakistan



"Pakistan's views carry no matter for Bangladesh as we are doing our tasks including the trial of the war criminals."
Sheikh Hasina Wajid,
Prime Minister of Bangladesh



"The process of the regional grouping over the years has been too slow."
Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda,
Prime Minister of Nepal



"Gross National Happiness (GNH) means 'development with values.'"
Tshering Tobgay,
Prime Minister of Bhutan



"The continued bombing of Aleppo is killing civilians, destroying hospitals and schools and it has nothing to do with combating terrorism."
Jean-Marc Ayrault,
French Foreign Minister



"It is utter nonsense that people are asking the Indian Army to show evidence of surgical strikes carried out across the LoC."
VP Malik,
Former Indian Army Chief

PAKISTAN

Another Satellite

The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) will launch the country's first remote-sensing satellite in March, 2018. Known as the Remote Sensing Satellite System (RSSS), the Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite (PRS) is a dual-purpose earth observational and optical satellite that will replace Badr-II. PRS will be primarily used for environmental monitoring, hazard



warning and natural resource surveying. Efforts are being made to utilise space technology in various sectors, such as education, infrastructure development, communication, and agriculture. Currently, space technology is used by Pakistan in the planning and implementation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. **S**

PAKISTAN



Bonds Fever

With its one billion dollars Sukuk bond issue, Pakistan has again entered the international Islamic bond market after a two-year gap. The Pakistan government had floated 5-year Sukuk bonds in 2014 at 6.75 per cent and raised one billion dollars. In 2015, a 10-year Eurobond was issued at 8.25 per cent, racking up \$500 million. Through the issue of 5-year Sukuk bonds in September 2016, the government plans to raise one billion dollars at the rate of 5.5 percent. About 38 per cent of the bids have already been received from European countries. **S**

INDIA

Terminator Train

A public health initiative taken to curb mosquito breeding, the Northern Railway of India, in association with the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), has started a special 'Mosquito Terminator Train' to spray insecticide on water bodies along the tracks in Delhi. Mounted on a wagon, the train has a power sprayer truck, which can sanitise inaccessible areas from a distance of 50-60 metres. Moving at a speed of 20 kilometres per hour, it covers a distance of some 150 kilometres in each cycle. At an interval of two weeks, four rounds of spraying are carried out every month. **S**



INDIA



Woman Empowerment

In Andhra Pradesh in India, an LED bulb manufacturing unit has been established to provide professional training and employment to women from tribal areas. The State Energy Conservation Mission, in association with the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), formed a firm 'Rampa Girijan Mahila Samakhya' (RGMS) to create a sustainable business model for the local tribal women. Headed by a B. Tech-qualified tribal woman, the firm has a workforce of 50 female employees, producing some 125,000 energy savers, 4,400 tube lights and nearly 6,000 street lights and decorative lights every month. **S**

BANGLADESH

Solar Irrigation

In Bangladesh, more than 355 solar irrigation pumps have been installed by farmers to water crops on more than 9,000 acres of land. A cost-effective alternative to diesel pumps, a solar irrigation pump irrigates 26 acres of land, generating about 10.2 kilowatts of electricity. Every year, Bangladesh imports some 3.2 million tonnes of diesel, while 40 percent of it is spent on running of nearly 14.32 lakh irrigation pumps installed across the country. This year, the Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL), a state-run financial



organisation, has approved 471 solar pumps. IDCOL provides grants to local farmers to help install irrigation pumps using renewable energy. **S**

SRI LANKA



Discovering 3D

RCS2 Technologies, a Sri Lanka-based firm, has introduced 3D printing in Sri Lanka to make the technology accessible to the general public. Initially, two lines of the fused deposition modelling (FDM) printers have been offered along with their materials, which will be used for different educational, engineering and industrial applications. The company has introduced an industrial-grade desktop 3D printer called MAGNUM, which is used internationally for machining, medical modelling and architectural purposes. RCS2 Technologies has also signed an MoU with the University of Colombo to develop the country's first multi-headed 3D printer. **S**

NEPPAL

Affordable Eye Care

In Rolpa District in Nepal, an ophthalmological centre has been established to provide eye care services to local people at an affordable rate. Funded by the privately-run Rapti Eye Hospital, the centre will serve people living in some 22 village development committees (VDCs) in Rolpa district. In Nepal, cataract is the most common eye disease, which accounts for about 62 per cent of preventable blindness in the country. Every year, some 350,000 cataract surgeries are performed in Nepal, but a large number of people cannot afford the treatment due to its high cost. **S**



MALDIVES

Underwater Thrills

Offering a new attraction to foreign visitors, the Maldives is about to open the world's first underwater hotel in Kuredhivaru Island. Being built by a Polish company, the hotel will sit six metres below sea level, offering a breathtaking view of the deep. The underwater hotel will consist of 21 moveable rooms, an underwater dive centre, a restaurant, a spa, and a recreational area, as well as a bar. The Maldives has the world's largest tourism submarine, world's first underwater spa, first underwater nightclub and the world's first all-glass underwater restaurant. **S**





Internal Challenges

Kashmir remains a living, breathing, bleeding tragedy. Seeking a solution calls for a cool, cerebral, even clinical approach. At the same time, many internal challenges must be surmounted.

By Senator(r) Javed Jabbar

Before we can effectively address the external challenges on Kashmir such as mobilizing international support for a just and

honourable solution, we should give higher priority to clearing the confusion and contradictions that mark our own internal handling of foreign policy.

Despite its association with the genesis of Pakistan in August 1947, thereby making it the first and oldest subject on our foreign policy agenda, Kashmir's pre-eminence is equalled today in 2016 by other subjects such as nuclear weapons, Afghanistan, USA, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and related spheres such as NATO, EU, Turkey, Russia, Gulf and other Muslim countries and other major nations.

Yet Kashmir remains pivotal. Regardless of the machinations of Modi or his successors, whether on the front-burner or on the back-burner, or even a side-burner, Kashmir simmers with an abiding luminosity and centrality. Sometimes the glow emanates only a mild, gentle warmth. More frequently in the recent past, the embers radiate intense heat.

Kashmir remains a living, breathing, bleeding tragedy. And even if the image of some Kashmiris boldly brandishing the flag of Pakistan in the face of Indian troops, could be a contrived, photo-seeking spectacle, we know that, at its core, the word "Kashmir" means an irreducible truth of injustice which deserves redress.

In the opinion of some Pakistanis, we have unduly magnified the Kashmir dispute. Thus, we ourselves have allegedly constructed a serious obstacle that prevents improved relations with India. This writer strongly dissents with this view. Pakistan simply had no choice but to do what it has done for 69 years - condemn the dubious manipulation of the alleged Instrument of Accession by the Maharaja with the connivance of the Indian Government and Mountbatten, oppose the occupation of Srinagar and the Valley by Indian troops in 1947-48 and call for the conduct of a plebiscite as per the UNSC Resolutions. Even our own Government's failure to prevent the passionate but tragically indiscriminate raids by tribesmen in October 1947 should not divert us from the undeniable right for self-determination of the Kashmiri people.

If the need to demonstrate absolute, unqualified unanimity amongst ourselves is the **first** internal challenge, the second issue concerns how we deal with the conceptual, strategic formulation of our foreign policy with reference to Kashmir and how we address tactical amendments to this policy as and when required by changes in objective conditions. In turn, this is closely related to the management of foreign policy on a day-to-day basis and our implementation of required measures. The process can be as crucial as the substance.

Whereas emotion, passion, religion

and pride duly, or sometimes unduly, affect our response, with regard to the **second** challenge, we need to exercise a cool, cerebral, even clinical approach. The determinant factors shaping our response should be - State and national interests; global and regional geo-political factors; economic imperatives; fundamental principles of structural coordination; cohesion within and between civilian and military spheres of power; basic requirements of democratic, political institutions; successful precedents and case studies from other countries where approximately similar issues have been effectively addressed. Not emotion, passion, personal temperament, whims and inclinations.

An essential step in this respect is to have a full-time, full-fledged Minister for Foreign Affairs. The present Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sartaj Aziz possesses vast experience in economics, finance, development and foreign affairs. He has previously served both as Foreign Minister and Finance Minister. He richly deserved to be the President of Pakistan. But, far from electing him as President, and purely to accommodate petty, party-related considerations of patronage, the PML(N) denied him a party ticket for election to the Senate - so as to enable some other favourite to become a Member of the Upper House. This meant that Mr. Sartaj Aziz would remain an appointed, not an elected Adviser. He has the status, rank and privileges of a Federal Minister and a Cabinet Member and is thus entitled to represent the Government in both the Senate and the National Assembly. But the Prime Minister retains the portfolio of Foreign Affairs as the Minister-in-Charge.

To deprive Mr. Sartaj Aziz of elected status is to deprive him from possessing dimensions of credibility and authority, both within the country and on a global level. In a democratic parliamentary system, such as we have, the most desirable and most potentially effective option is to have in place an individual whose credentials are authenticated by being elected, rather than being appointed. Conversely, it is also true that, in the very same parliamentary democratic system, there can be close family relations without elected status who enjoy more influence on official policy and actions than elected ministers. There are such individuals in the present Federal Government and in the Punjab Government. But these are not ideal modes. On the international level, an Adviser simply does not project the totality of authority and credibility which a full-fledged, preferably elected

Minister does.

We also have a distinguished former Ambassador in the person of Mr. Tariq Fatemi as Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs with the status of a Minister of State. A Head of Government is entitled to receive inputs from more than one source to be able to weigh diverse opinions and options before making a final choice.

Compounding the perceived lack of credibility, authority and singularity of approaches in foreign policy in the civil, political sphere is the unusual civil-military dimension relevant to critical aspects of foreign policy and national security policy in Pakistan. Due to factors beyond the country's own control such as the existence of grave threats to State survival from the very birth of the country in 1947, the Armed Forces have played a major role in these spheres at almost all times.

Between 1947 and 1958, Prime Ministers Liaquat Ali Khan and H.S. Suharwardy briefly but boldly showed that, given strong political leadership, it is possible to enable the civil segment to shape foreign policy.

In the period between 21st December 1971 and 5th July 1977, Z.A. Bhutto, notwithstanding his other deficiencies and misjudgments and catastrophic errors in appointing General Zia-ul-Haq as COAS and in delaying settlement of the 1977 crisis, also showed that strong political leadership can shape foreign and security policy without being dependent on prior endorsement by the military.

In 2016, on Kashmir at least, there appears to be concurrence between the civil and military leadership. Yet there is still the curious anomaly about the Defence portfolio. Perhaps curious is too mild a word. Appalling, may be more apt. A cynical view is that the Prime Minister attaches such little real regard for the importance of the Defence sector that he is unwilling to appoint a full-time, full-fledged Minister of Defence. Instead, the portfolio is assigned as "additional charge" to a Minister already unable to cope with the burden of being the Minister for Water and Power. It is difficult to find a precedent for such a bizarre arrangement. Even if we were to, for a moment, assume that a civilian, political Minister of Defence exercises very limited power and authority in the presence of an unduly assertive, long-accustomed-to-its-predominant-role - the GHQ - this is exactly the **wrong** action to take and the **wrong** signal to send by a civilian Government striving to **strengthen** political democracy.

For a political leader who is so strongly in favour of democracy and

the political process as is the present Prime Minister, to help perpetuate - deliberately or inadvertently - the notion that, even if he were to appoint a full-time Defence Minister, such a Minister will merely be a cipher, is to, in fact, strengthen and **deepen** the influence of the military over foreign policy, including Kashmir.

For a finishing touch to this lopsided process of having neither a full-time Foreign Minister nor a full-time Defence Minister to deal with Kashmir, the present Prime Minister insists on giving the Chief of Army Staff higher protocol than all his Federal Ministers and Secretaries!

And the PM frequently meets the COAS alone, without also inviting the Defence Minister to be present.

The **third** internal challenge is to facilitate the maturation of Azad Jammu & Kashmir into a genuine, autonomous model territory for what a single, united Jammu & Kashmir should be, and can be, one day. Unlike the short-sighted, insincere, insecure way in which India attempts to make Jammu & Kashmir an integral part of the Indian State, the State and the Government of Pakistan have shown far greater self-confidence and maturity in giving AJK the formal status of being a separate Constitutional entity. However merely ceremonial this feature remains, it provides the ethical and structural basis for Islamabad to cede much of its authoritarian control over the internal politics and dynamics of AJK. Official actions in this direction would also encourage the emergence of political forces within AJK that are independent of the domineering, distorting influence of the major political parties of Pakistan such as the PML(N) and the PPP.

In the political process, and most of all in governance, by reducing the scope for corruption and covert manipulation, Pakistan would serve the cause of strengthening positive perceptions on the international level about how valid is Pakistan's policy on Kashmir by retaining its historic linkages with AJK while deliberately distancing itself from the political development of AJK.

To decisively engage global attention and support and address the external, international challenges for a successful Kashmir policy, we need to first vigorously address the internal challenges. ■

The writer is a former Federal Minister and Member of the Neemrana Initiative, the longest-running (since 1992) non-media-reported Track II Pakistan-India Dialogue.



And Kashmir Burns

Having subjugated the people of Kashmir while they step up their freedom struggle, Narendra Modi looks beyond India's borders in quest for greener pastures.

By Syed Jawaid Iqbal

At last the cat is out of the bag; Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, has openly attested for the first time allegations regarding Indian involvement in

Balochistan. For the past many years, the government of Pakistan, its intelligence agencies and even politicians from Balochistan had been saying that India was strongly supporting the so-called

separatist elements in Balochistan but India had always rejected the allegation. During his speech on Independence Day on Aug 15, 2016, the Prime Minister of India openly confessed





Indian involvement in Balochistan. He said, 'People of Balochistan, Gilgit and Azad Kashmir have thanked me a lot in past few days.'

Modi has an uphill task to govern a huge country and capitalize on its potential. However, he has been more interested in the problems of others instead of looking inwards, from CPEC to Chinese interests in the South China Sea, the Nepalese Constitution or the water issue in Bangladesh. His views would carry more weight at the international level if he put his own house in order and this requires a colossal effort. A country like India needs a leader with understanding who could take along diverse people with conflicting stakes. Modi has not been able to address issues at home or internationally. In a democracy like India, a divisive personality is the last thing required for national integration.

Very recently, Prime Minister Modi stirred the pot by talking about Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and, in a first, equating Balochistan with Kashmir. This has surprised everyone. Even the Indian intelligentsia has struggled to ascertain the wisdom behind all this. Why would an Indian Prime Minister whose country has tried to convince the world that India has no role in Balochistan suggest an Indian intervention there? By doing so, Modi was trying to divert world attention from the grim tragedy that has been unfolding in the Indian Occupied Kashmir over the past three months. Thousands of unarmed youth are protesting every day for their right to self-determination. More than 100 innocent Kashmiris have been killed and more than 6000 injured. There is constant curfew and complete media blackout. Actually, India has botched up Kashmir again. It corroborates Modi's anxiety; he has a serious problem where he doesn't have an immediate workable solution to the post-Wani flare-up in Indian Kashmir. India's security apparatus has grossly overplayed its hand again, going too far even by its own standards and has made the situation worse.

Previously, a typical Indian reaction to such a situation would have been to signal to the world that Indian Kashmir



Modi has an uphill task to govern a huge country and capitalize on its potential. However, he has been more interested in the problems of others instead of looking inwards.

was none of Pakistan's business, perhaps insinuating Pakistan's spoiling role in a legitimate freedom struggle. But the reaction to the current uprising was too extreme for such a predictable reaction to work. In the wider economic interest of benefiting from the large Indian market, world powers have not been very demanding and critical of Modi's wrongdoings in Kashmir and on other issues. Over-reliance of major powers on India is a grave mistake and any regional order based on trampling of human rights will unravel sooner or later. In the second week of September, after the second Indo-US Strategic and Commercial Dialogue, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her US counterpart John Kerry held a joint news conference at which Sushma Swaraj said, "There was a meeting of minds on the issue of terrorism."

John Kerry said the perpetrators of attacks on Indian soil – in Mumbai in 2008 and at the Pathankot airbase last January – should be brought to justice. "The United States remains committed to bringing the perpetrators of the Mumbai and Pathankot attacks to justice. Terrorism is terrorism. There is no good terrorism or bad terrorism." Why could John Kerry not see involvement of the Indian military and agencies in Samjhota Express, Malegaon and other

terror acts and atrocities of the Indian Army in IOK? Where are the so-called champions of human rights and why are they silent about the IOK atrocities? This raises eyebrows over the US role in the region.

The arrest of Kulbhushan Yadav, a serving Indian naval officer, in Balochistan is a glaring example of India's state terrorism. Pakistan has always wished to maintain long-term, multi-faceted and durable strategic ties with the US for the realization of shared objectives. However, Pakistan had taken the position that mutual respect and co-operation at military, intelligence and diplomatic levels should be the hallmark of relations between two countries. America's dubious role of propping up India through a civil-nuclear agreement and its refusal to sign a similar agreement with Pakistan has irked Pakistan.

Pak-US relations were also strained during the Raymond Davis episode. It can be visualized from the planning and action by the TTP militants as to who attacked the GHQ, the Mehran Naval Base and the Kamra Base; all intelligence and equipment must have been provided by alien networks. Whatever the case, they had become an existential threat for Pakistan. Members of the US administration and the generals have been pushing Pakistan



to do more. Despite the fact that more than 50,000 citizens and five thousand security personnel have lost their lives after Pakistan joined the war on terror, they have continued to pressurize Pakistan into doing more.

Granting the Kashmiris their rights is the advisable thing to do as it will bring stability to a nuke-enriched continent. Let it be very clear. Kashmir is not about realpolitik; it is about the rights of people who are under India's illegal occupation. In a sense, it is a continuation of the colonial domination and foreign occupation of the colonial era. The world has decided to end subjugation of colonized nations by powerful nations. The period of alien domination has gone. If the world order was designed merely to balance the interests of major dominant powers, there was no need to create the United Nations. A cartel like the Council of Europe would have sufficed. The Kashmiris are asking for the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination. India can delay but never deny this right. The torch of freedom is in the hands of a new generation, the fifth generation and the flame will not die out. The recent attack on Uri and the time of its occurrence just before the United Nations Security Council meeting has placed the incident in doubtful light. Modi's decision not to attend the Security Council meeting was already being termed as an effort to elude the international forum on the Kashmir issue. The internal situation in India has also not been satisfactory for Modi. Human rights violations have been a major issue faced by his government. He has often faced protests while visiting foreign cities, such as London and New York. He does not like to hold press conferences because of the expected



impact of human rights violation issues in India in question-answer sessions. These abuses range from mass killings, enforced disappearances, torture, rape and sexual abuse to political repression and suppression of freedom of speech in Kashmir and in other states as well. The Naxalite insurgency is growing and many human rights violations are being committed by the Indian government. Regarding the atrocities in Indian Occupied Kashmir, a report by the US State Department says, "Indian authorities use Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to avoid holding its security forces responsible for the deaths of civilians in Jammu and Kashmir."

In addition to the efforts of the Kashmiris, the most authentic voice is that of Pakistan and the world has to pay heed to it. Pakistan upholds the right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir for self-determination in accordance with resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. These resolutions of 1948 and 1949 provide for the holding of a free and impartial plebiscite to determine the future of the state by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has reiterated at the UN General Assembly recently

that Pakistan's stand on the core issue of Kashmir must be resolved as per its historical perspective and according to the wishes of the Kashmiri people and that the dance of death and destruction would have no end. The Pakistan Prime Minister said that the list of crimes committed by the Indian forces was very long and was increasing by the day. Killings, molestations, ransacking of buildings, arrests, humiliation and harassment are the common and much used tools of the world's largest democracy by which it tries to muzzle a just voice.

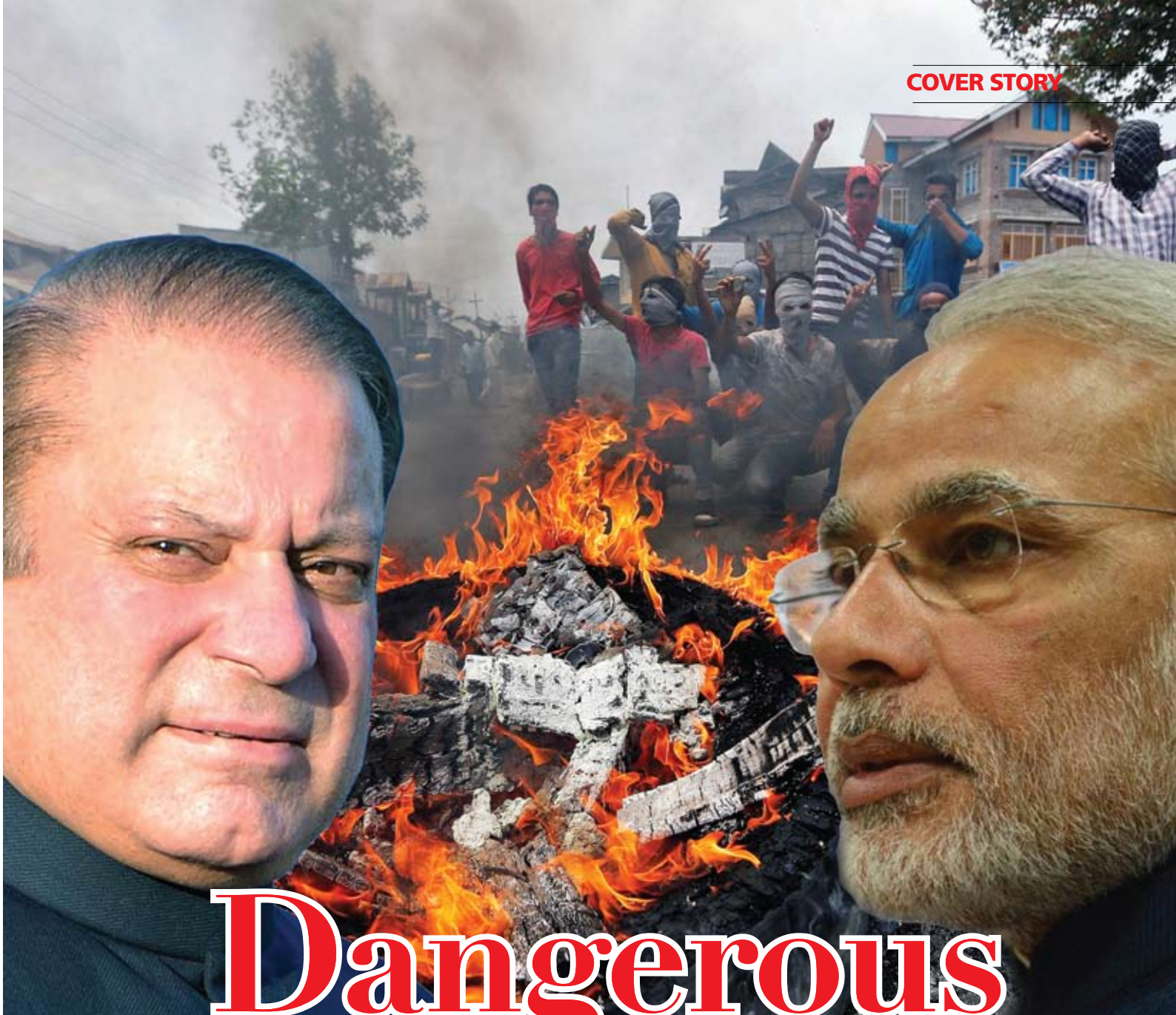
India is a large country, but being large does not guarantee greatness, especially when legitimate movements are suppressed through brute force and Pakistan is blamed for everything. The situation is further exacerbated when Modi openly acknowledges intervention in East Pakistan and Balochistan. But he cannot take the situation to the edge and drag both the nuclear nations into mutual destruction. In this way he will not only waste the potential of India being a bigger economy but will also destabilize the region.

Dear Modi, remove yourself from politics for a moment and consider things at face value: a separatist whose killing drew thousands to his funeral and more thousands to the streets for months—indicates the serious underlying problem that your government has either failed to recognize, or worse, has recognized it and is now foolishly trying to quell the uprising by force. The reason the bodies of dead protesters are being wrapped in Pakistani flags, the reason Kashmiris support Pakistan against India at cricket matches, the reason that slogans of 'Pakistan Zindabad' are chanted in Kashmir, is not because of some elaborate conspiracy that is now coming to the fore.

The reason is simple; the people of Kashmir and especially the younger generation are sick and tired of an 800,000-strong force that routinely beats, shoots, blinds, rapes and murders. They're sick and tired of living under occupation though everyone in India is still surprised by Burhan Wani's popularity. Kashmiris don't raise Pakistani flags because there's some mysterious handler behind the scenes; they raise them because the world has been silent to their suffering and because (for better or for worse), Pakistan is the only country that decries these atrocities and places moral support behind the Kashmiris' right to determine. ■

The writer is the Editor-in-Chief of SouthAsia Magazine.





Dangerous Trajectory

Pakistan should handle its problems with India discreetly. It should keep channels of dialogue open as this will reflect a positive attitude and imply that while it has no tolerance for external aggression or internal subversion, it is always willing to talk peace.

By Talat Masood

India is in an overdrive to isolate Pakistan. It is using its recent international clout to demonize Pakistan wherever and whenever it can. A glaring example of this was the recent BRICS platform. Fortunately for Pakistan, it failed to achieve its

objective, as its other members did not subscribe to India's manipulations. In fact, China praised Pakistan's exemplary role in the fight against terrorism.

India has been raising the temperature and pressure on Pakistan

thereby shrinking the space for any meaningful dialogue. Its aspirations to be a regional hegemon are obviously unacceptable. Afghanistan, regrettably, is playing second fiddle by supporting Indian designs and uses the cover for its failures by scapegoating

The Uri incident was played up by India beyond proportions and used as another opportunity to intensify the war hysteria.

Pakistan.

Pakistan has made serious efforts at raising the plight of the Kashmiris on all international forums and in world capitals. This has not resonated as much despite India being on the back foot in Kashmir. The reason is obvious. World powers formulate policies on the basis of their national interest and not on principles. Moreover, India by activating the Line of Control, has tried to divert attention from the gruesome happenings in the Valley. The world powers are turning a blind eye to these occurrences to protect their vested interests.

In addition to keeping the LoC active, Modi has launched a propaganda blitz against Pakistan. He has left no stone unturned in demonizing Pakistan at all international forums. He has described Pakistan as "Mothership and Ivy League of Terrorism," whereas, to the contrary, Pakistan has played a commendable role and made enormous sacrifices in combating it.

The Uri incident was played up by India beyond proportions and it used it as another opportunity to intensify the war hysteria. Having created a war phobia, Modi's government made inflated and false claims of surgical strikes in Pakistan to satisfy the ego of its people. An unprecedented threat of revoking the Indus Water Treaty that has stood the brunt of two wars was made. Equally disturbing, India has literally launched a hybrid war and is so emboldened that it has no qualms in opening an overt offensive against Pakistan. It is openly supporting the TTP and other dissident militant groups that are using Afghan territory to launch attacks on Pakistan.

It is also a hard reality and a sad commentary that the international community looks the other way when it comes to the atrocities of the Indian government in Kashmir. In these circumstances, no support is forthcoming from the UN or any of its agencies. With such indifference on their part, it will not be possible to get a resolution on Kashmir passed in the UN as the US and Western countries

will oppose it. The cool reception that the Pakistani parliamentary delegations received in world capitals is an indication of the importance they give to the Kashmir problem. Apparently, the delegations instead of being heard were lectured about Pakistan's support of militant organizations. This shows the extent to which India has been able to deflect attention from its atrocities and human rights violations in Kashmir.

Another recent example of India's drive to isolate Pakistan has been its boycott of the SAARC summit that was to be held in Islamabad. It persuaded other countries to follow suit. What it aims at is to encircle and isolate Pakistan so that all borders except the Northern corridor, linking China, remains open. Unfortunately, millions in India and other satellite neighbouring countries share what Modi says. Despite these impediments, Pakistan's best course would be to keep the Kashmir issue alive at the UN and other international organizations.

In addition, the government needs to energize the Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora and make maximum use of social media. Kashmiri leaders and people expect that Pakistan would forcefully plead its case internationally and ensure that non-state organizations stay away as they only act as spoilers. The military now clearly has distanced itself from these proscribed organizations, but New Delhi continues to mount adverse propaganda against it. When Hafiz Saeed and Difa-e-Pakistan leaders are seen parading on the streets of Islamabad or Lahore, it becomes an eyesore for the Indians and the international community and a huge embarrassment for Pakistan.

Besides, the Indian leadership also exploits the perception that prevails about the civil-military divide. These contradictions seriously hurt the Kashmir cause. From this it emerges that for dealing with India, clarity in policy and synergy among institutions is critical. For, after all, the international image is a mirror of the objective conditions prevailing in

the country. There is also a need for greater transparency by opening up Pakistan's part of Kashmir, including Gilgit-Baltistan, to the international media so that they can see for themselves the prevailing conditions and compare these with the heavily militarized Indian-held Kashmir.

The best response to the current heightened Indian belligerence is to consolidate internal strength. Balochistan needs to be given special attention. Baluch nationalist elements must be brought back in the mainstream and their feeling of deprivation, real or exaggerated, should be addressed. In essence the problem demands discreet political handling. With India, Pakistan should remain open to dialogue despite its current attitude. This will not be a reflection of Pakistan's weakness but its positive attitude. After all, the two countries cannot wish away their geography. Moreover, engaging with India does not imply that Pakistan should lower its guard against external aggression or internal subversion.

In addition to further consolidating its relations with China, Pakistan must make deliberate attempts to improve ties with Washington despite its strong leanings toward India. The US-India partnership indeed is a reality but Pakistan has to find ways of operating despite this framework. This is a different world from the eighties and needs a far more sophisticated approach in balancing relations with major powers and among rival regional poles. Another area where Pakistan has to navigate skillfully is its relationship with Saudi Arabia and Iran. These nuanced policies will give the country far more leeway and confidence in dealing with India and the rest of the world and be equally rewarding for its economy and internal stability. ■

The writer is a retired Lt. General of the Pakistan Army and a former Secretary of Defence Production. He is a regular columnist and commentator on strategic and political issues.



The Kashmir Conundrum

The protests against Indian atrocities in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, which started in July this year after martyrdom of a young and charismatic Hizbul Mujahedeen commander Burhan Muzaffar Wani in a fake encounter, have now entered its fourth month. The brutal repression by Indian security forces have so far claimed over 100 people's lives while another over 14,000 have been injured or maimed for life, including women, children and the elderly. The indiscriminate use of pellet guns has caused eye injuries to over 750 people, most of them, irreversibly losing their vision. Thousands more have disappeared and their fate is unknown.

The leadership of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), an alliance of 26 political, social and religious organizations formed in 1993 as a united front, has been arrested. Some of them have been tortured in solitary confinement while health concerns of others are ignored deliberately. The prolonged detention and inhuman environment in which these leaders are kept is a serious violation of their basic human rights as prisoners of conscience.

Pakistan has drawn the attention of the international community, particularly, the UN Secretary General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, Secretary General of the OIC, and Permanent Members of the UNSC, for taking immediate measures to stop India from committing genocide of defenceless Kashmiris. It has also urged the world body to assign fact finding missions to Indian Occupied Kashmir and initiate trials of those responsible for crimes committed against humanity.

As the Indian government remained insensitive to the huge death toll amongst protests, some sort of backlash was expected sooner or later and it happened when four heavily armed militants attacked an Indian army brigade headquarters near the town of Uri. They reportedly lobbed 17 grenades in just under three minutes, killing 19 and wounding another 28 soldiers belonging to 10 Dogra and 6 Bihar regiments. The Indian government and media promptly blamed Pakistan and used the incident to create an impression that the current uprising in Kashmir was terrorism sponsored by Pakistan.

It is unfortunate that Narendra Modi does not bother about his hungry millions and instead directs his nation's resources into his mindless misadventure of gaining regional superiority.

By Taj M Khattak



The timing of the incident was intriguing as it occurred just when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was to deliver a hard-hitting speech at the annual UN General Assembly session to sensitize the international fraternity on serious human rights violations in Kashmir and emphasize the need to resolve this long outstanding issue in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. The Uri attack was therefore widely suspected as a 'false flag' operation, calculated to deflect world attention from Indian brutalities in the valley and marginalize Pakistan's diplomatic initiative at an important international forum under the garb of cross-border terrorism.

In her speech at the UN, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, asserted that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India – a stance immediately rejected by Pakistan by logically pointing out that if it was an integral part of India, then why was it on the agenda of the UNO for the last seven decades. She conveniently glossed over atrocities being committed by occupation forces in Kashmir and instead referred to human rights violations in Balochistan, which is neither a disputed territory like Kashmir, nor on the agenda of UNO and has been part of Pakistan's federation since its independence.

India cancelled its participation at the 19th SAARC summit scheduled to be held in Islamabad in November, citing 'increasing cross-border terrorism' as the reason. SAARC Summits have been cancelled on ten occasions between 2002 and 2015, mostly because India uses the organization for political purposes. Pakistan has condemned this trend and issued a strong rejoinder that it is India which is perpetuating and financing terrorism in Pakistan – a reference to the serving Indian Navy Commander Kulbhushan Yadav who was captured and has confessed to having master-minded subversive activities in Balochistan and Karachi.

Later, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka also declined to attend, although as per SAARC charter, a Summit cannot be held, even if one member state is unable to attend. Indian pressure on its smaller neighbours was clearly a 'rub' on Pakistan but also reflected poorly on the abilities of these states to pursue their policies independently and as respectable sovereign states.

As pressure mounted on the Indian government to act militarily against Pakistan, it enacted the façade of carrying out a 'surgical strike' on suspected militants in Azad Kashmir who, according to India's Director General Military Operations (DGMO),

were preparing to infiltrate across the LoC to carry out terrorist attacks in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). Pakistan's ISPR dismissed the Indian claims of intruding 2 to three kilometres inside Pakistani territory as malicious fabrication of the truth and an illusion to create false effects. Pakistan's quick facilitation of international media and UN observers to the LoC and lack of evidence from India, despite calls from within, eventually forced Indian Foreign Secretary Subramaniam Jaishankar to confide with Germany's ambassador to India, Dr Martin Ney, that there were no 'surgical strike.'

Prime Minister Modi hinted at abrogating the 56 year old Indus Water Treaty (IWT), but later backed off. The Indian government, however, has decided to take measures to 'maximize usage of western rivers' as per the pact and review suspension of construction work on the Tulbul navigation project which had been shelved in 1987. An inter-ministerial taskforce has been formed to oversee expeditious implementation of 'Indian rights' over the waters of the western rivers. India claims that Treaty allows it to use 9.21 lakh hectares for agriculture as against 8 lakh hectares being diverted currently into its irrigation system.

It also claims that the treaty allows storage capacity of up to 3.8 million acre feet (MAF) from the western waters but has nil storage capacity at the moment. It has an estimated potential for hydropower from its share of western rivers at 18,600 megawatts while its installed capacity is 3,034 megawatts, with projects for an additional 2,526 megawatts under construction. It is believed that projects to generate another 5,846 megawatts are at an advanced stage of planning. All this is in addition to the 'run of the river' hydropower projects permissible under IWT.

India's decision to defer the next meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) is not a good omen as it could adversely affect timely discussions on different important aspects of the IWT. PIC meetings are a biannual event and can be postponed for a maximum of up to one year. Already, Pakistan and India are in arbitration at the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration over Kishanganga and Ratle hydropower projects. A prolonged breakdown in PIC contacts will only complicate matters further.

India's success in cancellation of SAARC summit notwithstanding, it was unsuccessful elsewhere to isolate Pakistan diplomatically. During the recent BRICS and BIMSTEC summit in Goa, Prime Minister Modi labelled

Pakistan as the 'mothership' of terror but his efforts to tarnish Pakistan failed as preferred words like 'nurture', 'shelter' or 'sponsor' were excluded from the official communiqué.

In fact, Chinese President Xi Jinping snubbed India when he urged that sacrifices of Pakistan against extremism and terrorism should be recognized and that success against terrorism made it imperative to 'address both symptoms and root causes.' Another embarrassment in the communiqué for Modi was inclusion of Islamic State (IS) and Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), an Al-Qaida proxy, both threats to China and Russia but not to India, and exclusion of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), which India wanted to be included.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's excessive obsession with Kashmir has been obvious for quite some time. India is not willing to indulge in deeper introspection to understand core cause factors leading to the present state of affairs in the valley. The situation is exacerbated by India stubbornness to resolve the dispute through a meaningful dialogue. If there was any external mix in past agitations, the present protests in Kashmir are purely indigenous and reflect aspirations of its youth. The draconian 'terror sub-culture' of the Indian army has run its course and can no longer reverse the tide.

It is unfortunate that major world powers haven't yet shown a desirable interest in permanent resolution of the dispute. But the struggle for a just cause must go and the least which the supreme sacrifice of nearly 100,000 deaths should now achieve is to unshackle the Kashmir dispute from moribund Indo-Pak bilateralism. The ultimate resolution of the Kashmir issue should, from now on, be sought exclusively in accordance with Security Council resolutions. That is not going to be easy but a long journey can only begin with a first few steps. Although Sartaj Aziz has ruled out talks without Kashmir on the agenda, but Pakistan can expect to be 'encouraged' towards another meaningless exercise once the protests tone down with the sole purpose to push the Kashmir dispute back into oblivion again.

It is said that much like poker, nine-tenths of all geopolitics is about bluff, but the critical one-tenth is to know when to fold your cards. Modi is playing for high stakes – one hopes he doesn't forget the critical one-tenth or else he will take down the entire region with him. Pakistan has to watch him very closely. ■

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



Anatomy of a Surgical Strike

India claims it conducted a 'surgical strike' against Pakistan on the night between September 28 and 29. There is no concrete evidence so far that such a 'strike' ever occurred.

By Javed Ansari



International observers have been keeping a close eye on South Asia ever since Narendra Modi marched into power in May, 2014. He had been in the eye of the storm for his alleged role in the infamous 2002 Gujrat Riots and at the time of his election as the Prime Minister of the largest democracy in the world, he was the only person denied a US visa for "severe violations of religious freedom" for more than twelve years. It is not surprising that there was serious debate whether he will be able to go to the USA on a state visit. This is what Nicholas Burns, the former U.S. Undersecretary of State had to say at the time, *"Now that it looks like Modi will become prime minister, it's reasonable for the Obama administration to say it's been 12 years [since the 2002 riots], and we'll be happy to deal with him."*

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz

Sharif's visit to India in May 2014 for the swearing in ceremony of Narendra Modi and later a surprise visit by Modi to Nawaz Sharif's private residence in Lahore in Dec 2015 (the first visit to Pakistan by an Indian premier in more than 10 years) reassured the world that the nuclear armed neighbours may enter a new era of peaceful co-existence. These hope, however, proved to be short-lived.

Any news of strained relations between the nuclear neighbours i.e. India and Pakistan, is viewed with great concern by world powers. These concerns started to intensify on Sep. 18, 2016 when a Brigade headquarter of the Indian Army at Uri in Indian controlled Kashmir came under attack by terrorists in which 17 Indian soldiers died. India has long blamed Pakistan for cross border support of militant groups and, after the Uri incident,

Indian politicians both from ruling and opposition parties, the press and electronic media, were unanimous in blaming Pakistan, calling for punitive action. The attack was attributed to Jaish-e-Muhammad, a terrorist organization purportedly sponsored by Pakistan's security agencies. As proof, Pakistan-made weapons, food items, etc. were displayed. Pressure started to grow on Modi who had been accused of pacifism after an earlier terrorist attack at an air base in Pathankot in Jan 2016. This time, the price was to be paid by the perpetrators of the attack. Many, however, wondered what the price could be and from whom it would be extracted?

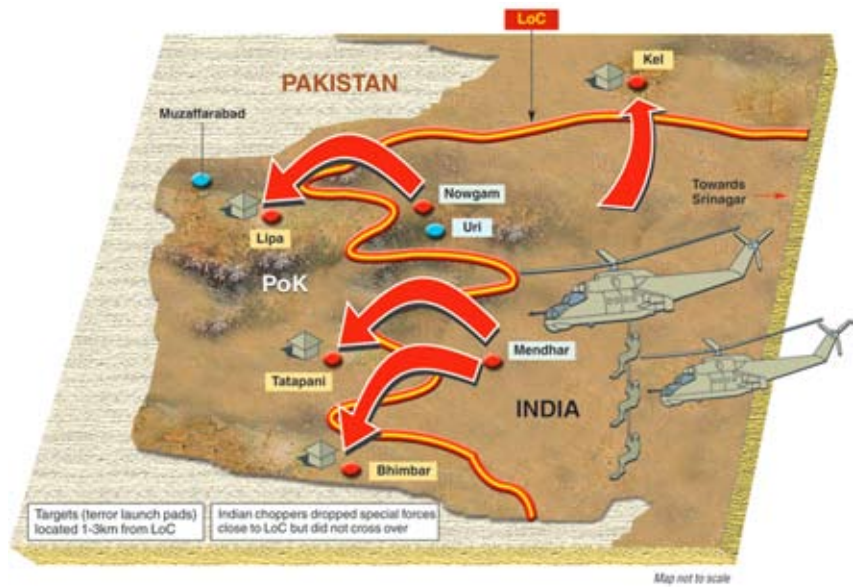
On Sep. 30, 2016, India's Director General of Military Operations, Lt. General Ranbir Singh broke the news that India had conducted "Surgical Strike" inside Pakistan-administered

Kashmir and the strike had “substantially eradicated launch pads of terrorists causing significant mortalities.” Most in India saw this as a long-awaited lesson that had to be taught to Pakistan. As expected, the Pakistan Army was quick to reject the claim and called it a “fanciful imagination used to placate domestic audience.” However, when within India, analysts and various politicians started questioning government claims and asked for proofs, skeptics also started to doubt the veracity of the claims.

Former home minister, Chidambaram said, “India is over-publicizing the ‘surgical strike’ on Pakistan.” Chief Minister of Delhi and Aam Admi Party chief Arvind. Kejriwal urged Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi “to prove that surgical strikes took place across the Line of Control as the Indian media had reported.” On the other side of the border, Director General, Inter Services Public Relations of the Pakistan Army stressed that while Pakistan had brought journalists to the Line of Control and was showing them the situation on the ground, India was not allowing a similar access to its own people, which was suspicious.

The international media also tried to unearth the mystery surrounding the surgical strikes. A police officer stationed in Poonch region told BBC reporter Aurangzeb Jarral that “Indian artillery fire targeted a few Pakistan Army posts across the Buttal region, resulting in the deaths of two soldiers.” Another report quoted local residents in Bhimber, Leepa and Neelum Valley regions as saying they witnessed “cross-border shelling between Indian and Pakistani forces” but no one testified to any aerial or ground incursions. In a similar vein, renowned U.S. newspaper **The Washington Post** published interviews of locals living along the Line of Control, the majority of whom denied reports of cross-border troop movement or the sound of helicopters. Also, famed strategic analysis portal ‘**The Diplomat**’ published a report which delved into the Indian military-defence apparatus and raised serious questions on the ability of Indian military forces to execute such surgical strikes.

In recent days, the debate regarding surgical strike claims to entered a new phase. The act of asking for proof, albeit in the guise of helping silence the claims of the Pakistani government, has caused an uproar in India. It is now being argued that any attempt to “question the Army is unpatriotic” or “playing into the hands of Pakistan Army.” In this environment, it is



reasonable to assume that no Hollywood style high-resolution video of Indian Special Forces killing the bad guys is forthcoming. Assessing the surgical strike claims on purely technical or practical grounds is therefore the only recourse available.

A surgical strike is widely believed to be a “military attack which results in, was intended to result in, or is claimed to have resulted in only damage to the intended legitimate military target, and no or minimal collateral damage to surrounding

structures, vehicles, buildings, or the general public infrastructure and utilities.” Israeli preemptive strikes on Egyptian air defence system in 1967, **Operation Opera** (surprise Israeli air strike on Iraqi nuclear plant in 1981) and **Operation Neptune Spear**, the May 2011 operation by US Navy Seals in Abbottabad, Pakistan, killing Osama Bin Laden, are often cited as classic examples of surgical strikes.

By implication, surgical strikes are thought to have some component of the air force for precision strikes or heliborne forces for undertaking special operations. Employment of fighter aircraft has not been claimed by any segment of the Pakistani or Indian media, whereas employment of heliborne forces was initially claimed and later denied. “India Today” reported that **“It was around midnight of 28-29th September, when the Army’s Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters with 25 commandos from 4-Para and 9-Para crossed the LoC into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The helicopters dropped the para-commandos at allocated spots and returned. They were now in the enemy region.”** Indian Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, himself an ex-Indian Army man, later told “The Hindu” during an interview. “There were no aerial strikes.” The “Telegraph” published a report that Indian choppers dropped special forces close to the LOC but did not cross over (see map published by Telegraph, India)

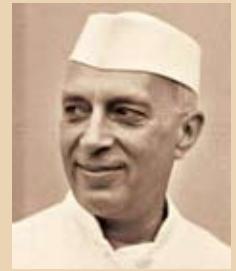
From an operational perspective, not using the air borne component for strikes makes sense. Firstly, the targets were merely 1 to 3 kilometers inside Pakistan and did not necessitate transportation by air; secondly, use of helicopters could prove to be noisy, easily detectable by ground troops, radars and targeted by shoulder-fired missiles.

The targets (terror launch pads) and points of ingress depicted in the map (and other similar maps by other newspapers/new channels) lie in mountainous terrain with predictable approaches, routes (Bhimber 3100 feet,



“...our assurance that we shall withdraw our troops from Kashmir as soon as peace and order is restored and leave the decision regarding the future of the State to the people of the State is not merely a promise to your Government but also to the people of Kashmir and to the world.”

– Jawahar Lal Nehru, Telegram No. 25, October 31, 1947, to Liaquat Ali Khan, PM of Pakistan



Lipa 6000 feet and Tatapani 2200 feet). Sneaking in of platoon-sized force on foot in this heavily-guarded terrain in a heightened state of alert, though not impossible is extremely difficult. Moreover, according to report, the operation began early morning on Sept. 29, 2016 at around 0430 hours and special forces were back home safely by first light. The time calculation of moving in on foot, reaching target areas, conducting of offensive action and time out does not seem to add up.

Another interesting aspect is that terrorist launch pads in all probability should be located behind or very close to the forward Army posts and well-defended. Even if precise intelligence of location of these launch pads and presence of terrorists was available, some exchange of fire, if not a pitched battle, between the infiltrating force and regular troops must have ensued. Precise information about casualties has not been released by either side. However, it defies logic that the striking force crossed enemy lines twice on foot without being detected (moving in and out), engaged in a serious fight and suffered no casualties.

India possesses an impressive inventory of Unarmed Aerial Systems, notably Israeli made Heron, US made Shadow I and II and indigenously developed Rostum I and Rostum II. Interestingly, none of these platforms is armed. Israeli-made Harpy, held by the Indian Army is a self-destruct aerial system with the capability to “home in” on radar emissions which is irrelevant in the context of strikes against terrorists. The possibility of using aerial systems during cross-border incursions for real-time surveillance and situational awareness exists. However, employment of drones (as per common understanding of precision drone strikes using Hellfire missiles by the U.S. in Afghanistan and elsewhere against terrorists) is not within existing

capabilities of the Indian Army.

Automatic weapons, mortars and artillery have been used extensively by both Indian and Pakistani armies whenever the situation escalates along the LoC. It was a significant step when these nuclear-armed rivals agreed to a cease-fire in Nov. 2003, aimed at halting years of cross-border gunbattles across the LoC. In the present context, cross-border shelling and heavy artillery fire by both sides was reported since the Uri incident and is continuing albeit sporadically. Use of precision artillery ammunition like the Russian Krasnopol or British Excalibur GPS guided shell (under delivery to India) can be one of the options available to India during these duals. However, this can hardly be termed as “Surgical Strikes” in the military sense.

Questions raised on operational level through the afore-stated analysis are over-shadowed by the controversy surrounding “Surgical Strikes” in India. Sanjay Nirupam, an esteemed Congress Leader and President of the party’s Mumbai chapter, has recently termed these strikes as **“Fake.”** Engineer Rasheed, an MLA in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly, has made a startling revelation that a video is being prepared by the Army’s PR branch in his home constituency which is likely to be propagated as being evidence of the Surgical Strikes (at the time of writing of this article, assertions by Rasheed had not been negated).

In wake of this comedy of errors that is going on, it is hard to believe that forces physically crossed the Line of Control. Till the time any substantial corroboration in brought in the public domain, international observers and neutral analysts will remain skeptical. **S**

The writer is Editor of this magazine and a regular contributor on political and social issues.



'Self-determination for the Kashmiris'

Nisar A. Memon breaks his silence since 2009, for people of Kashmir and for water security of people of Pakistan.

What are your comments on the claim made by the Indian External Affairs Minister in the UN General Assembly that Kashmir is an 'integral part of India'?

This statement must be seen in the historic context of diverting the world's attention from the state terrorism being perpetuated over people of Kashmir who are finally saying 'no more' to forceful occupation for almost 70 years which has now reached its culmination of independence movement of Kashmiris with curfews for over 100 days.

It was most hilarious to listen to the Indian External Affairs Minister defying the world and saying 'Kashmir was, is and will be ours.' She conveniently forgot the UN Resolutions of 1948 calling for self-determination by referendum in Kashmir to determine the will of Kashmiris for their future. She even forgot that her own founding Prime Minister Nehru had given his commitment to resolve this outstanding international dispute through plebiscite.

No amount of oratory will let India escape from their commitment to the world body, no amount of dreams of Kashmiri domination will let India escape the realization that it is neither a democratic country nor a civilized one. It neither differentiates between its own people or ones who like Kashmir are kept in chains by force. Its own treatment of Dalits and other minorities is well-known to world as against Pakistan where Sikhs and Hindus of India come for pilgrimage and Buddhist of the world visit Taxila.

Do you believe the current uprising in Kashmir is moving in the right direction?

The movement of independence by Kashmiris has always been in the right direction towards 'azadi'. It is now visible to the world that people can fight guns, chemical weapons and rubber bullets of state machinery with their will without any outsiders fighting with weapon support but just the diplomatic, political and moral support of Muslims of Pakistan, the world, Azad Jammu & Kashmir and people of Pakistan, including Gligit-Baltistan, which achieved independence from Dogra Raj in 1948 despite Delhi's support.

Kashmiris worldwide in Belgium, UK, USA and other countries, like Palestinians, are raising their voice for justice and fair play by the world community against extremist Hindu Raj and Zionist Raj both cooperating in armaments and intelligence-sharing from next door Afghanistan. The voice we raised in NATO and UK when our Senate Defence Committee visited to apprise them of tens of Indian Consulates in Afghanistan on the borders of Balochistan, which were not for visa issuance but for creating disorder by infiltrating their Naval intelligence officers and financing dissent in Pakistan. They failed miserably and were so desperate that had to send their armed forces to fight in Pakistan on instructions of their spymaster who is now adviser to Indian Prime Minister. At this point I am reminded of a couplet, 'Zulm phir zulm hay, bharta hay to mit jata hay, Khoon phir khoon hay girta hay to jum jata hay'

Do you have a workable solution regarding amicable settlement of the Kashmir dispute?

Yes only one: 'Implement the resolutions of UN and give the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir who have been forcefully illegally, immorally occupied



for last 69 years. Generation after generation of Kashmiris have been subjected to Nazi-like genocide in WW II. No number of media bans of both national and international media can hide the suffering and struggle of proud Kashmiri people against the atrocities of armed forces of India against unarmed people.

Armed Forces Special Powers Act which has given the army powers to disregard basic human and civil rights including habeas corpus indicate their ruthless state policy-making which must be withdrawn and war crime investigation must be launched by ICJ. Indian armed forces must surrender to the will of Kashmiri people and I will say Kashmiris must allow them to peacefully retreat while implementing UN Resolutions.

The fallacy of 'Kashmir is ours' by Indian leadership must not be uttered nor dreamt of since the Kashmiri movement has shown to the world it is homegrown and genuine movement where thousands have laid down their lives and millions suffered at the hands of black laws and powers given to Indian armed forces to keep people in control by curfews and picking children, women and old in violation of international law and practices. Kashmiris are at war with the mighty Indian state and have awakened the conscience of people of the civilized world.

USA must not allow visas for travel to those whom they denied visas due to their role in burning Muslims of Gujrat and in Friendship train between Pakistan and India. India did not burn train and Muslims but torched the process of peace in the region. The national interest of USA cannot be served by relationship with extremists who have captured power in Delhi which is challenged by its own people like Chief Minister of Delhi and many Indian parliamentarians. USA must not just see the Indian market size but see the size of violation of human rights and should not pardon individuals and follow the principles of justice laid down by their founding fathers.

The Indian Army has resorted to new tactics in its clampdown on the Kashmiris. Your thoughts on this.

The use of pellet guns against innocent protestors has again manifested the barbarity with which New Delhi seeks to assert its illegitimate claim. The heart-wrenching photos of children, women and elderly blinded and disfigured by these gruesome acts is compelling proof of India's oppression.

Will the trumped up 'surgical strikes' have any impact on the international community?

Certainly. The world has woken up in shock to see the intransigent attitude of Indian rulers, both civil and military and world is now openly calling for restraint and value of negotiation for resolution of international outstanding dispute over Kashmir between the two neighbours.

If India continues on warpath in the region, soon world will be left with no option but to ostracize them as sponsors of state terrorism. India must remember that its historic domination of peace-loving Buddhist people of beautiful Bhutan, which is landlocked and Indians enforce their will by getting hydel energy on their terms. Indian extremists should not treat the people and nations around with same yardstick. Bangladesh Awami League government supports India but the people of Bangladesh do not. Similarly, it is rulers in Kabul and not people of Afghanistan who will be enticed by their contributions of buses and military equipment which is market for Indian products.

In addition to its already existing disputes with Pakistan (Siachin, Sir Creek), India has opened more fronts such as the Indus Waters Treaty, sabotaging Saarc, etc. Is this behaviour justified for a country aspiring to become a major regional player?

You must understand India's compulsions and its history of terrorism. It has 1.3 billion people which need to be fed.

Instead of controlling population growth which Sanjay Gandhi started but was killed by its own extremists, just like Indira Gandhi was shot dead by Hindu extremists. They acquire territory but they have dispute with China and Pakistan. Sir Creek dispute was almost on the verge of resolution but their war machinery stopped it to have reason for their existence. Siachin is a criminal act of moving heavy machinery on the mother glaciers and aggravating climate change in the region causing glacier melt and floods like one we witnessed in Ataabad Lake. The glaciers they are killing are now taking revenge on soldiers, who are dying in extreme weather in hundreds. The sooner the Indian leave, the better will be its compliance with international agreements not to allow world to have more than 2 deg. C temperature.

Indus Water Treaty is acclaimed as the most successful between Pakistan and India and needs to be replicated by other countries. In 1947, Pakistan and India won their independence from British which divided the territory physically but its waters were not. Later, in 1960, the six rivers were divided, western rivers of Indus, Jhelum and Chenab for Pakistan and eastern rivers of Ravi, Sutlej and Beas for India. The Treaty never came in dispute due to political differences among the two countries. The wars in 1962, 1965, 1971 and 1999 did not affect it, because the it has dispute resolution mechanism such as bilateral talks, then arbitration and later going to International Court of Justice.

India's constructing Baghliar and Krishan Ganga dams on Chenab and Jhelum against provisions of the Treaty was taken up by Pakistan under the dispute resolution mechanism and got an award which also needs to be implemented. Instead, the extremists in India want to abrogate the agreement without reason. However saner elements in India have warned its government against doing so. Pakistan considers it an act of war. In my view it is yet another bogey by war mongers in India. In fact, IWT is an achievement of leadership of two countries and the World Bank to complete the partitioning by dividing the waters. The partitioning will only be complete when Kashmir is liberated from India.

India claims to have an independent media. Is this claim justified in the manner its so-called 'free' media is toeing the official line?

Media in India today is no more free, since it has not allowed its own as well as free world media to visit Kashmir and see and report human rights violations. It is putting lid on army atrocities where people are killed by point blank firing, injured by rubber bullets which have blinded hundreds, use pellets causing skin diseases and disable hundreds. World remembers the killing of Kashmiri lying helplessly under debris and Indian soldiers firing him to kill and then walking away.

Any other aspect that you may wish to mention.

We urge the people of India stop intransigent attitude and see reason and international law in dealing with Kashmir liberation movement. India by running away from SAARC is disrespecting the collective South Asia leadership and vision.

Pakistan's soft image is now gaining currency and no amount of Indian propaganda will affect it. Our defence is impregnable. Don't risk war which is not good for people of India and Pakistan. As a first step stop barbaric killing of Kashmiris and allow the media to visit Kashmir; restrain your army in its exercise of black laws. Indian soft image is gone and now world can see its true image. **S**

Nisar A. Memon is a former Minister of Kashmir & Northern Areas, State & Frontier Regions and Information, former Senator and Chair of Standing Committee of Defence & Defence Production. He is currently focused on the water environment and is Chairman of Water Environment Forum, Pakistan, which held a national conference from October 17-19, 2016 in Islamabad.

Blood Season

Jawaharlal Nehru reneged on his commitments; Narendra Modi and his cohorts are taking the Kashmir dispute to new levels of frustration and the people of the Valley live through untold despair.

By S. M. Hali

The Kashmir dispute is the oldest unresolved international conflict in the world today. It is an unfinished agenda of the partition of India in 1947. It was stipulated in the Independence Act of 1947, that Princely States will be given the option to accede to either India or Pakistan. Indian leaders knew that the predominantly Muslim majority population of Kashmir will opt for Pakistan so they coerced the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh to sign

a letter of accession in favour of India. Even before the signing of the letter of accession, Indian forces had landed in Srinagar to forcefully occupy the Valley. Kashmir was provisionally accepted into the Indian Union pending a free and impartial plebiscite as spelled out in a letter from the Governor General of India, Lord Mountbatten, to the Maharaja on 27 October 1947; accepting the accession, Mountbatten made it clear that the State would

only be incorporated into the Indian Union after a reference had been made to the people of Kashmir.

Pakistan and India went to war over Kashmir. One third of Kashmir was liberated by Pakistan but fearing the loss of the entire Valley, Indian Prime Minister Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, approached the United Nations, which enforced a ceasefire. The United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) promulgated two resolutions



adopted by the UN Security Council on August 13, 1948 and January 5, 1949, which were accepted by both India and Pakistan. Nehru, in a broadcast to the nation on November 3, 1947, said, "We have declared that the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given not only to the people of Kashmir and to the world. We will not and cannot back out of it."

Unfortunately, Nehru reneged on his solemn promise, despite having accepted the principle of a plebiscite; India has since obstructed all attempts at holding a plebiscite. The Pakistan-India wars of 1965 and 1971 did not change the fate of the people of Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK), who continue to be oppressed by illegal occupiers of their homeland. In 1989, the people of IOK took up arms to liberate Kashmir from the tyranny of India but the oppressors deployed seven hundred thousand soldiers, who have since martyred over a hundred thousand innocent Kashmiris, raped thousands of women, destroyed their property and incarcerated thousands of Kashmiri youth. Draconian laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Public Safety Act (PSA), POTA and TADA, have enabled the Indian armed forces to wreak havoc on the hapless people of IOK.

Modi took on the mantle of Prime Minister of India with a clear agenda.



Trashing the UN Resolutions, he declared Kashmir to be an integral part of India. During her address to the UN General Assembly, on September 26, 2016, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj mocked the UN Resolutions and declared: "Let me state unequivocally that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and will always remain so." If that were not enough, the famed Indian jurist, Ram Jethmalani, in an interview to the Outlook magazine in its October 8 2016 issue, stated: "Kashmir is an integral part of India, constitutionally, legally and morally, something that is non-negotiable."

Modi's heinous plot for IOK was threefold. Firstly, to rig IOK elections to enable the ruling party, BJP to govern Kashmir, secondly, abrogate Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which grants special autonomous status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir and merge it in the Indian Union and thirdly, to alter the demography of IOK by resettling Hindus there to offset the Muslim majority. Modi's machinations include demanding Pakistan to hand over the territories of Gilgit, Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir to India. He has also taken pains to besmirch the just liberation struggle of the Kashmiris to label them as "terrorists". In the bargain, an odious plot has been hatched to have Pakistan declared a "terrorist state" by the US Congress.

To promote its repugnant plot against Pakistan, India has launched a series of false flag operations in Udhampur, Gurdaspur, Pathankot and now Uri, in which Indian secret service RAW's operatives have attacked their own assets but blamed Pakistan.

India has changed the narrative and backed its war of words with controlled aggression, to isolate Pakistan in the comity of nations so that it loses its moral right to support the freedom movement in IOK. Unfortunately, the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry and so did part of the Indian Chanakyan plot of guile and deceit for Pakistan being bogged down in Kashmir. On July 8, 2016, popular Kashmiri youth leader Burhan Wani was ambushed and assassinated. His elimination became a rallying point for Kashmiri youth, who have poured out in thousands to protest Wani's slaughter. Indian armed forces in IOK are using pellet guns on the protesters, which have resulted in the martyrdom of 110 Kashmiris while the pellet guns have blinded thousands of Kashmiri youth and children.

Heartrending social media images of the innocent victims have moved

international litterateurs, including Noam Chomsky and hundreds of other academics to express their solidarity with the Kashmiris and ask Modi to stop the reign of terror in IOK. Over fifty Indian writers, artists, actors, filmmakers and intellectuals have returned their national awards to protest Modi's intolerance and proclivity for sadism.

To garner support for its atrocious agenda against Pakistan, India has unleashed its media, which has gone berserk to target Pakistan. This writer has participated in scores of debates on Indian TV channels, where there is a one-point program, castigate Pakistan as a terrorist state and declare its armed forces, government and people responsible for all of India's ills. Modi went on a warpath during his 90 minutes address to the nation on the occasion of India's Independence Day on August 15. Speaking from the ramparts of New Delhi's Red Fort, the Indian Prime Minister declared solidarity with the so-called separatists in Balochistan, Gilgit, Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Brahamdagh Bugti, the self exiled Baloch leader, has been offered Indian nationality while other Pakistan baiters are also being abetted and supported to denigrate the country of their origin.

Indian media whipped such frenzy that its people started buying for Pakistan's blood, especially after the Uri attack in which nineteen Indian soldiers were killed for which Pakistan was declared culpable. Indian armed forces were forced to choreograph another drama; staging surgical strikes against alleged terror camps in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Indian media itself questioned the authenticity of the "surgical strikes" but its government refuses to let up in the anti-Pakistan rhetoric. There have also been threats by India of rescinding the 1960 Indus Water Treaty and block Pakistan's waters.

Pakistan faces an uphill task to counter the Indian narrative of blackballing Pakistan. India has blockaded the SAARC Summit, scheduled to be hosted by Islamabad. The task is cut out for Pakistan, to counter the Indian narrative; Pakistan must develop its own strategy, based on cogent reasoning, to apprise the international community of Indian transgressions in IOK and its machinations against Pakistan. The country has a compelling story to tell, which must be proliferated with cool logic devoid of histrionics. ■

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





Regional Confrontation

India backing out of the Islamabad Summit does not augur well for the grouping's future.

By S.G. Jilane

Founded at Dhaka in 1985, with great expectations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), has degenerated into an Association for Regional Confrontation instead of Cooperation.

It was a dream concept with ambitious goals. The brainchild of the late Bangladesh president General Ziaur Rahman, it envisaged an organisation on the pattern of the European Union, with free trade, visa-less travel, customs union, common market, a common currency and, perhaps, even a common defence at some stage. But, for any forum with India and Pakistan as members, it would be unrealistic to expect unity. They fight like Kilkenny cats whenever they get together and vitiate the atmosphere.

The organization boasts six apex

bodies, namely, SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation In Law, South Asian Federation of Accountants, South Asia Foundation, South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children and Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature.

Besides, there are regional centers located in member countries such as Agricultural Centre, Meteorological Research Centre, Forestry Centre, Development Fund, Disaster Management Centre, Documentation Centre, Coastal Zone Management Centre, SAARC Information Centre, Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre, Human Resources Development Centre, Energy Centre and Cultural Centre.

How these bodies and centres function and what they have so far

achieved does not receive the light of day. Nonetheless the organization has been limping along all these years with its secretariat in Nepal.

A South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) was launched in 2006 but intra-SAARC trade amounts to just a little over 1% of SAARC's GDP. In contrast, in ASEAN (which is actually smaller than SAARC in terms of the size of the economy) the intra-bloc trade stands at 10% of its GDP.

In an ideal situation under SAFTA, transport would have plied between Afghanistan and Nepal or Bangladesh across Pakistan and India with goods. But Pakistan does not allow overland trade between India and Afghanistan across its territory.

Due to the eternal rivalry between Pakistan and India, each has tried to



win over other members to its side. Pakistan's relations with Bangladesh and Afghanistan remain strained, while with India they are always hostile. On several occasions the SAARC summit meeting which is required to be held annually, had to be postponed, because, India for one reason or another, decided not to attend, whereas it is necessary for all members to participate.

Moreover, Bangladesh, which had pioneered the organization became indifferent towards it when the Awami League came to power, because the name of Ziaur Rahman, founder of BNP, is associated with SAARC. And he is anathema to the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Hasina Wajed.

In the latest instance, India boycotted the next summit due this month in Pakistan after the terrorist attack on its military camp at Uri on September 18, in which 18 of its troops were killed. It immediately blamed the attack on Jaish-e-Mohammad, a Pakistan-based militant outfit. This was followed by mutual recriminations and jingoistic rhetoric from both sides, followed by India's claim of having launched "surgical strikes" against militants across the Line of Control in Pakistani territory, followed by Pakistan's denial.

In such an atmosphere, Prime Minister Modi's attendance at the SAARC Summit would be out of question. In sympathy with India, four other members - Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka also pulled out, leaving Nepal, Maldives and Pakistan to hold the conference. The

summit had, therefore, to be cancelled.

Yet, India could send a representative instead of Modi. Indeed, there is precedent of such action. In 1995, the eighth Saarc summit was scheduled to be held in New Delhi at a time when Pak-India tensions were soaring and the insurgency in Indian-held Kashmir was at its peak. Benazir Bhutto, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, opted not to attend the summit, but she did not sabotage it. Instead, she sent President Farooq Leghari to represent Pakistan.

The strain in Indo-Pak relations spills over into SAARC and vitiates its atmosphere. Pakistan complains that as the biggest country in SAARC, India tries to influence other members. India suspects that Pakistan wants to organize the smaller members to gang up against it. In such a situation this fine organization is now gasping for breath. In fact the India-Pakistan confrontation may lead to its demise sooner than later, because, with such in-fighting and lack of sincerity it is not possible for SAARC to function smoothly and deliver on the expectations attached to it.

It seems Pakistan has already washed its hands off SAARC because of India. It is therefore exploring the possibility of creating a greater South Asian economic alliance to counter India's controlling hold on the eight-member SAARC. This was disclosed by a parliamentary delegation from Pakistan visiting Washington to inform the US government and people about the atrocities being committed by India in Kashmir.

Talking to the media, leader of the delegation, Mushahid Husain Syed said that "A greater South Asia is already emerging," which includes "China, Iran and the neighbouring Central Asian Republics." Another member of the delegation said that, "Pakistan hopes that this new arrangement will give it more room to manoeuvre when India tries to force a decision on it."

Such an arrangement would also suit China as it is also worried about India's rapidly growing influence in the

region. It can also play "an important role in persuading the Central Asian Republics and Iran to join the new arrangement."

But some observers are sceptical. From what Mushahid Hussain Syed said, it seems that the grouping is politically motivated to confront India, rather than any plan for the progress of the member states.

Besides, if the definition of South Asia is stretched to include China, Iran and Central Asian States, then it could also include Azerbaijan, the Middle East, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia and even Mauritius, because they are all situated in the south of Asia.

Another question is what title will this new organization be given? SAARC countries will have little interest in supporting this fantastic idea, because, there is not much benefit for Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka in joining a land route far from their borders. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka also have their own ports.

The member that is likely to get the most benefits from a greater South Asian alliance is Afghanistan, which is technically a land-locked Central Asian nation. Any trade route that links the South and Central Asian regions is good for Afghanistan. But Afghanistan is too closely linked to India to join any arrangement that hurts India's interests.

Finally, even if a greater South Asia became a reality, there's no guarantee that its members would support Pakistan in its disputes with India, because, many Central Asian States have strong ties with India while Iran has problems with Pakistan.

Mushahid Hussain Syed's magnificent idea may therefore never see the light of day. The best option for the SAARC members is to resuscitate the organization which has the promise to take the region to greater heights, economically and socially. **S**

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

Politics of Power

The police force emerges as a power-monger in K-P after promulgation of the new police ordinance.

By Taha Kehar

No law can give effect to change unless it is widely accepted by the public. Legal education that revolves around the myopic belief that the state is the only source of law can be misleading. To the contrary, any attempts to implement a particular legislation will appear futile until and unless the roots of the law are firmly embedded in the social structure.

If this interpretation of the relationship

between law and society is anything to go by, the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Police Ordinance 2016 is little more than an ambitious attempt to streamline policing that does not account for practical limitations.

On the surface, the ordinance bears symbolic significance and gives lawmakers in K-P something to pat themselves on the back for. So far, the police force in Sindh and Balochistan

is governed under Police Act 1861. This law is, at best, a remnant of British colonial rule that does not account for the challenges of modern-day policing. After the 18th Constitutional Amendment, Punjab was the first province to devise a law for its provincial police. The Police Order 2002 was later extended to K-P as well.

The much-awaited 2016 ordinance has been hailed as a positive development



in a province that has been ravaged by militancy. It is aimed at making the K-P police a professional and depoliticized force that can address the challenges of the public.

The 2002 order was not effectively implemented in K-P as the legal framework was tampered with to sustain hierarchy within the police.

The new ordinance tries to limit such political interference. A quick glance at the legislation reveals that it seeks to develop a police law that adheres to the Constitution and the aspirations of the people.

However, it is easy to pay lip service to grand notions of constitutionalism and democracy. The challenges involved in depoliticizing the force and making officers more professional are manifold and will require introspection.

Speaking to journalists in Peshawar after the ordinance was issued, Chief Minister Pervez Khattak said the legal framework seeks to initiate a paradigm shift and sets the groundwork for a transition from a bureaucratic to a democratic system of ensuring accountability.

Section 4 of the law assigns 27 duties to the police so they can focus on fulfilling their obligations in a transparent and democratic sense. At a time when terrorism remains a cause of concern, the police have been asked to act as

combatants. However, these obligations can only be fulfilled over a period of time and heavily rely on the degree of training provided to police officials. For instance, Section 4(b) and (d) of the ordinance stipulates that the police must provide assistance to accident victims. This requires a special skill and cannot be achieved in isolation by the police department.

decision. Any divergence of opinion between the IGP and the assembly will therefore be reviewed by the Public Safety Commission. Although this is a viable solution, there is a strong likelihood that members of this commission may not understand their mandate and will need guidance.

The ordinance seeks to provide institutional freedom to the police.

A quick glance at the legislation reveals that it seeks to develop a police law that adheres to the Constitution and the aspirations of the people.

The provincial government will need to invest a sizeable amount of money to ensure that the ordinance bears fruit. More significantly, officers will need to be motivated and encouraged to realize the implications of their actions. Only then will the shift from a bureaucratic regime to an accountable means of performing police duties will be smooth and effective.

The role of the K-P Inspector General of Police (IGP) within the ordinance has also triggered considerable debate. The IGP has been granted a diverse menu of privileges to transfer officers of various ranks. He bears administrative, financial and operational liberties and is in a strong position to needlessly interfere in various matters. Under the previous system, the Provincial Public Safety Commission could press the government to 'repatriate' the IGP. But this provision is no longer applicable and might be misconstrued as the concentration of power in the hands of a leading official.

The level of autonomy could boost police efficiency as the IGP will be in a position to prompt action and will remain accountable if the situation spirals out of control. However, the matter could be further complicated by the fact that district police officers can be removed by the IGP on the basis of "unsatisfactory performance." First and foremost, a series of attempts must be made to define this term without relying on value judgments. The aim should be to assess the term in a specific manner rather than adopting a wider view.

If the views of SSP Operations Abbas Majeed Marwat are to be believed, district assemblies can now pass a resolution with a two-thirds majority to transfer a DPO under the ordinance. Once the resolution is passed, the IGP will have 15 days to comply with the

However, the legal framework will achieve little in spearheading police reforms. Although it has led to the setting up of three safety committees to inspect police stations, the ordinance offers nothing else to improve service delivery. In the past, a large number of public liaison committees have surfaced in various districts of the province to strengthen interaction between the public and the police. The 2016 ordinance could have taken these initiatives a step further to streamline the force, especially at a time when several instances of custodial torture have been reported across the province.

Over the past few months, the security situation has been completely ignored. Law-enforcement officials, police officers in particular, have been attacked since January. Media reports suggest that around 1,200 police personnel have been killed in K-P since 2006. At this critical juncture, there is a pressing need to understand that institutional freedom can only be achieved if a suitable environment has been created for the police force to operate in the province.

The ordinance has created an idealistic framework to depoliticize the force. It can only be implemented if a series of factors are addressed and there is a willingness to change the status quo. Until then, legislators from the treasury and opposition benches in the K-P Assembly have jointly voiced reservations about the ordinance and will continue to do so as they fear it will impact their narrow interests. The challenge is to prevent the politics of power and privilege from affecting policy decisions. ■

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



Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has further compounded the current face-off between India and Pakistan by his recent threat to withdraw from the age-old Indus Water Treaty (IWT) between the two countries which had been working smoothly through the years. But the raging dispute over sharing the water of River Cauvery, between two states in his own backyard should give him time to ponder over the unforeseen consequences of disturbing the IWT. Indeed, a quick survey of the Cauvery dispute should give an idea of how serious the water sharing issue can be.

The Cauvery rises in Karnataka and flows through Tamil Nadu, ultimately, emptying into the Bay of Bengal. The dispute about water sharing of the river originated in the 1890s between Madras (now Tamil Nadu) and Mysore (now Karnataka), wherein the two sides agreed on a divide.

The contention arose when, in 1910, both states started devising plans for construction of dams. The Government of India granted permission to Mysore, only for storage of 11 TMC*, but the foundation was laid to suit the earlier desired full storage. Madras was roiled. As the dispute continued, the Government of India referred the matter to arbitration under the Agreement of 1892. The arbitrator gave his award in 1914, which upheld the earlier decision of the Government of India and allowed Mysore to go ahead with the construction of the dam up to 11 TMC.

Madras appealed against the award and negotiations continued. Eventually an agreement was arrived at in 1924 which was set to lapse after 50 years. As the 50-year run of the 1924 agreement approached its end, both states and the central government started serious negotiations in the late 1960s which continued for almost 10 years. Meanwhile, a Cauvery Fact Finding Committee (CFFC) was constituted to inspect the ground realities and report. The CFFC submitted its final report in 1973. Inter-state discussions were held based on this report. Finally in 1974, a draft agreement was prepared but it was not ratified.

In 1976, a final draft was prepared based on findings of the CFFC. This draft was accepted by all states. But when Karnataka began building the Harangi Dam, Tamil Nadu once again resisted the move and went to court demanding the constitution of a tribunal under the Interstate River Water Disputes Act (ISWD) of 1956 as well as the immediate stoppage of construction work at the dam site. But later it withdrew its petition and the two

Water Woes

The Cauvery water dispute has been raging for more than a century but still defies solution.

By S.G. Jilane



states started negotiating again, which went on till April 1990 without yielding any results.

Meanwhile, upon a petition from a farmer's association in Tamil Nadu, the Supreme Court directed the Government of India to constitute a tribunal and refer all disputes to it. Soon after the tribunal was set up, Tamil Nadu demanded a mandatory order on Karnataka for the immediate release of water. The tribunal gave an interim award in 1991, based on the average for

the last 10 years, which worked out to 205 TMC that Karnataka had to ensure that it reached Tamil Nadu in a water year. The tribunal further directed Karnataka not to increase its irrigated land area from the existing 1,120,000 acres (4,500 km²)

Karnataka deemed this extremely adverse to its interests and issued an ordinance seeking to annul the tribunal's award. But, the Supreme Court struck down the Ordinance and upheld the tribunal's award.

Meanwhile, widespread demonstrations and violence broke out in parts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. But though this violence subsided after about a month, the mutual standoff went on. In 1997, the Union Government set up the Cauvery River Authority (CRA) and Cauvery Monitoring Committee (CMC). One was to look after the political and

Karnataka to release 1.25 TMC of water every day unless the CRA revised it. Karnataka complied with the order, but sought another meeting of the CRA, which revised the Supreme Court's order from 1.25 TMC to 0.8 TMC per day.

But the Karnataka government defied the CRA's order and refused to release any water, due to the large scale protests in the state. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu went back to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court ordered Karnataka to comply with the Cauvery River Authority's decision and resume the release of water. By this time the dispute had already spilled onto the streets in Karnataka, which refused to obey the orders of the Supreme Court. Tamil Nadu filed another contempt petition on Karnataka and the issue degenerated into a 'free for all' with all and sundry from both states joining the protests. People from various other cross sections of

society, including film actors, from both states poured out on the streets. Tamil TV channels and screening of Tamil films were blocked in Karnataka. Also all buses and vehicles from Tamil Nadu were barred from entering Karnataka.

The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal announced its final verdict in 2007, giving 419 TMC of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu and 270 TMC to Karnataka. Unhappy with the decision, both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka filed a revision petition before the tribunal seeking a review. In 2012 the prime minister in his capacity as chairman of the CRA directed Karnataka to release 9,000 cusecs** of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu daily. But Karnataka felt that this was impractical due to the failed monsoon and consequent drought and filed a petition before the CRA, seeking review of the prime minister's ruling.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to Karnataka to release Tamil Nadu its due share of water. The Supreme Court censured Karnataka, whereupon it started releasing water, but simultaneously filed a review petition before the Supreme Court seeking a stay on its order directing Karnataka to release 9,000 cusecs of Cauvery water every day to Tamil Nadu.

On 20 February 2013, the Indian Government notified the final award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) on sharing the waters of the Cauvery system among the basin States

of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Union territory of Puducherry. The Tribunal, in a unanimous decision in 2007, had determined the total Cauvery basin water availability in a normal year as 740 TMC, including 14 TMC for minimum environmental flows and unavoidable wastage to the sea. The final award made an annual allocation of 419 TMC to Tamil Nadu in the entire Cauvery basin, 270 TMC to Karnataka, 30 TMC to Kerala and 7 TMC to Puducherry.

Yet, bickering continues. In August 2016, Tamil Nadu approached the Supreme Court, seeking direction to Karnataka to release 50.052 TMC Cauvery water as mandated in the final order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal 2007. Karnataka cited a distress situation and declined to release water.

In early September 2016, the Supreme Court asked Karnataka to consider Tamil Nadu's plea on humanitarian grounds and release water and advised both states to maintain harmony. Karnataka informed the Supreme Court that it can release 10,000 cusecs per day, while Tamil Nadu demanded 20,000 cusecs per day. The Supreme Court ordered Karnataka to release 15,000 cusecs per day to Tamil Nadu.

Karnataka observed a bandh to protest against the release of water to Tamil Nadu and approached the Supreme Court citing public unrest, to seek modification of the earlier order. The Supreme Court obliged by directing Karnataka to release 12,000 cusecs of water. Even, this decision by the Supreme Court ignited unrest among the people of Karnataka and violence broke out in several districts of the state.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court issued several orders to the Karnataka government specifying the quantity of water to be released, but the orders were not carried out.

On September 30, 2016, the Supreme Court gave Karnataka a "last chance" and ordered 6,000 cusecs of water to be released during the first 6 days of October. On October 1, 2016, Karnataka filed for review petition over Supreme Court's latest order. The case is pending and the future remains uncertain. **S**

*TMC stands for (thousand million cubic feet).

**Cusec is a measure of flow rate and short form of 'cubic feet per second'.

Both units are used in reference to volumetric flow rate of water in a reservoir or river.

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



administrative aspects; the other the technical aspects.

In 2002, the monsoon failed in both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu demanded that Karnataka honour the interim award and release to Tamil Nadu its proportionate share. Karnataka on the other hand stated that the water levels were hardly enough to meet its own demands and ruled out releasing any water. The issue was referred to the Supreme Court, which ordered



Square One

Another effort is being made to restore peace in Afghanistan as the country has become war-weary and requires new development initiatives.

By Faizan Usmani

Even if it's a small-scale battle or a high-magnitude combat, days of war are always numbered. Afghanistan is one of those ill-fated regions in the world where war happens to be a perpetual phenomenon, whether it is imposed by outside forces or instigated by internal elements. Even when peace prevails for a brief period, it comes at a deadly cost.

Now there's a welcome move taken by the Afghan government. It has signed a peace agreement with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the former Prime Minister of Afghanistan, who is the founder and leader of the Hezb-e-Islami, ostensibly a political party.

A. Jamali is an expert in Afghanistan affairs and is associated with the Jamestown Foundation, a US-based institute of research and analysis on global affairs. According to Jamali, Hekmatyar was a leftist as per his political inclination, but later he became an ardent disciple of Sayyed Qutub, an

Egyptian author and Islamic theorist, as well as the leader of the Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) movement in the 50s and 60s.

In 1968, Hekmatyar joined a Kabul-based military academy 'Mahtab Qala' that expelled him in 1970 due to his radical political views. In the same year, he got admission into the faculty of engineering at Kabul University but could not complete his education because he, along with two other students, was imprisoned in 1972 on the charge of killing one of the leaders of the communist party in a violent clash at the university. Despite not completing his degree, he became popular as 'Engineer Hekmatyar.'

In 1973, Mohammad Daud Khan overthrew the Afghan government, become the first president of the country. He released most political leaders, including Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who founded the Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) in 1977. However, just after two

years of its inception, HIA was divided into two factions: Hezb-e-Islami Gulbaddin (HIG) and Hezb-e-Islami Khalis, which was headed by Mulavi Younas Khalis.

Being the head of HIG, Hekmatyar joined the 'Peshawar Seven' or the 'Seven Party Mujahideen Alliance' that fought against the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. In 1992, Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai was ousted from power and a civil war among the mujahideen started, killing some 50,000 people in the Afghan capital alone.

Meanwhile, Hekmatyar became the Prime Minister of Afghanistan in 1993 and resumed power in 1996 for a relatively brief period. However, he was forced to flee the country when the Taliban took over Kabul in September 1996. After spending a few years in Iran in exile, he moved to Pakistan in 2001.

Remembered as a 'highly



controversial commander,' he is even dubbed by the media as the 'Butcher of Kabul, having caused thousands of civilian deaths in the city and spending "more time fighting other Mujahideen than killing Soviets," says Peter Bergen, the security analyst associated with the CNN.

According to him, "Hekmatyar's party had the dubious distinction of never winning a significant battle during the war, training a variety of militant Islamists from around the world, killing significant numbers of mujahideen from other parties and taking a virulently anti-Western line."

Having recently signed a peace deal with the Afghan government, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the central figure of Afghanistan's second-biggest militant group, is now all set to make a political comeback after spending more than 18 years in exile in other countries.

"This is not just a peace deal between Hezb-e-Islami and the government of Afghanistan, but it is a beginning of a new era of peace all around the country," says Mohammad Amin Karim, head of the Hezb-e-Islami delegation. The move has been welcomed by the international community.

"The initialling of a peace agreement sends a strong signal of hope for Afghanistan and it demonstrates that

political processes can succeed where the conflict cannot," according to the European Union. Calling the deal an "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned" process, the United States seems happy with the development as well and the signing of a peace agreement with Hekmatyar is being hailed as a 'symbolic victory' by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

"Afghanistan has been failing in negotiating peace with militant groups for the last 15 years, and this deal marks the first practical success in that regard," says Haroun Mir, a Kabul-based security analyst and founder of Afghanistan's Center for Research and Policy Studies.

"This could be a template for peace deals with other militant groups and marks an achievement for Ghani ahead of the development aid conference being held in Brussels," says Mir.

However, many people question the logic of granting judicial immunity to the 'executioner of Kabul' with a proven a history of war crimes. "His return will compound the culture of impunity that the Afghan government and its foreign donors have fostered by not pursuing accountability for the many victims of forces commanded by Hekmatyar and other warlords that laid waste to much of the country in the 1990s," says Human Rights Watch, an international human rights organisation based in New York.

As per the agreement signed with the Hezb-e-Islami, the Afghan government has given Hekmatyar legal immunity "in all past political and military proceedings," and "all of the Hezb-e-Islami prisoners will be released in exchange for a permanent ceasefire," says the agreement.


In addition, the Afghan government

is working to lift international restrictions on Hekmatyar, a U.S.-designated 'global terrorist' who is blacklisted by the United Nations as well.

On October 18, 2016, news appeared in the media that secret meetings were held between the Taliban and Afghan government in Doha to resume peace negotiations. The next day, however, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid rejected the news. "Our stance about the negotiations has not changed. Our policy is very clear on that," he said.

Initiated in 2013, the dialogue process has been put to a halt since May this year when the US killed former Taliban leader Mullah Mansour in a drone strike.

Making a precondition for peace talks, the Taliban want a complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, which seems unlikely at this point. Despite this, there is good news for war-torn Afghanistan, as efforts are consistently being made to bring peace to the country, a herculean task the U.S. could not achieve only through its military manoeuvres.

Better late than never, the ongoing diplomatic effort to resume peace in Afghanistan is a welcome move. The development underscores the failure of the United States that has to give immunity to notorious warlords and international terrorists in the name of resumption of peace. If this is the ideal way left to bring peace, then what was the logic behind launching a full-scale war on terror in the region which killed over 30,000 people in both Afghanistan and Pakistan in the last 17 years? 

The writer is a member of the staff.

Friendly Food

Bangladesh prime minister Hasina Wajed is counting on a food support programme for the poor to win votes in the next election.

By Dr. Syed Ali Madni



If you put a hungry man in a brain scanner and give him a bowl of rice the reward centre of his brain lights up. In other words, it makes him feel good. But if you promise him a full plate of chicken biryani in future, there's no reward-centre activity. If it's not in his hands or mouth, he doesn't care. So the success of Sheikh Hasina's ambitious

programme 'Khudha hobe Niruddesh,' launched to provide the ultra poor lot of the country rice worth 10 takas will depend not on mere promises but its transparent distribution among the genuinely poor people of the country --- an extremely difficult task. The 'Fair Price Card' scheme was introduced in February 2011 by the government to

distribute rice at lower than the market price to the poor at the grassroots but has remained dormant.

Under the programme, about five million card holders were to get 30 kg of rice at Tk. 10 per kg. in March, April, September, October and November every year. In Bangladesh, the marginalized groups of people, most

of whom are farm labour, pass through difficult times during the months of March and April in the first half of the year and face a similar situation in September, October and November.

When Hasina was an opposition leader in 2005, during a visit to the seasonal poverty-stricken areas in the northern districts, she had pledged to improve the plight of the poor people if her Awami League party came to power. After she took office in 2009, she began pursuing various social safety net programmes to curb poverty in the northern districts. Food distribution at Taka 10 per kilogram was a part of the programme.

In a country where at least 45 million people, almost one third of the population, live below the poverty line and a significant proportion lives in extreme poverty, making provision for only 5 million may create problems for the elected representatives in selecting genuinely poor persons for the scheme. The poverty rate is the highest in rural areas, at 36 per cent, compared with 28 per cent in urban centres. Many people have an inadequate diet and suffer from periods of food shortage. Half of all rural children are chronically malnourished and 14 per cent suffer from acute malnutrition. In short, there are a number of ifs and buts for the success of the programme.

For selecting the beneficiaries, a five member committee will be formed at the upazila level, with a government official acting as the head of the body. The members of the committee will include the union parishad chairman and two noted persons of the union. An upazila level committee headed by the local lawmaker will scrutinize the list. For every 500 households there will be a dealer who will sell the rice to the target group as per the list prepared by the committee. Female-led families, widows, divorced or abandoned women and poor households with children will get priority under the food support programme. The scheme otherwise seems good and it is hoped the committee will work with due diligence and honesty and select card holders irrespective of political affiliations.

Even Hasina is aware of the fact and that is why she has warned, "No irregularity in the newly introduced 'Food Friendly Programme' (FFP) or 'Khudha hobe Niruddesh,' meant for poor people, will be tolerated. Stern action will be taken against dealers, including revoking their dealership if there's any irregularity. Elected public representatives will also face action if any allegation of anomaly is found against them."



At the same time, she has also asked government officials to ensure strict monitoring so that there is no mismatch or irregularity while preparing the list. She has suggested incorporating the names of the ultra poor in the lists while excluding the names of affluent ones, if there are any.

The prime minister inaugurated the food distribution programme by giving rice to 15 local people. The government has allocated Taka 2,100 crore for the food-support programme to distribute food among the poor with Tk 27 subsidy for every kilogram of rice. Hasina said the programme for distributing food grains against cards through the 'Food Friendly Programme' will continue as long as it is deemed necessary. She also noted that the way the financial capacity of the country's people is increasing alongside the downward poverty rate, there would be no need for providing such assistance in future.

With a brute majority in the parliament and confident to win the forthcoming elections Hasina seems absolutely determined to make the scheme a big success. She said, "The aim of our politics is that not a single person will remain hungry, poor and homeless. We are pursuing politics for changing the lot of the people, not changing our own fortune."

Calling upon her countrymen to strengthen the hands of the Awami League by gathering under the party flag, Sheikh Hasina said her party comes to power to give something to the people.


"The Awami League gives something to the people -- you have realized it. But those who were in power in the past snatched away everything from the people ... so, strengthen further the hands of the party and gather under its

flag," she said.

Commenting on the scheme, the BNP vice chairman Shamsuzzaman Duda alleged, "The government is deceiving poor people by launching food programme providing rice at Tk 10 per kilogram. This programme has been taken to create a scope for ruling party men to make money. Ruling party men have been plundering in the name of providing rice to the poor at Tk 10 per kg. The government has initiated the project to cling to power by giving its leaders and activists illegal and unethical financial benefits."

He was of the view that there had been widespread irregularities in appointing rice dealers, distributors and making the list of beneficiaries due to extreme politicisation. The ruling party men are buying the rice and selling it to wholesalers at high prices, he alleged.

Economists, however, suggest that such measures alone cannot reduce the level of poverty. According to them, as poverty levels remain stagnant or increase despite economic growth, it becomes clear that growth by itself does not reduce poverty, and macro-economic recovery does not necessarily translate into significant social improvement. This has forced governments and multilateral lending institutions to create or support programmes for combating poverty.

A menu of poverty reduction programmes can now be found in most developing countries. They include such instruments as conditional cash transfers, microfinance and rural employment guarantee schemes catering to workers outside the formal economy. 

The writer follows political and social developments in South Asia.



Quest for the Missing

Missing persons and their kin can draw some encouragement from the way their plight is now being handled in Sri Lanka.

By Khawaja Amer

Speaker of the Parliament in Sri Lanka, Karu Jayasuriya recently signed the Missing Persons Bill, making it a legal act to help find some 65,000 people reported missing during the country's civil war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The relatives of the missing persons have been demanding from the government to provide information on the whereabouts and fate of their near and dear ones missing for decades. Local and foreign rights organisations,

including the UN, have been insisting that providing such information is vital for the war survivors as it will enable affected families to get out of the trauma they have been going through for ages --- a genuine demand as it is difficult to express and impossible to understand the pain and agony of those living between hope and despair.

There are several aspects of human rights violations in Sri Lanka but the new step may initiate a positive movement towards reconciliation. For that very

purpose, the Missing Persons Office will have to be impartial and autonomous; such hopes have been belied previously. Now the government needs to alter this; otherwise missing persons will remain so forever and their near ones will have no idea about their whereabouts. The island will have imprints of severe human rights violations.

The problem of missing persons is a burning issue in Pakistan too. Human rights activists have been highlighting the issue quite forcefully, especially with

reference to Balochistan and Karachi. Abdul Qadeer Baloch, better known as Mama Qadeer, a Baloch rights activist and founder of the International Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, hails from the Balochistan. He came to national and international prominence in 2013 when he travelled from Balochistan to Islamabad along with other Baloch men and women to protest against the issue of missing persons in Balochistan. In March 2015, Qadeer was barred from leaving the country from Karachi Airport at the last minute. He was travelling to New York to participate in a human rights conference to highlight the plight of Baloch people and the issue of missing Baloch persons.

The Baloch insurgents allege that there are around 12000 enforced disappearances in Balochistan. The MQM, in a case of missing persons pending with the top court, recently submitted a list of 171 missing workers of which 100 have been missing since January, 2016.

On a similar issue in February 2015, the Supreme Court two-judge bench headed by Justice Jawad S. Khawaja, while hearing the application filed by the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons chairman Nasrullah Baloch, observed "There should be an effective mechanism so that whenever a dead body is found, the relatives of the missing persons should be contacted to identify it."

Despite efforts from human rights activists in Pakistan, nothing concrete has come out. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) deserves a solid commendation for finally succeeding in getting the Bill passed, urging the government to publicize the Bill through effective communication strategy in all three languages to reach out to thousands of families of the missing persons. The Bill envisages the availability of financial resources needed to build a strong institution and hire competent staff and establishment of regional offices of the IOMP. OMP membership must reflect the pluralistic nature of the island, to ensure integrity of the staff that are to be recruited and to provide gender sensitivity training to the staff. The Bill could also include that information regarding search carried out without a warrant be conveyed to the Police Chief within 48 hours and that foreign funds for the OMP be channeled to a common fund under the External Resources Department.

In principle, there are positive features in the Bill. The primary mandate is that of searching for and tracing missing persons and

identifying appropriate mechanisms and of clarifying the circumstances in which such persons went missing. The OMP mandate includes making recommendations to relevant authorities to address the incidence of

Sri Lanka, with one of the worst records in human rights violations, has taken a positive step. It has passed the Missing Persons Bill with some amendments in a unanimous manner.

missing persons, protecting the interests of missing persons and their relatives, identifying avenues of redress available to missing persons and their relatives, informing them about it, collating data related to missing persons from previous processes carried out by other entities and establishing a centralized database.

The fact remains that if not impossible, it is undoubtedly very difficult to trace thousands of missing persons after almost two to three decades. The Bill will definitely provide solace to the families of the missing persons that their government has at last taken the issue seriously and seems determined to at least find the circumstances under which they disappeared. If the OMP succeeds in accomplishing the assigned task, the Sri Lankan government will achieve yet another success after defeating the LTTE.

The joint opposition backing the former president Mahinda Rajapaksa created a rumpus in parliament when the Bill was introduced on August 11, demanding the government to "drop the Bill and save the dignity of the war heroes;" the Bill was, however, passed.

After it passing, the protesting MPs were found missing from the house, thus making it possible for the Bill to be passed without a vote, but with a few amendments. Rejecting the allegation of the Rajapaksa loyalists, Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera said, "I am pleased to inform that this Act of Parliament will safeguard the war heroes and enhance their prestige internationally. Although we are accused of betraying the war heroes, we will safeguard them and march forward. We will create an environment that is conducive for our Armed Forces to serve in international peace keeping forces."

According to Faisal Siddiqui, former member of the Task Force on Missing

Persons, "compared to Sri Lanka, the problem of enforced disappearances in Pakistan appears to be solvable. Firstly, it is on a decline. Secondly, a lot of disappeared persons have already been recovered due to the efforts of the courts

and the commission. Thirdly, there is already a workable solution in the form of a proposed law against enforced disappearance lying with the federal government, based on the consensus recommendations of the civil and military establishment as a result of the deliberations of the Federal Task Force on Missing Persons. Such a proposed law envisages the criminalization of enforced disappearance, flexible detention laws allowing long-term detention, an independent tribunal for deciding enforced disappearances cases, immunity to state officials only if they make full disclosure about enforced disappearance and compensation for victims."

He further says, "The non-resolution of this issue has less to do with its intractability and more to do with counterproductive denial narrative of the military establishment and intellectual laziness and the moral idealism of the human rights camp. Sadly, this is another example of our national failure to resolve a solvable problem."

Sri Lanka took ages to respond positively to the demands of the Human Rights Activists which proves that taking such decisions is not so easy. The conflict between the civil and military establishments, particularly in Third World countries, results in continuation of human rights violations. But then, definitely a time comes when you are compelled to say enough is enough and take bold moves in the greater interest of the country despite strong opposition.

Sri Lanka, with one of the worst records in human rights violations, has taken a positive step. It has passed the Missing Persons Bill with some amendments in a unanimous manner. Now it is time to take this issue rather seriously. It is always better to be late than never. ■

The writer is a member of the staff and a veteran journalist.

Sold Out

It looks like the new Nepalese Prime Minister has surrendered national sovereignty to India in order build a longer survival narrative for himself.

By Faizan Usmani

The rise of Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda as a new Prime Minister of Nepal is not out of the blue. His emergence is the outcome of a long-drawn political process that is dictated and administered by a neighbouring state.

Soon after assuming office in August this year, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, accompanied by Foreign Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat, made a four-day visit to India as it is mandatory for a newly-elected Nepalese PM to make a yatra to the

neighbouring country for the much-needed ashirbad.

In diplomatic jargon, the visit was the continuation of the close relationship between Nepal and India, wherein both countries showed an earnest desire to take bilateral relations to the earlier peak with the highest level of cooperation.

Terming his Nepalese counterpart as a "catalytic force of peace," the Indian Prime Minister said he held an "extensive and productive dialogue" with Pushpa Prachanda on a range of

issues related to regional development and cross-border trade between the two countries.

On the eve of his maiden visit to India, the Nepalese Prime Minister met with the leaders of Madhesi parties and other ethnic groups and denied the fact that his trip to New Delhi was not linked to the adoption of a new constitution of the country. "There is no connection between my India visit and the matter relating to constitutional amendment," he said.

In the meeting with his Nepalese



In the meeting with his Nepalese counterpart, the Indian Prime Minister shared his concerns regarding the newly-promulgated constitution of Nepal, which does not recognize the Madhesi people as 'sons of the soil.'

counterpart, the Indian Prime Minister shared his concerns regarding the newly-promulgated constitution of Nepal, which does not recognize the Madhesi people as 'sons of the soil,' depriving them the equal citizen status of other Nepalese people.

In a statement released by the Indian Foreign Office after the meeting, it was said India recognized Nepal's efforts to build a democratic polity in the country and there was hope that the new government, led by Prachanda, would hold a comprehensive dialogue with the Madhesi community during the implementation of the Constitution.

"We are hopeful that Nepal will successfully implement the Constitution through inclusive dialogue, addressing representational and territorial concerns of the Madhesi community within a short time span and accommodating the aspirations of all sections of their diverse society," said Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary of India.

"In an open border, our doors are never closed to our neighbour," says Jaishankar.

Prime Minister Prachanda said, "I am confident that the visit would not only normalise the relations that went through some bitter experience in the recent past, but also build a strong foundation for mutual trust."

Apart from Narendra Modi, Prachanda met with the Indian President Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Minister of State for Power Piyush Goyal. He also attended a joint business event, which was organised by Assocham, the Associated Chambers of Commerce of India.

On September 17, Pushpa Kamal Dahal gave a press briefing in New Delhi regarding his visit to India. He said, "I chose to visit India just one month after assuming office of the Prime Minister of Nepal and our decision was a concrete step in materialization of our policy statement that relations with neighbours is the top foreign policy priority. As 'neighbourhood first' is the policy priority of the Government of India, we have seen a great opportunity to deepen our friendship and partnership in the context of this convergence of policy

orientation."

During the visit, the Nepalese PM finalised three mega projects to be carried out by Indian companies for the construction and upgrade of the road network in Nepal. On the occasion, two lines of credit agreements were signed between Nepal and the India-based Exim Bank. When he returned, the PM was asked by the media about the achievements he made during his visit to India, but his reply was all about restoring diplomatic relations with India to normal.

An editorial in the leading Nepalese newspaper 'Nepal Times' said:

"The main message that Nepal PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal attempted to give to both his Indian interlocutors and the public back home was that he had restored India-Nepal bilateral relations to the earlier bonhomie. He may have succeeded in giving that impression in New Delhi, but back home the joint communiqué and purported secret deals have reinforced the belief that Nepal's leaders have once more sold out to India.

Having assumed office a few months ago, Prachanda has yet to start negotiations with the Madhesis, while any amendment to the Constitution is not likely to happen as it will require a two-third majority or more than 395 votes in parliament to approve the proposed amendments. Regarding the promulgation of the Nepali Constitution as a historic achievement, the Prime Minister says his government has made serious efforts to bring everyone on board as the phase of the implementation of the Constitution is entered. Quite the opposite, nothing has changed during his rule so far and he has yet to take India into confidence over the proposed changes to the Constitution.

For a nation that has not forgotten last year's nightmare of economic blockade by India, its new prime minister has miserably failed to change the status quo. This often happens with a landlocked country like Nepal that is left with no option but to stick by its neighbour even at the cost of surrendering itself. **S**

The writer is a member of the staff.

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Being and Doing
Kind and Humble
Hard Working
The Light in the Darkness
The Protector of Bhutan



Learning Curve

With elections taking place at regular intervals, Bhutan seems to be well on its way on the road to democracy.

By Muhammad Ali Ehsan

The local bodies or local government (LG) elections held in September 2016 in Bhutan auger well for democracy in the country. These were the second LG elections and 55.8 percent voters turned out to vote as against 56.23 percent who voted in the first LG elections. With the elections to the local governments, the process of democratization of Bhutan has also come full circle. The Election Commissioner of Bhutan appreciated the people and their willingness to invest in and promote democracy as the elections proceeded forward smoothly with the cooperation of the electorates in 1477 constituencies in the country.

He particularly appreciated the election of 11 percent of the women candidates in the LG elections. The LG elections this year are being conducted under the Bhutanese constitution after the first LG elections were held in June 2011. Bhutan, with the conduct of first ever elections to its parliament in 2008 and now the conduct of local government elections, has entered a new phase in its democratic history.

It would be pertinent to recall the short journey of Bhutan on the democratic road. In 2008, it transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional democracy. It has a two-party democratic system with

an Upper House that constitutes 25 elected members and a National Assembly with 47 lawmakers. The chief contestants were the Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party (DPT) led by Jigme Thinley and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) led by Sangay Ngedup. The DPT won the elections by taking 45 out of 47 seats. Jigme Thinley served as Prime Minister from 2008 to 2013. Elections were again held in 2013 and the Peoples Democratic Party came to power in the 2013 elections. It won 32 seats with 54.88% of the vote. PDP leader Tshering Tobgay assumed office of Prime Minister.

Since 2008, Bhutan stands out as a

sovereign constitutional democracy with the parliament directly elected by the people of Bhutan. The King of Bhutan who remains the head of the State will automatically retire on reaching the age of 65 years. The people of Bhutan are relieved that all the issues pertaining to their lives, including political issues, are now discussed in the parliament by their elected representatives. This gives them the leverage to have their voices heard, allowing the media and civil society to proactively influence, question and shape the decision-making process, rules, laws and policies that directly affect the lives of the people. With the people being allowed to rule, it can be easily assumed that the wellbeing of the people in Bhutan will become a top priority for the elected representatives in the coming years.

For the first time in history, Bhutan has a constitution in place that guarantees every Bhutanese his/her fundamental right as a citizen. The lawmakers and the democratic system will now ensure that all citizens enjoy the gift of democracy that includes the right to freedom of expression and movement and there is no discrimination against them. Laws condemning child labour and child marriages are considered a crime.

The high voter turnout in the elections only proves that the democratically elected parliaments are popular amongst the people and enjoy a high degree of legitimacy amongst the people. Besides the people, it is the King who has also played a huge role in putting Bhutan on the road to democracy.

His Majesty, King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, has been ruling Bhutan since December 2006, a year in which his father His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who ruled Bhutan from 1972, resigned. The current king is educated in the USA and at Oxford and is a forward-looking visionary who holds a modern view of Bhutan. He follows the footsteps of his father who initiated the democratization process in the country. The King can also be credited for giving a constitution to the country that appears to have no significant shortcomings. The provisions of the Constitution include an age limit of 65 years for the King to retire, prohibition against capital punishment, protection of the environment and that 60% of Bhutan should be covered by forests at all times.

A question that can be asked at this stage is that how is democracy developing in the country which has had two parliamentary elections and the political system seems to be working well. Institutions associated with good



The people of Bhutan are relieved that all the issues pertaining to their lives, including political issues, are now discussed in the parliament.

governance have been performing well under the democratic setup. The judiciary is independent and in its role as guardian of the constitution is doing a good job. One thing of concern has been the low voter turnout for the National Council Elections in 2013 (for the National Council election, only 45 per cent of registered voters turned out, down from 53 per cent in 2008. The general election saw 66 per cent of registered voters at the polling stations, down from 79 per cent in 2008) but the LG elections in the current year prove that people do believe in turning out for voting and participating in the democratic process. The world will be watching to see how many Bhutanese turn out for voting in the elections to be held in 2018.

All candidates to the Bhutanese legislatures must have a university degree. Few women in Bhutan have such qualifications. In 2013 elections no women were elected to the National Council and only four were elected to the 47-member National Assembly. Bhutan would want this trend to also change and more and more women to get elected – something that would be closely watched during the 2018 elections. Democracy must also result in the freedom of expression which has improved but needs to further improve as suggested by the “2014 Reporters without Borders ranking of media freedom.” It saw Bhutan slip ten places to 92 out of 180 countries. The

proliferation of mobile phones is having an effect in society and social media seem to be more vibrant and creating positive effects.

According to the UNICEF, 98% of the poor people in Bhutan reside in rural areas. A third of the Bhutanese population (31%) is classified as poor but only 2% of that lives in the urban areas. The question that Bhutan needs to ask is whether politics in Bhutan is an elite-driven process? And if it is for how long is it going to remain so? The Bhutanese middle class needs to take up this challenge but if the unemployment rate among the urban youth is 9.6 % (2013), would this augur well for the future of democracy in the country?

There may remain a lesson for Bhutan to learn from what Francis Fukuyama describes in his 2014 book ‘Political Order and Political Decay’ that – ‘those countries in which democracy preceded state building have had much greater problems achieving high quality governance than those that inherited modern states from absolutist times’. May be, in the coming few years, eradication of poverty, unemployment and lack of education are the simultaneous battles that Bhutan will have to fight along with the development and growth of democracy in the country. ■

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

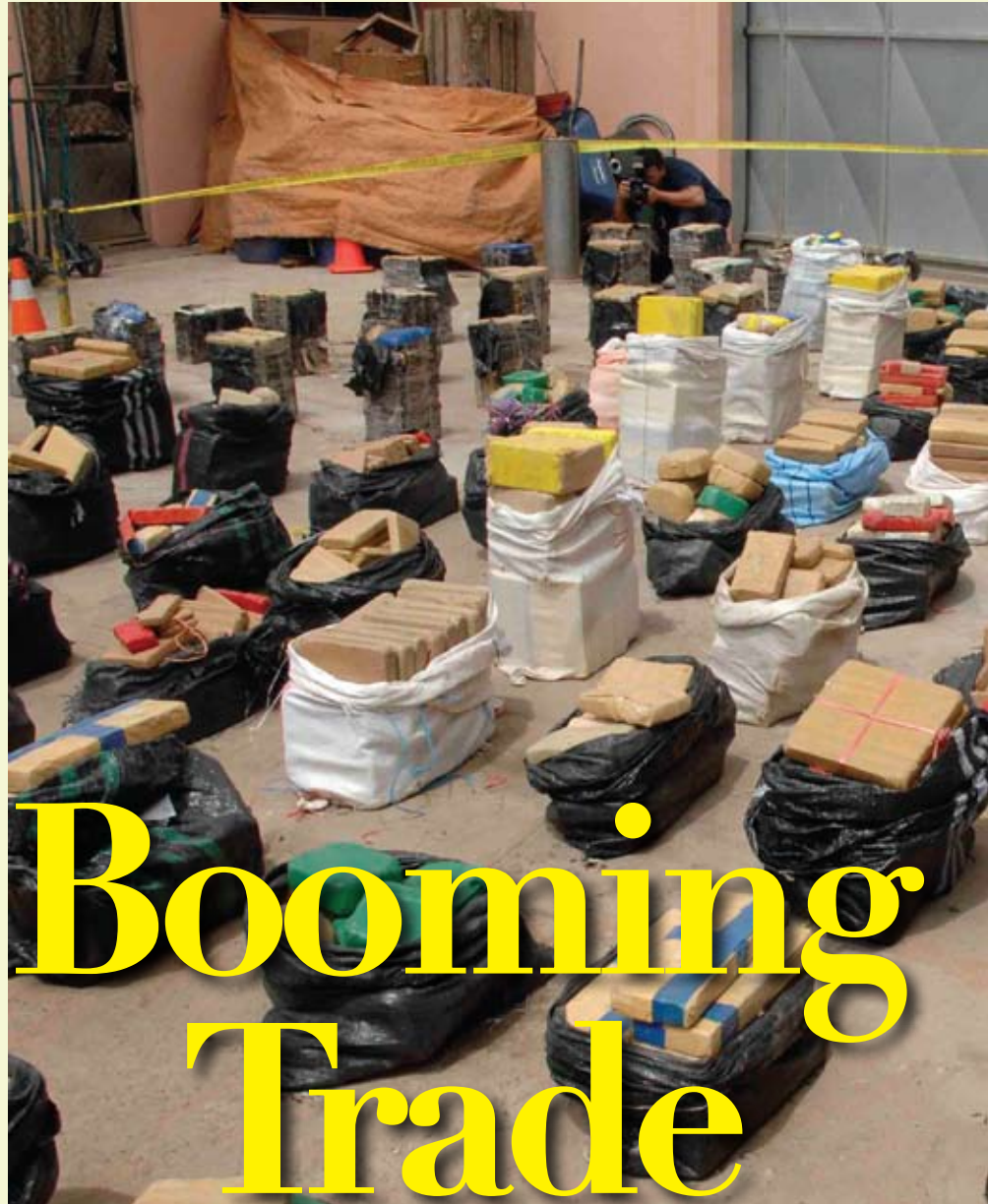
In Latin America, which for decades has been the theatre of activities of the biggest global cartels dealing in illegal drugs, the production and smuggling of narcotizing substances is going on unabated despite certain effective actions by the governments of the regional countries to curb the menace.

In Latin America, the Andean countries of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia are the world's largest cocaine producers, while Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean have become the main conduits for transporting drugs into the United States, Europe and beyond. As a result, the countries of the region have suffered multifarious negative consequences of drug trafficking and eradication and interdiction efforts. Generally, throughout the entire region, in both drug production and trafficking areas, there has been an upsurge of violence, corruption, erosion of state writ and massive human rights violations caused by the emergence of powerful organized crime groups and drug cartels. Central America has become home to some of the world's most dangerous cities, with the highest global homicide rate found in the Honduras, at 82.1 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. The region has become unsafe for protagonists of human rights and media personnel that expose the violence. Equally, politicians and security officials who refuse to be corrupted by drug trafficking groups and, above all, ordinary citizens feel extremely insecure due to the violence, conflict and crime perpetrated and sustained by members of the drug mafia.

Apart from these repercussions, in production countries, the negative impact also includes environmental and community damage from forced eradication of coca crops such as aerial spraying and the funding of guerrilla insurgent groups through illicit crop cultivation and sale, most notably, FARC in Colombia and the Shining Path in Peru.

The most important aspect of the contemporary Latin America drug production and trafficking scene is that the oldest drug cartels and militant organizations involved in production and trafficking of illicit drugs like cocaine, marijuana, heroin and other substances have weakened. The old cartels have been replaced by other smaller, more sophisticated drug cartels, complicating the issue of illicit drug production and trafficking.

Colombia is the most important country in the context of the Latin American drug trade. The biggest drug



Booming Trade

Illicit drug trafficking is a major global issue, with Latin America emerging as a leading player.

By Dr Raza Khan

cartels of Colombia include Medellin and Cali. The major drug cartels in Colombia are known to completely dominate Colombian life in every sphere, having a huge influence on politics and society. The bigger cartels are known to have under their wings some of the wealthiest people in the world. For instance, the big mafia world name is Pablo Escobar.

The Cali and Medellin cartels have become quite weak in recent times. There are a few other cartels which rose

to prominence after their decline. These include the Norte Del Valley cartel and the North Coast cartel. Like their precursors, both the new cartels are known to have tremendous influence in the government. Additionally, they have corrupted and bribed hundreds of officials to serve their interests and illegally smuggle drugs to US and Europe. A lot of the money earned from this drug trafficking is channelled to fund guerrilla warfare and destabilizing the government in numerous ways.



Cali and Medellin have received huge blows at the hands of law enforcement agencies. But the newer cartels, keeping the situation in view that large organizations had been more vulnerable to attack by US and Colombian authorities, have formed smaller, more manageable groups. In other words, the drug cartels have resorted to the division of labour with one group dedicated to smuggling drugs from Colombia to Mexico, another group controlling the drug laboratories in the jungle and yet another dealing with transportation of coca from the fields to the labs. This sophistication in management by the drug cartels has made the efforts of the LEA very difficult.

Apart from Colombia, Peru is among the single largest producers and exporters of cocaine in the world.

Even after decades of foreign-funded eradication efforts in the country, the industry is still thriving. Most of the estimated 325 tonnes of produce each year is making its way to Brazilian and European markets, earning Peruvian organized crime well over \$1 billion annually. In Brazilian markets, it is worth five times that amount. In Europe, the figure can be multiplied ten times. As Peru is widely considered one of the safest countries in South America, its domestic drug market is expanding. Thus gradually the illegal drug trafficking issue in Peru is becoming even more dangerous than the one in Colombia. If not managed properly, it can aggravate to disastrous levels in the years ahead.

In Bolivia, production of illegal drugs and their trafficking has also increased in subtle ways with efforts largely failing

to contain the menace. The same is the situation in Central America to a lesser degree.

The most important of the groups that has been involved in drug production and trafficking is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The Colombian militant group FARC emerged as a Marxist group in the 1940s out of the political chaos in the country and transformed itself into a pure terrorist organization, but sustaining itself through production and trafficking of illegal drugs has debilitated it in recent times. Consequently, it entered into internationally-brokered negotiations with the Colombian government and both ultimately reached an agreement to end the nearly half a century conflict and civil war in the country. The war decimated Colombian society by killing almost a quarter of a million people (more than 80 percent of them civilians) and displacing an additional six million from the countryside to the cities. Millions, traumatized by the violence, left the country altogether. The war also poisoned the country's politics, wrecked the economy and tarnished Colombia's international reputation.

But as the enforcement of the agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government was subject to ratification by the Colombians, the latter rejected it in a referendum held in October. The rejection of the truce by the Colombians with FARC generally reveals that despite the dangerous make up of the group the people no more could be browbeaten by it. The FARC has been largely relying on the narcotics trade to finance its reign of terror. In the eyes of many Colombians, five decades of murders, extortions, bombings, kidnappings and illegal land seizures in the name of a Marxist take-over deserve more strict dealing with FARC then to let it join the mainstream of politics.

During the 1990s, the FARC restructured its involvement in the drug trade by moving into narcotic production and distribution. Through the early 2000s, greatly aided by profits from the narcotics trade, especially cocaine, estimated to be worth between \$500-600 million annually, the FARC grew exponentially as did its terrorism. Noticeably, narcotics rather than ideology have kept the FARC in the revolution business. It was the FARC's involvement in the drug trade that pulled Washington into the Colombian conflict.

There have been some successes in the war against illicit drugs in Latin America, especially Colombia. With physical intervention by US agents and support by Washington to the Colombian

government in terms of finances, arms and training, the production of the drug coca had been reduced to the extent that in 2010 the country's cocaine production was 60% less compared to the peak year of 2000. However, in other countries this trend could not be observed. For instance, in that same year, Peru surpassed Colombia as the main producer of coca leaves in the world. Elsewhere in Latin America also, the production and trafficking of illicit drugs has registered an increase.

An important factor in the large-scale production and trafficking of illicit drugs in Latin America is the high demand of narcotizing substances in the North American and European markets. For instance, the United States is the largest user of illegal drugs in the world, with one in six citizens claiming to have used cocaine in their life. Keeping this in view, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), after reviewing the efficiency of the actions taken by the Colombian government for more than 20 years, has called for the coke consuming countries - mostly in Europe and North America - to take their share of responsibility and reduce demand for cocaine, explaining that there are limits to what the Latin American governments can do if cocaine consumption continues unabated. The



US agrees to this viewpoint but the fact that illegal drugs are landing on the American mainland and Western Europe from Latin America is equally the failure of Washington and European countries. The reduction in demand for illegal drugs would make the task of the Latin American governments easier to fight the drug cartels. This shows the complicity of American and European officials in the trafficking of illegal drugs from Latin America to their respective continents.

Production and trafficking of illegal drugs in and from Latin American countries has increased because of the employment of high-technology by traffickers as well as the enlisting of services of professionals from developed countries. Sometime back the Colombian National Police seized

a sophisticated submarine which was meant to secretly ship large quantities of cocaine to the US. Colombian cocaine traffickers and had hired engineering experts from Russia and the United States to help with the design of the submarine.

The production and trafficking of illegal drugs in Latin American is a serious problem for the entire region and the world, especially North America and Europe. If the production and trade survives, it is the collective failure of all the stakeholders and thus there should be a change in the strategy to address this grave issue. ■

The writer holds a doctoral degree in International Relations (Security Studies) and is a political and security analyst.

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Vol 03-Issue 13
24-30 July, 2016

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Taming of the Shrew

After its agreement with the 5+1 group, does Iran still find itself between a rock and a hard place?

By Huzaima Bukhari & Dr. Ikramul Haq

U.S. sanctions cover a variety of purposes related to the country's internal and external affairs, ranging from weapons proliferation to human rights abuses within Iran to state sponsorship of terrorism and fomenting instability abroad. They target broad sectors as well as specific individuals and entities, both Iranian nationals and non-nationals who have dealings with sanctioned Iranians.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew estimated that Iran's economy was 15 to 20 percent smaller than it would have been had sanctions not been ratcheted up in 2012.

The year 1979 proved as a turning point in the history of Iran as the Islamic revolution led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini overturned the rule of Raza Shah Pahlavi (1941 to 1979) for good, converting the country into an Islamic Republic. The former king went into exile in January 1979, almost a month before the arrival of Khomeini in February.

As the new regime was struggling with establishing its administration while the deposed king was begging different governments to provide sanctuary to him and his family, an event occurred that shook Iran's foundations of international relations. The infamous Iran Hostage Crisis was triggered off after Raza Shah was admitted in the USA for cancer treatment in November 1979. This provoked the Iranian students' anger and they seized the US embassy personnel and held fifty two hostages for 444 days with the support of thousands of Iranians harbouring anti-American sentiments. After a number of failed attempts by the USA to rescue the hostages, they were eventually released on January 20, 1981, minutes after Jimmy Carter's presidency ended that left in its wake the beginnings of a severe hostility between Iran and the USA, a superpower which also levied its first round of sanctions against Iran.

In 1980, Carter banned imports of Iranian oil, froze some \$12 billion in Iranian assets in the U.S., and later banned all U.S. trade, and travel to Iran. The U.S. lifted the embargoes after Iran released the hostages.

Iran found itself further isolated when in September 1980, Saddam Hussein invaded the country at Khuzestan in an attempt to build a corridor up to the Persian Gulf by acceding pivotal areas and making himself a strongman of the Middle East. Apparently, the West, including the UK, France, Germany and Brazil, sold weapons to Iraq while China sold weapons to Iran. Almost all relevant international agencies have confirmed that Saddam used chemical warfare to ward off the Iranian human wave attacks, taking an estimated toll of 100,000 during the 8 years of conflict. Simultaneously, these agencies have unanimously confirmed that Iran never used chemical weapons during the war which could be taken to imply that Iran is a country which denounces the abuse of any such weaponry that

has a devastating effect on human beings, even if they are enemies or aggressors. Despite this endorsement by independent international agencies, the stigma of notoriety was stamped on the Iran and was to have adverse consequences in the form of a series of economic sanctions.

It would not be out of place to mention at this stage that as long as nuclear technology is used for the benefit of the peoples of the world, it does not attract criticism but the moment its destructive elements are directed towards warfare, there is resentment inviting strong protests from different lobbies. This became more emphatic after the USA's criminal act of dropping two nuclear bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in August 1945. The extreme nature of destruction and its after-effects which continued for many years to come completely traumatized the whole world. The need to check proliferation of nuclear weapons resulted in various institutions and in culmination of different treaties which some countries have signed while some are still hesitant in doing so despite tremendous pressure from world organizations. In fact, pursuing nuclear technology may not be as harmful as working towards uranium enrichment which is an essential byproduct that is economically more viable.

According to Nuclear Energy Information Service:

"The connections linking nuclear power and weapons are more than political or historic. Consider: **1 FISSIONABLE MATERIALS:** It is the same nuclear fuel cycle with its mining of uranium, milling, enrichment and fuel fabrication stages which readies the uranium ore for use in reactors, whether these reactors are used to create plutonium for bombs or generate electricity. In the end, both reactors produce the plutonium. The only difference between them is the concentration of the various isotopes used in the fuel. Each year a typical 1000 mega-watt (MW) commercial power reactor will produce 300 to 500 pounds of plutonium—enough to build between 25-40 Nagasaki-sized atomic bombs."

The case of Iran is unique in the sense that Raza Shah Pahlavi acceded to the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1967 but his later policies aroused suspicions, particularly those of the USA that Iran was secretly aspiring to become a nuclear-armed state, contrary to his promise while signing the NPT. These were curtailed to some extent when the Shah agreed to allow



A greater breakthrough in thawing US-Iran relations came on July 14, 2015 when a deal was signed whereby in Obama's words, "It blocks every path to nuclear weapons."

inspection of its nuclear programme following the International Atomic Energy Agency Safeguards Agreement in 1974. However, the Islamic revolution and the mullah regime was seemingly a greater threat for the West which continued to eye Iran's nuclear capabilities with skepticism well into the 1990s when the USA government, under President Bill Clinton imposed sanctions on foreign firms believed to be supporting Iran's nuclear arms programme. This was carried into the early 2000s, when indications of work on uranium enrichment renewed US concerns, forcing further sanctions seeking to block Iran's access to nuclear-related material and so prevented it from pursuing its nuclear programme despite its claim of peaceful intentions.

Relations between the USA and Iran eased out a little when in November 2013, Iran and the 5-member Security Council plus Germany signed an interim agreement known as the Joint Plan of Action (JPA) allowing some relief from sanctions and access to \$ 4.2 billion in previously frozen assets. The relief for Iran came in exchange for limiting uranium enrichment and permitting international inspectors to visit sensitive sites. Economic sanctions remained in place with an agreement to cap export of oil at 1.1 million barrels a day (less than half of its 2011 export level). Iran would have to comply with the terms to limit its nuclear programme, which the IAEA would certify on inspection. Until then, the US Treasury clarified

that no other relief would be provided and the earlier nuclear sanctions were to continue.

A greater breakthrough in thawing US-Iran relations came on July 14, 2015 when a deal was signed whereby in Obama's words, "It blocks every path to nuclear weapons." The Iranian foreign minister called it a "win-win deal," which envisages limiting nuclear enrichment capability, among other things. Interestingly, Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel criticized the agreement on the grounds that empowering Iran could jeopardize the region's security although besides being alleged with supporting Lebanon's Hezbollah, Iran has not displayed any aggressive policy of hegemony as evident from its desistence from employing chemical weapons during the Iraq-Iran war. Remarkably, the US has shown a more pragmatic approach by 'taming the shrew' rather than insisting on a complete closure of nuclear facilities as it fully acknowledges that the decades long sanctions have failed in preventing Iran from pursuing its nuclear capabilities. Nonetheless, Iran would have to shoulder the responsibility of proving to the world in general and the Middle East in particular that it aspires for peace and any suspicions otherwise are baseless. ■

The writers, lawyers and partners in Huzaima & Ikram, are Adjunct Faculty at Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS).

Hope for Minorities

Minorities in Pakistan hope to enjoy more protection under the law as they have better legal cover now.

By Zufah Ansari

Being a minority in any part of the world has time and again put many communities at the risk of discrimination and, in extreme cases, persecution. Pakistan faces a similar situation.

With increasing radicalization and talibanization, minorities, especially

Christian and Hindu communities, have suffered greatly in the recent past.

While Christian communities have phased cases of blasphemy, the Hindus have quietly suffered and some have been forced to migrate from the country.

But despite these atrocities, these communities like many others have co-existed in peace and harmony and have stayed true to being Pakistanis.

With changing tides and growing advocacy by social change-makers, the National Assembly of Pakistan has passed a landmark Bill which allows



the Hindu minority to register their marriages. This wasn't possible earlier due to their treatment as second-class citizens.

In Pakistan, it is estimated that the Hindu population represents 1.6 percent of Pakistan's 190 million population. Despite that they have not had any legal mechanism to register their marriages since independence in 1947.

On the other hand Christians, the other main religious minority in Pakistan, have a British law regulating their marriages dating back to 1870.

The Bill now allows Hindus to be legally identified as married and recognized by the country's law. The minimum age for marriage for a Hindu individual is 18 years of age. The new minimum legal age for marriage of other citizens is 18 years for men and 16 years for women. In case of breaking the law, the minimum age would result in six months jail and Rs. 5000 fine.

Some of the conditions for a marriage to become recognized under this Bill are:

1. Both the male and female should be 18 years of age or above



The Bill now allows Hindus to be legally identified as married and recognized by the country's law.



2. Both parties of the marriage should give their consent
3. At least two witnesses should be present at the time of solemnization and registration of marriage

According to the Bill, every marriage that is solemnized under the Act should be registered with the union council or ward within 45 days of solemnization. However, if any person fails to get his marriage registered he or she will be liable to pay a fine of Rs 1,000.

This law has put especially Hindu women in a less compromising position as they can now demand for the fulfillment of marital rights during and after marriage.

The Bill is claimed to remove the last major hurdle on the way to enacting a law aimed at protecting women's rights, on the whole, not just Hindu women but for also other minority communities.

It has been reported in many cases that Hindu women have been targeted by abduction, forced conversion, rape and problems of proving legitimacy of their relationship before the law because their marriages were never officially recognized and hence not provable in court.

Some of the problems Hindu women faced without official proof of a relationship was getting government documents issued or moving forward on any other activity which involves documentation ranging from opening

bank accounts to applying for visas.

The Bill is also a relief for Hindu widows who were left financially and socially estranged after the death of their husbands as they couldn't claim rights to property, assets, belongings and government welfare.

The new law also legalizes re-marriage for a Hindu widow, six months after her husband's death. It also grants Hindus the right to divorce, with women having the additional right to do so on grounds of negligence, bigamy or having been married before 18.

With the help of this law, now Hindu women would be able to exercise their legal rights which are given to them during and after marriage.

Through the Bill, the National Assembly and legislation have made a move towards ensuring the rights of minorities who had been neglected as they are less in number, compared to the majority Muslim population.

It is expected that the Senate will also pass the law without much delay. The Pakistan government still needs to do a lot more in order to make the Hindu and other minority communities feel at home, safe and secure. This Bill is just one step towards that and a lot needs to be done to make Pakistan a safe haven for all citizens. ■

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

Crests and Troughs

Amid continuous volatility, Afghanistan's dysfunctional media landscape has begun to show signs of stability.

By **Mahrugh Farooq**

Afghanistan is considered to be one of the most fragile and fractured states in the world, with its government still struggling to contain economic and political issues and its people striving to rise above problems related to law and order and terrorism. According to a report developed by the UN Assistance

Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), approximately 1,592 civilians were killed and another 3,329 were injured in a series of attacks in just the first six months of 2015. The most recent attacks involved the murder of Yaqub Sharafat, senior provincial reporter for the state-run Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) in Qalat and an attack on Abdul Saboor

Sarir, editor-in-chief for The Afghan Times in Kabul by unknown assailants.

The country's economy is in a shambles, human rights defenders face the threat of attacks on virtually a daily basis while freedom of expression is curbed to the highest degree. According to Nai, a media watchdog in Afghanistan, nearly 73 cases of



attacks against journalists and media workers have been reported in the past year, with a majority of such attacks being committed by none other than government officials, representatives from police and security agencies and even elected officials. Early this year, in January, the Afghani parliament amended the Mass Media Law by limiting media freedom, an act many reporters and journalists feared would further restrict freedom of expression in the country.

Although the above paints a rather somber and desolate picture of the state of media affairs in Afghanistan, the sector itself has come a long way from what it used to be. According to a 2012 policy briefing report developed by the BBC named ‘The Media of Afghanistan: The Challenges of Transition’, the country did not have any indigenous broadcasting or media framework for a significant portion of the 1980s and 1990s. The only source of news and information was the country’s national broadcaster, Radio and Television Afghanistan (RTA), which was perceived as the government’s mouthpiece, dictating what the public should and should not be allowed to hear.

During the invasion of the Soviets during the 1980s, many Western transnational radio outfits began to offer programming in Persian and Pashto languages that appealed to the Afghan public, much to the ire of the Afghan government, which moved to ban such channels and instead steer the people towards its pro-Soviet radio channels. During the 1990s, whatever media infrastructure that did exist during that time was destroyed thanks to the efforts of the Taliban, who saw the system as a threat to their strategy of ruthless authoritarianism.

It was not until 2001, when the U.S invaded Afghanistan in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11 that same year, termed as one of the worst attacks to take place on American soil, when the media landscape began to drastically change. The interim government at the time steered clear of the hard-liner approach adopted by previous governments and instead worked towards opening up the media. This involved the granting of licenses for TV, radio and the press. As a result of President Karzai’s encouragement, the media industry boomed, allowing private television stations, radio stations and newspapers owned by influential members of society such as ethnic leaders, businessmen, private publishing houses and non-governmental organizations to “commercialise the nature of news



production”. According to Rustam Ali Seerat, a writer for The Diplomat, it was this approach that did away with the politics that had begun ingrained in many publishing and television production houses and ultimately gave them the creative independence needed to give a platform for unheard segments of society to state their views.

Another more recent transition that Afghanistan’s media has undergone is a shift of dependency on television, radio and print media outlets for news and information towards the creation of news and the spread of awareness of relevant issues and events via social media and other online forums. Citizen journalism, a form of reporting whereby an ordinary citizen possesses the power to inform and notify members of the public of issues and developments related to the well-being of both the society and the country, is a phenomena that has revolutionized the media landscape across the globe and which has now also begun to make waves in Afghanistan. Its benefits are dual; according to Rustam, “it allows for a diversification of voices and it has facilitated communication in situations where ordinary means are not effective”. He goes on to explain, “Literate Afghans are active on social media, and so receive news along with different interpretations of it from their friends on Facebook or Twitter. They can the share their own analyses with people in their circles. Afghan social media – although occasionally exacerbating inter-ethnic hate speech – has created an active and vibrant virtual community where different issues are raised, discussed and heard”.

Many recent uprisings and protests have been a result of activists using

social media to galvanise sections of the public. Even Afghan officials have been reported to use social media as a way of communicating with the president, mainly because there is a complete lack of proper channels of communication between higher-ranking and lower-ranking officials. Indeed, social media has become so popular that many soldiers on the ground are using it as a means to ask for supplies during their fights with the Taliban.

As a result, the Afghan government finds itself under an all new kind of pressure, something that was unprecedented in a land where all information passed through government communication channels. In response to massive criticism lodged by activist groups and non-governmental organizations, the Afghan government has created its own team of private news agencies and social media users that tackle such kinds of opposition online. This just goes to show that even on the governmental level, the significance of social media as a tool for creating awareness and bringing about change cannot be ignored.

It is evident that the social media revolution in Afghanistan is not going to go away anytime soon. This is partly because the medium has not only changed the traditional way in which people, groups and organizations communicate but it has also left a lasting impact on Afghan society. Now with an increasing number of people on social media and the country’s literacy rate improving, the influence is bound to grow, thus creating room for diverse narratives in the country. **S**

The writer is a member of the staff.

Google



Sundar Pichai
CEO, Google Inc.

Good Days

India has emerged as a leading IT market with its large user base and runaway progress. Now more Indian professionals are in focus around the world.

By Faizan Usmani

When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) launched its campaign during the 2014 general elections, it coined a new slogan 'Achhe din aane waale hain.' (good days are coming). At the end of 2016, when the BJP-led government will complete two-years in the saddle, people are still waiting for the 'achay din' they

were promised. Nevertheless, thanks to highly educated and tech-savvy Indian youth, it has succeeded in bringing in good days through its commitment to make India a centre of information technology development, as well as a global outsourcing hub.

Without doubt, the young Indian lot has made a difference, standing head

and shoulders above the party-affiliated political pundits and good-for-nothing bureaucrats of the country. From Sundar Pichai, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Google Inc., Satya Narayana Nadella, CEO, Microsoft, Sanjay Kumar Jha, CEO, GlobalFoundries to Shantanu Narayen, CEO, Adobe Systems, many Indians are heading the world's top IT

organisations and technology firms.

Apart from individual success stories, India has a lot to share about its emergence as a global investment hub, particularly in the IT sector. According to statistics of the India Brand Equity Foundation, an initiative of the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the country has the world's third largest internet user base of over 400 million, wherein its smartphone users have crossed the 160 million mark while the social media user base already touched 143 million last year. By 2019, India will have over 600 million internet users.

India is the world's largest IT sourcing destination with over 65 per cent market share internationally, employing more than 9.5 million skilled workforce. A leading IT services provider, India's cost-competitiveness attracts multinational companies to outsource their manufacturing operations and research and development (R&D) activities. By 2018, India will be generating some US\$146.72 billion through its internet-based economy. By 2020, its online business-to-business (B2B) sector is projected to cross US\$700 billion, while the business-to-consumer (B2C) market is expected to touch US\$102 billion in the next four years, according to the India Brand Equity Foundation.

Offering a bright business outlook to foreign investors, India has rightly emerged as an ideal hub for global investment, as it has been recently shown by Google Inc., the world's leading technology company specializing in Internet-related services and products.

After assuming the position of CEO of Google in August 2015, Sundar Pichai, a young Indian-American, made his maiden visit to India in December last year. During the visit, he announced several new projects and products for the country and shared his long-term vision 'Google for India' to improve internet connectivity in the country, Google's priority market.

Among the new initiatives being taken, Google is going to launch 'Project Loon,' an initiative that will provide a free Wi-Fi access to millions of users in India through a balloon-based internet service. Setting up a comprehensive public Wi-Fi platform called 'RailWire,' the company is rolling out free Wi-Fi services at 100 railway stations. It is already offering Wi-Fi at 52 stations across the country. With the launch of Google Station, the service will be soon extended to other public areas gradually.

According to Pichai, the initiative will be the world's largest public Wi-Fi project in terms of its total number of users. "Even with just the first 100

India is the world's largest IT sourcing destination with over 65 per cent market share internationally, employing more than 9.5 million skilled workforce.

stations online, this project will make Wi-Fi available for more than 10 million people who pass through every day," says Pichai.

Caesar Sengupta is the Vice President of Google's Next Billion Users division. According to him, "Every second, three Indians come online. However, our goal has not just been to help more Indians get online, but also to help Indians create the online experience they want; one that serves their needs and enables them to have an impact on the entire world. So we have been thinking about how to build products and services for this wave of new users — products that work for any level of connectivity, in local Indian languages, and across the devices that are most frequently used in India."

A couple of years before, a low-cost mobile phone set 'Android One' was launched in India by Google. Offering standard android features at a reduced price, a new feature has been recently introduced in the set, making mobile web pages load and browse faster with less data consumption. Google also made YouTube available offline, helping its millions of users in India watch online videos without a data connection.

"The content uploaded on YouTube from India has doubled and time spent is growing at 150 per cent ahead of global figures," says Eyal Manor, Vice President, Engineering Division, YouTube.

According to Google, India ranks third in terms of local guides on Google Maps and an offline version of it will be offered soon. In addition to that, the latest version of Google's Android One handset will be renamed after an Indian dessert and will offer numerous customised functions, such as an enhanced Hindi keyboard, Hindi Voice Search and support seven regional languages as Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil and Gujarati. In India, the internet giant is also going to offer the 'tap to translate' feature, allowing users to translate any text written in Hindi by tapping on the text.

"A message received in Hindi can be copied and Google Translate will appear right inside WhatsApp to show translation. Google will also run 'translateathon' which will translate

words in Bengali, Punjabi and Marathi as well," says Sengupta. For its Indian users, the company is also about to launch an improved version of live cricket scores and replays on its search engine.

As announced by the Google CEO, the company is going to establish a new campus in Hyderabad and plans to expand its team by recruiting more Indians in its engineering and business divisions. In collaboration with the National Skill Development Corporation of India, Google will also provide 3-year training to 2 million Android developers in 30 universities.

A part of the 'Google for India' vision, Asus Chromebit, the world's smallest Chrome OS device, was launched in January this year at Rs 7,999, providing a Chromebook like experience to desktop users. A part of its Internet outreach program, Google is offering internet-enabled motorcycles to women in rural India. Under the initiative, it has connected 1,000 villages and plans to connect over 3,00,000 more villages in the next three years.

On September 27, 2016, Google celebrated its 18th anniversary. On the occasion, the internet giant announced many new products for India, such as Google Accelerator, YouTube Go app, the Allo instant messaging app being offered with Google Assistant in Hindi and an enhanced version of Google Play for 2G connected devices.

Despite suffering from low internet penetration, India has already surpassed the U.S. in internet users, says Mary Meeker, the Wall Street securities analyst. "At 277 million, India only has fewer internet users than China and the potential for growth is vast. This growth will happen in rural areas where penetration is particularly low," according to Meeker.

"We learned the issues Indians may have with connectivity and data constraints can be universal. We dreamed up Maps Offline for India, but people in the United States and Europe are finding it just as useful. Simply put, solving for India is inspiring new Google innovations," says Sundar Pichai. ■

The writer is a member of the staff.

A Solution for Climate Change

Ancient water tanks are being used innovatively to combat water scarcity problems in Sri Lanka. This is one way to create more water resources.

By Sarah B. Haider

Climate change has become a subject of immense concern for everyone these days. Due to an increase in the temperature of the earth, people, communities and even entire countries have been adversely affected. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the current trend of climate change is continuing at an alarming rate – something that has not been witnessed during the past 1,300 years.

Like many countries, Sri Lanka has also been affected by extreme temperatures, leading to heavy rainfall in the southwestern regions during the monsoon season, while

the northeast and north central regions experience severe drought during the paddy and other field crop growing seasons. Consequently, the drought-ridden regions face extreme water scarcity – and more problems associated with water shortage.

Due to uncertain climate conditions and water shortage and variability, the management of water for agriculture and, in other words, the capacity to produce enough food, becomes a big challenge. An example is the Puhudiwula village, situated in the Anuradhapura district of Sri Lanka, where shortage of water has been a long-standing problem.

To deal with the problem, the villagers had started digging deep wells in search of water, to use for drinking as well as irrigating their lands for crop production. Although the wells provided a short-term solution to the

villagers, the water obtained through this means was contaminated, thus, leading to Chronic Kidney Disease of Unknown Etiology (CKDu) which many villagers suffered from over the years. As a result, water from these wells was declared unfit for consumption and the wells abandoned.

The villagers then resorted to a solution which their ancestors proposed – the preservation of ancient tank cascade irrigation systems. Some of the village tanks were constructed more than 2,000 years ago and, at present, an estimated 18,387 village tanks (both running and non-operational) exist in Sri Lanka.

According to the International Irrigation Management Institute of Sri Lanka (IWMI), a tank cascade, or a chain of tanks, is a series of small reservoirs that are constructed at successive locations on a single





common watercourse. These tanks look like ponds and lakes and are capable of storing and conveying water. The tanks can restore and reuse the drainage return flow which is recycled within the system.

Keeping in view the historical significance of these village tanks, Herath Manthrilake, head of the research program at the International Water Management Institute in Sri Lanka, says that the tanks represent a new kind of hydrological civilization. This is because traditionally, the tanks were not constructed for the purpose of irrigation alone. They served various purposes. For instance, some of the tanks were built in the forests away from the village to provide water to animals and prevent them from invading the cultivation areas in search of water. Another type of tank was the erosion control tank which was so designed that any silt from the upper slopes was deposited in it, before entering the main water storage tank.

Similarly, Ranjith Punyawardena, chief climatologist at the Department of Agriculture says that in the old days, these village tanks were built to deal with the variability of the natural climate. He further said that if the tanks were not there, it would have been impossible to carry out cultivation in the dry zone because the average rainfall that this zone is less than 1750

Though the cascade irrigation system has served human civilization from ancient times, the way it is helping villages of Sri Lanka to deal with and adapt to climate change today is remarkable.

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Considering the ongoing problems caused by climate change in the country, the Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment of Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the United Nations, received a grant from the Green Climate Fund, so that communities can develop ways to adapt to the impact of climate change. In the coming years, people dwelling in the dry zone will be able to directly benefit from the grant. In this way, the funds will be utilized for the restoration of the tanks in several villages of the dry zone, including the village adjacent to Puhudiwula.

Researchers suggest that the restoration of these village tanks would greatly assist in confronting water scarcity in the region, as one pond or tank would be able to irrigate a field at least three times a year. As a result, food security will be ensured in the

dry zone which is highly susceptible to the impact of climate change.

Moreover, as more tanks will become functional, the quality of ground water will also be improved and villagers will not be required to dig deeper wells, thus, reducing the chances of obtaining contaminated water and the consequent development of kidney diseases.

Though the cascade irrigation system has served human civilization from ancient times, the way it is helping villages of Sri Lanka to deal with and adapt to climate change today is remarkable. In fact, the restoration of the tanks is seen as a revolutionary approach to water management in the country. **S**

The writer is a freelance journalist with focus on human rights, conflict, climate change and cross-cultural narratives.

Elusive Economy

Nepal needs a serious overhaul to restore its economy and to put the country on rails on a long-term basis.

By Zeeshan Ahmed

Nepal is a country associated with the Mount Everest, beautiful landscapes and stunning valleys. It went through a terrible period during 2015 with two earthquakes. The result was a loss of over 8,000 lives and the destruction of almost 800,000 houses and buildings (only 17,000 were insured). This chain of events also resulted in a 135 day period where there was a disruption with India, between the months of September and January.

Nepal is considered to be one of the world's least developed countries with a gross domestic product of \$22 billion and with the rise of a minute 0.7% growth when compared with the previous year, one cannot argue otherwise. All this does paint a very bleak picture with not much space for positivity. But the country's economy has still not fallen.

According to the Nepal Bankers' Association, there has been an average jump among Nepal's banks in net profits. The jump is of 25%, when comparing the current fiscal year with the previous one. Another important figure is an increase of 26.1% in foreign exchange reserves, amounting to 1,039 billion rupees. This amount is sufficient to pay for goods and services imports for 18 months. This is indeed quite fascinating, as any commentator would consider the backdrop a precedent for more issues. But there is something else at work, which is also considered as the most important factor. Remittances. The driving force behind the stability is considered by many to be the secret pushing the



economy ahead.

But how exactly is that happening? To understand that, one must go back to 2015, when the earthquake hit Nepal. Many people from Nepal, who had been working in Malaysia and the countries of the Middle East, sent large portions of their salaries back home to help their families survive and rebuild. According to a report by the World Bank, the remittances were boosted to 11% year-on-year. Last year, the remittances rose to 20.9% annually, before slowing in 2016. The remittances have kept the economy afloat. The slowing down has occurred in part because of fewer immigrant workers from Nepal.

According to Damir Cosic, Nepal's World Bank country economist, the remittances have worked as a cushion to the shock and are indeed the brighter side of the country's economy. The figures, themselves, affirm the statement. According to the central



Though Nepal's economy has somehow survived, a lot is still left to be done.

bank, remittances have amounted to 650 billion rupees, from an estimated 4.5 million Nepalis working outside the country (not counting India, where a number of Nepalis work). The number accounts for 29.6% of the country's GDP, which speaks for itself. These, however, are the remittances sent through formal channels. An estimated 3 million Nepalis work in India, and send remittances through other media. The Indian rupees sent do not always make it to Nepal's banking network. These remittances range between \$2 billion and \$3 billion annually.

Though Nepal's economy has somehow survived, a lot is still left to be done. The country lost its position as South Asia's 3rd most competitive economy, according to the Global Competitiveness Report 2016-17 published by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The country ranked 98th among 138 economies in the world, with 3.87 points, as per the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI). Leading the table in South Asia are India at 31, followed by Sri Lanka at 71 and Bhutan at 97. A report indicated that Nepal has the best macroeconomic environment in the South Asian region. Despite all this, it still needs to emerge in other important areas and the most

integral is its infrastructure.

Reportedly, this infrastructure has become stagnant. Its progress has stopped and affects the economy on different fronts. Despite calamities, Nepal's economy has managed to stay afloat. But for how long will it be able to sustain? After all, the country is marred by other issues too. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the infrastructure has stopped evolving. The government must realize that while remittances have kept the economy up for now, a lot more still needs to be put in order. The remittances could be made use of and utilized in the best possible way only when the current system is overhauled and adjusted. Nepal's best economic partner is considered to be India, so perhaps it could build further on that? The opportunities are there but a lot depends on the administration.

Would the country be able to create an infrastructure suitable for not just the remittances but also other factors? This remains to be seen. Things might seem a bit stable but if they are not taken care of, they could push Nepal further down to a point from where it would be difficult to get out. ■

The writer likes to explore subjects of historical importance.

The Travails of Indian Society

What can better describe South Asia other than its deep-seated curses such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, gender discrimination and backwardness? Particularly in India, such long-standing social evils have ratcheted up beyond the point of no return. Despite achieving incomparable socio-economic growth and development through sustainable reforms and countless initiatives, the country has not achieved the kind of growth it was expected to achieve since its independence from the British in 1947.

Being a home of architectural wonders, as well as a land of perpetual human disgrace, India, over the period, has emerged as the country of first boys, according to Amartya Sen, which represents those who outperform the rest, pursuing quality education and professional development. In contrast, those who are left behind in the academic race are doomed to be reduced into lifetime losers who struggle throughout their life to move up on the social ladder.

Amartya Sen, a 1998 Nobel laureate in economics, is among the leading thinkers of the world. Hailing from India, he is currently the Lamont Professor of ethics and economics at Harvard University. A Masters from Trinity College, Cambridge, Amartya Sen has served as President of the International Economic Association, the American Economic Association, the Economic Society and the Indian Economic Association.

In his latest book, "The Country of First Boys," Sen defines the root causes behind India's acute poverty crisis and its ancillary products that have been hurting the world's second most populous

country since its existence. According to Sen, the book depicts his intellectual journey through the past and present with reference to the history of India and the demands the country has to meet to have a prosperous future.

Divided into 13 chapters, the book is a collection of essays, most of which were published from 2000 to 2010 in the Little Magazine, an India-based international journal.

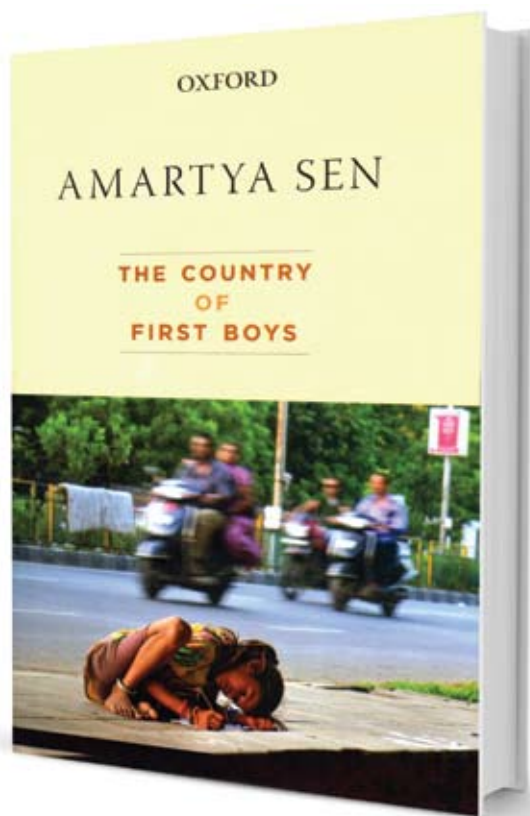
'The Country of First Boys' is the eighth chapter of the book, which describes India's poor state of education and its inequitable distribution across the country. Exposing the deficiencies of primary and secondary level education, the writer looks into the mystery of

Book Title:	The Country of First Boys
Author:	Amartya Sen
Publisher:	Oxford University Press
ISBN:	978-0-19-940364-6
Pages:	298

the country's educational system that receives international acclaim because of its ability to produce accomplished students and well-trained experts. On the other hand, a third of the people in India cannot even read or write.

The leading reason behind the dichotomy lies in the fact that Indian education is heavily obsessed with the first boys not only in the classroom, but also in society and in the making of public policy, according to Amartya Sen. He believes the 'first boy syndrome' has been severely afflicting the country, wherein only the educationally advantaged go to schools, colleges, universities and to the recognised technological institutions through a system working furtively to make sure that only chosen people can get privileged education and the educationally-deprived last boys, particularly the last girls, cannot go to a decent school or to any school at all.

Sen believes the Indian educational system has not only suffered from the lack of funding available, but it is a weak institutional structure of primary schools that is unable to provide equal opportunity to children from less privileged backgrounds. Among the other major obstacles are teacher absenteeism,



breakdown of the system of school inspection, lack of parental involvement in the education process, an increasing dependency on private tuition, as well as acute undernourishment among the children that inhibits their ability to learn and eventually leads to low school attendance.

In chapter 4 titled 'Hunger: Old Torments and New Blunders,' the writer talks about the long-term impact of the neglect of women's health that results in such critical forms later as maternal undernourishment, foetal deprivation in the uterus, low birth weight, under-nutrition and ill-health of children and ultimately, morbidity of adults. The writer thinks maternal undernourishment is linked with gender bias regarding women, while the price of such gender-based discrimination is heavily paid by men in the long run.

As per the writer, though India has achieved famine prevention since its independence, but it has miserably failed to manage the challenge of hunger and its record in this regard is worse than Sub-Saharan Africa.

The smugness based on ignorance tends to be the main reason behind endemic undernourishment and inherited hunger in India, which

has piled up the immense food mountains and also happens to be the world's largest conglomeration of an undernourished population. "We are evidently determined to maintain, at heavy cost, India's unenviable combination of having the worst of undernourishment in the world and the largest unused food stocks on the globe," says Amartya Sen.

"In 1998, stocks of food grains in the central government's reserves were around 18 million tonnes - close to the official 'buffer stock' norms needed to take care of possible fluctuation of production and supply. Since then, its climbed and climbed, firmly surpassing the 50 million mark and it appears, according to recent reports that our stocks now amount to 62 million tonnes. To take Jean Drèze's graphic description, if all the stacks of grain were laid up in a row, this would stretch more than a million kilometres, taking us to the moon and back. Since Jean Drèze wrote this last year (2000), the stocks have risen some more, and the stacks would now take us to the moon and back to the earth, and then back to the moon again." (Chapter 4: 'Hunger: Old Torments and New Blunders,' page no. 93)

In chapter 5, Amartya Sen highlights the importance of press freedom and emphasizes the significance of free media in the process of economic development. He underscores the need to expand the media's reach across the country, while he suggests that measures must be taken by the state to secure effective functioning of the media. He believes the freedom of the press deserves the strongest support, but the press has obligations too.

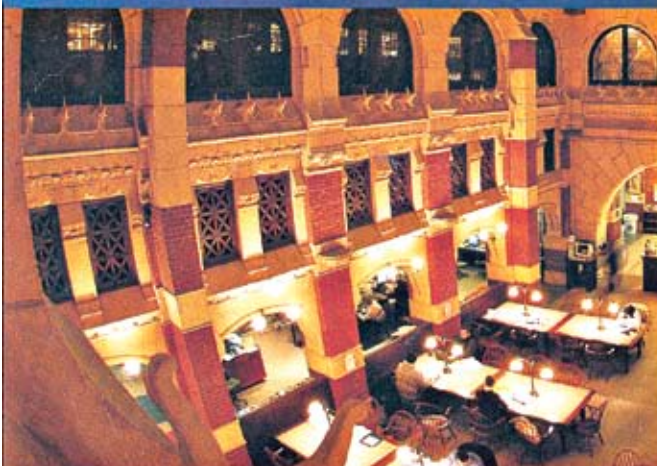
The book touches on the importance of teaching Sanskrit and ancient Hindu history to the young generation. It also sheds light on the revival of Nalanda University, an old higher education institution of the world and explores why it is important to consult Rabindranath Tagore to be familiar with the perils of nationalism, religious sectarianism and communalism.

Overall, the book delves into centuries-long, unresolved mysteries that revolve around poverty, injustice, identity crisis, war, social deprivation, illiteracy, inequality, gender politics, etc., preventing Indian society from becoming a truly civilized part of the world. ■

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