NEIGHBOUR
Genocide in Azerbaijan

November 2018

SOUTHASIA

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The Socio-Economic and Political Review

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Emerging Policy

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Water Water, Nowhere!

Though an agricultural country, Pakistan is fast moving towards water scarcity unless urgent solutions are found to the problem.

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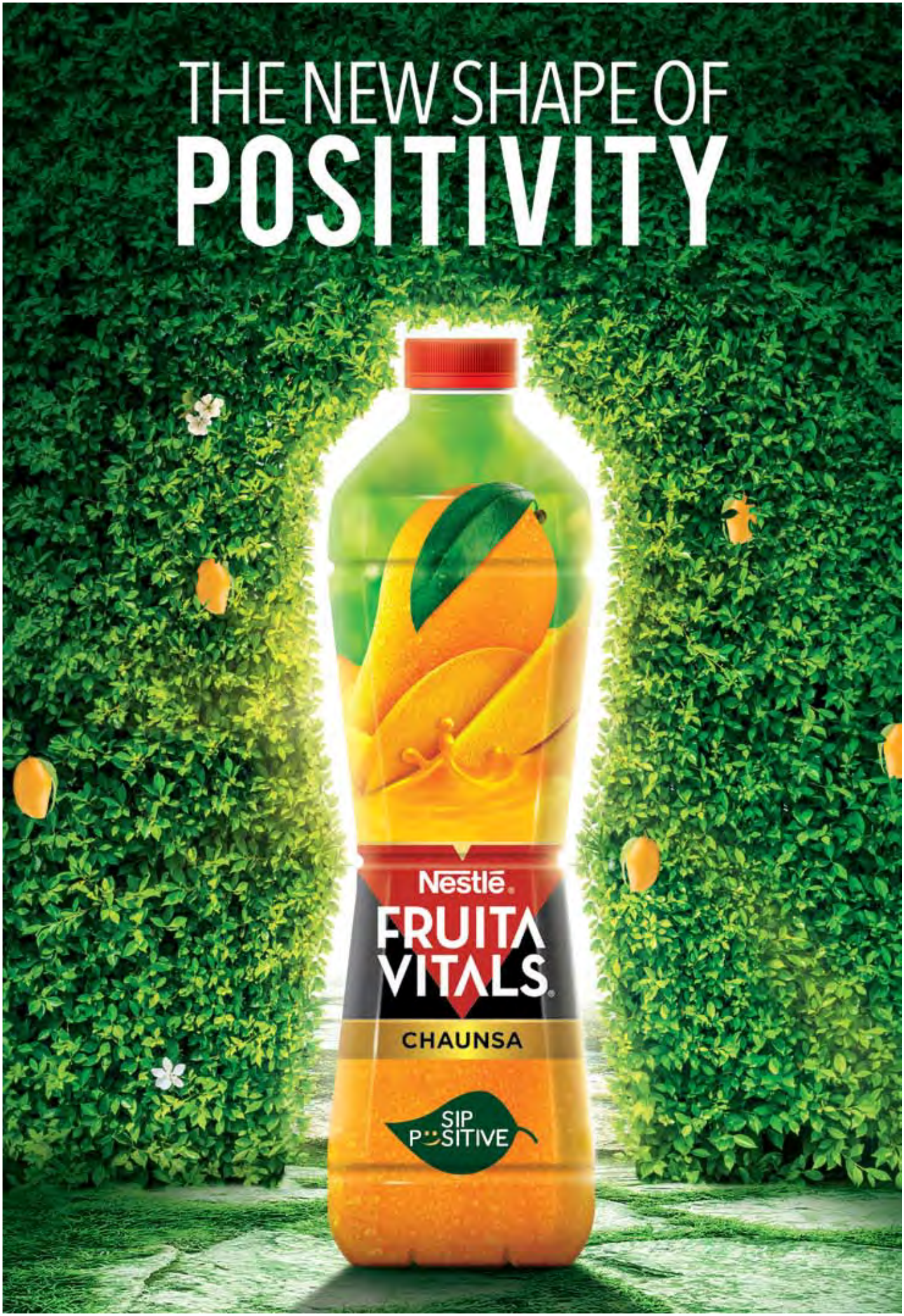
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NOVEMBER 2018 VOL.22 ISSUE 11

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EDITOR
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Faizan Usmani
Syeda Areeba Rasheed

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
S. G. Jilanee

CONTRIBUTORS
Aadil Nakhoda – Abdul Basit – Aisha Khan
Aneela Shahzad – Atif Shamim Syed – Dr M. Asif
Dr Murad Ali – Dr. Imran Khalid – Dr. Mansoor Akbar Kundi
Ifrah Shoukat – Imran Jan – Javed Qazi – Khalid Hussain Mir
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Wajahat Ali Malik – Zafar Mahmood

GRAPHICS & LAYOUT
Kamran Ghulam Nabi
Haroon Rasheed
Riaz Masih

BUSINESS UNIT HEAD
Syed Ovais Akhtar

MARKETING & SALES
Shiraz Khanji

CIRCULATION & COORDINATOR
Aqam-ud-Din Khan

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

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When Justice Prevailed

Aasia Bibi, a Christian citizen of Pakistan has been acquitted of the charges of blasphemy after a nearly decade-long court battle. This is a welcome move in many ways. First, the Supreme Court verdict will go a long way in clearing the perception in the international community about the vulnerable state of religious minorities in Pakistan. In terms of the Blasphemy Law, in particular, the world has been sceptical about the correct imposition of the very law that seems to target mostly those who are in a minority and have poor economic backgrounds. This means they have limited means and evidence at their disposal to defend and prove themselves innocent against any blasphemy charges that are brought against them. These charges, if proven true, can translate into a death sentence.

The complainants in Aasia Bibi's case had quarrelled with her and could be reasonably suspected of having dragged her to the court out of malice. The fact that a formal police complaint was lodged at least five days after the incident created further suspicions that evidence could have been fabricated. If that were not enough, some glaring disparities emerged in the depositions of different witnesses about the specifics of what happened when, where, and in whose presence? Pakistan's criminal justice system puts the burden of proof on the prosecution. The slightest deficiency anywhere along the process translates into a benefit for the defendant. But, for eight years, this did not happen in Aasia Bibi's case.

As is clear from the Supreme Court judgement, the case ought not to have travelled beyond the trial court stage in Sheikhupura district back in 2010. But it did, because it was no ordinary case. And because it was no ordinary case, the ruling is likely to go down in the annals of Pakistan's law as a historic judgement. Observers of Pakistan's legal scene also point out that the blasphemy charges against Aasia Bibi were not unique.

Though Pakistan's blasphemy law is referred to as a sword hanging over the heads of the minority population, the release of Aasia Bibi is a welcome development. Other than improving the tarnished image of the country, the verdict also proves the neutrality of its court system that defies the looming pressure exerted by the overwhelming majority only to protect the most vulnerable and goes the extra mile to maintain the writ of the state. The acquittal of a Christian woman, a mother of four, who had been on the death row since 2010 owing to blasphemy accusations, has many other aspects as well. In fact, it was not a matter related to the majority versus minority equation. It was a dual between the right and the wrong and, luckily, justice prevailed in the end, freeing Aasia from grave injustice and saving her from the noose of death.

Setting aside an earlier court judgment can be just another routine matter for the court, but the frequency of such judgment reversals calls into question the way the country's justice system works. The interpretation and effective imposition of the law cannot be left to the discretion of a few judges who defend their decisions in the public but think twice about their own decisions when they are challenged by the convict. The on-going trend when previous judgments are annulled by a court on the basis of insufficient reasoning is quite alarming and needs urgent review. No doubt, there is always room for difference of opinion and honourable judges cannot be made an exception. However, the point to consider is how such differences can be ironed out in the judiciary.

What the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mian Saqib Nisar said later, sums up the whole situation. He said nobody can tolerate blasphemy of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and "we are ready to sacrifice our lives for him. But, how can we punish someone when there is no ground to build a case against them."

Besides acknowledging the Supreme Court's brave decision, it is also important to recognise the positive role of the government that acted sensibly after the verdict came. Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed his firm resolve in the matter. Despite having much less experience in handling such situations, his government resorted to preventive measures as soon as the verdict was announced in order to maintain peace and communal harmony. Despite all odds, the government has clearly reaffirmed its policy to keep the country moving forward on the path of national development.

Syed Jawaid Iqbal
Editor in Chief

Role of DFIs

This is with reference to last month's cover story on the World Bank and its contribution to social sector development and financing in Pakistan. Honestly speaking, there is no denying the role of the development finance institutions (DFIs) in the socio-economic progress of the country. However, it has become quite a normal trend to categorically rule out the significance of DFIs and interpret their overall contributions to the country in a negative and derogatory manner. Interestingly, those who don't know anything about economics and finance tend to make every effort to speak against the IMF, the World Bank, etc. but only for point scoring at the cost of misleading public opinion. One should not forget the fact that the World Bank and the rest of the DFIs have been providing capacity-building and technical assistance grants to Pakistan since its creation. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge the DFIs' long-term role in serving and strengthening the various sectors of the country, instead of criticising them just for the sake of it.

Riaz Ahmed,
Gujranwala, Pakistan.

Publication Par Excellence

I am a regular reader of SouthAsia, subscribing to the magazine for more than five-years. This is the first time I am writing to you to appreciate your overall efforts and particularly to acknowledge the notable change in the magazine's layout and placement of more cover story articles. In the past, the cover story used to have a limited number of articles, but for the last few months it has more elaborate and comprehensive pieces, comprising more write-ups and intriguing opinion pieces that discuss the subject from different directions. I think you must keep it up and include more pieces in your main stories for a detailed review of the matter under discussion. SouthAsia has emerged as a quality journal, imparting valuable information and intriguing views on a range of national, regional and international issues. For this, your editorial staff deserves appreciation.

Dr. Syed Mubeen Murtaza,
Karachi, Pakistan.

Murder in the Consulate

The alleged mysterious murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul is shocking news. To make things more mysterious, Saudi Arabia took more than two weeks to admit Khashoggi's killing but this delay turned the whole story into a thriller. The incident looked more like a planned assassination and pointed to the duplicitous diplomatic and political manoeuvres that the most affluent countries brazenly use to serve their insidious agenda. However, the killing of a veteran journalist will have long term consequences. It also raises many questions about the way some people are dealt with. In this context, Saudi government needs

to introspect its political approach and must clear its position regarding the developments concerning Jamal Kashoggi.

Nafees Alam,
Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Breakthrough by Pakistani Scientist

According to a recent news report, a Pakistani scientist Muhammad Waqas Usman Hingoro has made a major breakthrough in the field of cancer biology. During his research study, Hingoro discovered the unanimous

cancer-killing mechanism that can effectively be used to cure a wide-range of cancers. Working along with a team of international cancer biologists at the City University of Hong Kong, the Karachi-based scientist unleashed the ability of a specific component of red blood cells to carry drug delivery nanoparticles to the affected parts of the human body. This is a major achievement and must be highlighted by the media to portray a positive image of the country. This will also help the international community know about the role and contribution of overseas Pakistanis in the world of science and knowledge.

Salma Iqbal,
Peshawar, Pakistan.

Afghanistan Stalemate

Afghanistan is mostly projected in the world media for its never-ending war. However, there is another downside of the war-torn country that merits the world's attention. Many parts of Afghanistan have been in a grip of drought for more than two years, while the number of internally displaced persons has increased by 1.2 million

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Letter of the Month SOUTHASIA

Forceful Inclusion of Women

This is with reference to the article 'Inclusion for Change' by Irshad Ahmed, published in SouthAsia in its October, 2018 issue. In his article, the writer recommends 'forceful measures' to ensure women's inclusion in the apex judiciary, the parliament and in other key areas. I am in total disagreement with the suggestion. Today's woman is equally qualified and capable and she does not need any force to push her into the social, economic and political discourse, though is still dominated by men. The modern world is ruled by meritocracy and competitiveness where both men and women are supposed to work equal vigour to make a place for themselves, instead of looking for outside help to move them up through reforms, constitutional amendments or other forceful means, as suggested by the writer. Those women who have yet to make inroads into the parliament, judiciary and other areas, must be self-reliant and strive for the best, but on their own.

Bushra Fayyaz,
Islamabad, Pakistan.

owing to the perpetual war between the government and the Taliban. Truly a humanitarian crisis, the drought is adding more misery to the poverty-stricken people of this unfortunate country that has virtually been downgraded to a well-trodden battlefield where big powers play war games. It has become obvious that no side has any interest in bringing in peace and stability to the region. The misfortunes continue while the present and the future of the country is at stake.

Abdul Ghani,
Kandahar, Afghanistan.

"India will be taught a lesson if needed."
Pervez Musharraf, former President of Pakistan

"We are disappointed that despite our earnest efforts, we have not been able to conduct the Rohingya repatriations in a peaceful and sustainable manner."
Sheikh Hasina Wajid, Prime Minister of Bangladesh

"The Indian intelligence agency RAW is trying to kill me."
Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka

"The will of the Maldivian people has spoken and the message is loud and clear."
Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, President-elect of the Maldives

"In a democracy, we need to present ourselves with facts."
K.P. Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of Nepal

"No deal is better than a bad deal."
Theresa May, UK Prime Minister

"All my life I have come across small men occupying big offices who do not have the vision to see the larger picture."
Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan

"We have never eyed someone else's territory maliciously. This in itself is our commitment and dedication to peace."
Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

"U.S. President Donald Trump's strategy to win the war against the Taliban is working."
Ashraf Ghani, President of Afghanistan

"The highest probable risk to Bhutan's development that I foresee is corruption."
Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, King of Bhutan

"Saudi Arabia and its King would not last two weeks in power without American military support."
Donald Trump, U.S. President

"The future of India's aerospace industry has been destroyed by snatching Rafale from the Indian state-owned company and gifting it to Anil Ambani."
Rahul Gandhi, Indian politician

PAKISTAN

Digital City

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is building the "Pakistan Digital City Haripur" on the outskirts of Islamabad. Located behind the Margalla Hills in Haripur District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it will be the country's first ever digital city. An initiative of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board, the city will provide dedicated space for a diverse range of business and technology firms, offering them state-of-the-art ICT infrastructure with seamless internet connectivity and scores of modern, high-tech facilities. A preliminary survey is being carried out and construction will begin by the end of the year.

PAKISTAN

Housing Project

The Pakistan government has launched the 'Naya Pakistan Housing Programme' which is aimed at building about five million houses across the country during the next five years. Equipped with basic facilities, the houses will be provided to underprivileged people at affordable cost payable in easy instalments. In keeping with the principle of public-private partnership, the government's initiative will stimulate about 40 related industries and will also attract local and foreign investment. Initially, the low-cost housing programme is being launched in seven cities - Quetta, Sukkur, Islamabad, Gilgit, Faisalabad, Muzaffarabad and Dera Ismail Khan.

INDIA

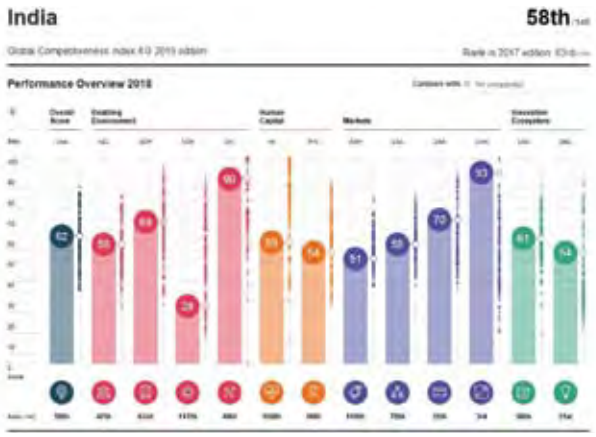
UN Recognition

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been awarded the UN's 'Champions of the Earth' award. Accorded on the recommendations of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Award recognises the achievements of Modi's countrywide 'Beat Plastic Pollution' initiative, which is aimed at eliminating all types of single-use plastic in India by 2022. Modi was also admired by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for launching the 'International Solar Alliance (SCA)' programme. The SCA is a global partnership which will reduce the world's dependence on fossil fuels by expanding solar energy development.

INDIA

Growing Economy

The World Economic Forum has ranked India 58th out of 140 countries in the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) for 2018. Securing a score of 62.0, India's latest ranking is termed as the largest gain among all G20 economies in the latest Global Competitiveness Report. The report also describes India as the main driving force in South Asia as it leads the region in all other areas of competitiveness, except for education, health and skills. The Indian economy has been showing consistent growth and is among the top performers in the "upper and lower middle-income brackets," says the GCI-2018 Report.



BANGLADESH

Healthy Cows

A team of veterinary scientists in Bangladesh has developed a new trivalent vaccine to prevent the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), an infectious cattle virus. The new vaccine will protect cattle against the three common types of FMD viruses. The research study was funded by the Bangladesh Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project. Many infectious cattle diseases are considered to be the main obstacles in the development of the country's livestock and dairy sectors. The total number of FMD susceptible domestic animals in the country are about 55.13 million, while the annual loss owing to FMD prevalence is estimated at around $125 million. S

SRI LANKA

Suspension Bridge

The Sri Lankan government has started the construction of the 'New Kelani Bridge,' the country's first suspension bridge. The 3-kilometre long bridge will solve traffic congestion in Colombo and in surrounding areas. Linking to the Colombo Katunayake Expressway, the six-lane bridge will run over the Kelani River, the country's fourth-longest river which stretches from the Sri Pada Mountain Range to Colombo. The bridge is being constructed in two phases and will be completed in 2020. The project is funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. S

THE MALDIVES

Underwater Villa

The world's first underwater villa 'The Muraka' is all set to open in Conrad Maldives Rangali Island. Meaning 'coral' in the Maldives' language Dhivehi, The Muraka is a $15 million two-storey hotel villa. It has one storey over water and one 16.4 feet below the surface. The upper storey has a gymnasium, a bedroom, a kitchen, a bar, a deck and a servant's room. A staircase leads to the underwater suite that has a king-size bed and a living area with a washroom. A night's cost of the underwater villa is $50,000. S

BHUTAN

Better Healthcare

The Government of Bhutan has launched a 5-year programme to improve the country's ailing healthcare sector. Started with the help of a $20.5m grant by the Asian Development Bank, the initiative will help Bhutan meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in terms of assuring universal health coverage for its people. The programme will upgrade existing health centres with modern equipment and will establish satellite clinics on the outskirts of urban areas. Bhutan's healthcare system witnessed a series of reform attempts throughout the 1990s to 2000s, resulting in an increased rate of life expectancy at birth. S

'Withdrawing the 18th Amendment will cause very serious consequences.'

- Senator Mian Raza Rabbani

The 18th Amendment came into existence after a long struggle which grew after the smaller provinces in Pakistan realized their sense of deprivation and began to feel that they had no control on their resources. This was stated by Senator Mian Raza Rabbani, former Chairman, Senate of Pakistan, while addressing a Talk on the subject of "18th Amendment: Applause & Criticism," in Karachi. The Talk was organized by Society for Global Moderation (SGM), a private sector Think Tank, and was held at the CMC offices.

Senator Raza Rabbani said any move aimed at withdrawing provincial autonomy as guaranteed in the 18th Amendment for the Constitution will cause very serious consequences to the Federation.

"The Constitution is an organic document and the 18th Amendment is not the last word itself. If you have the numbers in parliament and you think it needs to be improved further, you must do it, but anything about its rollback or withdrawing autonomy given to the provinces through it, will cause very, very serious consequences for the country," Senator Raza Rabbani said.

He drew attention to new clause (3A) in the Constitution which was inserted while getting the 18th Amendment passed. He said the clause ensured that a new National Finance Commission (NFC) award could not be lesser than the one it preceded.

"This was done with a deliberate intent", he said, adding that the provinces` share in the NFC award was 56 per cent in the past, which was drastically reduced to 46%.

"You may go through the history of the NFC... you would find it was awarded only during the democratic governments with delays and interruptions," he said, adding that today the problem remained the same. The Federation and other state institutions felt that their pie was getting reduced, which was why they were making delays in announcing the new NFC award.

Senator Rabbani said that a complete devolution of education and health sectors to the provinces had brought huge pressures from various quarters. Regarding curricula, he said, from grade nine and upwards the question of East Pakistan`s separation was dealt with in a single paragraph.

"There is a chapter in a textbook in which a chapter spells out advantages and disadvantages of dictatorship and democracy. It gives 11 advantages of dictatorship and eight of a democratic order. These books glorify jihad and the wars we have fought against India. All this reflects a certain mindset."

Sen. Rabbani said the 18th Amendment had enhanced provincial harmony and ended the decades-old Punjab bashing. He said the provincial autonomy given in the Constitution was useful in most respects as it subdued the sense of deprivation among smaller provinces.

He rubbished the claims made by certain quarters that the 18th Amendment was passed in haste and without proper preparedness, saying the committee for the amendment comprised 27 members representing every political party in parliament. It met for nine months and went through the Constitution "para by para and article by article."

He said the committee received 988 proposals from various quarters and went through each one. Every party gave its suggestions, which were duly looked into. And finally, the historic dossier was unanimously passed.

"Someone said this amendment was gravely against Pakistan, while another said the 18th Amendment is more dangerous than Mujib`s six points. And there are people too who still feel it is too little and too late."

He said Pakistan`s civil-military bureaucracy had decided after the death of the Quaid-i-Azam that the levers of power should not go away from their grip. The senator said the 18th Amendment was the fruit of a long struggle that spawned from the smaller provinces` sense of deprivation.

He said even the foundation of Pakistan started with the demand for provincial autonomy and four out of the Quaid`s 14 points catered to provincial autonomy.

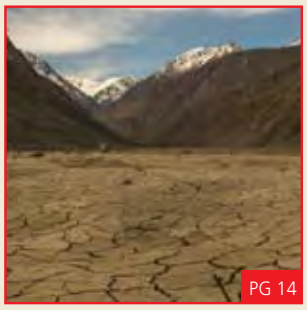
He said civilians were not the only corrupt ones and there should be across-the-board accountability and everyone should face one law and one court.

The senator said he had already proposed for a federal accountability commission, in which representation should be given to politicians, civil-military bureaucracy and the judiciary.

Earlier, Syed Jawaid Iqbal, Chairman, SGM introduced the Guest Speaker. After Sen. Rabbani's presentation, Jwaid Iqbal also conducted the Question Answer session. S

SOUTHASIA
NOVEMBER 2018

COVER STORY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WATER WATER, NOWHERE!

There needs to be serious re-thinking to restructure Pakistan's water economy.

By Zafar Mahmood

PG 15

WHY KALABAGH?

Pakistan needs to start building the Kalabagh Dam on a war footing before the country runs dry.

By Syed Jawaid Iqbal

PG 18

FROM BUCKET TO DAM

Pakistan's water woes are catapulting into a prolonged catastrophe and the nation direly needs new dams.

By Sarwar Bari

PG 18

PRACTICABLE SOLUTIONS

Water has become a politicised issue in Pakistan but now decisions must be taken that will positively impact the country's future.

By Aisha Khan

PG 20

GOVERNING THE WATER ECONOMY

Pakistan is one of the world's worst water-stressed countries. There may not be enough water left in the next decade for the country's survival.

By Dr Murad Ali

PG 21

THE RIP-OFF!

The people of Karachi face a perennial water crisis. The tanker mafia simply rips off the large urban population.

By S. M. Hali

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THE GROUND WATER GAP

Despite its signifance, a balanced system has not been devised to utilize groundwater.

By Taimoor Akhtar and Muhammad Fraz Ismail

PG 24

HANDLING THE WATER CRISIS

National water management can be handled without much investment.

By Ifrah Shoukat

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PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Water scarcity gives rise to multi-dimensional problems that need to be addressed without any loss of time.

By Dr M. Asif

WATER WATER, NOWHERE!

There needs to be serious re-thinking to restructure Pakistan's water economy so that it can play a crucial role in utilizing the country's agricultural potential.

By Zafar Mahmood

Ineffective and lackluster governance of the water economy is the root cause of our problem. We start with examination of the water scarcity issue in comparison with average productivity of water. A cubic meter of water in Pakistan produces 0.13 kg of agricultural produce. In comparison, the same quantity of water produces 0.39 kg in India. In China the produce is 0.28 kg and in the US, it is 1.56 kg. Other countries like Canada produce even more. The reason for better produce is use of modern irrigation techniques. 90% of water in Pakistan is used in agriculture. We can easily save 50% of this quantity. But our farmers are not inclined to leave the age-old flood irrigation practice.

It is common knowledge that laser leveling of agricultural land would save water by up to 50%. Investment in sprinkler systems and drip irrigation would save more water. Despite efforts of the provincial governments, the adoption of such techniques is not popular among farmers. The Agriculture University in Tandojam has provided a simple answer. The total cost of cultivating one acre of wheat is approximately Rs.25,000. This includes all expenditures - labour cost of sowing and harvesting, cost of seed, fertilizer and water, etc. If the farmer is inclined to use water efficiently, the additional cost of laser land leveling would be Rs.1,000 per acre. A drip or sprinkler irrigation system would cost much more.

Surprisingly, in Pakistan the average cost of water is only Rs.55 per acre. It would not be rational for the farmer to invest a much larger sum to save a percentage of water cost i.e. Rs.55. It is safely concluded that the price mechanism is not used for creating a balance between supply and demand in our water economy.

Similar is the issue of saving water from percolation. On an average, 100 million acre feet water enters the canal system. 40 million acre feet does not reach the farm gate. 5 million acre feet evaporates in the air and 35 million acre feet is lost to percolation. Out of 35 million acre feet, 15 million acre feet percolates in the sweet water zone and becomes a future asset. 20 million acre feet are lost to brackish subsoil water. Out of this, (20 million acre feet) half the quantity can be saved by lining of canals. However, the provincial governments have never shown any inclination to invest in such projects. The federal government is also reluctant to finance such initiatives which do not promise financial returns.

Another fault line is the country's taxation policy. Somehow, income from agriculture and industry is treated differently. A factory, however small, is subjected to all kinds of taxation but income from an agricultural farm may be in millions but it is not considered taxable. This creates an anomaly. With a share of 20% in the national income, agriculture as a segment of the economy contributes only 1% to the revenue stream. The investment by government in development of water resources may result in increase of agricultural produce, but increased productivity would not result in generating income for the government.

To further compound the problem, Pakistan has one of the lowest tax to GDP ratios. It has very limited fiscal space to invest in projects which do not become revenue-generating assets. We tend to treat water as a free commodity, without a price tag. This is the crux of what ails Pakistan's water economy.

The situation was not always like this. Under British rule, the water economy was established on sound lines. Huge investments were made in irrigation infrastructure. Barrages were constructed. Rivers were diverted into newly constructed canals and an elaborate network was developed to irrigate the uncultivated land. The capital expenditure and maintenance cost of irrigation infrastructure was recovered in full, from end users as water rate (aabiana). The cultivation of uncultivated areas would bring additional revenue as land tax. When the central government of united India advanced a loan to the Bombay Presidency (of which Sindh was a part) in 1923 for construction of the Sukkur Barrage, it was made mandatory for the provincial government to recover the capital expenditure in full.

After independence, recovery of capital expenditure was stopped. The maintenance cost of water reservoirs at Tarbela and Mangla is recovered from electricity consumers. Readers may be surprised to know that the cost of maintenance of huge irrigation

infrastructures, especially in Punjab and Sindh, is partially recovered from the farmers. Approximately, one third of the total cost is billed. Of this, the recovery ratio is approximately 33%. The gap is filled from tax payer's money.

In the absence of a price mechanism to create a balance between supply and demand, the water economy is literally going down the drain. To tackle this fundamental problem, a robust water policy is required with inter-provincial consensus. However, this has been ignored for a long time. In 2015, WAPDA was entrusted with the task to finalize the basic draft. In October and November, 2015, WAPDA organized seminars in Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta and Hyderabad. Water experts, journalists, engineers and economists were invited. A wide range of topics were covered in discussions. Heated debates were witnessed. Provincial governments gave their official point of view on diverse issues which included water storage, water management, efficient use, cropping pattern, flood management, sustainability of Indus Delta, maintenance of irrigation infrastructure and impact of climate change on water resources. Finally, a report was prepared and discussed in a day long session in Islamabad which was presided over by Federal Minister for Water and Power.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the Ministry of Water and Power finally came up with an excellent Water Policy in March, 2018. The approved document provides a framework to move forward. The accompanying Pakistan Water Charter rightly points out the urgency of the situation. It states, "The looming shortage of water in our beloved country has now become a grave threat to our food, energy and water security. Today Pakistan's water economy is in acute danger of running dry. The prevalent water scarcity is inching towards a full blown water crisis and is likely to become an existential threat, unless we act decisively."

In my humble opinion, unless we stop discriminating between incomes from different streams and introduce the self-correcting price mechanism in the water economy, sustained investment in preserving and developing this precious resource cannot be assured.

The writer is a former federal secretary and chairman of the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). He can be reached at zmahmood1952@gmail.com

Why Kalabagh?

Pakistan needs to start building the Kalabagh Dam on a war footing before the country runs dry.

By Syed Jawaid Iqbal

Kalabagh, meaning 'black garden,' is a small town located 20 miles away from Mianwali, a border district between Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Before the creation of Pakistan, the town was known as the 'Black Garden,' because it had many banana orchards which, from a distance, looked like black clouds hovering over the area.

The Kalabagh town has a strategic significance, because this is the point where the Indus River becomes a natural dam. Therefore, in 1953, global experts designated the area as an ideal site for building a dam. It is for this reason that at one point, the Kalabagh Dam was considered even more crucial for Pakistan than the nuclear bomb.

During the rule of Ayub Khan, Pakistan signed the Indus Water Treaty with India. Allowing Pakistan to build the Kalabagh Dam, the treaty literally sold the Ravi, Beas and Sutlej rivers to India for a mere 80 million rupees. Pakistan achieved phenomenal progress

during Ayub Khan's time. To maintain its pace of growth, it needed another large dam ready by 1992. Ayub Khan's lost his government before Kalabagh construction even started. Pakistan broke into two halves during Yahya Khan's rule. When Bhutto came into the saddle, he became engrossed in power politics. General Zia-ul-Haq took power in 1977 and the Afghan War began in 1979. All this combined to halt any progress on the Kalabagh Dam.

To further its agenda of turning Pakistan into a barren land, its neighbouring enemy has tactically nurtured some Pakistani politicians to speak its language. These elements start raising a hue and cry as soon as there is talk about building dams to cater to Pakistan's water woes. However, these anti-Kalabagh propagandists hold their tongues when India builds dams.

Pakistan now has water reserves that can just hold for five more years according to water experts. There is need for immediate measures. Small and large dams must be built across the country, otherwise Pakistan will become another drought-ridden tract like Africa. Not building the Kalabagh Dam can be described as the most grievous betrayal of the people of Pakistan.

It is painful to see that this vital project of national importance has been used by some leaders and political forces as an instrument of mud-slinging. Through insidious slogans it has been driven into the domain of fruitless and counter-productive debates instead of a sane and rational approach at future development. The Kalabagh Dam is a goldmine for Pakistan. The natural flow of the mighty Indus will never stop and the multifarious benefits of water and power from the Kalabagh Dam will be perpetual.

The Indus River passes through the Kalabagh mountain range and plains start right after Kalabagh. This makes it a natural site for a dam. Just by erecting a wall-like structure across the river can turn it into a water reservoir. The estimated construction cost of the Kalabagh Dam would be around USD 8 billion; once the dam is constructed it will save up to USD 3 billion a year, while 3,600 megawatt electricity will be added to the national grid.

Besides resolving nearly 85% load-shedding issues, the dam will generate low-cost energy which will be available at Rs. 2.5 per unit only. This will also irrigate the land in the south of KPK, Punjab, lower Sindh and eastern parts of Balochistan. The area is currently uncultivable owing to acute water scarcity. The Kalabagh Dam will irrigate about 40 lakh acres in Sindh, 22 lakh acres in Punjab, 20 lakh acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and about 16 lakh acres in Balochistan and help Balochistan get rid of its flooding issues for good.

Experts believe the Kalabagh Dam will bring cotton cultivation on an additional 10 million acres, rice on 0.4 million acres while sugarcane and canola crops could also be harvested on 0.2 million acres. The additional yields would contribute Rs. 250 billion to the national GDP.

In Pakistan, canal water irrigation currently produces yields worth Rs. 0.3 million per acre. The Kalabagh Dam will add yields worth another USD 15 billion. This will make Pakistan food sufficient and even increase its food exports; there would be no need for import of different food grains. Also, contrary to the widespread notion that the Kalabagh Dam will flood Nowshera and Mardan cities and a lot of fertile areas will be waterlogged in Sindh, the truth is quite the opposite. Water experts categorically reject any possibility of flooding because of the Kalabagh Dam.

India has already built some 14 dams on Pakistan's rivers and is also planning to build more dams, while Pakistan has not been able to build a single dam. To make things worse, the self-seeking politicians and so-called intellectuals must realise that time is running out and we need to start building the Kalabagh Dam on a war footing before the country becomes dry.

In both Sindh and KPK, the rampant belief that some politicians have spread is that once the Kalabagh Dam is built, both these provinces will become barren tracts and that the Kalabagh Dam is a big saazish (conspiracy) by the Punjab to use the dam for the irrigation of its own lands. The Punjab will only let the water flow to the other provinces to blackmail them. In fact, a leading politician of the KPK, when asked why he was so was vehemently opposed to the Kalabagh Dam, was heard retorting, 'Siyasat bhi tau karni hai.' (it is a good political issue).

Pakistan is supposed to be a champion of democracy and every politician cries hoarse for a political system built on the pillars of democracy. In fact, for quite some time, both Asif Zardari and his son Bilawal Bhutto used to harp on the concept of 'democracy is the best revenge' - a line which was originally enunciated by the late Benazir Bhutto as her response to dictatorship.

When it comes to building the Kalabagh Dam, all the defenders of democracy throw their beliefs on the side and do not realize that democracy needs a country to exist and if there is no country left, where will democracy go?

There is a dire need to redefine Pakistan's national priorities. Buildings dams is in the interest of the country's future existence and should be the foremost national priority. The Chief Justice of Pakistan, at the cost of stepping beyond his jurisdiction, has come forward to initiate a national movement for the building of dams in the interest of Pakistan's future existence. He has done so because no government over the last four decades had realised that Pakistan is fast becoming water-stressed and would soon become barren. It is worth noting here that so far, all the major dams in Pakistan, have been built in Ayub Khan's time. In fact, all dam projects were either undertaken or pushed in the times of military rule and never by a civilian ruler.

The CJP is pursuing the building of Diamer-Bhasha and Mohmand Dams while there is no talk of the Kalabagh Dam. President Musharraf, when he was in power, had started a debate on the Kalabagh Dam. But in the face of political expediency due to the opposition from Sindh and KPK and the fact that he became embroiled in a battle for his own survival, the Kalabagh Dam was forgotten. Had Gen. Musharraf really used his powers as a dictator and had not tried to become a democrat, perhaps the Kalabagh Dam would have been a reality.

Experts say the Diamer-Bhasha and Mohmand Dams would carry a very high price tag and despite the current national movement to collect funds initiated by the CJP, it will not be possible for the country to collect the requisite funds from its own resources. The Kalabagh Dam already has a natural dam location and would be less expensive to build if the project is pursued in right earnest.

Building major dams is crucial for the existence of Pakistan. The situation calls for the holding of a national referendum on the question of whether to build the Kalabagh Dam or not. There are so many experts in all provinces who fully appreciate the natural location of Kalabagh as a dam site that Pakistan has been blessed with. A referendum would serve to remove the dust from the project and expose all the non-truths that have dogged it for so long. Imran Khan is one leader who can do this. After all, if there is a contentious issue and there is no national agreement on it, the test of a real leader or statesman is to show leadership and lead the nation to a solution rather than being 'led' himself. S

The writer is the President and Editor in Chief of SouthAsia. He can be reached at jawaid@southasia.com.pk

From Bucket to Dam

Pakistan's water woes are catapulting into a prolonged catastrophe. The nation direly needs new dams – and also a drastic change in water usage habits.

By Sarwar Bari

Water is life. Ignorance is death. Especially in the age of automation, ignorance is a killer. The higher the ignorance, the greater the likelihood of casualty. We waste water callously, at home and in public, as we believe water will continue to pour. While we still practice flood irrigation, the world has moved on to drip and sprinkler irrigation. Should we continue with this wasteful practice, ten more mega dams will not be enough to fulfil our needs.

Thrift is the only solution. In my neighbourhood in the 1960s most houses, including our household, had hand pumps as we did not have tap water. Neither did we need it. Hand pumped water was clean to drink. We would pump the water as much we needed to for our use. In the winters, freshly pumped water would be warm enough for bathing and in the summers, it was cool enough to beat the sweltering heat of Multan. For emergency use, we would simply fill a bucket. Most houses did not need to have water tanks. Today, most households have water tanks and motor pumps. But we hardly have the water to fill them and if they do, the water is not consumable. You either need to boil it if you have gas supply or buy bottled water if you have lots of money. What a development!

Moreover, the lucky ones who have access to tap water love to waste the water. Their cars are washed every day with running water. Their water taps keep on running while they are brushing their teeth or washing their bodies. Their lawns are irrigated intensely. Also, our manufacturers are yet to learn how to make water-efficient toilets. Isn't it terrible that nearly 95% toilets are found to be leaking across the country? There is an urgent need to improve this too.

Now let's look at the water statistics. Pakistan has the 'world's fourth-highest rate of water use'. This means the amount of water, in cubic meters, being used per unit of GDP is highest in the world. Thanks to our ignorance. As a result, Pakistan's per capita annual water availability has almost reached 1,000 cubic meters - the threshold point. Ten year back our water availability level was about 1,500 cubic metres. In 1951, the per capita surface water availability was 5,260 cubic metres per year. As for groundwater, we pump roughly 50 MAF. This is depleting fast too.

Water scarcity in Karachi has already reached below the threshold level. No wonder, the tanker mafia has complete monopoly in that city. They allegedly killed Perveen Rehman because she had crossed the red line. Islamabad is fast becoming like Karachi. It is worth stating that Pakistan is experiencing the fastest urbanization rate and its population growth rate is also one of the fastest in the world. This requires increased water supply. Therefore, public policy must prevent other cities from becoming like Karachi.

Also consider this. The rise in rice and sugarcane crops cultivation area has further deteriorated the situation. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey, 2017-2018, rice cultivation increased by more than 250 hectare in one year, while the sugarcane crop area increased by 1,000 hectares. Both are water-intensive crops. For example, to produce one kilo of sugar, you need about 2,500 litres of water.

In the coming years, water scarcity will further deepen. On top of that, climate change and poor water management will exacerbate the situation.

So what is to be done? Pakistan built two large dams in the 1960s - the Tarbela and Mangla Dams. Out of 145 million acre feet of water that we receive annually, we save 13.7 million acre feet. Our need is 40 million acre feet. Many experts argue that Pakistan 'wastes' 29 million acre feet of its floodwater. These experts look at the issue from an extremely narrow and wrong angle. Hence, they mislead the public and hurt the Sindhis. They ignore the environment, they ignore ecology and they ignore rights of the lower riparian as well.

The Kalabagh Dam has been damned long time ago. Three of Pakistan's four federating units have rejected it aggressively. Respect their opinion and bury the issue.

If there is failure in acting now on the both afore-mentioned points, the country is likely to face a prolonged catastrophe. So what is the solution? Indeed building a dam is easier than to change the behaviour of the people and to make manufacturers and users responsible.

I would argue for both but educating people about water thrift must take the lead.

However, there is almost a consensus on Basha Dam. So build it but simultaneously, end the overwhelming ignorance and use water wisely. S

The author works with Pattan Development Organisation and has interest in disaster risk reduction and governance rights. He can be reached at bari@pattan.org

Practicable Solutions

Water has become a politicised issue in Pakistan but now decisions must be taken that will positively impact the country's future.

By Aisha Khan

Water is a capital asset that supports services that maintain the conditions of life. These include provisioning services that have direct inputs into livelihoods and the economy and regulatory services like floods, disease control and cultural services. Together they create eco-systems that support life on Earth. This makes water the most valuable resource on earth but despite this its value has not been determined thus far. It is predicted that the global water demand will increase uo to 55 percent by 2050, while reserves will go down. If current usage trends don't change, the world will have only 60 percent of the water it needs in 2030. As the demand for water increases and the planet gets thirstier, societies around the globe will face the challenge of difficult tradeoffs between uses of water.

In Pakistan, water is becoming an increasingly scare commodity and water-related challenges, in terms of per capita availability as well as the quality of water, have grown over the seven decades since independence and are now posing a threat to human security. Recently, the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) delivered a dire warning about water shortage. Severe water scarcity is already having a negative impact on the country's public health and economy. Over 80 percent of the water supplied is considered unsafe and water shortage and water-borne diseases are resulting in substantial losses to GDP.

Pakistan receives 80% of its surface water from the Indus River Basin. Approximately 90 percent of Pakistan's water is used for agriculture, with 60 percent of its population directly involved in agriculture and livestock, and 80 percent of exports based on these sectors.

Many underground water reserves are already running low, while rainfall patterns are predicted to become more erratic with climate change. If the population continues to grow at the present rate, the numbers are expected to be in the range of 400 million by 2050 and more groundwater will be needed for farming, industry and personal consumption. Urgent steps are therefore needed to create a balance between demand and finite supply to avert a deficit that may cause a catastrophe on many fronts: crops could fail, ecosystems could break down, industries could collapse, disease and poverty could worsen and violent conflicts over access to water could become more frequent.

Water use in Pakistan is largely unregulated and often wasteful. Pollution of water is often ignored and goes unpunished. The rate of extraction of water for agriculture is higher than recharge values, resulting in depletion of aquifers and lowering of the water table. Climate change is likely to exacerbate the situation with higher temperatures, more erratic weather patterns and disruption in the precipitation regime.

While shortage of water in Pakistan is a fact, deficits in internal management have aggravated Pakistan's water woes. There are many failures in developing management policies and tools to address water

issues. An integrated water resource management approach needs to be taken to address the needs of the major user sectors, such as agriculture, industry and households. There are challenges of relative abundance during four months (June to September). This is when the rains triggered by the monsoon winds result in floods. There is water scarcity during the remaining eight months marked by reduced flows in the rivers and dwindling flows in the three major reservoirs. Water is critical for both irrigation and energy. All these issues need to be addressed by the government on a priority basis.

The Ministry of Water Resources has limited capacity for policy coordination. Water-related institutions such as WAPDA, the Indus River System Authority, the National Flood Commission, and the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources under the Ministry of Science and Technology, operate in silos and some of them face technical, financial and human resource limitations. There is also no legal mechanism for coordination between the federal and provincial governments after the 18th Amendment and this is resulting in management challenges in the rapidly and chaotically growing urban areas. Water charges for irrigation and other users do not even cover the cost of maintaining the water infrastructure and there is no governance of ground-water which is being extracted unsustainably.

The mismanagement of water not only complicates the challenge of availability but also contributes to deterioration in the quality of water both in the rural and urban areas with negative economic and health consequences. Better management practices, especially in the agriculture sector that consumes nearly 90% of all available water, can help in alleviating our water woes for some time but unless cropping patterns are not made compatible with water availability, an optimal value of crops per drop will not be achieved.

Another major concern is the decline in the per capita availability of water and water losses including transmission losses. The quantity of water in absolute terms has declined due to the loss of three eastern rivers from 1970 onwards, consequent to the completion of the civil works for storing and transporting flows from the western rivers to regions served by the eastern rivers. Our experts have also observed a decline in the flows of the western rivers which is perhaps due to the silting of the rivers and prolonged droughts in the catchment areas of those rivers across the border. Apart from that, decrease in per capita availability of water has occurred because of the over five-fold increase in our population and poor maintenance of the water infrastructure, especially the canals and channels. The most effective way of reducing losses in transmission of water is the lining of canals and channels that though costly would be a worthwhile expenditure.

Pakistan is short on storage capacity and needs to build reservoirs.

Pakistan is also short on storage capacity and needs to build reservoirs. Large dams are one option but are costly to build, require expensive maintenance, (especially for de-silting), displace populations and contribute to loss of habitat for plant and aquatic life and entail losses of water caused by evaporation.

Some of the alternative ways of storing water include construction of small dams along the irrigation network, recharging ground water aquifers, proper maintenance of rain-fed lakes and rural ponds, recycling of water used by factories and rain harvesting by the municipal authorities, the corporate sector and individuals.

However, given Pakistan's extremely inadequate water storage capacity and the seasonal abundance versus the scarcity syndrome, the building of a few medium sized and large dams appears to be unavoidable but they must be planned, designed and maintained according to the guidelines proposed by the International Commission of Dams.

Unsustainable development pathways and governance failures have affected the quality and availability of water resources, compromising their capacity to generate social and economic benefits. The recently approved National Water Policy (NWP) addresses the entire range of subjects concerning the integrated development and management of the country's freshwater resources as well as the challenges of Pakistan's water resources. These include dependence on a single river basin whose major tributaries originate outside the country's borders. The drastic decline in the supply and deterioration in the quality of freshwater due to multiple geophysical and demographic factors must also be taken into account. There is a need for all-out efforts to enhance water use efficiency and reduce the demands of the main user sectors, especially agriculture.There is also a need for resolution of inter- rovincial disputes over the upper and lower riparian regions; the modernization of water infrastructure; and , above all, mitigation of the negative impacts of climate change, most of which relate to the supply of freshwater.

The National Water Policy (NWP) is mostly silent on the gender dimension of water but otherwise serves as a guiding document for water management. Given Pakistan's federal structure and the sharing of responsibilities relating to water resource development and management by the federal and provincial governments, much will now depend on how the provinces elaborate on the outlined principles and guidelines to meet their special needs and circumstances.

A Water Charter, duly signed by the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers of the provinces, highlights the seriousness of "the looming shortage of water "which poses "a grave threat to (the country's) food, water and energy security". It proclaims "the commitment and intent of the federation and the provinces to make efforts to avert the crisis". Both the National Water Policy and the Water Charter underline the urgency of policies and action plans to mitigate the profound adverse impacts of climate change on water resources and Pakistan's food, water, and energy security. It now remains to be seen how quickly the provinces develop the policy instruments to support the 33 objectives of the NWP and implement them with due diligence to make Pakistan water secure. The key to the future management of water in Pakistan is scripted in the NWP but will require political will and thought leadership to make it operational in letter and spirit. S

The author is the CEO of the Mountain and Glacier Protection Organization. She can be reached at aisha@mgpo.org

Governing the Water Economy

Pakistan is one of the world's worst water-stressed countries. With an increasing population, there may not be enough water left in the next decade for the country's survival. The time to act is now.

By Dr Murad Ali

In May 2018, the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) declared that the country is faced with a severe water crisis and that by 2025, there will be very little or no clean water available if drastic measures are not taken. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Pakistan is ranked 3rd among countries facing water scarcity. It is an alarming situation as per capita water availability in the 1950s was approximately 5,000 cubic metres per year which has now declined to below 1,000 cubic metres. This is an internationally recognized threshold of water shortage. According to some estimates, at present only 30 percent of the country's population has access to clean drinking water. In many parts of the country, people have no option but to use contaminated water. Consumption of such unhygienic water is the cause of several waterborne diseases. According to World Health Organisation (WHO), waterborne diarrhoeal diseases are responsible for over 2 million deaths annually the world over, with the majority occurring in children under 5. In Pakistan, nearly 60 million people are at risk of being affected by high concentration of arsenic in drinking water. So water scarcity and the use of contaminated water is a serious threat to public well-being.

Pakistan is already quite vulnerable to climate-induced hazards. According to the Global Climate Risk Index of 2017, which ranks countries based on impacts of extreme weather events both in terms of fatalities as well as economic losses, Pakistan is among the 10 most affected countries. Climate change coupled with unabated deforestation, threat to the country's glacial reserves, drying lakes and rivers and the poor water supply will severely affect agriculture, ecology and local biodiversity. The issue is further exacerbated by the excessive and unregulated consumption of water, lack of storage mechanisms, population explosion, lack of federal and provincial government interest and the absence of a sound national water policy.

It must be noted that the previous government identified food, energy and water security among the seven

key pillars in its key long-term policy document Vision 2025. Similarly, access to clean water and sanitation is also one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed upon by all UN member states under the 2030 Agenda. It must be emphasised that Pakistan was the first country that adopted the UN 2030 Agenda through a unanimous parliamentary resolution in February 2016. Hence, for achieving water security and accomplishing SDG 6, the country must come up with short and long-term plans and initiatives to address the challenge of water security.

In view of this, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Saqib Nisar came in the forefront to collect donations from the nation for the construction of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam costing over US$ 14 billion. The announcement to build the dam on public donations has revitalised the debate about the construction of large water reservoirs in the country. To join the chorus, PM Imran Khan also asked the overseas Pakistanis to generously donate for the Dam to save the future of their motherland. However, experts have raised questions over the feasibility of the initiative, particularly keeping in view the potential of donations as it seems an insurmountable task to generate US$ 14 billion by means of voluntary contributions from the public. Danish Mustafa, an expert on water and environment based at King's College London, is of the opinion that the actual cost of the dam could be up to US$ 28 billion, much more than the projected estimate and hence it looks highly improbable to raise such finances for the project domestically.

Also, large dams have significant social and environmental implications and every effort must be made to minimize their social and ecological cost in terms of population displacement and shock to the existing ecosystem. Hence, small dams having minimal environmental and social repercussions need to be prioritized in terms of water being used for drinking, agriculture, electricity and fisheries.

Building dams is only a uni-dimensional approach to resolving the issue of water scarcity. The government and relevant stakeholders must come up with a comprehensive national water policy and management plan aimed at conserving and enhancing water resources and minimizing water pollution so that the increasing population has access to clean drinking water.

Measures must be taken to restore lakes. Pakistan has about 60 lakes but

most of them are highly polluted and some have almost dried. Due to pollution, only in Lake Manchar, Pakistan's largest and one of Asia's largest freshwater lakes, 14 fish species have become extinct. Restoring these lakes will provide a better habitat for biodiversity, promoting ecotourism and agriculture, and providing water to the population.

Similarly, regulating tube-wells drilling is also vital. Due to increase in population, the demand for water has considerably increased. Whether it is domestic use, commercial or agriculture, there has been an unregulated use of tub-wells across the country where people extract as much water as they like. As a result of this practice, there has been an exponential rise in the number of tub-wells due to which the water table is going down in many parts of the country. Therefore, implementation of a strict policy is needed to regulate the number of tube-wells. Further, in the overexploited regions, artificial groundwater recharge might help to improve the water table.

Where possible, steam-based car washing needs to be encouraged to save precious water. There are hundreds of thousands of car washing stations across the country. They not only consume a huge amount of freshwater for cleaning, but also pose a grave threat to public health, biodiversity and ecology by polluting water streams, canals and rivers. Switching to steam-based car washing will not only conserve freshwater but would also reduce water and environmental pollution.

According to estimates, with over 7000 glaciers, Pakistan has the highest numbers of glaciers outside the polar regional. Nonetheless, on account of climate change, they are melting at a faster pace than in any other part of the world. If this trend is not controlled or reversed, there are concerns that by 2035, the country will have no more glaciers. Therefore, a national plan for the management of these glaciers could be critical to minimise the challenge of water scarcity.

There is also a need to create awareness among the masses that water is a precious resource and its wastage is akin to committing a sin. In Pakistan, water is either free of cost or there are just nominal charges and therefore there have been minimal efforts to focus on water conservation. The media need to play a constructive role in creating awareness about water scarcity and its conservation. Also, as practiced in many countries, it would be feasible to have a water pricing mechanism to discourage the enormous waste of water in households and commercially. Water scarcity is a multidimensional challenge and can be effectively tacked through a multidimensional approach. S

The writer holds a Ph.D from Massey University, New Zealand. He teaches at the University of Malakand and can be reached at muradali.uom@gmail.com

The Rip-off!

The people of Karachi face a perennial water crisis. With no solutions in sight, the tanker mafia simply rips off the large urban population while the relevant authorities simply look the other way.

By S. M. Hali

Pakistan is facing a major water crisis. According to a World Bank study, by 2025, Pakistan will in the middle of a drought-like situation. In this grim milieu, Karachi, Pakistan's most populous city, has enormous water needs, with an estimated core population of over 17 million. As an industrial hub with over 10,000 factories and production houses, till the international port of Gwadar becomes operational, the city is also handling 95% of the country's exports. Against this huge demand for water which is slowly becoming a precious commodity, the supply from the city's administration is very limited. The residents of the cosmopolitan city suffer equally, whether they live in the high income areas, middle class residencies or in slums.

The vast gap between supply and demand has given rise to the emergence of a water tanker mafia, which has stepped in to alleviate the problem but at cut-throat prices. As the severity of the water shortage is increasing, the water mafia provides 40 per cent of the city's water through tankers. While the city administration fails to quench the thirst of parched throats, the water tanker mafia continues to extort the residents of high prices and remains unchecked.

Let us examine the depth of the problem, its causes and try to find some solutions. Despite the fact that Karachi is Pakistan's largest city in terms of population and earns the highest revenue for the national exchequer, it also remains the most neglected. It faces three major challenges: an acute energy shortage, paucity of water and very poor waste management. Here, we examine the causes of paucity of water only.

There are a number of reasons why the water shortage in Karachi is so acute and is rising every day. Firstly, the water distribution system is old and inadequate, which causes leakage. The Hisar Foundation, which addresses water management issues, has found that "The underground water pipeline supply in the city has become outdated. For the last 25 years no new pipeline has been installed despite the city's growing population."

The website of Karachi Water & Sewerage Board (KWSB) makes the tall claim that it "is a service-based consumer-oriented organization responsible for production, transmission and distribution of potable water to the citizen of Karachi, managing sewerage system within the city to ensure hygienic environment, development of schemes to cover shortfalls in services and collection of revenues for sustained economic viability."

The KWSB Managing Director Misbahuddin Farid, on the contrary, while speaking to a correspondent from thethirdpole.net in November 2016,

admitted that "the leakages are causing a loss of around 25% of the total water available in the system, due to which we are unable to provide water to several areas." Two years down the line, the situation has worsened.

The initial 10,000 km network of pipelines laid a quarter of a century ago, besides becoming leaky and rusty, is unable to cater to the needs of the current 17 million population, which, according to a Time magazine report, is expected to grow to an additional 5.6 million by 2025. The KWSB says that it supplies water for an additional two to three million people who live on the outskirts of the city, which further aggravates the strain.

Besides the leakages, the burgeoning population and depleting water table, there is the additional problem of water pilferage. According to media reports as well as the findings of independent researchers, most of the illegal water hydrants are created by the water tanker mafia, which steals the water and then steps in to fill in the void of supply through its illegal tankers at exorbitant prices, which may vary from Rs. 6000 to Rs. 10,000. Authorities in Karachi crack down on the illegal water hydrants but the water tanker mafia is, at times, warned in advance of the impending raid by some corrupt police officials. The mafia lies low for a while and then resumes its illegal activities.

The solution lies in both short-term and long-term planning. The immediate need is to plug the gaps. Ayoub Hameedi, an ardent campaigner for 'mitigating the water shortage in Karachi' reports that researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) developed an inexpensive robot capable of fixing even a minute leak with extreme precision. Pakistan's scientists can also develop such a robot or perhaps the KWSB can acquire the ones developed by MIT, if the price is right.

Karachi is located beside the sea, a constant source of water but, ironically, there is not a single desalination plant in the city which can convert seawater into drinking water. Water recycling plants can certainly be installed to alleviate the problem. At the KWSB level, larger plants can be installed to store recyclable water and treat it before supplying it for secondary needs of the household. Every new housing project must include water recycling plants, which are inexpensive, whereas, at the smaller level, recycled water can look after the needs of watering lawns, washing cars and so on.

There is a dire need for teaching water management not only to the people of Karachi but to the entire country. It must be drilled in people's minds that water is a scarce commodity which must be conserved, used sparingly and not wasted. Primary educational institutions, television and other mass media outlets must carry out campaigns to educate the masses about the importance of water conservation. The majority of houses and buildings use air conditioners, which pick up moisture from the air; this moisture can be collected rather than being drained and used for secondary needs.

The government may also consider imposing a fine on those found wasting water. Saudi Arabia has enforced a system where vigilant patrols shut down the main water supply of residences if water is flowing out of the homes while washing cars or watering lawns. Such a system can be emulated.

Once the needs of the citizens are met through legal means, they will not give in to blackmail and extortion by the water tanker mafia and the problem can be resolved. S

The writer is a practicing journalist. He contributes to the print media, conducts a TV show and produces documentaries. He can be reached at sultanm.hali@gmail.com

THE GROUND WATER GAP

Pakistan's economy is predominantly agricultural in nature and relies on the country's groundwater resources. Despite its signifance, a balanced system has not been fashioned to this day to utilize groundwater in an effective manner.

By Taimoor Akhtar and Muhammad Fraz Ismail

The surface water of the Indus Basin is a peculiar and fickle natural resource. The people pine for it when less is available (like in dry winter months) and fear it when it pours down with unabated ferocity and flows through rivers of the Indus Basin in abundance (like in summer monsoon months). A great challenge for the residents of the Indus Basin is to survive in and manage the fickle nature of its water, especially, since most of Pakistan is at the mercy of the Indus and its waters for growing crops that are the backbone of the economy. Pakistan has only managed to survive (even with an exponential rise in population over the last few decades) during dry seasons by harnessing water from under the ground. But groundwater can be fickle too if not managed adequately and a delicate balance needs to be maintained between extraction and recharge. The Indus Basin is slowly losing this balance and a gap looms, between groundwater extraction and recharge. This gap is ominous as it threatens the sustainability of the country's groundwater resources and probably the existence of its agricultural economy.

The dependence of Pakistan's agricultural economy on groundwater is undeniable. At least 50% of agricultural water supplies (at the farm level) come from under the ground, harnessed through a network of more than 1 million tube-wells. These tube-wells are pumping around 55 million acre feet (MAF) volume of underground freshwater annually, for irrigation purposes alone. This volume amounts to more than 8 times the live storage capacity of the famous (or infamous to some) Basha reservoir. The current pattern of groundwater extraction may not be sustainable though, especially in those areas of the Indus Basin where the volume of extraction exceeds recharge.

According to a recent groundwater study conducted by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), there is significant spatial variation and imbalance in the current extraction and recharge rates within the Indus Basin. For instance, in many irrigated agricultural areas in the Lower Bari Doab of Southern Punjab (Multan District, Lodhran, Vehari, etc.), groundwater extraction is considerably higher than recharge. The consequence of this gap between extraction and recharge is a dramatic depletion of fresh groundwater in these areas and also an increase in the pumping cost for farmers. At the other end of the gap spectrum are agricultural areas of the Upper Chaj Doab and Upper Thal Doab (Gujrat, Khushab, Jhang, etc.), where the recharge rate is higher than extraction and the consequence of this gap is water-logging. Compounding these grave concerns is the fact that the bulk of drinking water needs within the Indus Basin are met by groundwater. Hence, within the urban pockets of the Basin, groundwater extraction is extremely high and, consequently, so is the gap between extraction and recharge (e.g. in Lahore).

Pakistan desperately and immediately needs a comprehensive basin-level groundwater management strategy to address the spatially varying groundwater gap of the Indus Basin. Thankfully, the first National Water Policy of Pakistan (that was finalized in April 2018) highlights the importance of such a strategy. Moreover, the NWP accentuates the need for groundwater regulation and aims to introduce groundwater extraction budgets at canal command levels (especially for canal commands where extraction exceeds recharge). Another policy objective of the NWP is the establishment of methods for increasing groundwater recharge in

over-abused areas. However, little has been done, since the policy came out, in terms of development of concrete ideas and implementation plans for controlling extraction and recharge.

Regulatory control of groundwater extraction could be established through introduction of licencing on installation of new tube-wells and bores. While this policy initiative may not be able to regulate groundwater pumping volumes of existing tube-wells, it would at least assist decision-makers in regulating the number of tube-wells in different canal commands. Heartening news in this regard is that a draft law for groundwater regulation through licencing (of new tube-wells) is in the works in Punjab. However, action may also be needed for regulating the amount of extraction in existing tube-wells. One way of implementing such a regulation could be through adding a groundwater water tax to the utility bills associated with electric tube-wells. The energy-usage tracking of diesel tube-wells may also be possible through smart tracking devices. If effective tracking of energy usage of diesel tube-wells is successful, a groundwater tax for diesel tube-well users could be introduced that is proportional to their energy consumption.

Policy initiatives for managing the spatial recharge pattern are also extremely important for managing the groundwater gap within the Indus Basin. The NWP talks about this too. However, concrete ideas for managing recharge have not been developed. One way of making this possible might be through development of a 'water credits' program that allows trading of surface waters between major canal commands. For instance, through a 'water credits' trading program, a canal command that is water-logged, could sell a share of its water entitlement (all canal commands have pre-defined water entitlements according to the Provincial Water Apportionment Accord 1991) to a canal command that is suffering from over-extraction. The water-logged canal could use the money it earns from 'water credits' trading to assist its farmers in improving their on-farm water management practices.

The sustainability of Pakistan's groundwater resources is hanging by a thread and the country cannot afford to ignore the gaps that threaten it. Yet, ignorance continues and it is time for a change. It is time for the state to take ownership of its groundwater resources. It is time to establish a Ground Water Authority (as indicated in the National Water Policy) that will ultimately assert the fact that groundwater is a shared resource and is owned by all citizens of Pakistan and not the few who relentlessly exploit it with reckless abandon. S

Taimoor Akhtar is a researcher and consultant in water resources systems engineering and management. He can be reached at taimoor.akhtar@gmail.com

Muhammad Fraz Ismail is an expert in hydrology. He can be reached at fraz.ismail@tum.de

Handling the Water Crisis

There are some aspects of national water management that can be handled without much investment and could help the national water crisis in the long-run.

By Ifrah Shoukat

Increasing climate change is adding extra stress to the supplies of fresh water as wet regions are becoming more wet and dry regions even dryer. This has driven developing nations to struggle and maintain a balance between the demand and supply of water.

According to the World Water Development Report, almost 5 billion people - 3.6 billion people already suffer from water scarcity every year - will suffer from drought conditions annually for more than a month, while the number of people suffering from floods will increase from 1.2 billion to almost 1.6 billion by 2050.

For the existence of life, there is nothing more important than water. Nevertheless, the world is facing a water crisis from Cape Town to Michigan and from the African deserts to Asia's swarming cities. According to the World Economic Forum, the water crisis is one of the main global risks the world is going to face in the near future. A recent United Nations report says that almost 5 billion people could possibly face severe water scarcity by 2050 in terms of general water distribution as a result of climate change, increased water demand and polluted supplies.

Despite being blessed with the world's largest and mighty glacial resources, Pakistan is facing the prospects of a water crisis. The equilibrium between supply and demand of water is creating challenges specifically in the domestic, industrial and agricultural spheres while the importance of the Indus River Basin is becoming even more critical. A recent report of the IMF says that Pakistan is one of 36 countries that are suffering from water stressed conditions. When measured in terms of per unit of GDP, Pakistan is fourth in water usage. What is even more challenging is the Indus River basin aquifer condition which is second to the most water stressed aquifer, according to satellite data from NASA. In addition, this aquifer is facing a shortfall of water five times more than it could store.

Water terrorism on the part of India is another serious threat to the water sustainability of Pakistan. For instance, construction of the Kishanganga Dam on River Neelum, Baglihar Dam on the Chenab and Wullar Barrage on River Jhelum has intensified the rifts on water distribution. Furthermore, Wullar Barrage has the potential to disrupt the tributaries of Lower Bari Doab Canal which will eventually disrupt the water equilibrium throughout Pakistan. Likewise, another major concern is the water diversion scheme of China which could possibly halt the flow of water into the Indus River basin, leaving the whole country water scarce.

Moreover, the storage capacity of major water reservoirs like Chashma, Tarbela and Mangla is decreasing due to the deposition of river sediments; they have lost 500 million acre feet, that is 2.5 % of their water saving capacity. Likewise, seepage results in 40 percent water lost due to unlined canal beds. It

is not stopping here as rapid melting of the glaciers due to global warming is a serious threat to water integrity. Almost 50 to 150 cm area of the glaciers is melting every year, posing doubts about the storage capacity of this reservoir.

In terms of average demand, Pakistan's dam capacity is of merely 30 days, compared with 220 days in India. This is due to the non-availability of enough water reservoirs. For instance, the Kalabagh dam, with a storage capacity of 6.1 million acre feet, has been imperiled by the dirty politics of provinces.

Likewise, though the Diamer-Basha Dam has been a part of politics of every government, no elected government has managed to materialize the project due to lack of political will and financial resources.

Water-intensive agricultural practices also need to be updated as Pakistan's irrigation system is very water rigorous which results in the loss of 50 to 60% of water. According to an FAO report, India produces 30 percent surplus food with the same amount of water while Americans are producing 50 percent more food with the same amount of the water Pakistan is using. Besides improved irrigation systems, crop rotation should be ensured, especially for the most water demanding crops like sugarcane and rice.

Many experts and scientists suggest solutions to the water crisis but nobody talks about an understanding of the country's own system. Insight to the sensitivities of the whole water system is imperative when it comes to the concrete solutions for the water crisis. Pakistan's problem lies in its consumption patterns as the country is water deficit at one end and facing floods on the other.

Dams are important, though the issue is not as simple as making dams only. Immediate and long-term investment in industrial, irrigation and urban sectors is required to ensure water security, which will ultimately fix the other associated problems. At the moment Pakistan needs large investments and must address the wastage of 54 MAF in the irrigation sector. There is no point of spending billion of dollars over dams while completely ignoring the erosion of river deltas and silting of dams. It is the need of the hour to adopt sustainability by managing the aquifers, improving the irrigation systems with increased efficiency and putting storage systems at the right place. These aspects do not need large amounts of money and foreign loans and are sustainable too. S

The writer is an environmentalist and can be reached at ifrahshoukat@gmail.com

Problems and Solutions

Water scarcity gives rise to multi-dimensional problems that need to be addressed without any loss of time or Pakistan would be faced with a serious disaster situation in a matter of just a few years.

By Dr M. Asif

The subject of water scarcity in Pakistan has become a burning issue in the national debate. Serious deliberation and meaningful action on the matter has been long overdue. Construction of new dams is an integral part of the ongoing debate on water scarcity, with the Supreme Court having established a Dam Fund to collect donations for the development of Diamer-Bhasha and Mohmand Dams. However, a question may arise if development of new dams is the only solution to the problem or is it a part of the solution?

Pakistan's water problems are multiple and acute. To mention a few, there is a lack of storage capacity, the water distribution infrastructure is limited and ageing, water usage is extravagant, the ground water table is receding, water stress on urban centres is intensifying and ground water is fast contaminating. Another important factor not to be ignored is climate change that is already a reality. It is set to lead to numerous and harsh implications including more frequent and intense natural disasters, melting of glaciers, rise in sea level and seasonal disorder.

Interestingly, the impacts of climate change are not going to be uniform across the world. In Pakistan's particular case, concerned potential implications also include fluctuation and reduction in the long-term availability of water, changes in the monsoon system, flooding and drought. It is almost a point of consensus in the international environmental community that climate change is set to

have an adverse impact on freshwater resources and food supplies in the world. It is therefore only pragmatic for Pakistan to safeguard its water supplies. Both these issues should not be viewed in isolation. Pakistan's water prosperity requires a holistic water management and governance mechanism that caters for most if not all of these problems in a cohesive manner.

Pakistan has a total water storage capacity of only 30 days while many countries have capacity of hundreds of days. The country is also in the bottom ranks when it comes to per capita storage capacity – while 36 countries in the world have a per capita storage capacity of over 1000m3. Pakistan's corresponding figure is a humble 135m3. Furthermore and quite ironically, Pakistan's per capita storage capacity is on a fast decline as in 2010, 2000 and 1990 figures were respectively 156 m3, 192 m3 and 243 m3. With rains supporting only around 15% of the irrigation, such a low and eroding level of storage capacity is alarming by any standard. On the other hand, Pakistan is reported to annually waste 10 trillion gallons of water. The price tag associated with this water loss is of the order of $21billion/year. In the backdrop of such trends, a national consensus is emerging on development of new dams.

Construction of dams, especially of medium-to-large-scale, is a major decision, which like anything else has its pros and cons. Dams can be a long-term solution for crop irrigation, water supply, power generation and flood control. On the other hand, dams are expensive to build, require displacement of population from the lake area, their capacity reduces due to silting and may be affected by water shortages. On balance, construction of new dams is a matter of strategic importance for Pakistan. Augmentation of water storage capacity has far-reaching benefits for socio-economics and national security. It will not only help preserve water for irrigation and drinking needs but also potentially contribute in tackling the energy crisis through the added dimension of power generation. Rain water harvesting (RWH) systems, a technology found useful across the world, should also be promoted.

Construction of new dams, however, is not a complete solution to Pakistan's water woes. The society at large has been extremely wasteful

Modern and efficient irrigation techniques such as sprinkler and drip irrigation should be adopted.

of resources with no exception when it comes to water. The lion's share in national water consumption goes to the agriculture sector, which accounts for well over 70% of total usage. There are, however, massive water losses in this sector. The canal system and water courses are reported to have losses in the range of 40-45% through seepage, while the water available at farm head, creates further losses of around 25%. It is imperative that these losses are controlled. When it comes to water management, the agriculture sector must be given proportionate importance. Over pumping of groundwater and over-irrigation needs to be controlled.

Modern and efficient irrigation techniques such as sprinkler and drip irrigation should be adopted. Besides water conservation, these approaches would bring added benefits for farmers, including reduced cost of cultivation and potential increase in per acre yield. It is equally important to improve agricultural practices. For example, employing high-yield and drought-resistant crops, zero-tillage and precision land leveling could be improved. There should be awareness campaigns, technical assistance, incentives and subsidies for improving agricultural productivity. Ultimately, the target should be to benchmark the agriculture sector in terms of crop yield per unit of water consumption. The focus of public support should not be limited to large scale farmers but small cultivators and farmers should also benefit from it.

Pakistan needs to have a robust, holistic and dynamic water governance mechanism in place. To begin with, public awareness in terms of offering due respect to this most valuable natural resource needs to be increased. It is time to adopt a carrot-and-stick strategy, which is a fundamental and universally established approach to achieving productivity and efficiency. Water-pricing should be rationalized in a way that all segments of society can see a benefit in conserving water. Promotion of water efficient irrigation techniques and research and development (R&D) around crops resilient to a water-scarce environment is critical. Forestation and other climate change mitigation measures are also required. Contamination of groundwater from industrial and commercial activities also needs to be addressed. Construction of new water storage facilities and dams is critical and inevitable for Pakistan's water prosperity but it is not the complete solution. The other and equally important part of the solution is efficient use of available water. S

The write has interest in energy and sustainable development. He can be reached at dr.m.asif@gmail.com

Does Pakistan Need Big Dams?

Pakistan's water needs can be managed more effectively if official thinking comes out of the 'dam' mindset and sets about finding other solutions to the problem.

By Uzair Sattar

The historical development of Pakistan's irrigation network is a legacy of the West. In the colonial period, the British built the canal system to gain legitimacy and support in the 'loyalist' provinces of Sindh and Punjab. Post-Independence, the World Bank brokered the negotiations of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty and initiated the "Indus Basin Project" (IBP) for the development of the Indus Basin. Given the fact that so much of Pakistan's water system is a direct product of the British Empire and post-colonialism, it is pertinent to be cognizant of how deeply embedded this thought process still is in today's policymakers.

The chief economic pillar in the United States' post-World War II architecture was the World Bank. During the Cold War, the United States used the bank (which was then known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) to leverage low-income countries for its own interests. The primary reason for this was to counter what the United States considered to be its greatest ideological threat at the time: Communism. There is no need to look too far from home to see this. The World Bank involved itself in Pakistan through the long and arduous negotiations of the Indus Waters Treaty which lasted for ten years. After the Treaty was signed, around $30 billion (in 2018 prices) was pumped into the Indus Basin for the construction of the Mangla and Tarbela dams as well as subsidiary projects as part of the IBP. By exerting influence through the World Bank, the US ensured that Pakistan would not join the Soviet bloc.

Another way of looking at this would be to evaluate whether the World Bank would act the same way today as they did during the Cold War. Would the US and the World Bank devote the same time and energy today as they did during the Indus Waters Treaty negotiations to mediate a much-needed bilateral water agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan over projects on the Kabul River? Would the World Bank pump the same $30 billion into the Diamer-Basha or Kalabagh Dam today as they did in the 60s and 70s for the IBP?

If your answer is yes, one applauds you for your idealism and hope. However, if your answer is no, it should be apparent that the World Bank's involvement in Pakistan was strictly under the auspices of Western interests in a completely different geopolitical era.

There are two primary ways the World Bank still continues to play a role in Pakistan: structural and normative. Structurally, their role has shrunk. The World Bank has a markedly smaller presence in Pakistan today regarding financial commitment or big-money projects. However, they still play a significant normative role in spreading their notions of "development" when it comes to water policy and planning. This has more severe ramifications on Pakistan's inability to overcome the water crisis.

For five decades, Pakistan's irrigation system has been shaped by the World Bank's "developmental" approach to the water infrastructure. This approach can be defined by a singular focus on the structural, supply-side construction of expensive brick-and-mortar projects to address the water crisis. In recent times, large dams and hydroelectric power plants are considered to be symbols of progress and advancement in the water sector. Don't believe this, just ask the Chief Justice of Pakistan who the enemies of development are in this country, and he will reply by saying those who oppose his Dam Fund. That is an example of the normative power of the West and, by extension, the World Bank, that is still wielded in Pakistan.

Brick-and-mortar investment in centrally managed dams and canals are not the only way to address Pakistan's water needs. Far more learned minds with more eloquent pens have written about the merits and demerits of the mega infrastructure projects on Pakistan's rivers. However, for the sake of simplicity — and its newfound sex appeal over casual dinner conversations or coffee talk —the Diamer-Basha Dam could be a good example.

Daanish Mustafa, Professor at King's College London, has said in a recent op-ed, "Pakistan's total official

GDP in 2016 was $284 billion. This means that with Diamer-Bhasha Dam [which he estimated to cost close to $28 billion], we will be roughly committing to a project equivalent to 10 percent of our total GDP. The site is traversed by multiple fault lines, which are well recognised even by WAPDA's own feasibility studies. Engineers like Bashir Malik, who is a former technical advisor to the World Bank and the United Nations and one of the most ardent supporters of dam building in Pakistan, have categorically stated that the risk of earthquake induced failure at the Diamer-Bhasha Dam site is too great to carry on with construction. Knowing all this, why is the country's time and money being wasted on a project which even engineers know is not feasible?"

The truth of the matter is myth and is as good as reality in politics. And dam building is as great a myth as any in Pakistan. To understand this, let's look at the 2005 water strategy which the World Bank proposed for Pakistan. It asserted, "Pakistan has to invest, and invest soon, in costly and contentious new dams." It further argued, "…while all voices must be heard, much greater weight must be given to the voices of those who have responsibility and face the voters and less to those who are self-appointed or who represent small special interests." This is a remarkable statement. It spells out what was known all along: that the World Bank takes a singular approach to water projects that are not going to help the most vulnerable segments of society to access water.

However, for the policymakers at the top, this is music to their ears. The World Bank and the forces behind it endorse their love affair with a dam worth 10% of their country's yearly output. The cherry on top of the cake is having the ability to label it as the country's saviour, calling it the solution to the water crisis and knowing people will believe this. The very fact that this can happen in Pakistan is a direct legacy of the post-colonialist "development" theory that has been espoused and exported to low-income countries by institutions such as the World Bank.

Pictures and videos of expensive new dams do well for political campaigning as this reflects tangible work that the government does in an attempt to solve Pakistan's water woes. But it doesn't take a genius to unearth that the problem is not in a lack of dams or other heavy duty brick-and-mortar projects. Tell any child in Orangi in Karachi or Sariab Road in Quetta that dams will bring water into their homes and they will laugh you out of their parched slum. Only the people at the World Bank and policymakers who espouse their ideas don't seem to know this reality. It almost seems as if the more education you have in this country, the more divorced you are from its actual realities.

The resulting rut Pakistan is in is the consequence of seemingly aligning interests of the government with the World Bank's deficient assessment of remedies to the water crisis. Pakistan has historically favoured bulky projects that yield ribbon-cutting opportunities and political prestige, support centralized bureaucracies and offer spoils for patronage. Unfortunately, this approach does nothing for the poor who are the most affected by the water crisis.

There is a famous political slogan: freedom is useless unless it cannot create the means to feed people. The same concept can be applied to development. A concept of development that doesn't provide people with the basic necessities of life is nothing but a chimera. S

The writer is a freelance contributor. with key focus on development issues. He can be reached at uzair.sattar@tufts.edu

The Looming Crisis

Pakistan must realize that it has a looming water crisis that just cannot be wished away. Hard decisions must be taken and the government and people must move together to overcome the crisis.

By Muhammad Atif Ilyas

'The more you run away from the problem, the more distant you get from the solution'. This pretty much sums up the rationale behind the looming water crisis in Pakistan whose severity is going to grow multifold as more dusks turn into more dawns. Alarm bells should have started ringing when Pakistan touched the 'water stress line' in 1990 and also when it crossed the 'water scarcity line' later in 2005. But in a proverbial Pakistani way, being unwilling to give in to the gravity of the issue at hand and possible repercussions it could carry in the future, we kept circling around the problem both at the government and the individual level. Even today, amid all the media-created fuss around the water crisis, nothing much has changed in terms of our inability to identify the feasible solutions to the problem.

For most part of the last three decades, the water debate in Pakistan has revolved around two elements, one in the upstream and the other in the downstream. In the upstream we have been busy blaming India for building

'illegal' dams using our water and in the downstream we have struggled with constructing some dams of our own. The major problem is our misplaced and misguided fascination with dams, which actually shows how myopically our policymakers have looked towards resolving the water issue.

Dr Hassan Abbas, an expert in hydrology and water resources, debunks two myths around the function of dams. One is their ability to prevent floods and the other to store water. He quotes the WAPDA report on the 1992 floods which clarifies that there is no provision in Mangla and Tarbela reservoirs for 'flood control' and that the Mangla Dam instead of controlling the 1992 flood, exacerbated the damages incurred. As for the storage function of the dams, today the storage capacity of all the dams in Pakistan combined is around 50 MAF of water, while natural ground water storage capacity is around 3000 MAF which can be managed by riparian zone management. Dr Abbas further states that even the city of Lahore alone has an aquifer of the size of the Tarbela reservoir which can be replenished by channelizing the extensive rains in Lahore. Conscious and modern countries are utilizing all the options mentioned here by using contemporary concepts like Water Sensitive Urban Design that incorporates such technologies as riparian zone management and Managed Aquifier Recharge.

Although these options must and should be considered by the authorities, but given the lack of financial and technological capacity of Pakistan, it is highly unlikely that these options will be entertained with immediate effect. If the government cannot ensure storage of water, it can at least minimize wastage of water as it is is one of the major and most neglected causes of the water crisis in Pakistan.

Pakistan has the fourth highest rate of water consumption in the world and, in terms of water used per unit of GDP, it takes the top honour of being the most water-intensive economy in the world, according to an IMF report. This development can be attributed to the fact we are an outdated agricultural economy with an efficiency rate of a mere 50 percent. Out of Pakistan's fresh water resources, a mammoth 93 percent is allotted to the agricultural sector, out of which 60 percent is wasted even before it reaches the fields due to massive leakages in the feeble water

This duplicitous approach towards the water crisis is not only confined to the authorities but also involves the citizens.

transportation infrastructure. The water volume wasted approximately amounts to the storage capacity of five Kalabagh Dams. As for the remaining 40 percent of water that actually reaches the fields, much of it is virtually wasted by outdated technologies like flood irrigation. The result is that Pakistan's productivity per unit of water is 0.39 kilograms per cubic meter which is one sixth of China's, and one third of India's and is pretty poor, to say the least. Pakistan needs a major overhaul in its water and agricultural infrastructure if it wants to stay relevant as an agricultural economy.

Despite all these solutions to the problems in the downstream, the previous governments always opted for solutions that were controversial and hence did not see the light of day. Behind those smoke screens, there has been a staunch lack of political will to do something about the looming water crisis that has pushed Pakistan to the brink of a major catastrophe. It would actually be a farce to say that the authorities and the former governments had no inkling whatsoever of the solutions required to address the water woes. Even the actions of the present government with its Diamer-Bhasha-centered water policy, reflects the fact that it has decided to not learn from its predecessors' mistakes.

This duplicitous approach towards the water crisis is not only confined to the authorities but also involves the citizens, especially in the urban areas, who keep blaming India and the government for their water woes and continue to waste gallons and gallons of water without any cause and worry. On an average, 40 gallons of fresh water in used to wash a car, 10 gallons on a shower and 4 gallons while brushing teeth. These are serious numbers when one accounts even 10 percent of the population for the wastage. The situation gets scarier when it is realized that most of the water wasted in homes is actually ground water, which is supposed to be the fail-safe option in case Pakistan runs out of water.

According to a UNDP and PCSIR report, Pakistan is going to run dry by 2025, so it is about time that this problem was seriously understood both at the individual and government level. It must be realized that only lip service and outdated and irrelevant solutions are not really going to tame the leviathan that the water crisis has become. It is time to make some hard decisions because the stakes have never been higher.

The writer is a teacher, a vocational engineer and a development commentator. He can be reached at atif.ilyas@hotmail.com

Sustainable Use of Water

Water scarcity can be perceived in multiple ways; unavailability of water or scarcity in access to water. This may be due to physical shortage or failure of institutions to ensure a regular supply or due to a lack of adequate infrastructure.[1] Every continent is facing water scarcity and its unchecked depletion poses a great challenge to the growing population. Water use has been growing globally at more than twice the rate of population growth in the last century, and an increasing number of regions are reaching the limit at which water services can be sustainably delivered, especially in arid regions.[2]

Water scarcity is expected to worsen as rapidly growing urban areas place heavy pressure on neighbouring water resources. A change of climate and bio-energy demand is also expected to amplify the complex relationship between global development and water demand.[3] As per the United Nations, there is no global water shortage as such, but countries and regions individually need to tackle the critical problems presented by water stress on immediate basis.[4] Water has to be treated as a resource which is depletable and diminishing, and which needs a far stronger focus on managing its demand.

According to a recent report by the International Monetary Fund, Pakistan ranks third in the world among countries facing acute water shortage.[5] Reports by the United Nations Development Program and the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources also warn the authorities that the South Asian country will reach absolute water scarcity by 2025.[6] As per the Food and Agriculture Organization's 2008 estimates, 94% of the total water was withdrawn by the agriculture sector, followed by 5% which was withdrawn by the municipalities and 1% by industry.[7]

Water is a shared resource demanding collective action and every stakeholder's ownership is to help tackle the scarcity. It is difficult to single out any one sector's role or separate the interests of the public and private sector from each other. The government should align water usage with the needs and demands of different users i.e., agriculture, industry, household, etc., adopting integrated water res-ources management.[8] Similarly, industries or businesses should also do their part not only because of the opportunities associated with water conservation but to gauge the understanding of benefits of shared water management, recognition of the private sector as a critical development partner and limited financial capacity of governments in countries like Pakistan.

Responsible businessesin Pakistan, realize that the essence of being water-conscious is not only for their survival but for the overall well-being of our global ecosystems and economies. For example, PepsiCo's agriculture and operations teams are helping conserve water by improving water use efficiency in its direct agricultural supply chain and manufacturing operations, respectively.[9] Likewise, Coca-Cola is also working in Pakistan to replenish water for communities and adopt water stewardship to ensure on-site water efficiency.[10]

Similarly, in order to help tackle water scarcity, Nestlé Pakistan realizes the importance of working beyond the factory gates and taking collective action with other partners like the government, communities, farmers, civil society and academia. Taking that approach, Nestlé Pakistan has forged partnerships over the years on the issue of water.

The Nestlé Caring for Water-Pakistan is a consolidation of such work with an aim to boosting local initiatives and partnerships responding to local situations and needs. It is a blueprint for bringing different partners together to discuss what should be done in order to contribute to improved water usage and tackle water scarcity. Nestlé Pakistan has an open-door approach in order to encourage more partners to join it and invite new ideas, whether they are related to agriculture, technology, quality of water or watersheds.

The world over, about 70% of water is used in the agriculture sector. In Pakistan, that percentage stands at 90%, with 50% wastage due to poor irrigation methods.[11] To help farmers improve their water management and reduce water use through high-efficiency irrigation techniques as well as new technologies, Nestlé has partnered with the Punjab Agriculture Department to encourage local farmers to take up drip irrigation. Nestlé covers 40% of the farmer's cost of putting up equipment for drip irrigation while the Punjab Government covers 60% of the cost. The Company is also developing model farms in partnership with different academic (University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences) and research organizations (Pakistan Agricultural Research Council) by installing high-efficiency irrigation systems like drip as stated above, different types of furrow irrigation and sprinklers based on the farmers' needs. Nestlé is also introducing perennial fodder verities to its dairy farmers which is evidenced to bring substantial water saving.

Similarly Nestlé has developed smart soil moisture sensors that read the moisture level of the soil and send regular data updates to a cloud from where the farmer receives information about which areas he should irrigate and how much. It has partnered with the Lahore University of Management Sciences to develop a software that enables the farmers and researchers to see the soil moisture level remotely on their computer screens. This helps save water and increase productivity by reducing the chance of under or over-irrigation.

While the industrial sector accounts only for 1% of water withdrawal in Pakistan[12], there is little or no attention paid to improving in-house efficiencies when it comes to water use. Nestlé Pakistan, as a responsible business, strives to have a positive impact in society through introducing responsible business techniques in terms of its operations, partnerships and communities. The Company's programs to improve efficiencies, recycle and reuse water has enabled it to reduce water consumption per ton of product by 11% between 2013 and 2016. Nestlé Pakistan's Sheikhupura Factory is also working on an innovative technology that enables it to extract water from fresh milk instead of drawing on an outside supply.

Sustainable Development Goal 12, requires industries to produce in a manner which facilitates decent and green jobs, reduces environmental and social costs and encourages doing more with using less resources while ensuring competiveness and eliminating poverty.[13] The corporate sector has an important role to play to address the growing threat of water scarcity. Companies are increasingly becoming aware of the need of sustainable use of watersheds and accessibility of water to the communities. However, water scarcity has to be handled mutually as it poses a threat to not only businesses but to all of us, collectively.

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NEW DELHI

Destabilizing Air Defence System

India and Russia have formally signed a $ 5.2 billion deal for the S-400 missile system from Russia amid a threat of tough sanctions from the US.

By Atif Shamim Syed

India and Russia announced a defence agreement on October 5, 2018 according to which India will purchase the S-400 missile system from Russia. The deal is worth more than 5 billion dollars.

The S-400 Triumf is an anti-aircraft weapon system developed by Russia's Almaz Central Design Bureau. It is considered as one of the best air defence systems currently in production anywhere in the world.

The S-400 deal and many other bilateral agreements were concluded during a recent official visit of the Russian President to India. Both the leaders refrained from mentioning the missile deal in their press statements because it is very likely to upset Washington. There was no mention of the deal in the joint speech of the two leaders after the conclusion of the talks despite the fact that the contract represented the high point of Vladimir Putin's two-day state visit to India.

It was only mentioned in paragraph 45 of the joint statement issued half an hour after the speech. The text revealed that the transaction was worth 5.2 billion dollars. Deliveries are supposed to begin in 2020.

India had been warned by the US that a defence deal with Russia might expose it to economic sanctions under a United States federal law, the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). It was signed into law by President Donald Trump in August 2017.

CAATSA sanctions buying weapons from Russia by any entity or country with the aim of punishing the latter for interfering in the American presidential elections, and its interference in Ukraine. In September, the US sanctioned China for purchasing Sukhoi-25 fighter jets and the S-400 system from Russia, sending a message to all other nations who might be considering buying Russian-made weapons.

India has invested enormous political capital in Washington during Obama's tenure and now Narendra Modi hopes to reap its dividends. A presidential waiver from CAATSA will allow New Delhi to avoid scathing economic sanctions. However, as yet there have been no signals from the US to this effect. India has argued that the purchase of S-400 was crucial for its national defence since it is flanked by two hostile nations: China and Pakistan. The missile system will provide India with an opportunity to enhance its defence capability and also serve as a deterrent against both countries.

India's dilemma is not only to avoid the CAATSA sanctions but to also safeguard its budding association with Washington while preserving its historical relationship with Russia. The US, on the other hand, risks undermining the administration's plan of partnering with India in the broader Indo-Pacific perspective. The US deems India as one of its strategic allies in the region and hopes to use it – along with Japan and Australia - for countering China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, the US and India have penned two defence contracts allowing both of them to use each others' military bases for various purposes.

However, obtaining a presidential waiver from the CAATSA sanctions will not be an easy task for India owing to the shifting political perspective of the White House and Donald Trump's hostile opinion regarding New Delhi's trade policies.

Donald Trump recently called India a 'tariff King', and warned the latter against imposing additional tariffs on imports. Trump's changing stance on India has several political experts believing that the presidential waiver that India is hoping for may not be forthcoming. The US administration will most probably use the threat of sanctions as a leverage in other trade disputes. Even if Washington grants waiver to India, it will extract benefits in other arenas that may not be to New Delhi's liking.

India is currently engaged in a

With the latest acquisition of S-400 missiles system, the balance of power has shifted in India's favour.

massive effort to modernize its weapons cache which it currently deems as obsolete and thus, unable to counter the threat of an assertive and strengthened China. The S-400 Triumf missile system is a significant addition to the Indian military arsenal. New Delhi is currently also engaged in the production of 5th generation T-50 fighter jets with Russia.

The US sees China as its global adversary. Being one of China's most reliable strategic partners, Pakistan feels out of favour with America. The policy-makers in Pakistan have failed to foresee the implications of this development while their Indian counterparts have been keen enough to not only anticipate it, but also to adapt their own policies to the changing international environment.

With the latest acquisition of S-400 missiles systems by New Delhi, the balance of power has shifted in India's favour. Pakistan has been unable to counter India's aggressive militarization, failing on both the diplomatic and economic fronts. Pakistan needs to keep pace with India's exponential defence spending. However, the poor financial condition of the country coupled with the burden of hefty IMF loans repayments has all but paralyzed Pakistan's economy. With the India-Pakistan comprehensive dialogue on hold at the moment, there is little chance that the situation will get better in the near future. S

The writer is a free-lancer and an investment banker based in Karachi. He can be reached at syedatifshamim@hotmail.com

CHANDIGARH

New Hope for Communal Harmony

There are indications that the Indian government is at last showing concern about the interests of religious communities and the first step seems to be the amendments to the Indian Penal Code.

By Muheeb Ahad

India is a pluralistic society with different religious groups identifying themselves and pressing their cases for a better place in society. Though the Indian Constitution has removed many disabilities of minorities but the political movements has curtailed the sphere of such thinking. The Punjab Cabinet on 21, August 2018 nodded amendments to the Indian Penal Code as well as the Code of Criminal Procedure to make blasphemy and sacrilege of religious texts punishable with life imprisonment. The Bill was passed unanimously by the Punjab cabinet. The Government of Punjab has taken a major step towards curbing such incidents and maintaining communal harmony in the state. The Bill would need assent from the president before its imposition. The Bill states:

"The Cabinet has approved insertion of section 295AA to the Indian Penal Code to provide that whatever causes injury, damage or sacrilege to Guru Granth Sahib, Baghwad Geeta, Holy Quran and Holy Bible with the intention to hurt the religious feelings of the people shall be punished with imprisonment for life".

It was in June 2015, when the first incident of sacrilege took place in India and had continued to happen until January 2018. According to reports, the Punjab Police had prepared a list of more than 100 sacrilege incidents from 2015 to 2017. The previous government of the Punjab had

proposed a similar law for desecration of Guru Granth, in the wake of repeated incidents of deliberate attempts to provoke religious rage by dispersing torn pages and destroyed copies of the Sikh holy book in different parts of the Punjab. The Centre had turned down the proposal earlier on the basis that it was not a secular law. The present amendment includes the holy books of other major religions to seek clearance of secular bar. The current proposal is an extended form of amendments passed by the Punjab Assembly in 2016 and is particularly intended to curb acts of sacrilege targeting the Guru Granth.

The government of Punjab has done the country a disservice to some extent by seeking to add a section to the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that would make even reasoned debate of theology a crime that warrants life imprisonment.

Anupam Gupta, Senior advocate at the Punjab and Haryana Court expressed his feelings thus: "While it is a welcome step. I have a concern. I am presuming that the definition pertains to physical sacrilege or desecration. The state has to be careful about the definition. Desecration is an offence but the parameter of this offence needs to be cautiously drafted. If someone writes an article or a book, makes a speech with a bit of intellectual criticism that certainly should not be covered. There should no vagueness in defining because then it ceases to have any conceptual meaning."

The Punjab Government's proposal to amend Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code is in ambiguity as the Bill falls short of defining what exactly sacrilege means. The law on the one hand is regressive which might close the door of interfaith dialogue and reasoned critique. It may put a bar on freedom of speech, especially in religious debates and discussions. It will also have deep ramifications beyond the Punjab. On the positive side, the Amendment would hold back such incidents and may bring communal harmony and peace to the state. However, the Bill seems to be rather complicated and would only prove advantageous to the people of the state if elaborated in detail so that it can bring peace and stability to the region.

It needs to include other religions like Buddhism and Jainism, which have no mention in the new law. The Bill will also eradicate controversial discussions on religions and the positive aspects of all religions will be highlighted and encouraged in debates and discussions. It would also bring religious harmony in the Punjab. To counter sacrilege incidents across India, the law should be implemented in other states as well, but it should not be misused and misinterpreted. India needs to bring more confidence in the religious sentiments of its people as, in recent years, this aspect has been increasingly lacking in the national narrative. S

Based in Srinagar, Indian Occupied Kashmir, the writer is a research scholar of Islamic Studies. He can be reached at muheebahad363@gmail.com

NEW DELHI

THE BATTLE FOR RAFALE

Three years down the line, the Rafale deal has turned into a synonym for distrust in India between the Opposition and the ruling BJP amid allegations of collusion, lack of transparency and crony capitalism.

By Taj M Khattak

It was during the 1987 Paris Air Show that I first saw a senior Indian Air Force officer in the spectators stand, filming the impressive maneuvers of the Rafale aircraft, which had just completed its landing trials onboard a French Navy aircraft carrier. He then mentioned to someone close by, 'this is the aircraft for India' - and one could see why. The aircraft had successfully completed its first maiden flight the year before and had decades of operational life ahead of it. The IAF's obsession with Rafale has continued since then as the Indian Air Force's incumbent Chief, Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa, recently called Rafale's induction in the IAF a game changer in the region.

The Rafale amply qualifies as contender to fill the gap between the in-service Sukhoi-30 fighter in the IAF and the future Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), Tejas, which has been under development for the past three and a half decades. This extra-ordinary delay in development is primarily due to the sluggish decision-making process in India, where, as soon as an aircraft reaches a certain level of development, the advances in technology make a compelling case for further up-grades. Tejas was inducted in the IAF in 2016 but the project is far from complete.

Like all major weapons procurement deals in India, the Rafale has had a turbulent history. After years spent in tendering, evaluation and negotiations, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government announced in 2012 that Dassault's Rafale had won the Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) competition. India had allocated about US$ 8 billion for acquisition of 18 'ready to fly' aircraft from France and another 108 to be locally manufactured at the Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL) in Bangalore with technical assistance from Dassault.

The total value of the deal is in the range of Indian rupees 1,300,000/- crores and, as per Indian procurement laws, contracts valued above rupees 2,000 crores should have at least 30% off-set clauses. Interestingly, the recent S-400 deal with Russia, also above rupees 2,000 crores, doesn't have an off-set clause. The UPA negotiated Rafale deal, however, stalled due to differences over local production where India demanded Dassault to assume quality assurance responsibility of the aircraft produced at HAL, while Dassault had reservations about HAL's ability to successfully undertake complex manufacturing and transfer of technology challenges.

This thorny issue of aircraft production appeared to have been resolved when Indian media reported in 2013-14 that the two sides agreed to let HAL manufacture 70% content of the aircraft. However, differences over the other contentious issue of the 'off-set' clause continued to simmer below the surface. The contract was expected to be signed in March 2015 in the hope that issues related to 50% contract value in off-set clauses will ultimately be untangled amicably. But soon thereafter and in April 2015, in a surprise move, India's Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar announced that the MMRCA deal signed by the UPA government was effectively dead.

In the same month, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Paris, India announced its decision to buy 36 Rafale fighters at a price tag of US$ 7.8 billion and signed an 'Inter Government Agreement' (IGA) a few months later during French President François Hollande's visit to India. In 2016, the Indian government directed the Indian Navy to engage with Dassault for procurement of the naval version of Rafale for its aircraft carriers as it desired commonality between logistics and spares for fighter aircraft with the Navy and Air Force, which could lead to buying an additional 54 aircraft for the Indian Navy.

The deal has caused a huge controversy in India as the Congress party claims that it is very expensive and its contractual clauses are void of transfer of technology provisions. The Modi government has tried to deflect criticism by declaring that the 'off-set' agreement is a matter between two commercial companies and the Indian government had no role in it. But the opposition parties are not convinced with this reasoning and insist that by eliminating HAL, Dassuault would be under no obligation to transfer crucial aerospace technology to India.

Besides, this would affect human resource enrichment and capacity building opportunities in the state-owned HAL.

Congress party president Rahul Gandhi, has also alleged that it would benefit a leading Indian businessman, Mr. Anil Ambani, whose firm 'Reliance Defence' would execute the 'off-set' clauses of the contract. Lately, Francois Hollande, who was President of France from 2012 to 2017 when the Modi government signed the contract, has further fueled the controversy by stating in a recent interview that France had no option but to select the Ambani Group as it was specifically so desired by the Indian government. This explosive disclosure has posed a formidable challenge to BJP's electoral prospects.

The opposition has been demanding cost break-down details of the contract for comparison with earlier contracts but the Modi government is stubbornly refusing, citing the 2008 agreement between India and France, which prohibits sharing of confidential information. In fact, in the wake of this demand by the opposition, the Indian government has inked another agreement on protection of classified information, which widens the scope of confidentiality of high technology exchanges, including defence procurement.

This latest accord subsumes the 2008 agreement signed by India and France and the government considers it critical to what it calls 'building an ecosystem' to attract major foreign partners in high technology collaborations. The refusal by the Modi government to share cost breakdown details has strengthened opposition parties' suspicions about transparency. A lawyer has filed a petition in the Supreme Court of India seeking direction to the government to reveal details of the deal and comparative prices in a sealed envelope to the apex court.

In a comical twist, the controversy has spilled over to Pakistan, when Senator Rehman Malik tweeted 'RG will be next PM if he follows JetGate properly'. The BJP government and its lackey media went berserk trying to establish a link between congress and Pakistan's establishment. India's widely watched TV channel 'The Republic' even interviewed Malik for over an hour during prime time in an effort to 'extract' any clues to expose the Congress Party's nefarious designs vis-à-vis Indian defence needs.

The next few months will determine what direction the Rafale deal takes in India. The Rafale aircraft, with its 'power to weight' ratio characteristics, is in a category of its own. Its two M88-2 engines render it ideal for low-altitude penetration as well as high-altitude interception missions over land and at sea. This poses a serious threat to Pakistan. With induction of the Rafale in the Indian Air Force and the recently contracted S-400 long range surface to air missiles from Russia, the changed air environment in the skies over India and Pakistan will be more dangerous than ever before.

Harold Wilson once said that a week is a long time in politics. The Indian elections are still a few months away. Who knows Senator Rehman Malik's prediction about its outcome could yet prove true if the acrimony in Indian politics over the Rafale deal continues to grow at its current pace. S

The writer is a retired Vice Admiral of the Pakistan Navy. He can be reached at tajkhattak@ymail.com

ISLAMABAD

'NO MORE'

There is a chill in the ties between the United States and Pakistan. The US-China trade war and the fact that Pakistan is building bridges with other nations is a source of worry for the US.

By Abdul Basit

Following parliamentary elections in Pakistan, the Trump Administration reached out to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government to reset fractured ties.

The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi have held two meetings in Islamabad and Washington so far to renegotiate the terms of engagement. Suspension of military aid, resurgence of Taliban attacks in Afghanistan and efforts to revive the Afghan peace process dominated the bilateral discussions. However, absence of joint statements at the conclusion of both meetings indicates the continuing deadlock.

To Pakistan's frustration, the US continues to view the bilateral relationship with Pakistan through the prism of Afghanistan. The inclusion of US State Department's Special Adviser on Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad and Joint Chief of Staff Joseph Dunford in the Islamabad trip signifies that.

The US-Pakistan ties for the moment will continue to remain transactional, tenuous and conflict-prone. The US rhetoric of renegotiating the terms of engagement with Pakistan is a continuation of its old stick-and-carrot policy that incentivizes cooperation and penalizes defiance. Washington's contradictory and confusing demands from Islamabad of going after the Taliban safe havens and bringing them to the negotiation table have only added to growing scepticism in Pakistan about the former's sincerity to Afghan reconciliation.

At this stage, when the Afghan Taliban have expanded their territorial control, scored impressive military victories exhibiting better operational capabilities and have diversified their regional ties beyond Pakistan, a clumsy military action would be counter-productive and a recipe for more chaos. The en masse resignations of Afghanistan's security cabinet indicate how bad things are in that country.

The US tendency of blaming and scapegoating Pakistan for its failures in Afghanistan is misleading and strategically myopic. All the variables that can make an insurgency successful favour the Afghan Taliban, of which cross-border sanctuaries are only one but not the only factor. Insurgencies succeed if: a) the government is dysfunctional and unpopular, b) external support (financial and logistical) is in good supply, c) sanctuaries are available to hide, train and reorganize, d) a political narrative is in place that resonates with the masses, e) there is mastery of guerrilla warfare to fight a conventionally superior adversary, and, f) there is knowledge of the terrain which becomes a force multiplier in asymmetric battles.

The Afghan Taliban have a qualitative edge over Afghanistan's National Unity Government (NUG) on all fronts. Blaming Pakistan may be convenient for the US but it does not add up if a nuanced and objective assessment of ground realities in Afghanistan is carried out. Any military misadventure to dismantle the Taliban sanctuaries on the Pakistani side will only take the Afghan war into Pakistani borders. The stance of the new Pakistani government not to fight foreign wars, emphasis on political termination of the conflict in Afghanistan through talks and turning down US demands of "do more" with "no more" will keep bilateral relations conflict-prone in the near future.

The change of government in Pakistan opened up a new opportunity for the Trump Administration to take a fresh start by restoring financial assistance. However, the decision to suspend $300 million reimbursement under the Coalition Support Funds (CSF) ahead of Mike Pompeo's visit to Islamabad added more chill to the already frosty US-Pakistan relations. Before this, FATF-grey-listing and the cancellation of the International Military Education and Training programme for Pakistani military officers had further eroded US political capital and goodwill.

The US hard tactics have pushed Pakistan out of the US orbit of influence and closer towards China. During the meetings with Shah Mehmood Qureshi, the US also raised the issue of the growing Chinese footprint in Pakistan. In August, Mike Pompeo warned the International Monetary Fund (IMF) not to bail out Pakistan fearing the money would be used to pay off Chinese loans under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

A recent report in the Wall Street Journal indicates that Pakistan has emerged as a new global flash point in the China-US trade war. The report points out that both US and China are fighting for dominance and influence in Pakistan and are trying to exploit the country's precarious financial security situation. This means if Pakistan takes advantage of another IMF programme, the US will impose certain

There is a fundamental disconnect between the strategic outlooks of US and Pakistan on Afghanistan.

terms on the bailout package, demanding specific restrictions on borrowing from China and forcing Pakistan to scale back some of the BRI projects.

Given this, Pakistan is between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, it needs an IMF bailout to overcome the balance of payment crisis and stabilize its shrinking foreign reserves. On the other, it desperately needs Chinese investment for its on-going infrastructure and energy projects to attract more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the long-term to minimize its dependence on foreign borrowing. If it succeeds in China, this will undermine the US's dominance as the global trade leader. To the contrary, if the US frustrates the Chinese overambitious plans to expand its trade footprint under the BRI, it will continue to retain its hegemony over world trade and the key trade routes.

In its 2017 National Security Strategy, the US had outlined Chinese investment in the connectivity project under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as being detrimental to its leadership in the world and in the international world order. The US is equally concerned about China's strategic ambitions of building naval and military bases in places like Gwadar and Djibouti. This concern was raised in Pentagon's report on Chinese Military and Security Developments in 2017.

In sum, there is a fundamental disconnect between the strategic outlooks of US and Pakistan on Afghanistan and the growing Chinese footprint in South Asia. The US views China as a competitor, while Pakistan considers it an all-weather friend and a strategic partner. Nonetheless, the agreement by both sides to continue dialogue and cooperation despite multiple challenges is a positive sign. To gain Pakistan's cooperation, the US needs a coherent strategy and a nuanced Afghan-South Asia policy, which acknowledges Islamabad's contributions, sacrifices and economic losses in the war on terror as well as appreciates and addresses its legitimate security concerns. S

The author is an Associate Research Fellow (ARF) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore. He tweets @basitresearcher

ISLAMABAD

The Housing Target

Five million houses in five years may appear to be an insurmountable target for critics of the current government but if the right steps are taken and the right balance created between the urban-rural divide, it is possible to achieve the target.

By Aadil Nakhoda

In its desire to achieve inclusive economic growth, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government has an ambitious plan to build 5 million low-cost housing units across Pakistan. Around 1.5 to 2 million such units are to be built in the urban areas, while 3 to 3.5 million will be built in rural areas of Pakistan. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) estimates that the annual shortage in housing is around 400,000 units. The PTI manifesto states that Pakistan has a shortage of approximately 12 million housing units, with more than two-thirds of the shortage being in the rural areas. The poorest segments of society live in precarious conditions in illegal settlements, particularly in the urban areas. These settlements usually lack basic facilities, such as potable water, sewerage and electricity. Along with the housing schemes, PTI also promises to create more than 10 million jobs in the next five years. It is, therefore, essential that policies made to meet both objectives complement each other.

Housing societies typically focus on high-end customers as they provide a better rate of return to the developers and the financiers. On the other hand, affordable and low-cost housing has to be large-scale, so that several hundreds of units are built on one location. Further, the investment not only requires more time and money but the returns can also be riskier as the potential residents often lack financial stability. Those seeking affordable housing are not only likely to be first-time buyers but may also not avail bank loans and mortgages. They mostly rely on affordable housing finance schemes. However, the SBP reports that housing finance from banks and the House Building Finance Company Limited (HBFCL) in Pakistan is at Rs 83 billion, which is 0.5% of GDP. This ratio is lower in comparison to that of India and Bangladesh. Housing finance has been neglected by the previous governments in Pakistan.

The housing policy of the new government focuses on ensuring that the poorest segments have access to decent housing and are provided incentives with easier terms on housing finance. The developers receive favourable incentives on service taxes. Although, decent living facilities have long been a point on the agenda of other political parties, they have failed to deliver as obvious by the mounting shortage of affordable housing units across the country. Further, such projects are often marred with controversies, including allegations of mismanagement and corruption.

The new government must take into account the characteristics of the households it intends to facilitate. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), Pakistan has more than 19 million housing units. Around 68.6% of the total housing units are located in the rural areas. Approximately 38% of these units in Pakistan have only one room and 30.5% are two-room units. On the other hand, 31.7% of the houses in urban areas are two-room units, while 30.4% are one-room units. However, 82.1% of the housing units in the urban areas are classified as 'pucca' (permanent or solid). This falls to 42% in the rural areas.

Approximately 55% of the housing units in Pakistan are located in Punjab, followed by 26% in Sindh. However, 72.7% of the housing units in the rural areas of Sindh are one-room units. On the other hand, a larger proportion of housing units in the KPK and Punjab are either two-room or 3-4 room units. Therefore, the type of housing demanded is likely to differ across provinces.

According to the Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2015-2016, the average size of a household in Pakistan is 6.31. This increases to 8.06 for households belonging to the poorest quintile. The poorest quintile also has the largest number of children in their households, exceeding 4.59 per household. Interestingly, the poorest households tend to be larger in the urban areas than in the rural areas. Also, the inequality reported for households in urban areas is higher than that for households in rural areas. The poorest households belonging to the lowest income quintile in the urban areas cumulatively earn 1/20th of the amount earned by all the richest households in the urban areas belonging to the highest income quintile. The poorest households in the rural areas cumulatively earn ½ the total income of the richest households in the rural areas. Further, it is more likely that rural households rather than urban households have additional family members, in particular female members, contributing to household income. The poorest urban dwellers are likely to be more income deprived than their rural counterparts.

As the government aims to create more than 10 million jobs, it must focus on the inclusion of the poorest population in the labour force. Although, the households in the poorest quintile of the population may have an additional member of households contributing to the total income, the head of the household is most likely to be employed in the agricultural sector. The head of the richer households is more likely to be employed in the wholesale, retail or manufacturing sector. The majority of those working as skilled agricultural workers and in elementary occupations belong to poorer households, while those belonging to the richest households are employed as professionals, senior officials, service personnel, sales workers and clerks. As occupations vary between households across different economic strata, the government must ensure that job creation leads to potential upward economic and social mobility of the poorest households. The government must incorporate strategies to ensure that the recipients of this program seek employment in the formal sector, promoting upward social and economic mobility.

One of the biggest challenges for the government is to ensure increased female participation in the labour force. Women represent less than a quarter of the total labour force, which unfortunately is dismally low even compared to countries with a similar level of development as Pakistan. Female participation in urban areas is lower than in rural areas. The majority of female workers are listed as skilled agricultural and fishery workers, with limited participation in the manufacturing sector as well in elementary occupations. Women on average earn 1/4th of the wages of men. A significant proportion of women participate as contributing family workers, which is one of the reasons for their lower wages. Even in the majority of occupations where they are better represented, their wages are significantly lower than their male counterparts. Therefore, providing opportunities, education and training for females to participate in the labour force as employees in relatively skilled occupations will help to alleviate deprivation in the poorest households.

When housing societies are located near labour-intensive industries that require cheap labour to increase production, the increasing supply of labour should be satisfied by a rise in its demand. The government must develop mass transit systems, particularly in the urban areas, connecting industrial and commercial areas with the housing societies. Employers can be provided with tax incentives to hire workers living in low-cost housing facilities located in close proximity. Employment opportunities to additional family members can help reduce the burden of poverty. Further, larger employers can be incentivized to financially support housing schemes close to their locations as has been the case in other developing countries. One of the unintended consequences of low housing schemes is that it may increase the size of the informal economy, particularly if opportunities for employment in the formal sector are not provided. Hence, it is imperative that the government undertakes a holistic approach as it strives to make housing affordable to the poorest segment of the population. SA

The writer is an Assistant Professor of Economics & Research Fellow at CBER, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi. He can be reached at anakhoda@iba.edu.pk

MALÉ

A Positive Turn

Now that Abdullah Yameen is out in the Maldives, his successor Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has a busy agenda in front of him to put the country back on the rails of real democracy.

By Dr. Imran Khalid

Ever since the September 23 presidential poll, the political situation in the Maldives is witnessing a series of fast twists and twirls. No one had predicted that President Abdulla Yameen, who had been ruling this country with an iron hand for five years, would be defeated by opposition candidate Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in an outcome generally hailed as a victory for democracy. President Yameen showed political puerility and fickleness after the electoral defeat. Visibly flummoxed, he grudgingly accepted the "people's verdict" and "officially" conceded defeat a day after the announcement of election results.

Just a little over a quarter million people in the island nation voted on September 23 in an election held amid intensifying international concerns for a lack of transparency and blatant suppression of government opponents. The veteran lawmaker Ibrahim Mohamed Solih had the strong backing and support of Yameen's main political rivals including the then jailed former presidents Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and Mohamed Nasheed along with Jumhooree Party leader and business tycoon Gasim Ibrahim.

Yameen went on national TV to concede defeat and promised a smooth transition of power to his successor. He further vowed to serve the people as the main opposition leader. A day before the elections, an election police contingent was sent to raid the office of Solih to ostensibly "investigate acts of bribery" but found nothing. Yameen did not hesitate to manipulate the election machinery to his advantage and major incongruities were observed in the voter registration process.

Yameen assumed the charge of presidency following a disputed election in 2013 and was quite successful in bringing order and stability to a country riddled by years of unrest since prison riots led to a democratic uprising more than a decade ago. With the "generous" support of China, Yameen smartly implemented his development agenda, despite challenges to his rule from all sides. His infrastructure achievements - which include a bridge, new airports and harbours, as well as dozens of resort openings – failed to quash public anger over allegations of graft and a wide-ranging crackdown on dissent.

His treatment of his political opponents has also been very spiteful. He jailed or forced into exile nearly all his political rivals, arrested hundreds for protesting against his rule, suspended parliament for long periods and shuttered independent and critical media. He did all this in the name of defusing attempts to "topple" a democratically elected government, but critics said Yameen resorted to such autocratic behaviour to cover-up corruption.

Those jailed during Yameen's tenure include his own vice president, Ahmed Adeeb, who was accused

for the tourism scam and two former presidents, including his half-brother 80-year-old Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who ruled the Maldives for three decades and Mohamed Nasheed, the country's first democratically elected leader. Two Supreme Court judges were also arrested during a state of emergency in February after the top court ordered the release of nine jailed dissidents. Interestingly, despite such a backdrop of corruption and political vandalism, Yameen was expected to sail through easily in the presidential poll. But the voters were in a different mood this time and he was shown the door.

It was Beijing that funded Yameen's infrastructure boom, catapulting the Maldives into what the opposition said was a "debt-trap". China indebted the Maldives by $1.3 billion during Yameen's five-year tenure, amounting to more than a quarter of its gross domestic product. Chinese companies were engaged in some 17 projects in the Maldives. These financing mechanisms clearly depict China's growing influence in the Maldives that had traditionally been a protégée of New Delhi ever since its independence.

China also provides the biggest chunk of tourists, averaging more than 300,000 annually, which is equivalent to about 70% of Maldives' population. During 2017, 306,530 Chinese tourists selected Maldives as their vacation destination. In view of the degree of control Beijing acquired over land, infrastructure and the financial system of the Maldives, Yameen's ouster is being projected as a colossal setback to China just as his authoritarian reign was a blessing for it.

New Delhi is fairly happy as far as the political change in the Maldives is concerned and Indian diplomats are quite optimistic that Yameen's departure from the scene will enable them to regain some of the leverage in its neighbourhood. Ibrahim Solih will face two imminent challenges; one, how to eradicate the influence of Yameen from the bureaucracy that has deeply infested every sphere of the government machinery, and two, how to strike a balance between China and India. Both are trying fiercely to elbow out each other from the country. Solih has to start massive reforms of the judiciary, security forces, the election commission and the bureaucracy to purge the system of all the ill-effects of decades of dictatorship that has not allowed democracy to take root. S

The writer is a freelance columnist and can be reached at ikhalid99@yahoo.com.

KATHMANDU

Friendship Under Stress

Though India and Nepal are contiguous neighbours, their bilateral ties have not been congenial for some years.

By Dr. Mansoor Akbar Kundi

Human behaviour is subject to change. Therefore, a permanent phenomenon in life is change itself. Similarly, the continuation of relationships among nation-states is subject to change from time to time. It is a complex phenomenon to understand as it might entail a single or many factors for the situation. Since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 that gave rise to nation-statehood, there have been a number of examples that relationships among states have improved and deteriorated.

The Nepal-India relationship is no exception to the rule. Nepal was the first country to enter a bilateral agreement with India in 1950. The Indian-Nepalese relationship which was traditionally very strong and largely considered as a model of endurable bilateralism for supporting one another's common national interests has been undergoing changes since 1947. This became more pronounced after Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was elected to power in May 2014. The bilateralism met setbacks on many occasions with bitter criticism and disagreements between the two governments.

One of the setbacks in the relationship was a dramatic upset when the Nepalese government under K.P.S. Oli announced that its army will not participate in the scheduled first joint military exercises in the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSEC). This is a regional group

comprising seven countries: Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan. It was established in February 2004 after Nepal and Bhutan joined BIST-EC, a region established for economic and trade co-operation between Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand in June 1997. Myanmar joined it a year later. Its headquarters is in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

BIMSEC largely stands for the promotion of trade and economic interests amongst member states with considerations to look into one another's political interests, if any. The joint military exercises from which Nepal walked out could be a joint regional effort for security integration not experienced before. Nepal and India had in the past held joint military exercises. Nepal has a small army comprising 95,000 regular and 65,000 reserve forces. But it is a professional army and has brilliantly served on different occasions in UN Peacekeeping Missions.

Why did the relationship between the two neighbouring countries that are close geographically and are predominantly Hindu states and have enjoyed cordial ties in past, went into a reversal? Only a few factors can be held accountable for the dilemma.

Nepal since 2008 is a constitutional republic based on a federal structure. The official political party is the Nepal Communist Party which is headed by K.P.S. Oli as the Prime Minister. The absolute majority of Nepal's population (81.5%) is Hindu, followed by Buddhists, Muslims, Kirants, Christians and others. The current constitution adopted in February 2015 replaced the interim constitution of 2007. Under the present constitution, Nepal has been declared as a secular state. Sovereignty belongs to people with neutrality of religions.

The Nepalese government blames the Modi government for supporting Hindutva and ignoring secular lines which began under Jawaharlal Nehru and served as the basis of the relationship between the two countries. Nehru who served as the Prime Minister of India for 17 years was tolerant and least opposed to communist rule inside and outside India. He is on record as saying that the larger threat to Indian integration and solidarity is from communalism rather than communism. The Oli government has repeatedly blamed Modi's policies as being anti-communist and against Nepalese national interests. It blames the Indian government for being responsible for political instability in Nepal since 2008 as no government has completed its tenure there. However, the continuity of elections in Nepal has not been marred. The current President of Nepal is B. D. Bhandari, the first female head of state of the country.

One of the differences between Nepal and India is the present political set-up the Nepal is based on. The relationship was marked with discontent soon after Nepal shook the shackles of the centuries-old monarchy and established a republic under a Maoist-titled political party. It brought Nepal closer to the People's Republic of China. However, relations with Indian governments under A. B. Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh were workable though the elected government of Prime Minister Madhev Kumar criticized the Indian government for ruining the Nepalese economy by imposing a 13-month economic blockade on the country. He and his predecessor J.N. Khanal had asked India to apologize and compensate Nepal which was not done. The relationship started worsening soon after the BJP government came to power under Modi. This government raised its objections over Nepal's 2015 Constitution. Modi sent his Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar to Kathmandu for discussions with the ruling and opposition groups who either opposed or supported the constitution.

The major objection by India was to convert an overwhelming Hindu population into a secular one with demarcation of Nepal into 7 provinces and 77 districts. The division would affect the larger neighbouring five Indian states: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Sikkim. Nepal was accountable for illegal immigration into India and India criticized Nepal for not regulating the Indian border linked areas with firm law and order. This was highlighted during Prime Minister Modi's visits to Nepal ---- the first visit by an Indian Premier in over 17 years since the visit by I K Gujral in 1997. After Modi stepped into power, he has paid three visits to Nepal. Along with Oli, he laid the foundations of the 900 MW Arun electricity project as well as the Raxaul-Katmandu Rail link.

Nepal is a landlocked country and shares a long 1,751 km mountainous, but porous and soft border with India through which people pass freely. The Modi government also showed defiance in response to continued requests by the Nepalese government to make changes in the 1950 bilateral agreement. The previous Indian governments had at least promised to look into the revision, but the BJP government has refused blatantly. Nepal considers the treaty, which makes India a close strategic partner, accountable for interference into Nepalese internal affairs by supporting anti-communist factions.

The 'friend of my enemy is my enemy' factor also plays an opposite role in two countries' relationship. The growing relationship between Nepal and China in recent years accounts for distancing with India. Diplomatic relations between China and Nepal were established in 1955 during the famous Bandung Conference. However, they were not close till 1996 when an armed struggle against the monarchy in Nepal was started by the communist forces. Since 2008, both China and Nepal have more cordial relations and, besides diplomatic ties, have strengthened economic and military relations as well. In 2017, in April and September, China and Nepal conducted joint military exercises which, compared to the ones conducted between Nepal and India, were on a much larger scale. Politically and ideologically, the Nepalese ruling party is closer to the Chinese ideology than any other South Asian country. S

The writer is Meritorious Professor at the Department of Politics and International Relations at the International Islamic University, Islamabad. He can be reached at dera1955@gmail.com

COLOMBO

Inclusive Constitution

Sri Lanka has a new Constitution ready in the pipeline but there are objections from the Sinhala community that this time, the Tamils are being given more powers and this may again lead to secessionist trends.

By S. G. Jilanee

Sri Lanka is going to give itself yet another Constitution, - the third, since independence in 1948. The sponsors are upbeat, which they have all the reason to be, because they propose to introduce some radical changes that seek to make the country truly democratic. The chairman of the Steering Committee of the Constitutional Assembly, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, in a special statement in parliament, was effusive in his praise for the new constitution, saying, "it will transform our country and herald a new era of prosperity and development."

The government aims to replace the existing executive president-headed Constitution adopted in 1978 with a new one which will also accommodate the Tamil demand for devolution of power to their regions. Rajapaksa's joint opposition is therefore, whipping up the Sinhala majority sentiment against the new constitution.

To allay misgivings of the Buddhist-Sinhala majority, the Prime Minister held out the assurance that the prominence given to Buddhism in Sri Lankan society will be safeguarded and that, the new Constitution is based on the principles of Buddhism.

The current Constitution, adopted in 1978, provides for an executive president with wide powers that conflict with democratic principles. Successive governments have been trying since 1994, to reform the constitution to strengthen democracy and ensure inclusivity, especially of the marginalized and alienated sections of society.

Not only Presidents Kumaratunga and Sirisena attempted some constitutional reforms, such as the 17th and 19th Amendments to the constitution, but President Rajapaksa, during his tenure, also employed the All-Party Conference, the All-Party Representative Committee and a committee of experts as a working group on constitutional reforms.

The 18th Amendment to the constitution that President Rajapaksa enacted, transformed Sri Lanka "from a limping democracy to an elected de-facto monarchy," remarkable for the complete absence of checks and balances against the arbitrary and absolute use and abuse of state power by the executive president.

The distinctive features of the new constitution are that it abolishes the executive presidency introduced in 1978 and also accommodates the Tamil demand for devolution of power to them.

The draft constitution has come under fire from two sources. One is the pro-Rajapaksa group, which objects to certain clauses that attempt to undo the mischief Rajapaksa wrought. This group considers those clauses prejudicial to Rajapaksa's personal interests and complains that the clauses have been designed with malice towards the Rajapaksa brothers.

Their primary objection, therefore, is the abolition of the executive presidency, which Rajapaksa had assiduously nurtured into a pseudo-monarchy. Their hearts naturally bleed at watching their cherished edifice demolished.

Another objection relates to the proposal to limit the presidency to two consecutive terms. This is a moot point. In the U.S. a president can only serve two terms. But in Germany, Angela Merkel is serving her fourth term. In the UK, too, there is no limit on how many times an individual can serve as prime minister. Hopefully, the political parties will find a consensus solution to this issue.

The second source to attack the new constitution comprises the conservative Sinhala majority, which opposes power-sharing with the Hindu Tamil minority. Former president Rajapaksa has accused President Maithripala Sirisena of trying to appease the minority Tamil community by promising devolution, while his joint opposition is whipping up the Sinhala majority sentiment against the new constitution.

Referring to the military defeat of the LTTE in 2009, Rajapaksa said recently, "We have to safeguard our victory." But, he forgot that Sinhala domination and Tamil deprivation plunged the country into a protracted civil war for 26 years. It is therefore, not appeasement but a realistic approach to the problem of the Tamil minority.

Rajapaksa forgot that frustration,

if allowed to fester, fuels rebellion. Prabhakaran has been killed and his LTTE destroyed. But another may rise from his ashes if the situation continues to drift. This is the issue the new constitution attempts to tackle through devolution of power to the Tamils.

The opponents to the proposed constitution are incensed by the term "maximum devolution" used in the proposal, because it envisages devolving power to the Tamil-dominated Northern and Eastern Provinces. It is widely recognized that it were the island's unitary constitutions (enacted in 1948, 1972, and 1978), that ensured all political powers for the majority Sinhala people and were the root cause of the 26-year civil war. Even then, political power-sharing still remains anathema to a large section of the Sinhala political establishment.

There have also been some rude attacks on the proposed constitution from certain quarters. A retired Sri Lankan army officer, Major General Kamal Gunaratne, insisted that "those seeking to introduce the new constitution are traitors who must be killed." Earlier, Dayan Jayatilleka, a former diplomat, had called for rising up and confronting the prime minister, as one of the architects of the interim proposals and a Sri Lankan academic, Asoka Bandarage, challenged the government's legitimacy to change the constitution. Meanwhile, the all-powerful Buddhist clergy has firmly vetoed the proposals on the grounds that this would undermine Sri Lanka's unitary governance.

The opposition to devolving political power to the Tamil-dominated Northern and Eastern provinces is driven by two notions. One is the fear that greater autonomy could pave the way for the Tamils to secede. Next is the long-held belief that the island of Sri Lanka is a designated sanctuary for Theravada Buddhism, the purest form of Buddhism and, as such, precludes political power sharing with non-Buddhists.

However, any question of the Tamil-dominated northeast region seceding has been comprehensively addressed in the interim report, which categorically states that the country will remain an "indivisible united" entity. To make the position even more clear, the official Sinhala version of the interim proposal uses the word ēkīya (unitary in Sinhalese) to describe the constitution, while studiously avoiding the word unitary and federal in the English and Tamil versions. Nonetheless, the mindset shaped by political Buddhism remains a major obstacle to enacting the proposed constitution. According to a section of the country's Buddhist clergy, there is no need for a new Constitution.

Senior Minister and Cabinet spokesman Rajitha Senaratne said they would go ahead with drafting the new Constitution. From the public statements made by the President and the Prime Minister, it appears that the leaders are committed to their promise – a new Constitution that brings an end to the executive presidency and creates a comprehensive political solution to the Tamil question through enduring power devolution.

The Joint Opposition (JO) claims it has the support of seventy parliamentarians. But, constitutional reform requires a two-thirds majority in a parliament of two hundred and twenty-five members. Therefore, for the JO to prevent reform it needs at least one-third, or seventy-five members, which means that constitutional reforms can be enacted without any hassle for a better tomorrow for Sri Lanka. S

The writer is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia. He can be reached at ghulamjil@outlook.com

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LONDON

Chequered Plan

By Imran Jan

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KAMPALA

A New Nelson Mandela

By Muhammad Muneeb Qadir

LONDON

CHEQUERED PLAN

British Prime Minister Theresa May's Chequers Plan has been met with heavy scepticism from trade experts who question whether its numbers add up.

By Imran Jan

British Prime Minister Theresa May presented her Chequers Plan in Salzburg, Austria, expecting a warm welcome for her proposal. However, what the EU leaders heard wasn't pleasant to their ears and what May heard in reply wasn't music to her ears either. That is probably why we didn't see her dancing in Salzburg. She was visibly furious to hear French President Emmanuel Macron say that the Brexit has been sold to the British by "liars" and that Ms. May must come up with "new propositions" if she wants a deal. His argument was that the British were simply told that exit from the bloc would be simple and profitable. Well, let us break it to them that, as they say in small print, terms and conditions apply. Macron also said the bloc would "never accept a deal which would damage the EU and its integrity".

Theresa May hit back by saying that there wouldn't be any amendments to her Chequers Plan. She said that the EU's demand that England remain in the European Economic Area and customs union would "make a mockery" of Britain's 2016 referendum. She further stated that, "The referendum was the largest democratic exercise this country has ever undergone. To deny its legitimacy or frustrate its result threatens public trust in our democracy." While May may advocate her Chequers plan aggressively, the plan is developing a chequered history by being unacceptable to parties on both sides.

Even though the proposal was adopted by cabinet in July, it has created much division within the Tories. Two Eurosceptic ministers have quit. One of them is Brexit Secretary David Davis. The other one, Boris Johnson has resigned as Foreign Secretary over the issue, labelling the plan a "suicide vest". A controversial idea in the plan is a hybrid arrangement wherein England would stay in the common market for the exchange of goods and agriculture but not allow free movement of people. The Chequers Plan calls for free trade in goods between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and a complicated technical fix to the issue of customs, which includes the collection of European Union duties by British officials.

That is at odds with the European Union not allowing cherry-picking from the four basic freedoms: movement of labour, goods, services and capital. The argument of the European Union leaders is that England cannot pick and choose what it likes and while there were obligations associated with the benefits of being a member of the European Union, there would be costs to exiting the bloc. That withdrawal negotiations could only commence when Article 50 of the European Union Treaty is triggered. European Commission President Donald Tusk said that May's proposal of keeping England inside EU's single market on agriculture and goods but not services using a common rule book "will not work". Tusk even went to Instagram where he captioned a picture of himself offering May pastry with the words "Sorry, no cherries."

In response, May said, "So we now need to hear from the E.U. what the real issues are, what their alternative is, so that we can discuss them. Until we do, we cannot make progress." Were the EU's demand not known or was it that Britain didn't know what the real issues were. This is a cunning move and May wants to start the negotiation from this point on, from the post-Chequers Plan rejection phase, forgetting all previous EU demands. The EU has put forward two options; One, as mentioned, is for the UK staying in the European Economic Area, which May denied, saying that would "make a mockery of the referendum". Two, a customs union or a basic free trade agreement between Northern Ireland (which is in the UK) and the Republic of Ireland (which remains in the EU) about which May said that that would mean Northern Ireland would be "permanently separated economically from the rest of the UK by a border down the Irish Sea." She warned the EU officials; "I will not overturn the result of the referendum. Nor will I break up my country."

For May and for Brexit supporting Britishers, one bad news is that Europe today is more united and firm in its demand than it was ever before. Charles Grant, the director of the Centre for European Reform, a research institution, said: "I don't see any E.U. split right now, I really don't. I've been looking for a pro-British lobby in the Council for six months now, and I can't find one."

Cutting the umbilical cord (Brexit)

Exit without a deal is an option May is mulling over. She is in a quagmire.

seems to be more difficult than when Europe was pregnant with the idea of a united customs union (Maastricht Treaty). The essence of this entire drama is that Britain wants to end the contract without paying the costs associated with the termination whereas the European Union is reminding the Brits of exactly those costs. This impasse doesn't sound very good for England and for Theresa May because with Britain's March 29, 2019 departure date looming, there may not be a deal acceptable to all parties in time for a smooth and orderly transition.

Exit without a deal is an option May is mulling over. She is in a quagmire. She said, "no deal is better than a bad deal". She should know that no deal is a bad deal too. Interestingly, whether or not it is good for Britain depends on who you are asking. The Tories call it a "clean break" with the EU whereas Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn labels it a "national disaster". The Tories argue that warnings of a disaster in the event of Britain leaving the bloc without a deal are mere scaremongering. The truth is that a "hard Brexit" would ravage the British economy.

Dancing is not going to cut it either otherwise May has shown great talent and desire for it. "Throughout this process, I have treated the EU with nothing but respect," she said. "The UK expects the same. A good relationship at the end of this process depends on it." Her words are reminiscent of a hated character in the film Godfather III, namely Joey Zasa. In a scene about negotiations between rich criminals, he says, "I say to all of you, I have been treated this day, with no respect. I've earned you all money. I've made you rich, and I asked for little. Good. You will not give, I'll take! "

It doesn't end well for Zasa. In one's humble view, there are only bad options ahead for England. The racism and fear driven policy of not allowing 'others' into their country caused the referendum in favour of Brexit. Diversity has always helped nations achieve greatness. Regardless, how ugly would the divorce be is something only time will tell. And time is of the essence here. The clock is ticking. Every second counts. S

The writer is a political analyst. He can be reached at imran.jan@gmail.com

KAMPALA

A New Nelson Mandela

The circumstances faced by Musevini in his earlier days or by Bobi Wine in today's times are entirely different from Mandela's since the latter was opposing oppression coming from external forces.

By Muhammad Muneeb Qadir

History is a study of societies where the 'powerful' attempted to dominate the apparently 'weaker beings'. History also tells us that this conflict between the two groups eventually culminates in the defeat of the tyrant and the emancipation of those subjugated to tyranny.

We still live in a world where the temptation to subjugate 'ordinary' people to the whims of those in power is great. There has been a resurgence of right-wing politics across the globe, one filled with xenophobia, bigotry, hate speech and most worryingly of all, a crackdown on dissent. These are the times of Donald Trump who openly propagates his ideas of 'American superiority' devising irresponsible policies against migrants. These are times when neo-Nazis find themselves within the German Parliament and are openly marching across the streets. The likes of Benjamin Netanyahu have made it an offence to criticize Israeli state policies.

However, by the same token it must be remembered that no one who remained silent was ever able to make history.

Right when apartheid was coming to an end in the mid-90s, the Rwandan civil war had broken out with the massacre of millions of Tutsi people at the hands of the ruling Hutu government. Other countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa have recently witnessed major political shifts owing to a change in leadership which had gone on unchallenged for years with the ouster of former Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe whose 4 decades long leadership is seen as a period of oppression, censorship and corruption. Similarly, South Africa which has always had one-party rule under the governance of the African National Congress (ANC) ever since the abolition of apartheid, saw a change of

leadership after a series of attempts by the former President Zacob Juma to continue to remain in power for longer than the prescribed Presidential tenure. It was in February 2018 that Cyril Ramaphosa (interestingly Nelson Mandela's original choice for the future South African President) was elected as the President, promising to ending years of corruption and fraud under Juma's Presidency.

In current times, the focus within African politics has shifted towards Uganda before the 2021 Presidential elections owing to a 36-year old pop-star-turned-politician, Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, also famously known as 'Bobi Wine'. Wine poses the biggest threat to the 74-year old incumbent President Yoweri Musevini who has remained in office since 1986 which means that the Ugandan population has not seen any other president spanning over 2 different generations. The 2021 election could well be 'the turning of the tide' but before that one needs to understand the reasons behind President Musevini's ability to have wielded such absolute powers in so unchallenged a manner for so many decades.

It appears ironic that Musevini the very man who had once toppled the extremely repressive Idi Amin regime and later turned into a dictator of sorts himself. Musevini assumed Presidential office in 1986 and was a beacon of hope for his people. He proved his merit by leading the nation to economic growth and greater levels of national security. His success in overthrowing the previous unpopular regimes led him to be labelled as part of 'a new generation of leaders' as well as a comparison with Nelson Mandela. However, today's Uganda seems to have its new version of Mandela, i.e. Bobi Wine.

Having ruled Uganda for long periods, Musevini seems to have brought into effect a one-party rule under the auspices of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the political wing of the National Resistance Army which had played an instrumental role in bringing down Milton Obote's unpopular leadership. This one rule has led to suppression of political opponents through repressive tactics including imprisonment or forced disappearances. Musevini has also been able to exercise his considerable powers over the legislature, leading to enactment of laws removing the 75 year age bar on holding Presidential office, opening to him the possibility of contesting the 2021 Presidential elections. Moreover, a new tax on social media has been recently introduced so as to discourage any political dissent as well as a crackdown on the LGBT community.

It is in this backdrop that the youth specifically and the wider population generally are looking up to their new found rebel hero. Musevini had dismissed the importance of Bobi Wine as a political force labeling him as a 'ghetto child', a term which evidences the marginalisation of rural Uganda's poor population. If Musevini thought that he could disregard the significance of Mr. Bobi, more than two-thirds of the Ugandan population comprising the youth, it is exactly the majority of these voters to whom Bobi Wine holds appeal. The youth has been affected by growing unemployment and lessening opportunities owing to the Musevini government's alleged corruption and it is a youth icon such as Wine whom they believe to be a better choice.

Musevini has taken cognisance of the threat posed to his authority by Bobi Wine. Bobi Wine, claims to have been brutally tortured by the authorities whilst in detention prompting him to seek treatment from the USA from where he returned to resume his political activities in September 2018.

Now that Bobi Wine has returned to Uganda, he is stronger, since not only is he a hero to his followers but also a victim of an authoritarian regime, further cementing the need to effect regime change. While the 'Nelson Mandela of Uganda' has changed, what is more important is to understand the spirit of what Mandela stood for before awarding anyone with such titles. The situations faced by Musevini in his earlier days or by Bobi Wine in today's times are entirely different from Mandela's since the latter was opposing oppression coming from external forces. The kind of rift that Bobi Wine is fighting today is against a section of his own public which works under the commands and influence of Musevini. However, the spirit of the struggle remains the same - to seek self-determination. The struggle is to bring about a regime which represents the will of the people and which is also accountable to the electorate. After the leadership changes affected in neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe and South Africa, it appears that the end of Musevini's one-man rule is nigh and the rise of a new dawn within Uganda's political-scape is on the horizon. What matters subsequently is Mr. Wine's potential of bringing about a more rights-sensitive, egalitarian regime within the country rather than falling into the traps of his own 'predecessors'. That is only relevant if Mr. Wine were to accede to Presidential office. S

The writer is an LLM Graduate from Queen Mary University of London and a high court advocate. He can be reached at qadirmuneeb@gmail.com

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Quest for a New Leader

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KARABAKH

Politics of Identity

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a territorial and ethnic conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts.

By Aneela Shahzad

The Caucasus has for centuries been a kind of a buffer zone between the Ottoman, the Persian and the Russian empires, each vying for influence and control in the region. Prior to that, the Caucasus lay in the pathway of Turk migrations to the east and back, since antiquity. This became the basis of ongoing ethnonational strains in the region, of which the stress between the two, Azeri and Armenian populations has been a major one.

The Azeris are Turks of Caucasian Albanian decent, who converted to Shia Islam in the 7th century with the invasion of the Arabs and their settlement in Albania. The Armenians are more native and had converted to Christianity in about the 3rd century AD. Since the Islamization period, the Armenians were clutched between the Sunni Ottomans to their west, the Shi'ite Persians to their south and the religiously Shi'ite but ethnically Turkic Azeris to their east. This makes a simple chemistry between the Azeris and Turkey and between the Armenians and Russia, the traditional protector of the Eastern Orthodox Church – yet the Russians supplying arms to both sides, have obscured their patronage for the Armenians – as this constant supply of arms is a major reason why war will always remain a possibility between the two states.

With WW1 and the dissolution of both the Ottoman and the Russian empires, the people of Nagorno Karabakh self-designated themselves as a self-ruling Armenian province, but were soon absorbed into the Soviet Union that had soon captured the whole of the Caucasus. As it happened, Stalin made the 'Treaty of Brotherhood and Friendship' with Kamal Ataturk, under which Nagorno-Karabakh was placed under the control of the Azerbaijani SSR. At that time, Stalin saw Ataturk as a potential ally and made this undemocratic decision just to please his assumed ally.

When the Soviet Union eventually disintegrated at the end of the Cold War, again the self-assumed parliament of this sub-region voted to join Armenia. At that time, over one million people rallied in Yerevan in support of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast's reunification with the Armenian SSR, but again the Supreme Soviet of the USSR concluded that Karabakh should remain part of Azerbaijan. This led to a full-blown war taking the lives of over 30,000 on both sides. Since 1994, Armenian forces have not only backed the Karabakh stance with arms and diplomacy but are also occupying 7 adjacent Azerbaijani districts.

It is difficult to put the blame on either side as war crimes have been committed by both and each believes that the Karabakh region rightly belongs to them. The truth is that at the time of independence, Armenia had a roughly 60/30 Azeri/Armenian population and Azerbaijan had almost the same ratio inversed; the two people had lived peacefully side by side in pockets for centuries.

But once they gained independence, the same people became bitter enemies, refusing to accept their own as their nationals on racial basis. These numbers give an idea of how mass deportations have served as a means of ethnic cleansing in the two states. In the 70 years since independence, planned and systematic deportations along with brutal episodes of massacres, have led to the displacement of as many as 230,000 Armenians from Azerbaijan and 800,000 Azerbaijanis from Armenia and Karabakh and its adjacent districts. The Armenians had been four times more aggressive in deporting the Azeris than the Azeri had been. This means that in the humanitarian terms the two nations have been giving each other a tit-for-tat.

Nakhchivan is an example of Azerbaijani atrocity, where forced displacement of the Armenian population has reduced it from 40% to zero percent. In his recent address to the UNGA, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said, 'Karabakh must not be part of Azerbaijan because Azerbaijani government wants the territory and not the people' and 'that the intention of Azerbaijani leadership is to cleanse Armenians from Karabakh, like they did in Nakhichevan'.

All this shows that the two nations have been using ethnic cleansing as a means of nation-building and an insurance of their sovereignties – but the question is, have these acts of genocide achieved the desired goals?

Or, has this constant internal conflict only consumed the two nations and forced them to mortgage their sovereignties at the hands of bigger

powers who have exploited their situation? War and constant fear of war has forced the two states into an arms race. Both countries have been featured as the top 10 militarized states since 2011 and the highest military spenders of the post-Soviet states. Though deemed as a 'frozen conflict' by many, the current decade has seen increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), heavy-calibre weaponry and increased presence and reported casualties among contracted service personnel and special forces and intensified military drills involving thousands of troops on both sides, which means that both sides are only readying for a deadlier war.

Russia's conduct clearly shows that it sees the continuation of the Karabakh conflict in its interest. After the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, that had resulted from Georgia's allying with Germany and its bid to join the NATO and the EU, Russia has become more sensitive in Armenia's case lest it would, being a Christian nation, be lured to the same path. Before that, the Chechen War (1999-2009) raised another alarm for Russia, that of Islamist fundamentalism, and being next door to Iran, Azerbaijan could become an easy prey. For this reason, Turkey's and Pakistan's swift maneuvering into befriending Azerbaijan and Russia's backchannel leading to the failure of the Tehran Declaration (1992), show a shared sense of fear towards this Islamist trend.

The European initiative, the OSCE Minsk Group created in 1992, co-chaired by France, Russia and the US, shows a similar indifference pointing towards an inability or a noninterest in resolving the Karabakh Issue. Will the Nagorno Karabakh conflict be ever resolved by relying on big powers or will it be resolved by more ethnic cleansing or with more militarization?

The April 2016 escalation that took 200 lives has shown the world that the conflict is alive and boiling. Azerbaijan's regaining control of two strategic heights in the conflict zone has also reignited strong pro-war sentiments in the Azeris and 2017 has seen more deadly encounters involving heavy artillery, anti-tank weapons and self-guided rockets. The two countries need to recognize how the conflict has consumed their nations and allowed exploitation at the hands of others. An all-out war for a 'final solution' would drag in several international stakeholders and plunge the two states into a long spell of destruction and death – whereas a prolonged low-intensity war situation would impact the normal life and progress of the two peoples. Both ways, only politics wins and humanity loses.

Conflict resolution seems possible only with direct negotiations between the three parties, with truth and reconciliation and with fair and agreeable give-and-take. The objective of these negotiations should not be to maximize gains but only a resolve to bring peace and to put the hate, abuse and killing in the past. S

The writer is a geopolitical analyst with interest in history, philosophy and anthropology. She can be reached at aneela.pathfinder@gmail.com

LHASA

Quest for a New Leader

According to Buddhist scholars it is the responsibility of the High Lamas of the Gelgupa tradition and the Tibetan government to seek out and find the next Dalai Lama following the death of the incumbent.

By Khalid Hussain Mir

Karmapa means the incarnation of the actions of the Buddha. In Tibetan tradition, this is considered to be the one who is enlightened with wisdom and spirituality and is consciously able to control his rebirth in order to continue his activities for the benefit of all sensible beings. Throughout the history of Buddhism it has been witnessed that Karmapa is a central figure and has played a very important role for the preservation of the study and religious rituals of Buddhism such as the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. The Karmapa lineage is the most ancient Tulku lineage in Tibetan Buddhism, predating the Dalai Lama lineage by more than two centuries and is an important one as the Karmapa is conventionally the head of the Karma Kagyu School.

The 16th Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje predicted though his poems and songs that he would leave his traditional seat of Tsurphu in Tibet for some time and would study in India before returning to Tsurphu again. After his death in 1981, Ogyen Trinley Dorje and Trinley Thaye Dorje both got recognition as the 17th Karmapa and both are separately performing their ritualistic duties but their recognition as Karmapa is still full of controversy as the majority has accepted Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the 17th Karmapa who was born in Eastern Tibet in 1985.

It has happened for the first time

in the history of Tibetan Buddhism that two nominees have been recognized as the 17th Karmapa. In 1992, Ogyen Trinley Dorje and Trinley Thaye Dorje both asked the office of the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala to confirm their recognition but only Ogyen Trinley Dorje was confirmed as the 17th Karmapa by Dalai Lama. It was interesting to see that China also supported Ogyen Trinley Dorje which is unusual. Ogyen Trinley Dorje became the first Karmapa to be recognized and ratified by the Communist Party of China.

After spending his early life in Tibet, in 2000 C.E. he left his birthplace and came to India where the Dalai Lama has hosted him at the Gyuto monastery in Dharamsala. In 2011 during his stay in India he was accused by the government of India as a spy of China after Chinese currency Yuan was found at the Gyuto monastery near Dharamshala. Later, the government of India declared that the funds found in Karmapa's possession were legitimate donations.

The Chinese government had earlier recognized Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the first reincarnated Buddha. This was confirmed and approved by the Central Government of the People's Republic of China after the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951. He has been regarded as the most influential Tibetan Buddhist leader after the Dalai Lama in a recent statement from New York. China is also seeking to tighten its grip on Tibet to control the traditional process of finding the reincarnation of any senior Lama that passes away. If it is decided that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should continue and there is need for the Fifteenth Dalai Lama to be recognized, the responsibility for doing so will first and foremost rest on the concerned officers of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust.

Dalai Lama, a charismatic personality of the Tibetan Movement, is now in his 90s. He has made it clear that his successor will come from the "free world". The situation has set the stage for the emergence of two antagonistic Dalai Lamas, one chosen by China and the other by the Tibetan authority. In view of the Dalai Lama's declaration regarding reincarnation of the 15th Dalai Lama at the age of 90, the 14th Dalai Lama should now declare one of the Karmapas as the real 17th Karmapa so that the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, art and culture would spread in the interest of unity and integrity of Tibetan Buddhists in India, Tibet, and China. At the same time, the Government of India and Tibetan religious authorities must keep a strict watch on Ogyen Trinley Dorje's activities in India and abroad. It is also confirmed that after the death of the 14th Dalai Lama, the holiness and legitimacy of his successor is going to be questioned and his reincarnation will be decided either by the Tibetan monks or by the Communist Party of China.

Recently the 14th Dalai Lama, during his prayer meetings at Dharamshala, declared that "When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism and re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not".

It is now time for the Tibetan religious and political leaders to make suitable efforts to select the future Dalai Lama to defeat the machinations of the Communist Party of China when the 14th Dalai Lama is still alive.

The wise men of the Tibetan government have to carefully guide the Tibetan people, maintain and strengthen traditions and ensure that the Tibetan cause is not suffocated by the Communist Party of China by taking advantage of any confusion caused in the Tibetan community inside China as well as abroad after the death of the Dalai Lama. S

The writer is a Doctoral Fellow of Islamic Studies at the Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University in Rajouri, Jammu & Kashmir. He can be reached at khalidbinali027@gmail.com

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BARA KAHU

SAINT OR SINNER?

A convicted felon of a brutal act has been elevated to the position of saint and all because he unleashed violence on a peaceful citizen.

By Syed Kamran Hashmi

Once an insignificant town located a few miles North of Islamabad on the way to Murree, Bara Kahu these days attracts an increasing number of pilgrims from all over the Punjab. Women come here to pray to conceive a male child, the sick to get healthy again and the poor to overcome their financial burden. What is so special about the town? It is the final resting place of Mumtaz Hussein Qadri, a disturbed police commando who killed the Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, for supporting Asiya Bibi. She is a young Christian woman who was convicted under the blasphemy law and had received a death sentence from the courts. She is currently awaiting an appeal.

On January 4, 2011, after Mumtaz Qadri had shot the Punjab Governor dead with more than 20 bullets, the person he was appointed to protect against death threats from religious fanatics, he surrendered to the police. The due process of law was followed for years afterwards. Unlike Qadri, who did not provide his victim a fair chance, he himself was given the full opportunity to defend himself. Hundreds of lawyers came forward to defend him, but the emotional stance they took did not - and could not - provide enough justification for him to unleash violence on a peaceful citizen. Having no other option, the courts declared him guilty. On Feb 29, 2016, he was hanged.

Typically, this would have ended the story: a crime followed by a fair trial, its appeal in the higher courts, a final sentence and its eventual execution. However, another story starts right from here, a story of a misdirected religion and misguided devotion, a story that supports the perpetrator of a cruel act and not the victim. As tragic as it may sound this, in a way, is also a story of Pakistan as a nation, in which we exonerate the criminal and blame the target.

As the news of Mumtaz Qadri's punishment broke the following morning, a wave of resentment swept through Pakistan. Hundreds and thousands of people poured in to attend his funeral in Lahore, making it one of the largest in history. Barelvi Sunnis who tend to lead on issues of blasphemy and Khatm-e-Nabowwat, took a strong stance against the government. They eulogized Qadri as the defender of the faith, a true devotee of the Prophet (PBUH), the person who laid his life to protect the honour of the Prophet. In Friday prayer sermons too, they mentioned his name as the hero of the 'Muslim Ummah' born after a century, referring to Ilm-ud-Din who killed the publisher of the controversial book Rangila Rasool for blasphemy in 1929. In their monthly meetings, they proclaimed him to have a successful afterlife, dreams of him resting in paradise were brought up and visions

of the Prophet (PBUH) congratulating him were made public. It was a deliberate strategy to mischaracterize a mentally unstable person, a person found guilty in a Muslim country, by Muslim judges and the Muslim courts, as a saint who could bring comfort in the lives of the pilgrims after he was dead.

There is no need to be too disappointed by the whole process of how one becomes a saint despite its apparent shortcomings. Canonization is otherwise serious business requiring certain strict preconditions to be met. In Catholicism, one has to live a saintly life for decades, a life of compassion and beneficence devoted to helping humanity. Furthermore, one has to perform two miracles during his/her lifetime which can be independently verified. Futhermore, the process has to be analyzed five years after the death of the person, once emotions have subsided and a general agreement prevails regarding the piety of the deceased.

Among Muslims too, although a formal process does not exist, sainthood is reserved for people with devotion to religion, spirituality and, above all, scholarly contribution. Ahmed Sirhindi known as Mujaddad Alif Sani wrote multiple books. Among them, the two most prominent ones are Isbat ul Nabat and Risal e Nabbuwat. Ali Bin Usman Hajveri who we remember as Data Ganj Bakhsh of Lahore authored Kashf ul Majoob, one of the most famous works on mysticism in the subcontinent. Jalal uddin Rumi penned down his ideas in Masnvi e Rum. Abdul Qadir Jilani, the saint among saints, expressed himself through Ghunyat ut Talibeen. Above all, Imam Ahmed Al Ghazali's Ilm-ul-Hayat-ud-Dunya is still recognized as a work of the master even after almost one thousand years. Coming to the 20th century, those who consider Allama Muhammad Iqbal a saint, recognize him through his poetic and philosophical contributions. Simply put, a long tradition of erudition and intellect exists within Sufi Islam.

True, a series of non-scholars and somewhat controversial figures like Mansur Halaj also appear in this list. But by adding Mumtaz Hussein Qadri to the list of eminent mystics and by constructing an ornate mausoleum for him, a convicted felon of a brutal act, modern day Barelvis have shown great disrespect to the order that once produced the finest minds of the era. They have proved what we already suspected as the cause of our failure both as a nation and as 'Muslim Ummah': Islam without intellect pulls us down to an abyss, a trajectory on which we are sliding down to new lows every passing day. SA

The writer is a US-based freelance columnist. He can be reached at skamranhashmi@gmail.com

KASUR

Helping the Abused

The challenge of preventing child abuse can be met by increasing mass awareness, assisting relevant elements of society and more vigilance from the government.

By Wajahat Ali Malik

Imran Ali, who was convicted for the rape and murder of six-year old Zainab in Kasur, was hanged to death in the early hours of Oct 17, 2018, at Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Central Jail.

Child sexual abuse is a very common crime, globally, in South Asia and in Pakistan. A recent report by national NGO Sahil reveals that some 2322 cases of child sexual abuse were reported in newspapers in the period from January to June 2018 from all geographical areas of Pakistan. This means that more than 12 children per day had been sexually abused. The reported cases in the first half of this year increased by 32% as compared to the 1764 cases in the period from January to June, 2017. An important fact about these reported cases is that the abusers were amongst acquaintances, relatives, neighbours and close family friends in more than 50% of the cases.

The current statistics are a tip of the iceberg. The fact is that people do not want to report these cases. They are ashamed to talk about this taboo subject in society, so most of the crimes remain hidden and go unreported. The benefit of this goes to the perpetrators who continue to abuse children freely without fear of any punishment or legal repercussions. The psychological trauma of sexual abuse of the child cannot be described in words. It impairs the mental development and physical faculties of the child if he survives the tragedy. If proper counseling and rehabilitation services are not provided to the victim in time, such children do not have normal family and social lives.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Observations in the fifth periodic report on Pakistan is seriously concerned about the large number of children becoming victims of sexual abuse, exploitation, rape and abduction. The Committee also mentions that Pakistan remains a significant source, destination and transit country for children trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation

in the form of child prostitution and child pornography. In particular, it is concerned that children are bought, rented and sold into domestic servitude, bonded labour and sexual exploitation or into forced marriages abroad and internally. The Committee regrets that insufficient measures were taken by the government to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation, to prosecute perpetrators, to clarify its laws on internal trafficking and to collect exact information about child specific shelters for victims of trafficking and prostitution.

Pakistan is a country where the highest numbers of human rights laws were enacted, but implementation is missing. The conviction rate in child sexual abuse cases is very low and the majority of cases are compromised between the parties before the final verdict due to lengthy trial period and the political and social influence of abusers and their acquaintances. It takes about two to five years to reach the final decision in such cases. From 2012 to 2015, the NGO Sahil has released the data of 309 cases of child sexual abuse. Unfortunately 119 cases were compromised, 161 cases were pending and conviction was given in 29 cases. This shows the conviction rate of approx. 9 percent. These figures don't represent the true scale of the problem and unreported cases might be exponentially higher.

The apex court of Pakistan has passed several landmark judgments about the issue of rape and child sexual abuse. The court declared that rape on a child is an aggravated form of child molestation. Rape is an act, which is cruel, dreadful and offensive; therefore it would fall within the ambit of the expression "heinous offence" used in the preamble of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997. The offence would thus constitute a terrorist act and fall under section 6 of ATA, 1997. Therefore, an Anti-Terrorism Court would assume the jurisdiction for trial of such a case.

The apex court directed that every police station that receives rape complaints should involve reputable civil society organizations for purpose of legal aid and counseling to the victim. The police department should establish separate reporting desks for registering the First Investigation Report (FIR) for the victims of sexual abuse. There is a need for the establishment of child-friendly courts. The trial of child abuse cases must be conducted in camera and after regular court hours in a speedy manner. Evidence of rape victims and other vulnerable witnesses should be recorded through video conferencing, so that juvenile victims do not have to be present in court. In case of female victim, a female magistrate should preferably record her statement under section 164 C.P.C. Administration of DNA test and preservation of DNA evidence should be made mandatory in rape cases.

In March 2018, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan published its annual report on State of Human Rights in 2017 and asserted that despite the enactment of a number of child protection legislation at the national and provincial level in the last few years, children were subjected to all forms of violence in varying degrees in 2017. It reveals that religious seminaries in Pakistan are rife with sexual abuse of children.

The Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) carried out an investigation in 2017 into the prevalence of abuse in religious seminaries in Pakistan. From its own findings and other available reports, APP calculated a total number of 359 reported cases of sexual abuse by clerics in religious seminaries over the past decade. This is only a fraction of the actual number of cases considering the pervasive nature of the problem and the vast network of religious seminaries that span the country.

APP's investigation found that the moral authority that the clerics enjoy in society, the taboo nature of the issue and the fear of militant religious organizations, prevented the reporting and prosecution of such cases. The police or the victim's family is often paid to not pursue the case. APP's findings were based on police documents and interviews with victims, relatives, former and current ministers, aid groups and religious officials. According to a report of the NGO Sahil, 30 abuse cases in religious seminaries were reported in the first half of 2018. In these cases children were sexually exploited either by their teachers/clerics or by older children.

The popularity of religious seminaries in Pakistan has also been related to socio-economic condition of the country and the insignificant standards of formal education. The majority of children in religious seminaries come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Since most religious seminaries offer free accommodation and food to students, this makes religious seminaries an appealing alternative for poor and ignorant parents. Thus, there is a dire need for oversight, comprehensive monitoring, reporting and systematic vigilance of religious seminaries by the government. The curricula of religious seminaries must follow the overall state curriculum and include subjects on children's rights and other international human rights instruments ratified by Pakistan.

Media and civil society have a great potential to create widespread awareness about the issue of child sexual abuse in the general public, legislators, policy makers and children themselves. Normally, it is observed that when an incident of child abuse occurs in our country, electronic and social media broadcast news and programs about it for some time and then discontinue. The media should ensure that the code of ethics for reporting child abuse cases is followed and they should not disclose the identity of the victim and his family members. Advertisements and awareness material about protection and promotion of child rights sponsored by different organizations, NGOs and government departments must be publicized through electronic and print media to sensitize people. Experts from different fields such as lawyers, judges, police officials, reclamation and probation officers, teachers, parents, religious scholars, child rights activists and representatives of social welfare communities and NGOs must be invited to TV programs and talk shows for discussion on the issue.

Child protection and welfare bureaus and child helplines give instant support to victims and provide dissemination of information and guidance for child rights but these are not present in each province. The government should allocate a budget every year for establishment and proper functioning of these bureaus in every province. Child protection bureaus must ensure that preventive measures are taken against child sexual abuse and provide free legal aid and rehabilitation services to victims. Self-protection education for children must be included in the syllabi of schools. After the Zainab murder case, the Punjab Government has done a good job by introducing child protection curricula in schools. Prime Minister Imran Khan and President Dr. Arif Alvi assured in their inaugural speeches that extra-ordinary steps would be taken for protection of child rights and reforms in the religious seminaries education system. It is hoped this will happen for the betterment and prosperous future of the children. S

The writer is an advocate of the high court and child rights activist. He can be contacted at adv.wajahat.ali@gmail.com

NEW DELHI

QUESTION OF MORALITY

"Equality is the governing principle of a system. Husband is not the master of the wife".

– Supreme Court of India

By Javed Qazi

One is master of his/her own body. He/she is at liberty to decide its choices and consequences, subject to where such choices are not harming any other or, for that matter, one's self. It may be a civil wrong but it is not a criminal act. Damages can be claimed but not the punishment. Such was the notion behind a recent seminal judgment of India's Supreme Court striking down Section 337 and 497 of the Indian Penal Code, which has decriminalized homo-sexuality and adultery. This means it is not a crime and the state cannot be party to the case. Yet two individuals can be. In many countries, the right to die with choice is an extension of the right to life. Soon this will also land in the subcontinent and the courts will incorporate it in jurisprudence. Both conducts and behaviours were crimes in the laws set 158 years back by the colonialists. Indian society has progressed since then. These 158 years old laws were ultra vires or in conflict with the fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The question is, why has it taken 68 years since the Constitution was promulgated?

The courts wait to see someone with locus standi, come and challenge it. They does not act on their own in ordinary circumstances. For example, it was Kashawanda of Kerala state who had filed the petition that manifested in discovering the basic structure of the Indian Constitution. And it is also a fact the court gives full opportunity to the legislature to legislate and make sure that the past laws are in conformity with the Constitution. It is the job of the legislature to act in this respect. Legislatures live under the magnet of their constituencies. When both conservatives and relative liberals, like the Congress, have issues at the heart of the voters' mindsets, they compromise with the circumstances. The court has no such compulsion; it has the Constitution and it wants it to be upheld. Yet it is equally a fact that judges come up with their particular mindsets and brought up. By and large it is incumbent upon them to see things in a detached manner, irrespective of their personal beliefs and biases.

Indian politics has gone through many ups and downs. Today Indian society is less tolerant and is at its lowest ebb in terms of being secular. India's Supreme Court is moving to correspond to universal norms as set by the framers of the Constitution. Adultery may be taboo and a norm but it is subject to a grand norm. It is arguably immoral but every immoral conduct can't be penalized and controlled by the state or, for that matter, be legislated. Even the question of morality is subjective. When there is consent, morality is subject to consent of the two individuals involved in such an act. The two individuals, not necessarily, should believe in the general perception of morality. It is a behaviour that someone likes but to others it is not likeable. The state cannot become a party to the perception of the majority against the minority.

Morality has been used as a weapon against the weak if it is encoded into the law as a crime. Such law, instead of being purposive, acts in the negative. It is also a principle of law that the state should stay away from deciding what is moral and what is immoral. The state should stay away from becoming party to one religion and claim that it is a referee between religions. All religions are equal before the state. Like all citizens before it. The state thus is the custodian of plurality in society.

Adultery laws of the colonialists now are nothing but a source of putting pressure on women's matrimonial disputes, even though such cases are rarely registered. It was anachronistic yet the Indian Supreme Court's final deletion is a loud and clear message to all that a grand norm will prevail and all norms, whether encoded or un-encoded, which are in conflict with it, will not prevail.

The Constitution is an organic whole; it revolves and expands with the passage of time. Society reaches a degree where the grand norm could make more inroads. The legislature legislates accordingly and when the legislature does not, it comes to the fore under its jurisdictional power of judicial review. It is an equal success of Indian society that its directions are progressively set to rise as modern society. In Pakistan, both these sections (337 and 497) are part of the Pakistan Penal Code. The society is conservative. It cannot be arguably said that it may not be conservative yet there are so many non-governmental institutions and particularly religious parties which have much say and could resist such amendments. The Constitution is a little confused as well on such issues

Adultery may be taboo and a norm but it is subject to a grand norm.

yet its scheme of fundamental rights gives a lot of space to the courts to separate the state from such questions of morality and let people decide themselves and not the state.

What India has incorporated and filtered in law, Pakistan has incorporated accordingly. It is a blessing for the courts in Pakistan that Indian jurisprudence has settled many issues for them.

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have roots in Anglo-Saxon law. The constitutions in these countries also have their origins in the movement of liberal values borne out of Renaissance and from the social contract theory which ensures rights guaranteed under the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights). These fundamental rights are taken from the UDHR. The state is therefore less concerned about moral order and more committed to universally accepted rights of individual. S

Based in Karachi, the writer is a civil society activist and a practicing lawyer. He can be reached at jvqazi@gmail.com

KERALA

Gender Discrimination

The intentions of the Indian Supreme Court of India to turn the country into an egalitarian society is meeting resistance.

By S.G. Jilanee

Earlier, it was the menace of lynching against which the apex judiciary had raised its voice. This time it is against the age-old practice at the Sabarimala temple in Kerala. The temple attracts tens of millions of pilgrims every year, but it bans girls and women of menstruating age - 10 to 50 years - from entering the temple. The Supreme Court has ruled against the ban, upholding the rights to equality of worship.

The temple authorities, on the other hand, claim that the ban was essential to the rites related to the temple's chief deity, Ayyappan, which is considered eternally celibate and rooted in a centuries-old tradition.

In the judgment, the chief justice, Dipak Misra, said: "Restrictions put by Sabarimala temple can't be held as essential religious practice. No physiological and biological factor can be given legitimacy if it does not pass the test of conditionality." Stressing the point that society needs to undergo a perceptual shift, the CJ observed that, "Patriarchy in religion cannot be permitted to trump over elements of pure devotion borne out of faith and the freedom to practice and profess one's religion."

The verdict declared that the ban was gender discrimination and

the practice violated rights of Hindu women, because, "religion is a way of life basically to link life with divinity" and "devotion cannot be subjected to discrimination."

However, though the landmark verdict might have put to rest the long-raging question of gender discrimination, but it must be remembered that there are several aspects of the pilgrimage which have rested on the premise that there are no women around. Now that the situation is set to change, considerable flexibility would be needed to bring about a radical transformation in the management of the temple.

The judgment has come at a time when the agencies of the Kerala government and the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) already have their hands full in efforts to restore normalcy in the area that was affected by the recent floods. Analysts say that in view of the time constraint - because the annual pilgrimage begins in mid-November - the court ruling has introduced multi-dimensional consequences.

"The shrine is about 5 km inside the forest and the difficult terrain is accessible only by foot. It offers basic facilities. But, accommodation at Sannidhanam, where the shrine is located, is woefully inadequate. The dozen buildings and a few sparsely furnished cottages that were built by sponsors nearly 50 years ago, offer accommodation to not more than 3,000 pilgrims at a time. Several thousand (male) pilgrims converging at the shrine normally huddle on sheets or mats spread in open spaces. Now, following the Supreme Court verdict, a tsunami of women will descend on the temple. Constructing more buildings to accommodate these pilgrims, especially women, will be a colossal problem for the authorities.

The Sabarimala Master Plan, which is based on the acceptance of Sabarimala as a forest shrine in the Periyar Tiger Reserve, does not contemplate the construction of new blocks at Sannidhanam. Instead, it advocates the demolition of all unnecessary buildings. The idea is to limit accommodation at Sannidhanam by developing a base camp at Nilakkal and encouraging satellite camping centres en route. From the base camp, entry into Sabarimala is regulated. This way, pilgrims have a smooth darshan and exit.

But owing to the growing number of pilgrims and the basic limitations, this may not be practicable. In fact, the whole pilgrimage is regulated by the holy 18 steps that lead to the sanctum. "Steep and narrow, they permit only a maximum of 90 persons in a minute. Even if entry is permitted throughout the day, the total number cannot be more than 1.2 lakh pilgrims." But, because, the temple is not kept open 24 hours, this limits the number to around 50,000 that is a small percentage of the number of pilgrims reaching Sabarimala every day.

A front view of Sabarimala Temple.

With the entry of women in Sabarimala temple now a legally recognized right, its implementation has to be efficient and foolproof.

They have, therefore, to form queues, for which queue complexes have been built to allow for a comfortable waiting period. But glitches in pilgrim management strategies have often led to a tedious wait, with little room for free movement that has often been the single largest cause of deaths.

After the judicial verdict, there will have to be a considered decision about intermingling versus segregation of male and female pilgrims in these queues.

Policing at Sabarimala will also need a drastic change, with the introduction of a massive number of women pilgrims. So far, it has been more like crowd control than pilgrim management. Only having women police would not be enough. The purely law and order approach, hitherto adopted, will have to change from one of control and regulation to that of facilitation and safety.

A new accommodation policy needs to be framed, toilets segregated, women staff engaged and several gender-specific requirements planned and provided for. In view of these constraints, the TDB could approach the Supreme Court seeking a preparatory period of about a year, before the temple can be made gender-sensitive.

The judgment has to be seen as an opportunity to change archaic practices and attitudes and usher in a new management culture. The TDB has to understand the implications of the order and undertake planning with foresight.

Experts say that large-scale modifications of existing buildings, a re-engineering of processes and much-needed training of staff in housekeeping, office management and counter management, etc., are the major tasks the TDB must undertake. With the entry of women now a legally recognized right, its implementation has to be efficient and foolproof.

No doubt the swarms of women at the temple will pose a massive challenge to the resources of the Kerala government, both human and material - from law and order, through accommodation and food, to hygiene and sanitation.

Meanwhile, the temple management has declared it intends to appeal against the Supreme Court judgment. But, until the verdict is revised, the present judgment shall have to be followed and women of all ages will be allowed to enter and worship in the Sabarimala temple. S

The writer is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia. He can be reached at ghulamjil@outlook.com

A CLOSE VIEW

By Nadya Chishty-Mujahid

University professor Robert Nichols' academic text on the history and gradual development of the complex Peshawar valley of Pakistan, which is part of OUP's Platinum series celebrating 70 years of Pakistani history, is a deeply erudite and valuable endeavour. Meticulously researched and well-written, if a trifle wordy in places, the book painstakingly delineates the changing dynamics of the history and culture of this region dating from the Mughal era to the last century.

On introducing his text, Nichols makes it very clear that no study of the region that claims to be comprehensive can do the Peshawar valley any justice if the contentious years of Mughal imperial rule are left out of the equation. He posits that far too heavy an emphasis has been placed by scholars and historians alike on nineteenth-century colonial views of the area, and while he naturally acknowledges these to be of tremendous significance, he does not view colonial scholarship as the only lens through which Peshawari socio-economic and historical development should be viewed. By the time one completes reading the book, one finds oneself to be in agreement with him.

Nichols therefore spends considerable time at the commencement of his text (indeed well into a third of the book) describing the development and influence of the powerful Yusufzai clan, especially their frequent and often fraught interactions with the imperialist forces of Emperor Akbar. He illustrates how the rich, irrigated soil of the valley led to multiple internecine squabbles for power, (both financial and gubernatorial) between various clans of the area. He also comments on the issues faced by rulers such as maliks and arbabs in arbitrating a region that was alternately lawless and rebellious. A quick side point that I should make here is that though he comments extensively on *maliks, arbabs*, etc., such terms are left out of the glossary at the end of the text and so a reader has to be especially careful to engage in close reading of the book in order to determine the significance of certain terms. However, his tables and appendices help clarify many points in the book that a reader may initially find obscure.

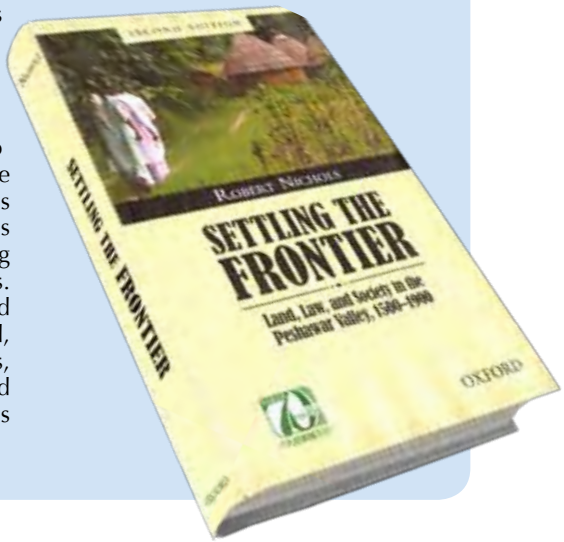
Be that as it may, his portrayal of how the writing and poetry of the valley resulted in the creation of Pakhtun lineage systems and genealogies that were partly mythical and often not particularly factual, is simply fascinating. He spends a lot of time on the importance of figures such as Akhund Darweza and Khushal Khan Khattak, outlining in detail how their writings and influence shaped the very culture of the region and had a long-lasting impact on how certain clans regarded their ancestry and hence inevitably their general importance to Peshawari society.

Nichols does touch upon the repression of women in the frontier as well as the strictness of life in general but does not dwell on this at length perhaps because these topics have been covered in more detail elsewhere. However, he does provide a systematic analysis of the influence of Sikh martial dynamics on the region's history and faithfully comments on issues such as how diseases such as typhus affected the region and how they were transmitted from village to village.

As noted earlier, he does not underestimate the impact of colonialism on the history of the area and his assessment of Elphinstone's rather high-handed Europeanized view of the locals is dealt with soundly. He deals equally faithfully with describing the Anglo-Afghan wars and lays the ground for explicating how the influence of the Raj paved the way for the Congress and the Muslim League's role in Peshawari politics in the twentieth century. To say that the book is a comprehensive study of the history of the region is almost an understatement and Nichols should be given credit for supporting every chapter with useful endnotes. A detailed index is also provided and though, as I have already mentioned, the glossary is lacking in some aspects, this is in aggregate a minor point and hence not a major drawback for this remarkable text.

Book Title:	Settling the Frontier: Land, Law and Society in the Peshawar Valley, 1500-1900
Author:	Robert Nichols
Publisher:	Oxford University Press
Price:	Rs. 1095
ISBN:	9780199406135

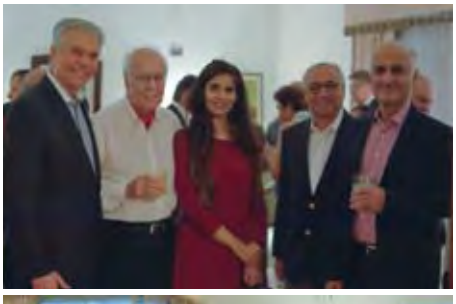
In order to justly appreciate Nichols' endeavour, it is important to peruse the text slowly and fully. However, this is not a task that will be easily managed by those who are simply seeking a quick overview of the frontier's history. Nichols possesses a rare ability to simultaneously view matters from several angles: political, historical, economic, geographic, social and material. In addition to this, he is to be praised for keeping his tone non-partisan and objective throughout. Regardless of whether he is engaging in activities as diverse as quoting moving Pakhtun poetry (in translation) or detailing mundane expenditures on land issues, he places all his material at the service of his overarching agenda: to provide an unbiased, detailed and highly comprehensive view of a region whose complexity has eluded both Western and indigenous writers for decades. S



US Consul General Honoured

Leading businessman and philanthropist Aziz Memon and his wife Samina hosted a Dinner at their residence in honour of the US Consul General in Karachi, Ms. JoAnne Wagner.

It was a very colourful evening and was attended by prominent city elite. Among them were Japanese Consul General in Karachi, Mr. Toshikazu Isomura and his wife, Kamal Azfar, former Governor of Sindh, Justice (R) Shaiq Usmani, Wajid Jawad, Abdullah Kadwani, Arif Habib, Basheer Ali Mohammad, Navaid and Dr. Sabiha, Khalid Awan, Chairman TCS, Ejaz Ahad and his wife Tayaba, Jamshed Qureshi and his wife, former chief of CPLC, Sharfuddin Memon and his wife and many others.



National Day of Austria Celebrated

To celebrate the National Day of the Republic of Austria, the 100th anniversary of the 1st World War, and the Austrian Presidency of the EU, His Excellency and Mrs. Raja Babar Tajammul, Hon. Consul of the Republic of Austria (Sindh), hosted a dinner and musical performance by Kusimanten (Austria).

The function was attended by Ambassador H.E. Dr. Brigitta Blaha, the U.S. Consul General and members of the Austrian cultural group that had performed at NAPA a day earlier.

Also present on the occasion were Sindh senior minister Nisar Khuhro, cricketer Zaheer Abbas, Byram Avari, Senator Khushbakht Shujaat and her husband, Ikhtiar Baig, Zeba Bakhtiar and many other guests.

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