The Complete Magazine for the Region

SEPTEMBER 2019

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SOUTHASIA

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Who holds the Trump Card?

Now that President Donald Trump has agreed to mediate on Kashmir, relations between India and Pakistan could move towards a thaw.

INDIA
Old Legacies

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A Rare Opportunity

World Bank and IMF Annual Meetings

Washington, DC, October 18-20, 2019.

To coincide with the forthcoming World Bank-IMF Annual Meetings to be held in Washington, DC, from October 18 to 20, 2019, ***SouthAsia*** magazine will be carrying a comprehensive Cover Story in its October '19 issue.

The meetings will bring together central bankers, ministers of finance and development, parliamentarians, private sector executives, representatives from civil society organizations and academics to discuss issues of such global concern as the world economic outlook, poverty eradication, economic development and aid effectiveness.

The event will provide a special point of convergence on the sidelines to international investors and decision-makers whose main focus will be on the developing economies of Asia, Africa and Latin America. More than 2,000 bankers, financial experts, international investors and other professionals are expected to attend these prestigious events.

The Cover Story will carry exclusive articles, features, interviews and other information about the World Bank – IMF policies and activities in the member countries, especially from the developing world. Arrangements have been made to make copies of this particular issue available to delegates and participants attending the meetings.

The event provides a rare opportunity for projecting your organization or services before an extremely relevant and influential target audience. Limited advertising space is available for all those who are interested in placing their advertisements. Please contact the Advertising Director at coverstory@southasia.com.pk latest by September 27, 2019.

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1 سے 3 سال کی عمر تک

3 سے 5 سال کی عمر تک

gro happy

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Breaking the Shell

India has been harping its 'bilateral talks with Pakistan' mantra and has been avoiding third party mediation on Kashmir like the plague. At the same time, it has contradicted itself and has taken the unilateral decision of merging Jammu & Kashmir into its union territory. It has simply thrown the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration into the dustbin. The country has also showed signs that it would pursue its Hindutva narrative with more aggression and make the Muslims of Kashmir a minority in their own state. This is happening in one of the world's most militarized regions. There are skirmishes between the armies of India and Pakistan day in and day out and the consequent death toll impacts both military personnel and civilians on the two sides. There is also the persistent fear that the border hostilities may take an ugly turn and lead to the outbreak of a full-fledged war.

War must always be avoided because an armed clash between two nations invariably impacts the respective socio-economic realities of both sides and has far-reaching effects. However, in the usual sense, this refers to a war fought with conventional weapons. In the case of India and Pakistan, if a war erupts, both nations could resort to using their nuclear capabilities to annihilate each other. If this happens, the entire South Asian region would be wiped off the face of the earth. What more, as a corollary, most of the globe can start writing its requiem because a nuclear conflagration anywhere is not restricted to just one part of the world. It is for this reason that while the United States has faced the humiliation of defeat in Afghanistan for almost two decades, it has not dared to use nuclear weapons there. In fact, after America's use of its nuclear capability at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1945, no nuclear nation has ever dared to use such an arsenal.

Perhaps, this is why, while the UN Security Council recently made a ruse of sitting down for less than an hour in New York to discuss the Kashmir dispute, it is President Donald Trump who is known to be making a very serious attempt to mediate between India and Pakistan in finding a workable solution to the long-festering Kashmir dispute. On the face of it, India refuses to accept any sort of mediation though Pakistan always welcomes it. There is a lot of sabre-rattling between the two neighbours but President Trump is making an attempt nevertheless to find a solution because he is aware that seven decades of eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation is more than enough to drag India and Pakistan, not towards development, but in the direction of mutual destruction. The upshot of this is that all of South Asia is affected and one fifth of humanity that lives in the region is simply not showing any improvement in the social indicators by which the world gauges human progress.

"Knowing that Kashmir is predominantly Musalman, it is one day bound to become a Musalman State."

– Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

in a May 5, 1934 letter to Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, a Kashmiri historian and journalist.

"The future of Kashmir is going to be decided finally by the goodwill and pleasure of the people. The goodwill and pleasure of this Parliament is of no importance in this matter, not because this Parliament does not have the strength to decide the question of Kashmir but because any kind of imposition would be against the principles that this Parliament holds."

– Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

addressing the Indian Parliament on August 7, 1952.

It is good that this time, despite the long-held adamant attitude of the Indian leadership and a lot of foot-dragging by other powers, the USA is taking a positive initiative in getting to the root of the Kashmir dispute and forcing both India and Pakistan to discuss the matter. For the time being, they may be doing it in a clandestine manner but there will come a time when they will agree on some kind of middle path and address the issue in a practical and pragmatic way. It is because of the Kashmir dispute that both nations are spending so much on maintaining their armed forces which are always at battle-ready positions. In better conditions, these countries could spend their money more judiciously and greatly improve the lot of their teeming millions. South Asia could be among the fastest growing regions in the world had it not been confronted with issues that most other parts of the world have already tackled and solved. This is an unfortunate part of the world that now needs to move ahead by exploiting its dormant potential in key areas. It must look at equitable economic growth, improve human development, end disparity between rural and urban populations, develop livable and sustainable cities, improve education and health, attain social progress, create better employment opportunities, promote entrepreneurship, develop human capital and bring about regional collaboration. For this to happen, it must emerge from its shell and start looking at long-term development prospects. S

Syed Jawaid Iqbal

President & Editor in Chief

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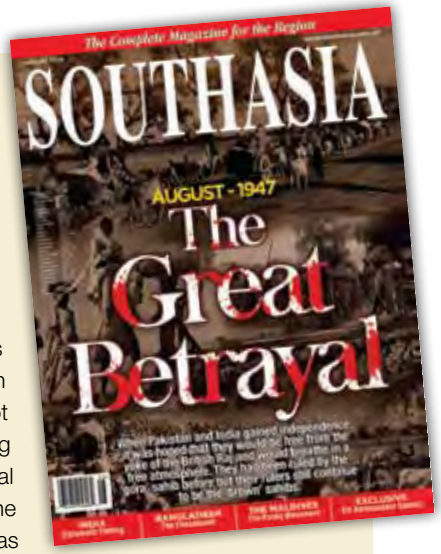
UN-ENDING STRUGGLE



This is related to your story 'The Great Betrayal'. Even after the partition in 1947, both Pakistan and India are still struggling for peace. The two nations have fought with each other for the past seventy-two years and the political situation is worsening with each passing day. Is this why they both got independence from the colonials? According to S.G. Jilanee, 'We have seen a great betrayal from the promise to address the plight of the masses who had been ruled by the British as now our people are ruling them to keep them under the thumb in the name of independence.'

Farhan Ismail,
Karachi, Pakistan

Remarkable Move

SouthAsia Magazine has always managed to deliver the best.

The interview of the European Union Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Jean-Francois Caution, is living proof of the fact. It was really impressive to see him sharing his views regarding South Asian politics and the relationship between the EU and Pakistan. The ambassador was of the view that indeed CPEC is a good initiative which has over the past years helped Pakistan in dealing with its energy crisis but it should not be the only focus. He also highlighted that Pakistan has a lot of potential and SAARC should be immediately revived to maintain peace among the countries.

Irteza Anwar,
Islamabad, Pakistan

What Solution?

The US has sought Pakistan's help to mediate between the Taliban and the US-backed Afghan government. Their agreement may end up harming the Afghan people if left at the mercy of the Taliban. How can we consider leaving the people of a nation to live under sub-human conditions and a medieval lifestyle that has no room in the 21st century? Would anyone consider living under such circumstances where your honour, respect, self-esteem and basic human decency is left at the mercy of a warlord who has no sense of the contemporary world?

Bahadar A Khan,
Toronto, Canada

SAARC vs. BIMSTEC

This is regarding the article 'Oranges and Apples' by S.G. Jilanee. We are familiar with the fact that SAARC has failed in its potential to deliver its agenda and because of its failure, many people are looking forward to BIMSTEC as its substitute. It should be clear that BIMSTEC is India's baby which it has

fathered by excluding Pakistan from it. In BIMSTEC, India will be able to dominate other nations of South Asia they way it wants. Bhutan's Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tsering has stated that BIMSTEC cannot replace SAARC as BIMSTEC has a different geographical location. Like BIMSTEC, SAARC is not limited to economic and technical cooperation and is a comprehensive package. They both have entirely different goals. Your title 'Oranges and Apples' explains the difference between the two.

Sabitri Sunwar,
Thimphu, Bhutan

Khanabadosh Cafe

In our world, open spaces are in decline because they are being transformed into parking lots and shopping malls. Khanabadosh Café in Hyderabad is such a place, a modern meeting ground that cherishes the poetic sensibilities of Sindh's culture and at the same time engages with

the world at large, inviting travellers from afar, like me. Rarely have I experienced such an atmosphere of joyous celebration of poetic potential, followed by a lively discussion of matters ranging from Friedrich Nietzsche to Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. It is with great sadness that I have just heard that Khanabadosh Café is under threat of closure. There are so few niches of cultural excellence. We can't afford to lose even one of them!

Ilija Trojanow,
Frankfurt, Germany

Education for All

This is with reference to the article 'Right to Education' by Dr Taseer Salahuddin. Whenever I hear the word 'education' the first thing that comes to my mind is that it should be free and compulsory for all. Today, the education system is so expensive that it is almost impossible for lower-middle class people to give their child a better education. Furthermore, the public schools that provide free education to the children aged 6-14 after the passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) in August 2009 lack the quality of education because of untrained staff, fake grading and non-practical, bookish knowledge. The differences between private and public schools are affecting the children and their families at large and this should be minimised.

Priyanka Avasti,
New Delhi, India

Growing Concern

Dengue fever is back again in full swing in Dhaka. In 2018, 347 people were infected in just two months but this year 1,864 people got infected between May and June. Dhaka is the second least liveable city in the world as cleanliness is not a priority there. People frequently spit on the streets, urinate wherever they find suitable and construction materials are also kept out in the open which are breeding grounds for dengue mosquitoes. Dhaka is growing in an unplanned manner having an outbreak of chikungunya last year and dengue this year. The city corporations and WHO have deemed the situation as 'alarming' but not out of control. However, the growing number of those infected suggests otherwise.

Zillur Rahaman,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

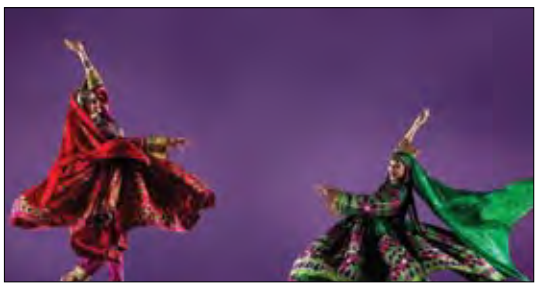
BRTS Sorrows

Karachi's green bus and orange Bus Rapid Transit Systems (BRTS) has become a far-fetched dream. More than four years have passed but there is no sign of completion. Last year the Sindh Governor, along with the Mayor of Karachi, laid the foundation of bridges and their extension at Sakhi Hassan, Five Star Chowrangi and KDA Chowrangi. After more than seven months, nothing seems to be happening. From the look of things, these projects are likely to suffer the same fate as Karachi's Lyari Expressway and the Peshawar BRT. Billions of rupees have been wasted so far in constructing the BRTS but there is only grief.

Arif Hassan,
Karachi, Pakistan

Promoting Culture

This is concerning the article 'Fascinating Attan' by Samar Quddus. The article primarily discusses the Afghans', particularly Pashtuns' rich culture of celebration which is in the form of Attan. Attan is an Afghan dance form which is performed with special musical instruments like drums, rubab and sornai. A group of people get together, form a circle and move around with the same beat and rhythm. It is recognised worldwide among all tribes and ethnicities and is regarded as the



national dance of Afghanistan. Women wear bright and colourful kuchi while men wear pakol (thick wool hat) and waskata (woollen vest), an attire as important as the dance itself. Various groups have even adopted the culture that now includes some areas of Pakistan as well. For this reason, Attan should also be adopted as one of Pakistan's folk dances representing KPK.

Khush Bakht,
Kabul, Afghanistan

"We must learn from history, there is no military solution for the Kashmir issue...we have to understand this reality."
- Pervez Musharraf, former President of Pakistan

"I do not have any fears, no fear of dying, of failure, of anything; that means I am very dangerous for my opponents."
- Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan

"Mind is never a problem. Mindset is."
- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

"None will respond to the call of Khaleda."
- Sheikh Hasina Wajed, Prime Minister of Bangladesh

"The Indian Ocean is in need of a mutually benefiting security architecture established on a multilateral basis."
- Ranil Wickramasinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

"Afghanistan is an extremely poor country awash with money."
- Ashraf Ghani, President of Afghanistan

"The American people are tired of liars and people who pretend to be something they're not."
- Hillary Clinton, former U.S. Secretary of State

"Political disagreements have the colour and fragrance that normally is seen and felt in a political bouquet, while remaining united on one issue that democracy is the future of Pakistan."
- Asif Ali Zardari, Pakistani politician

"The most important time in life is the present."
- Aitzaz Ahsan, Pakistani politician and lawyer

"One of the best ways to achieve justice is to expose injustice."
- Julian Assange, Australian investigative journalist

"It is the time to move ahead and bring the change."
- Rahul Gandhi, Indian politician

"Nothing destroys one's respect in the hearts of others more than greed."
- Muhammad Taqi Usmani, Pakistani scholar

"If knowledge is not put into practice, it does not benefit one."
- Muhammad Tahir-ul Qadri, Pakistani politician

"I think we can build democracy in Pakistan. But it will take time. And it will be a Pakistani democracy. Not one that's imposed by someone else."
- Fatima Bhutto, niece of Benazir Bhutto

"If you are weak, anyone can come and kick you."
- Jemima Khan, ex-wife of Imran Khan

"In some tiny, tiny way I am part of history, but I am also able to help people."
- Huma Abedin, U.S. political staffer

"Violence against women can end only when the culprits get punished."
- Mukhtaran Mai, Pakistani female activist

"Everyone remembers the last shot of World T20 2007, but forgets who brought the match to the last over."
- Misbah-ul-Haq, Pakistani cricketer

"Whatever you do, don't wake up at 65 years old and think about what you should have done with your life."
- George Clooney, American actor

"Sometimes you need to let people feel important by disliking you. It's their little happiness."
- ***Shahrukh Khan, Indian actor***

UNITY OF COMMAND

A question arises every three years in Pakistan that who will be next the Army Chief. The question is not asked with regard to Pakistan Navy and Air Force chiefs and these positions are filled in the normal course without the people knowing much about it. Army General Qamar Javed Bajwa will be completing his tenure in November this year and now he has been given another extension of 3 years perhaps because the situation in Kashmir demands that the army command be not changed. Pakistan's new Army Chief could have been the next senior-most general but it seems that Prime Minister Imran Khan can work better with General Bajwa.

POLITICAL STARDOM

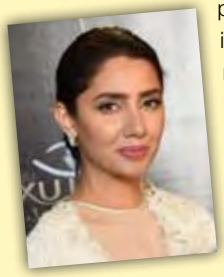
Is she the next top PPP leader, now that Asif Zardari is probably down and out and Bilawal Bhutto is still learning the ropes? Faryal Talpur became a true blue politician and rose to political stardom in her brother Asif Zardari's days as president of Pakistan. It is even said that Faryal could have proved good Presidential material had she been given the chance. Looks like she now faces quite a bit of NAB ire. She was arrested by NAB in connection with a case pertaining to money laundering through fake accounts. Does she still have a chance to shine on the national political horizon?

PROFESSIONAL GAB

It is said that TV channels these days have a hard time finding a person from the PML-N to represent it on TV shows. The only person available is Dr. Musadik Malik – a guy who can sell refrigerators even in the Antarctic with his gift of the gab. After graduating in Pharmacy from the Punjab University, he did a Ph.D. and M.S. in Healthcare Administration and Policy from the University of Illinois. He has also studied Health Economics and holds an MBA. A good-natured man and always smiling, Dr. Malik could do much better advising the PTI government on relevant issues rather than wasting his time in a dying PML-N. The PML-N can still have their Ahsan Iqbals and Maryam Aurangzebs to defend it.

BEAUTY FAMINE

Beautiful faces and good talent are few and far between in Pakistani showbiz. It's the same people who are repeatedly seen in the better TV plays and films or serve as hosts in award shows, etc. Good actresses like Mahira Khan are termed as 'old' by actors who have themselves played their innings. In the middle of all this, it is Mahwish Hayat as one person who has made a mark as a talented TV and film actress. What more, she still carries a sane head on her shoulders. It is a pity though that Mahwish will not continue acting for long and plans to become a film director after a few years.



ICI CELEBRATES 75 YEARS

Muhammad Sohail Tabba
Chairman, ICI Pakistan Ltd.

Muhammad Ali Tabba
Vice-Chairman, ICI Pakistan Ltd.

Asif Jooma
Chief Executive, ICI Pakistan Ltd.

ICI Pakistan Limited, which is a part of YBG (Yunus Brothers Group) is celebrating 75 years of its successful operations. The occasion was also marked by a 12-page supplement in Daily Dawn.

ICI is a leading manufacturing and trading company. It consists of four diverse businesses: Polyester, Soda Ash, Chemicals and Life Sciences. Through these businesses, the company manufactures and trades in a wide range of products, including polyester staple fibre (PSF), soda ash, general and specialty chemicals, toll-manufactured pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, animal health products and agricultural products (including chemicals, field crop seeds, vegetable seeds and more). The company also has a management stake in the infant milk formula business under the name of NutriCo Private Limited.

Mr. Muhammad Sohail Tabba, Chairman, ICI Pakistan Limited says the company had invested significantly to create value for its stakeholders and through its acquisition by YBG, it had been infused with revived spirits and renewed energy to relentlessly pursue growth opportunities in both the existing businesses and new ventures.

The Chief Executive of ICI Pakistan Limited, Mr. Asif Jooma says that ICI Pakistan Ltd. enjoys an iconic status in Pakistan's industrial landscape with businesses that are aligned to the country's economic and social fabric.

Yashma Gill on YouTube

Yashma Gill has recently launched a YouTube channel. She uploaded a promo on YouTube showcasing all that she will be covering in her videos – from personal adventures and experiences to experiments, fan moments and her everyday anecdotes.

Known for her charismatic persona, Yashma Gill has made her mark in a short time. She has hit dramas like 'Ghar Titli Ka Par', 'Ab Dekh Khuda Kya Karta Hai', 'Ki Jaana Main Kaun' and a few more. Currently, she is starring in 'Piya Naam Ka Diya'.

HONDA E-SPORTS

Honda Motor Co. is pumping more marketing dollars into competitive video gaming to protect its status as the dominant carmaker among young, first-time buyers. The Japanese auto giant is becoming the official automaker of Riot Games Inc.'s League of Legends Championship Series, one of North America's biggest e-sports leagues. The news comes eight months after Honda signed a partnership with Team Liquid, a three-time league champion.

Honda joins a growing list of sponsors for Riot's North American league, including Mastercard Inc., State Farm Life Insurance Co., Walmart Inc. and Quicken Loans Inc.'s Rocket Mortgage. They will work together on a digital behind-the-scene documentary series, plus traditional on-site advertising that will feature wrapped cars outside the venue. Honda, which has been investing in gaming since 2014, is also paying for naming rights to the championship series' MVP award.

DETTOL SCHOLARSHIPS

The 'Back to School' campaign is offered by Dettol every year and they are continuing the tradition this year as well. The scholarship will cover tuition fee for 12 months, from the 1st of January 2020 till 31st of December 2020 for those who win. There have been 21 Dettol scholars who have won the scholarship in the past two years along with the winner of the Dettol School Fund. Dettol offers several opportunities to increase access to quality education in the county.

Going back to school is an exciting time for children and parents alike. Through the initiative, children will have a more productive school year by ensuring good health through sustained hygienic practices that Dettol promotes.

Dettol has always played an important part in giving back to the community through different campaigns and programs. The Dettol School Program is an excellent example which reaches two million school-going children across Pakistan, educating them on the importance of cleanliness and hygiene.

CMC APPOINTS FAISAL SIDDIQI AS COO

Pakistan's leading perception management company, CMC, has appointed Faisal Siddiqi as its Chief Operating Officer (COO). In this capacity, he will be responsible for providing strategic and operational leadership in all activities pursued by the company with special emphasis on public advocacy and perception management.

Expressing his views, Syed Jawaid Iqbal, President & CEO, CMC said, "CMC takes great pride in the fact that its professional culture and practices have helped groom a future leader who is now at the helm of affairs in the company. We look forward to immensely benefiting from Faisal's rich experience and professional dedication in driving the organization forward in these challenging yet exciting times."

CMC is one of Pakistan's leading perception management and communications firms and the exclusive affiliate of Ketchum, USA in the country. CMC has fully functional offices in Karachi and Islamabad that offer a full portfolio of public relations, media management, community development, government relations, perception management, strategic counseling, crisis management, behavioral change communication, political grooming, parliamentary relations and public advocacy services.

FIRST INFINIX STORE IN KARACHI

Infinix Mobile, the smartphone manufacturer dominating emerging markets, has launched its first official store at Star City Mall in Karachi's Saddar.

Infinix Mobile is a Hong Kong based company which has quickly risen as one of the leading smartphone brands in the world. The store will feature flagship smartphones as well as other exclusive in-store deals for Infinix customers.

NBP Partners WorldRemit

Leading digital money transfer service WorldRemit and National Bank of Pakistan have launched safe, fast and low-cost international transfers to 1,500+ National Bank Pakistan (NBP) cash pick-up locations and designated branches of Pakistan Post Office.

The Pakistani Diaspora living in over 50 countries, including the USA, UK, Canada and Australia, can now send money to NBP cash pickup locations using their smartphone.

WorldRemit is also offering its customers zero fees for transfers to Pakistan. The Bank also recently launched special credit schemes for SME businesses across various industries and is offering Qarz-e-Hasna loans to students.

Pakistan has the sixth-largest Diaspora population in the world, with approximately 7.6 million Pakistanis living abroad. According to the World Bank, Pakistan received over $20 billion in remittances in 2018, representing almost 7% of the country's GDP.

PAKISTAN CASE AT IPRI SEMINAR

"Pakistan's Achilles' Heel: A Case for International Law and Diplomacy" was organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in Islamabad. Ahmer Bilal Soofi, former Federal Minister of Law and Special Envoy of the PM and founder of Research Institute of Law (RSIL), outlined how Pakistan can present its case more effectively if the battles in the courtrooms are well fought. He even pointed out that the Kulbhashan Jadhav case, being heard at the International Court of Justice, is one of the few instances in which credible, irrefutable evidence of terrorist activities against Pakistan has emerged.

'Aye Zindagi' to Unveil Six Short Films

Dot Republic Media, in collaboration with Next Level Entertainment, has launched the song 'Aye Zindagi' by Aima Baig and Nabeel Shaukat Ali to unveil the release of six short films starring heartthrobs of today, such as Saboor Ali, Minal Khan, Muneeb Butt, Wahaj Ali, Hassan Ahmed, Furqan Qureshi, Faryal Mehmood, Ali Safina, Gul-e-Rana, Sabeena Farooq and many others. The short films will be released on digital platforms in more than 240 countries.

HERE WITH TPL

TPL Maps, Pakistan's first digital mapping company, and HERE Technologies, a global leader in mapping and location platform services, have announced a strategic partnership in Pakistan, the Middle East and Africa.

Data from TPL Maps will allow HERE Technologies to offer high-quality maps of the region for all its customer segments, including automotive, transport and logistics, technology, media and telecommunications and the public sector. TPL Maps will become a go-to market partner for HERE Technologies in Pakistan, the UAE and other markets of the Middle East and Africa. The two companies aim to meet the needs of the region's rapidly growing economies and middle-classes, increasing consumption of products and services.

Achievement Awards

The 10th annual Pakistan Achievement Awards were held in London. The event celebrated the achievements of prominent Pakistanis across the globe in politics, entertainment, business, sports, arts and culture.

Iffat Omar Launches Her Talk Show

Iffat Omar is launching her first digital talk show 'Say It All with Iffat Omar'. The actress has opted for Youtube as the preferred digital platform for her show.

When asked about what the viewers should expect from the talk show, Omar explained, "It will be covering various subjects including personal, cultural, local and global information. My focus is to make it as interesting as possible for my viewers. The content will be different from what is currently available in the country. My talk show will feature everyone's favourite superstars as guests answering a variety of personal questions, playing games and generally interacting as they have never done before. Pure entertainment is what the viewers should expect from this project."

Seeking to revolutionize the digital media landscape in Pakistan, in 'Say It All with Iffat Omar', she hopes to provide a safe platform. Staying true to her signature bold and daring style, Omar encourages all her guests to speak their minds without any fear of repercussions. S

Sacred Games Back

With the success of 'Sacred Games' Season 1, Netflix has now come up with its Season 2. The web series has done huge business worldwide and gained popularity in the region and outside as well. The crime drama stars Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Saif Ali Khan.'Sacred Games' is based on Vikram Chandra's 2006 novel of the same name. The most popular Netflix original series in India, it is directed by Vikramaditya Motwane and Anurag Kashyap, who produced it under their banner Phantom Films. The novel was adapted by Varun Grover, Smita Singh and Vasant Nath. Kelly Luegenbiehl, Erik Barmack and Motwane served as the executive producers.S

THE KICK FROM FEMALE FOOTBALLERS

With the U.S. women's soccer team winning the World Cup, people's perspective may change. Previously, they thought women's soccer lacked the skill to have a packed stadium and female players didn't deserve equal pay.

With the door for discussion left wide open, the audience is eager to listen and ready to learn. With their voices echoing across Twitter and beyond, it's a step in the right direction and a clear sign of progress for women in sports. S

Pakistani Film at Venice Fest

Pakistani filmmaker Saim Sadiq's 'Darling' is the first Pakistani film to be shown at the Venice Film Festival. 'Darling', set in a dance theatre in Lahore where the story revolves around a young boy and a trans girl, is the first-ever Pakistani film to be an official selection at any of the 'Big Three' film festivals – that is Cannes, Berlin and Venice.

The film's cast includes Mehar Bano and Nadia Afgan of 'Suno Chanda' and 'Shaslik' fame. The main leads are Shani, played by Abdullah Malik, and Alina, played by Alina, a trans-girl from Lahore who makes her acting debut with the film. S

LOTUS EXPANDS INTO ASIA

Travel PR specialist Lotus has expanded into Asia with its second office outside the UK. Lotus Asia will be headquartered in Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur and supported by a team in Singapore, offering a full service across Southeast Asia.

Lotus plans to work with destinations and tourism organisations to adapt their tourism strategies to ensure they have the creative to attract these travellers and product development strategies. S

CABRERA GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS CHIEF

General Mills has hired Jano Cabrera as its Global Chief Communications Officer. Cabrera will lead General Mills' internal and external comms functions globally, overseeing 25

staffers. He will head issues and crisis management, media relations and corporate reputation building for General Mills with a focus on nurturing and protecting the company and its brands.

Cabrera was SVP of U.S. communications, global media and PR at McDonald's. He left the fast-food giant in March. A PR Week Power List 2018 honouree, he led media relations, brand reputation and consumer engagement and oversaw the U.S. market at McDonald's. Cabrera also revamped McDonald's in-house communications group with a focus on subject-matter experts. S

DEVRIES GLOBAL'S PR AOR

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has named DeVries Global as its global PR AOR, i.e. Public Relations Agency of Record, for four of its luxury brands in Europe, Asia and North America. The hotel company previously worked with firms in different markets before consolidating work with DeVries.

IHG awarded DeVries the account after a formal review that began last December and wrapped up in March, according to Emma Corcoran, IHG VP of global corporate affairs, marketing, commercial and technology. IHG put the account up for review, Corcoran said, after it re-evaluated its PR requirements and realized it needed to meet local, in-market needs and also tell its story globally.

The agency is promoting the IHG brands with activations to make them the first choice for luxury-focused consumers. Specifically, the firm is tasked with conducting brand PR campaigns, managing media relations and supporting hotel openings. S

No Host

The 71st Emmy Awards will not have a host just like the Oscar awards. The news follows in the steps of the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences (Oscars) after Kevin Hart was removed as the host following his tweets on the internet.

The entertainment will comprise an opening number along with many surprises. The awards will take place on September 22 at the Microsoft Theatre. S

MATSUSHITA, ESSENCE'S GLOBAL CEO

Essence, the self-described data and measurement-driven media agency of WPP's GroupM, has named Kyoko Matsushita as its new global CEO.

Matsushita joined Essence in 2014 as CEO of the agency's APAC region. In May, she was promoted as Essence's first global chief client officer. She is expected to name people to her executive team, including a new APAC CEO.

Under Matsushita's watch, the APAC region became the highest growth market for the agency as well as had the highest employee retention rate.S

RESOLD CHICKEN

Popeyes, an American multinational chain of fried chicken fast-food restaurants, is heading to a local California restaurant that famously re-sold its fried chicken to launch its first national chicken sandwich.

The owner – Kim Sanchez – of Sweet Dixie Kitchen, a restaurant in Long Beach, came under fire a few years ago when it was discovered that she used Popeyes chicken in its chicken and waffles dish starred in the launch video. The sandwich is battered with buttermilk and breaded with white chicken meat filet and is served on a buttery and toasted bun with two-barrel cured pickles and classic mayo or spicy Cajun spread. The sandwich is a hit in the Popeyes menu and is available at Sweet Dixie Kitchen.

Popeyes termed the launch as its biggest in 30 years as it has won market interest along with having the attention of other chicken rivals like KFC. Let's just hope people's memory won't deter them from giving the first national chicken sandwich a try. S

PEOPLE'S GO-TO PHONE

Tecno Spark Go is a budget mobile focused at students, budget-conscious individuals and those who want good features but can't pay a lot. It recently released a smartphone worth Rs.12, 999 which comes with many exclusive deals. The phone has a 4G LTE as well as Dot Notch display together with large memory and AI technology. S

BEYOND MEDIATION

The change in status of Kashmir may be just the start. Stripping the region of its autonomy is one of several long-held demands of Hindu nationalists.

BY SHAHID JAVED BURKI

The move was expected. On August 5, 2019, the Indian President issued a decree abolishing the special status the Indian Occupied Kashmir had been given in the country's Constitution. After dithering for months, the Kashmiri leadership -- a Hindu raja -- had agreed in late 1947 to have his state become part of India, but only under the autonomy guaranteed by Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. That provision was like a contract that provided that Kashmir would be different from other Indian states and have a say to what kind of federal laws could be imposed on it.

India had prepared for the August 5 move. For years India's Hindu nationalists had wanted to curtail the special freedoms enjoyed by Kashmir and after the resounding victory for their party, the Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party felt strong enough to move against the constitutionally guaranteed autonomy for the state. According to a front-page news analysis of the situation, The New York Times wrote on August 6 that "the voice of the Kashmiris was silenced, as the government cut off all communications from the area. Several top Kashmiri politicians were taken into custody including Mehbooba Mufti, a former chief minister of Kashmir."

This Indian move happened a couple of weeks after a meeting on July 22 between the visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and American President Donald Trump. The latter had offered to help resolve the Kashmir dispute that had soured relations between India and Pakistan right after they became independent states. If Donald Trump, America's 45th President, was a deep strategic thinker, one would be inclined to find some clever reason for what can be interpreted as a major move. During Imran Khan's Washington visit -- the 22nd to be taken by a Pakistani head of state -- the American president surprised the visiting prime minister and the Indian leadership by offering to intermediate in the 72-year old dispute. He claimed that his move was prompted by a request from Narendra Modi, the Indian prime minister. The two men had met several times since Trump moved into the White House. Their last meeting was at the G20 summit in Osaka, Japan, that brought the heads of 20 large states to the Japanese city for their annual summit. The group does not include Pakistan although the size of the country -- its population and gross domestic product -- justifies its membership. It has been kept out by pressure from India.

It took a nano-second for India to deny that the Indian Prime Minister had asked the American President to help settle the Kashmir issue. New Delhi has never accepted the idea of a third-party play in the Kashmir dispute. That is the Indian claim but it is not supported by history. Outsiders got involved whenever India and Pakistan went to war over the issue. This was three times; it would have been four times had wiser counsels not prevailed in the spring of 2019 when scores of people were killed by a suicide bomber in their part of Kashmir. Blaming Pakistan for the attack, India sent in fighter jets into Pakistani airspace which were shot down by Pakistan.

The first outside intervention was in 1948 when the two countries fought a limited war -- limited since the clash was confined to the state of Kashmir. The United Nations stepped in and the Indian side agreed that the future of the contested state would be determined by a plebiscite in which people would decide whether they would remain with India or move over and

join Pakistan. India then was accepting that the idea of a Muslim state being a part of its territory was an anomaly since the British had left their Indian colony by dividing it between a Muslim Pakistan and a predominantly Hindu India. History justified a plebiscite. It was the people's will that decided that the then North West Frontier Province would become a part of Pakistan and that the people of Sylhet, a heavily Muslim majority area in Assam, would join East Pakistan.

It was intervention by a superpower that ended Pakistan's second Kashmir war with India. In September 1965 the two countries fought a bitter 17-day war in which the main battleground was not in Kashmir but in the areas around Lahore and Sialkot. A United Nations mandated ceasefire was accepted by the warring parties. This time Pakistan wanted a follow-up not trusting the Indians to implement the first resolution on Kashmir. The Soviet Union then agreed to play the role of an intermediary. Alexei Kosygin, then the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, met with the Pakistani president Field Marshal Ayub Khan and Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Indian Prime Minister. The meeting took place in Tashkent, the capital of what was then the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. Not much happened in the meeting other than an agreement that was reached to restore the status quo. The strain of the encounter was too much for the Indian leader. He had a heart attack and died on January 11, 1966 in Tashkent after concluding the meeting with Kosygin and Ayub Khan.

The third time India accepted third-party intervention was over the ill-advised penetration of the Pakistani forces at Kargil, a spot on the extreme north of the Line of Control that separated the Indian and Pakistani held parts of Kashmir. General Pervez Musharraf was then the Chief of the Pakistani army. He though that he could improve Pakistan's military position by having his men take possession of the lightly occupied Kargil Heights. This move was done without the knowledge of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who had just before that time signed the "Lahore Declaration" with the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. India responded to the Kargil incursion by threatening an all-out war with Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif panicked but needed a face-saving solution to the problem. He sought a meeting with President Bill Clinton which was granted. On July 4, 1999, the holiest of America's holy days, Clinton met with Sharif in Washington, and in return for the President's pledge to get involved in solving the Kashmir dispute, agreed to pull the Pakistani forces out of Kargil. The status quo was thus restored but America did not get involved.

What is the lesson to be drawn from history? The Indians have welcomed outside intervention when things in Kashmir became very hot for them. Could the August 5 move produce the heat which would make India welcome Trump's offer to mediate? S

The writer is a professional economist who has served as a Vice President of the World Bank and as caretaker Finance Minister of Pakistan. He can be reached at sjburki@gmail.com

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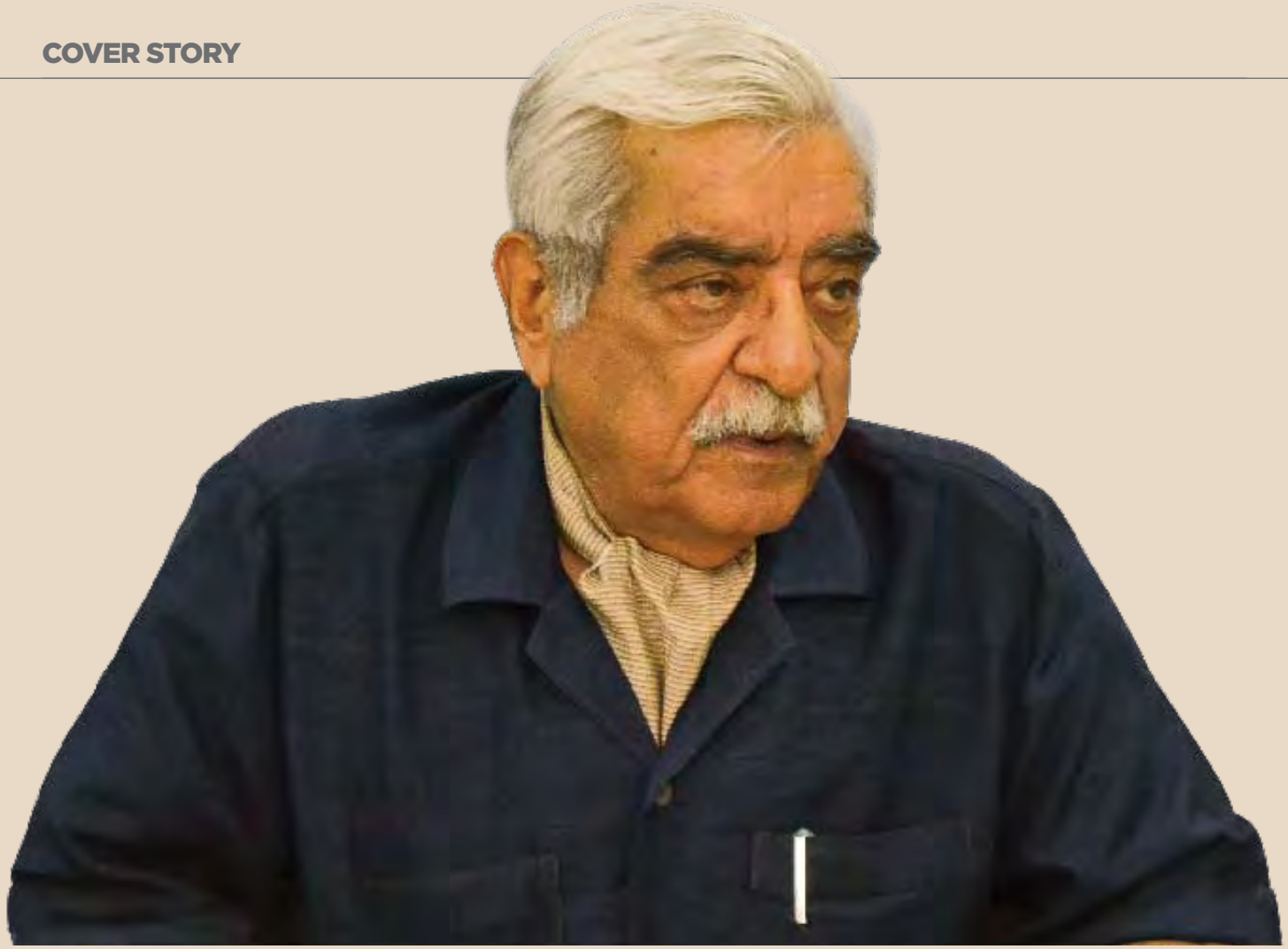


INTERVIEW

"Modi is solely interested in Kashmir's land at the cost of wiping out the Muslims."

Najmuddin Shaikh, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, speaks to *SouthAsia* in this exclusive interview.

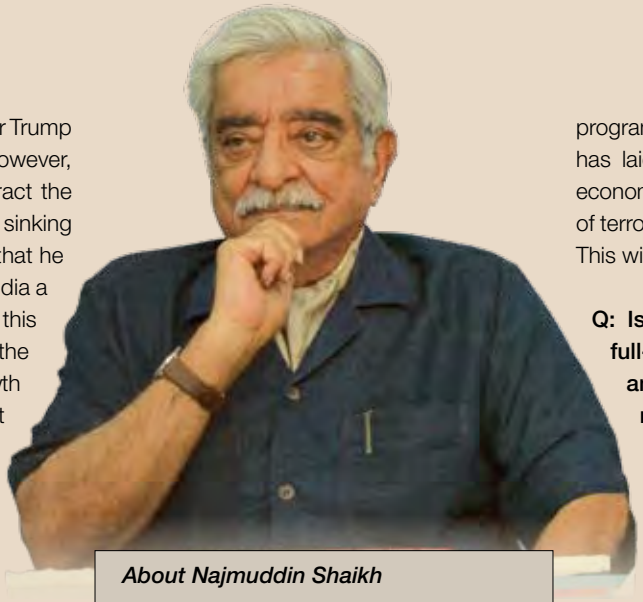
SouthAsia: India's decision to declare Jammu & Kashmir as its integral part seems to be spilling the U.S. applecart in Afghanistan. How will this step affect the on-going talks?

Najmuddin Shaikh: I think the recent developments in Indian-occupied Kashmir would not have a considerable impact on the peace process in Afghanistan. No doubt, Kashmir has been the bone of contention since ages, but Pakistan is also keen to find a peaceful solution of the Afghanistan crisis, because an unsettled Afghanistan would affect Pakistan's own stability and would undermine its ability to deal with terrorism, extremism, etc. We must focus on finding an applicable solution to Afghanistan but the U.S. should also understand our limitations in this regard. Both countries need to keep up their efforts to push the peace process forward to ensure that the Taliban talk to Afghanistan's elected government and come to a solution, of which a ceasefire should be a principal element. Power sharing is another vital factor that must be discussed between the Afghan government and the Taliban, but such things take time to happen. Once there is a ceasefire it will bring peace to the war-torn region and will also revive trading between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Q: Do you think President Trump's offer to mediate between India and Pakistan pushed the Modi-led government to expedite the abrogation of Article 370?

A: Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made up his mind much earlier to revoke Articles 370 and 35A to deprive Jammu & Kashmir of its special status. What Modi has done now with Kashmir became part of the BJP manifesto in 1984. RSS history suggests that the revocation of Kashmir's special status was one of its principal points even earlier, but it was Modi who made it a fundamental part of the BJP electoral

agenda in 1984. I am not sure whether Trump precipitated this move or not. However, Modi took such a bold step to distract the people's attention from the gradually sinking economy of India, knowing the fact that he had set an ambitious goal to make India a $5 trillion economy by 2024, though this is not going to happen. To achieve the target, India has to generate a growth rate of 8.5% or minimum 8%, but the current situation is quite the opposite. Thus Modi, once again, is playing the Kashmir card and is appealing to the janta's nationalist fervour to take their attention away from the economic failure. Trump has subsequently spoken to Modi and suggested to him that India must improve its relations with Pakistan and he has also been talking about playing a role in mediating between Pakistan and India to ease tensions. He knows that both these nuclear-powered countries in South Asia must be brought on the negotiation table, otherwise the danger of confrontation between Pakistan and India would continue to exist.



About Najmuddin Shaikh

Najmuddin Shaikh has served as Pakistan's Foreign Secretary from 1994 to 1997. He was Pakistan's ambassador to the United States from 1990 to1991. Earlier, he was Secretary, Ministry of Culture. He has also served as Pakistan's ambassador to Canada, West Germany and Iran. He was Pakistan's special envoy to Yemen, Sudan, Kenya and Bahrain.

Q: What are the future prospects for peace in South Asia region after India's unilateral action?

A: I am not very optimistic about peace prospects in South Asia. To me, unless all the stakeholders in India make a more determined effort to prevent Modi from taking his nationalist agenda further, which seems unlikely, we cannot hope for a peaceful environment prevailing in the region. Currently, there is a wave of Hindutva-based nationalism sweeping India and it seems unlikely that the Indian Supreme Court would term Modi's decision to revoke Article 370 as unconstitutional. No doubt, there will be constant resistance from the Kashmiri people, but it has become quite clear that Prime Minister Modi is solely interested in Kashmir's land at the cost of wiping out the indigenous Kashmiri Muslims for good. He simply wants to change the demographics of Kashmir and make it a Hindu-majority state rather than a Muslim state.

Q: For Pakistan, what are the takeaways from the recent UN Security Council meeting on Jammu & Kashmir?

A: Thanks to the Security Council meeting, the Kashmir dispute has become an international subject of concern once again. But I don't think that the Security Council meeting has achieved much. No statement was issued from the Council. However, it appears that Pakistan has briefed the Council members in the meeting which lasted for 25 to 30 minutes. However, I am not very sanguine about what the UN will do in the future. There have to be actions by individual powers, including President Trump, who has already talked about the fact that India and Pakistan must talk to each other to reduce tensions. It mostly depends on how far international pressure will build on India to make them realise that they cannot continue using the excuse of terrorism to win the conversation with Pakistan. For two decades, the Indians have been relying on these tactics and they will continue to do so.

Q: Do you think Pakistan can do more to internationalize the Kashmir issue?

A: Pakistan must continue the programme that Prime Minister Imran Khan has laid down for improving the country's economy as well as uprooting the menace of terrorism and extremism from the country. This will help us win international support.

Q: Is there any possibility of another full-fledged war between Pakistan and India, two nuclear-powered nations?

A: I don't think so because Modi would not find international support if India declares a war against Pakistan. As things stand, Prime Minister Modi is acting on his own agenda, which is first about changing the demographics of Kashmir in his fashion and to his satisfaction. After doing this, he will focus on making India a Hindutva state by getting rid of Muslims or by making them secondary citizens. Pakistan will come later. That is the worst case scenario I can perceive at the moment.

Q: Did India issue a veiled threat to Pakistan when its defence minister said that his country's commitment to 'no first use' of nuclear weapons would now depend on the circumstances?

A: I think Pakistan is not much worried about India's nuclear ambitions because they cannot afford such a war with Pakistan. However, we are more concerned about other threats from India, like they were earlier talking about their 'cold start' doctrine and things like 'hot pursuit'.

Q: What are you views about the US-Taliban talks?

A: There are some chances for a peaceful settlement but the situation is still not clear. Though some progress has been made to revive peace in the war-wracked country but there are divisions within Kabul and there are spoilers out there who would not like Ashraf Ghani's government to continue. This is because the present political setup in Afghanistan allows many a tribal fiefdoms to exist. It also helps various narcotics traders to keep up their business going without any hassle. Making the most of the vulnerable political scenario, illegal narcotic trade is a very important factor that hampers peace in Afghanistan. S

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THE TRUMP CARD

President Donald Trump offered to mediate between India and Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir. This was his version of a 'Trump Card' because he probably already knew that India had other plans for the region.

BY DR. MOONIS AHMAR

"I met Prime Minister [Imran] Khan, I got along great with [the premier]. I think they are fantastic people — Khan and Modi — I mean, I would imagine they could get along very well. But if they wanted somebody to intervene, to help them [...] and I spoke with Pakistan about that and I spoke frankly in India about it [...] that battle has been going on for a long time. If I can, if they wanted me to, I would certainly intervene."

- U.S. President Donald Trump.

That is what Donald Trump said during the visit of Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan to Washington in July. The offer of mediation by Donald Trump on Kashmir was welcomed by Pakistan but predictably rejected by India. Surprisingly, Trump quoted Modi of expressing his intention for American mediation with Pakistan but despite the hue and cry in the Indian parliament on why their Prime Minister was quoted by the American President for mediation, Modi remained silent.

India's insistence of the bilateral track and rejection of third party mediation is quite old. The last time, India agreed for mediation was 20 years ago when President Bill Clinton during his meeting with the then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called the Indian Prime Minister Atal Vehari Vajpayee to de-escalate Indo-Pak tensions emanating from the Kargil conflict. Otherwise, it is the official Indian policy not to accept third party mediation with Pakistan and settle issues with its western neighbour bilaterally on the basis of the Simla Pact and the Lahore Declaration.

In less than two weeks after Imran Khan's visit to Washington and his meeting with Donald Trump in the White House, on August 5, India announced revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A which gave special status to its administered parts of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Systematic efforts were made from the Indian side that it had taken the U.S. into confidence for the future Indian move of ending special status to J&K. However, such reports were denied on August 8 by the U.S. Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs that there was consultation with America on ending special status of J&K.

Following the August 5 act of India, the situation on the ground has changed as far as the issue of J&K is concerned. Pakistan is trying its best to internationalize the Kashmir conflict and exert maximum pressure on New Delhi by augmenting its diplomatic and political support to the beleaguered Muslim population of the Indian occupied Valley of Kashmir. One wonders if there is any Trump card as far as the peaceful resolution of Kashmir conflict is concerned or there is a likelihood of escalation of tensions between the two nuclear neighbours in South Asia? Is the American president in a position to play an effective role for managing the dangerous crisis which has threatened outbreak of hostilities in the region? Can the permanent members of the UN Security Council act and arrange a solution of the Kashmir conflict which can de-escalate tensions and provide the Kashmiri people a break from endless sufferings? These are the questions which are raised particularly in the context of the August 5 Indian act of revoking the special status of J&K.

Three major possibilities exist as far as the Trump card for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir conflict is concerned. First, more than the United States, it is the UN Security Council which can force both India and Pakistan to see reason and provide the people of J&K the right of self-determination. But in order to give practical shape to its assertive role at the UN Security Council, consensus among the permanent members and non-permanent members is imperative.

On August 16 while reacting to Pakistan's request, the UN Security Council President

agreed to call a consultative meeting to discuss the turbulent situation in J&K emanating after the revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A which granted special status and guarantees to maintain the identity and autonomy of Jammu & Kashmir. The meeting, however, didn't call for an emergency special session of the Security Council or moved a resolution condemning the Indian act of August 5. Yet the meeting can be termed as a brain-storming session composed of five permanent and ten non-permanent members of the UN Security Council to get familiar with the historical and current conflict dynamics of J&K. If the Security Council has political will and determination it can certainly play a decisive role in compelling India and Pakistan to seek a peaceful solution of the Kashmir conflict. In that case, the UN Security Council certainly has a trump card to de-escalate the situation in J&K on the one hand and India and Pakistan on the other.

Another trump card is held by the United States, Russia and China as all the three permanent members of the UN Security Council and as major players in the region can coordinate their diplomatic policy to alleviate the plight of the besieged Muslim population of J&K by urging India to ease communication restrictions, withdrawal of its forces from populated areas of the Valley and take the people of J&K into confidence on major policy decisions. Russia and China are now enjoying better ties and the United States is still the only superpower. The triangle of the U.S, China and Russia can certainly make a difference in order to prevail over India to amend its August 5 act.

The most important trump card lies with the people of India because as the world's largest democracy, despite imperfections, public opinion in that country can turn the current tide of Hindu militancy, intolerance vis-a-vis religious minorities particularly Muslims and cruel policy unleashed against the Muslim population of the Indian occupied Kashmir. Unfortunately, no major political party except the Congress opposed ending special status of J&K. The Communist Party of India and other smaller parties also expressed their resentment over the manner in which the fundamental rights of the people of J&K have been usurped by New Delhi.

When on August 5, Articles 370 and 35-A were revoked under J&K reorganization act of the President of India, BJP, Shiv Sena and other fanatic Hindu groups boasted that secularism in India had been buried deep and nothing could be done to reverse the process of transforming India as a Hindu state. For the democratic/secular and enlightened people of India, this was the last chance to save their country from the rising tide of fascism. And only Indian public opinion, particularly its media and civil society, could force the Modi regime to see reason and reverse acts of August 5 which tend to destabilize not only J&K but also the region and the world. To one's dismay, the Modi regime was able to annul Articles 370 and 35-A from the Rajya Sabha (upper house) and Lok Sabha (lower house) of the Indian parliament with two third's majority. In the Rajya Sabha, BJP has no majority which means members of Congress and other parties must have supported the resolution which ended the special status of J&K and divided it into two union territories of Ladakh and J&K.

As things stand today, the volatile situation of J&K has the potential to destabilize not only regional but also global peace. The assertion made by the Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh about India having second thoughts on its policy of 'No First Use' of nuclear weapons is a case in point. The deadlock between the Kashmiri Muslim leadership and the Indian government will further worsen the situation. In this scenario, it is the UN Security Council and other powerful stakeholders of th international community who should act before it is too late. S

The writer is former Meritorious Professor of International Relations and Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Karachi. He can be reached at amoonis@hotmail.com

ROLLER COASTER

The world community, especially the USA, will keep Pakistan afloat.

BY FAROOQ HASSAN

This is an oft visited subject. Pundits have cast their views for 72 years. Before wading into the subject, let me begin with some humorous anecdotes. I was the executive director of the Management Association of Pakistan for 9 years (2000-9). MAP was a port of call for various diplomats, investors, etc. A new U.S. ambassador, Anne Patterson, arrived in Islamabad (in 2007). As per required protocol, I wrote her an official letter, inviting her to address MAP members on her visit to Karachi. Obviously the letter got trashed – the U.S. Ambassador received over a hundred such letters a day from us colonial natives.

Two weeks later, I had lunch at my Gentlemen's Club (how did I qualify as a member?) and returned to the MAP Office 200 yards away. On my table was an Urdu magazine with Anne's picture on the cover. I tore off the cover and wrote on my personal memo, "Anne you appear to be a beautiful woman. Can I invite you for lunch at my club?" The memo, along with the magazine cover was couriered to Islamabad. As usual I forgot about the matter. About 10 days later, in the afternoon when I was almost dozing, the landline rang. A female voice announced, "Sir, hold on, the Ambassador will talk to you." I hung on, wondering which Ambassador was calling. A lady came on line and said, "Hi, I'm Anne Patterson. I got your note. I'm going to have lunch with you on (such and such date). I must warn you, I will be accompanied by two department heads, both women, and the CG in Karachi, also a woman." We agreed on the protocols and hung up.

That evening, at home, I told my two daughters (now living abroad), "You both

have to play host. I can't handle four women." The lunch was a great success, even though the wine was not the best vintage. Thereon, whenever Anne came to Karachi we had a brief one on one. The spymasters on both sides were wondering what the hell was going on. Anne departed in 2008. I was at her farewell dinner at the CG's house on Fatima Jinnah Road. From Pakistan, Anne went to Egypt as ambassador. It is not a coincidence that Mohammed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood government was overthrown and General Sisi was installed.

The other humorous episode involves Kay L. Anske, who spent her last three years before retirement as CG in Karachi. In all, she was in Pakistan for 9 years, Kay and I were buddies. Once, in anger, I told her, "Kay, you are not such a great consul general." She replied "Why Farooq, I thought you liked me?" I replied, "I can't find any bourbon in the market."

The very next morning three bottles of bourbon were delivered to my flat. Once I was having coffee with Kay in the old U.S. consulate building, next to the Marriott. From the window I could see into the State Guest House, where the President, Prime Ministers and visiting dignitaries stayed. It is not hard to fathom that they (U.S.A.) could probably hear every word spoken in the State Guest House. The technology was available to do so.

Having established that U.S.-Pakistan relations are primarily based on humour, let's move on to more serious stuff. At the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Harry Truman, the President of USA, told his administration to 'embrace' Pakistan. This was based on the geo-political reality of the time. New India had embraced socialism and was flirting with Russia. In the North East, Afghanistan had fought off two British invasions in the last century. They needed to be tamed. For the West, Iran was a 'jewel' because of its oil wealth. Pakistan was at the heart of all this.

In 1963 I met ex-President Truman, with a group of foreign exchange students in the Truman Library, in his hometown in Independence, Missouri. After his speech I asked Truman about Kashmir. His reply was blunt and brutal. "Ask your government to forget about Kashmir, and move on." I shut up. President Truman (1944-52) had a sign on his desk which read "THE BUCK STOPS HERE." The real change in Pak-US relations came under Eisenhower (Ike). In 1953 John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State and his brother Allen Dulles, the head of the newly formed CIA, issued a secret but widely circulated order that the USA encourages its companies (the word 'multinational corporation' had not been coined) to invest in these countries – South Korea, Turkey and Pakistan. During the Korean War, Pakistan was included in the supply chain and our economy took off.

In the 1950/60s the greatest influence on the people of Pakistan (the educated elite) was Hollywood. Washington D.C. was the political capital. New York was the financial capital. But the people of Pakistan were obsessed by Hollywood. They did not know Eisenhower or Nixon. But they knew John Wayne, Doris Day, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Bill Haley and his Comets, Joan Bayes, Rock Hudson, etc. It is safe to say that Pakistan was conquered by Hollywood not Washington D.C. It is only when John F. Kennedy and his wife Jacqueline reached the White House, did the people of Pakistan had name recognition of the President of USA.

The Ayub years (1958-69) were the utopian years of our relationship. The USA worked very closely with the military and the civilian bureaucracy. Army officers were trained at WestPoint, Fort Benning, etc. The civil service had access to the Ivy League schools. Foreign investment increased. Harvard University sent experts to create the '5 year' plans. In short, Pakistan was the darling of the West. Pakistan joined SEATO and CENTO. In Iran, the Shah, was being groomed as the policeman of the Middle East.

The US deep state was watching Bhutto's rise with concern. But they made no intervention to subvert the rise of PPP, as they usually do in other countries. The creation of Bangladesh created a lot of anti-Pakistan and anti-Army sentiment. But the USA stood by us – later known as the famous 'Tilt.' But USA had a concern about Bhutto and the PPP. Nationalization was not at all well-received in the Western capitals. When ZAB successfully hosted the Islamic Summit

This article was written before the summit between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Imran Khan and of course before Modi's unilateral action on Kashmir. Here is my take on the new developments:

The meeting surpassed all expectations. It concluded with a 'win-win' situation for both sides. The only loser was the 'Taittinger' champagne brand. There were no toasts. Alas, 2019 was a good year for grapes.

Deep within the inner reaches of the Pentagon, it is an acceptable fact that the government of Pakistan and the Pakistan armed forces, when working in tandem, are unbeatable. In the past 30 years, the US 'Deep State' has had considerable reservations about Pakistan's political leadership. Now that both parties are on the same page (an oft-used phrase), the Americans are happy to consider a strategic relationship rather than a transactional one.

Imran Khan's government and General Bajwa's army hold two major aces – the Ace of Spades and the Ace of Hearts (in bridge parlance the two major suits). If the hand is played correctly, Pakistan can become a major actor and influencer, not only in Afghanistan, but in the wider region – Iran, GCC, the Horn of Africa. If things go right, a major diplomatic and economic bonanza will follow. El Dorado may be around the corner.

Reza Shah Pahlavi (Shah en shah, King of Kings, Light of the Aryans) always dreamed of being the policeman of the Gulf. It never materialized. Perhaps the mantle might fall on Pakistan. Trump has made a mention to mediate on the Kashmir dispute. Kashmir has the 3C nomenclature – complicated, critical, crucial. Good luck Trump!

in Lahore in 1974, the die was cast. ZAB was on the hit list – it was only a matter of time. In 1977 political engineering was used to remove ZAB. General Ziaul Haq was brought in for an interim period. Initially Zia had no intentions to hang ZAB. The 'Execution Orders' of ZAB were lying on Zia's desk for 3 weeks. Then an event transpired and Zia signed. The 'event' is known to only a few people – mostly now dead. Dead men tell no tales. At some stage I might write about the 'event.' But not now. Event at the age of 74, I value my life.

A slight digression here. Most Pakis, even those in the Foreign Office, know little about the Power Attorney of USA. The State Department today has an annual budget of $70 billion. The Pentagon has a baseline budget of $700 billion. In exigencies, the Pentagon budget can climb to $1.5 trillion. Power is exercised in proportion to the budget. The CIA, which sometimes gets things horribly wrong, is no match for the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA). Today Donald Trump's first layer consists of either defence or intelligence officials. Rex Tillerson, the former CEO of Exxon, who became the first Secretary of State under Trump, was shown the door at short notice. The Military Industrial Complex, first lamented by Eisenhower in 1953, is alive, well and rampant.

By 1979, Zia's 'interim' period was considered over. Washington D.C. was reviewing options. Then a lifeline was thrown to Zia. The Russians invaded Afghanistan. Zia's longevity was assured. I do not wish to comment on Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan War. There are many experts – Ahmad Rashid for one. But two things are noteworthy. The USA (and allies) were willing to ante-up $50 billion to keep Pakistan engaged. Zia settled for 32 billion. Peanuts as he called it. Monkeys always get peanuts. The other noteworthy point is that Lt. General Hameed Gul was America's first man during the Afghan War - not Gen. Zia or Gen. Akhtar A. Rehman. Hameed Gul was pro-American to the hilt. In his later years, after retirement, Gen. Hameed became an 'American Hater.' There is a personal dynamic behind the change in attitude. People in the know

of things, understand. As the war wore down, Zia became expendable. A case of 'Exploding Mangoes' as one author put it.

In the 1988 elections, the Americans hedged their bets. They offered limited support to Benazir but kept Nawaz in the Punjab. The Americans also consulted the British because MI-6 kept a detailed dossier on Benazir. Benazir was a huge disappointment to the American establishment for two reasons: 1. She knew nothing about leadership, strategy or governance 2. She was married to Mr. 10%. Musical chairs continued till 19 November 1999 when Gen. Pervez Musharraf intervened. Musharraf's limited shelf life was extended after 9/11. When Pakistan is fighting a proxy war, NATO always prefers a military man at the helm. Eventually Gen. Musharraf had to shed his second skin. Since 2008 we have again seen a merry go round.

Pakistan's clout in Washington has been limited except in the times of proxy wars. Our Ambassador in D.C. can play the role of a Force Multiplier, depending on his/her personality. The most successful Pakistan Ambassador has been Gen. Sahibzada Yaqub. A man with an aristocratic bearing (Americans love aristocrats), sartorial splendour, a savvy thinker, a good speaker and persuader and, most importantly, he knew his vintage wines. He was always America's man. Twice, when he was ill, Sahibzada was treated at the Walter Reed Hospital, courtesy CIA contingency funds.

Other ambassadors who promoted 'Brand Pakistan' well were three ladies – Abida Hussain, Maliha Lodhi and Sherry Rehman. Our recent Ambassador to D.C. claimed a 'hardship' allowance every year. If D.C. is a hardship post, what do we grant our man in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – "Hell Allowance?" That brings us to Hussain Haqqani. From humble beginnings, he rose high. I am told he used to play gulli danda in the lanes outside his house in Martin Quarters in Karachi. HH had three objectives when posted to D.C.: 1. Appear to be an intellectual. 2. Siphon off funds to buy a house in the Georgetown District 3. Keep Zardari scared and perhaps be appointed National Security Advisor. Zardari had only one objective in posting HH to D.C. – when events become critical, it is easier to sacrifice a pawn, rather than a bishop or a queen. S

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Breakthrough Undone

US President Donald Trump's offer to mediate between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue could change the fortunes of the South Asia region. Pakistan was all for it but India was showing its typical obduracy. Now things have completely changed.

BY S. QAISAR SHAREEF

Relations with the United States are always a matter of great interest and debate in Pakistan. The Pakistani public realizes this relationship has a profound impact on the welfare of the nation, both positive and negative. While ties between these two countries are of paramount interest in Pakistan, in the U.S., Pakistan mostly enters the psyche of the nation when some bad event takes place in that part of the world and the blame is placed on Pakistan-based actors. To most Americans, Pakistan is a country that cannot be trusted to confront extremism emanating from its territory.

Prime Minister Imran Khan recently concluded a very successful trip to Washington. In addition to an unprecedented warm reception from the Pakistani Diaspora, it appears he successfully built an excellent rapport with President Donald Trump. He handled himself with a lot of confidence and displayed candour while reacting with senior U.S. government officials, think tanks and American media. However, the highlight of his trip was getting an offer from President Trump to mediate between India and Pakistan and help resolve the long-festering conflict in Kashmir. The next several months in this new-found relationship between Pakistan and the United States will be critical.

Over my 40-plus years residence in the U.S., I have seen successive American administrations trying to work with Pakistan and then grow frustrated when they did not succeed in getting Pakistani government policies sufficiently supportive of American goals in the region.

Pakistanis, on the other hand, feel they have played a very constructive role in the decades-long wars in Afghanistan and, in fact, made many sacrifices. They feel their support of U.S. initiatives in Afghanistan and their continued hosting of two to three million Afghan refugees for decades is not sufficiently appreciated in the court of world opinion. At the same time, the United States continues to feel frustrated that successive Pakistan governments, as they see it, have refused to sufficiently crack down on Pakistan-based extremists because they undermine Afghan stability.

The American focus at this time is on successfully disengaging from Afghanistan and seeing it put on a path to recovery and reconstruction. Pakistan also wants to see Afghanistan return to reconstruction and peace, if for no other reason, than to see stability in the region and seeing all of the three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan returning home.

However, that is where the congruence in U.S. and Pakistani interest often ends. The U.S. government wants to exit Afghanistan and leave behind a country that does not again become host to extremist forces that would work against U.S. interests. Pakistan wants to ensure that any future government or civil structure in Afghanistan does not lend itself to domination by forces that would threaten or destabilize Pakistan.

In order to understand why these two goals may not be congruent, one must look at the facts underpinning the many long-festering conflicts in the region. First of these is successive Afghan governments' continued refusal to accept the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan as an international boundary. They continue to make claims on several regions within Pakistan. These claims go back to before the creation of Pakistan in 1947, when the British drew the border between the then British-ruled India and Afghanistan, following successive British-Afghan wars.

Second, and not inconsequential in this entire matter, is the growing role of India and the goals it wants to pursue in Afghanistan. While the U.S. has up to now been reluctant to get involved in any way in matters of dispute between India and Pakistan, the fact is that ignoring some disputes in the region,

such as the status of Kashmir, while trying to resolve others, will likely not produce enduring results. Pakistan feels a moral obligation to provide political and diplomatic support to forces fighting for the Kashmiris' right of self-determination, while India claims Kashmir as an integral part of India, ignoring the history of how Kashmir was annexed by India in 1947 and subsequent UN resolutions concerning the matter.

As seen from the U.S., Pakistani support for separatist forces in Kashmir goes well beyond political and diplomatic considerations. The attack in Pulwama in Kashmir in February 2019 on Indian soldiers resulted in 40 or more deaths. While the attack was carried out by indigenous Kashmiris, a Pakistan-based extremist group claimed responsibility for it. Now that Pakistan finally seems to be moving to deal with the leaders of this extremist group, there seems to be satisfaction in Washington and this is helping create a diplomatic opening.

Given the history of conflicts between Pakistan and India, Pakistan has been very concerned about the emergence of India as an influential force in Afghanistan. Pakistan already alleges that forces aligned with India are involved in destabilizing Pakistan's Balochistan province by supporting separatist movements there. President Trump's call in August 2017 for India to play a more prominent role in Afghanistan only complicated the matter further. Given this stance of the U.S. government, President Trump's recent offer to mediate on Kashmir becomes every significant.

Where does all this leave Pakistan? The United States needs Pakistan's cooperation to gracefully exit from Afghanistan. Pakistan, on the other hand needs U.S. support to help overcome yet another financial crisis that the new PTI government has inherited. While the PTI government did not want to knock on IMF's doors, the reality has turned out differently. The U.S. seems to have provided at least tacit support to Pakistan's funding request to the IMF. Now it appears to be willing to help mediate on Kashmir. It could be a major breakthrough for the entire region if the Trump Administration were to actually follow through. Not surprisingly, supporters of India in the U.S. are already busy trying to get the Trump Administration to back track on the offer of mediation on Kashmir.

The U.S.A and Pakistan at this time need each other's cooperation and support to meet important national goals. It is now up to the leadership of both of these countries to turn diplomatic developments and enunciations by the U.S. President into concrete results. S

The writer is a Pakistani-American based in Washington D.C. He was country manager Procter & Gamble Pakistan from 2006 to 2011 and is author of a book "When Tribesmen Came Calling: Building an Enduring American Business in Pakistan". He can be reached at http://www.Sqshareef.com

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ISLAMABAD - NEW DELHI

The Middle Path

Pakistan and India need to shed their long-held differences in the interest of progress and prosperity of almost one-fifth of humanity.

BY S.R.H. HASHMI

Cross-border terrorism has always been an issue between India and Pakistan. In fact, such is the enormity of the situation that both nations are said to be in a perpetual state of war to counter terrorism from both sides. The relationship has been rocky from day one. Of course, Kashmir has been the core issue because it has remained an unresolved boundary dispute and it is the Indians who have not kept their side of the bargain all through. Terrorism, which India continues to blame on Pakistan, has mired the relationship which has reached an all-time low in recent years.

Casting aside past bitterness on coming to power, Imran Khan has repeatedly extended a hand of friendship to India, which unfortunately has not been clasped by Narindra Modi who seems unable to break the mould.

For example, about the terror attack in Pulwama, India habitually blamed Pakistan and even launched airstrikes on Balakot, during which Pakistani fighter jets shot down Indian jets and captured a pilot, whom they released soon as a gesture of goodwill.

Following these air skirmishes, Pakistan closed its airspace. The Indian government subsequently requested Pakistan to allow Narindra Modi's plane to fly through Pakistani airspace on way to Bishkek, in Kyrgyzstan to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, hoping perhaps that Pakistan would refuse and provide India another propaganda tool. However, the Pakistan government allowed Modi's plane to use Pakistani airspace.

However, then the Indian government said that Narindra Modi will not fly through Pakistan.

There were also statements about ruling out even 'chance' meetings between Imran Khan and Narindra Modi during the two-day SCO summit.

Also, with Pakistan suggesting July 11 to 14 as the possible dates for a bilateral meeting between the two countries, India agreed to meet Pakistan on July 14 at the Wagah border crossing to discuss and draft the final agreement for Kartarpur Corridor opening.

Just when things seem to be brightening up, there was news of five Pakistani soldiers being killed and one being wounded in an IED blast in the Chamb sector of Azad Kashmir, very near to the Line of Control. Considering the location, it would not be unreasonable to assume that it was the work of the Indian army which wanted to avenge its humiliation in actual fighting as well as at the international level, with its claim of downing a Pakistani F-16 jet which was proven wrong when US Defence officials confirmed, after actual count, that all Pakistani F-16s were intact.

That surely took the relations between the two neighbours back to square one.

In view of all this, one could be excused for assuming that the hope of improved relations between the two is little more than a pipe dream and that giving up trying would be the only sensible course.

However, considering that the estranged neighbours happen to be nuclear-armed, giving up trying could prove suicidal. Also, with the source of Pakistani rivers under Indian control, by simply curtailing the supply of water when we needed them most and, at other times, by releasing excess water in the rivers and causing floods in Pakistan, India can and does cause substantial damage to Pakistan.

Of course, by using its considerable presence and influence in Afghanistan, India does mischief in Balochistan and elsewhere in Pakistan. Pakistan already has in its custody a serving Indian naval officer Kulbhushan Jadhav who ran a network of terrorists in Balochistan for years and has been awarded capital punishment by a military court in Pakistan for his spying activities. Jadhav has also admitted to his spying activities and masterminding terrorism in Balochistan and Karachi. Of late, Modi's unilateral move to revoke the Article 370 to deprive Jammu & Kashmir of its special atatus has made the scenario more complicated for Pakistan.

In the wake of 9/11, the world seems to

have developed a strong aversion to militancy and terrorism in all its manifestations, including the ones previously classified as genuine freedom struggles, like Kashmir. Designation by the US of the so-called Balochistan Liberation Army as a terrorist outfit is the latest proof of that. On Kashmir, their interest remains limited to occasional issuance of condemnatory, but non-biting reports by the UN and other institutions/countries.

We know very well that the biggest hurdle to improved relations between India and Pakistan is Kashmir in which our interest is two-fold: Our rejection of Indian subjugation and repression of Muslims in IOK and also our dislike for India's total control over the source of our rivers. Because of this, we have fought many wars with India.

However, the only war in which we made significant gains was fought in 1947/48, whereby we liberated territory right up to what is now known as the Line of Control. This war was fought mainly by the Tribal Lashkars, with the Pakistan army stepping in much later because the British commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Army initially refused to commit troops to the war, citing the Instrument of Accession to India signed by Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir, in the face of Muslim advances. In the later wars in 1965 and 1999, we did not make any gains and only lost men and money. In the 1971 misadventure, we actually lost half of Pakistan as well.

So, with the military solution of the Kashmir issue ruled out, a diplomatic/UN solution has been impossible due to the loss of interest of the influential countries in the matter. With Kashmiri freedom fighters being unable to defeat India, the rising level of resistance by freedom fighters will only invite a higher level of barbarity by the Indian army, making life for them and their brothers and sisters worse than before.

The only way forward is to think of ways and means to ensure betterment in the lives of Kashmiris in IOK while accepting the fact that it will remain under Indian control. An honest acceptance of this bitter reality will remove the biggest hurdle to Indo-Pak peace and may lead to near-normal life for Muslims in IOK and elsewhere in India, leading even to the solution of the water issue and other problems in due course.

With Donald Trump seemingly losing his appetite for big wars, India may also have dropped its ambition of becoming Asia's Big Brother by eclipsing China with the help of US military power. With the Kashmir irritant removed and having failed to isolate Pakistan, India may be persuaded to develop friendly relations with Pakistan, which both the United States and China advocate.

It is high time that the leaders of India and Pakistan join hands and bring stability to the impoverished region, followed by progress, prosperity and real democracy because the masses have suffered far too much and deserve better.S

The writer is a free-lance contributor with interest in regional, South Asian and international affairs. He can be reached at hashmi_srh@hotmail.com

ISLAMABAD

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Pakistan is making progress towards rationalizing the economy. However, since there can be no gain without pain, the people will need to live through a period of difficulty to get over the aches and difficulties left behind by the previous governments.

BY AADIL NAKHODA

Significant economic challenges loomed high when the present government took office in mid-August 2018. It was widely believed that the government would undertake several reforms to stabilize and formalize the economy. Such reforms run the risk of eroding both consumer and business confidence.

The rupee depreciated from Rs 110 per US dollar towards the end of 2017 to Rs 124 in August 2018. It continued its downward slide, reaching Rs 162 in June 2019. The year-on-year general consumer price index

inflation in August 2018 was at 5.8% and increased to 9.1% in June 2019. The SBP policy rate stood at 13.25% in July 2019, increasing from 7.50% in July 2018. The wide gap suggests that the government is apprehensive about inflationary pressures. The budget deficit in FY2018 had surpassed 6% of the GDP, while it is expected to surpass 7% in FY2020. The reduction in the deficit requires tough measures to increase revenue generation and curtail expenditures. The gross revenue receipts is more than 33% higher than the revised estimates of revenue in the previous fiscal year. Such an increase in revenue generation will not only pressurize existing taxpayers through higher tax rates but also create conflicts with the informal sector of the economy.

Further, a high trade deficit and declining foreign investments were resulting in challenges on the external front as the trade deficit hovered around $36 billion and the current account deficit was reported at around $18 billion, the highest ever reported in Pakistan's history. With foreign debt payments due on foreign loans and the previous government's preference for an overvalued Pakistani rupee, the fall in foreign exchange reserves had brought instability in the economy. The tranches received from the IMF will lower the volatility and induce stability in foreign exchange. The ultimate test for the government will be to ensure that the rupee does not face speculative attacks that can erode its stability during the course of the current IMF programme.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in collaboration with the Institute of Business Administration (Karachi), publishes the Business Confidence Index every two months. It is a leading indicator for economic activity in Pakistan as it surveys approximately 500 businesses around the country in various sectors of the economy. The report was first published in August 2018. The current business confidence index and the expected business confidence index were both positive during the initial months of the new government, indicating a positive outlook by businesses on economic activity in the country. The current business confidence

indicator deteriorated in the subsequent waves. One of the major reasons for the deterioration in the business confidence is the increasing pressure on businesses to ensure that their transactions are properly documented, a tough task given the size of the informal sector. Although, the current business indicator has been negative, the businesses in Pakistan remain upbeat about expected business conditions as the overall index still remains slightly in the positive zone. Interestingly, the respondents in the services sector are relatively positive as compared to the respondents in the industry sector. In essence, although the business conditions are expected to recover, the challenge is to ensure that the recovery takes place sooner rather than later.

The government has been successful in ensuring that the diplomatic isolation of Pakistan is averted as it seeks to strengthen its foreign relations with not only superpowers such as the United States and China but also countries in the Middle East and East Asia. Even though current relations with India are at a low point, the 'Kartarpur Corridor' should prove a useful weapon in Pakistan's hands in view of the hostilities that are increasing between Pakistan and India following the latter's one-sided actions regarding Kashmir. If Pakistan succeeds in improving its foreign relations, foreign as well as domestic investor confidence is likely to improve.

The improvement in foreign relations must translate into better trading relationships between Pakistan and its major trading partners as well as with countries with which its integration can provide access to important inputs to boost domestic production. Even though Pakistan was awarded the GSP Plus status by the European Union in 2014, the benefits was limited only to a few products in the textile industry. It is imperative that Pakistan not only has access to cheap raw material necessary to improve efficiency in production but also increases opportunities for businesses interested in foreign joint ventures.

The government should consider approaching ASEAN countries and Central Asian nations for preferential and free trade agreements in order to benefit from the industrial development as planned under CPEC. Lastly, it is imperative that hurdles to business growth for the documented sector are reduced and documented businesses are provided incentives to increase their production. This should provide an impetus for the economy as a jumpstart is needed to restore lost confidence in the economy. S

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BY AMJAD ALI SIYAL

ADIALA

THE WITCH HUNT ROUTE

Equitable accountability for all needs to be put in place rather than a selective process that is raising eyebrows.

Ever since Prime Minister Imran Khan came to power, he has vowed to pursue corrupt politicians who have looted the country, attributing the nation's economic woes to these politicians. Ironically, the way the accountability drive is proceeding, it has created doubts over the fairness of the process owing to the obvious reason that almost all those put behind bars belong to opposition parties. One of them has already been convicted while the others are under trial.

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was convicted in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills case with seven years imprisonment and a Rs. 5 billion fine. Interestingly, the case was heard by the recently-dismissed accountability court judge Arshad Malik. The confessions made by the judge in a series of leaked videos, (whether he was trapped or otherwise), have certainly reinforced the perceptions of a political witch-hunt. The narrative of the opposition parties thus gets traction and it is surmised that the accountability drive is "selective", a "witch-hunt", tantamount to "pressure tactics", etc. Since the judge seen in the videotape has been dismissed, the opposition parties have demanded overturning of the sentence against the incarcerated Nawaz Sharif.

The case of Rana Sanaullah also seems to have highlighted political victimization on the part of the government. How come that he was carrying 15kgs of contraband material in his personal vehicle? It certainly goes against commonsense. The quantity of the contraband material recovered from Sanaullah's vehicle is punishable with the death penalty under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act, 1997. This entire episode has also put the para-military Anti-Narcotics Force, which is empowered to enforce Control of Narcotics Substances Act, in an awkward position as it is headed by a serving major general of the Pakistan Army. This will certainly hurt the reputation of the forces, which have long been blamed for political manipulation and interference.

As the accountability watchdog is an autonomous body established under the National Accountability Ordinance, 1999, statements of the ruling party leaders make the Accountability Bureau's actions dubious. Statements of the highest public office holders are considered as policy statements. Prime Minister Imran Khan during his recent visit to the U.S. while addressing Pakistanis at the Capital Area One stadium, referred to former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi who kept saying that he should be arrested if he had done anything wrong. Imran han said that now that he had been arrested, the opposition was criticizing it.

Cases which are on-going against those who belong to the government are proceeding at a snail's space. Aleem Khan was arrested on charges of possessing assets beyond his means. Later, he was released on bail and it was reported that he would be re-joining the Punjab cabinet. There are many other important PTI leaders whose cases are pending, notably those of Defence Minister Pervez Khattak, Liaquat Ali Jatoi, Zulfi Bukhari, etc. Slow proceedings in these cases certainly give the impression of "selective accountability".

Additionally, media have reported that Prime Minister Imran Khan has ordered review of relevant rules of the National

Assembly pertaining to production orders and has directed the concerned authorities to make necessary changes to restrict under-trial elected parliamentarians from attending the sessions of the legislatures. Unfortunately, the approach goes against impartiality. If these rules are changed, the PTI government could also ask for changing the Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business of the Punjab Assembly and in particular the KPK Assembly as they have been in power in the KPK since 2013. It is the right of under-trial members of the legislatures to attend House proceedings keeping in view the concept "innocent until proven guilty". However, necessary changes can be introduced in the relevant rules for making it mandatory for the parliamentarians to attend the sessions of the House instead of indulging in politicking and misusing the production orders to relax in a luxurious style.

It is imperative for the government to not influence the accountability process in any way in order to ensure free, fair and impartial accountability. Otherwise, gains achieved so far may face reversal. The highest public office-holders, including the prime minister, must avoid hurling accusations against political opponents as witnessed in Washington D.C. at the Capital Area One rally. It is not container-politics anymore. The situation demands focus on more pressing issues such as economic challenges, good governance, foreign and security policy issues, etc. In addition to that, the dramatic dismissal of Judge Arshad Malik demands overhaul of the judges' appointment mechanism so that only judges of high integrity are made part of the judicial system.

Pakistan is at the crossroads of a multitude of challenges. It is time to consolidate the gains previously made. It is also important to let the institutions flourish and dispense real justice. Lessons can be drawn from South Korea where former president Park Geun-hye was impeached on charges of abuse of power and coercion. Let the law take its own course as it is the only course towards realizing the "Riasat-e-Madina" model. S

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KARACHI

AFTER THE DEVOLUTION

Serious issues are being faced by prominent and popular welfare schemes in Sindh after the enactment of the 18th Amendment.

BY PARVEZ RAHIM

By virtue of the 18th Amendment carried out in April, 2010, legislation of labour laws was removed from the concurrent list of subjects in the constitution and devolved to the provinces. Senator Raza Rabbani was the author of this Amendment, who headed a special committee of the parliament constituted for this purpose. In his book entitled 'A biography of Pakistan Federalism', he has mentioned that Pakistan is among three out of 27 countries in the world having a federal structure, which do not have the concurrent list, two others being the USA and Australia.

The labour laws were devolved to the provinces without consulting two of the most significant stakeholders responsible for operating and maintaining a peaceful work environment in the industrial and commercial organizations. They are the employers and the workers countrywide federations. As a consequence, the sphere of labour laws, which had already become unwieldy and complicated prior to the said Amendment, is now faced with innumerable issues, resolution of which is not in sight.

Besides the problems faced by employers, the labour welfare schemes introduced and developed by the respective governments over more than fifty years,

are in jeopardy. The benefits available to workers under the laws, are being adversely impacted due to consistent confrontation and litigation between the employers and the institutions formed by the government to manage these schemes. Serious issues are being faced by three of the most prominent and popular welfare schemes, which provide medical treatment and assistance to the employees and their families, share in companies' profits and old age pension to the retired employees.

Following the 18th Amendment, the 6% amount of monthly contribution payable on behalf of every secured employee, has been under constant dispute in the superior courts between the employers and the Provincial Employees Social Security Institutions. Besides causing colossal monetary losses to the employers, such litigation is also affecting the quality of benefits provided by the respective provincial institutions to the secured employees. These benefits are available to the employees and their dependents in the event of sickness, maternity, employment injury or death.

The Companies' Profits (Workers' Participation) Act, 1968, provides for participation of workers in the profits of companies. A small fraction of the five percent amount of a company's profit during a year is allocated to the fund and paid to its eligible workers, the bulk of which goes to the government. This act has only been devolved by the Sindh government in 2015, while the three other provinces, are still following the federal act. As there have been no amendments to the latter act since April 2010, the benefits drawn by the industrial workers in these provinces and those employed in trans-provincial companies, i.e. companies having establishments in more than one province, are much less than those of employees in the establishments in Sindh.

The definition of "wages" in the Employees Old-Age Benefits Act, 1976, was amended in 2005, whereby it meant the wages as declared under the Minimum Wages for Unskilled Workers Ordinance, 1969. Since this ordinance lost its validity for the provinces after the 18th Amendment, and the EOBI is still being managed centrally, some of the employers continue to pay the monthly contribution at the rate of 6% (including 1% as employees' share) of Rs. 6,000/-, which was the minimum wage fixed under the ordinance in July 2008. The existing minimum wage in all the provinces other than Sindh, is Rs. 17,500/- p.m., hence the losses being incurred by EOBI on this account, will make it difficult to disburse pensions in 2022.

All these chemes were being run effectively and efficiently prior to the 18th Amendment and meeting their respective goals of catering to workers' financial and medical needs reasonably well. Following the Amendment, their management has gone astray and unfortunately there are no signs of restoration of smooth functioning.

The prime responsibility for ensuring compliance with the intents and purposes of social welfare schemes rests with the federal government. It is answerable to the International Labour Organization (ILO) for failure to run the schemes as intended by the conventions ratified by Pakistan and apprise the officials of ILO about the remedial measures being undertaken.

The rapid decline in the quality of disbursement and provision of benefits under the schemes need not only be halted but also brought back to the levels guaranteed by laws, in order to avoid causing further distress to workers. If the PTI government takes a bold initiative in the wider interest of employees, it should revive the federal status of all the aforementioned three enactments as existed prior to the devolution in April 2010. There is a strong justification and rationale for doing so besides salvaging the useful schemes like the old age pensions from extinction.

The earlier the management of these three enactments goes back to the federation, the better it will be for the employees, employers' and the industrial environment within the country in general. S

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NEW DELHI

BAD NEWS FOR DEMOCRACY

With the resignation of Rahul Gandhi as president of the Congress, the party looks like a headless chicken.

BY S.G. JILANEE

There was a time when you could conjure with the name of the Indian National Congress, because, it had won freedom for India, and the Nehru-Gandhi family became its face and identity. But, times have changed. So, what the Congress suffered during the last general elections, was not just a drubbing from the BJP, but a wholesale debacle. The defeat was so stunning that the party lost even its traditional Nehru family seat from Amethi.

Reeling under the impact of the rout, Congress president, Rahul Gandhi resigned his post. But, so intertwined is Congress with the Gandhi family, that according to some observers, "without a Gandhi at the top, the party is like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark." No wonder, therefore, that even though Rahul turned in his

resignation three months ago, in the first week of May, yet the Working Committee has not been able to muster the strength to take any decision on the issue.

Meanwhile, since its defeat in the general elections, the party is utterly devastated, leading to a spate of desertions. In fact, the party that led India to freedom and governed the country for nearly five decades has perhaps never faced a greater challenge to its existence in its long history. It has become so weak and demoralized that the BJP could openly poach upon its legislators, reportedly picking them up for a cool Rs25 crore, bringing down the Congress-JD (S) coalition government in Karnataka. In Goa, the entire Congress legislature party merged itself with the BJP.

With the Gandhi scion away and his mother being unwell, the Congress and its vast pool of talent and contacts spread in the length and breadth of the country present a tempting target for the BJP. And the longer Rahul remains away and unwilling to lead, and the rest of the party unable to reconcile itself to a Congress sans the Gandhis, the harder it would be for the party to revive itself.

Ideally, Rahul's decision to leave should have been accepted and respected with grace by the party and a successor should have been promptly found. No doubt, the Congress is facing a difficult situation. But, this is because the Congress is not like any other political party.

The fact is that a Congress without a Gandhi may sound like a good democratic idea but the idea has never worked. It is the Gandhi name that keeps the party glued together. Without it, the party will simply come unstuck.

Rahul is best qualified to take his mission to its logical conclusion and return India to its original path of democracy, secularism and social justice.

The Gandhis do not merely offer gravitas and identity to the Congress, they have also the capability to hold it together.

If the Congress is to survive as a viable political and democratic force, it is imperative that either Rahul Gandhi is persuaded to return or Sonia Gandhi is convinced to take charge of the party until a new leadership emerges.

Her daughter, Priyanka Gandhi, has natural flair and charisma to step into her brother's shoes. She proved it once again with her powerful and instinctive reaction to the Sonbhadra massacre of tribal people in Uttar Pradesh recently.

Unlike her reticent brother, she is a natural-born politician that seems to revel in media glare and is totally at ease with the hoi polloi.

She is immensely articulate, charming and has an aura of her own which television cameras naturally love. Unfortunately for Priyanka though, her husband Robert Vadra, entangled as he has been with numerous cases under this government, may turn out to be the proverbial millstone around her neck.

The Congress needs to resolve its leadership at the earliest possible, before more damage is done. With its national presence, inclusive politics and political infrastructure, the Congress alone among the assorted opposition parties, has the potential and wherewithal to take on the BJP and save the country from the clutches of religious bigots and fascists.

While Rahul's decision to step down is laudable and may have been inspired by the highest democratic traditions, he needs to pay heed to the appeals made by the thousands of Congress workers, especially because this is the need of the hour.

Rahul is best qualified to take his mission to its logical conclusion and return India to its original path of democracy, secularism and social justice that was visualized by the country's founding fathers. A "Congress-mukt" (Congress-free) India, may be music to Hindutva ears, but it would be bad news for the world's largest democracy. Hopefully, Rahul will listen to the appeals of his followers and withdraw his resignation. S

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SRINAGAR

BACK TO SQUARE ONE

The people of Kashmir have been enduring great afflictions for decades. Their grievances must be redressed in a just manner once and for all.

BY SIRAJ M. SHAWA

Indian atrocities in Kashmir have crossed all boundaries and it is obvious that by merging Jammu & Kashmir into Indian Union Territory, India has found a way to solve the long-festering Kashmir issue according to its own desires.

Following the Pakistan-India war of 1971, the Simla Agreement on bilateral relations was concluded by the two countries according to which both parties vowed to resolve their outstanding disputes amicably through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means. The Indian government relied on this agreement for maintaining a rigid stance against mediation by a third party in settlement of its issues with Pakistan.

In 1997, both neighbours engaged in dialogues at foreign secretary level in which 8 items agenda were established and different working groups were set up to carry the peace process forward. These talks later provided the basis for Composite Dialogues with the eruption of Kargil war which hit a snag.

As the Kargil war went on, the G-8 countries adopted a resolution taking notice of the Kashmir problem and showing serious concern over escalation in the region. The then US president Bill Clinton made calls to the contemporary Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan asking them to exercise mutual restraint. He, reportedly, also asked Pakistan to withdraw militants from the Kargil region. More than that, senior military commanders and state department officials of the US undertook quick visits to the subcontinent in order to ease tensions between the two countries. New Delhi tried to clarify that all this did not reach the point of mediation, but, inadvertently, they accepted the US role in weathering of the crisis, which involved the issue of Kashmir. Subsequently, it was the United States and other European powers which helped in the blacklisting of Pakistan-based militant groups.

In the early 2000s, Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogues began, but it was painfully evident from the start that these wouldn't last long as India kept on implicating Pakistan for its alleged role in every act of terrorism occurring on its soil. Finally, the Mumbai attacks in November 2008 put an abrupt end to the process.

It is abundantly clear that India doesn't maintain an attitude of seriousness in its bilateral engagement with Islamabad. They withdraw from negotiation either on one pretext or another, mostly before going over the agenda. At the same time, paradoxically, India emphatically rejected the mediation offers of third parties.

Post-Pulwama, at one point New Delhi was going to fire six missiles at targets in Pakistan to which Islamabad made its intentions of responding with three times more severity known to the international community. Again, it was the United State, along with China, UAE and some other countries who ameliorated a potentially explosive situation. The US Secretary Of State, Mike Pompeo, directly engaged both countries to cool tensions. Moreover, it was India that sought the support of China for the purpose of declaring Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. On the other hand, being a co-chair of the Asia Pacific Group, which is a regional affiliate of FATF, it is making problems for Pakistan in its efforts to be removed from the grey list, the root cause being the animosity between the two rivals due to Kashmir.

Kashmir is an important international issue as it is between two nuclear neighbours. With abolishment of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution, the issue of the occupied valley now presents a serious threat to the world's peace and security, and warrants meticulous attention of the world powers.

The situation in which the Kashmiris have been placed since August 5 is intolerable.

The UNSC recognized that Kashmir is an international dispute and urged both parties to refrain from any unilateral step.

They are under total communication blackout and confined to their homes due to curfew. Nobody knows what kind of brutalities they have been enduring. When the Indian forces lift the curfew, there are chances that gross human rights abuses would be unveiled, followed by widespread and strong anti-government protests backed by all Kashmiris. The radical step taken by PM Modi has turned pro-Indian leaders into anti-Indian in the occupied valley. The former IAS officer and young political leader Shah Faesal tweeted on August 13 that "you can either be a stooge or a separatist now".

This also elicited a strong response from Pakistan. In addition to downgrading of diplomatic ties, ending of bilateral trade and celebration of Pakistan Independence Day as Kashmir Solidarity Day and 15th of August as Black Day, Islamabad took the issue of Kashmir to the UN Security Council and may soon review all its bilateral agreements with New Delhi. The UNSC recognized that Kashmir is an international dispute and urged both parties to refrain from any unilateral step which can change the status quo. Before things go out of control, India needs to return to the status quo as Kashmir being a nuclear flashpoint, peace of the whole world can be shattered.

Since both countries have failed to settle this serious issue on their own, meditation by a third party is inevitable. India may assert that its all issues with Pakistan, including the issue of Kashmir, should be resolved bilaterally, but the fact is that there have been regular global interventions as far as India-Pakistan relations are concerned. The people of Kashmir have been enduring great afflictions for decades. Their grievance must be redressed in a just manner once and for all. S

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DHAKA

LUXURY OF CHOICE

"Choice is an illusion created between those with power and those without."
- Karl Marx

BY SABRIA CHOWDHURY BALLAND

Choices are for the privileged. There is an adage which says, "Beggars can't be choosers". In other words, only the privileged, the wealthy and the powerful are entitled to having choices.

Hobson's choice is defined as a free choice when no other alternative is offered. That is to say, it is a "take it or leave it situation." In Bangladesh, we are seeing Hobson's choice very clearly, much more so than we would like to.

During the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, the freedom fighters sacrified their lives for the birth of a new nation which could uphold democracy, the frreedom of speech, equality for all and the freedom of choice. The question is: forty eight years down the line, do Bangladeshis have these rights which their Constitution guarantees as inalienable rights?

On the surface, it may seem so. However, only on the very superficial surface, if merely the Awami League-led government's consistent talk of development, progress and GDP figures were to be believed. However, global statistics tell a different story.

Bangladesh is poised to achieve the third-fastest growth in the number of high-networth individuals in the world in the next five years, but it is also 148th out of 157 countries in the latest Oxfam Global Inequality Index. Simply put, there is an enormous disparity between the rich and the poor and it is strikingly apparent.

In January 2019, a new report from the wealth research firm, Wealth-X found that Bangladesh ranked third on a list of the fastest growing high networth countries, with an average increase of its high networth population at approximately 11.4% per year. These figures are astounding, particularly considering that hardly any, if any at all, of

this money is being circulated back into the economy. In fact, considering that most of the banks, nationalized and private, including the Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of the country, are bankrupt, it is obvious that funds are not being injected back into the economy. The ruling party may give the illusion of a trickle down phenomenon but it is just that... an illusion.

As things are evident in today's Bangladesh, a rich, politically well-connected elite benefits from development projects and policies, while the poor are neglected. Therefore, those who are not "in the loop", so to speak, do not have the privilege of choice. To add salt to the wound, being a fully autocratic regime, the government of Bangladesh under Sheikh Hasina has stripped its people of all democratic rights. There is no opposition to counter-balance and argue policies in the parliament, there is no freedom to vote, no freedom of speech, no freedom of the press or media, no freedom to even like the slightest anti-government statuses on social media for fear of being hounded down by the government's intelligence forces and arrested, kidnapped or killed.

FASTEST GROWING ECONOMIES

COUNTRY	PROJECTED GROWTH
RWANDA	7.8%
BANGLADESH	7.3%
INDIA	7.3%

SOURCE: IMF

Thus this lack of choice and freedom has rendered a politically fearful and apathetic mindset. In other words, why would a people risk their lives for things they cannot change under any circumstances, knowing their voices will not be heard? Democratic principles such as freedom of association and expression are far-fetched and nebulous concepts which will only bring forth severe retribution from the state. It is far better to adopt a "don't ask, don't tell" policy under such circumstances.

It is thus apparent that Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League have offered the people of Bangladesh nothing short of Hobson's choice, a take it or leave it situation, or rather, that is, take it or face dire consequences. Historical accounts of previous governments, (except of course the dictatorship of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh Hasina's father), even miitary dictatorships show that the circumstances in the country had never been so stringent, so limited and so lacking in choices.

History has shown us repeatedly that if there is any course of action for a government to take which will most certainly head towards failure, it is oppression. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." Bangladesh will certainly be no exception to this fact. S

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CHAGHAI

Under The Earth

Pakistan sits on of the world's largest copper deposits in Chaghai district but is unable to benefit from these because of the short-sighted policies of Balochistan's erstwhile government.

BY SYED FAZL-E-HAIDER

Can Pakistan pay the penalty of nearly $6 billion awarded by an international tribunal in the Reko Diq case? As it is, Pakistan's economy is running on a $6 billion bailout loan from the IMF. Reko Diq is a classic example of how the misguided and short-sighted policies and the bungled decisions of those at the helm of affairs during a certain period in Pakistan's recent history will now cost the national exchequer in billions of dollars and harm the long-term interests of the country.

The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) on July 12

awarded a penalty of $5.976 billion against Pakistan following a judgment in the dispute over the Reko Diq copper deposits in Chaghai, Balochistan. Tethyan Copper Company (TCC), a joint venture of Chile's Antofagasta PLC and Canada's Barrick Gold, had claimed $11.43 billion in damages in 2012 after the Balochistan government had rejected a leasing request from the mining joint venture.

Reko Diq is one of the world's largest copper deposits located in the Chaghai district of Balochistan. It is estimated to have a worth between $200 and $500 billion according to independent estimates. It is notable that near every copper deposit, gold deposits also exist though in a much lesser quantity.

Under the 1993 Chaghai Hills Exploration Joint Venture Agreement (CHEJVA), the Reko Diq deposit was jointly owned by Antofagasta with 37.5 per cent share, Barrick Gold with 37.5 per cent, and the Balochistan government with 25 per cent stake.

The project was scandalized after news stories appeared in the press claiming that the Reko Diq mine was being secretly sold to certain foreign companies for peanuts. The case was decided by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in its original and appellate jurisdiction simultaneously in 2013 and 2014. The apex court declared CHEJVA illegal and void because it was being executed in violation and contrary to the various statutory provisions.

In 2012, Pakistan could deal with the TCC from a position of strength but now the country will have to pay for the mishandling and short-sighted policies of the decision-makers in Quetta and Islamabad. The former provincial government of Balochistan, led by Chief Minister Aslam Raisani, could have negotiated with the TCC for a better deal, addressing the province's genuine reservations about the project rather than closing all doors of communication with the company and even refusing to meet its executives. The rejection of a mining licence to the company after an exploration permit was granted to them was an unusual decision by the Raisani administration in Quetta.

The Balochistan government then handed over the Reko Diq project to the scientist Samar Mubarakmand. This was not a prudent decision and proved very expensive for Pakistan's least developed province. Balochistan spent Rs2 billion to purchase machinery, dumpers and other vehicles and to employ people at high salaries. All these funds went waste and produced no results. If Balochistan had the capacity and resources to develop and operate the Reko Diq mine on its own, then what was the fuss all about? The province was not even able to bear the cost of the ensuing legal battle in the international tribunal against the mining joint venture. How will it now be possible for Balochistan and Pakistan to pay the $6 billion penalty?

Balochistan has been actually paying a heavy price for mishandling the Reko Diq project. The cash-strapped province has been deprived of the economic bonanza associated with the development of a world-class copper mine. The province and, in turn, the country, was deprived of much-needed multi-billion dollar foreign investment at a time when foreign investors are losing interest in this part of the world. Arbitral proceedings in the ICSID have further delayed the project. Reko Diq is now a disputed project in which no third party will invest until the international arbitration court has closed the case.

The long arbitral proceedings have not been without cost to the country. The responsibility for the heavy losses lies squarely on the irrational and irresponsible decisions of those in power in 2012. This includes both the provincial executive as well as the country's highest judiciary.

However, the re-negotiation option with the mining joint venture is not yet closed. TCC is still willing to discuss the potential for a negotiated settlement with Pakistan. After winning the case, TCC's chairman William Hayes reportedly said, "We remain willing to discuss the potential for a negotiated settlement with Pakistan and will continue to protect our commercial interests and legal rights until the conclusion of this dispute."

Pakistan is a cash-starved country and is absolutely unable to pay the approximately $6 billion damage claim. The mining company are the winners and in a position to dictate the terms of an out-of-court settlement. TCC will reap benefits from the Balochistan government in a negotiated settlement that it could not have gained earlier. Resorting to the international court has given it this advantage. For the Pakistan government in power today, a negotiated settlement with a smart bargain is the only way out, it seems.

Reko Diq is one of the largest copper deposits in the world and gold would be a certain by-product when copper is mined. TCC completed a successful survey of the Reko Diq mine years ago and established for the benefit of both the Pakistan government as well as that of Balochistan that the area was sitting on a large copper deposit. The Balochistan government greedily accepted Tethyan Copper Company's (TCC) survey report but did not grant them permission to develop the mine. This led to an international dispute which, subsequently, TCC won.

Now, without extracting a single ounce of copper or gold from this large deposit, Pakistan is liable to pay to TCC the huge sum of 600 billion dollars. Had TCC been given the permission to develop the copper mine, the region of Chaghai would have been highly developed today with roads, schools, hospitals, housing and countless job opportunities. This would have brought unprecedented prosperity to underdeveloped Balochistan and the Chaghai region in particular. But this was not to be. The people of Balochistan continue to live in abject poverty while the copper deposits of the province remain under the earth. S

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ASSAM

OLD LEGACIES

The National Register of Citizens, or NRC, is a list of Indian citizens living in the state of Assam. It is being updated to weed out illegal immigrants coming from Bangladesh and neighbouring regions.

BY ATIF SHAMIM SYED

The Indian state of Assam is compiling a National Register of Citizens (NRC). Simply put, it is a list of all Indian citizens currently residing within the state borders. People whose names fail to make it to the list will be deemed illegal immigrants and, if Amit Shah's words are taken at face value, will be thrown into the sea.

Regrettably, Mr. Amit Shah is India's serving Home Minister. His words mean much more than election-time oration. Assam's public servants have already compiled a provisional list of citizens in Assam which did not include 4.4 million residents. An overwhelming majority of those excluded from the provisional list are Bengali-speaking Muslims. Mr. Shah has declared that all of them will be deported to Bangladesh from where they allegedly crossed into India's north-eastern state during and after the 1971 war.

Bangladeshi authorities have announced that this is India's internal matter. They have also warned that Bangladesh will not accept anyone expelled from India. In such a case, if Mr. Shah makes good on his threats, millions of Muslims in Assam will become stateless after having stripped of their Indian citizenship.

Families and individuals who are not on the National Register are required to prove their Indian citizenship through legally admissible paperwork. The key date is March 24, 1971. All of them are required to show to the authorities that either they or their parents were in the state of Assam before this date. Anyone who came to Assam after this date, is considered an intruder.

Caught in the middle of an absurd politico-administrative game, millions of Muslims in Assam are scrambling to piece together the required paperwork. Failing to do so carries the risk of being locked up in detention centres, six of which are already operative and hold around 1,000 people. Ten more are on the way.

The government will publish a final list in a few weeks. People excluded from the list will be required to go to the "Foreigners Tribunals'. These special courts will hear their cases and pass uncontestable final judgements. For now, no one knows how many people will not make it to the ultimate list but it is certain that a majority will be Bengali Muslims. They will submit whatever papers they have only to be rejected by the BJP-aligned Assamese bureaucratic machinery.

Critics of the NRC insist that the entire charade has been designed to cow Muslims who make up a third of the state's population. Native Assamese have been complaining for a long time that their state's demography is shifting in favour of Muslims who, encouraged by their colonial masters, migrated in large numbers from Bengal to Assam in search of fertile lands during the British Raj.

Right after partition, Assamese politicians capitalized on the migrant issue, portraying it as a threat to their indigenous culture and language. For years, they have wrongly claimed that Bengali migration never stopped after partition and continues to this day.

With an upsurge in Hindu nationalism all across India, the religion factor in the Assam migrant issue came to the fore. Local Assamese politicians claim that there are 8 million Bengali intruders in their state, effectively banding together every Bengali whether they migrated during the British Raj or after establishment of Bangladesh in 1971.

In the midst of this political wrangling, the BJP saw an opportunity of doing away with millions of Muslim voters in Assam. Since, in reality, there are very few illegal immigrants in the state, the BJP is creating them with the help of the National Register. Moreover, the BJP leadership knows that any issue that splits voters over religion ultimately benefits their own party.

The Hindu nationalist party is so happy with the outcome that it is planning to carry out the NRC exercise in the rest of the country, effectively jeopardizing the residency status of the entire Indian Muslim community

which comprises roughly 14 percent of the population.

It is clear beyond doubt that the National Register is specifically targeting Indian Muslims who might be stripped off their citizenship and / or civil rights. Interestingly, the BJP has introduced a Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) which will allow persecuted religious minorities from neighbouring countries to apply for Indian nationality. These minorities include Hindus, Parsis, Buddhists, Christians and Jains but Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar cannot benefit from the CAB.

The combined irony of the NRC and CAB is that they might strip millions of Muslims of citizenship who are living in India for generations and simultaneously grant citizenship to non-Muslims who may never have set foot on Indian soil.

Mr. Modi explained this twisted logic behind the naked anti-Muslim stance during a visit to Assam. He said that the partition of the sub-continent resulted in the formation of two countries: Muslim Pakistan and Secular India. While Muslims of the region have their own homeland, India needs to make space for the rest.

Experts say that NRC and CAB will prove to be a double-edged sword for the Indian Muslims. The former will cut down their voting numbers in real terms while the latter will swell the number of non-Muslims, further decreasing the percentage of Muslims within the aggregate population.

Modi was re-elected in the recent Indian elections with a wide majority yet he will not dare alter the constitution for inserting Hindu religion as a basis for Indian citizenship, but he may employ subtle means of turning the country into a Hindu state.

The NRC is one of those subtle maneuvers. Unfortunately, it is only the beginning. S

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MALÉ

HOME-GROWN TERRORISTS

The Maldives is facing the challenge of a growing number of its youth being lured away by extremist forces to fight in the name of religion.

BY DR. RAZA KHAN

Continuous political instability and financial corruption in the government circles of the Maldives has given birth to numerous issues, the most important of which is the spread of extremism and a terrorist mindset in the name of religion. There have been reports of growing political instability, forced disappearances, foreign fighters and crackdowns on free speech, throwing the archipelago in the Indian Ocean to face new challenges. Among others, these new challenges to the Maldives include the problem of war refugees or returnees, growing religious dissent and increasing amounts of hate campaigns on social media. This situation has led many observers to ask the question, is the Maldives becoming a safe haven for terrorists?

There seems to be little doubt that extremism and terrorism in the name of religion in the predominantly Sunni Muslim

state of the Maldives have proliferated; however, there cannot be a sweeping statement as of now that the beautiful country has become a safe haven for terrorists. Having said this, these trends have been indicative of the fact that the growing number of Maldivian youth has been developing extremist and terrorist tendencies and the state authorities have not been able to counter these trends. In a December 2015 report by the Soufan Group – a private intelligence agency run by former United States FBI agent-turned contractor Ali Soufan - discovered that a total of 200 fighters from the Maldives had traveled to the frontlines of the war in the once Islamic Caliphate or State (IS) heartland in Iraq and Syria. Two hundred fighters meant that in the 2015 official count of the archipelago's population of 418,403, almost five of every 10,000 Maldivian citizens were IS fighters. Most importantly, this count only included those young Maldivians who somehow were able to actually travel to the war zone and did not take into consideration the people who ran extremist and terrorist networks domestically, carried out long-term and sustained propaganda and handled logistics, both domestically and through expats living around the world.

Extremism in Maldivian society has permeated to such an extent that liberal or secular individuals have routinely been getting death threats from radical outfits and their members. In this connection, a covert radical Muslim group ran a telegram channel titled "Murtad (apostate) Watch MV," posting pictures and information of people that it has labeled as "apostates," "enemies of Islam" or "laadheenee" (irreligious or secular) for speaking against archaic practices broadly and an incident of death by stoning verdict against a woman charged with adultery. This telegram channel remains active, issuing life-threatening messages ever since it emerged online in November 2018. The channel has been observed to have a large number of subscribers. Muslim militant outfits over the years have launched several religiously-motivated attacks in the Maldives and the state's authorities' inaction forced several writers and scholars to flee the country for safety. The murder of writers and secular scholars like Yameen Rasheed (April 2017), Ahmed Rilwan (August 2014) and Afrasheem Ali (October 2012) speaks volumes of the radicalization of Maldivian society.

This year on February 21, the Maldives counter-terrorism agency, the National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC) had announced that the six widows of Maldivians fighters, who perished in the IS war in Iraq and Syria, wanted to return to the country. The return of these war widows and their children as well as the radicalized combatants themselves, like for all other countries of their origin, is a grave issue for the Indian Ocean nation. Noticeably, the country's authorities seem not to be prepared to take the huge challenge. This is despite the fact that the Maldivian government came up with an anti terrorism law in the year 2015.

The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2015 criminalized any participation in other people's (foreign) civil wars and under the law any individual caught attempting to leave the Maldives to join a foreign civil war could be jailed for 10 to 15 years. However, the law could not prevent militant exodus as scores of radicalized Maldivians left the country to fight with armed groups in the Middle East, including the Al-Qaeda linked factions like Jabhat al-Nusra or another hybrid group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), as well as the IS. It must be noted that influx of fighters from the Maldives to the Middle Eastern conflict theatre have had the highest per capita rate in the South Asian region, which is indeed alarming.

Irrespective of the numbers of radical Maldivian youth going out of the country to the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight along global Muslim extremist and terrorist outfits there, as mentioned here, emerged a chronic issue of dealing and re-integrating the returning fighters and their family members. Suspected militants returnees like Ahmed Latheef, Ahmed Suhail Moosa and Munawwar Abdulla are some of the first militants to be charged with traveling abroad with the intent of joining terror groups in early 2016. However, they could never be convicted and have been acquitted for lack of evidence even though they were arrested in Turkey. Similarly, Mohamed Abdul Rahman, who had fought in Pakistan's Waziristan alongside the Pakistani Taliban for over a decade, is free in the Maldives as the criminal court cleared the charges against him as prosecutors could not prove he had taken part in fighting after the 2015 Anti-Terrorism Act came into force. A host of factors have been responsible for these acquittals of suspected militants like the Maldivian security forces' inexperience in anti-terrorism investigations and a fear of domestic backlash as many consider these as 'Islamic' heroes in the country.

While the actual number of fighters and facilitators of the Islamic State in the Maldives is shrouded in mystery, the state authorities seem unequipped and are fully motivated to deal with the chronic situation. Moreover, it is not only the fighters and sympathizers of the IS but also several other extremist and terrorist organizations justifying their inhuman radical and terrorist activities in the name of Islam that have attracted scores of young Maldivian men. These extremist and terrorist groups include both global outfits like Al Qaeda and local groups. It is important to note that extremist and terrorist tendencies among sections of Muslim youth have proliferated in almost all the surrounding countries of the Maldives, including Malaysia, Sri Lanka and India and have a definite impact on the archipelago.

Rising extremism and terrorism is a grave problem of the Maldives and it has multiple causes. However, the most important has been continued political instability in the country and the resulting bad governance, leaving little hope for the Maldivians, particularly the young population, for a bright future. Therefore, sensing and realizing that the situation is hopeless, an increasing number of youth have been attracted towards radical Muslim organizations as religion is a definitive source of solace. Unless there is political and social stability in the Maldives, there is all probability that extremism and terrorism would grow. S

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EXIT FOR PEACE

If the Taliban make peace with the U.S. in Afghanistan, their country and the region could benefit from immense economic advantages.

BY MARYAM NAZIR

Recent developments suggest that the scope of Pakistan-US relations has once again been rejuvenated, from President Trump's behaviour to the massive reception that Imran Khan received in the United States. Bilateral relations between the two countries had been at the lowest over the last few years. Reconciliation from the American side is now evident like never before. Given Premier Khan's calibre, opinion circles were always confident of how deftly he would handle everything. At least he would not read notes from a piece of paper. The American side too responded with grace. The slogan of 'do more' was also not heard this time.

Working towards a graceful exit from Afghanistan and a subsequent electoral victory, President Trump now seems to be desperate to reach a deal with the Taliban. There are chances that the US and President Trump especially might give away too much in their quest to reach a settlement. If the American exit is a success story, leaving Afghanistan in the hands of warring factions could hurt American 'strategic interests' in the region. The Taliban have signaled the possibility of intra-Afghan talks after the complete withdrawal of the US forces. What will be the fate of the Afghan government? They have not been involved in the negotiations by either side and this is rather strange.

There was a time when the Americans were power-mongers in the region and never gave 'negotiations' a thought. The Taliban had all the desire for talks. Now, times have changed and Taliban control has grown massively. According to some figures, Taliban control is almost 52 per cent of all of Afghanistan. The Taliban have also been handling the negotiations from a position of strength and authority.

Afghanistan and its people have been at war for the last four decades. The Taliban have now learned to live in perpetual chaos and, for them, a drawdown would ultimately bring Afghanistan back under them. After the Americans leave, and the issues of governance and conflict settlement have been attended to, there will be chaos in the country. It is for this very reason perhaps that the Taliban have not frowned once in the talks process, given the options, but other stakeholders have been treading very cautiously.

Afghanistan is important for Pakistan which has been active in chanting the mantra that a settlement of conflict must be Afghan-led and owned.

Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to the USA has placed a bigger responsibility on Pakistan's shoulders. Pakistan has facilitated the Taliban to come to the table. Now that the US wants Pakistan to play a bigger role, there is news already circulating that a Taliban spokesperson is willing to meet Prime Minister Imran Khan. If the world, after a nod from the U.S., has agreed for peace in Afghanistan, there are spoilers around who are quite capable of throwing a spanner in the works. After all, they did make a mockery of peace in Afghanistan in the past.

While an Afghan-centric equation is considered, other issues, including the presence of ISIS in Afghanistan and the turbulent environment discouraging economic initiatives such as CPEC, TAPI and CASA-1000 need attention. The ISIS cannot extend its stay in Afghanistan in the presence of the Taliban. If there is peace in war-ravaged country and a genuine in-house government (with equitable representation) is put in place, improvement of its economic health would become a compulsion, given foreign aid and assistance in other forms.

The momentum of the American Presidential election campaign is also kicking in. The US is now roo far ahead in the U.S.-Taliban talks process to pull out and is optimistic about the outcome. The Taliban are negotiating with skill, good conduct and authority and their perseverance is bound to get them somewhere. S

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TEHRAN

International Villain

There will come a time soon when the United States will recognize the status of Iran as a nuclear power, just the way it has done with North Korea.

BY DR. MOONIS AHMAR

In his State of the Union message on January 29, 2002, the then American President George W. Bush used the term "Axis of Evil" in which he categorized Iran, Iraq and North Korea as countries to be treated with impunity because of their support for international terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Now, President Donald Trump, after his face-off with North Korea, is focusing on Iran, blaming Tehran of sponsoring terrorism in the Middle East and aggressively pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

America is determined under the Trump administration to penalize Tehran; by withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal and re-imposing punitive sanctions against Tehran it is so far unable to depict Iran as a villain. On the contrary, because of his hawkish and belligerent posture, Donald Trump is termed more of a villain. His threats, acts of coercion and brinkmanship by deploying sizeable American naval warships in the Persian Gulf and tightening sanctions with the sole purpose of crippling the Iranian economy and forcing the anti-American regime to emerge in Iran portrays him as a villain.

Iran is not looked upon as a villain in the crisis and its conflict with the United States is based on three main reasons. First, America has a history since 1979 till today of denying the Iranian regime any legitimacy and threatening to destabilize the country by patronizing counter revolutionary forces. The two-pillar policy of the United States in the Persian Gulf (one pillar Saudi Arabia and another pillar Iran) has failed. After the Iranian revolution in February 1979 and the occupation of the American embassy in Tehran by revolutionary students/guards, Iran-U.S diplomatic relations ceased to exist. Forty years down the road, one can still see polarization, tension, war of words, threats and acts of coercion prevailing in Iran-U.S ties.

Perhaps, America has not been able to reconcile with the fact that it has lost Iran which was ally in the Shah of Iran's time but is now an enemy state. The 2015 nuclear deal, which was signed by six countries and Iran, ensured that Tehran will not proceed with its nuclear weapons program and in return the United States agreed to lift sanctions against Iran. The deal, which was struck during the Obama administration and signed by Iran, Britain, China, France, the Russian Federation and Germany, was a good arrangement to engage Iran but Donald Trump, during his election campaign in 2016, made it clear that if elected he would order American withdrawal from the deal. By implementing his election commitment, he in fact disengaged Iran from the goal of nuclear non-proliferation.

Second, it is true that Iran is involved in the Syrian civil war and helps Hamas in Gaza and the Hezbullah in Lebanon, but Tehran's support to such parties cannot be termed as sponsoring terrorism. Iran is also accused by its Arab opponents, particularly Saudi Arabia, of supporting the Houti rebels in Yemen. There is an anti-Iran axis composed of the United States, Israel and Arab monarchs led by Saudi Arabia. One can understand American and Israeli chagrin against Iran, but the Arab Gulf countries, namely Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E and Bahrain consider Iran as a hostile state which, according to them, is involved since the Iranian revolution of promoting the "Shia crescent" in the region. It is strange that such Arab countries share their threat perception against Iran with Israel and seem to have a tacit understanding with the Jewish state in further isolating Iran in collaboration with the United States.

Iran's influence in Iraq is another source of insecurity among the Sunni Gulf monarchs because in the event of any armed conflict between Iran and the United States, one cannot expect Iraq to remain neutral. Iran has survived American sanctions and hostile relations with Arab Gulf countries since the inception of Islamic revolution of February 1979. Instead of dealing with the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Golan heights, including one of the Muslims' holiest places, the Al-Aqsa mosque, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have given legitimacy to Israel's illegal control over Arab areas. The U.S-Israeli and Arab Gulf axis is a major destabilizing factor in the region than the so-called villain role of Iran. Finally, by following an extreme hostile policy vis-a-vis Iran, the U.S-Israel and Gulf Arab nexus is further strengthening the hardline clergy based in Qom, which wields real Shia power rather than President Hassan Rouhani, who is a moderate and pro-reform leader. Trump's threatening posture vis-a-vis Iran is not helping pro-democratic and pro-reform parties because the more the United States tries to isolate Iran and gives threats of annihilation, the more the hard line elements backed by the clergy are strengthened. When Iran shot down an American drone in June this year, President Trump boasted that he was in a position to launch a retaliatory strike which would have killed 250 people but since it was not worth it, so he stopped that attack 10 minutes prior to its launching.

From any standpoint, Iran cannot be categorized as a villain because it is neither an aggressor like Israel or the United States nor does it have ambitions to expand its territory beyond its borders. But, it is Israel and the United States who are pushing Iran to go nuclear. For how long, Iran can cope with threats, sanctions and acts of brinkmanship from the United States, Israel and some Arab Gulf countries is yet to be seen. At the end of the day, the only option it will have will be similar to the one used by North Korea - go nuclear and manufacture nuclear weapons as a deterrent against external aggression. The U.S has a history of first opposing and then accepting the nuclear states as was evident when India and Pakistan emerged as de facto nuclear states in May 1998 followed by North Korea later. The U.S, which had imposed sanctions against India and Pakistan as a punishment for their nuclear tests, lifted the sanctions after 9/11. It will follow the same policy in case of Iran because the message given to Tehran is that the only language America understands is that of crossing the nuclear threshold. That is the reason why there has been a surge of horizontal proliferation in the last three decades and the United States is now treating North Korea with respect.

Based on these realities, the only major threat which the Middle East faces today is from Israel and not from Iran. Israel is the only nuclear state in the region with around 200 nuclear weapons whereas Iran is far from gaining a similar nuclear status. Unlike Israel, which has occupied Arab areas since the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Iran is not an aggressor and supports the just cause of the Palestinian struggle for emancipation. Therefore, it is because of the Israeli and U.S paranoia vis-a-vis Iran that the two countries pursue a highly provocative approach against Tehran with an understanding that with the support of Arab Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia, they can force Iran to capitulate. S

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NAYPYIDAW

THE ROHINGYA MASSACRE

The Rohingya Muslims belong to Myanmar and should be absorbed by the country rather than being driven out.

BY S.G. JILANEE

Myanmar is a Buddhist country. It would therefore be quite appropriate to expect that it should be following the precept of *ahimsa* (non-violence), which was the bedrock of the teaching of Buddha. Yet, the Myanmar government seems to have turned his teachings upside down as it has unleashed full-scale military crackdown on Rohingya Muslims, driving a large number of them from their homes into Bangladesh, even as Nobel laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, looks on with indulgent sangfroid.

The enmity between the Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims, is quite old. During World War II, Rohingya Muslims, who were allied with the British, fought against local Rakhine Buddhists, who were allied with the Japanese. After independence in 1948, therefore, the new government comprising mainly Buddhists, denied citizenship to the Rohingyas, subjecting them to extensive systematic discrimination.

The Rohingya Muslims have historically faced ethnic and religious persecutions, culminating in 2017 in a fierce, protracted genocidal campaign by the Myanmar army, leading to arbitrary killings of Rohingyas, including children and old people, gang rapes of women, inhuman torture, and razing of village after village that forced all those people to seek shelter in neighbouring Bangladesh, where, today, they number over a million.

In the last two years, various efforts have been made for the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees to their homeland. But they did not make any tangible progress,

because at the very start, the Myanmar government was unwilling to recognise their rights and citizenship. Second, Myanmar imposed a screening and verification process to eliminate the so-called illegal Bengali Rohingyas from the list of returnees. Third, in November 2018, a much-publicised repatriation bid for some 2,000 families was abandoned after the refugees refused to return for fear of fresh persecutions and confinement in the newly-built camps across the border in Rakhine State.

In view of the continued military atrocities against the Rohingyas inside Myanmar, the refugees in Cox's Bazar are not going back to Myanmar any time soon. Indeed, the Myanmar government seems least interested in the resolution of the crisis. The "clearance operation" is already done; the Myanmar military is sticking to their lies and deceptions, unwilling to give in to any demands of the international community. Even the strategy to send back the refugees to so-called designated "safe zones" inside Myanmar is not gaining any ground; but if it does happen, it will be tantamount to sending them to concentration camps and robbing them of their future rights and citizenships—which are their primary demands. There cannot be any safe zones in Myanmar unless the perpetrators of the Rohingya crisis, including the military generals, who committed crimes against humanity and genocide, are brought to justice.

The current scenario does not provide any sense of hope or relief for any returnees in Myanmar nor those stranded in camps in Bangladesh. The refugees are not allowed to work (although many sneak out to work); they can't leave the camp, open a bank account and have a mobile phone (due to security reasons), although many have bought phones from local Bengalis, and children can't attend any Bengali school, which may lead, to social and cultural integration. The present dense living conditions, poor quality of water and inadequate vaccination have left Rohingya refugees prone to many contagious diseases. As a result, both the refugees and the host communities in Cox's Bazar are vulnerable to serious health risks.

Meanwhile, the host communities are also becoming apprehensive of the long-term presence of the refugees and thus slowly turning hostile towards them. The concern is equally evident in Dhaka. At a recent meeting, leading economists and policy analysts have rejected the idea of providing the refugees with access to the local labour market; instead, they recommended their quick repatriation to ease pressures on Bangladesh because their presence has already posed serious threats to the local environment and population. Any plan for a long-term stay or opening the door for resettlement and integration might, in the circumstances, lead to conflicts with local communities and raise a range of security issues for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has conceded that it will be unable to voluntarily repatriate Rohingya refugees to Myanmar as it had planned because it cannot find anyone willing to go back, though efforts to "motivate" people to leave will continue.

On the face of it, though, it would appear unusual for people to refuse to go back to their homes, but so traumatised are the Rohingyas, by the horrors perpetrated upon them, that they would prefer living as refugees, to going back home.

The situation demands urgent intervention by the UN, because, if allowed to fester, it might erupt into a direct conflict between Bangladesh and Myanmar. S

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HONK KONG

Another Tianamen Square

Thousands of people in Hong Kong have taken to the streets.

BY ANEELA SHAHZAD

The people of Hong Kong have been protesting against the Fugitive Bill for over four months now and they seem to be unmoved. The strength of the protest has forced the Lam administration to postpone the Bill indefinitely.

Hong Kong had become a possession of the British Colonial Crown in the Treaty of Nanking (1842), which was one in a series of 'unequal treaties' that depict China's 'century of humiliation'. In 1997, when the Crown finally signed "the cession of the islands", it did so on the pretext that Hong Kong will practically maintain its independence under the 'one country, two systems' principle until 2047. In 1992 the US Congress too enacted an act in consent with the occupation government of Hong Kong, which allowed the US to continue treating Hong Kong separately from China for matters concerning trade, export and economic control after 1997.

This prelude does show Britain as an occupying power and later the US as an intruding one, that have infringed upon the sovereignty of China that clearly considers Hong Kong as its own province and part of the Han Chinese family. However, this does not mean that the people of Hong Kong do not have the democratic right to their own sovereign will, as their separate identity has been solidified in the decades of separation.

When seen in the light of this separate identity, the people of Hong Kong had previously shown their displeasure of China's increasing control in the country in the 2014 protests, when students came out into the streets fearing that the proposed reforms for the Hong Kong electoral system would lead the way to China practically choosing their Chief Executive. In the same vein, this new proposed Extradition Bill is being seen as China's bid to exercise superintendence upon the liberties of the people of Hong Kong. Though Hong Kong already has extradition treaties with 30 other countries around the world, the plea against China is based on its allegedly deeply flawed justice system wherein arbitrary detention, unfair trials and torture are a norm – even though China is not known to have operated the likes of Abu Ghraib in its land. Nevertheless – if the Hong Kongers have a fear, it should be addressed.

And the fear seems to be real, as the protesters have not relented in their show of displeasure over the past months. They have come out in the hundreds of thousands, not only in Hong Kong but also in several pro-western capitals. Matters have become worse as the establishment that is largely considered pro-China, ordered the police to fire tear gas and rubber bullets at peaceful protesters on June 12, strengthening the narrative of an authoritative China.

While the people of Hong Kong are right in defending their freedom, there is also a global perspective that needs to be attended to wherein China considers itself a rising power that is being deterred at several fronts by the US and its allies in the Pacific. China's blunt accusation of Western hands behind these protests point to this on-going global rift, especially, as Trump wages a grave trade war against China and aims to disturb the Persian Gulf oil supplies that fuel China's economy.

The West's show of the ability to interfere in China's internal matters also damages China's reputation as an invincible power, which it direly needs for the propagation of its global Belt and Road dream. In such a case, it can be understood that China will not allow the perception of bending to the will of Western interests and be carried around the world at any cost. It will eventually make its bid, even if the matter is delayed for a while. China showed its upper hand at the matter in the G20 Summit that was held in Osaka,

A Backgrounder

Months of protests by pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong have led to repeated clashes with the city's security forces. Hong Kong is part of China, governed under the so-called "one-country, two systems" principle. Under this agreement, China recognizes Hong Kong's ability to administer its own governance, legal, economic and financial systems, while both sides agree that Hong Kong is part of one, re-unified China.

The current protests began with the Beijing-backed Hong Kong government's proposal of an extradition law that would have allowed the deportation of people from Hong Kong. Officially titled the "Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation," it has been controversial since the government first announced it in February 2019.

Mass street protests began on June 9 with a one-million person march. Chief Executive of Hong Kong Carrie Lam resisted calls for the bill to be formally withdrawn. After a two-million person march on June 16, Lam declared the bill "dead" on July 9.

Protesters flooded Hong Kong International Airport in the hope of getting the world's attention. But images of two mainland Chinese citizens being tied up, questioned and accused by protesters of being spies for Beijing lent China new weapons in the battle for public opinion. Beijing condemned the protesters as rioters and described their actions as "terrorist-like." Chinese state and social media exploded in anger. Hong Kong's protesters apologized, but the damage was done, and the world watched.

Will China use its army to quell the unrest in Hong Kong? China has moved dozens of military vehicles to Shenzhen, the closest city to Hong Kong, just across the border and 25 miles north of Hong Kong's central business district. State media have also aired videos of training drills in Shenzhen, which look very much like a mock-up version of the clashes between Hong Kong riot police and the pro-democracy protesters.

That would be a last resort for China. The optics of Chinese army troops on the streets of Hong Kong would be disastrous for the region. China would be ostracized, as it was after its bloody 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. Both China's and Hong Kong's stock markets would plunge. People and capital would flee Hong Kong.

wherein it clearly asserted that it will not allow G20 to discuss Hong Kong as foreign powers have 'no right to interfere in its internal affairs'. During the Summit, Chinese vice commerce minister Wang Shouwen said that trade talks between China and the US should be based on 'mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit and meeting each other halfway'. He said 'meeting each other half way means both sides have to compromise and make concessions, not just one side'. One could infer from the statement that China wants the US to stay at a distance and not cross into its jurisdiction. Protesters seem to be gradually resorting to some violent means to record their dissent. The 12 June protests outside the Legislative Council descended into violent clashes between the police and protesters, with at least 79 people injured. On August 15, the march came amid calls for peace and unity after ugly scenes at the Hong Kong Airport, when a small crowd of protesters attacked two men – one, a suspected police officer from mainland China, while the other was later revealed to be a reporter for the Global Times, a Chinese state-backed newspaper.

In the present situation, it seems like the matter has subsided for now but more protests are expected as China may re-initiate the Bill soon. The Hong Kong people at this stage must also consider that 'apprehension of misuse of a law' does not make the law inapplicable. All laws can be and are being misused all around the world, but that does not nullify the utility of the law. The question is what should be done to ensure that China will not subject any person in Hong Kong to unlawful abuse and make him or her accountable to Hong Kong authorities in the matter. The Extradition Law is not a vice in itself; it protects the basic rights of the people of Hong Kong. A middle way should be sought that ensures democratic freedom and basic rights of the people and also curbs violent crimes in a country with a multitudinous number of foreigners coming to the country for business and fun – potentially making it a hub of criminal activities. After all, nobody wants democracy to turn into an organized anarchy. S

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WASHINGTON

BACK TO DEATH ROW

The U.S. federal government is resuming the capital punishment after a nearly two-decade hiatus.

BY SAMIA SHAH

The decision of the US Justice Department to resume executions of prisoners has sent a wave of concern in those circles that defend human rights and loathe the very idea of taking somebody's life. The US Justice Department hasn't carried out any execution since 2003 though executions are carried out in the states where they are legal. Defending the move, US Attorney General William P. Barr said the Justice Department owes "it to the victims and their families to carry forward the sentence imposed by our justice system."

But critics are not ready to buy this argument. Given that the resumption is resumed at a time when the majority of the countries in the world have abolished this inhuman practice has raised many questions. According to Amnesty International, recorded execution rates decreased by 31 percent from 2017 to 2018 across the globe, with 690 executions recorded in 2018 — down from at least 993 recorded in 2017. It seems that most of mankind is opposed to this practice. As of the end of 2018, 106 countries had ended the the death penalty. International organizations have

also been campaigning against the sentence. The United Nations has pushed for worldwide abolition of the death penalty with the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres asserting that this penalty has no place in the 21st century. But, unfortunately, many of the states of the world are yet to abolish the death punishment. Some countries like China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Iraq carried out the highest numbers of executions in 2018.

The resumption does not only put the US at odds with several south and central American countries but also with its close western allies where capital punishment was abolished long ago. Rights activists believe that the practice is preferred by authoritarian states and a country like the US that champions the cause of human rights should not resume it. It should rather, they argue, go for a total abolishment of this practice not only at federal but at state level as well.

The US is brimming with nationalistic feelings and xenophobic ideas these days. Anti-immigrant rhetoric seems to have permeated all walks of American life. Many blame the incumbent US President Donald Trump for fanning these anti-immigrant sentiments. Some of his detractors go to the extent of declaring him a white supremacist, arguing that the President is trying to tear down the social fabric of his society through his irrational rhetoric that has created frenzy against the non-white communities. The US move has created suspicions about the motives of the step. The massacres and mass shootings in the last few years in the world's second largest democracy and involvement of many white supremacists in these incidents has sent a shiver down the spine of black and other non-white communities. Amidst this environment, the decision is bound to create more fears among such communities.

The US Justice System is viewed as biased towards the non-whites. Historically, blacks have outnumbered the whites in American prisons. Though in recent decades the gap between the two communities languishing in jails has narrowed, it has not been completely eliminated. According to a report by the Bureau of Justice System, the total number of black prisoners held by federal and state prisons in the US was 475,900 at the end of 2017 while whites were 436500, showing a difference of 39,400. According to the Bureau, a decade earlier the number of black inmates was 592,900 and whites were 499,800, reflecting a difference of 93,100. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People clarifies that this analysis includes only inmates who have been handed down more than a year's sentence. The decline in the black-white gap between 2007 and 2017 was driven by a 20 percent decrease in the number of black inmates, which outpaced a 13 percent decrease in the number of white inmates.

The attitude of police and other law enforcement agencies is said to be one of the factors leading to the crowding of jails with black prisoners. But activists claim it is not only black prisoners who are discriminated against the whites but Hispanics and other non-whites also face a discriminatory attitude from the responsible officials in the police and other government departments.

With the resumption of the executions, it is that feared that coloured and black communities would be targeted or would be more vulnerable to the practice. Rights activists claim African Americans are disproportionately represented on the death row and among those who have been executed. According to the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, "Black people make up 13 percent of the population, but they make up 42 percent of death row and 35 percent of those executed. In addition, many studies have found the race of the victim to affect who receives the death penalty, with homicides of white victims more likely to result in the death penalty."

The association claims that the federal death row is no different, asserting that out of 63 people on the federal death row, 37 are people of colour, adding that 27 of them are black. The rights body notes with concern that several reviews of the federal death penalty have found troubling racial disparities in charging, plea bargaining, sentencing and executions. Citing a review conducted by the United States Department of Justice, the association says 48 percent of white defendants received a sentence less than death through plea bargaining. "Yet, only 25 percent of black defendants and 28 percent of Hispanic defendants were able to plead guilty in exchange for life sentences."

Historically, the death sentence has been used against political opponents, religious dissenters and free thinkers. It was ruthlessly used against lower classes of society, especially in the UK where once upon a time even a pickpocket or petty thief could also be executed. It is claimed that between 1770 to 1820, more than 35,000 persons were handed down the death penalty in the UK. The practice had existed there for centuries. It was in the 20th century that the famous case of Birmingham Six roused the conscience of people against this inhuman punishment, forcing law makers to think about its abolition. In France it were not only the aristocrats and members of royal families who were guillotined but those who brought about the French Revolution of 1789 also became victims of this barbaric punishment. In Russia, not only the family of the Czar and the feudal elite were handed down executions but the main architects of the Russian Revolution of 1917 were also awarded capital punishment in the Great Purges of the 1930s. A number of innocent people were also awarded capital punishments in countries like British India, North Korea and China. If the punishment did not exist, they would not have lost at least the most fundamental right of all rights—that is the right to life.

Activists claim that in America between 1973 and 2016, 156 people who had been sentenced to death were subsequently determined to be innocent. During the same period, 1,142 people had been executed. This means that for every ten people executed, more than one person was exonerated. NAACP activists assert that this number does not include the people who were executed despite strong evidence of innocence or for whom evidence proving their innocence was found after they were executed.

Despite all this, resumption of the death sentence has been announced in the USA and is likely to earn the ire of several rights organizations. They will definitely make efforts to seek a halt to executions, but given the tense political environment, it is difficult to say if their efforts would yield any result. S

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ISLAMABAD

Living Her Passion

Pakistani women are as good in sports as in any other field. All they need is an encouraging environment.

BY ZAINAB MANZOOR

Women living in societies like Pakistan are used to the remark "Sports is for men" The fact is that women can be as interested in sports as men are. In Pakistan, there are not many resources facilitating women in sports. There is complete absence of an environment for females to play games as males do. There are no separate playgrounds for women and there are not many women's teams participating in any sports. Females in Pakistani society also have to face a social stigma if they show interest in playing a sport. This male-dominated society is riddled by the judgmental behaviour of people towards women in sports. This includes bullying, social isolation and other tags which sportswomen have to suffer according to the mentalities of the kind of people they come across.

Despite living in such a stereotypical society, there are many strong women in Pakistan who have given impressive performances in many international sport competitions such as the Olympics, world championships, Commonwealth Games, cricket and Asian Games. They have won gold medals in athletics, swimming, racing, cycling, karate and cricket. Their performances have always enabled them to win a good name for Pakistan.

While many Pakistani women are discouraged for their involvement in sports, there are so many inspirational examples who have challenged the norm and are defying all odds to live their dreams. Among them is Sana Mir, the former captain of the Pakistan women's cricket team. She is the first woman cricketer to have achieved the number one rank in the ICC ODIs. She has won for Pakistan two gold medals - in the Asian Games in 2010 and 2014.

Another example is that of a girl who broke many stereotypes and zipped the mouths of many critics. She is Naseem Hameed who is said to be the fastest woman in South Asia. She is a track and field athlete who won a gold at the 100 meters event at the South Asian Federation Games (SAF) in Dhaka in 2010, by running the course in just 11.81 seconds. Now she is working as a coach at Aman Foundation and trains underprivileged children in Korangi.

Another young rising star who was just 14 when she achieved many victories for the Pakistan football team is Hajra Khan. She is the only footballer in Pakistan women's football history to hit a record 100 goals in her career. Now she is the captain of the Pakistan women football team and plays as a striker and midfielder.

Samina Baig has shown that women are equal to men in power, courage and strength. She was only 25 when she conquered seven summits. She is the first and only woman from Pakistan to have climbed the Everest and seven other summits, such as Mount McKinley, Mount Elbrus, Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Aconcagua, Carstensz Pyramid and Mount Vinson. Samina Baig is also recognized as the youngest Muslim woman to have achieved the astonishing feat.

Rubab Raza has ruled the waves since when she was just 13 and became Pakistan's first female Olympic swimmer. She did 50 meters free-style in the Summer Olympics, 2004. She also represented Pakistan in the South Asian Games (2006) and Commonwealth Games (2006). She has won two silver medals and one bronze medal and has become an inspiration for so many young women.

There are so many other examples of strong women in Pakistan. There is Maria Toorpakay Wazir, a squash player who used to disguise as a boy just to play with her brothers on the streets. She belongs to a town of KPK where being a Muslim girl taking part in sports is considered taboo. She was threatened by the Taliban after which she locked herself in her house for 3 years. Despite these issues, she did not give up and kept practising. This is how she won the first ever women's event in the Nash Cup in Canada, the Southwest Squash Open and the Liberty Bell Open. She is ranked as the 56th female squash player in the world. In August 2007, President Pervez Musharraf presented her with the Salaam Pakistan Award.

Like Maria Toorpakay Wazir, there must be a lot of other women in Pakistan who are either hiding their gender or their passion. Maria stood and took a step for herself. She has definitely shown the way to other females - that if a girl is determined to make for herself a place in a predominantly male society, then there is no stopping her. There will soon be many more women in Pakistan who, instead of suppressing their dreams, will unveil their passion for sports and will let the world know about it. S

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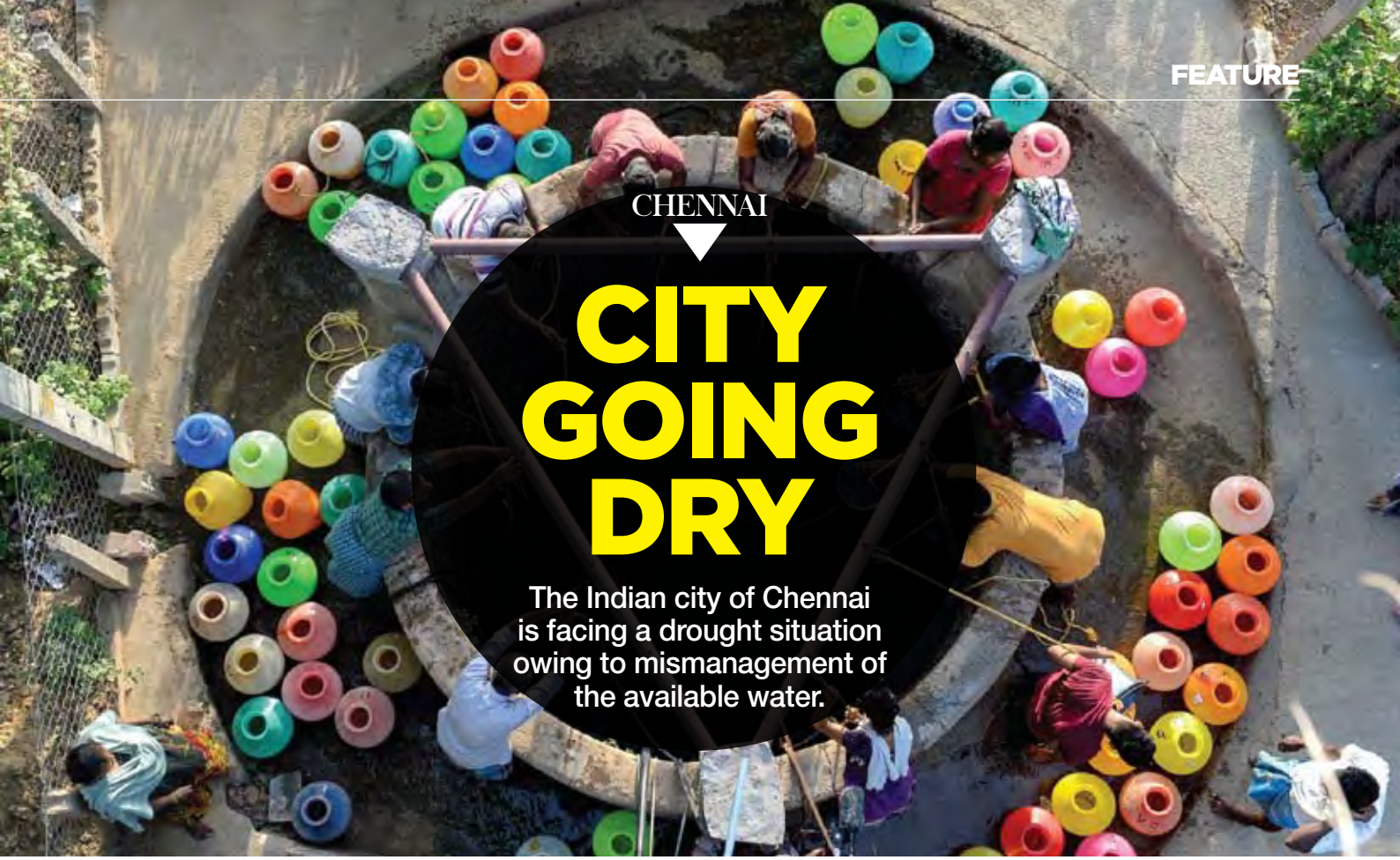

CHENNAI

CITY GOING DRY

The Indian city of Chennai is facing a drought situation owing to mismanagement of the available water.

BY MURTAZA TALPUR

The water crisis is an alarming global challenge. A number of countries and cities around the world are facing extreme water shortages. One is India's metropolis Chennai. Over the last two decades, the city has been facing a very bad water crisis and it has made Chennai completely parched. In June 2019, city officials declared that "Day Zero", or the day when almost no water would be left, had been reached. It is alarming to know that all the four major reservoirs (Poondi, Cholavaram, Puzhal and Malayambakkam) providing water to the city have run dry.

For the past 50 years, the 'water history' of Chennai can be portrayed by good rains, floods and a few droughts. This year, the response to the drought is a reflection of a sheer lack of interest, procrastination, dearth of imagination and a total lack of planning and management. As a result, water tanker owners have hit a gold mine. But what makes things more reprehensible is the lack of a sustainable water management plan to recover from the deplorable situation.

Water needs in Chennai have increased by 47% in the last decade, from 750 MLD (millions of liter per day) in 2008 to 1,100 MLD in 2018. In the same period, the metro water supply has plummeted by 8% from 650 MLD to 600 MLD. Against a total of 11,257mcft (million cubic feet) capacity, the four reservoirs supplying water to Chennai have below 35mcft water left in store.

As the population of the city is increasing and its geographic coverage expanding, in the past 10 decades, the quantity in reservoirs had remained stable in Chennai. In terms of water consumption, Chennai's per capita consumption is 107 liters per day, which is quite frugal as compared to 140-270 per capita per day in other cities of the country.

The major water source in the city is rainfall, but during 2018, precipitation in Chennai had been at the lowest at 75.55 centimeters as against 149.5 centimeters in 2017. Due to that, the city has seen an extended dry spell in a decade this year.

The Global Surface Water Explorer and India Today's Data Intelligence Unit (DIU), investigated 34 years of water volumes of Chennai's four major storing reservoirs - Poondi, Cholavaram, Puzhal and Chemarambakam. More than 20 lakh people in Chennai struggle for fresh water for at least two months every 2 to 3 years,. The situation is deteriorating owing to swiftly expanding urbanization. Supporting a population of about 50 lakh, this sixth largest city in India needs 80 crore liters of water every day, but it can only provide 52.5 crore liters and that also is dropping at an extreme pace.

Unfortunate water planning and management has made Chennai one of the most water-stressed cities not only in India but globally. The four major city reservoirs have a total capacity of 11.5 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft), though it has dropped to an unprecedented low. Moreover, Sholayar, one of the largest reservoirs in Tamil Nadu, has also totally dried up.

Recently, Chennai has been hit by more water adversities. Between 2015 and 2019, it has confronted extremes of floods, tsunami and droughts. In 2015, Chennai was brought to a halt by floods, which killed nearly 300 people, injured thousands, damaged property, houses and livelihoods worth Rs 143 billion. In 2004, there was a tsunami in Tamil Nadu, which killed 8,000 people and affected almost 0.9 million families.

Currently, the Chembarambakkam Lake that once ran over and caused inundation in the city, stands dry with below 1 mcft water. The water supply of Chennai relies on four main ponds, two purification plants and groundwater. In addition, there is a canal to

tap into for excess water from the Krishna Basin and the Cauvery. Due to a weak monsoon in 2018, three of the four lakes are empty, and the fourth has less than 1% water. Groundwater has also depleted because of low precipitation. The Krishna River didn't help the city either.

The intensified water situation in the city has made people draw groundwater but due to over-extraction, that too has reached deficit levels. This does not cater to the needs of the millions who live in city. The water crisis is not restricted to Chennai or other urban areas and the stress is being equally felt in the countryside of northern coastal Tamil Nadu.

Chennai-based water expert and the World Resources Institute's sustainable cities manager in India, Raj Bhagat P, says, "Chennai's problem is not lack of water but managing the water that is already available. Chennai shouldn't be equated with drought; it does have sufficient water for managing its needs. It should think of managing water efficiently and scientifically. The responsibility lies on all stakeholders - residents, industries, government and farmers."

In view of the huge water demand in all the sectors - domestic, agriculture and industrial - the existing water is not sufficient for Chennai. Over the years, these sectors have grown substantially and negligible variation in rain instigates vast stress. Shortage of precipitation, exceedingly exhausted groundwater, population pressure and worthless water management and planning push Chennai to this situation practically every 6 to 7 years. The government has now announced plans to bring water from Jolarpettai, which is about 100 km from Chennai, by railway tankers for the next few months.

Chennai's water crisis can be resolved through efficient and effective implementation of rainwater harvesting, waste water re-use, protection of flood plains, lakes and wetlands, open data for researchers and scholars to provide detailed and effective interventions and improved efficiency in using domestic, industrial and irrigation requirements upstream. Apart from that, local communities should be given awareness at grassroots level to utilize water properly and not to waste it. S

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NEW DELHI

Decolonizing

A ridiculous syllabus is still being followed in India to select government officials. Young civil servants are chosen through an ideology controlled by forces that sought to break India. It is this ideology that governs the mindset of Indian diplomats, IAS officers, tax, police and various organs of the government.

BY INAMULLAH MARWAT

Globalization has brought changes in human interaction both at the micro-level and macro-level. At the micro-level, we can see the human mind looking for more sophisticated versions of life in which it wants to make sure that every faculty of the human mind is acknowledged and an inclusive society is established in which everybody, irrespective of their sex, caste, religion or any other identity, can thrive. Though, cases of human search for exclusiveness at the cost of others can also be observed in the current globalized world.

Similarly, we also see many forms of changes in human interaction at the macro-level. There are many dimensions of it in states clubbing together in regions for economic collaboration and collective efforts to cope with global challenges in the shape of climate change, extremism, poverty and many other challenges.

However, there is one particular change at the macro-level coming in the wake of globalization in the erstwhile countries. With each passing year, the world is getting more connected because of globalization. There is an urge both at micro and macro levels of human interaction for self-identity. At the micro level, we see people striving for all kinds of rights; the reflection of this can be seen in the shape of female rights, minorities' rights and disabled rights, etc.

Similarly, at the macro level, we see colonial states trying to shed their colonial identity and wanting to attain their indigenous or decolonized identity. A case study of the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) shows how the colonial structure of Indian bureaucracy has affected India and the challenges the Indian government has faced to decolonize the IAS.

Historically, during colonial times, the IAS was known as the Imperial Civil Services

(ICS). Being a part of ICS was considered, like today, a privileged position. ICS provided the backbone to the British administrative structure in India. Since then, the charisma of being part of ICS, now known as IAS, has never vanished. India's top-class graduates in millions appear in IAS exams conducted by the Union Public Service Commission every year in almost 2000 exam centres across 60 cities in India. Their recruitment takes place on merit; however, despite merit at the helm, the IAS does not seem grounded and its modus operandi is considered to be aloof from dealing with local problems directly. In the face of recruitment of incredibly bright young men and women in the IAS, one commentator observes, "a potato expert is looking after defence, a veterinary doctor is supervising engineers and a history graduate is dictating the health policy."

Right from the application students submit for taking the IAS exam till their allocation for posts in different departments, the overall system is colonized. As per Rajiv Malhotra, who is an American-Indian author, the syllabus that is recommended to students for taking the IAS exam is not indigenized. Students are supposed to understand the theoretical concepts of social problems from the perspective of the West. Any student good at explaining subjects in the jargon of Western authors is considered a potential candidate for the exam.

In his lecture on Youtube, Rajiv says that, for the theoretical concepts of subjects like Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, International Relations and Religious Studies, students are expected to go through the literature of Western authors. There is no tendency or tilt to introduce Indian discourse in the syllabus or expose students to modern narratives on the part of UPSC. In the context of globalization, no new narratives like the rise of China are being taught and everything is put before the students from the Western perspective. Students' concepts of equality, inequality, hierarchy, exclusion, poverty and deprivation are expected to be learnt from the western authors' perspective.

Similarly, for the IAS exam, newspapers such as "The Hindu" and writers of a particular inclination are recommended as a part of the course. It does not matter how many analytical errors their writings or overall approach may have; they are a must-read for someone appearing in the exam. Thus, as per Rajiv, the Indian Civil Services is creating an alien group to rule which does not have any proper know-how of the society they are part of.

Says Ramachandra Guha, "…in no other democracy do generalists so comprehensively corner the top jobs at the higher levels of the administration. In no other modern society does a person, who got a high rank in an examination 35 years ago, automatically goes on and is allotted a high-status, high-impact, and vastly important government job, based only or largely on that exam rank."

The most significant problem with the IAS is to recruit a candidate based upon general competence at the helm of the departments where there is specialized knowledge required on the part of candidate whom he/she misses and, simply because of getting high scores, candidates are assigned the responsibility to steward their respective departments. The sensitivity of the issue has also been admitted by an IAS officer, who was ranked first in the year of his selection, saying, "It is impossible to run a 21st century economy with a 19th century bureaucracy using 18th century rules." The need for specialized knowledge among candidates has also been accepted in the last two decades by the Constitution Review Commission (2002), the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2008) and the NITI Aayog's 3 Year Action, in the wake of rising complexity in modern-day policymaking.

On June 10, 2018, the Modi-led government, under a lateral entry scheme, launched 10 senior joint secretary positions for private professionals in departments of economy, transportation and environment. However, the move created a huge firestorm in bureaucratic corridors. Since the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) came to power under the stewardship of Modi, the government has been introducing non-IAS officials based on their specialized skills. However, the move has faced a lot of bureaucratic backlash and has turned reforms in bureaucracy into a moot point in India.

Advocates of introducing specialized non-IAS officials say that it can be of advantage in three ways. First, it will address the shortage of officers in key positions. Second, it will expose IAS officials to new and fresh ideas. And third, IAS will, in the wake of introduction of specialized non-IAS officials, create a competitive environment among IAS officials for higher posts and thus the performance of IAS officials will improve. Automatic career progression of IAS officers without any competition and the assurance that the IAS officials will not be disqualified because of their poor performance has created complacency and the overall IAS seems quite static because of it.

Opponents to the lateral induction of non-IAS officials based on specialization say that merit can be compromised in the recruitment of non-IAS officials because of nepotism. It is also said that IAS members act as a link between the common man and policymaking by virtue of their exposure to the ground realities through field experience in their initial years of service. IAS officials are in a better position to deal with the issues of the common man compared to a non-IAS official who has no field experience. Also, it is said that introduction of non-IAS officials can demoralize career government servants.

The colonized nature of the IAS exam because of its syllabus, exam structure and the evasive nature of the IAS to innovation has made Indian bureaucracy oblivious to not only indigenous problems of India but has also failed the country in catching up with the rising complexity of policymaking in modern world. The overall structure of the IAS has been to turn the bright minds of India, instead of working for the country in the true sense, to fit into a mechanical structure which upholds the colonial structure but is hardly receptive to indigenous Indian problems.

India needs to have a debate about how to decolonize Indian bureaucracy by devising overall exams based on indigenous literature and making the IAS open to lateral induction.S

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COLOMBO

MAKING CITIES WALKABLE

Over time, people have shifted from the 'clean the city' to the 'keep city clean' concept.

BY AZHAR ALI

Cities have played vital role in human development throughout history. Some of the earliest cities of the near-past dwelled around six to ten thousand years ago in different parts of the world. Ancient cities thrived and then were wiped out. Cities of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Africa, South America, Europe, Palestine and Indus not only existed but expanded and did inter-city trade. It is a well-known fact that the Indus civilization used to barter grain with agri-equipment manufactured in Mesopotamia. With the passage of time, factors such as increasing population, lack of resources and pollution destroyed very fiber of life in these cities. Cities around the globe suffered epidemics of plague recorded since 420 BC. The Black Death epidemic happened in 1665-1666 in London killing hundred thousand people in 18 months. Cities of the Indus civilization were wiped out due to excessive deforestation, a problem still present in the region.

The jewel of the Indus civilization was the city of Mohenjo-Daro which was famous for its art and also sewerage, water and waste management. Even today, one can witness waste water channels, public baths and remains of waste storage in the city. Today our cities are certainly more populated and less planned than those of our ancestors. Mother nature has been taking care of organic pollutants for billions of years. However, it seems that human activities have brought these pollutants to a threshold level. Addition of inorganic pollutants on the other hand is asking nature to perform a duty she has not been designed for regarding organic as well inorganic wastes.

We have vigorously been putting toxic gaseous, liquid and solid wastes in the earth for at least the last two centuries. The earth's capability to handle this waste has come to a halt resulting in increased pollution levels which today threaten the very existence of the human race. Cities with dense population and intense economic activities are the epicenters of these episodes. Unfortunately, we have developed our civilization at the expense of a fragile ecosystem which poses the risk of complete disappearance of the human race.

Countries have been trying to establish liveable cities around the globe. There is strong control over polluting sources in developed countries where proper sanitation services are provided and air pollution is monitored and controlled. Over time, people have shifted from the 'clean the city' to the 'keep city clean' concept. Many indicators and parameters are being monitored to keep pollution under control and make cities more liveable.

The complex nature of city life makes it quite difficult for authorities to keep track of these indicators and parameters. Luckily there is a single parameter which can cover all others to indicate how much a city is liveable. This parameter is asking the question, 'how walkable a city is?'.

In modern cities of developing countries, one is left with the option of trying to find the way to a home through parked and moving vehicles. Footpaths, if they exist, are occupied by parked bikes and cars and in the absence of both, are filled with solid or liquid waste. Other than connectivity and green spaces, cities are suffering from air and water pollution as well as heaps of solid waste. Planning and managing a city which has these issues is a complex task. However, if the authorities while planning a new intervention or running the existing cities ask, 'how walkable the city would be' all matters can be resolved to make a city liveable. We won't witness waste water flowing on the sides of roads, occupied footpaths, dangerous levels of air pollution and disappearance of green spaces.

Better building and traffic management may reduce connectivity and air pollution problems. Improved waste water and solid waste management would decrease the impact of pollution. If a person can walk in a city then the city won't be having these pollution issues. In western countries one can find flocks of people walking at almost all times of the day. They have resolved the waste water, solid waste and air pollution issues to a great extent. Air pollution is a silent killer making people more tired, sleep deprived, tense and prone to diseases. Open drainage of waste water and heaps of solid waste pose a great public health problem. Walkability in a city is certainly a most helpful parameter to make a city liveable. This parameter would also address the dire need for improved public toilet services in our cities which we decline to discuss. Especially the female gender faces much more hardships when out of home. S

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LUNANA

TOURISM IN THE SKIES

Transportation in hilly Bhutan has been greatly eased by a helicopter taxi service that is proving to be a boon both for tourists as well as local residents.

BY TAHA KEHAR

Helicopters are no longer an unusual sight in Bhutan. Following the inception of the Royal Bhutan Helicopter Service Limited, they have revolutionized the country's transportation sector by offering an alternative, if not altogether unconventional, mode of travel.

Bhutan is dotted with towering mountains, a labyrinth of lush valleys and an assortment of scattered hamlets. As a result, travelling is a daunting prospect in the landlocked country because it is a challenge to navigate through the hostile terrain in a safe and efficient manner. Although roads that stretch to over 10,000 kilometres have been constructed in the last 50 years, the problem has persisted. Over time, there have also been copious disruptions in transporting goods to remote parts of the country.

Concerns over these transportation woes are all the more significant as Bhutan receives a large number of tourists who hike its trails and visit its monasteries and majestic countryside. Long-term commercial setbacks in this respect could deal a critical blow to the economy.

In order to counter this, the Bhutan Helicopter Services commenced operations in November 2015. According to some estimates, the chopper taxi service has safely transported over 1,000 travelers. Given the country's rough topography, helicopters are a viable means of transporting goods and people to remote areas. In 2014, two airlines successfully carried almost a quarter of a million passengers to various destinations. While this is an impressive feat, it runs the risk of being exceedingly expensive. There is a shortage of feasible land to build airports to facilitate the movement of travelers. Amid these restrictions, relying on an efficient helicopter network will be far more cost-effective.

By offering travelers an aerial view of Bhutan's major sites and transporting goods to distant hamlets, the helicopter service seems to have established its monopoly in a crucial business.

If statistics are anything to go by, the Royal Bhutan Helicopter Service transported over 40 medical patients from remote parts of the country to Thimpu within six months of starting its operations. What's more, these chopper taxis have enabled people to attend religious ceremonies and events in inaccessible localities that were hitherto inaccessible. Countless locals have been well-served by the arrangement as they don't have to go through the hassle of traversing difficult terrain, which can be a risky and time-consuming undertaking. So far, the service has proved to be relatively secure as the relevant officials tend to take all the necessary precautions to avert any untoward incidents. As per local news reports, crew members are often seen using weighing scales to determine if helicopters are carrying too much cargo or an excess number of passengers.

However, the helicopter services have also drawn criticism. For many skeptics, it is difficult to imagine helicopters – which are primarily utilized by countries to pursue rescue missions, evacuations and firefighting efforts during emergencies – being used

as taxi services for citizens and a means to boost tourism. But the problem goes beyond such considerations.

Suitable checks and balances need to be maintained on the goods that are being transported through this helicopter service. At this critical juncture, every item – from instant noodles to construction material – appears to be whisked off to remote areas. The service needs to develop stricter guidelines on the goods that are allowed onboard. Although crew members tend to conscientiously ensure that weight limits do not exceed on helicopters, a more cohesive vetting procedure could guarantee that the service functions without any glitches.

The Royal Bhutan Helicopter Service has also voiced concerns about the landing pad. Chhewang Gyeltshen, the CEO of the company, has recently complained that since the landing pad in Zomlingthang is dusty, the helicopter's engine has to be rinsed after every trip to Punakha rather than the after every 50 hours of flight. Most helipads are also dirty because they are built on picnic spots and spaces where animals graze. The short-term solution is to encourage crew members to clean the ground before takeoff and landing. But a long-term strategy must be devised as well. Tangible steps need to be taken to construct more conducive helipads for the chopper taxis. Bhutan's Department of Air Transport plans to "select and outfit" new helipads across the country. According to a proposal received in 2010, around 40 existing helipads in 18 districts need to be revamped. The Bhutan Helicopter Services plans to address the situation in the coming years.

Refueling is another sticking point that needs urgent attention. In some parts of the country, barrels of fuels are regularly transported across long distances in a pick-up truck to enable the chopper taxis to refuel. This procedure needs to be fine-tuned to ensure efficiency.

The company's pricing policies have also come under fire. In 2017, the Royal Bhutan Helicopter Services received a letter that demanded a clarification on its fares and requested an increase in the subsidy offered to the residents of Lunana, a remote village in Bhutan. This decision was prompted by concerns over the rapid increase in fares despite a spike in the demand for trips to Lunana. Residents reminded the helicopter service of the promise it had made at the very outset to gradually reduce hiring charges once the number of trips made to a particular locality increased. The charges levied on residents from remote areas are already subsidized. But the helicopter service needs to account for these demands and revise its fares.

While the helicopter service has streamlined Bhutan's transportation sector in seemingly unpredictable ways, a concerted effort is required to iron out the inconsistencies, challenges and concerns that have emerged over time. S

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DHAKA

THE AESTHETIC CONTEXT

Art as a form of expression of the people's opinions and emotions continues to serve as a powerful weapon.

BY MESHAL SATTAR

Art holds a really significant place, not just in human history but in the lives of humans beings. It has driven great movements and great people to do amazing things by utilising the most powerful tool - human emotion. Art has also been used to promote politics, fuel sociological movements and to endorse culture and control by those in power.

The sub-continent, with its vast, diverse, and immensely colourful culture, has always been a great hub for artists. Mughal era art held immense value. The Mughal style of painting started from the reign of Akbar in the 1600s. It was a unique blend of indigenous Indian style of painting and the Safavid school of Persian painting. The concoction of Indian, Persian and Islamic styles created a unique art genre that would outlive Akbar for decades. The art was carried on by Akbar's descendants and successors all the way to the British Raj.

The British established many art schools, some of which are still around. They sought to encourage the Western style of painting and wanted to endorse western culture by making art an academic subject. Fine art in the subcontinent was replaced by applied arts and the indigenous style of painting started to be viewed as crude and naive. Many old patrons of art became less wealthy and less influential and Western art became more

ubiquitous. This is exactly what the British wanted.

However, this was the time when the Indians were starting to wake up to the injustices of the British and struggling to develop and preserve a sense of cultural and social independence. With the Swadeshi movement, the rise of nationalism in Bengal, and the desire to preserve cultural identities, the very first art movement arose in 1905 in the Bengal School of Art. This was much less a school and more a movement that was started by Rabanindranth Tagore. The school produced modern "Indian style" paintings, that represented and romanticised Indian culture and tradition while preserving the essence of ancient art. This type of art played an extremely pivotal factor in re-awakening cultural pride and giving the indigenous people a sense of identity. This style of art was also a challenge to Western art and has had a lasting impact on Indian institutes of art in the subcontinent, which still continues to produce art centred around tradition and culture.

Many art movements arose in the 1940s, with the growing political tensions in the country which eventually led to partition and then independence. Indian artists felt a social responsibility while also being exposed to numerous art movements taking place in the West, which influenced a lot of their work.

The first modern trends in art consisted of these local artists taking local contexts and reproducing them in the aesthetic framework of the West - creating a completely new and unique style of painting.

One of the artists who produced some of the most famous and well-liked paintings at this time was the Bengali artist Zain ul Abedin. He was one of the first few to move on from the Mughal or oriental style of painting to a much more modern approach. He used a simplistic, skeletal framework to reproduce what he referred to as "realistic" art. His most acclaimed work is his documentation of the famine of 1943, which he made using mostly charcoal and ordinary paper yet his work became immensely popular. His paintings highlighted a sinister side to Indian culture and the world; they spoke to the masses because he refused to produce art for the sake of art, but chose to depict the pain of the masses.

Important work was also done at this time by Safiuddin Ahmed, Qamar ul Hassan and S.M. Sultan. They were the pioneers of the art movement that affects Bengali art to this day. It is also true that when Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan, the art in East Pakistan took on influences from West Pakistani artists as well, such as Chughtai, Ahmed Parvez, Shakir Ali, etc.

Art in the subcontinent is still being used to express the opinions and emotions of the youth and has a lot of platforms. Zain ul Abedin, who started the modern art movement and changed traditional art forever has an art gallery and museum dedicated to him located in Myminsingh. S

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Little By Little

With the current level of environmental degradation and deforestation prevalent in Pakistan, Sapphire Retail Limited, Pakistan's leading fashion house, has introduced environment-friendly canvas bags. These bags are made from 100% leftover fabric which is collected at Sapphire Textile Mills and then shredded into their basic form before being weaved into the canvas bags.

The launch is driven towards changing the habit of consuming single-use plastic and paper bags and encouraging customers to re-use these canvas bags in their day-to-day life. The bags are purposefully designed to carry up to three kilograms in weight so that they can be used for multiple purposes. They are available in all Sapphire retail outlets.

The canvas bag initiative follows in the steps of the brand's previous introduction of seed-embedded shopping bags made from cotton waste. The brand also launched a capsule collection, the proceeds of which went to a massive tree plantation drive. All these initiatives are part of a larger campaign called "little by little" which is geared towards creating awareness about environmental issues and to encourage the customers to make responsible decisions that will ultimately benefit Pakistan. S

Piri Piri In Karachi

After successfully launching restaurants in Islamabad's Giga Mall and Lahore's Emporium Mall, Pepe's Piri Piri has launched its third outlet in Karachi's North Nazimabad.

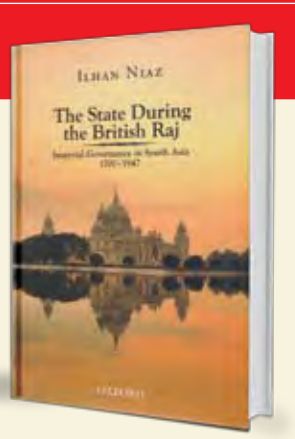
Pepe's started in London in 2004 when Piri Piri was virtually unknown in the UK and available at a handful of places. They were the first to use the name Piri Piri. It all changed with the launch of Pepe's first store in London, which was called Pepe's Piri Piri. Almost overnight, Pepe's Piri Piri chicken became the talk of the town as the taste of the chicken was startlingly fresh and kept bringing customers back.

Pepe's prides itself for serving only fresh chicken as opposed to using frozen chicken. After North Nazimabad, they will be launching another branch in Karachi's Sindhi Muslim Housing Cooperative Society followed by more branches in Islamabad, Lahore and Jhelum. They will also be launching very soon in UAE, USA and Morocco. S

BOOK

THE STATE DURING THE BRITISH RAJ

Ways of the Raj



Book Title	:	The State During the British Raj
Author	:	Ilhan Niaz
Publisher	:	Oxford University Press
Pages	:	Hardback 312 pp.
ISBN	:	9780199408535

BY NADYA CHISHTY-MUJAHID

Ilhan Niaz is a highly respected scholar of South Asian studies and perhaps the best person positioned to provide one with a two and a half century overview of the diverse workings and machinations of the British Raj in India. Commenting in a crisp, acerbic fashion, he states in his preface that moral post-modern outrage at colonialism is no excuse for not engaging in rational understanding of the intricacies that led directly (though over several decades) to a transmutation of Raj-dominated imperial India into what is now regarded as the modern Indian state. Though he asserts more than once how this history can be contextualized from a Pakistani as opposed to Indian perspective, he does not dwell on actual Pakistani politics so much as the history that preceded the creation of this country.

Niaz limits himself to the eighteenth, nineteenth, and the first half of the twentieth centuries, but this is sufficient for him to conclusively prove his thesis. On a more "micro" level, especially insofar as terminology is concerned, he does an admirable job of not only explaining concepts central to imperial India such as mansabdar and zamindar. Later in the text, he amusingly but usefully also indicates precisely what thugs, dacoits and badmaash mean for the social fabric of the subcontinent! His knowledge of the ins and outs of Timurid Mughal rulers is nothing short of impressive. Given how incredibly vast the Mughal empire grew, describing its governance with comprehension let alone accuracy is a Herculean feat, but Niaz succeeds. Though the chapters are undeniably erudite, a close perusal of the book leads to some scintillating and enjoyable titbits, such as the point that Emperor Akbar's chief eunuch was one of the most rapacious men of the Timurid period, at least insofar as avarice is concerned!

One of the best aspects to Niaz's writing is that in spite of being eminently well-read he does not allow the work of other critics to pull the wool over his eyes. For example, he asserts that while Akbar may have been ostensibly secular and Aurangzeb far more Islamically orthodox, both potentates utilized their relationship with religion to consolidate their own power—which was their primary aim. This type of clarity of vision serves Niaz well as he comments on the widespread hierarchy of the Timurid period. His knowledge of the East India Company is equally impressive, especially when it comes to its complex financial workings, as indeed is his assessment of the crucial role played by the growing influence of civilians in the sub-continent, especially over the course of the nineteenth century. At one point he even notes that the financially influential Company started getting away with things that would have led to the beheading of its officials in an earlier day and age!

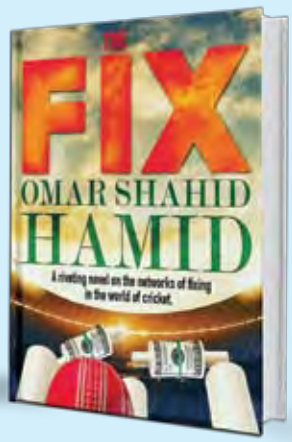
Having laid such sound foundations, he moves gracefully into delineating in great depth how the British, shrewdly ascertaining the civilian influence growing in India, built on extant power structures and bureaucracies (which hailed from the Timurid age) in order to shape what eventually became the Indian civil and military services. Though he obviously mentions key elements of this transformation such as the establishment of the "Indian Sandhurst" at Dehra Dun, his incisive research enables him to appreciate far finer facts than a mere overview might offer. One especially interesting point is that he bestows special commendation on the Indian forest service later in his text. Thus, insofar as intellectually weighty surveys are concerned, his work is especially admirable. Indeed, one wishes that the supplementary material had been in the form of supportive footnotes as opposed to endnotes since that would have made for more accessible reading.

On occasion he brings in comparisons to more modern cultural references, such as American politics, and even the post-Baath party era. Though these are few and far between, they subtly hint at the authorial workings of an especially fine and well-read consciousness. It is partly for this reason that his strong and somewhat polemical authorial voice comes across as intriguing as opposed to jarring. For instance, he unabashedly underscores that Nehru was an atheist, and that secularity thus simply would not have been much of an issue for him. His opinions on personalities like Cornwallis and Napier are equally astutely gauged and expressed. Naturally it is perspectives like these, proffered with the confidence that stems from years of experience, that make his book stand out when compared to other less-informed texts. It appears as if Niaz has reached a point in his career where his work demonstrates a balance between thorough research, informed opinion, and above all a finely-honed academic instinct that is only born after years of painstaking engagement with a subject. Metaphorically speaking he has colonized South Asian studies as adeptly as the British eventually colonized India. Ilhan Niaz can write well about power because he understands it. S

BOOK

THE FIX

Crimes Off the Field



BY MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

"The story of how petty-minded men brought down an icon," is how chapter five of The Fix ends. By this time, readers pretty much know how match-fixing has affected cricket in Pakistan and how it is slowly entering into the women's division of the game. Authored by Omar Shahid Hamid, the novel shows the life of the protagonist, Sanam Khan, skipper of Pakistan women's cricket team. She is hopeful of leading her team into the finals of the T20 World Cup and emerging victorious. However, when the book begins, Sanam, along with her vice-captain, Fatima Shah, is playing the final match of the Asia Cup against India. After Sanam Khan and her team hoist the Asia Cup trophy, match-fixers look at Sanam and her squad as a gold mine ready to be capitalized upon ahead of the T20 World Cup that is just around the corner. While Sanam has been showing resilience on the field and displaying loyalty at every step, the high officials of Pakistan's cricket board, unfortunately, are loyal only to money and have their close associations with match-fixers and bookies.

Hamid begins the novel by narrating the action on the field during the final match of the Asia Cup. There is something peculiar about Hamid's writing style. He uses simple language but assertive statements that put the reader right in the middle of the action. His writing style will certainly entertain and appeal to cricket-crazy readers. He explains each over bowled by the Indian bowlers and describes with vivid detail how the Pakistani players are playing these deliveries.

During the early parts of the novel, as Hamid is revealing the characters, he introduces Sanam and Fatima along with Babar Qadir, the player who once disgraced the Pakistan cricket team in what is considered to be a case of match-fixing but is now controlling the cricketing body. He has close links with Rehan Bhai or RB, the man who controls all bookies from South Africa. Hamid's storytelling dexterity blended with his ability to juggle various characters - both leading and supporting - across the book is a trait that makes The Fix an interesting read.

Hamid tells the story of Tariq Zaman, who the cricketing fraternity of Pakistan refers to as The Skipper. Although Tariq Zaman has passed away recently according to the novel's timeline, he is remembered for helping Pakistan cricket evolve over the years because of his robust leadership. However, as Rumessa Apa, Skipper's sister says, Tariq was let down by his teammates during a Test against Australia and during the men's World Cup.

Hamid has elucidated through his fictional story a grim reality of how deep match-fixing has seeped through Pakistan cricket. That is not the only factor close to reality in The Fix. A male cricketer, Faisal Qureshi or FQ, who played cricket under Tariq Zaman's captaincy, became the talk of the town for his alleged involvement in fixing matches. Apparently, Sanam Khan, while in England ahead of the T20 World Cup, develops a love interest with FQ and the media splashes their news of having dinner that creates a ruckus at Sanam's home back in Pakistan.

The speed of events unfolding and the story progression keeps varying throughout the novel. When describing a match, Hamid keeps the narrative fast-paced. The chapters that involve dialogue or a heated confrontation between Sanam Khan and Saleem Euro or Babar Qadir, the speed of storytelling slows down so the reader can gauge and decipher what is happening by what is being said by the characters and what is not being said by the author.

Book Title	:	The Fix
Author	:	Omar Shahid Hamid
Publisher	:	PanMacmillan, India
Pages	:	252pp.
ISBN	:	978-9389109016

Throughout the book, Hamid has beautifully developed Sanam Khan's character as a courageous woman who stands up to what is right even it means to publicly confront and humiliate Saleem Euro and his henchmen when the latter compels her to take gifts and to reconsider his offer to fix her matches or parts of it. Sanam Khan is an energetic player who upholds professionalism and passion at all costs. While The Fix is indeed about cricket, the game is played off the field in the corridors and lobbies of hotels where Saleem Euro meets with cricketers who tend to sell their soul to the devil.

Will Sanam Khan lead her team to a title victory at the T20 World Cup in England or will Saleem Euro win his way? Unfortunately, little does Sanam Khan realize that although friendships in her team are based on trust and loyalty, money can break them. There will be moments when you would look at Sanam Khan all alone against the bookies because those whom she considered her friends switched sides. Sanam Khan remains the odd one out. Will she fight to remain 'clean' in this dirty game of match-fixing or will she shun away her principles to be on Saleem Euro's side? The book will keep you glued until you find out her ultimate fate. S

FILM

CRAWL

Bone-chilling!

BY HADIQA IQBAL

'Crawl' is the best summer release for filmgoers. With nail-biting moments and edge-of-the–seat thrills, the film has all that a perfect horror film should be. It boosts the instincts of viewers and is on the ball in delivering everything in a 90-minute package.

Directed by Alexandre Aja and written by Michael and Shawn Rasmussen, the American horror film features Kaya Scodelario and Barry Pepper as the daughter Haley and father Dave. The film portrays a girl who is sharp, efficient in tackling stuff, scared by things but never giving up, assuming death to be the last hope for escape. Crawl depicts

a professional swimmer Haley struggling to get her badly injured father out from their house located in Florida which has been hit by a degree 5 hurricane.

The situation gets tense when Haley comes across growling and greedy alligators along with threats like floodwater rising from crawlspace up to the floors. The hurricane is a big threat and provides new spaces to alligators to attack, besides inviting spiders and bugs. The injuries make the father and daughter physically weaker. The death of some other victims also horrifies the two mentally.

The story starts with Beth (Haley's sister) calling Haley and informing her that a Category 5 hurricane is on a collision course with Florida and advises her to get out of the state while she still has time. Worried, Haley is concerned about her father's safety as he is not answering the phone. Against the instructions of Florida State Police, she navigates around evacuation routes to check on Dave and finally lands in the

crawlspace at her family home in Coral Lake where she finds her father badly wounded.

While getting away from filthy pipelines, she meets predators who have invaded her house through the storm drain, entering the crawlspace. From there the two start contesting the hungry alligators and continue doing so till the end of the film. This is a complete thrill package full of scares, jumps, emotions and threats. They try to escape a few times when Haley manages to connect through a discarded police radio through her cellphone and diverts attention of the alligators, later killing them with weapons like a shovel, fire flare or grabbing a gun from a dead policeman's body and shooting the monsters.

The film is proficient in its skills, very well directed and executed. The atmosphere and the alligators look real. The surging scenes of the escapers being trapped and then their survival from ambushes after every 7 to 10 minutes shows their struggle. There is no dragging in the film; emotions, bonds and strengths of the two are nailed at the correct moments.

The father-daughter duo faces danger throughout the film. On many occasions, when they seem safe, they are faced by more complications. There are thrilling moments that keep the audience constantly hooked.

The film is a must watch because it will chill you to the bone. S

FILM

SUPER 30

Pursuing Your Passion

BY MUHAMMAD ALI KHAN

'Super 30' is inspired by the real-life struggle of the Patna-based mathematician Anand Kumar who has seen astounding success rate for IIT (International Institute of Technology) admissions every year with his batch of Super 30 kids. The film reveals how Anand sets up Super 30, an educational institute free of cost for coaching 30 deserving but underprivileged children for IIT entrance exams, thereby earning the wrath of other IIT coaching centers that charge a handsome amount. The film showcases how the man and his batch of students dare to dream big despite the obstacles.

The film begins with an international event in London where one of Anand's former students (Vijay Varma) credits him for changing his life and guiding him all the way through. The film then introduces us to Hrithik Roshan as young Anand Kumar with a flashback who can do magic with numbers. He loves maths so much that he sneaks into a college library to study from foreign journals. He even writes a love letter to his love interest using binary numbers.

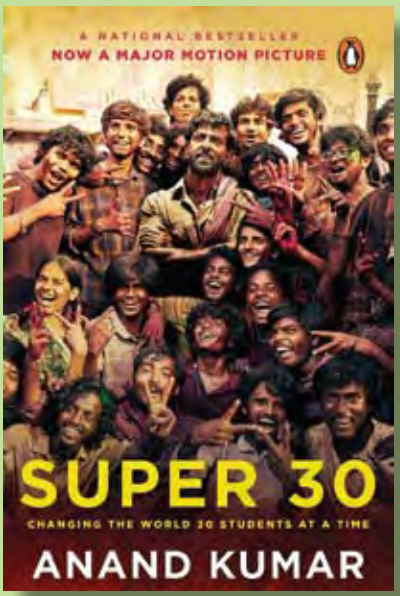
With his flair and passion for numbers, he makes it to UK's Mathematical Spectrum and The Mathematical Gazette. Though being the son of a postman in Bihar, he soon gets a seat at the Cambridge University by writing a research paper. His father sells everything he can to afford the fees but in vain. Anand also goes from door to door looking for sponsorships but during that time his father passes away and he is forced to sell papar which his mother makes at home.

Anand is then picked by Lallanji (Aditya Srivastava), who runs the Excellence Coaching Academy for IIT aspirants, to become a maths teacher for affluent students. But soon he realises that there might be many more Anands who give up their dreams every other day due to unusual circumstances. He then sets out on a journey with his brother Pranav (Nandish Sandhu) to train 30 brilliant but poor kids who have the same passion as he has. What then unfolds is a roller-coaster ride that takes Anand and the kids on a rough journey to appear for one of the toughest exams in India.

'Raja ka beta raja nahi banega, raja wahi banega jo haqdar hoga'. The line is the highlight of the film. How Anand poses mathematical and scientific questions to his students derived from routine scenarios gives the film some of its best moments. There are many scenes in the film that are heart-breaking too, including the one where his acceptance letter from Cambridge University is used as a wrapping paper for the papad that he sells. Also, he and the students barely have anything to eat but they survive to have a better education and a better life.

The film lands on the shoulders of its leading man Hrithik Roshan who does a great job in portraying Anand. His dedication and effort in doing the role is commendable. He makes every scene strike a chord. Pankaj Tripathi as the corrupt politician is again a delight to watch on screen as he manages to be both hilarious and menacing at the same time. Aditya Srivastava as Lallanji seems the perfect professional rival as he matches the villainy of the character. Mrunal Thakur as Anand's love interest, though given little screen time, manages to pull off well. Sadhana Singh and Virendra Saxena as parents and Nandish Singh as the brother are also good.

How director Vikas Bahl presents acts of integrity and courage as they occur in life is laudable. The writer Sanjiv Dutta as well gives us an underdog story where there's hardship but victory in the end. The duo does well in not highlighting Anand's



success story but keeping focus on how education is the only means to empower the less-privileged. Ajay-Atul's music is the best thing about 'Super 30'. The songs 'Basanti no dance' and 'Question mark' have attractive beats while the song 'Jugraafiya' is entertaining with its lyrics by Amitabh Bhattacharya. 'Niyam ho' in the end credits also has a strong impact. The cinematography of the film stands out overall.

'Super 30' questions why education is only what the rich can have as it remains a dream for many. The lesser can also flourish if they are given the same opportunities. In one of the scenes, Anand's students come face to face with the English-speaking students in a unique way that boosts their confidence and prepares them for the competition. The film narrates the story of a teacher who stands against all odds to set an example for the world to see and that's what makes it a must-watch for all, especially if you are a student. It gives you the message that if you desire something, pursue it passionately and nothing can stop you from achieving it. S

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