

SOUTHASIA

Afghanistan	Afg. 50
Australia	A\$ 6
Bangladesh	Taka 100
Bhutan	NU 50
Brazil	BRL 20
Canada	CS 6
China	RMB 30
France	EUR 45
Hong Kong	HKS 30
India	Rs. 100
Japan	¥ 500
Korea	Won 3000
Malaysia	RM 6
Maldives	Rf 45
Myanmar	MMK10
Nepal	NcRs. 75
New Zealand	NZ\$ 7
Pakistan	Rs. 300
Philippines	P 75
Saudi Arabia	SR 15
Singapore	S\$ 8
Sri Lanka	Rs. 100
Thailand	B 100
Turkey	Lira. 2
UAE	AED 10
UK	£ 3
USA	\$ 5



INDIA CRUMBLES

Widespread protests have erupted in India following passage of discriminatory laws against the Muslim population. The people's anger is growing – and Narendra Modi is fast losing his popularity.



PAKISTAN
Selective Accountability

AFGHANISTAN
No Direction

SRI LANKA
New Government

IRAN
Tit For Tat



**“ A people that
elect corrupt
politicians,
imposters, thieves
and traitors are
not victims... but
accomplices ”**

– George Orwell



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Is India crumbling under its anti-Muslim laws?

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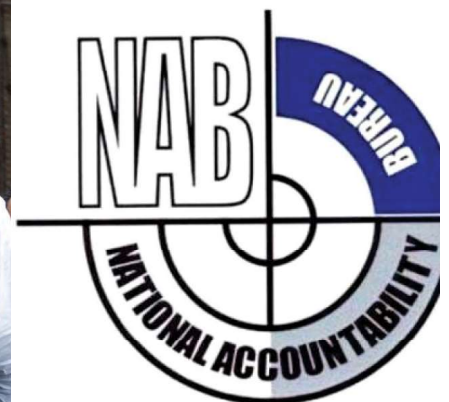
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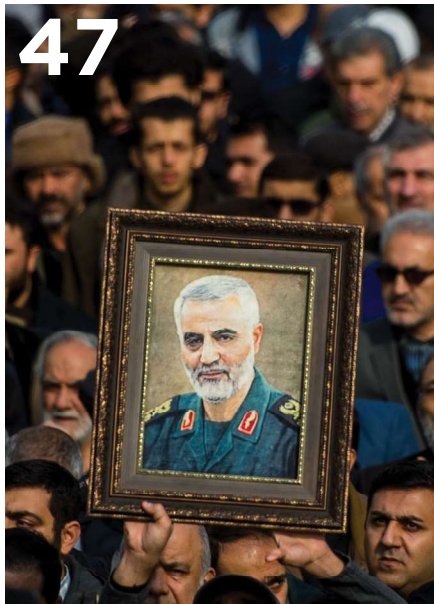
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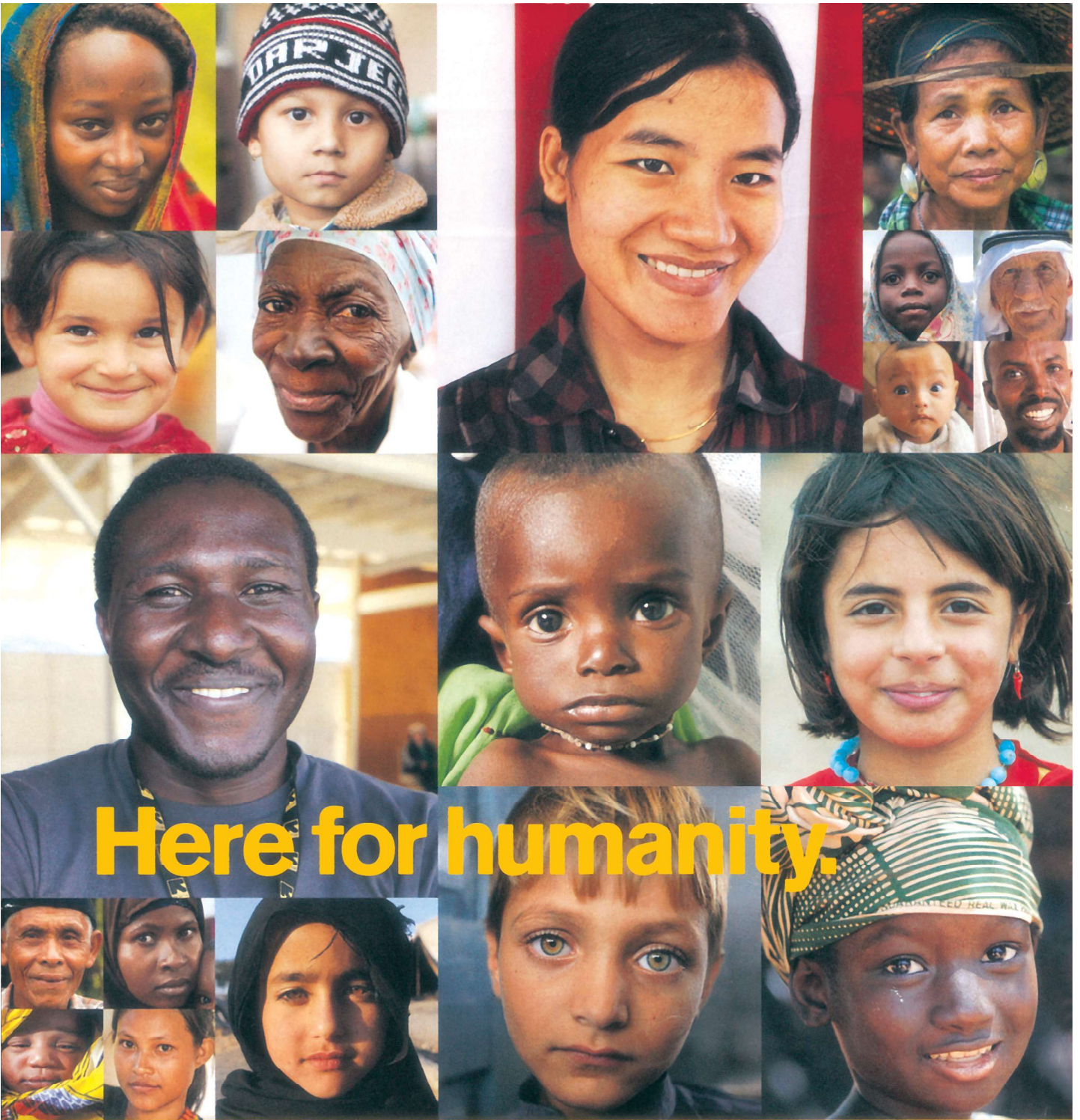
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Soldier or Traitor?



Former President of Pakistan, General (R) Pervez Musharraf, is surely not a 'traitor' as was further borne out by the verdict given by the Lahore High Court on January 13, 2020. The LHC's judgement declared unconstitutional all actions taken by the previous government against Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

Gen. Pervez Musharraf is the former Chief of Staff of the Pakistan Army and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. He served the Pakistan Army for well for over 40 years during which he was eminent in fighting various wars for the country. The General has an outstanding track record, and can by no means be described as a 'traitor'. The Pervez Musharraf trial was nothing but an aberration of the law. It was also a morale dampener for the Pakistan Armed Forces. These officers and men are constantly engaged in a war to protect the nation's frontiers. From the ordinary Jawan to the highest ranking officer, they are all fighting in all sorts of conditions – from the sweltering heat of blistering deserts to the world's toughest cold weather conditions, such as the below-freezing heights of Kargil and Siachin. They are laying down their lives or losing their limbs, no questions asked, because the Sipah-e-Salaar ordered them to defend the country at all costs. The expression 'unity of command' could not be more effectively displayed anywhere else as in the case of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

Along with being highly motivated and obedient fighters, Pakistan's soldiers are also beloved sons, fathers, husbands and brothers but they do not flinch for a moment and are always ready to fight and die under orders of their commander, if called upon to do so. It is then quite unfortunate to see that their high morale is severely bashed and they have the psychological feeling of betrayal because the very Sipah-e-Salaar, for whom they are laying down their lives, is being called a 'traitor'. By extension, the entire force should then be considered traitors because they are following a traitor's orders. This is an attitude that has severely shaken the fighting and disciplinary spirit of the Pakistan Armed Forces – though it has been

recognized as one of the finest fighting forces in the world. In recent years, the Pakistan Armed Forces have become more battle-hardened than any other army in the world as they have successfully combated and defeated those terrorist elements that had caused the deaths of more 70,000 soldiers and civilians and whose mindless attacks have caused losses of several billions of dollars to Pakistan's economy.

Gen. Pervez Musharraf, while he was President of Pakistan, only imposed an Emergency in 2007 to control the country's administrative situation that was getting out of hand. What he got in return, by a section of politicians, was the allegation of high treason and the title of 'traitor' under Article 6 of Pakistan's Constitution. Another South Asian leader, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, imposed an emergency in India in 1975, but she was never declared a traitor or charged with high treason. Was this because she was a civilian? Did Gen. Musharraf face the allegation of high treason and called a traitor because he was a military man?

The history of the Indian sub-continent is replete with many examples of military commanders who took similar actions as General

Musharraf to direct governance of the people on constructive lines through military interference so that the country would be ridden of corruption and the looting of national wealth by a handful of politicians. Even the great poet Ghalib has said somewhere that while he enjoyed writing poetry, his past generations had followed the profession of soldiering.

In light of the recent LHC verdict, it is now incumbent on the PTI government to move a constitutional amendment in the Parliament for the word 'ghaddar' or 'traitor' to be permanently removed from the Constitution of Pakistan and another term be used in its place, such as 'wrong-doer', 'offender', etc. Article 6 should also be amended on similar lines. Pakistan's major political parties, such as PML-N, PML-Q, PTI, PPP, ANP, JUI-F, MQM, BNP, JI, etc. need to come together for the amendment because the Pakistan Armed Forces are a national asset and do not belong to any particular party. These political parties have already joined forces for such causes as extension of the Services Chiefs or appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner. They can do so in this case as well. **S**

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کچھ شاعری، ذریعہ عزت نہیں مجھے
غالب

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President & Editor in Chief

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One-Page Phenomenon

This is related to last month's cover story 'Same Page Saga'. In Pakistan, two parallel political narratives have evolved: one civilian and the other military. The current state of civil-military relations needs to be addressed if the country is to be governed and transformed into a modern democracy. As per its track record, civilian rule in Pakistan has miserably failed to provide better governance. The reasons are endemic poverty and deprivation, massive misuse of public funds and corruption, the patriarchal nature of party politics, and much more. Civil-military relations have become a complicated matter that does not allow for a productive discussion. Hence, the Same-Page phenomenon cannot be taken as a policy imperative.

*Fatima Sohail,
 Karachi, Pakistan.*



Digital Pakistan

Pakistan has been through many ups and downs but Prime Minister Imran Khan has taken several initiatives for the country. One such initiative is Digital Pakistan. A senior Google executive and MIT graduate, Tania Aidrus, is leading the initiative that the Prime Minister has initiated to herald a technologically-driven environment. In an interview with **SouthAsia** magazine, Tania explained Digital Pakistan as an overarching vision that aims to unlock the potential of Pakistan by architecting the foundations of its digital future. She was of the view that soon a few big successes out of

Pakistan will bring regional and global attention to the massive opportunity that exists in the country.

*Hafsa Batool,
 Lahore, Pakistan.*

Multiplying Problems

Labour costs are rising across Asia and Bangladesh is no exception. This has put the textile industry there in a bind, as Western customers, faced with online competition from Amazon and others, are demanding that prices of textiles exported by Bangladesh be kept under control. Garment makers in the country have therefore been forced to make major investments in building safety, following a factory fire that killed 117 in November 2012 and the collapse of a building known as Rana Plaza in April 2013, which left more than 1,100 dead. Since then, Western brands do not buy from Bangladeshi suppliers unless the latter are certified to comply with



stringent fire and building safety regulations.

Factories in Bangladesh have grown haphazardly, some even operating on the upper floors of office and residential buildings. Western apparel makers feel more secure buying from countries where manufacturing is better planned and organized. These issues need to be tackled on a long-term basis if Bangladesh is to maintain its position in the world as a major textile garments supplier.

*Rahul Deshpande,
Dhaka, Bangladesh.*

Tuition Model

Tuition centres in Pakistan which were initially meant to be a choice for students have now become a necessity. Previously, tuitions were considered to be providing help to students who were academically behind but now even the brightest of them have succumbed to the routine of unnecessary and pointless tuitions. This is a result of secondary educational institutions changing their teaching methodology which incorporates tuition centres into the mix in a way that omitting them becomes detrimental for the students. The reason for doing this is the promise of profits for institutions due to the increasing number of students. Instead of focusing on a better business model, institutions should shift focus towards providing a more comprehensive and productive experience for students to optimize the system and reserve tuition centres for those who really need them.

*Bilal Siddique,
Islamabad, Pakistan.*

Rajapaksa Again

This is regarding the article 'Return to Autocracy' by Taha Kehar about the corruption and nepotism that prevails in the Sri Lankan government. The Rajapaksas have a history of giving key positions to all their siblings, making the clan's dynastic ambitions more obvious. During their previous regime, nepotism was deeply embedded in the polity and meritocracy was dealt a critical blow. In their second innings,



Gotabaya Rajapaksa has won the presidency by exploiting the people's sentiments. They have elected Mahinda Rajapaksa as the Sri Lankan Prime Minister. He dismantled constitutional provisions that stipulated term limits in his first tenure. Abuse of power and the cycle of bigotry are likely to increase and threaten democratic survival in Sri Lanka as accountability in the Rajapaksa government is hard to expect.

*Neha Pensai,
Colombo, Sri Lanka.*

Disappearing Country

The Maldives may be a paradise for tourists but now it has many issues about the environment. These include dwindling freshwater supplies and inadequate sewage treatment. Recent estimates indicate that the nation's water supply may be exhausted in the near future as population increases have created a sanitation problem that threatens the waters surrounding the island nation. Another significant environmental problem is the rise in sea levels due to global warming. The islands are particularly susceptible to flooding. Environmental preservation is complicated by these unique problems that affect a nation consisting of 1,200 islands spread over 510 miles of the Indian Ocean. Preservation of the desert island's ecology, protection of marine life and coral reefs and coconut tree rehabilitation are additional environmental goals. It is hoped the Maldives government will be up to the task or soon, there will not be a country called Maldives anymore.

*Sami Abdur Rehman,
Malé, The Maldives.*

Nepali Mermaid

Nepal is booming with athletes making a mark for the country. Gaurika Singh,

a 17-year old, claimed her second gold at the 13th South Asian Games when she clocked 2 minutes 17.73 seconds to win the women's 200m backstroke swimming competition. With another top of the podium finish, Singh, who has a new moniker as the 'Nepali Mermaid', has become one of the most decorated Nepali athletes at the regional sporting spectacle. She has won



two individual gold medals and a team event silver so far. She was appropriately praised by the President of Nepal Swimming Association Ashok Bajracharya. Watching her go from strength to strength, Nepal's swimming officials cannot help nurturing Olympic hopes.

*Milan Sajit,
Kathmandu, Nepal.*

Number Plates

The Sindh Excise and Taxation Department doesn't seem bothered about the suffering and harassment of owners of newly-registered vehicles whose number plates have not been issued for years despite registration. The authorities collect Rs.

1000 upfront at the time of car registration and a challan is issued duly stamped with the statement 'Original number plates not issued'. According to Mukesh Kumar, Minister of Excise and Taxation in Sindh, thousands of number plates have not been collected and are lying in storage. If this is to be believed, why are number plates not being issued to the existing buyers?

*Shabbir Ali,
Karachi, Pakistan.*





"Islam teaches tolerance, not hatred; universal brotherhood, not enmity; peace, and not violence."

- **Pervez Musharraf**,
former President of
Pakistan

"There can only be democracy when money is not allowed to be spent in politics."

- **Imran Khan**,
Prime Minister of
Pakistan



"Good governance with good intentions is the hallmark of our government. Implementation with integrity is our core passion."



- **Narendra Modi**,
Prime Minister of **India**

"I can feel the pain and suffering of countless people around the world, persecuted and expelled from their homes like the Rohingya."

- **Hasina Wajed**, Prime
Minister of **Bangladesh**



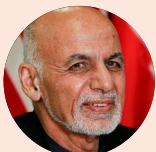
"I deny in all possible terms reports of attempts to use the military to influence election results, during decades in politics. I have always bowed down to the people's verdict. Wins and losses are a natural part of political life."



- **Gotabaya Rajapaksa**,
President of **Sri Lanka**

"I like tough partners."

- **Ashraf Ghani**,
President of
Afghanistan



"I am Syrian, I was made in Syria, I have to live in Syria and die in Syria."

- **Bashar al-Assad**,
President of **Syria**

"If you're walking down the right path and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you'll make progress."

- **Barack Obama**,
former US President



"We are all a little bit hippy, a little bohemian. We take that from the culture we knew, from the '70s and the '80s."



- **Nicolás Maduro**,
President of **Venezuela**

"I don't think of myself as unbreakable. Perhaps I'm just rather flexible and adaptable."

- **Aung San Suu Kyi**,
State Counsellor of
Myanmar



"If the international community supports us, and I ask it to do so by lifting the embargo on weapons, then we could eliminate Daesh in Libya definitively and quickly."



- **Khalifa Haftar**,
Libyan leader

"We have our forces deployed all across the border, including J&K, and we have various plans."

- **Gen. Manoj Naravane**,
Indian Army chief



"This is a lull before the storm. Things will explode, they're bound to explode. The way the Kashmiri people's rights are being trampled, there's bound to be a reaction."

- **Shah Mehmood Qureshi**,
Pakistan foreign minister



"If the Kashmiris are not given their right to self-determination then peace and stability in the region will never be possible."



- **Mushaal Mullick**,
wife of **Yasin Malik**

"Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose."

- **Bill Gates**,
founder of **Microsoft**



"I believe in absolute freedom of expression. Everyone has a right to offend and be offended."



- **Taslima Nasreen**,
Bangladeshi writer

"I knew I needed to wait for the right time where I can prove myself."

- **Abid Ali**,
Pakistani cricketer



"I'm tall and smart. If you're aggressive and energetic it can be intimidating for people who aren't very smart themselves."



- **Julia Roberts**,
American actress

"Don't talk in front of my back."

- **Meera**,
Pakistani actress





NO, SAID IMRAN KHAN

Was Prime Minister Imran Khan ever offered a role in an Indian film? Probably he was in his young days when he was a celebrity, having taken Pakistan cricket to new levels and having built an image for himself as a social A-lister in the West. It seems that none other than the late Indian actor and film-maker Dev Anand had pursued him to do a role in one of his films but Imran Khan had gracefully declined the offer.



MAHIRA, MEHWISH ADMIRED

Mahira Khan and Mehwish Hayat have made it to the 'sexy' list for 2019 of the UK weekly Eastern Eye. India's Alia Bhatt was declared the sexiest female face of 2019 as per the magazine. Mahira Khan has also represented Pakistan at the Paris Fashion Walk. Perhaps Mehwish Hayat had the judges going her way because she has also bagged a Tamgha-e-Imtiaz at home though a lot of people think many other actors also deserve to be recognized in this way.



NUSRAT JEHAN'S NEW ROLE

India's Nusrat Jehan is a member of the Indian parliament from a West Bengal constituency. She was not elected on a BJP ticket but that of TMC (Trinamool Congress Party) led by Mamta Banerjee. Nusrat Jehan is also an actress and despite being elected an MP, with all the attendant work, she still wants to do at least two films a year. She has been a successful Bengali actor and wants to do the lead role in the forthcoming film Asur. She is still best remembered for her role in Khoka 420.

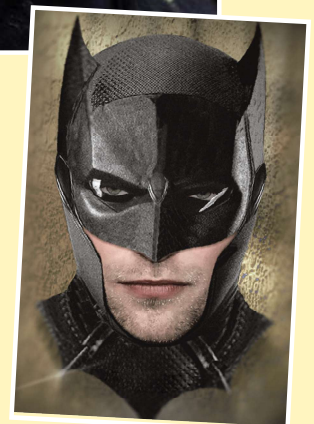


HUMAYUN SAEED AS BATMAN

There were rumours circulating that DC Comics (Detective Comics) wanted to sign Humayun Saeed as their next Batman. The Pakistani actor seemed to have caught the attention



of DC Comic. He plays the main male lead in the TV serial "Meray Paas Tum Ho". The DC Comics franchise was said to be in talks with Humayun Saeed for the Batman role but this never came about. It would have certainly been a proud addition to Pakistan's entertainment industry, had DC Comic finally not chosen Hollywood actor Robert Pattinson to depict the new Batman.



MAQSOODS CELEBRATE THEIR 50TH

Recently, Anwar Maqsood celebrated fifty years of his marriage with Imrana (Immu). The golden jubilee was attended by a larger number of people who blessed the couple on the special day. Guests included Javed Jabbar and his wife Shabnam, Syed Jawaid Iqbal and his wife Zeba, Rubab Haider (wife of late Naseer Haider, the ad man who used to play bridge every Sunday with Anwar), Rafi Khan, cricketer Salahuddin, Yasir Hussain and Iqra Aziz. There were also many other prominent people and relatives among the guests.

Syed Jawaid Iqbal and Zeba gifted the couple a book comprising comments from Anwar Maqsood and Immu's close relatives, friends and family members. Copies of the book were

Some quotes from the book presented by Jawaid and Zeba:

'Each of the two is a distinct individual. Neither is a shadow or an extension of the other.'

– Javed Jabbar

'Fifty years ago, two of the most wonderful people I know started their lives together.'

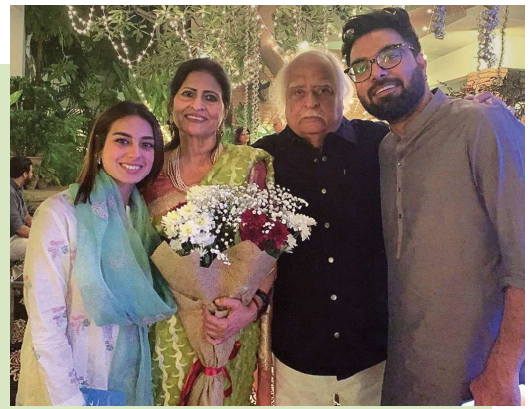
– Anum Ahmed

'The kind of love and affection I've been getting from his family over the years is beyond words.' – Adnan Siddiqui

'AM and Immu stand as not only a couple that managed to strike success but they did so in all respects, keeping the dignity of each relation intact.' – Shaha Jamshed

'One of the pleasures and rewards of returning from the UK to our homeland was meeting and becoming close to bhabi and Anwar bhai.' – Dr Saad Niaz

'Anwar sahab and Immu ji are like parents to me.' – Yasir Hussain



also distributed among the guests.

What added to the evening's entertainment was a big screen in the centre on which old Indian songs played, depicting the love between Anwar Maqsood and Imrana. The big screen later showed live pictures from the stage, where the couple was answering questions from their grandchildren in a quiz competition.

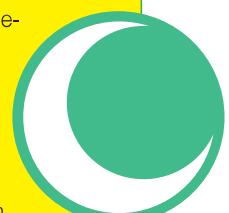
A visitor's book was also available for the guests to write their views. **S**

SALAM PLANET

Social networking apps have become an integral part of our life. Apart from the well-known global apps, community-based platforms are sharing interests, religious beliefs and motifs. Considering the precedent set, 'Salam Planet' has come into being. The app is more of a one-stop-shop designed to deal with any queries concerning the Muslim way of life, ranging from Quranic teachings to Halal restaurant reviews and lifestyles. It has a direct connection with people of a similar mindset.

It is, in fact, a marketplace app for all the people around the world regardless of their religion. The moment you install the app, you are offered a variety of interactive sections such as trending user posts, reviews, media, public figures, shopping, travel, sports, food and entertainment. It allows you to create, comment, share posts, pictures and links with your family and friends.

In a nutshell, 'Salam Planet' intends to provide a similar experience as other global app but in a more personalized way. Currently, the app operates in two languages – Danish and English. **S**



More Online Transport

First came Careem and Uber and were heartily welcomed by the people of Karachi who have always been suffering from an acute public transportation problem. The provincial government simply did not care and kept making hollow promises.

When the rates of the ride-hailing services started going high, more entrepreneurs came into the market such as Airlift and SWVL offering rides in small, air-conditioned buses - and they got more than willing customers.

Now it is reported that more online transport companies are planning to launch their services at even better rates. This time, the Sindh government has also jumped in to make money from the people's daily transport needs. At the same time, it seems the government has all but absolved itself from the responsibility of providing regular public transport in the city, such as buses and the Karachi Circular Railway or making roads, flyovers and underpasses. **S**



'A Quiet Place' Returns

'A Quiet Place 2' recently released its trailer which speaks volumes about the kind of film John Krasinski will be delivering to us. The scene takes us back to a silent place where Emily Blunt, the lead actress, and her husband John fought for their family's survival. John sacrificed himself in 'A Quiet Place' so that his family could escape the monsters and now it's up to Emily Blunt to save her family.

The trailer gives us some more insight about the creatures from which the Abbott

family is escaping but now the whole town is in danger. Cillian Murphy can be seen in the trailer who will be a part of the journey to save other humans. Djimon Hounsou has also joined the cast.

The synopsis of the film reads, "The Abbott family must now face the terrors of the outside world as they fight for survival in silence. Forced to venture into the unknown, they realize that the creatures that hunt by sound are not the only threats that lurk beyond the sand path." The film is slated to release on March 2020. **S**



SINGING DEBUT FOR KINZA HASHMI

Pakistani actress Kinza Hashmi who is a renowned name in the Pakistani drama industry has stepped into singing with her debut song 'Sajna'. Kinza took to social media and shared Sajna's cover, sung by her. The song has been originally sung by the young multi-talented singer, Yashal Shahid.



Kinza started her acting career in 2014 and appeared in several television commercials and serials. She played Rashna in Hum TV's 'Ishq Tamasha' for which she even received a nomination for Best Negative Actor at the Hum Awards. **S**

Jubilee Life Awarded

Pakistan Stock Exchange held the Top 25 Companies Awards Ceremony, to honour the top companies of Pakistan. This is the most prestigious and sought after recognition for the corporate sector. Prime Minister Imran Khan graced the occasion with his appearance.

The companies winning the awards belonged to a broad spectrum of industries, meeting or exceeding the pre-requisites

of Capital Efficiency, Dividend Distribution, Growth in Operating Revenues, Turnover, Corporate Governance and Investor Relations.

The Prime Minister, along with other senior government officials, distributed the awards among companies that made it to the Pakistan Stock Exchange Top-25 ranking in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Jubilee Life Insurance received the PSX Top 25 Companies award



in 2016. The award was presented by the Finance Minister, Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh to Mr Farhan Faridi, Group Head – Retail Distribution, Jubilee Life Insurance. **S**

VELO LAUNCHED IN PAKISTAN

The official launch of the white nicotine pouch brand Velo Pakistan took place in Karachi. The event was themed with the fitting blue carpet and a massive chair wall which also served as the photo wall. A glam booth inside was also made where one could get a 180 degree photo gif shot.

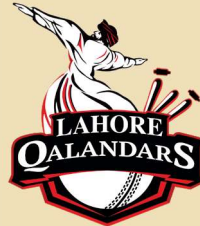
The event witnessed an aerial hoop dance performance by Filipino performer

Faith. Everyone from Nadia Hussain to Frieha Altaf to the face of Velo Pakistan, Sheheryar Munawar watched in awe as Faith played with the hoop.



The product's signature cool and breezy colour theme lighted the mood and the ambiance of the place and one would be pulled aside to an incredibly unique showcase: the brand name Velo carved in thick ice.

Renowned personalities including Model Abeer Rizvi, Abeer Habib, Zhalay Sarhadi, Hira Hussain and producer Sadia Jabbar also showed up. **S**



HBL PSL 2020

PSL
Pakistan Super League

The Pakistan Cricket Board has announced the schedule of the HBL Pakistan Super League 2020 with all 34 matches to be played across four international venues of the country from 20 February to 22 March, 2019. The schedule announcement was part of the 50 days to go to HBL Pakistan Super League 2020 celebrations that also featured the launching of the countdown clock, which has been mounted at the main entrance of the Gaddafi Stadium – the home of Pakistan cricket.

PCB Chairman Ehsan Mani said, “After bringing Test cricket back to Pakistan, hosting of the entire HBL Pakistan Super League is our other major achievement. I never had any doubts it was Pakistan’s league and should be played in front of home crowds. The league will feature 36 foreign stars out

of 425 who showed interest. This shows the confidence that players throughout the world have in playing in Pakistan.”

“Through this event, we expect the economy and tourism to get a significant boost, which will have a direct impact on the overall health of the country. I am expecting like last year, the entire country will get behind this tournament and by turning up in big numbers. I also want to thank the local governments and security agencies to facilitate the PCB in bringing HBL PSL back to Pakistan, for which we are grateful”, he added.



Of the 34 event matches, the National Stadium will stage nine matches and Lahore’s Gaddafi Stadium will host 14 matches. National Stadium will also host the Qualifier between the top two sides, whereas the Gaddafi Stadium will be the venue of the two Eliminator and the Final. **S**

‘SOUL CHARITY’ BY ADEEL CHAUDRY

Adeel Chaudry is a food influencer and a chef who was named one of the most handsome food connoisseurs in the world. He is also the owner of a trendy restaurant



in Lahore called ‘Junoon’, famous for its amazing menu and especially the Imli Cola Bomb which is their speciality. Adeel is known for his impeccable style and amazing food vlogging as he

travels a lot.

All restaurants prepare a huge amount of food every day and the leftovers are either thrown away or go bad but this entrepreneur started the initiative of ‘Soul Charity’. The place is a walk-in place outside ‘Junoon’ where packaged food, clothes and shoes are available for people in need. The packaged food is from the buffet section of the restaurant and has a variety of traditional, Chinese and continental dishes.

‘Junoon’ also have a policy to give discounts to customers who finish their meals and do not leave behind the food on their plates. Adeel’s effort to eradicate hunger has been much-appreciated and truly projects Pakistan’s youth in a positive light. **S**

JUNAID MURTAZA COUNTRY MD OF L’ORÉAL PAKISTAN

Junaid Murtaza has been appointed the new Country Managing Director of L’Oréal Pakistan. Murtaza is a LUMS alumnus of 2008 who began his career with Unilever Pakistan and led an accelerated career path through various successful stints in Marketing & Sales.

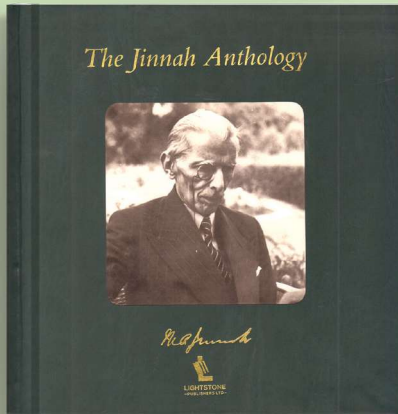


In 2013, he joined L’Oréal as the Marketing Director – Consumer Products Division - extending the reach of L’Oréal Paris and Garnier brands to the consumers of Pakistan. He then moved to the Global L’Oréal Headquarters Paris, France as Zone Marketing Director for Pan Africa and Middle East region.

Junaid returned to Pakistan in 2018 as the General Manager for L’Oréal Pakistan Consumer Products division and within 9 months, he succeeded the position of Country Managing Director where he is the Chief Executive for L’Oréal Pakistan subsidiary, being one of the youngest Country Managing Directors in the L’Oréal world. **S**

LEARNING FROM JINNAH

The Foreign Office has requested a total of 750 copies of 'The Jinnah Anthology – 4th Edition' authored, edited and compiled, by Liaquat Merchant, President of the Jinnah Society, and Professor Sharif Al Mujahid, for placement at all Pakistan embassies, high commissions and consulates worldwide. The book was published by Lightstone Publishers and the decision for keeping the 750 books in Pakistan's diplomatic missions was taken by Mr. Sohail Mahmood, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.



Liaquat Merchant



Sohail Mahmood

Mr Mahmood is a seasoned diplomat with experience spanning over three decades that includes various assignments at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as Pakistan's missions abroad in both bilateral and multilateral arenas. Prior to becoming the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, he was Pakistan's High Commissioner to India. He has also served as the Additional Secretary for Afghanistan/West Asia as well as

Director General for the Americas at the Foreign Secretary's Office. His foreign assignments include position of Pakistan Ambassador to Thailand and Turkey, among many others.

The Jinnah Society aims to promote Jinnah's legacy through the publication of books, articles and letters in newspapers, besides producing films and organizing events in schools, book launches and media programmes. The sale and distribution of the Jinnah Anthology and

Quotes from the Quaid-e-Azam is a part of the effort.

Mr. Liaquat Merchant and Professor Sharif Al Mujahid have emphasized that in order to understand the reasons which led to the creation of Pakistan, what Pakistan was intended to accomplish, the reason for its continued existence despite treacherous circumstances and why the idea of Pakistan will never die, one has to understand Jinnah because he constitutes the bridge which must be crossed to understand all this. **S**

Nida and Yasir kick-off new ventures

Yasir Nawaz, a film director, producer, screenwriter and actor has stepped into the food business by opening his own restaurant 'The Forest' in Karachi. It all started when Yasir contacted a friend and told him about his interest. He wanted to go into the food business. Soon, they partnered and 'The Forest' was the outcome. For Yasir, the food business is competitive and a completely different ball game compared to films but he is enjoying the experience and getting to know its different aspects.



The restaurant's main offerings are desi food like BBQ, karahi, daal makhni, etc They also have continental food but mainly focus on taste for which they have specialized chefs. With a soothing and romantic ambience with old trees, Yasir has high hopes for his new business.

His wife Nida Yasir has just launched a new clothing line by the name of Nida Yasir Collection (NYC) – not to be confused with New York City. The collection features women's fashion-wear. She thinks Pakistani women are conscious of their clothing and that is why she has launched a brand with various colours that speak for themselves.

The idea for the line is enough to invoke inspiration in anyone. Says Nida, "I have always wanted to reach out to every woman and every household in Pakistan at some level. I am extremely humbled with this experience and would love to expand it into different directions to bring in more products." **S**

'JOKER' SEQUEL?

According to rumours, Todd Philips and Joaquin Phoenix are in talks for a sequel to 'Joker', the film that brought in more than 1 billion USD worldwide. The director and actor, both received standing ovations for the film along with earning the top Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival and a Golden Globe acting prize for Joaquin Phoenix, who received critical acclaim for his transformation from a vulnerable loner into a confident villain in the film. Phoenix also got a BAFTA leading actor nod and the film was also nominated for adapted screenplay, original score, casting, cinematography, editing, sound, production design as well as makeup and hair. Well, time will tell if the speculation turns out right or not. **S**



THE CASTE REALITY

Protests have broken out across India, most of them violent, against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019.

BY DR. UDIT RAJ

The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA) was promulgated with the intention to subvert the secular fabric of the Indian Constitution. There was a misnomer that one of the Indian states, Assam, has been highly infiltrated from bordering countries, particularly, from Bangladesh. To get them out or to identify illegal migrants, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was prepared. Its outcome went against the RSS/BJP and frustrated them. More than 19 lakh people in Assam were excluded from the NRC out of a total 3.29 crore who had applied for it. Out of the 19 lakh, less than 5 lakh were Muslims while the Hindu population was about 13 lakh. This punctured the whole propaganda that millions of Bengali Muslims were living in Assam.

The ruling party had no other choice except to amend the Citizenship Act of 1955 to grant a swifter path to Indian citizenship under the assumption of religious persecution to any individual belonging to the specific minorities of Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis. The justification to exclude Muslims was that they have many other Muslim nations to settle in. This argument is bogus and unacceptable. There are many Buddhist and Christian nations also and hence they could have also been excluded like the Muslims. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution says that no person can be denied equality before the law or the equal protection of laws within the territory of India. Article 15 of the Indian Constitution says that a citizen cannot be discriminated against on the basis of religion, race, caste or place of birth. Thus, this is a clear departure from the secular structure of the Indian Constitution.

The RSS/BJP did not approve of the Indian Constitution from the very beginning. Three days after

the Constituent Assembly passed the Constitution, the RSS's English organ, Organizer, on November 30, 1949, rejected the Constitution and demanded Manusmriti as the Constitution. Manusmriti, translated as "The Laws of Manu" or "The Institutions of Manu," is the most important and authoritative Hindu Law Book (Dharmashastra), which served as a foundational work on Hindu law and jurisprudence in ancient India for at least 1500 years. Until the modern times, it was the standard reference for adjudicating civil and criminal cases by both the rulers who patronized the Vedic faith and the people who practiced Hinduism. Of the many law books of Hinduism, Manusmriti is certainly the most popular and authoritative work.

M.S. Golvarkar says that the present Indian Constitution is nothing but a compendium of various constitutional provisions of western countries and there is no Indianness in it. He further says that there is not a single word of reference in its guiding principles as to what our national mission is and what our keynote in life is. While delivering a speech at Resham Bagh, the RSS Headquarter at Nagpur, Golvarkar said, "RSS inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology is lighting the flame of Hindutva in each and every corner of this great land."

Now there should not be any doubt left that why the CAA has been brought. They waited for a long long time to replace the current Indian Constitution by the

Manusmriti. According to the Manusmriti, except Brahmins and Kshatriyas, all others are born to serve them. Women, regardless of any caste, must be treated like slaves and should not have any material and political power. At all times, they must be controlled by men. Till she grows up, a woman will be under the control of her father, after marriage, her husband will take charge and, in old age, it is a son who will control her.

Vinayak Savarkar, the Hindu and Indian nationalist and leading figure in the Hindu Mahasabha (Great Society of Hindus), also said that he would prefer the British Raj than the rule of the lower castes.

When Article 370 of the Indian Constitution was being done away with, the argument was offered that it will help the Dalits as they are not entitled to reservation benefits in Muslim-dominated Jammu & Kashmir. While amending the Citizenship Act of 1955, the Home Minister of the Indian Government furthered the same argument that the Dalits are treated even more badly in Pakistan. Of the 8 million Hindus living in Pakistan, around 6.5 million are Dalits. They are engaged in menial work, are forced to convert to Islam and there is hardly any opportunity for them to make progress.

As developments have showed, Jamia students were badly beaten up in New Delhi but that paid off handsomely where the anti-CAA/NRC movement was concerned. After that, Shaheen Bagh became an



inspiration for whole of the country. Of course, the JNU students' support was very critical. On the day on which the fateful incident took place at the Jamia, police did not stop at that only, but began booking cases against already victimised students. In the late evening, JNU students and mainly youth and common citizens from other walks of life, gathered at the police headquarters to mount pressure to release them. This helped in escalation of the agitation, otherwise they would have succeeded in bundling them up in various criminal cases, jails, etc.

After the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 was passed, agitation broke out all over the country. It helped bring together protesters in one of the states, i.e. Uttar Pradesh. Peaceful marchers were killed and injured. The Bengal BJP Chief could not hold his tongue and warned the anti-CAA agitators that they will be shot like dogs, as in UP. In Uttar Pradesh, 19 agitators died and many got injured but the state government was saying that they were killed by protesters' bullets. What a joke! Why was not a single policeman killed? Pellet guns and bullets found in the bodies of those killed were in the possession of the police and not the civilians. This also showed that only Muslims are being targeted, their properties are being attached and false cases are being slapped on them.


The ideology of the RSS has divided the Indian society into thousands of castes. Discrimination is justified in scriptures and religious discourses. The majority of Muslims, whether in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, are converts. It is not always correct to say that the Hindus were forced to convert. In some cases, it is true that they embraced Islam at the point of the gun or in lieu of some allurements but the majority of them converted due to the message of Islam. Imagine that when untouchability and caste discrimination is still continuing, how much worse it must have been in the ninth century and onwards?

Is it not a fact that all Sankracharyas' seats in the parliament are reserved for Brahmins? Had there not been reservations, Dalits and tribals could not have been found in governance and legislative bodies. Of course, the BJP is trying to forward the confusing theory that the Hindus have nothing to fear. Another narrative is that the CAA is for giving citizenship rather than snatching it away! Due to countrywide protests, the BJP is now on the backfoot in offering such logic, but the intention is to dilute reservation and finally

replace the Constitution with the Manusmriti.

The way forward for the ongoing agitation depends on leaders and activists of the anti-CAA campaign. I spoke at Shaheen Bagh on January 19, 2020, that the celebrities and intellectuals do not influence the voting pattern much. What is needed is the inclusion of leaders and representatives of backward areas and Dalits. The caste system plays a key role in electoral politics. The BJP has come into power through the strength of the vote. It will also be overthrown by the strength of the vote. Muslim leaders love to use the term 'Hindustan' and 'Hindu' in their dialogue and speeches, but they must refrain from it. This power struggle is not between the Hindus and Muslims but between the Manuwadis (the so-called upper caste) and thousands of backward and Dalit castes. The Dalits became Hindus at the time when the Manuwadi forces needed them to pitch against the Muslims. If they are Hindus, then why inter-caste marriages do not take place and why are resources and governance not proportionately divided?

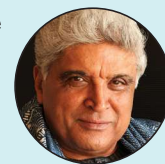
Can the Valmiki's open restaurants, tea shops and sweet shops like Aggarwal Sweets or Sharma Sweets? I guarantee that no one from the upper castes will visit eateries of Valmiki or other lower castes like of the Khatik, Chamar, Matang, Mala, etc. The moment the backward and Dalit castes realise this bitter reality, they will not become Hindus. This anti-CAA agitation can bring about social reform provided it is being led with this vision.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, father of the Indian Constitution, rejected Hinduism and embraced Buddhism. The Indian society is the greatest paradox in the world - that whatever is spoken and taught in books and at public meetings and seminars, has hardly any reflection in society. The moment people leave public meetings, classrooms and other discourses, they will leave these things there. After that, they will settle down in their castes and institutions. The success of this agitation will depend on the fact that the caste reality is kept in mind. 

The writer is a former member of the Indian Parliament and National Spokesperson of the AICC. (The All India Congress Committee - AICC - is the Presidium or the central decision-making assembly of the Indian National Congress).



“By entering the Jamia campus without permission, the police have created a precedence that is a threat to every university.”



Javed Akhtar,
poet and screenwriter



“Shocking messages of violence, tear gassing from Jamia in Delhi!

Why are students being treated like criminals? Why are hostels being tear-gassed? What is going on? Shocking and shameful!”

Swara Bhasker,
actress

“Post-announcement issues suggest there is an army of yes-men in the government who nod at everything, do not think things through or raise genuine doubts. Maybe, they should think about the decision-making process.”



Chetan Bhagat,
author



“To speak with silence when we should protest is what makes cowards out of men. India is burning. One can't be mute anymore.”

Pooja Bhatt,
actress and film director

NEW DIRECTIONS

There may be a ray of light in the widespread protests that have erupted across India against the new citizenship laws.

BY JUSTICE (R) M. SHAIQ USMANI

Nationalism is a phenomenon unknown to the followers of the Hindu creed as, in spite of being an ancient people, they have never really projected themselves as a nation in the sense the word is understood today. Strangely enough, the current rise of Hindu nationalism in India has roots in the rise of nationalism amongst Muslims inhabiting British India. Indeed there was no cause for the rise of Muslim nationalism at all because neither was there any consciousness amongst the Muslims in British India of being a separate homogenous unit as there were great differences amongst them, nor was there any sense of persecution amongst them since the British by and large treated both communities i.e. Hindus and Muslim, alike.

However, differences between Hindus and Muslims were inherent and there was no meeting ground between them. There was no mixing between the two socially and hardly any intermarriages or participation in each others' festivals. By and large, the two communities led separate lives. Nevertheless there was a perception amongst Muslims that if and when India gained Independence, the Hindus, being in numerical majority, would be in control of the country and hence may dominate them. Notwithstanding this perception, on the whole, the two communities co-existed peacefully though, on occasions, tempers did flare up but this was triggered by minor incidents of perceived sacrilege of symbols important to the two communities and not by any particular hatred for each other, at least not open hatred. Generally, before Partition, an uneasy calm prevailed in British India. But as the future revealed this was akin to a lull before the storm. The storm unleashed after Partition resulted in whole scale massacre of one community by the other, more in Punjab than elsewhere, which suddenly brought out in the open the hitherto dormant hatred

amongst the two communities.

If one examines the reason behind this sudden outburst of hatred, one would have no choice but to delve into the past and look at the thousand years' rule by the Muslims in the subcontinent. The Muslims, who came to India, were mostly adventurers looking for wealth and land to settle down and mostly came from Afghanistan, Persia, Anatolia and Central Asia. They were by no means a homogenous lot; instead they were disparate groups looking for pelf and power and often fought amongst themselves. Eventually, certain groups from Afghanistan prevailed over others and settled down in the land and established monarchic rule. Significantly, unlike the early Arab invasions in the Middle East, the proselytizing zeal was absent amongst these adventurers from Afghanistan though in their lust for pelf they did perpetrate atrocities amongst the local population and often justified them by exhibition of misplaced iconoclastic zeal.

The impact on the local population of the excesses by these adventurers was not so pronounced because the local people themselves were not a homogenous unit.

They too, consisted of disparate groups continually engaged in internecine warfare and were riven by

differences in cast and creed. Thus India then was a land without any organization or a machinery of State. But all that changed when the Mughals decided to make India their home and laid the foundations of a powerful dynasty. The Mughals by and large were a liberal lot and paid only lip service to Islam and that too, only to derive legitimacy from the Caliphate in Baghdad. Thus, there is no evidence of large scale atrocities committed by the Mughals due to any proselytizing zeal till the ascending of the throne by Aurangzeb, who was a devout Muslim. He did commit excesses against the Hindu population, perhaps to pacify his guilty conscience for killing his own brothers in the war of succession after Shahjahan's death. But the fallout of his stern treatment of the Hindus was that liberalism, which was the hallmark of Indian society before him, waned to a great extent. Aurangzeb's reign, though comparatively brief, did not permanently scar the relationship between the two communities.

Ironically, it was the coming of the British, particularly when they annexed India that the



consciousness amongst the local populace about there being two distinct communities arose either by design of the British with a view to divide and rule or to enable them to administer the two communities properly, which required that the two be treated differently because of their different customs and traditions.

It is the movement for Independence of India that brought the differences between the two communities into the limelight. Initially, of course, the two communities worked together for independence of India but soon the Muslims realized that the Hindus had suddenly become conscious of the fact that they were in the majority and hence had the right as well as expectation to govern the future India in the post-British period which was set to become a democracy on the Anglo-Saxon model. No doubt, that in a democracy, this was a natural process but because of the simmering hatred of centuries, this consciousness amongst the Hindus began to manifest in various acts of intolerance by the Hindus and eventually led to the emergence of a Hindu militaristic political arm, the RSS. The Muslims watched this rise of fascist trends amongst the Hindus with concern and their fear of Hindu dominance after Independence of India was exacerbated which, in turn, gave rise to the consciousness of a Muslim nationhood that found expression in the evolution of "The Two Nation Theory" i.e. Muslims and Hindus of India were two distinct nationalities.

The rest is history! What is significant is that both new countries carved out of British India i.e. Pakistan and India, at the time of their creation claimed and aspired to be secular countries, where religion was not to play any part in the governance of the country. Fortunately, at the time both countries were led by two individuals of outstanding ability and moral calibre i.e. Jinnah and Nehru and both were committed to building secular societies in the countries that they led.

It is an irony of history that it is Pakistan which strayed from the path first by adopting the Basic Principles Committee Report in 1952 and thereby abandoning secularism and adopting a path to make the new country into an Islamic country where religion and politics were to merge. Inevitably, this process led to a rise in influence of the religious elements with a fundamentalist bent of mind in the body politic of the nascent country. Pakistan thus formally abandoned the quest for secularism by adopting Islam as a State religion and by declaring itself the Islamic Republic of

Pakistan in 1973.

Judging from the nature of the two peoples, that is Muslims and Hindus, who in spite of their different beliefs, are essentially cast in the same mould, one would have expected India to follow the same obscurantist path as that taken by Pakistan but they were fortunate to have Nehru's leadership for a longer period than that of Jinnah in Pakistan, hence the process was delayed. This, at the time, was to the great advantage of India as it became a darling of the western world as well as that of the Soviet Union. Because of its huge population, potential economic strength, soft image and permissive culture, India was all set to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. But soon after the passing away of Nehru and his heirs, acrimony between the two countries increased and the inherent devious nature of the Hindus in India asserted itself and RSS suddenly appeared to dominate the politics of India. Fortunately in the early years the RSS's political arm, the BJP was led by an intellectual, Vajpayee, hence, while he governed, the RSS influence in India was contained and did not become rabid. An intellectual in the person of AB Vajpayee, by his very nature is not wont to be an extremist. But as soon as Vajpayee disappeared from the scene, Hindu India emerged with full force and discarding the secularism independent India's founding fathers had opted for, it started taking steps to turn India into a Fascist Hindu state, where religious symbolism asserted itself and support was sought from history by re-writing it to show that the Muslims responsible for the atrocities committed in the past when, if at all committed, were undertaken by merely unscrupulous adventurers. Their being Muslims was just a chance occurrence because, in those times, atrocities by such adventurers was the norm regardless of their religious affiliations.

Soon this new-found hatred under the leadership of Narendra Modi led to ways and means of undermining the Muslims by the Indian government and the political establishment itself. The new citizenship laws introduced by the BJP government recently are just the beginning of the persecution of Muslims, which is bound to lead to their perpetual harassment and pogroms in the future. This in turn is bound to destabilize India with emergence of indigenous resistance by Muslims and resulting terrorist activities as well, most likely to be spearheaded by the remnants of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. India has thus lost many advantages and the chances of its emergence

"Understand the chronology. First, they will promise you two crore jobs. Then they will form the government. Then they will destroy your universities. Then they will destroy the country's constitution. Then you will protest. Then they will call you a fool but youngistan will not budge."



Priyanka Gandhi,
politician



"What was the necessity of the CAA and withering of secularism in India, instead of a general rebuttal?"

Mahathir bin Mohamad,
Malaysian Prime Minister

"Reports from Delhi are it was a war zone last night - Fascism is not a joke - we use the word with the understanding it's deadly."



John Cusack,
American actor



"NRC and CAA will not be implemented in the state of West Bengal as long as I am alive."

Mamata Banerjee,
Chief Minister of West Bengal

“It’s time that we wipe out hatred, spread love. Whatever misunderstanding, fear exists in our hearts and should be spoken about through dialogue with the government. I still don’t know why I am being terminated from the show, Savdhan India. I have not received the official termination letter. I got a WhatsApp message from the channel that it would be the last day of the show. Before that, I wasn’t given any intimation. I feel if it was indeed a repercussion to my action, I sell my talent, not my conscience. When my kids grow up and ask me what I was doing when students were being tortured, I should have an answer.”

Sushant Singh,
TV and film actor



“Education for every child is our dream. Education is what empowered them to think independently. We have raised them to have a voice. In a thriving democracy, to raise one’s voice peacefully and be met with violence is wrong. Every voice counts. And each voice will work towards changing India.”

Priyanka Chopra,
actress



as a world power. Its chances of becoming a permanent member of the Security Council have also receded to a great extent. Indeed, in this scenario, in the not too distant a future, India may even have to contend with disintegration because, in the on-going turmoil, various militant sub-national groups, which abound in India, may also jump into the fray. This may lead to a mass exodus of Muslims from India to Pakistan which could even destabilize Pakistan since Pakistan does not have the capacity to absorb refugees in such large numbers. It is obvious that such turn of events would not bode well for the future of the subcontinent.

In hindsight, it can be said that much as we in Pakistan dislike the rise of Hindu nationalism in India and its repercussions, the fact remains that it is the Indian Muslims who are responsible for such developments in the subcontinent through giving rise to Muslim nationalism when none existed, through propounding the Two Nation

Theory in the first place. Perhaps, to that extent, there is some rationale in India’s actions in the Modi era as Indian Hindus too, have merely followed the Muslims’ lead by embracing the Two Nation Theory propagated by Muslims in the pre-partition era. But looking into the future, there is a possible saving grace in all these developments in the subcontinent as the widespread protests that have erupted in India against the new citizenship laws, may eventually lead to the coming together of all communities inhabiting the subcontinent and thereby the shunning of antagonism and militaristic posturing, which can go a long way in alleviating the lot of the unfortunate poverty-stricken people of this land. ■

The writer is a former Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court. He has been actively involved in human and women’s rights causes.



DOUBLE JEOPARDY

The Muslims in India lived peacefully in a secular state until the BJP came to power and questioned their allegiance to an India that may soon become a wholly Hindu state.

BY DR. MOONIS AHMAR

The controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019 passed by the Indian parliament and authenticated by the President tends to unleash a grave crisis since the imposition of emergency imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975. While, the 200 million strong Muslim population in India is enraged with the discriminatory act which will consider giving Indian citizenship to non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who entered India before December 31, 2014, non-Muslims are also protesting across India against the CAA.

The double jeopardy of the Indian Muslims during the BJP’s Hindu nationalist rule emanates from their vulnerability to periodic lynching by Hindu fanatics on suspicion of cow slaughter and the looming threat of registration of their identity

by the state which may target them. BJP and Shiv Sena stalwarts have made it clear to Indian Muslims either to convert to the Hindu religion or migrate to Pakistan or Bangladesh. Can 200 million Indian Muslims migrate to neighbouring Bangladesh and Pakistan with any ease? And why should they leave their country of origin in which they have been living for centuries? To coerce them to convert to Hinduism will not work and Indian Muslims are quite hard in preserving their faith and identity against all odds.

India today is passing through a strange situation as, on the one hand, the vast majority of Indians are silent and indifferent to what is going on against religious minorities under BJP’s rule and, on the other, other political parties claiming to be secular and democratic are unable to save India from transforming to a Nazi and Fascist state.

Why are Indian Muslims angry against the

CAA and the National Registration Act (NRA)? According to the Indian website The Print, “before the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Home Minister Amit Shah made it clear that there will be a national NRC, similar to that of Assam. So, in this case, after the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, when NRC is carried out, it is a given that there will be mass exclusions due to the process demanding papers establishing lineage, etc. Although, the exclusions are bound to include everyone from Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis to Muslims, all others, barring the Muslims, will be saved by the 2019 Citizenship Law as it seeks to provide citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians of the neighbouring nations. But Muslims, having no country to accept them and India having no provisions to grant them citizenship, could inevitably end up in detention camps”.

It is for the first time in several decades that almost all over India there are protest marches against the CAA. The demonstrators are joined by people from a cross-section of society. Indian Muslims now feel insecure in light of the ‘real intentions’ of the BJP and its communal allies like the Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, Sang Pariwar and RSS. Any person in India who has some awareness about the lethal implications of the well-planned, ultra-right wing Hindu nationalist government to implement its age-old agenda of establishing India as a ‘Hindu state’, must be ready to witness large scale violence and instability. Will anti-CAA and NRC elements sustain their agitation against the BJP government or, with the passage of time, the momentum of the popular movement will wither away?

There are three possibilities of the outcome of an upsurge against the forces of Hindu nationalism and the movement against the CAA and NRC. First, in view of the overwhelming majority of the BJP and its allies in the Lok Sabha (upper house) of the Indian parliament, it is quite difficult for the opposition to reverse measures taken by the Indian state like the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act of August 5, 2019 and the CAA passed by the Indian parliament on December 11, 2019. Although, the student community in India, despite the use of brute force against them, has sustained its agitation in all the major campuses of India against the



NPR: India's National Population Register (NPR) is a register of the usual residents of the country. It contains information collected at the local (village/sub-town), sub-district, district, state and national level under provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.

NRC: The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a registry maintained by the Government of India containing names and certain relevant information for the identification of genuine Indian citizens whose creation is mandated by The Citizenship Act 1955 as amended in 2003. The register was specifically made for Assam. However, on 20th November, 2019, Home Minister Amit Shah declared during a parliamentary session that the register would be extended to the entire country by 2021. NRC is said to be the base for the issue of National Identity Cards (NICs).

CAA: The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA) is an act of the Indian parliament, which amends the Citizenship Act of 1955 to grant a swifter path to Indian citizenship under the assumption of persecution to any individual belonging to the specific minorities of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who entered India on or before 31 December 2014. The law, however, excludes Muslims. This is the first time that religion has been used to grant citizenship in Indian law. However, scholars are of the view that India has always emphasised that ‘India is for Hindus’.

* CAA, when combined with NRC, could lead to Indian Muslims being stateless. Without documents, they could be jailed, deported or left in camps.

communal policies of the BJP government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his close confidant, Union Minister of Interior, Amit Shah have made it clear that there is no way their government will go on the backfoot. Both BJP stalwarts have directed their party workers to go door to door and make people

aware about the propaganda unleashed by the opponents of CAA and clear what they call the ‘misconception’ prevailing in India and outside about that Act.

The use of Hindu communal thugs against their opponents is also a reality which was manifested in an armed attack

against liberal and progressive students and the faculty of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi in January. Scores of masked men entered the JNU and started beating students and faculty members who were identified as being against the BJP. The use of Fascist and Nazi methods by the BJP and its allies against their opponents is now a daily affair in India. Second, opposition parties are still divided on issues which prove how India is drifting fast towards being a Hindu fascist state. For instance, in the Rajya Sabha (upper house of the Indian parliament), despite its lack of majority, the BJP government was able to pass the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Act and also the CAA. It seems the BJP, since 2014 when Narendra Modi became Prime Minister of India, has systematically penetrated into civil society, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, police and the military. As a result, neither the police nor the judiciary takes any action against BJP thugs who beat and injure their opponents. On the contrary, when masked men, who were the goons of the BJP, attacked students and faculty at the JNU, instead of taking action against such culprits, the police registered cases against the students who were attacked.

Third, Indian Muslims must change their way of life by focusing on getting better education and maximizing their influence in politics. Transformation of the Indian Muslims from a marginalized population to an empowered and influential one can only take place if they deal with the issues which determine their social backwardness and poor economic predicament. For that purpose, those Indian Muslims who are concentrated in some parts of the country but scattered otherwise in the whole of India, must organize themselves as a political and economic force before it is too late and the BJP fanatics, having the patronage of the state, attempt to liquidate them.

Years of discrimination have made the Indian Muslims bitter and aggressive. They are angry when questions are raised about their patriotism and commitment to India. They don't need any certificate for being patriotic as they consider themselves to be loyal Indians and rule out any possibility of possessing a soft corner for Pakistan. A segment of the Indian Muslims is very critical of Pakistan, while terming the 'two nation theory' lethal for the Muslims of India. They lament that because of the creation of Pakistan they are still suffering as Hindu

nationalists taunt them and ask them to either convert to Hinduism or go to Pakistan.

The BJP can wishfully think of cleansing India of Muslims through intimidation, changing names of cities, buildings and roads but in reality it is not possible to play with the lives of 200 million Muslims. It seems, in view of serious opposition, that the BJP government will be forced to abandon its fascist tactics against religious minorities. For Indian democracy, the major test will be how it eradicates the threat of a Fascist and Nazi mode of governance where opponents are silenced by force. The next general elections in India are due in 2024 and there appears no possibility of removing the BJP from power as the party has a huge majority in the lower house. Therefore, Indian Muslims and other religious minorities need to swallow the bitter pill of Hindu fanaticism unless the majority of Indian voters rise against the regime. **S**

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The Last Nail

India's secular image has been placed in a coffin which will soon be buried by the Hindutva ideology.

BY DR. AHMED SAEED MINHAS

India needs no enemy under its Modi-led fascist government. The severely discriminating Hindutva ideology has tainted Modi's acts, one after another and are inching India towards its ultimate break-up. There are optimists within the Hindu community, mostly the elite caste, who think that India will rise as the most glorious Hindu state of the world with the daring steps taken by the incumbent BJP government as it has the capacity to impact the new world order and share global power. There is, however, general pessimism about Modi's acts of discrimination, especially against its over 200

million Muslim population. The pessimists belong to not only the domestic but also the international community. They believe that the Indian Union, which had a unique bondage of secularism that mainly kept it in its present geographical shape, has been challenged from within. The Indian constitution does not allow any kind of discrimination on the basis of religion. Even at the time of Independence, Nehru proudly claimed that India was a secular state or, in simpler terms, 'home of all religions' while Pakistan was occasionally criticized for being religion-based.

Under the present domestic unrest in India, it appears that while India was being internationally criticized for its blatant human

rights violations in Indian-held Kashmir by an unprecedented abrogation of the Indian Kashmiris' identity, the BJP government, under the evil-minded Modi, decided to play with yet another fire - discriminating against the Muslim population by denying them Indian citizenship. Perhaps, Modi believed that the punishment of one or hundred murders remained the same so he tried to enforce the citizenship act simultaneously as it would equally bear political resistance, thereby avoiding global focus on Indian-held Kashmir.

An objective analysis must be made of the evolving situation, impact on the region and response options from Pakistan.



The controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill has been enacted as law by the Indian Parliament. It specifically denies citizenship to those Muslims who migrated to India from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, besides placing the onus on all the Muslims living in India to prove their identity as pure Indian citizens, failing which they would be detained in camps for the rest of their lives. The discriminating enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) segregates the Muslims from other non-Hindu minorities. The discrimination has naturally caused a tectonic effect on the Indian fibre of a secular societal identity, especially in the north-eastern Indian state of Assam where Modi has tried to implement the law in quick time.

The unprecedented act of doubting the native Muslims' identity has erupted violence-prone protests all around India. The situation is getting worse with every passing day and the over 200 million Indian Muslims are being viewed as aliens. The Muslim population, their heritage, educational institutions and values are being challenged and they are facing the wrath of extremist Hindus.

Ironically, despite daylight violations of human and basic fundamental rights, India's moderate domestic voices are either not being raised or are exercising extreme restraint so as not to be blamed as traitors who could face the

atrocities of Hindu extremism. Domestically, the Indian parliament swells with BJP's hardliner parliamentarians. There are a few from other moderate parties who are extremely careful for fear of being singled out, including Congress parliamentarians whose political bite had come crashing nose-down during the 2019 elections.

Besides the political high-handedness, the Indian military command is also taking the power-ride. The status of the retiring army chief has been raised to the newly-created position of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The world knows that he is the same Indian Army Chief who, at the cost of embarrassment to the Indian Army, made false claims of conducting a hot-pursuit operation in the wake of India's self-staged and unfortunate Pulwama incident, followed by the shameful Abhi Nandan episode which occurred in the backdrop of the falsely-claimed Balakot surgical strike inside Pakistan.

The two false claims were not supported by any proofs but were trumpeted by the current CDS shamelessly on the reckless and anti-Pakistan Indian media. This anti-Pakistan sentiment helped Modi win the elections. Interestingly, the newly appointed Indian Army Chief has also sensed Modi's modes of conveying his blessings and has already started issuing threatening statements against Pakistan's sovereignty and security. Thus, the

"If this is what's going to happen every time a citizen expresses their view, forget CAB, we should pass a bill and not call our country a democracy anymore! Beating up innocent human beings for speaking their mind? BARBARIC."



Parineeti Chopra,
actress



"I feel proud about it that people are coming out - be it on the streets

or wherever they are - they are raising their voice and expressing themselves as it is important. If we want to see change in life and society, it is important that a point of view be put forward."

Deepika Padukone,
actress

"As a parent and a citizen of India, I am deeply saddened by the unrest across various educational institutions of our country. I hope and pray for peace to return as soon as possible. Great teachers learn from their students. I salute the world's youngest democracy."



Hrithik Roshan,
actor



"I strongly condemn the violence that the police have shown in dealing with the students. In a democracy, citizens have the right to peacefully protest. I also condemn any kind of act of destruction of public property. Violence is not a solution for anything!"

Rajkumar Rao,
actor

"This has gone too far. Can't stay silent any longer. This government is clearly fascist and it makes me angry to see voices that can actually make a difference stay quiet."



Anurag Kashyap,
film director



"There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest. With the students and their democratic rights to protest! I condemn violence against protesting students."

Manoj Bajpayee,
actor

"Gandhi and Ambedkar held up with screams of Inquilab Zindabad. These students are fighting for us when we needed to fight for them."

Zoya Akhtar,
film director



Hindu hardliners in political, domestic and now in military realms, are in control of Indian decision-making which is an alarming dilemma.

Internationally also, there are hardly any reactions to the human rights violations on the pretext of the CAA being an Indian internal issue. A few statements by the western powers and the UN could best be graded as mild, diplomatic and a mere tick in the box. Most ironically, the Muslim countries have also remained shy of criticizing Indian behaviour, apart from a few, such as Turkey, Pakistan and Malaysia.

How the increasing anti-citizenship violence and protests in India could unfold is like writing on the wall.

India could stage a false terrorist act inside its territory on the pattern of the staged attack on the Indian Parliament and blame Pakistan. The same could then be used to start

an all-out or limited war to divert the attention of the protesting masses. Under the garb of hot borders, it would then easily be able to undertake massacre of the Muslims in India by organized Hindu mobs. On the military front, India could venture to call Pakistan's nuclear capability a bluff, if Pakistan exercises restraint and avoids spiraling up the conflict. The new Indian Army Chief has already indicated his adventurous intent by hinting on so-called Indian surgical and hot-pursuit operations.

The Indian leadership could physically push the frightened Muslim population in India towards Pakistan's international borders either by establishing detention camps close to Pakistan or through atrocities of extremist Hindu mobs. They could even remove the border fence and let the Muslims cross into Pakistani territory as refugees. Pakistani forces could even fire on the illegal immigrants or the government could accept them as refugees. If the latter happens, would Pakistan's already weak economy be able to absorb them into the population? As it is, Pakistan is still paying the price for hosting 4 million Afghan refugees.

The response options for Pakistan are

limited. First, keep the diplomatic offensive going. Second, make Pakistan diplomatic missions more pro-active, especially in Geneva and New York, duly supported by like-minded people at all forums pertaining to human rights and sovereignty. Third, Pakistan being one of the most powerful Muslim countries, should make

the world Muslim community realize about their responsibilities towards the well-being of their fellow Muslims around the world. Pakistan needs to use its tangible diplomatic influence to make the OIC more pro-active by forming some kind of a pressure group using political, diplomatic and commercial bargaining chips at various forums on quid-pro-quo basis. Fourth, domestically all political parties have to be on one page on this issue. The impending crises should be seen in advance and response strategies be devised at the national level. Political harmony is the need of the time. Only a 'complete national response' would bring dividends. When

nations become united from within, they are bound to rise and succeed.

In the end, the US in particular and the world in general, will be sooner or later blamed for their bias in favour of Indian hardline policies, in case a humanitarian or military crisis erupts in South Asia. The US has to act as per its stature of sole superpower by looking beyond its narrow commercial and strategic interests. Whether the US-led world community acts or not, it is certain that Modi's enacting of the Indian Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has shaken Indian foundations as a secular state. It seems to be the last nail which just needs a few more strikes of the hammer to be sunk into India's secular coffin. Only time will tell whether the country will survive as a totally Hindu India or fragment into many independent siblings. **S**

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TOWARDS EXTREMISM

India under Narendra Modi and his BJP is building a new national identity as a Hindu state. Gone are the days of Indian secularism. Considering its huge population and the pluralism it has always been known for, perhaps the country should avoid being driven into a corner.

BY IMRAN JAN

In the book *Sapiens*, the author Yuval Noah Hariri reminds us how we are quite new to the current form of lifestyle. While we may think and firmly believe that this is how we have been and how our life history was shaped by the events of a few hundred years, the reality is that we actually indulge in behaviours that hint that we were wired this way thousands of years ago.

The fact that we eat unstopably when we are hungry or when the food is our favourite is testament to the fact that we are wired to behave in a greedy way because our ancestors for thousands of years ate food when they could find it, not when it was time for lunch or dinner. And when they did find food, they ate wildly because of the uncertainty ahead. Now we may know when we would eat or may have the luxury of determining when to eat but when we do, we do not behave any differently than our ancestors thousands of years ago. In a nutshell, this lifestyle has been around for a very short time compared to the thousands

of years we lived as homo sapiens along with other forms of humans such as the Neanderthals.

India was never a perfect secular democracy but it had some semblance of it. However, the BJP-led hatred towards Muslims is only an open expression of the decades old underlying Indian sentiment. Today's anti-Muslimness is a noisy reflection of its former quiet version. BJP's staunch followers believe that all Indians are Hindus, which means that they believe that the non-Hindus, especially the Muslims in India, were forcefully converted to Islam and now it is time to forcefully make India Hindu again.

The new law enacted in India, called the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), is a testament to the extremist, bigoted and xenophobic mindset of the Indian Hindu. On the surface, the official narrative, which is not credible by any measure, says that the law is meant to give asylum to persecuted non-Muslim minorities in neighbouring Muslim majority countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Muslims from these nations are, however, not afforded similar asylum. The CAA allows only

Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Buddhists and Christians to stay in India and even become citizens, but not Muslims.

Completing and perfecting the sinister clause is something called the National Register of Citizens (NRC). It requires Indian residents to prove that they came to India on or before March 24, 1971. It is a herculean task to provide documentation from that time. Therefore, it has rendered about 2 million residents of Assam stateless. They face either deportation or imprisonment, for which concentration camps are being built by the Modi regime.

The NRC is designed to push the undocumented residents out or into jail but the CAA says that if you have lived in India for 6 years and you are a Hindu, Jain, Parsi, Christian, Sikh or Buddhist, just as long as you are not a Muslim, you can stay in India and even become a citizen. The CAA is an insurance policy to prevent the Hindus from being deported from India by the NRC. The de jure and de facto national slogan of India has now become: No Country for Muslims.

Nationalization and nationalism are two similar words but with profoundly



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different meanings, may be even opposite in certain contexts. Nationalization is a practice most common in communist states where the state takes over companies and businesses from private control and places them under governmental control, for the perceived benefit of all. This is called the left wing school of thought. Nationalism, on the other hand, is about self-determination in a given state. Recently, it has come to mean a mindset or ideology that favours a certain race or religion to be representing the national character of one's nation. India, Israel and Myanmar, among others, are the perfect examples of such a nationalistic ultra-rightwing thinking. In India, in particular, religious discrimination is now the

In India, in particular, religious discrimination is now the law of the land, called CAA.

law of the land, called CAA.

The rights that people enjoy in any country are not always because those rights are enshrined in the constitution. The existence of certain rights are ensured by the absence of laws violating those rights or rather by the inability of the governments to legislate in a way that would abridge those rights. For example, the American people have the right to free speech because the government is forbidden from making any law that restricts that freedom. They have the right to a free exercise of religion because the government is forbidden from making any law that would favour the establishment of a certain faith. Similarly, rights abuses also happen not because of the official policy directing it but rather the absence of safeguards preventing them.

It is not forbidden territory for the Indian government to enact laws that would violate religious equality and rights. Apart from the CAA, the Ayodhya verdict is another example where the state's highest judiciary clearly sided with the majority religion in the country by giving it the land of the Babri Masjid for the construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, thereby legalizing the mob demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. This drift of India from

being a somewhat left-wing secular country to a perfect right-wing extremist state is both bad and good.

Bad because the powder keg aspects of Modi's extremist agenda are enormous and unpredictable. The heat would reach the entire neighborhood including Pakistan. This is bad for the Muslims living in India. Good, because Modi is actually validating the Two-Nation theory. Pakistan was created because of the realization that the Muslims in India, who were in a minority, would be persecuted by the majority Hindus. Many in Pakistan like to indulge in counterfactuals, such as what if Muslims could have lived peacefully inside a united India and that why was there any need to create Pakistan? Such arguments are mostly made by those who think it might be considered a sign of intellect. The current situation in India, where anti-Muslim hatred has not even spared the actors' community, should suffice as an answer to their despicable question. Muslims in India spend their lives proving their patriotism. How miserable!

Shabana Azmi has said, "I wanted to buy a flat in Bombay and it was not given to me because I was a Muslim and I read the same about Saif (Ali Khan). Now, I mean, if Javed Akhtar and Shabana Azmi cannot get a flat in Bombay because they are Muslims, then what are we talking about?" Saif Ali Khan is another leading Indian celebrity. If this is the fate of super-rich Muslims, imagine what the poor Muslims face in India?

Jinnah was even given the title of "the ambassador of unity" for his fierce advocacy of Hindu-Muslim unity in a united India. But then Gandhi injected religion into the freedom struggle, inculcating such terms as 'Satya', 'Dharma' and so forth. The zeal that followed was something Jinnah realized he could not control. He came to one unmistakable conclusion: that there has to be a separate homeland for the Muslims of the region. Hence, the Two-Nation Theory – and it has been further validated. **S**

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"I am deeply disturbed about what the students went through and I strongly condemn this. All of us have the right to protest and exercise our fundamental freedom of expression. However, protests should also not turn violent and lead to the destruction of public property; this is the land of Gandhi. Ahimsa is and should be the tool to express. Have faith in democracy."

Ayushmann Khurrana,
actor

"I wonder if this is the start or the end. Whatever it is, this is surely writing new rules of the land and those who don't fit in can very well see the consequences. Irreversible damage has been done and I'm not talking about just life and property."

Tapsee Pannu,
actress



"My heart goes out to all the students back home in Delhi. In a democracy like ours, it's sad to see violence against citizens for voicing their opinion through peaceful protests. There should be no place for violence of any form and intent in our country. I strongly condemn this act."

Sidharth Malhotra,
actor

The United States and Pakistan will continue to work closely.

Ervin Massinga, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Pakistan Affairs at the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs in the US State Department, visited Pakistan in December 2019. Here he talks to *SouthAsia* magazine in an exclusive interview.

How important is Pakistan in the overall worldview of the United States?

The United States has always viewed a strong, prosperous, democratic Pakistan, at peace with itself and its neighbors, as critical to U.S. interests. We have had a multi-faceted relationship with Pakistan dating back to Pakistan's independence in 1947, encompassing cooperation on security, trade and investment, and close ties between our two peoples. Although challenges in our relationship remain, Prime Minister Khan's July 2019 visit to the White House demonstrated that the United States and Pakistan can work together on issues that are vital to U.S. and Pakistani national security and to peace, stability, and prosperity in South Asia.

How would you describe U.S.-Pakistan relations at present?

The Trump Administration sees the U.S.-Pakistan relationship as one with real potential. We have made clear that fulfilling that potential requires progress on our joint efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan and on Pakistan taking sustained and irreversible action against the militant groups that operate from its soil.

President Trump and Prime Minister Khan also agreed during the latter's visit that there

is much potential to expand our trade relationship beyond the current historic level of \$6.6 billion. We have already made strides toward this goal. In agriculture, U.S. soybean exports are helping grow Pakistan's livestock industry, U.S. cotton boosts

Pakistan's growing exports in the textile industry, and the first-ever commercial sea shipment of U.S. Holstein cows in November will help Pakistan increase its dairy production. The U.S. Department of Commerce is organizing 10 Pakistani buyer delegations to the United States and five regional trade shows in 2020 to build deeper relationships between U.S. and Pakistani firms. These programs will correspond to the priority sectors of



energy, infrastructure, agriculture, healthcare, and digital economy – areas where there is concrete, practical room to grow trade and address Pakistan’s domestic development priorities.

We also enjoy strong cooperation on integrating women into the economy through initiatives such as the U.S.-Pakistan Women’s Council. Through the Council, a public-private partnership, companies such as Citigroup, PepsiCo, S&P Global, and Proctor & Gamble make commitments to empower women and strengthen Pakistan’s economy through mentoring, hiring, supply-chain diversity initiatives, internships, and other activities. These companies know integrating women into the economy is not just good for society, it’s good for business.

There is also agreement between the leaderships of both our countries that our people and business communities would benefit greatly from improved relations, so our focus right now is on taking practical steps to increase cooperation on security and economic issues, as we continue to emphasize the need for Pakistan to contribute to a more peaceful South Asia.

What are your views on Pakistan’s economic reforms?

Pakistan has the potential to become an important player in the global economy, and we are encouraged by Prime Minister Khan’s economic reform agenda. We welcome his Digital Pakistan initiative to capitalize on Pakistan’s young, tech-savvy population. We have also seen policy reforms to make it easier to obtain construction permits, start a business, access electricity, and trade across borders – all of which contributed to Pakistan’s Ease of Doing Business ranking rising an impressive 28 slots and being identified as one of the top 10 reformers globally in 2019, according to the World Bank.

As I am sure your readers know, the IMF Executive Board approved a 39-month program for Pakistan that could provide as much as \$6 billion to the country if it adheres to the robust set of program commitments to bring about macroeconomic stability, lay the foundation for robust and sustainable growth, reduce debt, and improve financial integrity by meeting its action plan commitments set

Good governance, rule of law, transparency, and market-based policies are the keys to a thriving private sector and sustained growth.

out by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). We strongly encourage Pakistan to work with FATF and the international community to fully meet its action plan commitments and uphold its anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing obligations. That includes fulfilling its commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 1267 to freeze and prevent the raising and moving of funds belonging to or associated with UN designated terrorist groups. The United States is eager to expand economic ties with Pakistan, but ultimately Pakistan’s economic progress hinges on sustainable and irreversible implementation of its FATF action plan.

I would also like to reiterate a message that we deliver consistently around the world, and that is that good governance, rule of law, transparency, and market-based policies are the keys to a thriving private sector and sustained growth. We welcome any and all steps that harness the talent and potential of Pakistan’s population and build a more open business environment based on these principles.

How could Pakistan further improve its trade relations with the USA?

The United States is the largest export market for Pakistan’s goods and Americans were again on pace to be the top buyer of Pakistani products in 2019. U.S. exports to Pakistan also reached a record high of \$2.9 billion in 2018. Trade creates jobs in both our countries, so clearly we want to see it

continue to grow. To do that, we encourage Pakistan to continue with its economic reform efforts and look for ways to improve the climate for foreign businesses. For example, we welcome recent increases to Pakistan’s textile and apparel exports, as well as Pakistan’s steps to reduce tariffs on cotton, enabling U.S. cotton imports to Pakistan. We would like to see Pakistan develop more formalized, predictable regulations on agricultural imports. We think there is much room to improve the environment for Pakistani startups by building more modern, flexible capital markets to attract venture capitalists. We also encourage Pakistan to bring intellectual property rights protections and enforcement in line with international standards, which would send a clear signal to U.S. and international businesses that Pakistan is serious about improving its economic climate. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Global Innovation Policy Center reports a high correlation between improved intellectual property regimes and increases in foreign investment, innovation, and development.

We encourage Pakistan to take full advantage of its benefits under our Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which allows Pakistani companies to export about 3,500 eligible items to the United States duty-free, including many manufactured items and agricultural products. Examples this year range from jewellery to spices, exercise equipment, and dates. It’s also a little-known fact that Pakistan can enhance its GSP benefits by coproducing export items with Afghanistan, which has GSP access for an additional 1,500 products, from food to chemicals to kitchenware. GSP cooperation offers enormous opportunities to enhance cross-border commerce between the two countries.

In my recent speech at the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Karachi, I outlined these steps and others Pakistan could take to increase trade with the United States, as well as how the U.S. Government works in partnership with Pakistan on these efforts through agencies like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Commerce Department, in addition to our economic officers at our Embassy and Consulates.

But I also emphasized in this speech that the United States is not a planned economy. U.S. companies make decisions based on profit and risk calculations and market-based opportunities. So, while we are committed to expanding trade and investment with Pakistan, at the end of the day, U.S. companies will draw their own conclusions about whether Pakistan offers them a welcoming business climate and a good return on their investment.

In which socio-economic areas can the U.S. help Pakistan?

We have a strong legacy of assistance to Pakistan in a vast range of socio-economic areas. The U.S. Mission to Pakistan recently launched a new social media campaign, #Partners4Prosperity, which highlights the many ways the United States partners with Pakistan to support Pakistan's development. I hope your readers will visit the Mission's social media pages to learn more.

The most important characteristic of American assistance to Pakistan is that it is composed primarily of grant aid and not loans. It is focused not on profit, but on directly supporting Pakistan's economic development. This is not the case with some of Pakistan's other major partners. With U.S. assistance, Pakistan and its people are not required to repay the funds or programs made available to them. I will focus on energy and education in providing some examples of how our assistance can improve lives and livelihoods, but please know there are many other areas I could discuss, from health to judicial reform to countering narcotics.

The United States' work in the energy sector since 2009 has led to over 3,500 megawatts added to Pakistan's power supply, benefiting more than 42 million Pakistanis. It has also helped Pakistan transition away from burning expensive oil and towards natural gas and clean renewable energy, a key priority for Prime Minister Khan's Administration. For example, we made wind development possible by connecting Pakistan's first wind power corridor to the national grid. And the United States' work with the Pakistani government supported the planning, designing, and financing of Pakistan's first liquified natural gas import terminal, as well as several natural gas-fired

power plants, mobilizing about \$2.4 billion in investment with approximately \$1.3 billion in equipment sales for U.S. companies.

We have helped train 45,000 teachers and school administrators, reached 1.8 million public school learners, and provided 19,000 scholarships to Pakistanis to attend higher education in Pakistan. Over the decades, the United States has helped establish some of Pakistan's most prestigious educational institutions and centers, including Lahore University of Management Sciences, the Institute for Business Administration and – more recently – the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, and the Center for Advanced Studies in Energy at the National University of Science and Technology. The United States government brings over 800 Pakistanis a year to the U.S. on educational and cultural exchanges, making it the largest exchange program portfolio worldwide, including the world's largest Fulbright foreign student program. The U.S.-Pakistan exchange program alumni network exceeds 29,000 people, building people-to-people ties.

In addition to these efforts, the United States has just recently modernized our development finance capabilities with the creation of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC). The DFC more than doubles the U.S. Government's global development finance capacity to \$60 billion and equips us with new tools, such as the ability to make equity investments and fund feasibility studies. The DFC will advance private-sector-led development, resulting in projects that adhere to high standards and are financially viable over the long haul.

Our bilateral relationship is now maturing to one more focused on trade than aid, and we are continuing to target assistance in ways that help improve the overall business climate. We will focus on private-sector inclusion across fields, building capacity of Pakistani firms and ties between our two countries.

What can Pakistan especially learn from the U.S. in the health and education fields?

Our work in the health and education fields in Pakistan is informed by U.S. best practices and an understanding of the local Pakistani context. The United States has

invested more than \$600 million since 2002 to support the health sector by partnering with local stakeholders to address major health challenges such as the emergence of drug-resistant infectious disease outbreaks and coordination of disease surveillance and response. The United States has supported tuberculosis prevention, access to clean drinking water, and detection systems for cross-border infectious diseases. Achieving sustainable progress in Pakistan's health requires smart investments in strengthening the health system and its core functions, such as human resources, information, finance, medical commodities, and service delivery.

The United States has worked to promote dialogue between U.S. and Pakistani students and education professionals, particularly through the Fulbright program, which is marking its 70th anniversary this year. Over seven decades, Fulbright has supported more than 6,300 Pakistanis to study and conduct research in the United States in disciplines critical to Pakistan's long-term social and economic development, building a cadre of experts in education, health, civil society, finance, economics, technology, and business. Based on recent survey results, Pakistani Fulbright alumni have benefited greatly from their experience in the United States. They report that as faculty back home in Pakistani universities, they are collaborating with their American colleagues and replicating novel approaches to instruction and learning experiences such as internships, study abroad, research conferences, and mentoring.

In my discussions with my Pakistani counterparts, I made a point to emphasize that investing in education creates the foundation for sustainable economic growth. According to UNICEF, a shocking 22.8 million Pakistani children aged 5 to 16 are not in school. That's 44 percent of its school-aged population. I encourage Pakistan to invest in the talents and potential of its young population so that the next generation will be successful in the global economy.

What role does the US visualize for itself in the India-Pakistan dispute regarding Kashmir and the plight of Muslims in India, in general?

The United States views Kashmir as an issue for India and Pakistan to resolve and has emphasized the need for dialogue aimed at reducing tensions. We believe that Pakistan taking sustained and irreversible steps against militants and terrorists on its territory is a core component of any successful dialogue between India and Pakistan.

Since last August, we have publicly expressed our concerns with the detentions and communications restrictions in Jammu and Kashmir and called for the resumption of normal political life.

Respect for religious freedom is both a core American value and a fundamental human right. We emphasize the importance of religious freedom in our engagement with all countries, including India. We urge India to protect the rights of its religious minorities in keeping with India's Constitution and democratic values.

What are the common goals of the United States and Pakistan in terms of bringing peace and security to Afghanistan?

President Trump and Prime Minister Khan agree that a negotiated end to the Afghanistan conflict is a shared priority, an outcome that would avoid further violence and suffering for the Afghan people and open the path to a stronger U.S.-Pakistan relationship. We have appreciated Pakistani steps to advance the peace process to date, and we continue to encourage Pakistan to use its influence to promote security and stability in Afghanistan. Resolving the Afghan conflict peacefully presents significant opportunities for Pakistan and the broader region.

What are those fundamental areas in terms of social development that the United States believes Pakistan must address first?

We believe it is for Pakistan, not the United States, to determine where to focus its development efforts. But as with any country, we think sustainable development



We will focus on private-sector inclusion across fields, building capacity of Pakistani firms and ties between our two countries.

comes from long-term capacity building and investing in people and that includes not just investing in quality education but also protecting human rights and human dignity. I think my boss Ambassador Alice Wells said it best in a recent speech: "U.S. economic

and commercial engagement, security cooperation and development initiatives have advanced freedom, openness, and economic prosperity across South Asia, enabling nations like Pakistan to develop their own strengths."

How do you look forward to the United States and Pakistan continuing to work together on the humanitarian front?

The United States and Pakistan have and will continue to work closely together to address humanitarian issues. Over the past year, the United States has provided more than \$64 million to support humanitarian activities that improve water, sanitation, and hygiene; promote food security; and support shelter, protection, and education for millions of Pakistanis and Afghan refugees impacted by natural disasters or conflict. In recent decades, the United States has provided large-scale assistance after natural disasters like earthquakes and floods. The U.S. also works with communities in Pakistan to prepare for and reduce the impacts of humanitarian crises through disaster risk reduction programs. U.S. humanitarian assistance is provided through humanitarian partners, including the United Nations and NGOs. Unfortunately, many well-respected NGOs working on humanitarian issues have had their important work negatively impacted by an intrusive and opaque registration process. We hope to see the operating environment for these organizations improve and look forward to continued collaboration on humanitarian issues. [S](#)

About Ervin Massinga

Ervin Massinga is the US State Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Pakistan Affairs at the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA). He previously served as Director of the Office of Pakistan Affairs within SCA. Mr. Massinga is a career Foreign Service Officer since 1995. Prior to becoming Director of the Office of Pakistan Affairs, he served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Khartoum, Sudan from 2016-2018, and in Conakry, Guinea from 2013-2016. Other assignments include overseas tours in the Dominican Republic, Chile, Cote d'Ivoire and China, as well as domestic assignments in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Bureau of African Affairs, the Bureau of Energy and Economic Affairs, and at the Office of the United States Trade Representative. Mr. Massinga is a graduate of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service (1990) and the University of Washington's Graduate School of Public Affairs (1995). He is the recipient of several State Department Meritorious Honor Awards and a Superior Honor Award. He speaks Spanish, French, and Mandarin Chinese.

POWER-SECTOR RETHINK

Revisiting approaches applied for power sector reforms in developing countries during the 90s.

BY DR. SHAHID RAHIM

This latest report from the World Bank Group compiles the results and lessons learned from a monumental effort the Bank staff undertook recently to revisit the approaches that were applied for power sector reforms in many developing countries during the early 1990s, largely with its own technical and financial support. The report has a futuristic approach in the sense that, in drawing future policy implications of the lessons learned during this study, it takes due account of the new sustainable development policy goals as well as the disruptive market and technological forces that are now reshaping the power sectors around the world in major ways.

The study relies heavily on evidence-based data and information from the past 25 years from the Bank's own databases, as well as those from some other prominent agencies, including the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the US Energy Information Administration (US EIA). It also draws from in-depth case studies of 15 developing countries, that were specifically carried out for this study using 90 quantitative performance indicators and qualitative answers to 460 questions. The countries included Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, India, Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Senegal, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine and Vietnam.

A new paradigm for power sector reforms was put forth during the early 1990s (the report terms it as the "Washington Consensus")

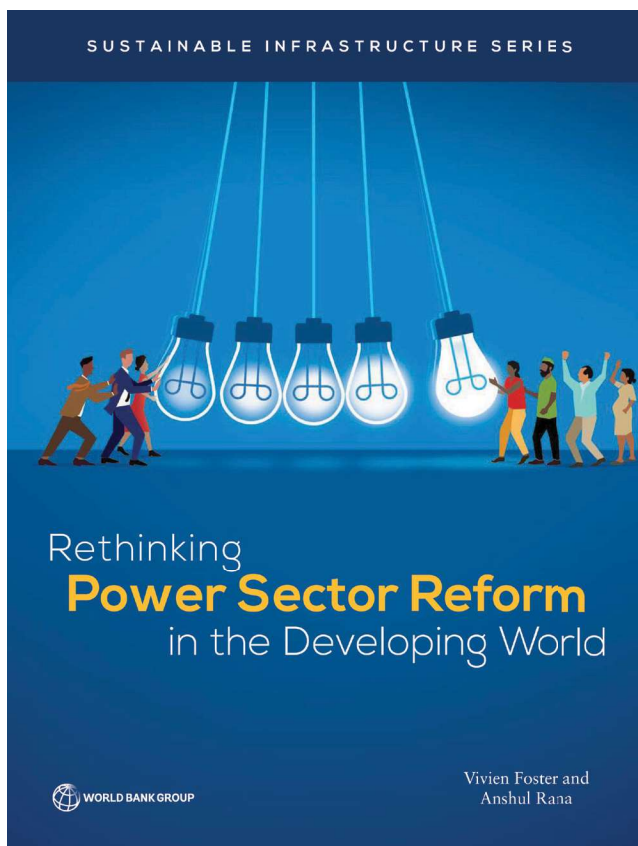
that emphasized the functional unbundling of power utilities in the developing world, by encouraging private sector participation and investment, promoting competition in contestable parts of the industry and creating independent regulators to guide, oversee and regulate the restructured industry. Twenty-five years down the road, the World Bank thought that it was high time to revisit the power sector landscape and see how effective and successful the approaches have been in delivering the intended results and also see if there was any need to fine-tune or improve these approaches in the wake of new policy demands and the market trends that have emerged since then and are reshaping the

electric supply and delivery business in many new ways.

According to the report's authors, only a handful of developing countries have fully implemented the "Washington Consensus" policies. Across the developing world, reforms were adopted rather selectively, resulting in a hybrid sort of model in which elements of market orientation coexist with continued state dominance of the power sector and its various functions and activities.

This exercise's main conclusions, as stated in the book, are that even though regulation has been widely adopted in most developing countries, practices often fell short of theory and cost recovery goals remained largely elusive. The private sector did finance a substantial portion of new generation capacities, but its contribution to network parts of the industry remained much more limited, with efficiency levels that barely matched with those of well-governed public utilities. Restructuring and liberalizing, though they have been beneficial in a few of the larger and comparatively better-off countries have also proved too complex for most of them to implement.

The key findings emerging out of the study are: (i) uptake of power sector reform did not follow the prescribed model; (ii) reforms gained traction only if they were compatible with the country's political and ideological settings; (iii) the private sector's contribution was restricted to the generation part only; (iv) wholesale power markets helped improve efficiency in a few countries



it is a very useful survey of what has succeeded in the past and what has not and how to do it better in the future.

only; (v) good corporate and institutional practices contributed to achieving better performance; (vi) private sector participation in T&D delivered good outcomes; (vii) regulatory frameworks were widely adopted, but fell short on effective implementation; (viii) cost recovery proved difficult to achieve and sustain; (ix) the outcomes were heavily influenced by the starting conditions; and (x) good outcomes were achieved by adopting a variety of institutional patterns, and not by any single rigid setup.

The book also draws a number of useful policy implications from the afore-stated lessons: (i) design of power sector reforms should be informed by the enabling conditions on ground; (ii) reforms must be grounded in the local realities; (iii) greater emphasis should be placed on building institutional capacity; (iv) generation should be procured through a transparent and competitive process; (v) unbundling shouldn't be the highest priority if governance and institutions are weak; (vi) wholesale competition is viable only for countries that can provide sound foundation; (vii) efforts should focus on strengthening corporate governance and management of the local utilities; (viii) regulatory framework must reflect the institutional context and accommodate emerging technological trends; (ix) privatization of distribution should be aimed only when enabling conditions are met; and (x) agenda of universal access and decarbonizing calls for additional reforms must be targeted explicitly at these objectives.

Based on the findings of the survey, assessment of their policy implications and putting both of them in the future perspective, the authors of the report make a 3-point prescription that they recommend should guide any future reforms in the power sector in a developing country.

First, for any future reform effort to succeed, it must be tailored to the local political, economic, and institutional realities of the country in which it is to be applied.

A more thoughtful and structured approach should be used to assess the compatibility of the intended reform model with the existing conditions, and tailoring it accordingly, to enhance its assimilation and effectiveness.

Second, unlike process-oriented reforms of the past, the developing countries should seek outcome-oriented reforms. The previous model focused primarily on institutional reforms, which was thought to lead to better overall sector performance. In the future, reform packages need to be designed by identifying the most critical outcomes desired by defining key obstacles that can prevent their achievement and taking requisite measures to clear them.

Third, instead of a rigid and inflexible model, as has been the case in the past, future efforts should be open and flexible to a combination of models that can effectively deliver the target objectives, recognizing that there can be more than one route to success.

Over all, it is a very useful survey of what has succeeded in the past and what has not and how to do it better in the future. This review barely scratches the surface of the treasure of highly-practical and useful information, findings and recommendations that the report contains. As such, it is a must-read for both the students and practitioners of electric utility organizations, regulations and managements. It will also be a useful desk-reference for regulators of developing countries as well as for the energy and power sector leaders and ministerial staff whom they can consult on need basis to avoid the pitfalls of poorly designed reform schemes and seek guidance on how to do it better in the future. **S**

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SELECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

NAB (National Accountability Bureau) and corruption cannot go together but NAB and Pakistan's economy can.



BY TAHA KEHAR

The PTI has pedalled an anti-corruption narrative for a long time. It condemns the fraudulent practices of politicians, successive governments and public-office holders for weakening Pakistan's democratic process. When it assumed public office in August 2018, the Imran Khan-led PTI gained the opportunity to eradicate corruption in all its forms and strengthen the culture of accountability.

Weeks after it took over the reins, the PTI introduced a series of initiatives as part of a massive course correction. The federal government constituted an Assets Recovery Unit to retrieve unlawful money stashed abroad by businessmen, government functionaries and politicians. The unit was presided over by the PM's Special Assistant on Accountability, Shahzad Akbar. Under his supervision, assets worth \$5.3 billion acquired through fake bank accounts and money laundering were traced. In a similar vein, the PTI has reshuffled the cabinet twice in the last two years to review the performance of its members and guarantee good governance.

Notwithstanding these strategies to

make the ruling elite answerable for their actions, the PTI-led administration has shown mixed results in facilitating across-the-board accountability. A quick glance at the political alignments of those being targeted in the ongoing accountability drive has led analysts to speculate that the process is being used to serve sectional interests. In July 2019, Awami National Party Central President Asfandiyar Wali Khan categorically told the media that the federal government is targeting opposition parties under the guise of accountability. In August 2019, Sindh Minister of Information and Archives, Saeed Ghani echoed these sentiments when he drew attention to the ruling party's "politically-driven" brand of accountability. Ghani also claimed that the PTI was allegedly using the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), which is the primary body responsible for the accountability process in the country, to settle personal scores with opposition leaders.

Over the last two years, NAB has been in overdrive and has consistently carried out inquiries on politicians. Though the accountability process set a new record in April 2019 by recovering Rs. 303 billion from corrupt elements, its operations have been scrutinized for its partisanship.

As per the National Accountability Ordinance, the Accountability Bureau enjoys considerable power to conduct inquiries and indict those involved in corrupt practices. In recent years, the NAB chairperson has made active use of his authority and has demanded the arrest of a large number of public office-holders and politicians. More often than not, allegations have been leveled against senior leaders of the PML-N and the PPP – the two major opposition parties – of receiving kickbacks, misusing authority and possessing assets beyond their declared incomes. In June 2019, Faryal Talpur was taken into custody in a case pertaining to money laundering through fake accounts. Similarly, Miftah Ismail, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Maryam Nawaz – who are associated with the PML-N – were sent to jail soon after they were kept in NAB custody. The circumstances of the PML-N leaders' arrests have raised questions over political victimization.

In an incisive article published in The News ('NAB: What Accountability?', October 5, 2019), former Sindh Governor Mohammad Zubair argued that all three leaders were apprehended at a time when preliminary investigation was being conducted on their cases. The former governor also stated that

Miftah Ismail, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Maryam Nawaz were duly cooperating with the Bureau and had already been placed on the Exit Control List. The grounds for their arrest therefore, appeared to be somewhat flimsy.

Throughout the article, Zubair illustrated that the Bureau had mishandled the cases of all three PML-N leaders as well as various PPP leaders. As per the article, the underlying intention of this political witch-hunt was to exert undue pressure on opposition politicians and induce them to disengage from the political realm.

The extent of partisanship appears to be somewhat deleterious. When the NAB chairperson was confronted about the selective nature of accountability, he expressed a keen interest in inspecting projects that fall within the purview of the PTI, such as the Peshawar BRT and the Malam Jabba land case. Through an initial inquiry authorized on the Billion Tree Tsunami Project in March 2019, NAB detected losses worth over Rs462 million to the exchequer.

If taken at face value, this development ought to be lauded as an attempt to make

the ruling party answerable for its actions and failures. However, recent amendments to the NAB law may negate the overall effect of this move. Under recent modifications to the Ordinance, the ambit of the Bureau's powers has been significantly reduced. Businessmen, bureaucrats and public office-holders will no longer be investigated by the country's primary accountability watchdog. To the contrary, NAB will only be able to investigate politicians. As a result, unelected politicians who may invariably belong to the opposition may be subjected to excessive scrutiny.

According to Prime Minister Imran Khan, the changes in the Ordinance will protect businessmen and ensure that they don't lose market confidence. Shahzad Akbar has defended the amendments to the NAB law as a means of safeguarding innocent people from unnecessary harassment. But these assurances have done little to assuage the concerns of opposition parties. In December 2019, Qaumi Watan Party Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao claimed that the PTI administration had curbed NAB's powers to serve its own interests.

Despite these reservations, the NAB Chairperson has upheld the efficacy of the accountability body and stated that officials are indiscriminately taking action against corrupt elements. The chairperson has also declared that the PTI government has not interfered in the anti-corruption watchdog's affairs.

Amid these mutually contradictory claims, we cannot forget that the culture of accountability and the overall democratic process is under attack. Now that the NAB ordinance has been modified, we must realise that the accountability process shouldn't be vested in a particular institution or organisation. If the process is being manipulated to orchestrate a political witch-hunt against the opposition, social and political forces must work towards demanding a form of across-the-board accountability that is not prisoner to victimization tactics. **S**

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ISLAMABAD

SUMMIT DEBACLE

Prime Minister Imran Khan should have kept his commitment to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan to attend the Kuala Lumpur Summit and not bowed to Saudi pressure.

BY ALI FAUDEL

The Kuala Lumpur Summit or KL Summit was held in Malaysia between December 18 and 21, 2019.

The idea for the Summit was conceived in New York in September 2019 when Imran Khan met the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a UN General Assembly meeting. Khan stated his profound desire to work with both leaders in order to address the problems of Muslims globally and improve



their worldwide image.

Even a few days before the Summit, the ruling PTI was presenting it as a major

diplomatic achievement for Imran Khan.

But, only two days before the event, on December 16, Prime Minister Imran Khan

decided not to attend the KL Summit, and informed Mahathir Mohamad of his decision through a phone call.

The Summit was held despite Imran Khan's absence. It was attended by more than 450 Muslim leaders, thinkers and intellectuals from 56 countries.

At the end of the Summit, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the Saudis had threatened Imran Khan with withdrawal of monetary assistance extended to Pakistan. It was also made clear to the PM that hundreds of thousands of Pakistani workers in the kingdom would be sent back home.

The situation was extremely embarrassing for Pakistan and, by some accounts, a diplomatic disaster. It is obvious that Khan had failed to take into account the fact that Pakistan's Arab allies would have serious reservations about the meeting. Khan may also have thought that the Summit would present an opportunity to discuss the deteriorating situation in Kashmir because the Organization of Islamic Countries has so far failed to offer even a modicum of diplomatic support to Pakistan on the Kashmir front.

Unfortunately, however, the Kuala Lumpur fiasco not only laid bare the lack of Pakistan's diplomatic acumen, but also exposed its inability to draft an independent foreign policy free of outside influence.

If the PM had shown some diplomatic sense, he would have refrained from making a commitment to attend the Summit in the first place. Someone in Pakistani diplomatic circles should have anticipated strong Arab opposition to the event and warned the PM not to become too enthusiastic.

Pulling out of the Summit at the last minute under a flimsy pretext was another blunder that only served to internationally expose Imran Khan's alleged penchant

for U-turns and his inability to chart an independent foreign policy. Pakistan needs huge financial support from the Arabs but Imran Khan also wants to further his own diplomatic agenda. He has now realized that both are not possible simultaneously.

Saudi Arabia may have been concerned that the KL Summit would pave the way for the formation of a new Muslim body for replacing the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), effectively challenging their uncontested leadership of the Muslim world.

If the Saudis told Imran Khan not to attend the Summit, he should have sent a delegation instead. But he chose not to do it.

Imran Khan's last minute withdrawal from the Summit drew widespread criticism from the attendees. Pakistan immediately denied that Saudi Arabia has pressured it into skipping the KL Summit, but the damage to the country's reputation had already been done.

Imran Khan made a commitment in haste, without thinking about its possible consequences. When the Saudis took him to account, he reeled under pressure.

The incumbent PTI government is very keen to portray itself as a neutral state in the Saudi-Iranian rivalry. This is becoming more difficult now owing to the huge Saudi financial leverage over Islamabad. Given the intensity of the highly complicated Middle East politics, Saudi Arabia cannot afford to lose Pakistan to either Turkey or Iran – its two main rivals in the region.

Pakistan has always tried to bridge the gap between Iran and its Arab adversaries. However, the current situation in the Middle East has rendered this task next to impossible. Iran's involvement in Syria is unacceptable to its Arab neighbours. The conflict has claimed hundreds of thousands of civilian lives and displaced

millions.

The Iran nuclear deal penned in July 2015, was another blow to the Arabs. The worst thing about this deal was that it was engineered behind the backs of America's Arab allies. They believed that the West was planning to patch up with Iran, and use it as a counterweight against regional Arab powers.

Iran's footprints are visible in many Arab countries. Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iraq are all under the direct or indirect influence of Iran. The Arabs are certain that Iran is trying to create its hegemony in the region. Its final goal is to become the leader of the entire Muslim nation – a coveted position currently held by Saudi Arabia.

In this context, Riyadh's fears that the KL Summit will enhance Iran's prestige, and further its influence among other Muslim nations, was not completely unfounded. Saudis also suspected that Turkey and Malaysia, in connivance with their archrival Iran, were planning to undermine its position, and create a parallel Muslim bloc as a counterweight to the Saudi-dominated OIC. They perceived the KL Summit as an existential threat.

While giving in to the Saudi demands, Pakistani diplomats seem to have missed the point that Pakistan also holds immense sway over Saudis. It has a significant military presence in the region. Pakistan's former army chief is leading the Islamic military alliance headed by Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia needs the support of Pakistan – a declared nuclear power, and a regional powerhouse. Pakistan can use its military prowess as a leverage over its Arab allies. It can opt to increase military ties with Qatar – an Arab outcast - in order to increase its regional martial clout.

The Saudis made a calculation that Imran Khan is financially vulnerable. They decided to act upon it, and pressured him to miss out on an important event. Unfortunately, Imran Khan failed to take a realistic stock of his own strengths. The result was a diplomatic debacle that would haunt the country for years to come. **S**

The writer is a free-lance contributor.

Pakistan has always tried to bridge the gap between Iran and its Arab adversaries.

More of the Same

Now India has a Chief of Defence Staff and it's the same army general who was always prominent with his askew hat. He now represents all the three armed services – and is the one who helped Modi make India the bully of the neighbourhood.

BY VICE ADMIRAL (R) TAJ M KHATTAK

The idea of creating the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) in India was one of the recommendations made by the Kargil Review Committee (KRC) headed by eminent strategic thinker K Subrahmanyam in 1999, and later endorsed by a Group of Ministers (GoM) led by L K Advani. It was clearly an acknowledgment that India lacked a single agency which could link all elements of the nation-state with military strategy and military strategy with operational art.

During the next two years, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (CISC) to Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee was appointed in India and Headquarter Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) was established by amalgamating Director General Defence Planning Staff (DG DPS) and Joint Secretary Military Wing, (JS (Mil) in IDS. In addition,

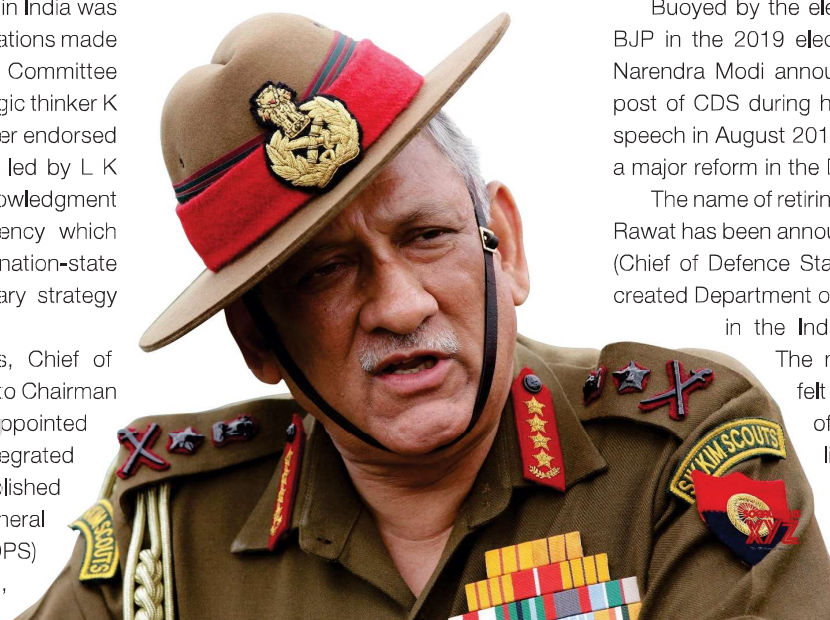
the Andaman and Nicobar Commands and Strategic Forces Commands were raised but that is as far as KRC recommendations

progressed. No further progress could take place as successive governments wanted a consensus amongst all political parties.

Buoyed by the electoral majority of the BJP in the 2019 elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced creation of the post of CDS during his Independence Day speech in August 2019 and it was hailed as a major reform in the Defence Department.

The name of retiring Indian General Bipin Rawat has been announced as the first CDS (Chief of Defence Staff) to head the newly created Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in the Indian Defence Ministry.

The need for a CDS was felt in India on the lines of other major powers like the US and UK to provide strategic direction and formulate strategic art along with other components of



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Command of all Indian military services should be directly under the CDS and should be based at the Joint Operations Centre.
- In the JOC, there should be a Standing Committee constituting Component Commanders of the three services of Lt. Gen. or equivalent rank. They would be involved in formulating joint operational art from the integrated military strategy evolved by the CDS in consultation with the three service chiefs.
- The CDS should shed his service uniform after being promoted to the five star appointment.
- The JOC be electronically linked with all the operational commands of the three services. In addition, five Sector Commands be formed.

HQ NC/WC/SWC be linked with HQ WAC/CAC to form Western Sector, HQ SC with HQ SWAC/SAC/CAC and HQ WNC/SNC/ENC to form Southern Sector and HQ EC with HQ EAC and HQ ENC to form the Eastern Sector besides HQ ANC. A Central Sector also be formed to tackle

internal asymmetric threats.

- The transformation towards a unified structure should take place in a phased manner.

The Kargil War identified certain inadequacies in the functioning of the Higher Defence Organisation. Subsequently, the Kargil Review Committee enumerated the need for a thorough review of the national security system and recommended instituting the post of CDS. After the report of the Group of Ministers was submitted, substantial reforms did take place in the armed forces. The Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (CISC) to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee was appointed on 01 Oct 2001 and HQ Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) was created by a Government of India letter dated 23 Nov 2001. The staffs of the erstwhile DG DPS and JS (Mil) were merged with HQ IDS and it started functioning with effect from 01 Feb 2002.

However, in Nov 2005, the present Defence Minister, indicated in the Rajya Sabha that a decision regarding the appointment of CDS could only be taken after holding wider consultations with various political parties.

national power. He is also expected to bring synergy to the three services at the highest echelon and optimize resource utilization.

The office of CDS will replace the existing organizational arrangement of what is known as Cross Service Co-operation (CoSC), where the senior-most service chief officiates as its Chairman on rotation basis. Experience has shown that the Chairman CoSC neither had the time nor the institutional authority to efficiently execute his assigned tasks. The model proved to be weak, as each service was working in its own domain and any joint efforts were slow, duplicating and resulting

in wastage of resources, which created delays in decision-making.

The CDS will now be the permanent Chairman of CoSC, in addition to being Secretary of the DMA (Department of Military Affairs) in the Ministry of Defence. There are already four other secretaries in the Ministry of Defence, so Rawat's placement there will give him an opportunity to key in horizontally and vertically with important government functionaries on a regular basis.

In this innovative structure of the CDS donning two hats, he will be the principal advisor to the Defence Minister on all tri-services matters. Functioning both as

a Secretary in the Ministry of Defence and CDS, he will need to do some deft maneuvering for evolving a stable hierarchy and equivalence in relation to the civilian bureaucracy and will need a very high level of co-operation amongst all stakeholders. The three service chiefs of the army, navy and air force will, however, continue to advise the minister on matters exclusively concerning their respective services. Like the service chiefs, the CDS will also be a member of the Defence Acquisition Council and Defence Planning Committee.

The appointment will be for a period of three years or till attaining the age of 65 years,

REQUIREMENT OF CDS AND UNIFIED STRUCTURES

One of the major lessons of the 1965 War and the Kargil War was inadequate joint planning. The reasons cited for this inadequacy were lack of joint structures necessary for operational planning and lack of unity of command in operational and intelligence activities at the national level. There is no doubt that the three services are proficient in the planning and conduct of operational art in their own individual spheres and have acquitted themselves exceptionally well in UN Peacekeeping Operations and exercises with the USA, Russia, UK, China and Singapore. However, when it comes to formulation of strategic art and the conduct of joint operational art, there are serious inadequacies. There is no single agency that links all elements of the nation-state with military strategy and military strategy with operational art.

The management of national security involves a synergism of varied functions that range from evolving a security philosophy and a security strategy to evolving and implementing military strategies, designing and conducting campaigns and ultimately executing combat operations by identified forces. The application of military power needs to be in conformity with the overall national security objectives and in support of the desired end state, formulated for specific operations.

Without having a clear end state for conflict termination, campaign planning would meander through various stages of force application before achieving success or failure by hit and trial methods. However, this would not be an efficient way of applying military power. The stated objectives need to be achieved efficiently with optimal application of appropriate force. It may be possible that the end state could be achieved by the employment of only a single service but at the same time, it may need two or more services or an integrated application of the military forces along with all elements of

national power. Most contingencies would require a focused approach by all elements of the state. Thus, there is a need to institute structures that evolve an integrated approach.

The application of force should not be based on individual aspirations of only one service. The strategic decision, the determination of clear military and political end state and the planning for strategic and joint operational art, needs an interface between the political establishment, the bureaucracy and the armed forces. The Chairman, COSC does not have the institutional backing or the time to conduct this vital function as he wears two hats, one as Chairman, COSC and the other as the Chief of his own service. This function can only be carried out by a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) who is not inhibited by his own service tasks or loyalties and is assisted by an integrated operational institutionalised structure.

In the present environment, the individual services carry out operational planning at the Command HQ level. The plans rather than being joint, are based on single service appreciations to achieve the stated objectives and overlaying the application of the other service to suit their own requirements. Hence the plans are based more on creating a feeling of "mutual co-operation" to achieve strategic objectives rather than being based on a jointly appreciated integrated course of action. It is for this reason that more often than not the plans are focused mainly towards gaining real estate and territorial accretions quickly, as leverage tools rather than to focus on achieving strategic objectives in the most optimal manner, even if it implies employing out-of-the-box techniques.

- Air Chief Marshal SP Tyagi, PVSM, AVSM, VM, Theatre Command
- Group Captain AS Bahal, VM

These are the authors' personal views and not those of the College of Air Warfare or of the Indian Air Force.

whichever is earlier. Should the government so desire, he can be given further extension in service. To fulfill legal requirements, the Army Act has been amended to create the post. Does this mean that the CDS will always be from the army? He could be from the other two services as well in due course after the respective service regulations are amended but this is not clear at present.


There is a lot of work cut out for General Rawat as the first CDS of India. To begin with, his secretariat would need to establish a Joint Operations Centre at the IDS headquarters which encompasses the Indian Army, Navy Air Force, the National Command Authority, Aerospace Command, Andaman & Nicobar Command, and Strategic Forces Command, to provide standing capability to plan and conduct campaigns and operations as well as tackle emergent situations without having a permanent force deployed under its command. The CDS would also want to have various operational commands of the three services electronically linked and sector-wise for assimilation and evaluation of threats from a wider spectrum. These are basic requirements for jointly executing the operational art and promote development of an integrated environment.

In his previous appointment as Chief of the Indian Army, General Bipin Rawat often talked of preparedness for a 'two and a half front war', meaning China, Pakistan and the internal security threats. In the on-going nationwide protests against the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA), General Rawat publically threw his weight in favour of Prime Minister Modi's actions, thus attracting criticism that for the first time in the history of the country, he had politicized the army.

In his new job, he now has to seriously lay down a national security strategy taking into account the entire threat spectrum. He also has to determine whether the entire country is to be considered as one India Strategic Theatre or divided into more than one. Each has its own implications.

India has a million-strong army and an expanding navy and air force. But it clearly lacks a single agency which could link all elements of the nation-state with military strategy and military strategy with operational art. The foundation of that single agency has now been laid with creation of the post of CDS and appointment of General Bipin Rawat. This will dampen individual service aspirations to apply force singly – a phenomenon also

applicable to Pakistan. But for the idea to succeed, it has to be understood that joint war fighting is not about fighting a war with equal opportunity but about recognizing the unique competencies and capabilities of each arm and service. If not, then the smaller services in a country tend to lament about being undervalued in overall joint doctrines and war plans.

This is where India's first CDS will face his main challenge and his success will depend on whether or not and how well or otherwise, he is able to carry along the other three service chiefs. To be successful, there has to be a change of mindset in the thinking of the three services which must have hardened after decades of working independently. There were already some concerns in the three services about the difficult function of attending to the specific needs and understanding the peculiar dynamics of individual services and articulate it seamlessly in the overall Defence strategy of India. 

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DHAKA 

The Quagmire

Those who will not reason are bigots, those who cannot are fools and those who dare not are slaves.

- Lord Byron

BY SABRIA CHOWDHURY BALLAND

Recent political developments in India have opened a Pandora's Box. The developments are overtly targeting the country's largest minority, the Muslims. With an increase in hate crimes, particularly against the Muslims in recent years, there is fear that India, long known as the world's largest democracy, has become dangerously intolerant and rather undemocratic, under the Bharatya Janata Party (BJP).

For the Awami League government in Bangladesh, which shares a border with India on three sides, India's National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) were regarded as "internal matters", or so it was declared to the people of Bangladesh. However, this nonchalant stance has become a denial that is too immense to ignore by the Awami League.

In October 2019, the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned from India after having signed seven bilateral treaties

with her counterpart, Narendra Modi, an act which proved to the vast majority of disappointed and infuriated Bangladeshis that they could not expect their leadership to look out for the interests of the country. Each treaty was seen as benefiting Bangladesh's larger neighbour against its own interests and well being. Commenting on Facebook regarding this issue even resulted in the murder of engineering student Abrar Fahad by the Chattra League, the student wing of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League. If there was ever any doubt that

Bangladesh had lost its sovereignty due to the pro-Indian priorities of its ruling party, these treaties sealed the conviction in the minds of the Bangladeshis that sovereignty and independence were merely words in their Constitution.

At a time when anti-India sentiments are profoundly present amongst Bangladeshis, India has assured Bangladesh that the NRC and CAA will not affect it. However, there are genuine concerns and apprehensions in Bangladesh that the NRC and CAA might unleash an exodus of Bengali-speaking people from Assam and Muslims attempting to escape persecution in India. After taking in nearly one million Rohingya refugees fleeing persecution in Myanmar, Bangladesh cannot take in any more people. An influx of refugees from India would be just the tip of the iceberg.

Many analysts feel, and rightfully so, that the denial of Indian citizenship to tens of thousands of Muslims from Assam and most certainly elsewhere in India will trigger strong reactions from Islamist parties in Bangladesh, which would present serious challenges to the secular Awami League. Although Sheikh Hasina has a proven track record of complete intolerance to any form of dissent and freedom of speech and expression, an uprising of Islamist parties would most certainly cause friction in the Awami League's relationship with the Hindu right wing BJP, a predicament that the Bangladeshi PM tries at all costs to avoid.

The BJP in India has utilized the predictable strategy of claiming that Hindus in Bangladesh are persecuted and tortured, resulting in a mass anti-Bangladesh smear campaign on social media, a tit for tat strategy which has rubbed Bangladesh the wrong way. It sees these accusations are baseless and unwarranted and although the Awami League attempts at all costs to bend over backwards to cater to India's desires, these recent exchanges and concerns based on the CAA and

Sheikh Hasina has a proven track record of complete intolerance to any form of dissent and freedom of speech.



NRC are ones that even the leadership in Bangladesh cannot digest. India's attempts to equate Bangladesh to fundamentally theocratic Muslim nations, such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, is something that is unacceptable to Bangladeshis, where religious and racial harmony have always been a priority, unlike in many of its neighbouring countries.

This is not to say that there has never been any religious persecution in Bangladesh. However, whenever isolated incidents have occurred, the secular government has taken action promptly.

The Bangladeshi government has declared that it will allow people to enter from India only if it can be proven that they are citizens of Bangladesh.

This is a nebulous condition which most people realize is futile. Many of the Muslim immigrants in India who are being told they do not qualify for citizenship (whereas Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains do) probably do not have any documents to prove citizenship in either country. Therefore, on what basis does

Bangladesh expect India to present proof of their Bangladeshi nationality apart from religion? This is a clear manifestation of xenophobia that under any other government in Bangladesh would perhaps not be entertained, in the least, as the country cannot be used as a dumping ground for bigoted, abominable regimes such as those in Myanmar and India.

It is a veritable pity that India's claim of being known as "the world's largest democracy" has been infected by the Modi regime, giving rise to the fundamental question: what is the future of Muslims in India? Furthermore, how will the xenophobic, ant-Islamic reign of terror in India affect Bangladesh?

The answers to these questions and more have yet to unfold. However, to paraphrase the quote by Lord Byron, those who dare not stand up against bigotry succumb to slavery. The freedom fighters of the Bangladesh Liberation War most certainly did not fight to defend a future of slavery. Or did they? **S**

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THE FLOATING WREATH

It has been strongly alleged that foreign influence played a role in turning the tide in the Maldives presidential elections in 2018.

BY S.G. JILANEE

Maladweep (wreath of islands) floating in the Indian Ocean, better known as Maldives, held its presidential elections in 2018. However, controversy was sparked by the Speaker of the Parliament, Mohamed Nasheed's public statement recently, acknowledging foreign interference in the elections. His statement was received with alarm all over the country, because it is a first to happen in Maldivian politics. Nasheed's remarks, on December, 14, 2019, are proof the elections have not been free and fair, and did not reflect the will of the Maldivian people. In fact, Nasheed, who is also the leader of the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), hinted at possible efforts by the opposition to collude with foreign governments to jeopardize the sovereignty of the country and this is deeply agitating the minds of the political leaders who called for immediate investigation.

Nasheed said that at the time "no one thought that we would win the 2018 elections" and that the opposition had "no chance." He also explicitly made it clear that the then opposition "made unreasonable demands" from the government of India to "create a small window" prior to the elections, and that "Indian officials and Indian diplomats were at it." He praised the government of India, saying that "Indian diplomats were very clever" and that "they did a whole sort of other things which brought us the elections."

However, in an attempt at damage control, Nasheed later refuted reports that he attributed the main ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP)'s electoral win in the 2018 presidential election to Indian influence.

Nasheed released a tweet clarifying his statements. In the tweet, he said his re-

marks were being misinterpreted and India had never meddled in the Maldivian elections. Nasheed was referring to India's influence in a positive sense, such as encouragement to conduct a free and fair presidential election, and that the pressure it presented helped ensure a free and fair vote. But, that did not take away the fact of influence, even though benign.

The Maldives faced international pressure ahead of the 2018 presidential election when the then president Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom jailed all opposition leaders and obstructed other opposition leaders from returning to Maldives after they had left the country. At the time, several countries had expressed their concern whether a free and fair election could be conducted in the



Mohamed Nasheed

Abdulla Yameen

Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

Maldives.

After the opposition coalition won the election, President Yameen first accepted the results of the election, and stated that he respected the peoples' decision. However, he later alleged electoral fraud, and refused to accept the outcome of the election. He raised several serious allegations against the members of the Elections Commission. In fact, President Yameen and senior members of the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) still allege that the 2018 election was 'stolen' from them.

China and India have long been vying for influence in the island nation with China having taken the lead in the last four years. However, the ousting of a pro-China autocratic President and the election of a moderate and democratic candidate has given India a fair advantage to improve its ties with the Maldives.

India, which established its diplomatic mission in the Maldives four decades ago, had a harmonious relationship with the country until the politically motivated expulsion of former President Mohamed Nasheed in 2012. With Yameen's coming to power in 2013, their relationship deteriorated considerably, since China emerged as an extensive presence in the Maldivian infrastructure, trade and energy sectors since 2012.

Yameen has been widely accused of undermining the country's democratic process by jailing critics, political rivals and opposi-



It would be better if Maldivian political leaders avoided all foreign influence in their domestic affairs.

tion lawmakers. In February 2019, he imposed a state of emergency in the country, defying a Supreme Court ruling, which nullified criminal proceedings against the opposition leader Mohammed Nasheed and ordered the release of a group of opposition lawmakers from jail. India publicly condemned this act and urged the government to restore the credibility of the electoral and political process.

The unexpected ousting of Yameen is a potential diplomatic win for India. Within hours of the election results, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the new president, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. And Solih publicly announced that India is Maldives' 'closest ally'. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs also issued a statement, saying, "This election marks not only the triumph of democratic forces in the Maldives, but also reflects the firm commitment to the values of democracy and the rule of law." At the same time, former President Nasheed, an ally of the opposition, who will act as an essential guiding figure for the new government, has reportedly called for an audit of all the infrastructure projects contracted by China, possibly to renegotiate deals.

After the Speaker of the Parliament acknowledged India's influence in the last presidential elections in the Maldives, it was evident that this was a settled issue and influence was exercised. Whether it was benign, as Nasheed says, or otherwise, is a moot point.

Even though foreign influence was not of a magnitude as to vitiate the elections, it would be better if Maldivian political leaders avoided all foreign influence in their domestic affairs. ■

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COLOMBO



After the Triumph

If Sri Lanka can achieve a harmonious peace, all its communities can get together to carve a way forward.

BY AMJAD ALI SIYAL

Sri Lanka has a bitter history of civil war and political turmoil. The civil war in the country, which continued for about 25 years, was crushed in 2009 during the tenure of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa. This gave new hope to the citizens of the island nation that they would live in peace after the defeat of the Tamil Tigers. However, political turmoil continued, the media was muzzled, and human rights abused. Although the memories of the Easter bombings were fresh, the 2019 presidential elections were peaceful. They catapulted Gotabaya Rajapaksa to the position of President of Sri Lanka. It has been hoped that the new president will respect human rights and bring peace and prosperity to the chaotic Sri Lanka.

The Rajapaksas are a prominent political family in Sri Lanka. Mahinda has also served as the President from 2005 to 2015. His brother Basil was advisor to President Mahinda as well as a minister, while the other brother Gotabaya served as the defence minister during that tenure. It was during Mahinda's tenure in 2009 when the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) were defeated and war



came to an end with the death of Velupillai Prabhakaran. Gotabaya Rajapaksa as the defence minister played an important role in the defeat of the Tamil Tigers. On the other side, he is blamed for gross human rights violations, corruption and media muzzling during the civil war.

Former President Maithripala Sirisena served as minister under the presidency of Mahinda Rajapaksa. However, he defected from Mahinda and joined forces with Ranil Wickramasinghe. That coalition defeated Rajapaksa in the 2015 election. President Sirisena appointed Ranil Wickremasinghe as his Prime Minister. Ironically, due to disagreements on administrative and economic issues, a tug-of-war ensued between them. Consequently, President Sirisena sacked Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe and appointed former President Mahinda as the PM. Ranil Wickremasinghe refused to back down and termed his sacking as unconstitutional. The situation led to a constitutional crisis. The Supreme Court reinstated Ranil Wickremasinghe as PM in December 2018.

When the Easter bombings occurred on April 21, 2019 in which more than 250 people were killed and 1,000 plus were injured, it created an atmosphere of insecurity amongst the Sri Lankans. Against that backdrop, after six days of bombings on April 27, Gotabaya Rajapaksa announced he would run for the presidential election. For that purpose, he also renounced his US citizenship. Gotabaya Rajapaksa promised economic prosperity which requires stability and enhanced security as prerequisites. The slogan to boost security in the backdrop of the Easter bombings appealed to the Sri Lankans who voted for him. His opponent Sajith Premadasa, adhering to the democratic norm, accepted defeat and congratulated Gotabaya on being elected as the 7th President of Sri Lanka. Gotabaya appointed his brother, former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, as the prime minister.

Keeping in view his credentials as the defence minister and the aggressive military campaign which helped in defeating the Tamil Tigers, the Sinhalese Buddhists celebrated the election victory of Gotabaya,



believing that he would tackle the security challenges effectively in a similar way as he played a vital role in defeating the Tamil Tigers back in 2009. On the contrary, rights organisations, media persons and minority Tamils and Muslims were worried that he may initiate a ruthless campaign against them.

As he was accused of violations of human rights during the civil war, it is now being feared that he may tread the same path in the name of security and, in particular, minority groups such as the Muslims and Tamils may be victimised. The Muslim minority community is already feeling insecure owing to the involvement of Islamists in the Easter bombings. There have also been incidents in many areas whereby the Sinhalese majority-held Muslim countrymen responsible for these violent attacks and violent clashes were also reported. Thus, the victory of Gotabaya has multiplied the anxiety of the Muslim minorities as well as the Tamils.

In the past, Gotabaya was accused of threatening media persons and many killings of journalists were attributed to him. He forced media to toe the government's line or face the music. Many journalists of high repute were killed and kidnapped for reporting abuses of human rights in the Sri Lankan civil war. His ascendance to power is translated as a result of placing more curbs on media freedom.

On the foreign policy front, Gotabaya seems to be very pragmatic. During the

Mahinda Presidency, the government did not enjoy friendly ties with India. Nevertheless, he seems to be inclined towards India. Soon after taking over the reins of power, he paid his first overseas visit to India, which is a reflection of the importance he attaches to ties with India. Moreover, he has also been balancing ties with China and with the western countries.

Now that Gotabaya has been elected as the President, it is in the interest of Sri Lanka as well as the dominant Rajapaksa family, to restore security. However, Gotabaya must not abuse human rights, stifle media or suppress the Muslim and Tamil minorities. He should dispel the impression that he will resort to arbitrary action against any community or organisation and should let the institutions to organically evolve and ensure the rule of law.

The island state, which has long-suffered instability, needs peace, prosperity, strong institutions and respect for human rights. It should treat all its citizens equally, whether they are Sinhalese or others. If Gotabaya can sincerely deliver on his promises while respecting the rule of law and democratic traditions, he may also secure the next term which is due in 2024. **S**

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DETAILING THE DYSFUNCTION

U.S. officials are said to have misled the public about the Afghanistan War for almost two decades. Rosy but false pronouncements were made and unmistakable evidence hidden.

BY MAJOR GENERAL INAM UL HAQUE (RETIRED)

Yielding to immense US pressure and thanks to the efforts by Pakistan, the Taliban agreed to a 10-day ceasefire with the US after the peace agreement was signed. This would subsequently lead to reduction in violence with Afghan forces and an intra-Afghan dialogue under the auspices of Germany.

The Taliban and US negotiators met on 15 and 16 January in Doha. Later Sohail Shaheen, Taliban spokesman while speaking to the Pakistani paper Dawn on 18 January, described the talks as “useful” hinting at their continuation. He stated the Taliban were “optimistic” about a deal

with Washington by end January, 2020. The negotiations were expected to outline an agreement that would see US troop withdrawal in return for security guarantees by Taliban, besides agreements on other issues. The ceasefire had the US pre-condition of re-starting the talks that were started in Doha and then paused in December last year, after a Taliban attack near the Bagram military base. The Taliban had been consistently refusing to accept the US demand to announce a ceasefire “during the peace talks” and remained stuck to their position to do so “after” the agreement was signed. The Taliban are, reportedly, still not calling it a ceasefire but just an “arrangement”, given the negative effect it has on unity of the Movement, as

repeatedly argued in these pages.

The pause in the peace process had mixed results. The Afghan government that previously felt sidelined in a peace process, considered it “too rushed” till President Trump scuttled it last September. It is now pushing for an extensive ceasefire. As per Afghanistan NSA’s, Hamdullah Mohib, Afghan leaders considered a ceasefire as the Taliban’s seriousness for peace, and conceded that the Taliban “can deliver on what they sign.” The Taliban used the interruption to bridge divides among their own rank and file. Reportedly, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban deputy leading the talks, traveled to Pakistan and met around 300 senior and midlevel commanders to take them onboard.



During this time; Dai'sh, was able to entrench in Kunar, Laghman and Nangarhar provinces in eastern Afghanistan, due to Salafi influences in these provinces and their broad compatibility with Dai'sh's Salafist ideology. Support from the local population bolstered by resources - mainly oil revenues from Iraq - started attacking government forces, foreign forces and the Taliban. The group used women as battle shields, forcibly converted captured men and women to their ideology and required women to marry their fighters, either voluntarily or out of ignorance. This caused a societal backlash and the Taliban offensive with overwhelming local support, evicted the group that the US military was unable or unwilling to do.

In another development, on 9 Dec 2019, Washington Post published "Afghanistan Papers", styled after the Vietnam era "Pentagon Papers." These were based on SIGAR (US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction) interviews with some 400 insider US, UN and Afghan officials, detailing the causes of US failures in Afghanistan. Consequently, what was known for a long time was publically acknowledged by US, that the US political and military leadership had been lying to the general public about the actual situation of war in Afghanistan.

Gen Douglas Lute - a three star Army General - handling the Afghan war under Bush and Obama Administrations, is quoted as saying, "We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan - we didn't know what we were doing.... We didn't have the foggiest notion of what we were undertaking." The price for ignorance was steep; over 157,000 deaths including 43,074 Afghan civilians and 64,124 Afghan security forces... and still counting. US casualties, included over 2,300 dead and around 20,589 wounded, besides the terrible after-effects like mental distress, PTSD and suicides, etc. SIGAR estimates the cost of war since 2001 (only for Departments of State, Defence, Veterans Affairs and USAID) was around 978 billion, excluding the CIA.

James Dobbins, a former US diplo-

mat, is quoted as saying, "We don't invade poor countries to make them rich. We don't invade authoritarian countries to make them democratic. We invade violent countries to make them peaceful and we clearly failed in Afghanistan." In geo-strategy, wars have defined political aims, objectives and clear military goals. The US failed this fundamental. From an initial objective "to retaliate against al-Qaeda and prevent a repeat of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks" it dithered towards nation-building, turning Afghanistan into a democracy, transforming Afghan culture and reshaping "regional balance of power among Pakistan, India, Iran and Russia."

Most interviewees attributed the continuing Afghan fiasco to a lack of "Strategic Direction" from political masters and a "Strategy" from military command including an operational strategy. The shifting aims and objectives of war inhibited a professional military from pursuing coherent goals and a clear plan. USMIL had no clear "War Termination Strategy" to end the conflict. Gen Petraeus faced tough questions from skeptical lawmakers as far back as March 2011, whether or not the US Afghan strategy was working? Gen Michael Flynn, a retired three-star general, told SIGAR in a 2015 interview, "From the ambassadors down to the low level, [they all say] we are doing a great job... Really? So if we are doing such a great job, why does it feel like we are losing?" Insiders reported in 2014, that "truth was rarely welcome" by the military in Kabul.

During the "Nation-Building" under President Bush, the US allocated more than \$133 billion; flooding Afghanistan with far more aid than it could absorb, leading to rampant corruption. Mass corruption involving "judges and police chiefs and bureaucrats extorting bribes" antagonized common Afghans, who flocked back to the Taliban.

Raising of the Afghan National Army and Police is still a pipe-dream with mostly incompetent, unmotivated and absconding recruits, and a predator officer corps, taking cuts in soldiers' wages and pocketing salaries of "ghost soldiers". One third police recruits were drug addicts or Taliban insiders, selling official property, including gasoline.

The US spent about \$9 billion to fight the opium problem during the past 18 years. But Afghanistan, in 2018 alone, produced 82 percent of global opium. When the British paid the poppy farmers to destroy their crops, there grew more poppy next year; and

when the US destroyed poppy fields without compensation, infuriated farmers joined the Taliban.

The Papers criticize the shortsightedness of not pursuing a negotiated settlement with the Taliban earlier on... that, ironically, Pakistan was emphasizing all along. There is typical finger-pointing at Pakistan for not "doing more" and for providing "safe havens" to the Taliban besides the escape argument that USMIL was restrained to conduct "Hot Pursuit Operations" inside Pakistan.

What the Papers fail to acknowledge is the Taliban motivation, inspiration and fighting ability that was pivotal in denying victory to the strongest military machine on earth. The power of a just cause and willingness to offer supreme sacrifice for defence of their faith and country are likewise not appreciated. It is hoped that correct lessons have now been learnt and would be pursued. **S**

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BEIJING

DEBT TRAP OR CRAP?

'Debt-trap diplomacy' is little more than a fantasy. China is not trying to seize strategic infrastructure by crippling poor countries with unsustainable loans and it is not the driving force behind their problems.

BY DR M ALI HAMZA

Debt-trap diplomacy is generally understood as a trap where an economically strong country deliberately lends enormous amounts of credit to an economically feeble and smaller debtor country, with an intention to consequently obtaining economic or political compromises when the debtor country is unable to repay the loan. These days this term is accompanied with serious criticism, primarily from the western hemisphere, regarding the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China. The criticism is about China's temperament of extending excessive loan to facilitate countries in severe economic crises, with an intention to ultimately control the economic and political decisions of the debtor countries that are said to support China's geostrategic interests, when it becomes unable to honour the debt contracts.

The West has reached this conjecture in light of examples of Sri Lanka, some African countries, and even Pakistan, where China is hugely investing in infrastructural development, and the West is worried about China incapacitating these countries in taking their own decisions. History does not allow the trusting of such plausible concerns of Western countries because, in the past and even in the present, many financially sound countries have taken and tested new ways to increase their own economic gains from underdeveloped countries and underprivileged humans in poor countries.

The Western argument was always supportive of a notion that if a country utilizes its resources to increase its wealth alongside the development of another weak country, there is nothing wrong with it. This argument is considered shallow when used by China. While staying absolutely positive about the



concerns of the West, in the phrase "Debt Trap Diplomacy", the West is ok with debt and diplomacy, but very much alarmed with the word trap and, seemingly, does not want independent countries to get trapped and lose their sovereignty.

Genuinely speaking, the trap was always there. Company Raj shifted to British Raj in India. It was a few million dollars partnership fund against terrorism that forced us to import the external war into Pakistan and made us lose thousands of lives and trillions of dollars. The USA has been extending conditional funding facilities. The conditions were nose in nature and challenged Pakistan's sovereignty many a times with the small utterance of Do More. Recently, the country's strings were pulled and the PM was forced to cancel his scheduled participation in the Kuala Lumpur meeting. The reason was the dollars and facilities bestowed on Pakistan by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to meet the reserves needs of the State Bank of Pakistan, and those few hundred thousand Pakistanis working in KSA. Many examples can be found in which economically strong countries have trapped Pakistan under their financial might.

What is the trap offering? Being trapped by the West resulted in sieged sovereignty,

a drowned economy, an afflicted political structure, shrinking foreign linkages, a distorted social texture, growing uncertainties, hopelessness among the youth, a rising brain drain, etc. In the last 70 years, the money-casting demi-gods of the West never considered Pakistan a partner to grow along, but a slave of a modern kind.

Even if room is given to China's trap allegation it needs to be observed as to what this trap is contributing to the debtors? Is China using Pakistan to pull it into a missile war for its geo-political interests? Is Pakistan becoming China's weapon import market? Is China using Pakistani military bases to meet its warfare targets? The simple answer is No.

President Xi Jinping has increased China's foreign aid, infrastructure investment, energy engagement and interconnectedness. This should not be a surprise, because four fifths of China's investments are spent on infrastructure projects in underdeveloped and developing countries that ultimately cause development. For instance, China has increased its investment relationship with African countries, created a program like the African Human Resources Development Fund (AHRDF) that helps in improving the education of Africans and a large proportion of the African population has obtained entrepreneurial skills

and employed themselves.

The unemployment rate in Sub-Saharan Africa has reduced to 6.09% from 7.88% in the last 15 years. Yes, educational growth continues to invite debt for the region. However, this is balanced because people are able to work to produce goods which lessens the debt. Human resource development has also been seen in agriculture and technology, where teams from China regularly visit African countries each year to further their training in these ever-changing fields. Moreover, the main types of infrastructure that these debts improve include roads, railways and ports, and improved infrastructure that favours internal trade, healthcare and education systems.

Thus growing debt to China positively affects Africa's economy via the much-needed development in infrastructure. Another example of infrastructure development is the Merowe Dam Project in Sudan: this is set to more than double the power development in Sudan, which is currently severely lacking. China's investment on the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka - a port leased to China for 99

years in 2017 - is largely the reason Sri Lanka is widely cited as a clear example of getting trapped in Chinese debt. However, the real picture of Sri Lanka's debt crisis was far more destructive. Debt repayments for the loans obtained for Hambantota Port amount to only around 5 percent of Sri Lanka's total annual foreign debt payments. The money obtained through leasing Hambantota Port was used to strengthen Sri Lanka's dollar reserves in 2017-18, particularly in light of the huge external debt servicing due to the maturity of international sovereign bonds in early 2019.

The largest portion of Sri Lanka's foreign debt was international sovereign bonds, which amounted to 39 percent of the total foreign debt as of 2017. Sadly, though, Sri Lanka has failed to increase exports or FDI by a sufficient margin to match its rising foreign debt repayment obligations. The so-called Chinese trap helped Sri Lanka to break the Western debt prison.

The notorious and most criticized Chinese trap for Pakistan is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) - the

main plank of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative that includes 20% debt-based finance and 80% investments in joint venture businesses between Pakistan and China. The CPEC comprises ports, roads, railways, energy, agriculture, science and technology and other projects in various sectors. This trap is assisting Pakistan to realize and take advantage of its geographical location, materialize its natural resources such as agricultural land, livestock, flowing rivers, deep sea shores, tourist attraction sites, etc. If borrowing loans is ultimately causing Pakistan to reorder its developmental anomalies and grow together with China as a partner, then debt trap diplomacy is a better way than the West's debt trap diplomacy that just draws foreign resources against dollars and deserts the partner countries. **S**

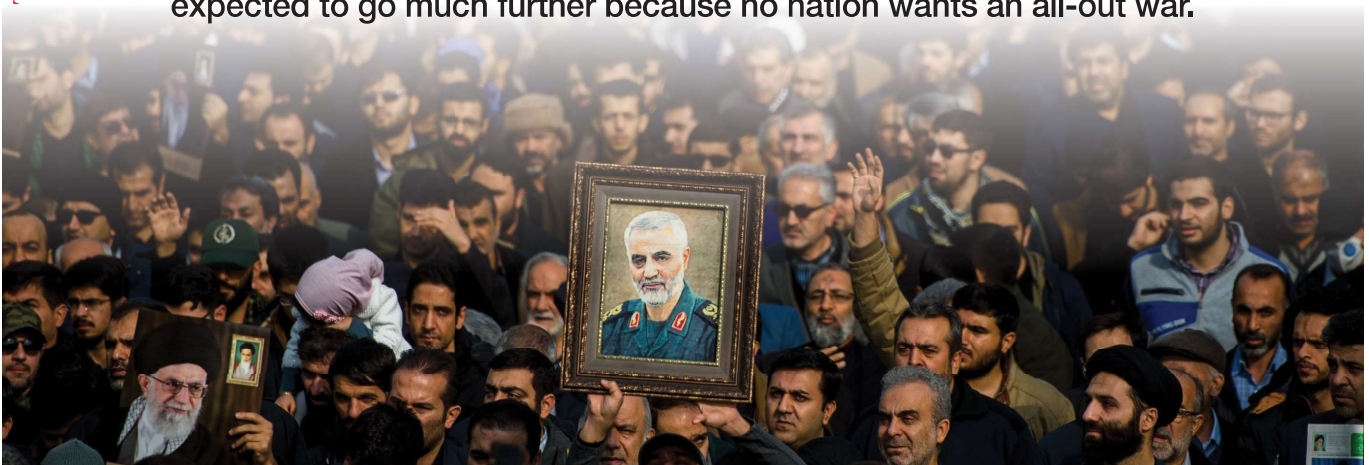
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TEHRAN

Only a Face-off

Iran's tit for tat after the General Qasem Soleimani killing by US drones is not expected to go much further because no nation wants an all-out war.



BY RAJA RAFI ULLAH

On January 3, 2020, the United States military kicked off the new year by assassinating a powerful man in Iran, Major General

Qasem Soleimani, through a drone strike near Baghdad's international airport. Although the US in the past has carried out similar acts by breaching international borders, the brazen audacity of killing of the military man seemed reckless to many international

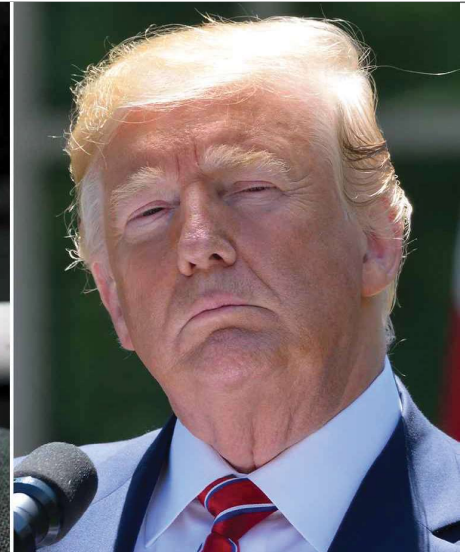
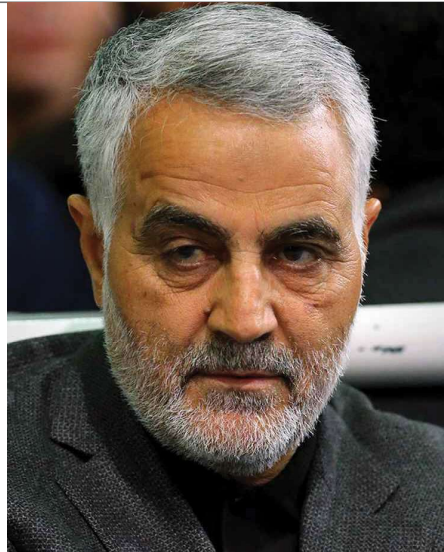
observers, an act that has potentially risked the peace and security of the Middle East and beyond. Iran responded by targeting US military bases in Iraq with missile strikes, though no casualties were confirmed. Some after-effects of the Iranian missile strikes have

been reported, though. Dozen's of people died in a stampede in Soleimani's funeral procession and a Ukrainian passenger plane was downed, killing all 176 on board, when Iranian forces targeted it with missiles – apparently by mistake taking it to be a US military plane.

A US-Iran face-off then began. It is important not to forget the bigger picture. A picture that is complex and is interlinked not only to the present state of affairs but also to the history of the US-Iran relationship. It has its beginnings in 1978. This was the time when only a few years had passed since US military engagement in Vietnam. Britain was prepping for an election. France was hosting a foreign guest of a controversial nature - Ruhollah Khomeini. The protests against the US-backed Iranian monarch, Reza Shah Pahlavi, were intensifying. Those who wanted the Shah deposed were not only asking for an Islamic state, but also an end of the secular sections of the country's socio-political fabric. It seemed as if the whole country had united against the Shah's rule, with Ruhollah Khomeini emerging as the symbolic leader of the revolution. There was also a growing feeling in the West, despite its own strategic reluctance, that the Shah's days were numbered and Iran was ready for a regime change.

1978 gave way to 1979. Raza Shah Pahlavi, sensing his time was up, fled Iran and Khomeini entered Iran to a hero's welcome. Within months of the Shah's fleeing, following a popular referendum, Iran's revolutionaries solidified their power by taking control of all the facets of the Iranian state machinery, including the military, the ministries and the media. If the overtly acrimonious stance against the West taken by the new Iranian government and Khomeini was not enough, what added further strength to it all was the takeover by the revolutionaries of the US Embassy in Tehran.

The embassy staff and other US personnel were taken hostage by the Iranians and they demanded that the US hand over the deposed Shah to them. Some 52 Americans ended up spending 444 days in the US embassy in Tehran. Six of them were helped by the Canadians to escape. This was the first time that the US and the West imposed severe economic sanctions



on Iran, a trend that would be repeated on and off in the coming decades. The hostage crisis also served to cement Iran's position as a pariah state in the US-led international world order.

No wonder that following Iran's stated resolve to avenge the killing of Qasem Soleimani, President Donald Trump tweeted that America had identified 52 Iranian sites that would be targeted if the Iranians transgressed any further. The number 52, it seemed, was a symbolic figure as the same number of American hostages had been held by Tehran almost 40 years ago.


For all that time, Iran has been ruled by an anti-West Islamist regime. This is a part of the new world where most regimes are aligned with the US. A growing Iranian hegemony, whether strategic and/or military, is a threat to America and its closest allies in the region, particularly Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Iran's nuclear program is a threat to the nuclear hegemony of Israel. A powerful Shiite theocracy on its borders is also a nightmare for Saudi Arabia. It is no surprise that President Trump, given his eccentric nature and strong partiality towards Israel and the Saudis, rolled back on the nuclear deal that Obama had struck with the Iranians in coordination with other world powers. From a rational point of view, the deal was an effective one and there was no need to back out from it. Iran had also restricted its nuclear activities in return for easing of economic sanctions. This was independently verified and reported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Whether the current face-off will lead to an escalation of hostilities and war, the answer is 'No'. The United States, despite the flippancy

of its current administration, is aware that the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is under threat from domestic social and political forces. Apparently, the Iranians at large have rejected the rigid, authoritative and deceitful ways of the current regime and are demanding change. In such circumstances, open war against a regime already on the wane is perhaps not an ideal strategy. What the US and its regional allies want is just to keep Iran in check and ensure that the economic sanctions remain in place, costing the Iranian regime billions in lost foreign trade revenue.

On the Iranian side, the fact remains that wars are expensive and need to be financed. The Iranians, despite their grand claims, don't have such money. While a war against the "evil of America" might hold the key to uniting some sections of the otherwise disaffected Iranian population, the act itself will only paper over the cracks that have been widening within the Iranian social fabric since the turn of the century.

For now the ideological, strategic and proxy conflict between world's only Islamic theocracy and a US-led West will continue to play out, but it would take only a significant error in judgement from either side for matters to escalate towards open war – a rational standpoint that was echoed in Iran's tempered response with missile strikes on American bases in Iraq. 

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LONDON ▶

After the Divorce

Once the UK is out of the EU, it is likely to emerge again as a powerful nation in its own right.

BY AYAZ AHMED

Karl Marx once remarked, "The only permanent thing in this world is change." In the discipline of international relations, the neo-functionalists emphasize the establishment of regional organizations to achieve maximum political and socio-economic cooperation; but Brexit shows that the realist school of thought in world politics has triumphed once again.

Since the UK joined the European Union in 1973, it has continued to play an important role in influencing the bloc's initiatives regarding economic, security and diplomatic matters of the continent. Presumably, the post-Brexit period would have a lasting impact on the effectiveness and potency of the EU not only in European politics but also across the world.

The re-election of Boris Johnson makes it crystal clear that the United Kingdom will finally withdraw from the EU. What is pertinent is that the world is experiencing a wave of populist politics and Boris Johnson is not an exception. Such divisive and populist demagogues, namely Narendra Modi and Donald Trump, have adopted an anti-elitist and anti-pluralistic tone and tenor to lambast their predecessors. This was primarily designed to augment their vote banks on the eve of elections in their respective countries.

During his election campaign, Boris Johnson adopted harsh language towards the policies of the EU. Election rhetoric based on populist demands always assists

politicians to win a landslide victory. In recent elections for the lower house of the UK's legislature, the Conservative Party gained 365 out of 650 seats.

The Conservatives, under the leadership of Boris Johnson, had already made up their minds to abandon the EU. Soon after their sweeping victory, Boris Johnson remarked, "We will get Brexit on time by January the 31st." He continued to severely criticise the EU for the many ills faced by Britain and said that by leaving the European Union, the UK would take back control of its trade, laws, migration system, border, money and delivering on the democratic mandate of the people.

Given the large majority the Conservatives have in the House of Commons, they will now easily get Brexit done. All this leads to an important question: what could be the implications of Brexit for the UK as well as the EU once the UK is out of the regional bloc?

As far as the EU is concerned, Brexit may have dire repercussions for the economic bloc. First and foremost, British withdrawal will substantially weaken the EU on the political and diplomatic fronts. This might render the regional bloc unable to face resurgent Russia in the backyard as the EU is to lose its Franco-

British Defence axis which has been largely instrumental in discouraging Moscow from any expansion towards Eastern Europe. President Donald Trump's inclination to shift American boots from Europe to the Asia-Pacific region has already created myriad security issues for the crisis-ridden EU. Moreover, a large number of European workers could also lose their jobs in Britain. More importantly, if Britain makes phenomenal economic strides after leaving the bloc, other members could also follow suit, creating a domino effect and subsequently pushing the bloc to the cusp of disintegration.

On the other hand, the British will largely benefit from Brexit.



Once the European workers start leaving London, this would create for them (the Brits) thousands of vacant jobs and seats in educational institutions. They would also realize the dream of a powerful Britain playing the role of a balancer and their hegemony in the contemporary anarchic world. In the same vein, Britain would be able to chart an independent, robust and proactive foreign policy free from the dictates of Brussels.

More importantly, the UK would be able to hammer out a comprehensive strategy regarding refugees coming from the war-torn Middle East and poverty-stricken Africa. This could, therefore, immensely help Britain strengthen its security from 'lone wolves' who have been inspired by Islamist militant groups.

However, in the post-Brexit period, the British could also face many restrictions and issues in terms of getting visas and visiting other European countries. Additionally, the

The British divorce with the bloc could well bring about daunting economic, political, diplomatic and security challenges for the EU.

UK's trade with the members of the EU is also likely to experience a downturn. It looks like the UK will have to cut its developmental outlays and shift more and more of its resources to foster its security in the post-withdrawal period.

To conclude, Boris Johnson's re-election is an incentive for Britain to quit the EU. The British divorce with the bloc could well bring about daunting economic, political, diplomatic and security challenges for the EU. Though the UK faces some challenges, yet the success of Brexit will largely benefit the

country and help it devise independent policies concerning trade, refugees and security. If adequately managed, the post-Brexit period would provide the UK with a marvellous opportunity to again emerge as an assertive and dominant power on the world stage. **S**

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THE STINKING LIFE

Humans working – and dying - inside stinking and poisonous manholes is a common occurrence in Pakistan. However, people have grown indifferent to the plight of sanitary workers.



BY PARVEZ RAHIM

Life would become miserable if the road outside your house was inundated with filthy gutter slush or there is a constant foul smell emanating from it or there are huge piles of garbage all around and it is difficult for you to breathe. You would have many sleepless nights and a persistent headache.

The persons who provide you relief from such ordeals and facilitate in letting people live in a stench-free, environment are themselves the most marginalized, overlooked and ill-treated workforce. You are not even aware of their work. But you must accept that no other person can either do or be willing to do the work they do at any cost.

The sanitary workers all over Pakistan are the most neglected and exploited class of society. They work in pathetic conditions at low wages and there is hazardous impact on their health at all times. Legislators may have brought the agriculture and construction workers within the ambit of labour laws, but they have so far ignored the sanitary workers. This neglect may be judged from the fact

that the National Sanitation Policy, 2016 and the Sindh National Policy, 2017 do not mention sanitary workers.

Extending labour laws formally to sanitary workers will not be enough as the respective provincial governments will have to ensure that these are implemented in letter and spirit such as providing them the required safety equipment like gas masks, uniforms, safety kits, gloves and boots, etc. These workers face a fatality risk that is 10 times higher than workers in all other industries. Their misery is compounded by the outdated civic infrastructure and poor attention to workplace safety, discrimination and negative social attitudes against the profession.

Entering the sewage pipes through manholes with bare bodies and remaining there till the material causing the blockage, is removed and thrown out, has been an old practice of the sanitary workers. Such hazardous entry into the filthy tunnels sometimes exposes them to lethal gases or bites from poisonous insects, causing their death. Young Rafiq Masih died in August 2019, when he was cleaning a storm water drain in Landhi, Karachi, while his colleagues fell unconscious from inhaling

toxic fumes. Earlier, in 2017, another young man Irfan Masih died tragically at the Umerkot Civil Hospital, after inhaling poisonous fumes. The doctors had refused to provide him treatment because he was considered 'unclean'.

Most sanitary workers, escaping fatalities, suffer from skin diseases, asthma, tuberculosis, backaches and breathing problems. There is an urgent need to provide them medical cover by extending the social security scheme to the sanitary workers as well as to their families.

As it is, the overall compliance status of labour laws in the industrial and commercial establishments is deplorable. While some of the progressive employers do provide reasonable facilities and salaries to their employees, the majority do not even pay minimum wages and leave them at the mercy of contractors. The treatment meted out to sanitary workers in terms of payment of wages is even worse as most are paid lesser wages than the minimum of Rs. 17,500 p.m.

At present there are around 11,000 sanitary workers in Karachi, divided between the six districts of the Municipal Corporation and the Waste and Sewer

Authority (WASA). Of these, there is a very small number of regular employees. The seniors among the regular workers get monthly wages of more than Rs. 20,000. All others are employed on a daily wage of Rs. 500, with no paid weekly rest day and vacations. The existing daily rate of minimum wage is Rs. 673. Those working for the municipal corporations lift garbage and clean the roads, while the ones engaged by WASA remove blockages from sewage lines.

While commenting on his wages, one sanitary worker said, "We are getting Rs. 15,000 p.m. out of which approximately Rs. 2,000 is taken by the inspectors of our contractors. If we refuse to pay the extortion money, we are told to leave the job". The attitude of their employers towards them is inhuman; they ask them to work for extra hours without any overtime. The sanitary workers employed through the janitorial contractors in Defence Housing Authority and Clifton in Karachi, are paid wages ranging from Rs. 800 to Rs. 1,200 p.m.

In Islamabad, private sanitary workers

collecting domestic waste from different sectors of the federal capital are employed on daily wages. According to them, they are being exploited by the Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) contractors due to their uncertain and insecure job status. They complain about the poor working conditions and ruthless behaviour of the contractors.

In a 2013 survey, the World Watch Monitor noted that the representation of Christians in jobs of sweepers and other sanitation positions in major cities of Pakistan was disproportionately higher compared to their percentage in the population. They also noted that nearly 70 percent of the sanitation staff in Lahore were Christians, while in Karachi, they made up 80 percent of the staff.

An NGO called 'Strengthening Participatory Organization' (SPO), in collaboration with the Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC), has initiated a pilot project called "Promotion of Social Well-Being of Sanitary Workers". It has quite ambitious goals and is strongly pursuing the

Sindh government to regularize the services of sanitary workers and provide them all the benefits, especially those related to health and workmen's compensation.

SPO has recently distributed around 250 safety kits to the sanitary workers to help them avoid horrible incidents while cleaning choked gutter lines. SPO has been contributing to humanitarian causes for the last 26 years and intends extending its projects to Lahore. It is financed by the Norwegian Church Association. More NGOs need to participate in such projects as it is our collective, social, political and national responsibility to contribute to the betterment of the neglected segments of society because they make us live comfortably at the cost of their own health - and even lives. 

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Sandwiched Community

The Bengali community in Pakistan is a hard-working lot. They have mostly lived in Karachi ever since they took refuge in the city after 1971 but most of them have never been accepted as citizens of Pakistan and continue to lead uncertain existences.

BY QURATULAIN THALHO

Saima, a Bengali middle-aged woman, works in Karachi as a maid in three different houses everyday along with her three young children. From every house she gets around 5000 to 6000 rupees monthly – enough to put food on the table and afford some basic necessities. Her children accompany her to work because they are

unable to go to school as, despite being physically existent, they don't officially exist in Pakistan. Why? Because they don't have B forms which means they are not registered with NADRA (National Database and Registration Authority) as even their parents don't possess CNICs (Computerised National Identity Cards).

Living an undocumented life is not as simple as it may seem. Saima's children will fail to acquire higher education or white

collar jobs when they grow up because of this undocumented. It will not only have an impact on their social status, but their physical and mental health will also be at stake. After all, what could be worse for a person living in this digital age without a legal identity?!

More sadly, this is not just the story of Saima and her family as about 3 million Bengalis strewn around 200 settlements across Pakistan have similar stories. From

cleaning houses to peeling heaps of shrimps everyday in a hutment, these women and children are compelled to do odd as well as low-wage work. They, however, could have avoided doing such work, if their husbands and fathers had been earning well. When they could, they would go out to sea to catch fish and earn some money by selling it. But now that the CNICs are being checked strictly by the maritime officials, their husbands and/or fathers do not venture out to sea, fearing arrest for being Bangladeshis living illegally in Karachi.

Even though these Bengalis have been living in Pakistan for more than 4 decades now, they still don't have a national identity card. They consider themselves Pakistanis in every way, for the Government of Pakistan they are still Bangladeshis because they fail to provide proof – any proof that meets the criteria laid down by the Pakistan Citizenship Act 1951.

When identity cards were made manually, a large number of Bengalis were able to get Pakistani identity documents, either legally or illegally. Almost all of them successfully transferred those cards into CNICs in the early 2000s. But the Government of Pakistan rejected the applications for the renewal of CNICs to separate Pakistani Bengalis from illegal immigrants.

"I was born in Karachi, but still getting a CNIC was a real struggle for me. There was a point in my life when I was all set to flee illegally to Turkey along with several other Bengali migrants, ignoring the risks attached," says Shahid Shah, a young Bengali activist.

According to another Bengali migrant who wishes to remain anonymous, the police here is a major problem for them as they extort money and those who are unable to pay them are tormented and kept in illegal confinement. "We cannot even



To further intensify their problems, even the home country is not willing to welcome them.

hide our origin as we look and sound very different from the rest of the Pakistanis," Shahid points out.

The government of Pakistan, however, did make an effort in 2001 to legally register and document immigrants and other foreign residents in the country by establishing a government database, NARA (National Alien Registration Authority), but a large number of Bengalis – the so-called aliens in Pakistan – were reluctant to register themselves with NARA as they feared that after registration they would be deported to their country

of origin. Hence, the whole exercise was futile and NARA was merged with NADRA.

To further intensify their problems, even their home country is not willing to welcome them. Some of the Bengali immigrants travelling on Pakistani passports have been denied visas to enter their home country because they are considered supporters of the Bangladeshi opposition party that is pro-Pakistan.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Bengalis are a traumatized and petrified community in Pakistan. If one puts the spotlight on the mental health of this community, there is no insightful data regarding their health and wellbeing (physical, social, mental). There is no published study on the internet that tells us about the current status of wellbeing of these migrants. No one ever talks about how their mental health, including their self-esteem and social and emotional wellbeing,

is taking a toll due to the hardships and unfairness they face every day.

Even after 48 years, these migrants have been waiting for the Pakistan government to reconsider its policies on migrants and refugees. Their minds are flooded with qualms and uncertainty and they question themselves: will we ever get a Pakistani identity? Will we ever get the status we deserve? What future do our next generations have here in Pakistan? Are they, too, going to be born as aliens?

Let's hope the answers to these questions will soon be responded to in the affirmative. **S**

The writer is a journalist and sociologist with a passion for fiction writing. She is also a social media blogger covering human rights and mental health issues and can be reached at q.thalho@hotmail.com



The Christians Too

Christianity is India's second largest minority religion after Islam but Christians are described by extremist Hindus as alien to the nation.

BY DR. MEHREEN MUJTABA

Christianity is India's third-largest religion after Hinduism and Islam, with approximately 28 million followers, constituting 2.3 percent of India's population. Like the Muslims, Christians in India are also concerned about their future in the country. A wave of violence against foreign religions such as Islam and Christianity were seen after the Bharatya Janta Party (BJP) under Narendra Modi came to power in 2014. According to the All India Christian Council, there was an attack on Christians recorded every 40 hours in 2016 and 26 cases of violence against Christian communities were documented between January and March alone.

In 2014, there were 147 violent attacks on Christians in India but by 2018 that number had jumped to 325. Persecution of Christians in the country is religiously motivated violence against the minority group. According to the Human Rights Watch, these acts of violence are a tactic employed by the BJP to meet its political ends. The increase is attributed to the BJP's emphasis on Hindu nationalism and stirring up of religious passions that often lead to attacks on minority faiths by Hindu radical groups. What is the future of Jesus' followers amidst chants of 'Jai Shri Ram'?

In the past two years, nationwide attacks on Christian minorities were seen in 24 out of 29 states of India. In its latest report "Persecuted and Forgotten" published on November 14, 2019, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) calculated at least 117 incidents of violence against Christians in the first quarter of 2019 alone, 477 in 2018 and 440 in 2017.

The US Commission of International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) which is a US federal government commission created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, in its 2017 report has ranked



India's persecution severity at "Tier 2", along with Iraq and Afghanistan. In its Nov, 2019 report, USCIRF reported that 1.9 million non-Hindu residents of the north-eastern state of Assam were omitted from the National Register of Citizens (NCR), rendering them stateless.

According to the Open Doors World Watch report, India has risen from number 31 to number 10 in persecution severity over the past few years, just behind Iran.

Though the incidents of violence against Christian minorities have occurred in nearly all parts of India, the epicentres have been the states of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and the capital area of Delhi. Various churches were ransacked, vandalised and burned to the ground while graveyards were desecrated. In Rajpur, a nun was sexually assaulted while, in another incidence, a mob attacked a church during Sunday service, injuring men, women and children and damaged the statues of Mary and Jesus.

Converts from Hinduism to Christianity

are more vulnerable to persecution due to harsh campaigns like "Ghar Wapsi" (homecoming). Most converts are not only physically assaulted but also killed, more so now when several states in India have adopted anti-conversion laws and the ruling BJP has made it clear that it wants to scale it up nationwide. Such radical claims are making it worse for the Christian minorities living in India to continue with their day-to-day lives.

In November 2019, the Baptist Press carried the harrowing story of the 68 year old pastor Basant Kumar Paul. He and his family members were attacked twice by Hindu extremists. The pastor was hit in the head by an axe and left to die in his home based church in Jharkhand, India. The pastor was quoted as saying, "My physical body is weak, but my spirit is strong and will not break with persecution."

Not only Muslims, but also the Christians in Jammu and Kashmir, fear for their lives since the BJP-led government revoked the 1949 law, making it impossible

for Christian congregations to meet. A gathering of four or more people is illegal in Jammu and Kashmir, whether they are Muslims or Christians.

So far, more than 100 churches have been closed down nationwide due to extremist attacks. In May 2019, the BJP led government demolished a church-run school and hostel in Odisha state due to the irrational claims of an extremist group saying that the church was evangelizing students.

India's 28 million Christians are living in increasing fear. While President Donald Trump praised Narendra Modi as one of America's "greatest, most devoted and most loyal friends" during the latter's recent

visit to the White House, he was met less enthusiastically by Christian groups in the US due to the rising trend in violence against Christians by the Indian government's Hindu nationalist ideology. It is also pertinent to state here that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an extremist paramilitary group, which has led the persecutions against the Indian Christians as well as the Muslims, is a close ally of the BJP and Modi has long been a member of this organization. Although organizations like Open Doors, Religious Liberty Commission at the Evangelical Fellowship of India as well as USCIRF, believe much of the blame can be attributed to Modi due to a clear connection to his ideals and ideology and

a rise of religious persecution in India, Modi himself has largely been silent.

In the current state of affairs, it is high time that the US and other nations have a public discourse on the religious bigotry, persecution of minorities and human rights violations in India on a daily basis and remind India that being the largest democracy in the world has a responsibility to protect personal and religious freedom. **S**

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KABUL

LIVING THEIR DREAMS

Zohra, the first all-female orchestra in Afghanistan, is proving that the women of the country can pursue any dream if they put their hearts and minds to it.



BY LABBABA JAHANGIR

Amidst the sounds of guns and bombs has emerged another sound that has been heard all over the world. Who would have thought that a group of girls would rise like the phoenix from the ashes of a war ridden country like Afghanistan and spread the

message of peace through music? About five years ago, an exceptional all-female orchestra was formed in Kabul. Afghanistan is a nation where only a few years back, music had been outlawed and women were barred from taking part in any social activity. Now, this group of women known as Zohra, is travelling across the globe and

performing at international events.

Ahmad Sarmast, an exiled musicologist, during his time in Australia kept negotiating the rebuilding of music education in his nation with the Afghan Government. He is on a mission to restore his country's rich music tradition decimated by decades of war. When he returned to Kabul, he

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established Afghanistan National Institute of Music in 2010. This music institute works under the patronage of the Ministry of Education. In 2011, ANIM unveiled its Afghan Youth Orchestra, comprising boys and girls. Later, in 2015, an all-female orchestra was launched by the same platform. An all-female orchestra was an idea that came from the female students he taught.

It was named Zohra - after the Persian goddess of music as 30% of students studying music at ANIM are girls. The group started with less than 10 girls but now over 30 play in the orchestra. The girls who became a part of Zohra are the first women in their families, communities and even country, to study music properly in over 30 years. The girls of the Zohra orchestra come from provinces across Afghanistan. They have traveled to Kabul and now live there to study music at the Institute

In Zohra's ranks are the country's first female conductors, Negin Khpalwak and Zarifa Adiba. The orchestra rehearses twice a week. The frequency of these rehearsals increases before a concert or performance. There is an environment of unity and love among the orchestra members. The older students help out the younger ones, and they also choose their own repertoire. The orchestra plays Afghan and Western music and is conducted by specialist teachers and students.

The girls have performed at various events in Kabul but their international journey started when they were invited to perform at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, in Davos in 2017. Getting to Davos was not easy. Seeking permission from families of the girls and the government to travel abroad was a herculean task but Ahmad Sarmast achieved this with international and national support.

As, Nico Daswani, Head of Arts and Culture, World Economic Forum, said, "With the theme of this Annual Meeting being 'Responsible and Responsive Leadership', what appropriate a closing concert than an exchange with these extraordinarily courageous musicians."

Zohra undoubtedly represents courage, zeal and passion. Following an

unconventional area, especially in a society like Afghanistan's, required a great deal of courage and strength. Furthermore, when it comes to activities of girls, there are already many restrictions in South Asian societies. After all, how many countries in the region have all-female music groups? Defying all odds and coming together to pursue what these Afghani girls were passionate about is a commendable task. The credit goes not only to Ahmad Sarmast for presenting the young musicians to learn but also to the families of the girls for breaking the stereotype of the conventional Afghani family and granting them permission and support to fulfill their dreams.

Due to the long ongoing war and Taliban takeover, the lives of the people, especially the women have been in turmoil. The Taliban banned music and female education and restricted outdoor activities of women when they were controlling most of Afghanistan. They were deprived of the very basic rights which women around the world enjoy without even realizing it. To come from such a background and pursue an unconventional field like music is a commendable and courageous move. The existence of the orchestra, along with the pride and joy seen on the girls' faces as they play together, shows how much things have changed in Afghanistan. It also shows just what can be achieved when a young girl is clear about what she wants to do in life and is given the opportunity.

Zohra is not just a platform for these girls to fulfill their dreams of pursuing music but is an outlet where they can be free to express themselves. It is an inspiration for thousand of girls who have such dreams but are too scared of society. The emergence of such enterprising girls and women in various sections of the Afghani society is important for the overall development and progress of the country. **S**

The writer has an abiding interest in international relations. She has a Masters degree in the subject from the National Defence University, Islamabad and can be reached at labbaba1808@gmail.com



HUNZA

Hunza to become first plastic bag-free zone in Pakistan

The local government's initiative 'Clean Hunza Project' paves the way for multinationals such as Nestlé to act on their global commitment.

BY KIRAN FAROOQ

One of the five districts in Gilgit-Baltistan, Hunza is located on Karakoram Highway at an altitude of 8000 feet. In recent years, it has become a popular attraction for local and foreign tourists with approximately one million tourists visiting the region in 2018. This influx of tourists on the one hand has created income generation for the local community but on the other, it has become a reason for increasing plastic waste in the district.

The issue of plastic waste in the environment is one of the most pressing challenges the world faces today. Around 400 million tons of plastic are produced every year and is growing exponentially.

Plastic pollution is most visible in developing Asian and African nations, where garbage collection systems are often inefficient or nonexistent. Plastic trash has become so ubiquitous it has prompted efforts to write a global treaty negotiated by the United Nations.

Changing the way, we interact with packaging, as producers or consumers, requires us all to rethink the way we produce and consume.

Plastic packaging accounts for nearly half of all plastic waste globally, and much of it is thrown away within just a few minutes of its first use. Most plastic may be single-use, but that does not mean it is easily disposable. When discarded in landfills or in the environment, plastic can take up to a thousand years to



decompose.

We are already unable to cope with the amount of plastic waste we generate, unless we rethink the way we manufacture, use and manage plastics. Ultimately, tackling one of the biggest environmental scourges of our time will require governments to regulate, businesses to innovate and individuals to act.

Only nine per cent of the nine billion tons of plastic the world has ever produced

has been recycled. Most ends up in landfills, dumps or in the environment. If current consumption patterns continue, then by 2050 there will be around 12 billion tons of plastic litter in landfills and the environment.

A waste-free future is dependent on having the right collection, sorting and reprocessing infrastructure,

Many big multinational companies are aiming for 100% recyclable or reusable packaging by 2025. Despite this, only 14% of all plastic is actually recycled today.

Changing the system, requires collaboration and innovation on a global scale. By working with partners around the world, from materials scientists and packaging

The Lifecycle of Plastic



Source: WWF



specialists to community groups and NGOs, governments and other companies, lasting and impactful change can be created, for people and the planet.

As the world's largest food and beverages company, Nestlé has stepped up to meet this challenge in Pakistan, with the vision to ensure that none of their packaging, including plastics, ends up in landfills or as litter. They have also publicly committed to making 100% of its packaging recyclable or reusable by 2025. Nestlé Pakistan has started a pilot project "Clean Hunza Project" that will encourage waste segregation and its management in Hunza.

"Clean Hunza Project", is part of District Council Hunza initiative to make it the first plastic bag free location in the country. Nestlé's participation will focus on waste segregation on the recycling site and connecting further to recyclers downstream.

Presently, the waste segregation and management system in the area is managed by Gilgit-Baltistan Waste Management Company (GBWMC) and District Council Hunza. Tourists also bring a lot of packaged goods (bottles, carbonated drinks, paper-based packaged items, etc.) from down the country and eventually leave this waste in Hunza after consumption.

The project will focus on infrastructure development for a formal waste management system for Hunza with GBWMC and support from KADO for raising awareness in the communities, where Nestlé will support the GBWMC with trainings on



Many big multinational companies are aiming for 100% recyclable or reusable packaging by 2025.

segregation of waste, compressing and bailing at the waste segregation site. The plastics (PET and flexi package) and paper-based packaging collected, after bailing process, will be brought down the country for recycling.


Commending the cause, Babar Sahibdin, Deputy Commissioner Hunza, said, "Under District Council Hunza initiative, Hunza leads as the first plastic bag-free location in Pakistan. Contribution of 10,000 reusable bags during 2020 by Nestlé will further strengthen this behaviour change mindset in the community as it will create awareness amongst the locals to stop using plastic bags and incline them towards a more environmentally friendly solution. We appreciate Nestlé for extending support for capacity building of our staff on waste segregation site, compressing, bailing and connecting to recyclers downstream."

Waqar Ahmad, Head of Corporate Affairs, Nestlé Pakistan, while highlighting the company's global commitment to tackle plastic waste, said, "This project marks the beginning of Nestlé Pakistan's journey to reduce the environmental impact of plastic

packaging by improving the management and recycling of various kinds of plastic packaging, in line with UN SDGs. Globally we aim to make 100% of our packaging recyclable and reusable by 2025."

He further added, "The Clean Hunza Project is a pilot project with a focus on streamlining the management and recycling of plastic waste, with a forecast of increasing waste collection to 220,000 kgs by 2024. This project will result in lesser plastic ending up in water bodies downstream."

The project, which will be first of its kind at such a high-altitude residential location, will make a positive environmental impact at both the local and national level.

It is believed that the answer to the complex plastics and packaging issue is to look into multiple solutions. It also requires a holistic view and a well-orchestrated effort. 

The writer is a freelance contributor and communications practitioner. She can be reached at kfnaim24@gmail.com



TREAT FOR THE TASTEBUDS

The people of Karachi thoroughly enjoyed the Karachi Eat 2020, the biggest food festival of the metropolis, with food ranging from American and European to Pan-Asian cuisine as well as desi and probably a little bit of everything. And this was all despite the weather which was a bit of test for the people of Karachi.

Karachi Eat is about people of all ages who love food. It is also built around the idea of creating a common platform for people enthusiastic about food. The event this year was again a three-day extravaganza but this time it took place at Karachi's Beach View Park a much better venue.

Some 115 stalls were set up at the Karachi

Eat, introducing some new entrees as well as home-based stuff. Chipseez introduced their signature beetroot, sweet potato and potato chips while Lemon Grass

launched their Crying Tiger while

Churrosity came back with a new Churro Hot Dog; Cloud Naan offered their Chicken Naan and Spicogetti introduced their new entree Chic 'N' Cheese Spaghetti in addition to their signature Khausa and Singaporean Rice.

Among all the eateries, many stalls

took the people's attention but only a few satisfied the tastebuds. Basic Taiwanese spicy fried chicken bao and deep-fried baos with ice-cream stood out in a small metal truck. The bao buns were homemade and filled with either spicy fried chicken and ba-

sil leaves or served in fried form with ice-cream toppings. Carbie's delicious burgers were perfectly seasoned with tender meat while Crust Bros' Italian Neapolitan pizza was light, airy and full of flavour. Cheese lovers were also offered edible 24 karat gold, mozzarella cheese and basil.

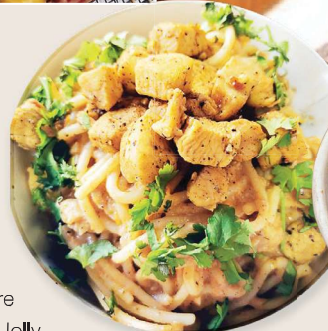
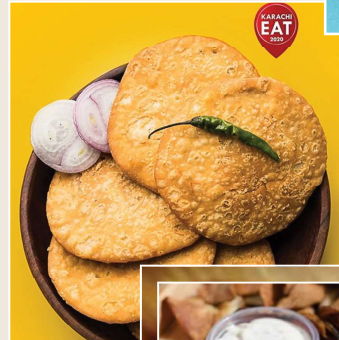
Burmese Bowl introduced the KhowSaMosa Shot by combining potato samosa with khowsey condiments and coconut curry. D'OH's fresh churros had a rich flavour while the dessert sushi with fluffy crepe wrapped around various flavours and toppings were delicious. Their Jolly Rancher and Hawaiian punch ice lollies were really chilly in the winter season. Jolly Rancher flavoured cotton candy was also available at Sweet Escape with flavours ranging from blue raspberry and grape to green apple and premium butterscotch.

Sol's smoked brisket sliders, burgers, bao buns, hot chocolate and butterbeer enhanced the taste buds, especially the hot chocolate topped with marshmallow and cookies. Original Bosnian cevapi were served by Leena's Cevapi that consisted of lepina bread and stuffed with grilled meat. Their ajaver and curd were homemade with an authentic taste of Bosnia. Tikyani had tikka biryani and tikka stuffed kachoris, the recipes of which are passed down for generations in the owner's family.

The Mexican and Ko-

rean hotdog was the main item at Dirty Dog where Mexican hotdogs had beef chilli, nacho cheese and salsa. Korean hotdogs had pickled slaw, sesame seeds and peanut sauces. O Donuts stood out with their unique flavour fusions. Yoshi's had mocha donuts made with glutinous rice flour and were gluten-free. Their moffle chicken sandwich, Korean fried chicken and ebiyaki balls (Japanese street food) were made with dashi batter filled with veggies and pickles and topped with various sauces and toppings.

With concerts and performances by Canadian bhangra group Josh, Nauman Khalid, Falak Ahmad Shaikh, Punjabi band Sahara UK, Zoe Viccaji, Waqar Ehsin, Noman Jalal, Israr and Lil Mafia, the festival featured talented chefs and street vendors with their numerous eateries offering extraordinary food with unique flavour and taste. 



Impoverished Diversity

BY NADYA CHISHTY-MUJAHID

Gender studies and sexuality professor Richa Nagar focuses on the topic of hunger in deeply impoverished strata of society in this academic publication titled 'Hungry Translations.' The book combines academic discourse with creative pieces such as poems and plays (especially one titled Hansa) in order to illustrate the concept of global hunger, and more intriguingly, the collective psychological response of communities to lack of food in societies.

The subtitle of her text is 'Journeys with Sangtin Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan [SKMS] and Parakh Theatre.' The former, as its name connotes for those who understand Hindi, is an Indian farmers' and labourers' organization where the average earner has income well below the poverty line. Nagar's book is thoroughly researched, as befits any worthy academic endeavour, and the bibliography is particularly useful, paying homage to erudite minds such as Hannah Arendt and Judith Butler. As indeed is the glossary at the end of the text.

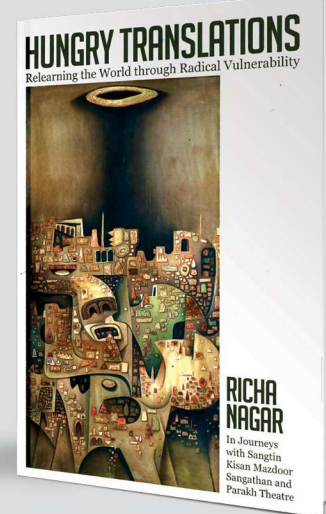
Unapologetically feminist, egalitarian-minded, a social activist and a committed believer in the power of art to change and shape lives, Nagar situates her discourse in a milieu of what she terms post-oppositionality. In other words, her book goes far beyond the binaries of difference inherent in racial, socio-political, and sexual politics. Her agenda appears to be that of expressing how creativity in general and dramatic performance in particular expose one to becoming radically vulnerable: this state of being enables one to rethink the world on one's own terms and conditions.

When filming his swan song starring Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise, *Eyes Wide Shut*, legendary director Stanley Kubrick put the couple through a gruelling regime of cinematic takes and re-takes which ran into tens in number, occasionally hundreds. Though this was enough to drive most actors insane, the gritty Cruise and determined Kidman did not allow this to deter them from conforming to Kubrick's will, and apparently it was when they

were at their most exhausted that they gave their best performances. The point of this being: they reached their dramatic peak while in a state of radical vulnerability.

Although the Kubrick story is my example, not Nagar's, her work indicates that SKMS grappled with terrifying hunger and abysmally low wages on a regular basis to the point where one would have assumed (and rightly so) that these gut-wrenching social issues would have crushed the spirits of most. Yet out of the depths of this despair were born some of the most major creative endeavours of the text. Nagar writes how a play whose working title was 'Kafan' was transformed into the text *Hansa*. Focusing on the death of a poor woman who prepares food for the community, it implies that money that could have bought a shroud is better utilized buying food and alcohol for the mourners. Although the spirit recoils at such callousness in the face of death, in point of fact the ethos of the play makes perfect sense from the grim, all-too-realistic perspective of the SKMS. Madan Lal Nagar's equally grim cover artwork for the book displays a Picasso-like type of surreal quality, lending itself to multiple imaginative interpretations.

Nagar must have appreciated Shakespeare's sentiment regarding one picture being worth a thousand words, because she includes several touching and useful black and white photographs of members of both SKMS as well as their performances. I was impressed to find that much of the poetry in the book was written by Nagar herself—though hardly the stuff of great literature, it resonates with emotive sincerity. Although she refers to 'Hansa' as 'the soul' (which is appropriate in this context), there is poignancy to the fact that the word technically means swan, especially since traditionally a swan is known to sing only before it dies. (My reference in the afore-stated to Kubrick's final film was specifically and deliberately chosen.) Given that global hunger annually results in the deaths of millions of men, women, and children the world over, while one experiences a sense of horror at the tribulations of the SKMS, one also applauds their committed desire to salvage the dignity of their



Book Title : Hungry Translations
Author : Richa Nagar
Publisher : University of Illinois Press, 2019
Pages : Paperback, 299 pp
ISBN : 978-969-976-004-4

souls by means of artistic 'swan songs' if nothing else.

The latter portion of Nagar's work deals with a course created and taught by her at the University of Minnesota titled 'Stories, Bodies, Movements.' Through this course she expects to fulfill an agenda that underscores the importance of personal stories when it comes to achieving social justice. Many scholars of feminism and drama have attempted to create spaces within which the energy of human interaction is allowed to move freely and with explorative dynamism until the chaos eventually coalesces into artworks that possess both meaning and definition. Again, a set of casual but vital photographs of her students expressing themselves (or judging others) via performance lends a sense of clarity to what Nagar wants us to believe she achieved.

Certainly for those who avoid gender issues (and discussions of them) like the plague, this text will come across as excessive, and I can visualize several people abandoning it without doing justice to appreciating what it is about. But that would be a shame, because in the twenty-first century one has a moral imperative to truly understand diversity. Perhaps this imperative has been imposed on us by the likes of Richa Nagar, but the imposition is nothing if not heartfelt and informed. **S**

BOOK

Beyond the Green

BY TAHA KEHAR

The dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 remains a turning point in Pakistan's history and evokes memories of war and the humiliating defeat of our armed forces. The catastrophic war of 1971 is also billed as the fundamental event that made Pakistan realize the need to maintain its national unity and stave off any attempts by India to impinge on its internal affairs.

Over the last five decades, historians have revisited this turbulent event and analyzed the blunders that led to the loss of East Pakistan. While a vast majority of these accounts are fraught with biased interpretations of the war, Ikram Sehgal and Bettina Robotka's *Blood Over Different Shades of Green: East Pakistan 1971: History Revisited* falls within the category of books that offer an objective view of the events that led to the fall of Dhaka. This is a commendable feat because Sehgal witnessed the conflict at close quarters and – as Robotka states in the preface to the book – “personally... knew all the main characters of the [1971 war]”. Sehgal, therefore, uses the benefit of hindsight to offer rich details on how discriminatory policies and a soaring sense of disillusionment led to the break-up of Pakistan. With the alacrity of an eyewitness and a historian's eye for facts, Sehgal is able to revisit the events of 1971 with candour. As a result, it comes as no surprise that *Blood over Different Shades of Green* succeeds in providing an intimate glimpse of the causes and consequences of the war.

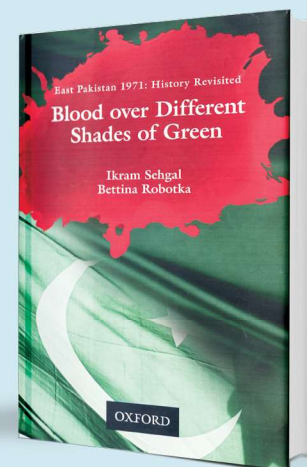
Through a detailed scrutiny of the cultural identity of East Bengal, the authors plumb the depths of the past to explore how the 19th century Bengali Renaissance fuelled the search for identity and inspired a surging sense of “all-inclusive Bengali nationalism”. Sehgal and Robotka state that “there was a widespread sentiment in West Pakistan and its army, that East Pakistanis were not true Muslims, that their version of Islam was clos-

er to Hinduism and, therefore, they must be brought onto the correct path”.

The authors methodically examine how these sentiments pushed the erstwhile East Pakistanis onto the fringes and culminated in a demand for a separate nation. Readers are taken on a journey that helps them understand how the burgeoning economic disparities between the people of East Pakistan and West Pakistan resulted in discontentment. The incessant delays in fostering development and progress in East Pakistan are also discussed at length. In addition, the authors have highlighted how the issue of selecting the country's national language took a political turn and provided an impetus to the civil war.

Throughout the book, Sehgal and Robotka never pull their punches when it comes to criticizing the insecurities that the ruling elite in West Pakistan had about the “Bengali majority”. If the principles of a parliamentary democracy are to serve as a gauge, East Pakistan would have had a majority of parliamentary seats owing to its large population. In *Blood Over Different Shades of Green*, the authors condemn the “Punjabi and Muhajir political elite” who deprived East Pakistan of their seats because they wanted to seize control in the Centre. For instance, the authors have drawn attention to the fact that the Bengalis were heavily underrepresented in the provincial government and most key administrative posts were “occupied by West Pakistanis and non-Bengali Urdu speakers”.

While these justifications for the 1971 unrest have been cited in countless history textbooks, they have been expounded upon in a clear and effective manner in *Blood Over Different Shades of Green*. More often than not, historical texts that are taught at secondary schools across Pakistan tend to gloss over the events of 1971 and portray the unrest that erupted in the eastern wing as a bilateral conflict between India and Pakistan. Sehgal and Robotka's depiction of the war is mercifully bereft of these tendencies. Instead, it never



Title	: Blood Over Different Shades of Green: East Pakistan 1971: History Revisited
Author	: Ikram Sehgal and Bettina Robotka
Publisher	: Oxford University Press Pakistan
Pages	: 420
ISBN	: 9780190702274
Price	: Rs.1,595

holds back from exploring the event from the perspective of the East Pakistanis – a vital lesson that could improve history-writing processes across the country.

The emphasis remains on a chronological retelling of the breakup of Pakistan and its aftermath. As a consequence, the book encompasses events such as the 1965 war and the elections of December 1970 that eventually changed the fate of the entire nation. The various phases of the 1971 war, the systematic genocide and the role of India in the conflict, have also been critically assessed. The authors have also examined how bilateral ties between Bangladesh and Pakistan have evolved over the decades.

In a similar vein, the debate surrounding the demand for an official apology for the war has been addressed in a dispassionate manner. “The demand coming from the Bangladeshi side, of more apologies, hold little weight and are politically influenced,” the authors state. “How many times can you apologize?”

Published by Oxford University Press Pakistan, *Blood Over Different Shades of Green* is a well-researched and informative book that can help us understand our past mistakes and exorcise the narrow-minded beliefs that Pakistanis espouse about the 1971 war. **S**

TV SERIAL

MERE PAAS TUM HO

Bold Statement

BY MUHAMMAD ALI KHAN

Although many TV plays are being broadcast on various channels, the one which recently caught most attention was ARY Digital's 'Mere Paas Tum Ho' featuring Ayeza Khan as Mehwish, Humayun Saeed as Danish, Adnan Siddiqui as Shahwar and Hira Mani as Hania. The kind of attention this serial got was unmatched. The popularity was because of many reasons, from marketing tactics to creating a hype about the plot or the ploy to delay the finale and screen it in a cinema.

It would be unfair to treat 'Mere Paas Tum Ho' just like another story about betrayal because for the first time viewers got to see a man's perspective in such detail. The serial was all about unequal gender relations, infidelity, second marriage and the role of women in Pakistani society. The audience might have liked the theme, more because the story showed what a man went through when he was hurt and betrayed. The serial had numerous twists and turns and created uproar. Even Adnan Siddiqui said that more men than women were watching 'Meray Paas Tum Ho', which was not quite surprising as the plot was entirely different from the usual Pakistani stuff.

Mehwish and Danish were a middle-class couple who lived with their son Rumi (Shees Sajjal Gul). From the start, Mehwish was seen as being greedy for money; she forced her husband to earn more, by doing illegal deeds while working in a government job. Trying to make ends meet, he even took bribes to gift his wife a diamond necklace. Mehwish's friend Anushey (Meher Bano) introduced her to Shahwar at a café. His flirtatious conversation made Mehwish believe that Shahwar was in love with her. The money lured Mehwish because she was fed up with living a middle-class life where she always had to compromise while Shahwar was a wealthy man. Soon they got very close. Eventually, Mehwish left Danish on their wedding anni-

versary. She went with Shahwar. Danish was aware that he could not do anything to bring her back. What Mehwish didn't realize was that Shahwar is simply using her and soon he would be fed up of her.

The real struggle unfolded when Maham (Savera Nadeem), Shahwar's wife, came back on Shahwar and Mehwish's nikkah day and slapped Mehwish for her deed and sent Shahwar to jail for committing fraud in the company. Mehwish was then left alone and soon realised that by leaving Danish she had made the biggest mistake of her life as she also knew that she always loved Danish but got carried away by Shahwar's charm and luxuries, the consequences of which, she has to pay. In between, the young son Rumi became mature enough to understand what divorce meant. Meanwhile, Rumi's teacher Hania got emotionally attached to Rumi and with his father Danish.

People were rather quick to judge Mehwish for her lack of character but no one paid any attention to Shahwar as he did the same thing. They both were married to someone else when they decided to leave their wedded partners and live together. Why wasn't Shahwar criticised? Did someone also notice that Danish repeatedly said to Mehwish that he was very possessive about her? What transpired was not possessiveness and was more of a psychological aberration. The way he kept saying at the wedding of Anushey's brother, 'Ab woh Shahwar tumhari taraf kiyun dekh raha hai?' and 'Woh mere janey ke baad hi kiyun aya tum se baat karne ke liye?' was totally strange. People can say, 'Jab biwi ko baar baar bolega kay woh dekh raha hai, woh dekh raha hai, to biwi bhi to dekhegi na phir usko'. This would be a more logical perception.

Now comes some sarcasm. The writer of the serial, Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar, is someone who himself does not seem to know what will happen next. He has even declared somewhere that a man cannot resist a woman tempting him. His views were squarely criticized though soon the 'do takay ki aurat'



dialogue surfaced and the social media became a war zone. However late, Maham's thappar (slap) tended to rescue the narrative. In the final analysis, most people did not endorse the ideas or the words that the writer used with reference to women.

Humayun Saeed, the love-struck guy who later turned against the woman he loved, was impressive in his sincerity, honesty and simplicity. He seemed to be experimenting with the role. Ayeza Khan was like a breath of fresh air. She came across as a natural actress and perhaps this is why people really hated the character she played. Adnan Siddiqui seemed to take his acting very seriously and, as Shahwar, blended his flirtatiousness with the right amount of charm. Hira Mani came across as a good actor. The serial had excellent performances and sharp direction.

'Mere Paas Tum Ho' had a web of complicated relationships. The play emphasized that in Pakistani society, what is okay for a man is never okay for a woman. It showed how the repercussions for breaking a norm can mean something else for a woman and something completely different for a man. Women generally forgive their partners to normalize their lives but men have their way.

Directed by Nadeem Baig, the serial proved to be a big hit on the basis of its powerful performances and a beautiful soundtrack by Rahat Fateh Ali Khan. The gender-bias and double standards prevailing in Pakistani society clearly come across, making 'Mere Paas Tum Ho' a bold venture. **S**



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