

Hope of Happier Times ?

Concern about Pak nukes

US intelligence agency's report called "black budget" has painted a grim picture of security of Pakistan's nuclear weapon and expressed fears of them falling in the hands of extremists thereby increasing the threat of destabilization of peace in the entire region. The US intelligence agencies have been closely monitoring Pak's regular upgrading of nuclear technology and nuclear strike power especially against its neighbor India for which she might find a pretext to initiate nuclear exchange. US intelligence agencies are concerned that the extremists have clandestinely dented into Pakistan's nuclear arsenal complex, and they are capable of using it at their free will.

Yet one more concern for the US intelligence chapters is that they suspect Pakistan is engaged in chemical and biological weapon manufacturing, which the Islamists can lay their hands upon. The intelligence community is not very sure whether Pakistan has the industry to manufacture chemical and biological weapon regimes but there are indications that would support the suspicion to that end. The report says that of all the countries it is Pakistan on which the US has concentrated her attention and the intelligence agencies are strictly monitoring the movement of elements that could reinforce the premise of dangerous weapons falling into the hands of the jihadis. The Report says that Pakistan has been reputed for supplying nuclear technology to the countries that are inimical towards the US. There is nexus of sort between Pakistan and China and the latter has contributed to development of nuclear technology of Pakistan. All this development is gradually increasing the concern of the US and the policy planners in the Pentagon are discussing how to thwart the danger posed to the peace loving world. At least they are convinced that Pakistan remains the epicenter of world terrorism and that makes it the most dangerous country.

India have long been warning the world community of the rising terrorist power of Islamists in Pakistan and Pakistan Government's inability of controlling them. It is now common knowledge that the radical Islamists having all the sympathy and support from the Pakistan Army have already made dent in the bastion of Pakistan's defence forces. The fundamentalist organizations like LeT and JM have already been recognized by Pak Army as its vanguard in a situation of war with Pakistan's enemies. The LeT has openly and at various occasions declared their support to terrorist organisations functioning in India. Therefore though US may have still doubts about the status of Pakistani jihadi organizations' relations with the Army, we have none. Therefore passing of nuclear or chemical weapons into the hands of jihadis will not be a matter of chance but by design. Whenever Pakistani Army feels time is opportune it will offer all sorts of weapons into the hands of the jihadis.

Apart from this, the Report has meticulously circumvented the crucial point in this debate. Past and present history tells us that both US and UK have helped Pakistan become a terrorist state neck and crop. No other Islamic country in the world has received so much aid in cash and kind and so much of military war machine as Pakistan has. While the US intelligence has been regularly pouring in details of Pakistan's dangerous nuclear programme, the US administration under all Presidents has been sanctioning billions of dollars by way of aid for her. And Pakistan has been diverting these funds for purchase of arms to be used either against India or against the nationalist forces within Pakistan demanding democratization of Pakistan. While elected civilian governments have been ousted by the Army, the US, UK and European powers have been pouring funds lavishly into the coffers of the Army rulers of Pakistan. Washington knew very well that China was providing nuclear know-how to Pakistan but did not bat an eyelid. Rather it provided enormous funds and war machine to the Generals. It is known to all that CIA and ISI have been working hand in glove in the creation of Taliban. Why should the Washington now raise hue and cry about Pakistan's jihadis aspiring for nuclear or chemical weapons. It is they who created them and now they are up against their own Frankenstein.

Zoos for twin cities

The Government is reported to be toying with the excited plan of setting up two zoos, one each for Jammu and Srinagar. Normally, we are happy to know that there will be a major scheme of providing entertainment to the citizens of two capital cities especially to the children who will also find something big to rejoice about. We know that some wild life species will find their way into the contemplated zoos and this will be a prestigious addition to the zoological fund of India.

However our major concern is that of maintaining the standards of keeping the zoo animals in perfect health by providing them the food, medical aid and proper environment. Maintaining a zoo is a stupendous task about which everybody is not aware of. It asks for huge budget and manpower and large paraphernalia. Has the Government taken care of all these pre-requisites? Above all the land for sanctuaries is a big matter. Will the identified sanctuaries remain fully secure and finally what about the trained staff to handle the wild life? Have we all the paraphernalia at hand?

In business circles in Mumbai there seemed to appear on Wednesday a small, tentative sliver of hope in the unrelenting gloom that currently prevails. It found reflection on Twitter with Anand Mahindra wishing the new Governor of the Reserve Bank well with this tweet, "Never before has a new Reserve Bank Governor's every action & utterance been watched so closely. Good luck in the fish bowl, Raghu." From my friends in business circles I have learned that Raghuram Rajan is seen as a man who could perhaps succeed in taking some steps to save the Indian economy from further collapse. At the recommendation of a friend I read his book 'Fault Lines' when it came out a couple of years ago and found it readable and not written in the usual jargon that economists favour when they write books. But, I know little else about this man whose celebrity is of such an order that even his good looks have caused comment in the financial newspapers.

My only conversation with the new Governor occurred one snowy afternoon in Davos when he was on his way to one session and I to another at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting. He said he had read my column in India Today and I muttered something in return. Speaking of Davos reminds me of what I think of as the exact moment when India's economic troubles began. It was in 2006 and India was so much the flavor of the season for international investors that the Indian business community had come up in Davos that year with a campaign called 'India Everywhere' to celebrate India's arrival on the world stage as a possible new economic superpower. There was

an India Soiree filled with raucous music, fashion shows and the smell of spicy kebabs. Bollywood songs drifted into the icy night out of the clubs on Davos high street and there were so many Indian ministers, journalists, businessmen and bureaucrats in that tiny snow-covered resort that it felt a little as if the whole of political Delhi had moved to the Alps. It felt good to be Indian in Davos that year but the feeling did not last long because already talk had begun about 'inclusive' growth with the implicit suggestion that the incredible growth rate of the economy for two decades had benefited only a handful of rich Indians. Davos-wallahs, as the venerable Vinod Mehta, called them disparagingly last week when he wrote a paean of praise to his hero, Sonia Gandhi. The truth is very different but you

can only see it if you do not wear ideological blinkers. The truth is that whatever prosperity India has seen since it became an independent nation in 1947 has come as a result of these very 'Davos-wallahs' having done their bit to grow the economy after the license raj ended in 1991. The truth is that if there have been failures they have been entirely those of governance. If the Prime Minister had been able to continue the reforms that he started as Finance Minister in P.V. Narasimha Rao's government then the reforms he should have carried out in the past decade would have been to do with public services. Sanitation, healthcare, education reforms should have been what he concentrated on along with serious administrative

reform. Instead, under orders from Sonia Gandhi he focused on investing all his time and money in exactly the sort of massive welfare programmes that kept India mired in poverty for forty 'socialist' years. These schemes sound good on paper but in reality serve mostly to keep our poorest citizens dependent on handouts as they wallow in horrendous poverty. Meanwhile, ministers of the Government of India discovered that they could make money beyond their wildest dreams by extorting money from big business through deals to hand out coal mines and big infrastructure contracts. This is exactly what has happened in the second term of the Sonia-Manmohan government and ironically the blame for this has been put on big business. Anna Hazare and his followers, who

became so filled with hysteria that Supreme Court judges started canceling major international contracts as if it was normal. One judgement resulted in the cancellation of 122 telecom licenses and made foreign investors realize that their money was not safe in India.

Then came another judgement that closed all iron ore mines in Karnataka and caused more than 100,000 people to lose their jobs. The Government of India could have tried to persuade the judges that what they did had harmed the economy but this did not happen. Then, came the former Finance Minister's decision to impose taxes with retrospective effect after the Supreme Court ruled in favour of Vodafone in a tax case. This made investors even more nervous because the decision indicated that the rule of the government in power was more important than the rule of law. The final blow has come in the form of Sonia Gandhi's two favorite laws: the food security bill and the land acquisition bill. The message that goes out is that government will not cut public spending even if it leads to bankrupting India once more.

So in this bleak landscape will the new Governor of the Reserve Bank be able to make a difference? Will he be able to take measures that will strengthen the rupee and encourage investment? Will he be able to restore some of the optimism that was such a characteristic of the Indian economy for more than twenty years? The truth is that nobody knows. The truth is that times are so hard at the moment that the future looks bleak despite one of the most celebrated economists in the world taking charge at the RBI.

ON THE SPOT TAVLEEN SINGH

wear larger ideological blinkers than almost anyone else, built their movement against corruption on the premise that the country's wealth was being 'looted' by corrupt businessmen with the collusion of corrupt politicians. Far too many middle class Indians were seduced by this idea without questioning why India remained such a poor country in the decades when it was officials who controlled all natural resources.

The truth is that governments do not have the money to invest in such areas as the mining of iron ore and coal, which is why private investment was allowed in the first place. But, on account of the former CAG (Comptroller & Auditor General) and his zeal to expose corruption the atmosphere

lost no time in restoring the Jihadi content in the text books which was removed by earlier ANP government in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa province. Anyone criticising the concert is understandable. Be it unpleasant. But at the same time we must put questions to Geelani Sahib and his ilk on their seemingly irrational behaviour. Difference of opinion is far more acceptable than acquiescence. Meek deference as against independence of thought and acquiescence have made no value addition to our society. That is why it is on the decline. Various forces have contributed to the weakening of the communal bond in J & K. The octogenarian leader would do a lot of good to his 'followers' if he stops segregating people on the communal lines. His reference to Valley and some selected parts in Jammu region in his boycott call has ominous potential to disturb communal peace in the State. The unfortunate scars of Kishtwar are too fresh to be reopened there or anywhere else in the State.

In J & K's present socio political context, Pakistani columnist's concluding words must ring a warning: "And if we have decided as a state and society that rotten traditions must be perpetuated, criticism and change must be penalized, and law must be used to inject reverence and morality into ordinary Pakistani, let's forget about You -Tube, grow beards and join hands with the Taliban. We probably have more in common than we realize." Choice is ours. Time to make it wisely.

(The author is former Pr. District & Sessions Judge)

"Zubin Mehta's Concert And Geelani's Congenital Itch"

B L Saraf
The German embassy in India is scheduled to hold a cultural programme in Shalimar gardens, Srinagar, on 7th September.

Internationally renowned orchestra conductor Zubin Mehta is slated to perform in the show. Syed Ali Shah Geelani is up to what has, now, remained his only job. Cry for a hartaal: "I appeal to the people of Kashmir Valley, Chenab, Poonch and Rajouri belt of Jammu region to observe a complete shut down on 7th September." His grouse is that the concert is aimed at "turning the focus away" from Kashmir. Then, in the wild flight of imagination he accuses Mehta of "propagating the Israeli agenda." Geelani's call against the musician has come on the heels of grand Mufti's opposition to the Valley's only girl musical band, decreeing music anti-religion. Though, it is a different matter that soon after issuing the dictate against the band the venerable religious leader was seen enjoying a musical programme in the idyllic ambience of Char chinar in a roving boat. Irrespective of the fact whether the programme holds on or not, certain points need to be made.

Geelani Sahib, Kashmir has lost the kind of focus which, in a misplaced notion, is congenitally ingrained in your thought and mind long before you endorsed the bloody armed 'movement' in the Valley. And whatever little mention it would receive in highly bigoted and interested international quarters got lost courtesy your support to the armed militancy in Kashmir. So, do not sulk. Syed Sahib, to your credit, your love for Pakistan and its rabid communal elements



is not concealed That you profess as a birth right. So, whatever those elements do and propose to do there, on cue, you take the line. Seen thus, there is something more in your diatribe against the Shalimar concert than is apparent. After all, art of any kind, except that of gun games, is a much despised commodity in the country of your dreams. First, they banned You-Tube; then late night telephone packages got the axe. Is music on the chop? In a Pakistani enlightened journalist, we do find an answer for you. Babber Sattar, a columnist in Dawn apprehends so.

He, in a scintillating sarcasm, brings out the sorry state of affairs in Pakistan and castigates the rabid elements in his column: "First You-Tube was banned. Now it's late night telephone packages. What is next? Music, for it gives the impressionable all kinds of crazy ideas of love and idealism." Poetry, which incites the emotions of the young if it is of

the romantic variety, or worse still, encourages dissent and revolt against the status-quo if it is the serious stuff written by Faiz or Faraz?" By banning music you are putting fetters on thought process and critical speech, as some may want to evaluate the performance critically. You may have your reasons for opposing Indian state but you have no right to hold the art lovers to ransom. Surely there are better ways to protest and make a point. Here, a Kashmir civil society group seems to have a better idea to "bring back the focus" on Kashmir. They have decided to organise a parallel programme titled "Haqq-e-Kashmir" on the same day of Mehta's performance.

Pakistan, in general, can't be considered a role model. Even otherwise a fairly liberal minded person, Imran Khan too has let down some of his fans in Pakistan by adopting a crude sectarian political stance. His PTI Government

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(The author is former Pr. District & Sessions Judge)

ULB Elections

Sir, Delay after delay in holding much delayed ULB Election, is a slogan being audible again and again from everywhere. Feeling the pinch of want; being the head of a social organization it was represented just at the opportune time, when the Deptt of local bodies through their congress Minister, conveyed to the Govt of their having been fully preparedness to hold such Election at any time. But there remained complete silence over this important issue from Govt side. Leaders including PCC president Saif Din Soz have already indicated their inner feelings in this regard. All others had been putting forth this genuine demand for so many years.

Now the Bajpas have sounded their Shankhhooni, the violent thunder of which is audible from every nook & corner of the State. They have started coming out in streets, protesting for this demand against the Govt with their paraphernalia. PDP & NC conveners being against such constitutional values of democracy. More over the hurdles pointed out, are going to be over with the passage of time. No doubt security scenario shall have to be tightened at this juncture, if the gov't is seriously sincere to offer opportunity of local self Govt to our deserted towns, which is thought to be our constitutional right as the citizens of a democratic State. Otherwise we can be swayed by the feelings that we are still under arbitrary autocracy of the bureaucrats which is not at all healthy in a model State as ours. It can be counted as exploitation of the masses and nothing else.

Yours etc....
S C Gupta
Retd Edu Officer,
Udhampur

Populism or Welfare Schemes?

Kalyani Shankar

Will the Congress Party's strategy to woo the electorate with populist welfare schemes work in the 2014 elections? Will there be a UPA-III? It is indeed an uphill task to overcome the present scams and policy paralysis for the UPA-II to come back to power. Sonia Gandhi and her advisers think that new welfare measures like the Food Security bill and the Land Acquisition bill, which have been passed by Parliament this week, might work just as well as the MGNREGA and the loan waiver schemes did in the 2009 polls. The Congress President has made it clear that she has no faith in the trickle down effect to reach the poor, and instead prefers that they be rewarded immediately through these welfare measures. This is contrary to the neoliberal economic theory, which believes in doing away with subsidy regime and allow the market forces to take over. While pursuing these schemes, Sonia has simply brushed aside the objections including those from Singh and has insisted that the resources have to be found. This is the paradox facing the economist Prime Minister Manmohan Singh - which is where to find resources. Sonia believes, just as her mother-in-law Indra Gandhi did, that populist schemes are the route to power. Many of the regional satraps may agree with her on this.

Before the last Lok Sabha election, Gandhi pulled out of the closet the MGNREGA scheme, which provided for guaranteed rural jobs to the unemployed youth. Now comes this Food Bill, with its promises of cheap food grains to the poor. The Land Acquisition bill is to provide fair compensation to those whose land has been taken away for public buildings and factories. These together constitute a welfare regimen that is not only huge in terms of outlay, but also by the sheer size of the beneficiaries.

Although MGNREGA has been touted as a relief to many poor people, the critics find fault in many ways including leakages in its

But 2013 is not 2004 or 2009. The Congress itself was surprised by the 2009 victory, as it did not expect to perform so well. It may be a big gamble this time in view of various factors. After two terms and a series of scams tumbling out of its cupboard, the Congress and the UPA 2 government are in a vulnerable position facing a strong anti-incumbency.

delivery. Studies reveal that the money meant for rural employment did not reach the intended false beneficiaries claimed the benefits. As for the Food Security bill, doubts are expressed about the lack of storage facilities, the actual number of beneficiaries, linkages and leakages. But the Congress hopes that the mechanism for transfer will be in place in the next six months and the benefits will be for all to see. The Congress ruled states - there are fourteen of them - would go all out to implement the scheme even if the non-congress states do not cooperate. Three of them had already launched it on August 20, on the birth anniversary of late Rajiv Gandhi. The strategists are sure that this will create a huge rural vote bank, which would favour the Congress Party.

But 2013 is not 2004 or 2009. The Congress itself was surprised by the 2009 victory, as it did not expect to perform so well. It may be a big gamble this time in view of various factors. After two terms and a series of scams tumbling out of its cupboard, the Congress and the UPA 2 government are in a vulnerable position facing a strong anti-incumbency.

Secondly, the emergence of a strong leader like the BJP's main campaigner Narendra Modi has become an unknown factor for the Congress when the Gandhi scion Rahul Gandhi is still reluctant to be on the forefront to counter him.

Thirdly, the Congress strategists hope these welfare measures may cover up the series of scams and governance deficit. However, it is not going to be that easy. Take the FSB. Even though it is a centrally sponsored scheme, the delivery system is the responsibility of the states. While the Congress ruled states might be enthusiastic, the non-congress ruled states like Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu have grievances that their existing welfare scheme was much better than the FSB. In any case, the benefit to the Congress depends on the delivery system by the states.

Fourthly, the growing middle class is slowly turning against the Congress. It was this huge vote bank, which helped the Congress in 2009 elections. The urban middle class that was charmed by him from 2004-2009, with the high growth rate and his clean image, is now simply depressed with him, vexed with the spiraling prices and high inflation.

Fifthly, the captains of industry who were waiting in vain for the reforms from the economist prime minister are quite disappointed and are looking to the BJP campaign chief Modi to rescue them. Modi has projected himself as a friend of rich industrialists and there are at least eight big industrial houses, which are supporting his claim for the top job. They are upset with the Congress for bringing the land acquisition bill, which they claim is anti-industry.

Sixthly, there are serious doubts in some sections whether Sonia's welfare policies are on the right track. They feel it may be good politics but bad economics. This section believes that the victory of Congress in 2009 had nothing to do with rural employment, healthcare or increase in agriculture prices. They argue this is not the right time for bringing any new welfare schemes when the economy is on the downside. The global rating agencies are predicting a down grade for India in view of its economic performance.

The Congress led by Sonia Gandhi is taking a big gamble in the next elections and solely depending on the freebies it is offering to the poor. It is a million dollar question whether the Congress pull off the hat trick. (IPA Service)

Readers Write

Political parties under RTI Act

Sir, Refer news item 'Omar favours bringing political parties under RTI purview' DE Sept 4.

At a time when all political parties have vehemently opposed their inclusion under RTI Act for accountability and maintaining transparency, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's statement is quite worth taking note of and deserves to be appreciated by the countrymen. It has come as a ray of hope amid despair. Barring our politicians, every one in the country wants that politicians should be brought under RTI purview. This will allow the countrymen to know the functioning of political parties.

The people of country have a right to know the politicians whom they are going to elect, and how they wield power once they occupy the power seats. Indian voter is as responsible for development of nation as does a politician. Rather a voter is more responsible than the elected representative. By this very logic, he should be aware of the deeds of a political party. So political parties should voluntarily go for RTI Act.

Yours etc....
Sunil Khajuria
Jammu

Promotions in environmental science

Sir, The department of school education has recently issued promotion orders for elevation of masters as incharge lecturers in various subjects. The promotees have been asked to submit various documents for verification, in order to make way for their placement and adjustment, so that the students are benefitted. It is worthwhile to mention that the most important subject that is the subject of environmental science has not been touched. There are a lot of vacant posts of lecturers in the subject of environmental science and a sizeable number of post graduate masters/teachers serving in the education department and managing higher secondary classes for the last so many years and not even a single master/teacher has been promoted as lecturer in the subject till now, environment being the cause of concern and vitally important subject. The Deputy Chief Minister (Minister for School Education) is requested to take personal interest in the matter and issue instructions for elevation of post graduate masters/teachers in the subject of environmental science to lecturers so that the students are benefitted and their classwork is carried on smoothly.

Yours etc....
Hira Lal Bhat
Jammu