

Seeing would be Believing

The country's President and Prime Minister made some highly thought-provoking remarks to the student community and the political parties on Sunday.

The President has sounded sharply diagnostic of the ailment with his characteristic call-the-spade-a-spade uprightness, but because this resonates one time too many from him, the still elusive curative treatment of the disease of terrorism by an all-out political intervention is a disappointment.

Those were good words uttered by the Prime Minister; but much as we know that she alone cannot set things right on the campus there is also a growing public belief that her high stake in making the government work dictates that she adopt a surgical approach to terrorism.

The reality on the ground is that the arms recovery drive has petered into a whine from a roar. It is during some factional fights within the BCL that arms have surfaced evidencing their illegal possession.

Frightening Spectre

The latest revelation about arsenic poisoning in the country is frightening. Tens of thousands of people drinking water from shallow tubewells have shown the symptom of the malady.

Let us take note of the Indian expert's recommendation for drinking surface water and using shallow tubewell water for washing, etc. His survey found deep tubewell water safe for drinking.

Now someone from another country taking the pains to underscore the looming threat of arsenic poisoning, the local scientists have suddenly found a scapegoat in the government.

Creeping Martial Law

Pakistani President Farooq Leghari's decree, allowing the army to play a formal advisory role in government affairs, by all accounts, is a serious set-back for democracy in that country.

By taking this step, Leghari gives the impression that he has been playing into the hands of the military.

Notwithstanding her abuse of power and corruption — which, many believe, she committed when in power — Benazir Bhutto now emerges as the defender of democracy in Pakistan.

It's the Economy, Stupid

An analysis of the polls show that economic issues dominate the public mind and it is their perception that PML (N) leader Mian Nawaz Sharif has the ability to deal with economic issues that make him the most popular leader presently and thus makes PML (N) the leading party.

PERCEPTIONS aside, the real feeling of the people can only be gauged by evaluating the results of a poll across the country.

Research and Collection Services Ltd (RCS), a private company engaged in market analysis, targeted two age groups in both the sexes, male and female, to determine the answers to a number of questions, some of which are politically operative in the context of the Feb 3 elections.

Collectively, "unemployment" and "inflation" indicated that "economy" was the dominant issue in the coming polls. A large number of voters volunteered to answer the questions were "professional" people, either "self-employed" or "clerical".

It is widely known that China is an exponent of "panchsheel" or the doctrine of Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, but it has also been a weapons supplier to class war exponents and potential revolutionaries as well as to contentions parties in conflict.

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Beijing's security image has been of varying order, with a constantly shifting behavioural manifestations. It had its periods of alliance and independence, active involvement and isolation, dogmatism and realpolitik, radicalism and moderation or de-radicalization, ideologically-guided security formulations and of de-ideologisation.

Apparently it would be very difficult to offer any generalization on China's security behaviour. The country has experienced some unpredictable shifts in its security postures in every decade since its liberation. Now that China is steadily emerging as a power player in the polarity of international security system, it is imperative to unveil Beijing's security concerns as it enters the 21st century and is destined to play a leading role as a global actor in the reshaping of the international system.

China sees its basic security policy goals as consolidation of national defence, resisting foreign aggression, defending national sovereignty over its land, sea and air as well as its maritime rights and interests, and safeguarding national unity and security.

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To the Editor...

First things first The newly-elected government is still governing on an ad hoc basis, and has yet to come down to routine level of administration, which is very difficult in developing countries; where, generally, the opposition is more vocal and disruptive; and the party in power has a long pending list of party priorities to dispose off before settling down to confine their gaze at the lowly files.

So, instinctively, the first priority is self-preservation through consolidation of power. This takes a long time before the second or third gear is applied to executive work. The public image is sought to be built up through the spout of demagogic oratory, still cultivated as a traditional pastime than for moving the country forward.

First priority: Anti-corruption campaign should be a loud, high-profile, and a 52-week activity, non-stop. The liberation image has to be restored, and anti-corruption punishment has to be made deterrent, at the same level of priority. The former is not effective without the latter; when the enforcer is no longer in power. What action have we seen during the last six months? Nothing visible or loud enough to talk about. If it is top secret, tell us what is top secret, without naming names. High profile anti-corruption case is reported to be in the offing against the former PM.

Second priority: anti-bakshish campaign round the year. Need not be explained what it means.

Third priority: Anti-bribery slogans by all the ministers during 50 per cent of the time they speak in public. It should become an obsession, as we find on some other topics.

Fourth priority: Pay attention to the non-political evildoers and corrupt people in the public and private sectors. Less than two per cent of the citizens are politicians, but they cause more than 90 per cent of the trouble and damage.

Fifth priority: The above four!

A Zabr Dhaka

thereby putting some doubt as to the accuracy of the poll. Among the qualities the public aspired for in their favourite leaders was "honesty" at 33 per cent followed by "political views" and "ability to manage the economy" at 14 per cent each.

"Personality" seekers were registered at 13 per cent while "ability to speak" got only 7 per cent just ahead of "religious views" at 6 per cent. The results

may not be that accurate but do show clear trend as far as the public support for political parties/political leaders is concerned. In Punjab 42 per cent of the people support Mian Nawaz Sharif and PML(N) followed by Mian Yousaf Raza Gillani (Tehrik-i-Insaf) at 18 per cent followed by Ms Benazir Bhutto at 15 per cent.

In Sindh the result was even more startling inasfar as TI at 16 per cent and PPP (SB) at 8 per cent have taken away the once-solid vote bank of PPP (estimated at newly 45 per cent in 1990), leaving the party at a meager 13 per cent as compared to PML (N) at 16 per cent.

In Balochistan PML (N) is clocking in at 40 per cent followed by PPP at 17 per cent, though surprisingly PPP (SB) has 5 per cent but a vast segment of 26 per cent are undecided while others are splintered into smaller parties with concentration in their own areas giving them 1-3 seats each on the same pattern as in the last 2 elections.

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

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China's Security Concerns: Emerging Patterns

by Dr Abul Kalam

A realistic projection of China's future security posture or direction of its security behaviour can hardly be made on the basis of its historical manifestation of its foreign policy at a time when "transition to the post-Deng era might begin at any moment."

China already perceives 'South China economic sphere' a reality, which has become 'the hot area with the world's fastest economic growth.' Rich in natural resources and situated in the middle of the western coast of the Pacific and bestriding Northeast and Southeast Asia, it joins the Pacific and the Atlantic with the railways and network system linking itself with distant ports like Rotterdam in Europe.

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IN MEMORIAM

B M Abbas AT

by Amjad Hossain Khan

INTERNATIONALLY reputed water expert B M Abbas AT died on 26th December 1996 at BIRDEM at the age of 85 of old age complications.

Mr Abbas became Member of the Presidents Advisory Council in 1977 and later on Member of the Council of Ministers in 1978. He fought resolutely against the Farakka Barrage Project of India and tried to reach an agreement on sharing of the Ganges water once the Farakka Barrage was commissioned.

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