#### South Asian Nuclearisation and Weaponisation

## The Conceptual Dimension: No First Use Option

by M Shahiduzzaman

We are moving into the next century while the two sub-continental giants have now chosen to take the clock back and force us to relive the last fifty years of this century once more — except that the fifty years involved a global context while the current balance of terror is to be relived in a regional context.

PART from the absence the early fifties, namely, George Kennan, Robert McNamara, of an aims control Gerard Smith, et al. There were dialogue, which the men who are almost rated perpetuates a basically unstable as the intellectual fathers of the deterrent posture, there are sev-Dominoe Theory, along with eral other dimensions of the the notorious John Foster conceptual perspective, that deserve exposure in order to Dulles. George Kennan was in fact deepen a serious understanding the real theoretician who of the issues involved. It ought through his famous "Mr. X" aunot be a futile exercise in simple thored article in a 1948 issue of filibustering on the virtues or vices of the national security the prestigious "Foreign Affairs" Journal, founded the state or the moratorium state which amounts to little beyond Containment Doctrine and an initiation of the sixties litthereby initiated the roll-on to the conceptual dimension of erature that had long been Deterrence Theory. Now the locked up in heydays of the Cold War. They do not constitute eisame man in his very late age came up with this "No First Use ther any meaningful under-Doctrine" along with the three other Cold War compatriots in standing of a nuclear-weapons prone region nor any apprecia-1981 through a much-debated tion of the strategic implicaarticle in Foreign Affairs Jourtions of nuclearization. Ananal in 1981. The proposal they lysts do not have to sound came up with was that NATO alarmist sonic booms as is should discard the "Right of imagined but do have a con-First Use of Nuclear Weapons" sciousness to put forth the releas a gesture of goodwill to the vant contending issues as far as

they relate effectively to the

current literature on security

studies. An important concep-

tual dilemma has been the re-

cent Indian Foreign Office

Option". The Indians had re-

cently offered this proposal to

the Pakistanis, as press reports

seem to have indicated, whether

such proposal was authentic or merely speculative is not yet

fully clear. What is clear how-

ever is the vastly deceptive

character of this doctrine.

which though apparently

tempting, could be strategically

very reappealing to the lesser

power of the two in geo-political

trine" is a conceptual misnomer

in operational terms, right

from the outset when the doc-

trine actually originated in the

first year of the decade of the

were no less than such towering

figures who had in fact founded

the "Containment Doctrine" of

The authors of the doctrine

eighties.

In fact the "No First Use Doc-

propagation of the "No First Use

The proposal was quickly rejected first by the Germans and the French and then across the Atlantic, by the Americans. Despite the terrible degree of repulsion towards medium range tactical weapons - the Pershings - which were earlier installed all over West Europe and the consequent apprehensions of a Europe-based limited nuclear war, the allies considered the "No First Use Option" as highly unrealistic and an incentive towards insecurity. So NATO retained its "Right of First Use Option", arguing that

such a right was the most potent

means to discourage any Rus-

Russians. For these old men.

hardened and seasoned by the

rigour of the Cold War, the post

Vietnam trauma was far too

much to swallow and therefore.

the simple old age retreat was

one of mellowed-down maturity

- a total reversal from their

long years of twigging the nu-

clear weapons options. Surpris-

ingly, they had under-estimated

their obsolescence.

sian adventurism or even any provocation. NATO still retains the right of first use even if confronted by a conventional attack.

Now applying the Doctrine in South Asia implies that if both parties agree on discarding the "First Use Option," that could reduce the risks of a nuclear war. For India, to initiate such a doctrine is inconsequential. Since she is the stronger party, larger and far more wellequipped of the two. But Pakistan is much more vulnerable in geopolitical terms - with a dangerous lack of territorial depth so that any surprise armoured onslaught, even if conventional, could split her into two. Nuclear strength, even the retaining of the right of first use - is the best guarantee for her to offset any lack of conventional superiority, neutralise any possible Indian adventurism and force India to desist from any bluffing. Most important, the first use option lets Pakistan to uphold a threat of irreparable damage on any aggressive adversary even non-nuclear, and forces India to treat Pakistan as co-equal in strategic terms.

If Pakistan signs any "No First Use Option" deal with India, she then literally surrenders the most potent advantage of her nuclear weaponization something that duly compensates her comparative territorial disadvantage and limits in overall arsenals, in quantitative terms.

Therefore, just as NATO had reserved the "Right of First Use Option" as the most credible guarantee against any Soviet misadventurism even in the 1980s post-detente phase of the

Cold War, when things had begun to look far more conciliatory to such original hardcore specialists as the authors who initiated it, similarly, Pakistan confronts the same option. Being a strategic inferior. Pakistan's options are far less than India's and once she has the bomb, her only tactical option is to rely on the threat to use it first, even if there is any serious provocation short of any nuclear threat from India. The first use option is Pakistan's only security guarantee as far a nuclear deterrence is con-

deterrence posture, yet for Pakistan, any form of nuclear strategy is necessarily a deterrence-based option. This is a means of a high threat of punishment upon the enemy which is otherwise superior, so that the enemy does not undermine Pakistan's resolve to counter massively a limited conven tional assault and has no temptation to treat the Pakistani nuclear threat as a bluff. It is this particular potent preparedness to use such an option and the threat to use it first which gives the real credible deterrence value to Pakistan's nuclear acquisitions. For her, the defense value is secondary, that is, the actual use of it if deterrence fails forcing the literal use of the nuclear weapons. leading to mutually assured de-

Although a highly unstable

The prospect of any actual use is understandably far more minimized when the threat of a right of first use is reassuringly maintained. Of course, this can be a highly destabilizing state of deterrence and all the more so, devoid of any arms control

traction.

dialogue or regular exchange of data. But nonetheless, giving up the "Right of First Use Option" as the Indians put forth, would simply deny Pakistan the deterrence value of weaponization. Just as much as Pakistan has had to pay a very high price to opt for a weaponsized status, it would all be of no consequence at all once she ever shows any interest in accepting the "No First Use Option". For her, this is a trap that simply threatens to wipe out her status of equality gained vis a vis India - as a guarantee against any preponderance.

Therefore, Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto and her opposition party should not feel sorry that Nawaz Sharif has rejected the "No First Use" Indian proposal. To make it a domestic political ploy is rather dangerous and simplistic. If the NATO had rejected the "No First Use Option", offered by their own old strategists, and despite their far more convincing technological superiority, largely based on West Europe's lack of territorial depth, in that case, militarily inferior Pakistan's best nuclear doctrinal guarantee is to maximize her threat potential on India — that is, to strongly emphasize the "Right of First Use" even in the face of a surprise conventional onslaught by India — in theoretical terms.

The "Right of First Use Option" is an ideal deal for nuclear co-equals. But it could also help to treat the nuclear option only for its determent utility and not any defense utility. Given the nature of Indo-Pakistani status of asymmetry, there is no denying the fact that the deterrent utility for Pakistan is maximized only when the readyness

to use the nuclear option is

maximized. The "No First Use Option" is a weak doctrine and possibly a potentially dangerous doctrine. It creates the scope for a false sense of security and potential bluffing, while one already keeps the finger-tips pressed on the nuclear button. It may offer a superficial sense of security rather than the use of a preventive medicine.

In fact, in a nuclear deter-

rence posture, however unstable it might be, declamatory rhetorics of restraint are wishful behaviour, offering nothing substantive. Finally there is another compelling reality which makes the "No First Use Option" completely inoperative within the South Asian deterrence structure. It is amazing that Indian proponents of this doctrine never took into consideration the inevitable compulsion that a "No First Use Option" must be a post arms control phenomenon. This means that such doctrine simply fails to bear any consequence when it is contemplated at a pre-arms control stage. Only an acceptable level of minimal trust and conscious level of mutual weapons data transaction can allow the type of common strategic perceptions to afford a 'No First Use Option"

This becomes clear when one studies the timing of the first ever proposal of this doctrine in 1981 by George Kennan and his group for NATO to adopt, which was eventually rejected of course. It came during the postdetente phase of the Cold War better known as the early Reaganite era, when things were growing notoriously jingoistic with the initiation of the Star Wars plans. But what propelled such a doctrine like the "No First Use Option" at that time was to arrest further deterioration of the weaponisation cli-mate after a decade full of arms control dialogue and very opti-mistic phase of detente-based confidence-building measures between the two superpowers. Thus, a no first use option can only be the end-result after a through process of confidencebuilding measures and also when both adversaries have in fact achieved a stage of approximate parity in their weaponization capabilities.

This is rather vital since we notice that only after the Soviet Union had achieved an acknowledged parity in 1970 after two decades of catching up and sufficient humiliating oppositions by the United States, did the latter finally acknowledge the Soviet status as a superpower and preferred to move towards detente. In South Asia, on the other hand, the asymmetry is well-defined and Pakistan is the nuclear as well as the conventional under-dog in geo-political and strategic terms. It is thus rather absurd that India could ever imagine Pakistan to consider the "No First Use Option" seriously.

Pakistan in fact showed little interest in the proposal and the whole idea simply faded away. No one can expect that such a proposal could at all be taken seriously in a state of such lack of eventuality on serious dialogue. In fact, Pakistan balked down after the Indian initiative in this regard, and her Foreign Minister came up with a Quixotic remark to the effect that the flight time would be so short that it makes little difference who uses the weapon first and who uses it second.

This makes sense after all, considering the geo-technological distance of mutual targeting. In fact battlefield tactical weapons or short-range twenty to fifty miles could be targeted at advancing armoured columns in about five seconds or even less. In this particular scenario, who wants to give up the advantage of surprise, if in fact battlefield use appears feasible? In that case, nuclear weaponry assumes the character of defence weapons, with little deterrent value. Actual use is certainly a part of Pakistani strategy, considering her horrifying lack of territorial depth in Funjab. Short-range battlefield weapons have great tactical value and Fakistanis are the most probable bunch to play the devil's advocate role. India missed out the point that the "No Flast Use Option" can only be feasible when flight time of missiles are extended to the level of inter-continental ballistic missiles, that is, strategic wcapons or long-range missiles only. If we consider short distances between neighbouring states, and if there is a situation of geo-political as well as military-technological asymmetry. it is impractical to assume any realistic applicability of the

weapons covering a distance of

"No First Use Option". Thus, the conceptual dynamics of nuclear weaponisation ought to be placed more carefully and should not be transfixed by the Cold War-based superpowers' definitions in all ar-

The differences in time-span or rather time-boundaries are enormous. We are moving into the next century while the two sub-continental giants have now chosen to take the clock back and force us to relive the last fifty years of this century once more - except that the fifty years involved a global context while the current balance of terror is to be relived in a regional context.

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#### Letter From America

### The Hundred Best Movies Ever Made

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

How can "Gandhi" (Ben Kingsley), a film that cleaned up at the Oscars in 1983 be omitted from the top 100, whereas cross-dressing Dustin Hoffman's slapstick "Tootsie" make it at 62? How can "Beckett" (1964) featuring memorable acting by Peter O'Toole and Richard Burton be ignored in favour of "A Clockwork Orange" (number 46), best known for stylized rape!

AST month, the American Film Institute came up with a list of the hundred best films ever made. (The list is given below for the benefit of the readers; the annotations are mine.) The list was announced on a CBS television show hosted by Jodie Foster, with comments by just about anyone who matters in the filmdom. NEWSWEEK brought out a special issue commemorating the films. The period covered was between 1896 to 1996; this year's therefore. blockbuster, Titanic, could not be considered. The writer has most of the movies. Here's his assessment.

Perhaps many of the Bangladeshis have not heard of "Citizen Kane", the critics choice as the number one film ever made. The Orson Welles epic is about a newspaperman building his empire. Full of shadows and symbolism, this is a movie that one likes to praise, not see. It is hardly ever shown on American television.

"Casablanca", a movie that inspired Woody Allen, got the nod for the second place. The World War II flick is noted for its one-liners: "Here's looking at you, kid", and "play it again, Sam." Francis Ford Copola intended his "Godfather" movies (numbers 3 and 32) to be an indictment of American capitalism. Instead it awarded the Mafia royalty status.

If it was left up to the American people, not the critics, the top choice would have been "Gone with the Wind" (number 4), the civil war saga. Margaret Mitchell took ten years to write the American classic. Her novel is full of the N word Producer Selznick debated mightily whether or not to keep the N words. Sanity prevailed and the sanitized version of the novel made it to the big screen. Several versions of Clark Gable's famous last words, "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn" were tried out, including, "Frankly my dear, you give me indigestion!"

"Lawrence of Arabia", the movie that inspired Steven Spielberg, took the number 5 spot. The desert classic exploited the full screen to the fullest. Few movie scenes are better than the first appearance of Omar Sharif in the film — as mirage meshing with the desert background, slowly revealing himself. Personally, I like David Lean's other film, "The Bridge on the River Kwai" even better. To me that movie, about British prisoners of war in a Japanese camp, is the best war film ever made. "The Wizard of Oz" is number 6. The film version of "Alice in Wonderland" entertained (and terrorized) a generation of children with witches and other scary charac-

"The Graduate" (number 7) dared to make fun of American sex and corporate America ("Remember just one word Benjamin, 'Plastic!'"); although the Simon and Garfunkel songs made the film memorable for many others. Brando's "On the Waterfront" ("I could have been somebody, instead of a bum") was number 8, and Spielberg's

holocaust epic "Schindler's List" was number nine. Finally, Gene Kelley's heartwarming "Singin' in the Rain" rounded out the top ten.

And now to controversies. How can "Gandhi" (Ben Kingsley), a film that cleaned up at the Oscars in 1983 be omitted from the top 100, whereas cross-dressing Dustin Hoffman's slapstick "Tootsie" make it at 62? How can "Beckett" (1964) featuring memorable acting by Peter O'Toole and Richard Burton be ignored in favour of "A Clockwork Orange" (number 46), best known for stylized rape! And what is the rationale behind the inclusion of D. W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" (number 44), a movie that glorified the Ku Klux Klan? They might as well have recognized Leni Rifensthal for producing those artful propaganda films for Hitler!

Most of the good films did actually make the list. Wilder's "Double Indemnity", with killer Barbara Stanwyck as femme fatale, is the late Satyajit Ray's favourite film, and should have been ranked higher than 38. "The great Satyajit Ray" himself was listed as the top Asian film maker with a photograph of Apu from "Pather Panchali"

No review of films is ever complete without a list of flops. With "Ishtar" and "Heaven's Gate" to his (dis)credit, Warren Beatty has shown a knack for those. To counter NEWSWEEK's best films list, TIME magazine came out with a list of some of the worst Demi Moore's 1996 version of "Striptease topped

I wentieth century has been the century of movies. As NEWSWEEK pointed out, as individuals and nations we have grown up with them. Our images of love, war, family and feud owe so much to what we have seen on screen. Everyone is a fan, expert and critic of movies. "We don't feel the same way about the more venerable art forms — the photograph, the novel, the theatre, which are movies' parent and great-grand parents. They are older than we are, and we tend to get a little polite in their presence. But the movies are our contemporaries - our buddies, our crushes, our

"From its disreputable nickelodeon beginnings as a cheap, working class diversion, the movies needed only a few decades to become the dominant art form of the century, leaving novelists and playwrights biting their nails with envy. And early on, it became clear that the man behind the curtain, the wizard in charge, was America's Hollywood. Colonizing the world's imagination, its iconography became an international language. From Hollywood movies we have learned how to live, how to love, what shoes to wear.

Who knows what a globalized Hollywood will offer in the next hundred years.

The Top 100 Movies

Citizen Kane (1941, Orson Welles) 2. Casablanca (1942,

Bergman) 3. The Godfather (1972, Marlon Brando, Al Pacino) 4. Gone With the Wind (1939, Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh) 5. Lawrence of Arabia (1962, Peter O'Toole, Omar Sharif, Alec Guinness, Anthony Quinn) 6. The Wizard of Oz (1939, Judy Garland) 7. The Graduate (1967, Dustin Hoffman. Ann Bancroft, Katherine Ross) 8. On the Waterfront (1954, Marlon Brando) 9. Schindler's List (1993, Liam Neeson. Ben Kingsley) 10. Singin' in the Rain (1952, Gene 11. It's a Wonderful Life

Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid

(1946, James Stewart) 12. Sunset Boulevard (1950, William Holden) 13. The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957, Alec Guinness. William Holden, Jack Hawkings) 14. Some Like it Hot (1959, Marilyn Monroe, Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis) 15. Star Wars (1977, Alec Guinness, Harrison Ford) 16. All About Eve (1950, Bette Davis) 17. The African Queen (1951, Humphrey Bogart, Katherine Hepburn) 18. Psycho (1960. Anthony Perkins, Janet Leight 19. Chinatown (1974, Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunnaway) 20. One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975, Jack Nicholson, Louise Flethcher).

21. The Grapes of Wrath (1940, Henry Fonda) 22. 2001: Space Odyssey (1968) 23. The (1941. Maltese Falcon Humphtey Bogart) 24. Raging Bull (1980, Robert De Nito) 25. E. T. The Extra Terrestrial 26. Dr. Strangelove 27. Donnie and Clyde HORT Warren Deatty) 28 Apocalypse Now 11079 fir ando Martin Streent 29 Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939) James Stewart) 30. The Trea sures of the Sierra Madre

31. Annie Hall (1977, Woody Allen, Diane Keaton) 32. The Godfather Part II (1974) 33. High Noon (1952, Gary Cooper) 34. To Kill a Mocking Bird (1962, Gregory Peck) 35. It Happened One Night (1934) 36. Midnight Cowboy (1969, Dustin Hoffman, Jon Voight) 37. The Best Years of Our Lives (1946) 38. Double Indemnity (Fred McMurray, Barbara Stanwyck) 39. Dr. Zhivago (1965, Omar Sharif, Julie Christie) 40. North by Northwest (1959).

41. West Side Story (1961. Natalie Wood, Richard Beymer) 42. Rear Window (1954) 43. King Kong (1933) 44. The Birth of a Nation (1915) 45. A Street Car Named Desire (1951, Brando) 46. A Clockwork Orange (1971, Malcolm McDowell) 47. The Taxi Driver (Robert De Niro, Jodie Foster) 48. Jaws (1975, Richard Dreyfuss, Robert Shaw, Rob Scheider) 49. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937, Disney Animation) 50. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969, Robert Redford, Paul Newman, Katherine

51. The Philadelphia Story (1940, James Stewart, Katherine Hepburn) 52. From Here to Eternity (1953, Frank Sinatra, Burt Lancaster, Ernest Borgnine) 53. Amadeus (1984, Tom Hulce) 54. All Quiet on the Western Front (1930) 55. The

Ross)

Sound of Music (1965, Julie Andrews, Peter) 56, MASH (1970, Donald Sutherland) 57. The Third Man (1949) 58. Fantasia (1940) 59. Rebel Without a Cause (1955, James Dean) 60. Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981 Harrison Ford)

61. Vertigo (1958) 62. Tootsie (1982, Dustin Hoffman) 63. Stagecoach (1939, John Wayne, Claire Trevor) 64. Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977, Richard Dreyfuss) 65 The Silence of the Lambs (1991) Jodie Foster, Anthony Hop-66. Network (Albert Finney, William Holden, Faye Dunnaway) Manchurian Candidate (1962) Frank Sinatra) 68. An American in Paris (1951, Gene Kelley, Leslie Caron) 69. Shane (1953) 70. The French Connection (1971, Gene Hackman)

71. Forrest Gump (1994, Tom Hanks, Sally Field) 72. Ben-Hur (1959, Charlton Heston) 73. Wuthering Heights (1939. Lawrence Olivier, Merle Oberon, David Niven) 74. The Gold Rush (1925) 75. Dances with Wolves (1990, Kevin Kost ner) 76. City Lights (1931) 77. American Graffitti (1973. Richard Dreyfuss) 78. Rocky (1976. Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire) 79. The Deer Hunter (1979, Robert De Niro, Merri 80. The Wild Bunch (1969)

Modern Times (1936, Chaplin) 82. Giant Charlie 83. Platoon 1986 (Charlie Sheen) 84. Fargo (1996) 85. Duck Soup (1933) 86 Mutiny on the Bounty (1935 Charles Laughton) Frankenstein (1931) 88. Easy Rider (1969) 89. Patton (1970, George C. Scott) 90. The Jazz Singer (1927, Al Jolson).

91. My Fair Lady (Rex Har-

rison, Audrey Hepburn) 92. A Place in the Sun (1951) 93. The Apartment (1960, Jack Lemmon) 94. Goodfellas (1990) 95. Pulp Fiction (1994, John Travolta, , Uma Thurman, Samuel Jackson) 96. The Searchers (1956) 97. Bringing up Baby (1938) 98. Unforgiven (1992, Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman) 99. Guess Who's Coming to Dinner (1967, Sidney Poitier, Spencer Treacy, Katherine Hepburn) 100. Yankee Doodle Dandy (1942, James Cagney)

HE 81st Constitutional

The 81st Constitutional Amendment Bill proposes to introduce the reservation through a new Article 330 A (1) and (2) that states 'seats shall be reserved for women in the House of the People; and that seats shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes as the case may be. The Article 332A recommends reservation of seats for women in the State Legislatures and union territories, provided the States act

In order to resolve and integrate various suggestions raised by these Member of Parliament. the Bill was referred to a Joint Select Committee of the Two Houses. In course of deliberations the Committee received 102 Memoranda containing comments/recommendations from womens' organisations and individuals; the committee recorded oral evidence from prominent political leaders Smt.Pramila Dandavate, the Attorney General Sri Ashok-Desai, Former Secretary in the Ministry of Law, and advocate Sri S S Ramiah and representatives of leading womens' organisations. The Joint Committee, that included representatives of all political parties and Independent members, agreed that this Bill but they meet their approval and reservation for women in legislatures etc. also proposes suggestions to improve

amendments more effective.

# Bill: A Dialogue Priya Prakash writes from New Delhi

The Women's Reservation

The women's reservation issues cuts across all sections of society. Women's inclusion in the decision making process, and governance enlarges the base and transforms the structure of politics and governance. The women's perspective is by the very nature of women's lives, interest and existence, an inclusive one.

Amen-dment Bill 1996, was introduced in the Parliament and the report of the Joint Select committee was presented to both the houses in December 1996. However the process was halted as the 11th parliament went in for a mid term poll. The National Agenda of the ruling coalition has also accepted this as an important

that have less than three seats are exempted from the reservation as above.

the provisions to make the The committee was of the view that there should be no exception to the principle of reservation and the States having less than three seats three nominated members by the President of Anglo Indian community in the Lok Sabha

and also elected Capital Assembly of Delhi. In such states having less than 3 elected members the reservation for women candidates should be rotation for the third elected position. The committee also recommended that government should work out the modalities for reservation of seats in Rajya Sabha, and legislative council in the States.

For reservation of Other Backward Caste women, committee recommended that at present no reservation has been provided for Other Backward Classes in the constitution, similar to that of St/ST. Therefore committee was of the view that the government may consider this provision as and when this issue of reservation for general category of Other Backward Classes is taken up by the Parliament. Thus it will be seen that

various issues related with

the recipient. The 'Sarda Act' Hindu succession Act punitive provisions against Dowry and many others have never received the serious implementation, and it appears, attitudes are likely to hardened to stop the participation of women in politics also. Looking at the increasing criminalisation of politics. Crimes against women and increasing cases of abduction rape and murders invariably would keep the women from active participation in politics. The latest in the series are the reported cases of criminal assault and rape of women candidate in Panchayat election in West Bengal, a party candidate of Trinamul Congress in the Panchayat elections, and repeated assault and rape of Saheli worker, student of Jaipur University in Rajasthan, would deter women in critical numbers to join the mainstream as they did during

The distorted scenario, fifty years after Independence

highlights the need for reordering macro-societal priorities, political restructuring, with a view to directory development to focus on women and girls so that they do emerge as a key to economic growth with social justice.

reservation have been processed exhaustively, by the Joint Select Committee. Therefore, given the political will, it should not take long for the Parliament to legislate the electoral promise. The main Opposition party viz Congress Party, have promised on several occasion they will cooperate on the question of political empowerment of women and help in evolving a national consensus for implementation of this amendment. The womens' movement is asking an assurance for the political will, as it is apprehended that, as usual, legislations relating to issues of women are not given the priority it deserves. Even after these are passed, these are not enforced diligently due to silent opposition, social and cultural attitudes, the law remain in the Law Book, and do not benefit

the Independence movement. Women were not afraid to face lathi charge and jail sentences in their struggle for freedom against a foreign ruler, but if they would find insensitivity and criminal assault against women with the tacit sanction of the overlords of the society too overbearing and oppressive to be fought single handedly. It is said that political empowerment holds the key to an all round development and improvement in women's social and economic and legal status in our country. But women who will continue to be troubled by modern day Rahu and Ketu and be deterred to come out of their homes due to the fear of physical assault, would be traversity of democracy.

This saga of rape, female infanticide and other crimes against women challenge

should social conscience, speicially when perpetuated to terrorise a section of the population from seeking who are striving for social change. India's strength is in it's large pool of manpower skilled men and women. Therefore to deny one section of the population be deprived of political activism, in the name orthodoxy they prevent development of half of the population that are women, the nation is going to be caught in an economic backwaters.

This distorted scenario, fifty years after Independence highlights the need for reordering macro-societal priorities, political restructuring, with a view to direct development to focus on women and girls so that they do emerges as a key to economic growth with social justice. Womens calls for critical mass participation in the country's political and policy making structures is broader than the needs of any one sections of so-

The women's reservation issues cuts across all sections of society. Women's inclusion in the decision making process, and governance enlarges the base and transforms the structure of politics and governance. The women's perspective is by the very nature of women's lives, interest and existence, an inclusive one. It is therefore a strategic instrument of effecting an urgently needed shift in politics towards the basic needs of society in general and the large numbers of the disempow-

As a result of 73/74th amendment large number of women are already participating and contributing to the democratic process. The vehicle that has helped grassroots women making this journey has been the Reservations. It is widely expected that 81st Amendment, providing a similar participation opportunity in the State Legislatures and Parliament would complete the political cycle, and harmonious change to gender-equitable political partnership.

The writer is former Secretary to the Indian Planning Commission.

— Mandira

#### Will RiceTec Gobble Up Thai Rice Next?

HAI farmers are afraid that RiceTec Inc., the US-**L** based company that was in the news recently for its attempts to pirate an Indian rice variety, may strike again and walk off with a patent on Jasmine rice. The company is already marketing a brand called Jasmati, which has nothing to do with the Thai Jasmine rice or with the Indian Basmati, except the similarity

in name. Jasmati is derived from a variety called Della, which has been developed in the United States. Della is in turn a selection from Bertone, from the Piedmont area of Italy. "RiceTec deceives the public and uses and Asian-sounding name, which

connotes quality, to lure people to believe they are being offered a cross between Jasmine and Basmati" says the Thai Network on Community rights and Biodiversity (BIOTHAI).

Jasmine rice is a local Thai variety, which originated in the eastern part of the country, Chachoengsao, where the soil is saline and sandy. Rice grown in this area is soft and perfumed. so it is called Khao Dawk Mali - the perfume of the white Jasmine flower.

RiceTec and other companies in the US, which are marketing "their own versions" of Jasmine rice have not patented the germplasm. They are, however, exercising their own claims to the name.

ket a rice called Jasmati if it is not derived from Jasmine or Basmati, RiceTec breeder Jim Strikey responded that he considers Jasmine rice to be a term for "any aromatic, sticky rice" and Basmati a term for "any aromatic, long grain, nonsticky rice". Strikey went on to say that Thailand should not bat an eye about this because, according to him. Thai farmers got the rice from Madagascar in the first place.

According to BIOTHAI, however, the rice goes back a hundred years when it was developed by their ancestors. In 1959, after nearly two decades of testing, the Thai government rice board officially released

Jasmine rice. This was before When asked why they marthe Green Revolution, so foreign agencies like the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) had nothing to do with it. It grows well in drought conditions and on saline soils, and suits the farming conditions of northeast Thailand. By contrast, IRRI's famous IR8 and other subsequent rice varieties are made to suit high-input chemical agriculture in irrigated lands, which the poor cannot afford.

By now, the breeding efforts of Thai farmers and scientists have resulted in more than 200 different lines of Jasmine in Thailand. Virtually all Thai Jasmine rice is produced by five million farmers in the north-

east. These are resource - poor farmers, whose income does not exceed the poverty line of US\$ per month, per person. Their livelihoods depend on Jasmine rice. More than 25 per cent of the rice exported by Thailand is now Jasmine rice. India's recent experience at

the hands of RiceTec has raised serious concern in Thailand. "Here is an American company claiming monopoly rights and getting huge benefits from India and Pakistan's rice culture and giving nothing in return," said a BIOTHAI representative. "Of course, RiceTec says their patent is not on India's Basmati but on 'their own' Basmati. which they claim to have invented'. CSE/Down To Earth