

It Pays to Be Bold (Not Reckless)

The steps taken in the new economic regime with respect to foreign exchange and trade are in the right direction but they do not go far enough, they are still too little. The government may have bought some time and so it is still not too late to bring in radical changes that will restore confidence in Pakistan's economy.

EDMUND Burke writing Thoughts and Details on "Scarcity" not only about masses. "And having looked to Government for bread, on the very first day of scarcity they will turn and bite the hand that fed them", unquote.

PM Mian Nawaz Sharif may have cause to ponder on Burke's observation, particularly when he looks at his so-called natural constituency, the business community. The PM and the Federal Finance Minister should refer to Field Marshal William Slim's "Unofficial History" in particular the chapter entitled "It pays to be bold". The steps taken in the new economic regime with respect to foreign exchange and trade are in the right direction but they do not go far enough, they are still too little. The government may have bought some time and so it is still not too late to bring in radical changes that will restore confidence in Pakistan's economy.

exchange, the Government of Pakistan (GOP) has partially restored the confidence of depositors. While depositors may not feel so cheated anymore they still have grounds for grievance. To avoid short-fall in the currency supply the difference between the official rate could be in the form of redeemable Pakistani Rupee bonds in yearly denominations at a mark-up slightly more than the usual bank rate i.e. the floating bank rate (or the floater) is a reasonable idea. As regards the receipt of export proceeds, remittances, etc., it is fair to give 50 per cent at official rate and 50 per cent at the "floater" rate.

However, if anybody thinks that the wage earner abroad will send in their money home at less than the "Hundi" rate they are mistaken. The "wage earner" must get at the prevailing "Hundi" rate and he must get it with the same speed and efficiency, that is the only way to get them to remit through official channels, anything else is wishful thinking.

The government has to re-

and therefore the scheme elapsed. A delegation is expected to negotiate fresh terms with Islamabad now that the US has dropped its objections. Obviously the quantum of ESAP/EFF required has now increased, at the same time IMF would like to tack on more conditions.

In the meantime, the default clock is ticking away, first there will be a 30-day period followed by a 60-day period. Pakistan could well decide to go ahead with the default since the promised funds were kept away as pressure tactics. This is almost a game of playing chicken, seeing who blinks first. The Government of Pakistan through Mian Nawaz Sharif or the US, through its surrogate IMF. Would the west counter-attack another land of anarchy in this already volatile region?

Geo-politically Pakistan is not Somalia or Rwanda, the oil-rich states are in the vicinity and so are Iran and Iraq, would the US want to create a solid block of anti-US sentiment that will de-stabilize the Near East? Moreover it is a nation with a

form a possible "Caretaker" government.

Another prominent columnist has talked of a "forward bloc" within the PML. Speculation is rife that we are in the throes of a government meltdown and sacrificing possible scapegoats at the altar of public opinion will not suffice to stem the collapse. Well, neither may be quite true, paraphrasing Mark Twain, "the rumours of the government's demise are greatly exaggerated".

Webster's Dictionary describes scapegoat variously as (1) a goat upon whose head are symbolically placed the sins of the people (2) one that bears blame for others and (3) one that is the object of irrational hostility. The most commonly supposed scapegoats for this regime are Senator Sartaj Aziz, the Federal Finance Minister, and Dr. Muhammad Yaqub, the axe man well come down on them but it will not be deserved. They have soldiered on under very adverse circumstances, voicing their objections to various schemes in closed door sessions but loyally carrying out instructions as ordered.

Senator Sartaj Aziz, whom I admire very much, was requested by me to resign in the face of this crossfire but he declined saying that would be the easy route, that in keeping with his conscience and the larger interest of the country he felt he could minimise damage by staying in place. Similarly Dr. Yaqub, another man one admires, had in fact resigned many months ago but because that could have led to some weakness in negotiations with the IMF, in the country's greater interest he has kept loyally to his post.

If these two are indeed made scapegoats, would this be just reward for loyalty under fire? The government has to stop creeping around the issues and get on with it. Talking about Rs. 10 billion from POL price increase, what about the bank defaulters who owe more than Rs. 170 billion? July 11 has come and gone. In the face of this the regime's credibility is rapidly going down.

Why should the people of Pakistan pay for the criminality of a host of businessmen and industrialists? That is the acid test of Mian Nawaz Sharif's leadership! He should not fear their retaliation, if he does the correct thing the people of Pakistan will breathe a sigh of relief that their confidence in him was not misplaced. Field Marshal Slim wrote another chapter in "Unofficial History" which one recommends strongly to the PM. "Do not take counsel of your fears!"

THE Tenth SAARC Summit is going to be held in Colombo from July 29 to 31 under the cloud of suspicion and distrust created in the region by the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in the month of May last. As reported by Mr Anwarul Haq of The Daily Star (July 18, 1998) some western diplomats correctly told him "that every one will keenly await the outcome of the talks between the Indian and Pakistani leaders". They have also observed that "the primary focus will be on the attitude, pronouncements and postures of the two leaders relating to their nuclear stand."

The nuclear bombs now possessed by the India and Pakistan and the stand taken by them is enough for mutual annihilation of their teeming millions. What then the other members of the SAARC can do except to insist collectively and individually to get an assurance from both India and Pakistan about making South Asia a zone of peace?

The SAARC charter does not allow bilateral disputes and issues to be raised to the forum. If the dispute (Kashmir) between India and Pakistan could be solved by mutual discussion without the help or mediation from outside they could have solved the problem in the last 50 years instead of fighting two wars on it and developing nuclear weapons, which now pose a threat to the peace and security of the whole region.

What then we, the ordinary people of the region, can do to help the leaders who are to shape the destiny? We can do our best in suggesting measures for consideration of the leaders of the seven countries for maintaining peace and ensure progress in this region. But before making any suggestion for consideration it is worthwhile to notice in retrospect certain observations of the leaders of India and Pakistan in the recent past.

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in his interview with a private television network (The Daily Star dated July 7, 1997) called for mutual cuts in the defence budgets of India and Pakistan. In his interview he said: "I have requested the Indian Prime Minister that troops should be withdrawn from Kashmir as a first gesture which will help in building an atmosphere of trust".

At that time Mr Inder Kumar Gujral was the Prime Minister of India and with reference to him Nawaz Sharif said, "I can understand the limitation of Gujral, I too have got my own limitation. This is not the time to fight. We must learn from our past mistakes and should analyse what all we have gained or lost. We have fought wars and spent so much on defence budgets instead of concentrating on the development of both the nations. We have only suffered by adopting a path of confrontation. It is high time we should change our attitude."

Admission of past mistakes is the sign of a great mind, especially when Nawaz Sharif had no role to play in the commission of mistakes, and the intention to analyse the gain or loss shows a pragmatic approach for improving relations with India.

Obviously Mr Sharif refers to post-partition mistakes committed by both India and Pakistan. But if some one says that partition of British India in 1947 was itself a mistake will he be far wrong? While going to attend the SAARC Summit at Colombo the leaders of India and Pakistan would do well to keep in mind the failure of the great leaders on the scene in 1946-1947 to keep India united, despite the Cabinet Mission plan, to the keep India united.

Mr Yousuf Rafiq in Islamabad and D K Joshi in New Delhi wrote an article under the caption "New Brooms Try to Sweep Away Past Hostility" (The Daily Star, March 30, 1997). They said that "although half a century of bilateral relations is strewn with broken aspirations, the climate today is better than it has been for years". Pakistan attributes the breakdown of the previous official talks in 1994 to Indian intransigence and says tension has not been relieved by India's increasing its military budget for 1997-98 by 21 per cent to US \$ 10.2 billion. It accuses India of pushing ahead a missile development programme which Islamabad sees as posing a ma-

For the last decade we have introduced and introduced computer education in all possible academic institutions without much looking into the quality. We developed syllabus to make us confident that something good will happen. If we copy MIT syllabus, are our universities turning into MIT soon? This is the quality of faculty members that matters. A good syllabus itself cannot give much unless it is followed by qualified teachers.

Tenth SAARC Summit What Then Must We Do Now

by Md Moksudur Rahman

for threat to Pakistan. "New Delhi insists that Kashmir is an integral part of India, and accuses Islamabad of openly aiding militants there and in Punjab." "India expects Islamabad to take a more realistic stand, instead of pressing for a plebiscite in Kashmir valley, a proposition it dismisses as buried in the debris of time."

If these attitudes of the two countries continue one has reason to doubt the efficacy of bilateral talks to solve the problem of Kashmir after 50 years of being originated. If the dispute can be settled by mutual discussion, every country and the international community will be very happy. But since it could not be done in the last 50 years, there is scope for doubt about the efficacy of bilateral talks without outside assistance, if not mediation.

Mr Arshad-uz Zaman wrote under the caption "India-Pakistan: Hopeful Stirrings" (The Daily Star dated June 27, 1997). "It is good time to take stock of the achievements and failures of these two major players of the Sub-continent. What can be confidently stated is that the arms race due to hostility between India and Pakistan has worked as a powerful brake to nation-building activities. India and Pakistan appear to have found the essential ingredient to a settlement of all outstanding issues most important of which is the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. And that ingredient is the political will which has been missing for half a century."

Thereafter Zaglul A Chowdhury observed under the headline "Indo-Pak Relations: Change of Hearts" (The Daily Star dated 30 July 1997). The latest round of talks between India and Pakistan is widely seen as qualitatively different from many of such dialogues that the two arch-rivals held from time to time. The discussion that the two countries had during the last fifty years to reduce tensions only at times raised

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ious hopes of a better relationship while the parley collapsed on most occasions without producing any tangible outcome. Any talk between New Delhi and Islamabad has to be seen in this wider context and whenever two sides seek to discuss political issues of contentious nature, it is generally assumed that the talks are more a kind of rhetoric and ritualistic in nature."

Inder Kumar Gujral, the then Prime Minister of India in his interview with BBC World's Hard Talk programme on the occasion of India's celebration of 50 years of independence spoke about the improvement of relations with neighbours. He observed (D S Aug 14, 1997) "Our relations have moved on and are qualitatively very different than they were, say one year ago. We have been able to do something and we have now moved towards the last hurdle - India and Pakistan relations. Since my talks with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, I am optimistic that we will find a way out." I K Gujral further pointed to the fact that South Asia is due to become a free trade zone by 2001, and then he said, "If you are to be a free trade zone you have to have friendly relations. I am sure that future of this Sub-continent is in togetherness."

On October 18, 1997 The Daily Star carried a news under the headline "UK's Labour Party has hidden agenda to create independent Kashmir" The news continued:

"The sources said British Foreign Secretary Rabin Cook, who visited India last year as member of the Shadow Labour Cabinet, had told Indian authorities the Kashmir issue was an 'article of faith with the Labour Party'."

"The hidden agenda was ultimately to obtain an independent state of Jammu and Kashmir."

"Cook genuinely believes that there is an unfinished business of partition."

"The sources also quoted a Labour resolution at its October, 1995 Brighton conference as saying that while India and

Pakistan had to participate in a Kashmir solution, no such solution will be acceptable, to this party unless it is acceptable too, to the long suffering people of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh".

It is well to remember that the partition of the Sub-continent (British India) into India and Pakistan, the latter comprising two parts - East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan - took place in 1947 under the Labour Party Government in Britain headed by Clement Attlee.

In this backdrop India and Pakistan exploded nuclear bombs in May last only to cause a set-back to the confidence building steps and measures for creating mutual trust between India and Pakistan. Our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina immediately rushed to New Delhi and Islamabad to exert her sobering influence on the leaders of both the countries, and it seems she has succeeded to an extent.

In this context, 10th SAARC Summit is going to be held at Colombo and the leaders of the seven countries are expected to devise ways and means to solve the problems which stand in the way of togetherness of these South Asian countries and thus to make SAARC organisation more an effective body. The leaders of these seven countries should recognise that application of force begins where reason fails, and there is no problem which cannot be solved by peaceful means, given the political will. The ends and means both must be equally good and morally justifiable.

What then must we do now to secure peace and effective cooperation amongst the seven countries of South East Asia? Keeping in view the noble objective and with respect to the sagacity of the leaders of the SAARC countries' venture to make some suggestions hereunder for their kind consideration.

First - It is necessary to have a forum for discussion of

corruption in administration and to enhance confidence in the impartial administration, both executive and judicial.

Seventh - The use of common language plays an important role in the communication of minds and helps understanding of each other. So, a common language should be adopted for use in the government offices and courts, and English may be considered for the purpose, besides the different state languages.

Eighth - The leaders should also consider the possibility of a common defence arrangement for this area.

For the settlement of Kashmir dispute the attention of the political thinkers and the leaders concerned is invited to the following facts:

a. The proposal of Dr Ferozq Abdullah, the Chief Minister of Indian part of Kashmir for imposing a freeze on Kashmir dispute by India and Pakistan for 25 years. This means status quo with regard to the Line of Control. Pakistan should stop extending even a moral support to the militants, because there cannot be a moral support for terrorist activities. Benazir Bhutto, when she was Prime Minister of Pakistan, called a hartal in Pakistan declaring moral support to the militants in the Indian part of Kashmir. Dr Ferozq Abdullah's view deserves first consideration as he is on the scene of dispute and faces the music.

b. An Independent Kashmir as allegedly contemplated by the Labour Party of Britain considering the business of partition of India as yet unfinished. This proposal obviously implies re-unification of two parts of Kashmir. After all it is the well-being of the Kashmiris who should be considered to be fundamental in any shape of Kashmir. And Kashmiris would be, no doubt very happy in that event. The glaring example of re-unification of two separate parts is that of Germany after about 45 years of its division.

c. The proposal of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, given to Pakistan in 1964 for forming a confederation comprising India, Pakistan and Kashmir. "Sheikh Abdullah was released on April 8, 1964 and the Kashmir conspiracy case was immediately withdrawn. It also proved that although Sheikh Abdullah wanted self-determination - meaning thereby greater autonomy - he never wanted Kashmir to accede to Pakistan. Nehru lost to the inevitable his former friend and political colleague to New Delhi. Sheikh Abdullah, now sober and more mature due to the healing balm of suffering, responded warmly to this gesture. The two leaders were conscious of the fact that a slight disturbance in the status quo would unleash forces of destruction in the wake of the partition following the transfer of power. They, however, insisted that a solution was imperative so that the Kashmiri Muslims would live non-violently within the wider framework of secular India and did not rule out some agreement even with Pakistan so that the problem could be solved within the geo-political realities of the Sub-continent. Nehru, therefore, suggested to Sheikh Abdullah that he should undertake a pilgrimage of peace to Pakistan."

Accordingly, Sheikh Abdullah accompanied in his mission by Mirza Afzal Beg, Mubarak Shah Naqshabandi, and son Dr. Ferozq Abdullah reached Pakistan in the first week of May, 1964. Nehru had asked Sheikh Abdullah to discuss with the Pakistan authorities a proposal for a confederation between India, Kashmir and Pakistan. But the proposal was cold-shouldered by Marshal Ayub Khan, because, as the events were to reveal later, he had another 'solution' for the Kashmir dispute up his sleeve! The one man who could have resolved the Kashmir problem, so far as the autonomous nature of the state was concerned, was now no more. Nehru had asked Sheikh Abdullah to return to Srinagar, a deeply frustrated man. With Nehru's death the process of reconciliation received a fatal blow." (chapter X of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah - A Political Phoenix by RN Kaul).

The writer is a former Judge of High Court Division.

AS I SEE IT

Ikrām Sehgal writes from Karachi

alise one thing, the major issue at the moment is the credibility of our sovereign guarantees that has been eroded needlessly. Going by Clausewitz "Selection and Maintenance of Aim", therefore the first priority is to somehow restore the confidence in our spoken and written words. Any economic package must eliminate the feeling that the foreign exchange deposits have been cheated. By allowing Rupee-ification of the US dollar at dual rate, the government has conceded the principle anyhow by allowing a floating bank rate. There has to be a radical departure from the norm to encourage our expatriates to remit money through the banking system. That can only be done at free market rates i.e. the kerb rate.

Why not have a tri-rate system, an official rate, the "floater" and the "Hundi" rate? Also demonetize dollars on the cards - either the government does it or the economy will deteriorate to such a state that some successor regime will have to step in to do so. Why is the government protecting blackmarketeers, hoarders, smugglers, militant groups, etc? The IMF did not come through its promised tranche in time

nuclear and missile capability. For the think-tanks in the US looking at various options and responses, try that on for size. They may not like it but they have to come to terms with reality. We have been a faithful US ally for long with nothing much to show for it, in the face of Indian threats the nuclear-explosion was necessary out of regional security considerations. The US should remember the Chinese proverb, "Do not use a hammer to remove a fly from a friend's forehead".

Whenever any government is in trouble, there is no dearth of leaders who line up to proclaim how and why they would have fared better. Political analysts by the dozen trot out theories which are usually long on speculation and short on fact. A whole host of names suddenly appear from nowhere as possible alternatives, from the PM down to Ministers and Advisors, Pakistan, which even at the best of times is prone to rumour and conspiracy theories, is presently overwhelmed by a combination of both in various permutations. Jang's Irshad Ahmed Haqqani (who proudly states that he does not read my columns) has come with a "talent list" of people who could

National Computer Programming Contest 1998

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Computer Technology and Education

by Prof. Mohammad Kaykobad

Computer education was formally introduced in BUET in the early '80s through setting up a new department called Department of Computer Engineering under the Faculty of Electrical and Electronics Engineering.



We can consider ourselves really fortunate in the fact that visualising enormous potential of computers our predecessors took initiatives to install the first computer, an IBM 1620, of the then Pakistan Atomic Energy Centre, Dhaka in the early '60s. Theoretical Physics group, then working at the Atomic Energy Centre, played a decisive role in bringing the computer, which was supposed to be installed in the western wing of the country, back to Chittagong Port.

Scientists and engineers working in Atomic Energy Commission and in Dhaka University started extensive use of this computer. From then onwards other universities got introduced to this new technology. Considering our pretty average development at that time, we can be proud of introduction of computers so early in the country.

With the introduction of microprocessors, computers became more affordable in price and reduced in size. A revolution started with the availability of personal computers. Again we did not fall behind. In the early '80s PCs penetrated into our market, and our scientists, engineers and academicians did not fail to realise its far-reaching implications. Computer education was formally introduced in BUET in the early '80s through setting up a new department called Department of Computer Engineering under the Faculty of Electrical and Electronics Engineering. Initially degree at Masters level was offered in Computer Engineering for graduates of engineering and some other disciplines of general universities. Applied Physics and Electronics Department of Dhaka University also came forward to start some works with this new technology through guiding courses in work and related courses in other universities and in BITS some courses on this technology were also introduced. Revolutionary developments in PC technology in the '80s resulted in slicing down of the prices of PCs in a drastic manner, and all the time larger and larger number of PCs appeared in the local market at an affordable price.

In 1986 BUET introduced the first degree course in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering. This was then followed by Khulna, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Jahangirnagar and other universities. Dhaka University opened the Department of Computer Science with one-year Masters course for students of related fields, and finally started its undergraduate program quite late. As usual we must mention here that in many cases departments were opened too hurriedly. For example, we introduced this discipline in school level long before we could have teachers with appropriate education. Introduction of the course initially at Masters level and then gradually coming down would have been a more appropriate policy. This would have resulted in availability of teachers in lower levels. As usual we seem to think of missing the only train and hurriedly introduce something without proper planning.

This kind of planning does not really work for harmonious growth and development of education system. For quick training, impact of which will be in a very limited duration, this works. But education cannot be hurried. It must have continuity. It must have a history. It must not be isolated.

A few years back we appeared to be overactive in revolutionising our course curriculum. Interestingly this was not initiated by any educationist, and so was done easily and quickly. The more you know, the less free you are in doing whatever you like since then you understand a lot of anomalies that can come along with the drastic changes resulting from shallow thinking.

For the last ten years we talked a lot about data entry industry and finally came out as spectators of the huge business our neighbours are doing. We could have introduced education in computer field in Masters level, then in bachelors, then in colleges and finally in schools. Soon after we had graduates with Masters degree we could have opened BSc level courses initially in well-known colleges of the capital, and then to other colleges of the country. When significant number of graduates with, for example, pass degrees, came out, they could have been employed in

schools. But this was not followed. So we had to train teachers of almost any discipline hurriedly in a place called NTRAMS so that they could give computer education to our school children.

This was a disastrous decision. Computer was made an alternative course to elective mathematics. Imagine when none of the universities offering computer courses would have taken an intermediate pass student without mathematics into computer departments, we introduced computer courses sparing mathematics. Such a decision could have been taken only by persons having no understanding of the discipline. Teachers were given some kind of training hurriedly by people having no formal education in computing.

Undoubtedly they are effectively confusing our children with their blind-people view of an elephant. It may be noted here that these teachers will be teaching our kids for another 40 years, and we will not be getting rid of our errors so easily unless we plan for a good and effective training scheme for them. We always put forward the lame excuse that computer literate people will not be available for teaching in schools and colleges due to low financial emolument. We must think about it. Quality education requires similar educational quality in teachers. If we want to have it we must attract the best students of the country to teaching. However, if students could study computer science as a subject in degree pass level there would have been many graduates for teaching computer science also in schools.

Our hurried decision of introducing computer education in different universities was also not appropriate. After 15 years of introduction we still have severe shortfall of teachers if students cannot be taught properly then it is worse. Both public and private universities are in acute shortage of teachers. Even learning about the shortfall of teachers nobody is in the back foot, every university is opening the discipline with the purchase of a few computers.

This is an unhealthy culture. Man behind the machine is more important than the machine. Mere purchasing of com-

Gandhi Memorial in the US

Aziz Haniffa writes from Washington

US House of Representatives unanimously approved legislation authorising the Indian government to establish a memorial to honour Mahatma Gandhi in the American capital.

The legislation stipulates that U.S. taxpayers would not have to bear the cost for constructing or maintaining the memorial, but merely provides the vacant piece of land adjacent to the Indian embassy on Massachusetts Avenue for the Government of India to erect the monument.

The legislation, originally introduced by Rep. Frank Pallone, Democrat, in the House Resources Committee now goes to the floor of the House for a vote. Similar legislation has been introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat and a former Ambassador to India.

Pallone said he hoped the legislation, co-sponsored by the Republican co-chair of the India Caucus, Rep. Bill McCollum, and 17 other members of the 92-member Caucus, would be voted on by the full House before Congress adjourns for its summer recess.

Pallone said such a vote would envisage passage of the bill before the end of the year-long celebrations marking India's 50th independence anniversary celebration that began on August 15 last year.

The National Capital Memorial Commission gave its unanimous approval for the proposal several months ago, following some stirring testimony by Pallone and Wajahat Habibullah, minister, community affairs at the embassy, who spoke of Gandhi's life and achievements and how he was

inspired by U.S. thinkers and how in turn he provided inspiration to the civil rights movement in America.

Pallone said, "The proposed Gandhi Memorial would be a most worthy addition to the landscape of our nation's capital, and it would also be a fitting tribute to a man whose profound impact on the history of the 20th century continues to be felt around the world."

Even though there was an overwhelming consensus among members of the Commission that Gandhi was a "great leader" and a "tremendous inspiration," some lawmakers expressed qualms during the mark-up about the rationale for erecting monuments for foreign leaders.

But it was left to another Republican on the panel, James Hansen, who said that monu-

ments for foreign leaders had been erected and should continue to be erected, especially in exceptional cases and that "there is no better example of such an exceptional leader than Gandhi who has inspired millions of people around the world and our own civil rights movement."

Hansen pointed out that not only would it not be erected on the Mall, but that it would not cost American taxpayers a dime because the Government of India would foot the entire bill, including construction and maintenance.

The committee vote was yet another victory for Habibullah, who has been the driving force behind the legislation by Pallone and others, mobilising the Indian American community and exhorting them to keep the pressure on their respective lawmakers to approve the proposal.

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