

Sri Lanka

Polls and Death of the Matriarch

By Mansoor Mamoon

OFFICIAL announcement of the results of the October 10 parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka was kept in abeyance and delayed by the Election Commission (EC) on the charges of widespread vote rigging, violence, intimidation and snatching of polling boxes and capture of polling booths. A statement issued by EC said the results were to be announced on Thursday (October 12) after discussions with leaders of the contending parties. Poll observers have asked for re-polling in 22 centres. But under the new constitution there has so far been no instance of re-polling in the past. So everything now depends on the EC. Preliminary unofficial results, however, indicate that no party - neither the ruling People's Alliance nor opposition United National Party - has a clear-cut majority. Thursday morning's pro-government Daily Mirror and the island news claimed victory of the PA. The PA is reported to have bagged 105 seats closer to the target of the absolute majority of 113 seats. Hectic lobbying is on for the support of the smaller parties. PA hopes to get the support of a smaller Tamil Party - EPPD - and form the government again.

The poll is likely to be a setback for President Chandrika Kumaratunga rudely shattering her dream of ending the 17-year-old ethnic insurgency in the northeastern region of the country. As already reported, neither the ruling seven-party PA of Kumaratunga nor the opposition UNP of former Prime Minister Ranil Wikremesinghe is likely to secure absolute and convincing majority. The UNP is greatly angered by the results which indicated that it could not fare

well in the areas like Kandy which had been traditionally its strong bastions and there fore alleged rigging by the ruling PA.

However, both the parties are now reportedly vying for the support of the smaller parties to form the government and hectic lobbying is already on in Colombo to curry their favour. It will take some time more to get a clear picture of the after-poll scenario as to for whom the bell will finally toll - for PA or for UNP. It largely depends upon the decision of the Election EC. Whichever way the result goes there is apprehension of post-poll large-scale violence.

Chandrika had yet another shock in the form of a personal tragedy. Her 84-year old mother Srimavo Bandaranaike, the world's first woman prime minister, died of heart attack in the early hours of the polling day. A pall of gloom cast its shadow over the republic. But the polling went on as usual despite the death of the matriarch. In the last parliament PA had one vote majority in a house of 225 members. In the October 10 elections PA's popularity is believed to have decreased to some extent instead of an increment as was desperately sought by President Kumaratunga. Further erosion of her strength was caused by the defection of the Muslim Congress from her alliance. Reports trickling down from the EC suggest that the UNP's strength would register an increase. But neither side would have a comfortable majority. What is of utmost concern for the peace process to succeed for ending the Liberation of Tamil Tiger Elam's (LTTE) insurgency through peaceful means is the considerable success of the Marxist ultra-nationalist JVP's (Janata Vimukti

Paramanu - the People's Liberation Front) in the polls bagging impressive ten seats this time. JVP, comprising mainly the Sinhalese, waged an urban a guerrilla warfare in which it lost nearly twenty thousand of its armed cadres. The government crushed the rebellion with an iron hand. The party is now finally on the track of constitutional politics leaving aside its underground guerrilla tactics and has been able to get due recognition through the support it has garnered.

It is vehemently against giving any concession to the Tamils, who comprise seventeen percent (3.2 million) of the country's population and are now fighting tooth and nail for their independence through bifurcation of the island. JVP would not be a partner in any coalition but would very much like to maintain its independent entity. UNP, therefore, cannot hope to form the government with JVP's support. Observers earlier predicted that the poll would be a closely fought race between the two main contenders - the PA and the UNP. The main issues in the fray had been ending the Tamil insurgency, the price hike caused by the increase in fuel prices and the burgeoning unemployment situation.

Twenty-nine political parties and 99 independent groups put up a record number of 5,477 candidates. The number of electorates stood at 12 point 07 million out of a total population of over 18 point 06 million. In the poll related violence 70 persons, including two candidates, were killed, 6 on the day of polling. Independent observers from home and abroad who monitored the poll registered Three hundred episodes of violence. Despite the

deployment of large number of police (about 40,000) and round-the-clock vigil by the troops, the poll was marred by rigging, violence, snatching of polling boxes and capture of booths. There was no arrangement for casting votes in the Jaffna Peninsula where LTTE guerrillas continually pounded civilian areas to scare away the voters.

Analysts strongly maintain that as PA did not get the necessary majority in parliament, President Kumaratunga's autonomy plan will fall flat and further instability and uncertainty will grip the strategically important island close by the Indian coast in Tamil Nadu. In the last parliament the president failed to get her autonomy plan approved, as she did not have the required two-thirds majority.

The poll result is an indication that the LTTE insurgency will continue to rage to the detriment of the long sought after peace and stability in the strife-torn country. Even if UNP ultimately succeeds in forming the government Chandrika will have her sway and dominance as the Executive President. Its vow to clip president's wings will not succeed, as UNP will also not have the majority needed for amending the constitution, which provides for presidential form of government. The October 10 poll seems to have created more intense political stalemate and standoff between the two bitter rivals. Instead of resolution of political problems it is likely to aggravate the situation with a snowballing effect of the festering problems which are already there. So peace will remain largely illusive in Sri Lanka.

As already mentioned, Srimavo Bandaranaike, former Prime Min-

ister and mother of President Chandrika Kumaratunga died on the day of polling. She was thrice the Prime Minister of the country. Forty years ago from an obscure housewife she rose to become an 'astute stateswoman' in the words of London Times after the assassination of her husband Prime Minister Solomon Bandaranaike. She adhered to socialist policies and Non-Alignment and championed the cause of peace and disarmament. Her daughter Chandrika is, however, poles apart from her as regards economic policies. On August 10 last when she submitted her resignation as Prime Minister under her daughter President Chandrika she wrote that one should retire from politics gracefully as she is doing and hand over the reins of power to a more energetic one. Srimavo is the forerunner of women politicians in South Asia like - India's first Prime Minister Indira Gandhi; Muslim World's first Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto; Bangladesh's two successive Prime Ministers - Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina. What distinguishes her from others of her ilk is that she had no hesitation to admit that she considered herself as a woman and a mother. This showed that she took pride for being a woman. Srimavo's death will have no impact on the political scenario of the country as she had already from politics. She considered the election as crucial and cast her votes in a wheel chair moments before the fatal heart attack. Frail and highly vulnerable state of health could not prevent her from performing her civic duties. She has thus set the example of political consciousness par excellence.

End of an Era

By Ekram Kabir

SIRIMAVO Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike will indeed be remembered as a political leader of recent times who not only dominated Sri Lankan politics for long 42 years but also transformed the course of the island-nation's history. 'It is an end of an era in Sri Lanka's politics. No other leader has influenced the lives of so many people in this country,' a long-term associate of Mrs. Bandaranaike, Sri Lankan Minister for Cultural Affairs Lakshman Jayakody was quoted to have said.



Mrs. Bandaranaike was the first woman prime minister of the world. However, this was a position to which she did not aspire, but history beckoned her. To her people, she was then a 'weeping widow' for frequently bursting into tears in public when she used to pledge herself to continue her husband's policies.

However things changed and she learnt to grow up as a leader with a strong will to bring about a change in her country. In Sri Lankan politics she is often compared with the leaders like D. S. Senanayake and Dudley Senanayake. J. R. Jayewardene and Dr. N. M. Perera, but in the international arena she had certainly surpassed them. She, even though from a little known country at that time, came into the forefront of international politics along with other third world leaders like Nehru, Tito, Nkrumah and Nasser. As a leader of the poor nations of the world she became the chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and presided over the movement's Colombo summit attended by a near 100 heads of state and government.

In the home front, Mrs. Bandaranaike did not hesitate to take unpopular decisions that she considered would benefit the country. She clashed with the Catholic hierarchy over the government's take over of schools. She nationalised the insurance industry and the multi-national companies that controlled the distribution of oil. She also clashed with the US over this move which resulted in cutting off American economic assistance to Sri Lanka for some time. Her policies of nationalisation of big industries often came under criticism but strangely enough this paid off handsomely and

helped shut her critics out. She also nationalised some companies in the plantation sector and restricted some imports.

She succeeded to transform Sri Lankan economy from a post-colonial capitalist economy into a mixed economy with a very strong socialist bias.

On her foreign policy affairs she made a shift in 1970 when she ordered the US Peace Corps out and Israeli embassy closed. In 1972 she made the country a republic and the year before she crushed a Marxist insurrection in which about 20,000 were believed to have died.

She was a great friend of India as well as China. The measure of her status as an international statesperson was such that she was accepted as a mediator during the Indo-China war. As a non-aligned leader she did play an active role in supporting the third world demand for a more equitable international economic order.

She made sacrifices as well. When Mrs. Bandaranaike stepped down as prime minister in August last, she did not relinquish her position as leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) that was founded by her husband, a party she nurtured over the years after his assassination in 1959.

It was under Mrs. Bandaranaike that the rural and urban poor came to the forefront displacing the English educated elite. She always proclaimed that the people were with her. There was never a moment in her life where her honesty and sincerity qualities quite hard to find these days were questioned.

Tempered through hard time in politics for long 42 years, though sick, she travelled from Colombo to Attanagalla to cast her vote on October 10 parliamentary election, in which she has been elected with record majorities.

We extend our deep condolences to the bereaved family and the friendly people of Sri Lanka at her demise. She not only transformed the history of the country but also re-wrote it. It was she who restored the name of the country from the old colonial name of 'Ceylon' to 'Sri Lanka' as it was known in the days of its glory.

South Asian women, who later became national leaders, owe a lot to Sirimavo.

Pakistan

One Year On...

By Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury

A year has passed since General Pervez Musharraf seized power from a democratically elected government. He may have reasons to look back with a degree of satisfaction, which perhaps stems from the fact that he has effectively kept politicians at bay during this period. Two main political figures Muslim League's Nawaz Sharif and People's Party's Benazir Bhutto are pushed to the corner and they hardly play any role in politics ever since the army took over on October 12 last year. Nawaz is serving jail sentences after being convicted in several cases related to terrorism and corruption. He may not overcome his plight in foreseeable future.

In fact, the sword of death still hangs over him since the government has appealed against the verdict by a Sindh anti-terrorist court giving Nawaz a life-imprisonment in the case that also carries death sentence if found guilty. The ex-prime minister has moved to the Sindh High Court challenging the sentence, but the state also appealed against it. Benazir is in self-exile having little luck with domestic politics except giving occasionally statements. Furthermore, the military ruler has banned politicians from leading their respective organisations by a decree that prohibits leaders from heading political parties if convicted in criminal charges.

Evidently, the tough measures were designed at both Nawaz and Benazir. Sharif is sentenced for

many years and Benazir was earlier found guilty in a corruption case and sentenced to five years of imprisonment by the previous government. As such, both of them have been robbed off their scopes to lead the organisations. Their respective organisations are also in disarray due to leadership crisis.

Gen. Pervez was largely unnerved during the first year of rule in a country where the military sought to rule the roost during most of its history since independence. In most cases, they spared no efforts to extend the period to remain at the helm. The latest military strongman is no exception. But he says he would announce the date of elections by October 2002 as directed by the Supreme Court of the country. Politicians are clamouring for immediate polls but this has fallen in deaf ears.

The favourable scenario, notwithstanding, all is not well for Gen. Musharraf. There are a number of thorns, as the army tries to legitimise its rule and seeks international support for its existence. Musharraf came under severe international criticism



when he toppled the elected government of Nawaz Sharif in the bloodless coup. His arguments in favour of the take-over was the alarmingly increasing 'misrule and corruption' by Sharif government.

The allegations of corruption against the elected government, however, were not baseless but this cannot be the basis of seizing power from representative authorities. The US, EU, Commonwealth and other democratic forums are asking him to give a timetable for restoration of democracy which the military ruler refused, but relented only when the Supreme Court when validated that Pakistan must get new elected government within three years, from October 12, since this period is enough for the military to clear the Aegean stables. The other day, Gen. Musharraf said that he would

abide by the verdict. Politicians were disheartened by the ruling that legitimised military rule but the timeframe for elections gladdened them since military rulers in the past like General Ayub Khan, Gen. Yahya Khan and Gen. Ziaul Haq quit the scene after long periods when forced either by pro-democracy agitation or by circumstances beyond their control. Whatever support that the army enjoyed by removing a corrupt administration has evaporated during the last six months as neither the economy has improved nor the corruption has remarkably scaled down.

Nawaz Sharif charged the military for corruption and alleged that the generals were amassing wealth but castigating the politicians for plundering people's money. But the regime continues to harp on the misdeeds of the elected government and lately filed another case against Sharif. True, corruption should not be taken lightly, no matter who commits it. But the point that is being missed here that extra-constitutional measures cannot solve this menace. Army government's crusade

against the politicians has at least done one good thing to the victims as they could come closer setting aside their animosity. Muslim League, Peoples Party, elderly and octogenarian Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan all combined to resist the conspiracy to destroy the culture of politics. They could do little so far but the broad unity on a minimum agenda can help bring back democracy in Pakistan earlier than expected.

However, there is no denying of the fact that Pakistani politicians failed to live up to people's expectations as governments of PML and PPP squandered their opportunities more than once. Unfortunately, politicians have in a way facilitated the toppling of the civilian governments as army relied on the public anger against the elected authorities for their misdeeds. Few Pakistanis shed tears when elected governments were dismissed unconstitutionally although in principle they want to be governed by their representatives.

As Gen. Musharraf celebrates the first year of being in charge of the country, Pakistan today stands as the only nation in South Asia where the road to democracy reverted to non-representative government and that too at a time when democracy is flourishing all over. Authorities in Pakistan should take steps to restore democracy earlier than the timeframe given by the Supreme.



The Region This Week

RNA deployed in Dailekh

IN ORDER to control the suspected rise in Maoist activities in the mid western hilly district of Dailekh, some 50 Royal Nepal Army (RNA) personnel have been deployed from the army barracks at Nepalgunj. However, the Defence Ministry is silent over the deployment of the army in Dailekh's Dullu.

AI criticises Bhutan

THE London based rights group Amnesty International has criticised Bhutan for rejecting a compromise formula put forward by the United Nations refugee agency to end the decade long refugee problem between Nepal and Bhutan. In a statement released on October 4, Amnesty International said Bhutanese government's decision was a major blow to the future of the Bhutanese refugees now living in camps in eastern Nepal. They number more than 100,000.

Bird havoc at airport

THE civil aviation authorities in Nepal were forced to suspend or divert all international flights to and from the capital, Kathmandu, after a Chinese airliner was damaged when it hit a bird while attempting to take off. Although no one was injured, the plane's tyres burst causing it to block the runway for about six hours until workers managed to remove it.

Operation Vajpayee

INDIAN Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee underwent successful knee replacement surgery on Tuesday and could be back on his feet in the next week or two. The 73-year-old premier, whose health has been a subject of media speculation, was comfortable and in good spirits after the operation. Vajpayee was given a local anaesthetic and was conscious throughout the operation, which took just over an hour. The prime minister suffered from arthritis in his left knee, which was replaced in the operation by an artificial knee joint.

Landmine kills Indian soldiers

A landmine explosion has killed three Indian soldiers and injured four in Indian-administered Kashmir. Police say separatist militants used a remote control device to set off the mine when a bus carrying soldiers passed by on the Jammu-Srinagar highway. Two similar explosions on the same highway in August left nine Indian soldiers dead.

Indian arms deal

PAKISTAN has said it is concerned the recent huge arms deals between its rival India and Russia will have a destabilising effect on South Asia. This is Pakistan's first comment on the deals which were struck last week during a visit to Delhi by the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. A Pakistani foreign office spokesman said India had made its military ambitions evident by increasing its last defence budget by 28 percent.

Foreign churches

THE hardline Hindu group in India, the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh or RSS, which has close links with the ruling BJP, has renewed its call for a national church for the country's Christians. The head of the RSS, KC Sudarshan, repeated his appeal for Christians to dissociate themselves from what he called foreign churches, which he accused of conspiracies against India. Sudarshan was speaking in the western city of Nagpur on the Hindu festival of Vijaydashmi.

Verdict against Hoti

THE Awami National Party in Pakistan on Saturday rejected the Attack Fort accountability court's decision against Azam Khan Hoti, brother of Begum Nasim Wali Khan and former communications minister in Nawaz Sharif's cabinet, and announced that 'it will be challenged in the High Court'. ANP Chief Asfandiyar Wali Khan said his party had been opposed to the National Accountability Bureau Ordinance and it had rejected the Attack court's verdict against Azam Khan.

Diplomat 'beaten up'

PAKISTAN has lodged a strong protest with India over the alleged beating and illegal detention of a Pakistani High Commission official by police in Delhi. Pakistan says the embassy official was beaten up by a group of Indian police officers after they stopped him for a traffic offence, while he was riding a motorbike with diplomatic licence plates. According to Pakistan, the official was only released when the High Commission signed a bond for 5,000 Indian rupees. Correspondents say India and Pakistan routinely accuse each other of violating international conventions on diplomatic norms.

First Indian oil firm privatised

THE Indian government has decided to sell a third of its stake in the state-owned company, Indo Burmah Petroleum, as part of its efforts to raise billions of dollars from the sale of government-controlled firms. At a meeting in Delhi, ministers also decided to sell government shares in two leading trading houses. Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie told after the meeting that the government had invited international bids for the shares in IBP, the first of the four state-owned oil companies to be privatised.

BD 'does not need aid'

BANGLADESHI Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said that flood-stricken areas in the country do not yet need international aid. 'We do not immediately need any international assistance as we have our own resources and are trying to overcome the situation,' Bangladesh managed to cope with the last century's worst floods in 1998 when 53 of the country's 64 districts were hit, she said.

'Mafia boss' arrested

SUSPECTED Indian underworld don Chhota Rajan is again in the hands of Thai police. The head of Thai immigration police, General Hemaraj Theerathai, was quoted as saying that Rajan was arrested after a three-member Bombay police team had confirmed that the passport he used to enter Thailand was fake. The Bombay team had arrived in Bangkok on Thursday after an apparent delay on the Indian side in deciding whether to seek Rajan's return to India.

Indian minister's death

A six-member committee of leading doctors looking into the death of India's power minister, PR Kumaramanglam, has concluded that he did not receive appropriate medical advice for over three months after being discharged from a leading private hospital in Delhi. He died in August after he was admitted in a government hospital, he was diagnosed with blood cancer. The committee criticises the private Apollo hospital for not diagnosing the 48-year-old minister's ailment properly.

Open new front

A SPOKESMAN for the Afghan northern alliance commander, Ahmad Shah Masood, has said the opposition have decided to form a new military command. The spokesman said the leaders met on Wednesday in the Iranian city of Mashhad and agreed that the ethnic Uzbek leader, General Dostum, who has been living outside Afghanistan, should resume military activities in Afghanistan. It was agreed that the opposition would open up new battlefronts against Taliban forces in northwest Afghanistan where General Dostum has influence and where there was the potential to recruit new force.

RDX seized

THE Kutch police has seized 25 kg of deadly explosive RDX, allegedly brought in from Pakistan, from the hillocks near Bial village in Nakhrana taluka of Kutch district in Gujarat. The Kutch police said on receiving the information about the consignment a few days ago a special task force was pressed into action which seized the explosives and other material abandoned at an isolated place around Bial village.

--Compiled by Ekram Kabir

India

Putin on Kashmir

By Harun ur Rashid

INDIA apparently considers whole of Kashmir an integral part of India. The fact that India and Pakistan fought two wars on Kashmir does not change India's perception. Indian leaders often come out with a statement that Pakistan had illegally occupied part of Kashmir and the sooner it leaves the territory, the better it is for the stability of the region. Thus the only dispute according to India appears to be the illegal occupation of a part of Kashmir by Pakistan. Pakistan dismisses this Indian position and refers to the UN Security Council's resolutions of August 13, 1948 and January 5, 1949.

It appears that the above Indian claim is being made despite the fact that since 1950 the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) has been stationed there. However they are not allowed to monitor conditions fully along the Line of Control (LoC). India considers the mandate of the UNMOGIP has lapsed. Only 45 UNMOGIP inspectors are located on the Pakistani side, although India allows under special circumstances the inspectors on the Indian side of LoC.

The LoC is a part of Simla Agreement of 1972. LoC is 1000km long running in a non-linear way over rugged terrain near Jammu in the southwest up to glacial heights of the Himalayas near China's Sinkiang province in the northeast. The Simla Agreement called both sides to respect LoC.

LoC is not a cease-fire line as was established after 1948 war.

The Karachi Agreement of July 1949 established the cease-fire line between the two countries in Kashmir. India and Pakistan had to end the 1971 war formally and Simla Agreement of July 2 1972 was concluded. The Agreement promised to recast their future relations and with respect to Kashmir, it provided that 'both sides pledged to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them'.

Consistent with the terms of Simla Agreement, India considers that bilateral negotiations are the only way to resolve this dispute while Pakistan argues that third party intervention is not unwarranted to find a solution to the issue. It is argued by Pakistan that the expression 'any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them' in the Simla Agreement are the key words. They contend that these words were inserted in the Agreement to mean that when bilateral negotiations can not end the stalemate for the last 52 years, the third party intervention in the dispute is called for and India should agree to it in terms of the Simla Agreement.

Self-assertion by Kashmiris is a key factor since 1989 and it has found expression in armed insurgency in Kashmir. It is reported that India has deployed about 275,000 soldiers in Kashmir with 40,000 forces on LoC. Pakistan is reported to have deployed 40,000 to 50,000 soldiers on LoC. It is reported that the insurgency has led to around 25,000 deaths in

Kashmir. Given the serious unrest in Kashmir the big powers could not be blind to the situation in Kashmir. There is a view that the insurgency in Kashmir has an impact in the region and has led to the strengthening of fundamentalist Islamic forces in the region including in Afghanistan and they have infiltrated in Central Asian Republics, Xinjiang province of China and Chechnya of the Russian Federation. Therefore it appears that for strategic reasons Kashmir dispute needs to be resolved.

In this light President Putin's views on Kashmir are to be examined. He is reported to have said that Kashmir issue can only be resolved on a bilateral basis through compromise with absolute respect for the LoC and preventing any foreign interference.

Observers believe that what he said does not appear to be wholly satisfactory to India. He did not toe India's line and asked for compromise on both sides. That implies that India has to compromise its tough stand on Kashmir, although he supported the position of bilateralism and respect for LoC. The reference to the prevention of foreign interference by President Putin appears to reflect primarily his concern for Chechnya's situation, even it could be applicable by extension to Kashmir.

The Russian position on Kashmir is similar to that of US. Both Russia and the US recognise that Kashmir remains a dispute and an explosive one too. Both believe that it has led to serious tensions

At a Glance

Ranked by Exports 12 months	Bhutan	Bangladesh	India	Maldives	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	Nepal
Exports 12 months	\$0.1b.	\$3.5b.	\$39.2b.	\$0.1b.	\$8.3b.	\$4.7b.	\$0.5b.
GDP growth	6.0%	4.4%	5.8%	6.8%	5.3%	4.2%	3.3%
Per-capita GDP, (PPP)	\$1,370	\$1,040	\$1,740	\$3,395	\$1,570	\$2,625	\$1,100
Per-capita GNP (nominal)	\$450	\$299	\$436	\$1,167	\$492	\$627	\$225
Population (millions)	0.8	130.0	1,000.0	0.3	138.8	19.1	23.1
Population growth	2.3%	2.2%	1.9%	3.0%	2.6%	1.2%	2.3%
Inflation CPI	9.2%	3.8%	5.0%	-5.1%	3.8%	6.8%	1.8%
Curr. acc. balance	-\$0.1b.	-\$0.2b.	-\$3.8b.	-\$0.22b.	-\$1.8b.	-\$0.3b.	-\$0.1b.
Reserves excl. gold	\$0.3b.	\$1.4b.	\$33.4b.	\$0.1b.	\$1.3b.	\$1.6b.	\$0.8b.
GDP (PPP)	\$1.2b.	\$132b.	\$1,710b.	\$0.8b.	\$219b.	\$49b.	\$25b.
People per sq. km	66.5	336.5	435	12.5	49.9	32.9	112.9
Life expectancy	61	66	62	67	63	73	57
Unemployment rate	42.2%	38.1%	52.1%	92.6%	37.8%	89.5%	27.5%
Urban pop.	7%	20%	28%	32%	35%	23%	14%

Currency	US Dollar	Japan Yen	Hong Kong Dollar	China Renminbi	Saudi Riyal	Bhutan Ngultrum	Thailand Baht	Cambodia Riel	Nepalese Rupee
Bangladesh (LoC)	\$4.80	89.71	6.52	6.52	14.68	86.92	7.43	34.30	48.71
India	\$5.67	42.80	8.84	8.82	12.18	67.93	6.38	21.46	41.20
Pakistan (Rupee)	\$3.30	96.73	7.08	8.84	14.69	86.94	7.38	25.41	49.70
Sri Lanka (Rupee)	88.20	72.06	10.04	9.45	20.87	114.43	10.74	36.10	70.31
Nepal (Rupee)	78.41	8.53	9.10	9.12	16.91	108.51	9.25	32.72	68.91

Source: Domestic Product (GDP) is the value of all goods and services produced in one year. Purchasing-Power Parity (PPP) based on World Bank rates takes into account price differences between countries. For a more accurate measure of national wealth, Constant National Product (GNP) is GDP plus payments from abroad from investments and labour, minus similar payments to foreigners. India's mortality is the number of deaths under age one per 1,000 live births.

between India and Pakistan. Both acknowledge that the Indian sub-continent has become unpredictable and unstable, after India and Pakistan have become nuclear powers. Both reiterated compromise from India and Pakistan to resolve the issue. Political observers believe that President Putin has given a mild rebuff to the Indian leaderships on their stand on Kashmir dispute.

The author, a Barrister, is former Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.