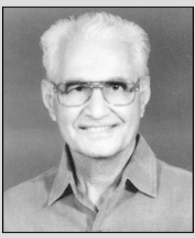


To and from New York



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

INDIAN and Pakistani heads of government went to New York (and Washington), addressed the UN General Assembly, spoke about their concerns about terrorism, had bilateral discussions with the US President George W. Bush and other American officials and should now be back. These two heads traversed on parallel lines without any intersection. The Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee even observed diplomatic purdah from President Musharraf by not attending the UN Secretary General's lunch for fear of having to sit in proximity to Musharraf. What have the two gained for their respective peoples? Pakistan's gains are simple to count. These were mainly financial aid, rescheduling of debt servicing and various American promises to be helpful in getting more funds and understanding from the multilateral agencies and other donors. Pakistan President must have been very pleased with the kind of reception he received in America in contrast with what was his experience until this year's September 11. Pakistan has reaffirmed its commitment to go on acting the faithful ally in the fight against terrorism. Among the non-tangible gains are words of fulsome praise for the President and his courage with the American promise that they would not again walk away after the war, unlike the 1989 experience. How substantial is the credit side of the ledger and whether there

is any debit side to it would remain a subject for discussion.

Insofar as India is concerned, it is clear the BJP leaders have not swallowed the American decision of recruiting Pakistan's cooperation in the war against Afghanistan. They do display signs of feeling jilted and slighted after their astonishing offer of unreserved cooperation for American military operations against Afghanistan. They have been irked and that seems to verge on chagrin. What did they really aim at requires investigation. It is understandable if they had Kashmir in mind and would have liked the Americans to lean on Pakistan to stop its cross-border terrorism. That is how they see their national interest. The Americans have not refused to accept Indian cooperation but have deferred it until after they have done with Taliban, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. The logic of American priorities should have been understandable to the Indians. America's perceived need for Pakistan's cooperation for fighting in Afghanistan is geography's imperative. Why this Indian attitude that looks like petulance?

Aid for Pakistan is ingenious due to the overall US attitude being untrusting of it. Their bilateral relationship remains wary and halting. There is no identity of purposes despite all talk of identity of views. The shadow of the Indo-Pakistan cold war hangs heavy and has resulted in the US President not countenancing Pakistan's wish — whether or not Musharraf brought it up — to let the earmarked F-16 aircraft restored to Pakistan. American concerns about nuclear proliferation question, the Kashmir Jihad and democracy remain. These concerns are not being pressed for the time being. No one should forget that they are still there. Pakistan's desire for America playing a role in the Kashmir dispute with India has always had willing listeners in Washington. Indeed the US has been anxious to play the mediator.

But it is stymied by the total Indian refusal of third party intervention in Kashmir. American readiness to mediate is hard to count as a gain for Pakistan. Americans have been desirous of playing a role on their own. Should India relent and permit a larger American role, no matter what it is called, it will not necessarily be a boon for Pakistan — unless Islamabad is only interested in getting off the hook.

Taking India's obsessive interest

reconciled to unprecedentedly larger role in South Asia while their own wishes can safely be disregarded. Both have been diminished to an unprecedented level. The suspicion that the Indians saw an opportunity in the American reaction to September 11 attacks for itself has been strengthened by Indian reaction to the American decision to recruit Pakistan's help in its campaign in Afghanistan. Why cavil at Pakistan becoming the conduit and

some objectivity and from various angles. The commonest angle being used in Pakistan is: what did the country gain out of the whole affair? Well, Pakistan has gained the status of an ally with the US and those who call it a gain should be happy, although it seems uncommonly like a satellite's. Pakistan military may be happy because it can get its officers trained in America, obtain spares, components and other necessities from the US. The

supremacy over the whole Asia is implicit in it. India's would be a somewhat higher level of satellitehood, something like being a butler among other menials.

Talking about India in this context largely because the relationship between India and Pakistan is inebriably close, even if not cordial. Enmity does not preempt closeness. Besides, South Asia remains a perfect region made by nature itself. The potentialities inherent in

to remain the President for as long into the future as he could see. It sounds like a threat rather than a promise to rejoice in. Governments in South Asia are primarily fighting over foreign policy issues. The Indians are fond of saying that Pakistanis are obsessed with Kashmir. It is largely true. But can it be denied that Indians are obsessed with Pakistan — and quite malevolently too? Who does not know that the ruling party in India has been recently weighing the pros and cons of mounting an invasion nominally of Azad Kashmir, though the objective could only be larger. The two governments of New Delhi and Islamabad are quite similar in outlook and political rhetoric. The BJP-wallahs have always flourished on anti-Muslim policies and actions; anti-Pakistan propaganda helps them electorally. The military and other conservative regimes in Pakistan have also flourished on anti-India (connotation being anti-Hindu) rhetoric and Kashmir. The two are happy enough to be enemies so long as there is no shooting; both would flourish politically in their respective countries by demonising each other.

But the politics in India is remarkably anti-people. The grinding or near grinding poverty of some 60 to 65 per cent Indians is being ignored while maximum resources are pumped into war preparations, research for war and war industries. The Pakistanis do the likewise. This half-a-century old pattern needs to be broken. Let's imagine for a moment that the governments in Delhi and Islamabad have buried the hatchet and have returned to peaceful pursuits. What would their first priority be? It would be to manage various glitches in the India-Pakistan relationship and their first priority would be to fight poverty and economic backwardness. They would automatically opt for regional cooperation and free and preferential trade. They would go in for integrated regional planning and execution through regional institutions and instruments. The resources that nature has endowed the region would be developed and

exploited from the point of view of growing more wealth without forgetting a more equitable distribution. Should the standards of living begin to rise in the region, the various nationalistic, communal or caste polarisations will become less explosive and would gradually erode. This is an area where one and a half billion souls, perhaps more, live and have many ethnicities — within each nation state. The point to be remembered is that while mass poverty lasts and most of the mobilisable resources are spent on war-like purposes the various polarisations would continue to grow and become harder still to tackle in each country.

It is from this viewpoint that the India-Pakistan relationship should be viewed. A new purposeful politics has to be introduced which would be more people-friendly and would assign higher priority to economic development than war preparations. Insofar as Kashmir is concerned, it is hard to conceive any immediate solution that would satisfy all the three parties: India, Pakistan and Kashmiris themselves. The best that can, and should, be done is to isolate it, contain the violent part of it by mutual agreement and postpone a solution to better times by putting the problem in a new political framework that is democratic and people-friendly. Meantime the two countries should normalise their relationship and embark on a course of people-to-people friendship with maximum economic and trade cooperation. This regionalism should not ignore the need for a more equitable distribution of incomes. What they have so far done, particularly in this visit to America by the two heads of the governments, is to glory in being satellites of America and have lowered their own statuses. Both countries have lost substantially as a result of this visit. They can only regain self-respect by turning their attention to their own region and by developing it.

M B Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan

PLAIN WORDS

The two countries should normalise their relationship and embark on a course of people-to-people friendship with maximum economic and trade cooperation. This regionalism should not ignore the need for a more equitable distribution of incomes. What they have so far done, particularly in this visit to America by the two heads of government, is to glory in being satellites of America and have lowered their own statuses. Both countries have lost substantially as a result of this visit. They can only regain self-respect by turning their attention to their own region and by developing it.

in Kashmir as the datum line it is possible to see its sudden and unconditional cooperation, not to mention the earlier astonishing and unreserved support for NMD, as being calculated to buy American goodwill for India's Kashmir stance of all trouble being due to cross-border terrorism — and to isolate Pakistan even more. If so, the calculation seems to have gone awry. Americans show no sign of giving up their desire for playing the mediator's role, now preferring to call it facilitator's role. On the contrary, it is possible to see the other side of the coin as Americans having made India tacitly accept its 'facilitation' in Kashmir by its persistent assertions and India's unconditional cooperation offers nonetheless.

Anyway, the way the Americans are going their own way and disregarding Indian, Pakistani and others' sensitivities, it is clear that the Indians and Pakistanis are now

staging post for any operation in Afghanistan, if you agree with the overall purpose? Could it be that the BJP leadership was immature enough to expect the Americans to eat out of their hands and align themselves with the Indians in fighting cross-border terrorism in Kashmir simultaneously with the war against Taliban? Should that dream have come true, India would have gained many collateral benefits: Pakistan would be on the enemy states list and the strategy for war would be suggested by M/s Vajpayee and Advani. It is astonishing that politicians of Vajpayee's and Advani's experience would suggest a course of action to a superpower that will pull India's chestnuts out of the fire — the chestnut being so big as Pakistan itself, itself a nuclear power — that can offer so much more to the Americans.

The question of who has gained how much should be discussed with

other gain is, as noted, \$ 1 billion plus some more aid for a few more years. That is about all. There does not seem to be any prospect of substantial longer-term gains from the US connection, only goodwill for so long as the master-client relationship lasts. Insofar as promises of not walking away again after the victory in Afghanistan, it is a tale to the Marines. When the time comes, the Americans would review the situation and do what is urgent and expedient then. Can they remain faithful to an old flame? Insofar as Indians are concerned, they have certainly gained long-term friendship of the US, although even that relationship would not be between equals. The Indians have by their actions — motivated largely by spite for Pakistan — become seekers of favours. The operative part of their desires amounts, at its maximum, to be recognised as a regional influential. Recognition of American

the region cannot be ignored for the sake of — yes, even the Americans. The governments of India and Pakistan cannot be allowed to ignore the fact that their main business is to promote the interest of their people. Their relationship with foreign powers comes later; it is a secondary matter. The primary interest of the people in both India and Pakistan is obtaining a job, to be able to buy foodstuffs, clothes and a shelter. They require governments that cater to their first of all.

For Pakistanis, there is a special democratic deficit in this visit. While President Bush's earlier commitment to stabilise the Musharraf presidency had merely made Pakistanis apprehensive, there is now a none too inscrutable reality to be faced: President Musharraf has told New York journalists that while he will honour his pledge to hold polls for national and provincial assemblies by October 11, 2002, he is sure

Anthrax? 'We have lived with it, we have got used to it'

JOHN KAMAU
writes from Kajiado, Kenya

ANTHRAX outbreaks may be hitting the headlines everywhere, but among Kenya's pastoral Maasai community it is not even news.

"We have lived with it, we have got used to it," says 78-year-old Lenyaele ole Kenta. "It's nothing big."

An elder at the Mbirikani group ranch, a 1,350 square kilometre area bordering Mount Kilimanjaro, ole Kenta even claims to be immune from anthrax — called *emburu* among the Maasai.

"If you eat infected meat you only need to chew a young shoot of *olmisigiyo* and you are healed," ole Kenta says. "Some of us have immunity from anthrax and we don't need to chew it."

Olmisigiyo (scientific name: *Rhus natalensis*) is a fruit-bearing bush that grows in the savannah or along forest edges in lowlands and midlands.

Doctors working in Kenya's Kajiado region, 60 km south of Nairobi, confirm this practice.

"I have heard of Maasai elders who eat meat from infected cows, then chew some herbs and hardy get any sickness," says Dr James Maingi, who runs a private clinic in Nairobi.

The elders have a different explanation.

Some time ago, explains ole Kenta, the Maasai developed traditional ways of preventing anthrax infection.

"When a woman was seven or eight months pregnant and she began to starve, surviving on water and little or no food," says ole Kenta about a common Maasai practice in which pregnant women fast, "an animal that had died of anthrax was sought and its most infected body

As anthrax outbreaks disrupt the US government and strike fears of bio-terrorism across the world, African pastoralists who have lived with this potentially lethal bacteria for generations remain unfazed. A Gemini News Service correspondent visits the Maasai in Kenya to see how they have harnessed traditional knowledge to deal with anthrax and why the latest outbreaks do not scare them.

parts the liver and spleen would be cut out, roasted and given to the woman to eat.

"She chewed young shoots of *olmisigiyo* and drank the juice as she ate the infected meat," he said.

The Maasai believe the diseased food hardens the foetus and the baby is born with strength to resist anthrax and related diseases.

"There is no scientific explanation for that," says Maingi, who has worked among the Maasai for 20 years. "And it would be interesting to see research done on whether exposure of the foetus to anthrax stimulates it to develop immunity to the disease."

Although this practice of feeding anthrax-infected cow liver and spleen to pregnant women is now dead, ole Kenta says that it should be revived to give Maasai children immunity.

"Anthrax cows are not buried. Never," says Mereso Agina, a leading Maasai woman. "The only thing that happens is that the meat is boiled and not roasted. The soup is then taken with some herbs."

Anthrax is primarily an animal disease, affecting cattle and sheep. It is caused by the bacteria *bacillus anthracis* and can form hard-shelled spores that survive for up to 80 years.

Humans can experience three types of anthrax infections: cutaneous anthrax, the least serious, produces skin lesions; intestinal anthrax, caused by eating contami-

nated meat, brings on symptoms similar to food poisoning and is often fatal; and respiratory anthrax, caused by breathing in spores, is also frequently lethal.

Anthrax scares have gripped the United States since early October, when anthrax was found on the computer keyboard of a Florida journalist who died of anthrax on 5 October. Since then, three others have died from anthrax. There have now been 17 confirmed anthrax cases in the US, including 10 cases of the deadly inhalation anthrax and seven of the less dangerous skin anthrax.

Almost all infected had handled letters filled with anthrax-laced powder thought to have been sent by terrorists.

Anthrax fears have disrupted the US postal system, the White House, Congress, Supreme Court and Justice Department. Traces of anthrax have also been found in mail sent to US embassies in Argentina, Lithuania and Peru. Kenya also faced an anthrax scare after a parcel sent from the US to a Nairobi doctor was suspected of containing anthrax spores.

But as mail rooms worldwide continue treating suspicious packages with caution the fear of anthrax has yet to grip the plains of Kajiado district, where the Maasai continue to graze cattle.

"I have heard it on the radio. I do not think it scares me," says ole Kenta. "Our only worry is that it kills

our livestock but humans... no."

Among the Maasai, animals that are afflicted by disease or seriously injured are slaughtered such action prevents the spread of disease and further losses of edible meat.

However, meat from diseased animals is eaten. Indeed, much of the meat consumed by the Maasai is from such animals.

Andrew Stenton of Nairobi Hospital says: "The disease is not uncommon in East Africa, as it is in the Western world."

And Dr Gabriel Mbugua, director of Kenya Medical Research Institute's Centre for Microbiology Research, says anthrax is "no big deal".

"It is a relatively safe organism to handle. I would safely take my snack in there," he says, pointing to his laboratory.

In June, August and October anthrax outbreaks were reported in Kajiado, Murang'a and Nyeri districts respectively. And not everyone dismisses anthrax fears.

For 14-year-old James Mathenge anthrax is scary especially after his brush with the bacteria after handling an infected cow.

"The cow just died and we decided to slaughter it, but the veterinary officer told us to bury it because it had *Mururu* [the local Kikuyu tribe word anthrax]," he said.

"Two days later my hands started itching and I developed a fever. Then my glands started to swell and I sought treatment.

some herbs," says Ezekiel Kesendany, the chairman of Odececo, an Ogiek non-governmental organisation. "Another way is to put salt into the meat and let it dry in the sun before cooking it."

"We do not bury cows in the ground, we bury them in our stomachs."

John Kamau is the editor of Rights Features Service and a columnist with Kenya's Daily Nation.

"But I didn't think it would kill me," he added.

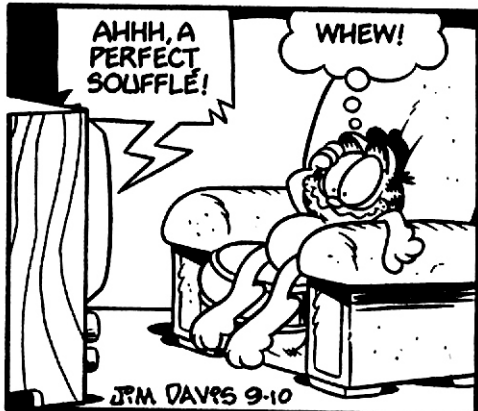
Among the Ogiek, an indigenous honey-gathering community, anthrax-infected animals are not discarded.

"We normally boil the meat with

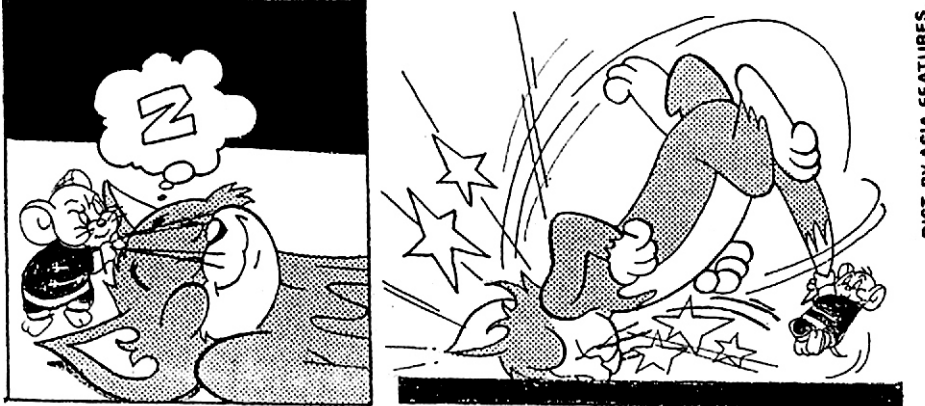
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