

INDIA

Role of the police in Gujarat carnage

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER in Mumbai

THE role of police in communal riots in general and in Gujrat riots in particular has been far from desirable. I have been investigating communal riots in India since Jabalpur riot of 1962. The Jabalpur riot was such in magnitude that it had shaken Jawaharlal Nehru who had secular vision of India. The role of police in Jabalpur riots was quite shocking. Apart from helping the rioters the SRP men were accused of snatching gold bangles and *mangalsutra* from the necks of women. They gate crashed into houses of riot victims and beat up women and took away whatever they could lay their hands upon. As it was my first investigation of communal violence I could not believe that the police could do all this. It was unbelievable indeed.

After Jabalpur, riot after riot I saw the role of police, which was strongly biased against minorities. In Meerut riots twice I witnessed role of police: in 1982 and 1987. In both these riots the role of PAC was worse than that of rioters. In 1982 Meerut riots the PAC killed at point blank the only son of one Dr. Shabbir and had him load his dead body on the truck. The PAC also destroyed Dr. Shabbir's dispensary completely. The same force killed several others who were hiding in their houses. Some women told me they had hidden their husbands in large trunks and they were pulled out of them and shot. Justice Krishna Iyer also visited Meerut after this incident and was so shocked at the behaviour of PAC that he wrote an open letter to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, urging upon her to hold an inquiry into the role of the PAC.

Then again PAC repeated its role in Meerut riots of 1987. The PAC commandant Mr. Tripathi was accused of having pulled out 23 young boys from their houses in Hashimpura loaded them on a truck, took them near a canal outside the city, shot them dead and threw their bodies in the canal. Two boys miraculously survived to tell the tale. Again nothing happened. It was few years after the incident that FIR was recorded during chief ministership of Mulayamsingh Yadav. But nothing again moved beyond recording the FIR.

The role of police during Mumbai riots of 1992-93 came under severe criticism by

various NGOs and above all by Srikirshna Commission, which named 32 officers as guilty of anti-minority bias and also Mr. Tewari, a high police official was accused of being instrumental in killing some young Muslim boys in Suleman Bakery, near Minara Masjid. The authorities took no action and Tewari was symbolically arrested and released immediately after great deal of criticism by human rights activists.

All this is bad enough and sufficient to shake minorities' confidence in the police. The same story repeated in Gujrat carnage after the Godhra incident of 27th February 2002. Again the police in Gujrat aided and abetted the rioters. This time the role of IAS officers also came under severe criticism. Harsh Mandar, an IAS officer of M.P. cadre working in Gujrat with Actionaid India at a time was so enraged by the role of IAS officers of Gujrat and their total surrender to the political authorities that he did not think it fit to continue in such service and he resigned in sheer disgust. Harsh Mandar wrote in his article, "Numbed with disgust and horror, I return from Gujrat ten days after the terror and massacre that convulsed the state. My heart is sickened, my soul wearied, my shoulders aching with the burden of shame and guilt." He further writes, "The unconscionable failures and active connivance of the state police and administrative machinery is also now widely acknowledged. The police is known to have misguided people straight into the hands of rioting mobs. They provided protective shields to crowds bent upon pilage, arson, rape and murder and were deaf to the pleas of these disparate Muslim victims, many of them women and children. There have been many reports of police firing directly mostly at the minority community, which was target of most of the mob violence."

It is not Harsh Mandar alone who writes about such role of the police in Gujrat carnage. Several others including some top police officials themselves have also condemned the police for what it did in Gujrat. Mr. Julio Reiber, ex-Director General of police, Maharashtra, even called them "eunuchs" for having attacked helpless people including old men, women and children. Even after riots the police were not recording correct FIRS either under pressure from

political authorities or because of their own communal leanings. Mr. Ribeiro told *Times of India* in an interview, "Apart from the usual complaints of inaction, people said that police were recording absolutely incorrect FIRs. I met a respectable Hindu gentleman who said that the police did not take down the names of the rioters he had seen and wrote that it was a group of unidentified people. If people who have seen their mothers and sisters raped and burnt before their eyes have no hope of getting justice they will all turn into terrorists." And then Ribeiro asks "Why are we talking about ISI and Pakistan when we are doing their job for them by creating terrorists."

Another top police officer Vibhuti Narayan Rai, now Inspector General of Police in U.P. who has handled several riot situations maintains that "any riot can be controlled in 24 hours if the administration wants to." According to a *Times of India* report, Mr. Vibhuti Narayan Rai has written letters to all IPS officers in the wake of Gujrat violence saying that the police should not blame inadequate equipment and manpower for their failure. Large scale rioting can be checked even with such problems." Mr. Rai also said that it is essential that the police should be seen to be objective that's what sends the right message to the people.

In every riot police also indulges in revenge killing once its man is injured or killed. It goes totally berserk once a policeman is hit. It happened in Deonar area of Mumbai during 1992-93 riots after a policeman was killed by unknown people. Several young Muslim boys had to pay with their lives. It was only a senior and upright police officer like Mr. Pawar who brought the situation under control. Same thing happened in Ahmedabad on 2nd April during Gujrat violence.

When a policeman Mr. Amar Rao Patel was killed the police fired in revenge and 10 persons including two women died and 14 were injured. Angry residents of Patel ki Chawli and Modi ki Chawli where seven persons were killed alleged that police was on revenge spree. The residents said there was nothing happening at the Patel ki Chawli which is one and half kilometre from where the police constable was killed. Nothing had happened there since February 28 and no violence had taken place there even before the police fired and killed 10 persons.

The police has its own version, of course. Inspector R.B.Parmar maintained that soft policing can not control a rioting mob. If a woman is injured it could be a stray incident or she could also be a part of rioting mob. Whatever the explanation firing was in excess and disproportionate to the violence by mob.

Is entire police force to be condemned? Though in riot after riot police does kill and arrest innocent citizens one cannot condemn entire force. There are officers who are unbiased and committed to professional handling of riot situations. Persons like Ribeiro and V.N.Rai, both top police officers are themselves good example of such people in the force. And there are many more such committed officers. Even in Gujrat we found many such officers during our investigations. Some officers handled the situation quite professionally but they were, unfortunately, not given free hand by the political bosses, particularly Narendra Modi. Such officers were instantly transferred and these transfers were either described as 'routine' or 'promotions'. It was more a culpability of political bosses than lack of professionalism among these officers.

There are number of factors which must be taken into account. Sometimes, nay more often, honest officers lack courage and do not act according to the rule book and surrender to the will of political bosses. Some who do get immediately transferred and they become ineffective anyway. But in Gujrat most of the top officers just surrendered meekly before the politicians with few honourable exceptions. I met one Additional Commissioner of police who did not allow riot to take place in his area and was immediately transferred to an administrative job in police headquarters in Ahmedabad.

There is also great need for changing the very model of policing. Our policing is still on the model of British colonial rulers. It has to change to democratic model from colonial model. If proper transfer policies are not evolved politicisation of police will continue to take place and this is disastrous from policing point of view. This is precisely what happened in Gujrat carnage. Some top officers were politicised and hence they did not handle the situation professionally and those who did get transferred most arbitrarily.

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WEEKEND PROFILE

The scientist

ZAGLUL A. CHOWDHURY

EMINENT scientist Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who is described by his countrymen as 'father of Indian missile technology', is almost set to become next president of India following the retirement of K. R. Narayanan on July 24. He has been nominated for the highest position of the nation by the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and paradoxically, supported by no less a party than the main opposition Congress led by Sonia Gandhi.

The main opposition is not expected to support the candidate nominated by its bitter political enemy Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led NDA, but not only the Congress but some other key regional opposition parties have announced their support for non-political Dr. Kalam, who helped India raise its standard to a new height through atomic and missile technology. However, his election is unlikely to be without a challenge since the leftists parties have chosen Laxmi Shaighal, an elderly freedom fighter and an associate of Netaji Subash Bose as their nominee for presidency.

The communist parties say that certainly Dr. Kalam is a pride for India but they do not feel comfortable in choosing a nuclear and missile scientist for the highest post of the country because his contribution is mainly in the destructive field. Nevertheless, Kalam, who has been awarded with 'Bharat Ratna' by the Indian government, is seen by the Indians as a worthy son of the country and as such opposition parties like the Swajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and AIDMK of Jayaram Jayaalitha in the southern Tamil Nadu state threw support to Kalam along with the main opposition Congress despite the fact that he is the nominee of the ruling NDA.

There could be other contestants as well in the election along with Dr. Kalam and Laxmi Shaighal but the NDA candidate is certain to win the race with ease barring major upsets or unforeseen developments. The Indian president, a largely ceremonial position, is elected by the members of the *Lok Sabha* and the state assembly members.

The ruling NDA has a major-thing majority in the electoral college and a hard contest could have been in the card if the combined opposition fielded a joint candidate to challenge Kalam and this makes his chances of success unassailable. The fight by the leftist parties against him is more symbolic than any real business.

Kalam's nomination has been a wise and calculated move by the NDA leadership, mainly PM Vajpayee, who is known to have floated the name of scientist Dr. Kalam after the NDA was split over the choice of candidate for the post of president as the BJP as well as the NDA were divided between two nominees - vice president Krishna Kant and Maharashtra Governor P.C. Alexander. The former was supported by a section of BJP and Telegu Desam party, a constituent of the NDA from southern Andhra Pradesh while the latter by an influential section of the BJP and its key ally Shivsena in Maharashtra.

Finally, the differences persisted and the PM began looking for new names who could carry unanimous support and scientist Kalam emerged as the "dark horse" in the process.

The NDA government in India is likely to benefit by in more than one ways by the decision to field Kalam as its nominee. First, now the win of its candidate is certain and the alliance no longer suffers from the strain of an uncertain future in the election even if though the alliance might have slender majority in the electoral college where not necessarily all are expected to vote strictly on party line as there could be some aberrations. The Indian presidency, although largely ceremonial,

NEPAL

The monarch goes to Hindustan

The Indians are going to use the royal visit to size up King Gyanendra, writes C.K. Lal from Kathmandu

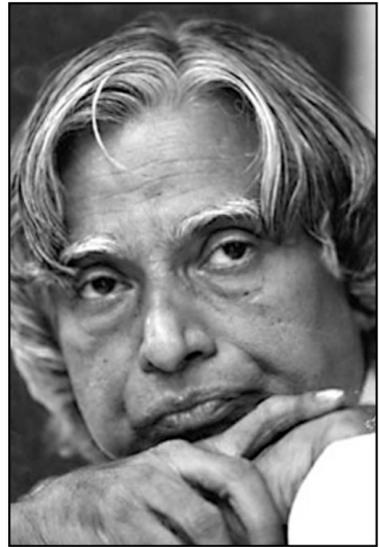
KING Gyanendra's first foreign trip is perhaps going to be his most challenging one. Seldom free of the clash of conflicting interests, Indo-Nepal relations have been suffering from a noticeable lack of mutual trust. Despite repeated assurances from New Delhi, Nepali authorities believe that several Maoist leaders continue to operate out of safe havens in Indian territory. Perhaps to balance the score, India's hawkish Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani aired his own grievances about other terrorists in Nepal early this week.

This was a shrewdly-placed curtainraiser to the royal visit. The Indian Home Minister publicly alleged that two Kashmiri militant outfits had set up base in Nepal. Discussions about terrorism in South Asia run the risk of turning into mutual blame-throwing if the Advani red herring is equated with the hard reality of Confederation of Communist and Maoist Political Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA).

Officials accompanying King Gyanendra will have to convince India's hawkish foreign policy bureaucracy that Nepal doesn't stand to gain anything by allowing Kashmiri militants to operate from its territory. Kashmir is now an international issue being monitored by the Americans, with Indian concurrence, even if not at its behest. Kathmandu has too many problems of its own to bother about the "most dangerous region in the world".

The ground reality on the trade treaty and transit facilities front is even worse. Indian intransigence has effectively killed processing (alright, alright, "repackaging") industries such as vanaspati ghu, copper wire and acrylic yarn. The dry-ports built with World Bank loans at Birganj, Bhairahawa and Biratnagar remain deserted because the promised rail links to Indian railheads haven't materialised. Having been a successful businessman once, and one who had trading and industrial links with Indian business houses, King Gyanendra must be aware of the influence that these industries have in the corridors of power in New Delhi. The challenge before Nepali negotiators is to convince the captains of Indian trade and industry that a more liberal regime between the two countries is financially more beneficial for both sides.

Personally, the king may feel that the New Delhi establishment is using the opportunity to scrutinise his attitude as him up, as it were. Perhaps owing to his business background, King Gyanendra is considered conservative by India's chattering classes. This is in sharp contrast to the liberal image that King Birendra enjoyed during the 1990s. The canards spread by the Maoists against the present monarch haven't succeeded in damaging the reputation of the monarchy.



assumes critically important role in certain occasions like claims and counter claims of majority in the Lok Sabha for formation of a government or during instable situation when a government struggles for existence although nothing unethical is expected from the president who goes by democratic norms and ethics. The BJP and the NDA can count normal support from Kalam since he is their nominee.

Besides, the NDA can rightly claim that its choice of the nominee has been such that it could get the major opposition parties along with it and this a kind of national consensus that India should have on such important issues. But the biggest advantage of the government and the prime minister will be obviating the impression that they are communal in nature - a notion gained in the aftermath of the communal carnage in the western Gujarat state. The image of India and NDA government has been largely tarnished by the Gujarat situation and now they will seek to dispel this idea on the ground that by choosing a minority Muslim for the highest post of the country, the NDA or that matter its driving force BJP has shown that they are not at all communal. Indeed, the choice of Kalam will gladden the hearts of many Muslims to an extent and this will help the government.

The Congress and other opposition secular parties which are supporting the scientist also evidently kept in mind the issue of their countless supporters from minority community while extending support to Kalam. Sonia Gandhi said her party discussed in detail before deciding to support him.

If everything goes well in the expected lines, the person who once sold newspapers in his childhood in an obscure village in Tamil Nadu in southern India, looks certain to become next president of India. Kalam says he is the symbol of an ordinary Indian and feels that he would be able to contribute to the nation as president and a scientist since it is the age of science and technology.

A regional vision

ADNAN REHMAT

FOR a region that boasts a staggering 45 of the world's 50 highest mountains, it is a sad reflection on South Asia's continuing inability to climb out of the pits that it has been in for several decades now while the world has moved on to better things.

Who is to blame if South Asia is literally the poorest, the most illiterate, the most malnourished, the least gender sensitive and the most militarised region in the world? Surely proof enough of a crippling crisis of leadership and absence of good governance.

Here is some food for thought: If the performance of our governments doesn't improve dramatically, then between now and 2020 tobacco alone will kill 1.52 million in India, Pakistan will have about 90 million illiterate women, about two-thirds of all Nepalese will be without adequate sanitation facilities, about 40 per cent of all children in Bangladesh will be underweight, over a quarter of the Sri Lankan population will live below the poverty line, every Bhutanese woman will have to bear five children and Maldives will probably be the only country in South Asia where women have shorter lives than men.

If these random statistics from individual countries are bad enough, the region as a whole boasts worse: South Asia has the world's most largest pool of illiterates and the most number of children at work rather than in schools while only African women bear more children than our women.

The very fact that we are confronted with these figures proves that our leaders have failed in their primary responsibility of ensuring the welfare of the majority of the peoples and need to be held accountable for their failure. For if they are not, and if current trends are any guide, misery will continue to haunt our region and the very concept of a nation state will start being challenged and radicals and anarchists will fill out the vacuum created from poor and bad governance.

Malaria has killed more people in our region than missiles have. Droughts in Pakistan and India in the past two years have caused more deaths than the never-ending border skirmishes. Why, searing heat alone in India and Pakistan's heartland this summer has killed over a thousand.

Instead of epitomising the collective virtues of progress, rationality, tolerance, peace and harmony - all of which has been our collective heritage for centuries - our region has come to instead symbolise regression, degeneration, intolerance and violence.

Even Africa in general seems a region happily coming to grips with modernity and embracing it willingly and without reservation whereas we are confronted with the unforgiving dangers of nuclear proliferation and the futility and misplaced pursuit of expensive nuclear programmes we can't afford.

The million-plus amassing of troops on one of the world's longest shared borders for several months now is so sad because it is increasingly eliminating the chances of peace. Which of the two can talk peace and prosperity with guns trained at each other?

An enduring basis for a stable South Asia in 2020 lies not in the threat or use of military force, but in the patient building of institutions which embody norms, values and behaviour that decent peoples and nations want and must have.

For stability in 2020, South Asia will have to shift from the "national security" paradigm to "human security". And do so NOW, for what

passes for security now is any thing but that. Insecurity is security and security is insecurity! In many instances across South Asia, the state itself is the chief threat to the dignity and life of citizens.

The threats posed by the administrative, judicial, police, paramilitary and military structures to human rights in our region are very real and an every-day phenomenon, but incomprehensible within the analytical framework of national security.

In contemporary times, democracy, liberalism, free market economy, confidence building measures and human empowerment have emerged as successful principles for peace and development. This is a recipe for the following: Reduction in defence spending, Reduction in tension between states and Increase in resources for social and economic development.

Sadly, there seems to be little serious realisation of these trends in South Asia at the policymaker's level. Contradiction in perceptions, theories and practices are not only notable between South Asia and the rest of the world but disparities in understanding global trends within South Asia are also remarkable.

For one, the region is badly managed. Democracy in the region is fast turning into an empty ritual. The gap between the state and



society is becoming pronounced. The peoples of South Asia in general feel excluded from the larger political process and despite the existence of local governments, in most of our countries, the state remains distant from the citizen.

Institutional decay is evident every South Asian state. There are stark social and economic inequalities, which are the result of inefficient and unjust system of political and economic management.

South Asian economies are debt ridden and the rates of saving and investment are dismal. Income disparities in the region are one of the largest in the world. Health services in these countries are poor. They spend many times more on defence than on social, economic and physical development.

Spare a thought for the smaller countries in South Asia that are dominated by the policies of India and Pakistan, and are condemned to react to all regional and global developments in the shadow of these two ever-sparing giants.

These states no doubt have a lot to share in the human security environment of South Asia as a whole but their importance is under-

mined by the hostilities of the two largest countries in the region. It's time these smaller states united and gave these two uncompromising giants a dressing down.

Only with political freedoms - the right of for all men and women to participate equally in society - can South Asian peoples genuinely take advantage of economic freedoms. So, what should be done? I think the most important step towards generating the kind of economic growth needed to do this is the establishment of transparent, accountable and effective systems of governance.

Only when the South Asian peoples feel they have a stake and a voice will they throw themselves wholeheartedly into development. After all, rights make human beings better economic actors.

It is clearly not enough for the South Asian countries simply to grant economic and social rights in theory alone. You cannot legislate good health and jobs. You need an economy strong enough to provide them and for that you need people economically engaged.

So economic and social rights - which form the bedrock of human security - are both the incentive for, and the reward of, sustainable human security in South Asia.

And being wedded still to "national security" is a major reason why the governments in South Asia in general spend more to pro-

tect their citizens against undefined external military attack than to guard them against omnipresent disease, poverty and illiteracy.

When hundreds of millions live below the poverty line, a majority is without education, health and livelihood, and when citizens are killed by their own security forces, then the concept of national security is immaterial and of zero utility. To insist on national security at the expense of human security would be to trivialise the concept of security to the point of sterility, bereft of any operational meaning.

India and Pakistan would have both been winners, and by extension the rest of South Asia too, if they had followed such a policy. By history and geography, the fates of India and Pakistan are tied together. They can work to improve the living standards and quality of life of their two peoples, and those of others in the region; or they can fight to keep each other at the bottom of the international league.

The time has come for new thinking in South Asia, especially on issues of security and development - two sides of the same coin - inseparable and linked together because of the unique nature of the South Asian environment.