

Sixty years of partition

Let there be peace and friendship

THE partition of the subcontinent into two independent states-- India and Pakistan-- in August 1947 was undoubtedly the most momentous event in the political history of the region as a whole.

It also marked the end of the British rule of nearly 200 years, and shaped the political destiny of people, albeit in differing contexts. While India steadfastly adhered to democracy in a complex and vast social setting, Pakistan, for most part of its existence, reeled under military rule, with patches of democratic dispensation, more as an exception than rule, during the last 60 years. The two countries have also had adversarial relations almost since 1947, that at times degenerated into full-blown hostilities.

India has been immensely benefited by democracy which kept it on a stable economic course too, and it is now emerging as an economic superpower. Indians passed the critical test that democracy was subjected to at least on one occasion when emergency was declared by Mrs. Gandhi in June 1975. They overwhelmingly rejected the idea and put their country back to democratic ways. The fight for supremacy in the political arena has always been confined to the politicians, unlike in Pakistan where intervention and seizing of state power by the military badly weakened whatever foundation of democracy the country had started with. Pakistan is still struggling to find an answer to the perennial question: who should govern it and how.

The rise of an extremely virulent form of religious extremism is a big challenge that Pakistan is facing today. As for India, it also has reason to be worried about the communal forces asserting themselves in society, despite secularism being an avowed state policy.

The good news today, however, is that both New Delhi and Islamabad have felt the need for doing away with hostility which did not serve the two countries well in the past. They are now nuclear-capable which adds an altogether new dimension to their bilateral ties and balance of power in the region.

We hope Pakistan will succeed in setting aside the forces of intolerance and establish a democratic order for the collective good of its people. India, despite the tremendous success it has achieved over the last one decade or so, still has the issue of wide rich-poor gap to deal with. Once durable peace exists between the two countries, they will find it a lot easier to concentrate on issues pertaining to people's welfare. We hope the day is not far away.

We wish both countries a happy and prosperous tomorrow.

Interest cut on loan for import

Will it bring down the prices?

THE central bank's circular to commercial banks directing them to reduce interest rates to 12 percent from 14-16 percent on loans for import of 10 essential commodities apparently comes as a move to catch the bull of soaring market prices by the horn. This is an attempted price stabilisation measure prompted by a collapse of the productive sector brought on by devastating floods, unabated increase in international commodity prices and the need for ensuring steady supply of essentials during the month of Ramadan.

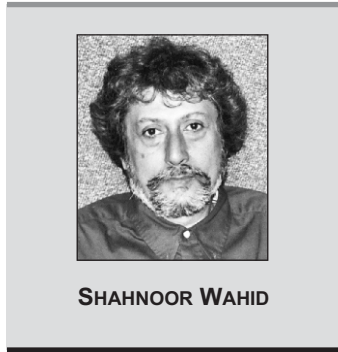
To us, this appears to be a rather simplistic recipe, well-intentioned that it must be. The banks' profit margin is set to be reduced, as they are being asked to part with some profit for the sake of consumers and in the interest of market stability. That is well and good. Now the question is, are the importers, wholesalers, middlemen and retailers willing to pass on the benefit of the reduced cost of import to the consumers? The margin of the interest rate cut being fairly large, they should be able to share the benefit with the consumers. If they don't, it will reflect badly on their social commitment. Even so, we stress the need for a market monitoring mechanism to work vigorously to neutralise possible intervention by cartels and middlemen at various tiers.

The second crucial factor that could undercut the positive impact of the interest cut has to do with the international prices. The move presupposes that international prices will not rise from the present level; but who can guarantee this, given the fluctuating international market behaviour? Let's not forget that despite the government's recourse to zero tariff on import of certain essential commodities the prices have not clearly come down. This is because of the fact that international prices have been on the rise except for that of sugar.

The bottomline is seeking cooperation of the chamber bodies to work out a market monitoring mechanism to jointly oversee implementation of various measures taken by the government.

LOOKING BACK

1970 elections and Sheikh Mujib's six points



SHAHNOOR WAHID

ON the sad occasion of the death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, we tend to go back in time and contemplate the unique circumstances that led to the inevitable birth of Bangladesh. Among the unique circumstances worth mentionable are the Language Movement of 1952, student-people protests throughout the sixties against West Pakistan's economic exploitation, violent anti-Ayub movement of 1968-69, and movement in support of Awami League's Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Six Points for greater autonomy of East Pakistan.

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SENSE & INSENSIBILITY

Movement for autonomy found a new meaning and dimension after the devastating cyclone and tidal surge of 1970 that hit the coastal belt of East Pakistan and the demonstrated apathy of the military government of Gen. Yahya Khan towards the suffering humanity. The cyclone that struck on November 12 was the deadliest one ever recorded, which took the lives of around 500,000 people. The ferocious waves that came from the ocean flattened everything in their way on land.

Yahya Khan towards the suffering humanity.

The cyclone that struck on November 12 was the deadliest one ever recorded, which took the lives of around 500,000 people. The ferocious waves that came from the ocean flattened everything in their way on land. It has been estimated to be the sixth cyclonic storm of the 1970 North Indian Ocean cyclone season, and was also the most powerful, reaching a strength equivalent to a Category 3 hurricane.

The Pakistani government was severely criticised both by local political leaders in East Pakistan and by the international media for its poor handling of the relief operations following the cyclone. The people of East Pakistan never forgot or forgave the rulers of Pakistan for their colonial attitude towards them.

It was the beginning of the end of East Pakistan as a province of Pakistan and the very naturally the elections that followed paved the way for the creation of Bangladesh.

Below is a short take of the results of the 1970 general elections held simultaneously in the two wings of the then Pakistan.

The elections were held under the supervision of the military regime of Gen. Yahya Khan. The polls in East Pakistan were supposed to be held in October 1970 but because of that year's floods these were rescheduled for December, and some in January 1971.

In all, twenty-four political parties took part in the elections with as many as 1,957 candidates filing up nomination papers to vie for 300 National Assembly seats. But the number came down to

1,579 after initial scrutiny and withdrawals and these candidates finally contested the elections. The Awami League offered 170 candidates in the elections (out of this number, 167 were for constituencies in East Pakistan).

Jamaat-e-Islami offered 151 candidates, the second-highest number. On the other hand, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) ran 120 candidates, all from West Pakistan and none from East Pakistan. The PML (Convention) offered 124 candidates, the PML (Council) 119 and the PML (Qayyum) 133.

The elections passed off quite peacefully in both wings with relatively high level of public participation. The estimated voter turnout was nearly 63 per cent, with the number of registered voters in East Pakistan being 31,211,220 and in West Pakistan

25,730,280.

In the elections of 1970, Awami League won 167 of 169 East Pakistan seats in the National Assembly but none of West Pakistan's 138 seats. It also bagged 288 out of 300 provincial assembly seats in East Pakistan. Awami League thus got an overwhelming majority in the 313-seat National Assembly to form a governmnt. After the results

1970 Election Result

Party	% of votes	Total Seats
AL	38.3	167
PPP	19.5	81
PML(Q)	4.4	9
PML(Con)	3.3	7
Jamiat Ulema	4.0	7
NAP(Wali)	2.3	6
Jamaat e Islami	6.0	4
PML (Council)	6.0	2
PDP	2.9	1
Independent	7.1	16

were declared, Gen Yahya Khan welcomed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the 'future prime minister of Pakistan.' But Bhutto and some Pakistani military Generals had other plans in their minds.

Mujib's six points

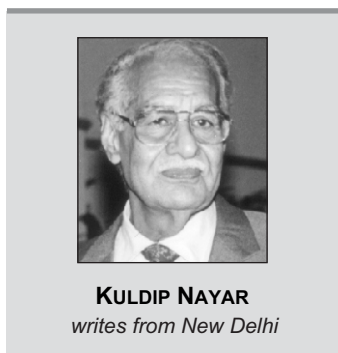
It was in 1966, in Lahore, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced his historic six point political and economic

program aimed at attaining greater autonomy of East Pakistan. Among the salient features of the six point program were: the government to be federal in character and parliamentary in nature; members to be elected through direct elections; legislative representation to be based on population; the federal government to have main responsibil-

ity of foreign affairs and defence; each wing to have own currency and separate fiscal accounts; taxation to be done at the provincial level; each federal unit to control its own earning of foreign exchange; each unit would have the power to raise its own militia or paramilitary forces.

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Secularism has a long way to go



KULDEEP NAYAR

writes from New Delhi

IT is a straight question, which should have been addressed long ago. If the accused in the Mumbai blasts could be tried and punished even after 15 years, why not those who rioted and killed hundreds in Mumbai in the wake of the Babri masjid demolition in December 1992? The rioting, as the Justice B.N. Sri Krishna Inquiry Commission put it, was a "cause and effect" happening.

The Shiv Sena has threatened to organise a "Hindu backlash" if the government reopens the rioting cases. The then chief minister, Manohar Joshi, has warned that communal amity in the state would be torn asunder on religious lines if the past were looked into. But how does one explain that out of 13,000 cases, only 800 odd were taken up?

Obviously, they were not pursued because of communal considerations. If things were left as they are, the government would be seen as coddling the communal elements.

The Sena's hysterical outcry is understandable because the Commission has held its men

When organisations like the Shiv Sena, feeding on hatred, continue to attack Muslims, and when even the elected MLAs at Hyderabad are not willing to apologise for their action, it is clear that our society has become thickly coated with the muck of religion. It cannot be wiped out easily. What the government can ensure is, at least, that the parties do not have the name Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh appended to them.

guilty. The report, now nine years old, said: "There is no doubt that the Shiv Sena and Shiv Sainiks took the lead in organizing attacks on Muslims and their properties under the guidance of several bodies of the Shiv Sena."

Justice Krishna has specifically mentioned Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, "who, like a veteran general, commanded the loyal Shiv Sainiks to retaliate by organizing attacks against Muslims."

When the riots took place, the Sena-BJP combine was ruling Maharashtra. Atal Bihari Vajpayee led the BJP coalition at the centre. Both rejected the report, the Sena characterising it as "pro-Muslim." Today, the Congress leads the state and central governments.

They have been in power for more than three years. The question that arises is, why did they, knowing the BJP inaction, not move against the politicians and police officials indicted in the report?

Even now, the action taken is cursory because of the Sena threats. The Mumbai police are establishing a cell to reexamine the closed cases. When the

police have done little so far, and when the force itself is involved, how can a fair probe be possible? What the government will prove by not taking action is that there is no rule of law, no constitutional right of equal citizenship.

The guilty, whatever their religion, have to be punished. However wayward India's democratic system, there has to be justice. Instances like the non-compliance with the Krishna report spread the impression that when it comes to taking action against Muslims the government is firm, but lax in the case of Hindus.

This reading is confirmed when one goes through the recommendations of the various Commissions after independence. Seldom have their steps been implemented. Action is still awaited on reports on the riots in Jabalpur (1961), Ranchi (1967), Bhiwandi (1970),

Jamshedpur (1979), Meerut (1982) and Bhagalpur (1989). They were major riots, where the names of politicians and police officials were mentioned because they were involved.

In all riot reports, Hindu

extremists were found to be the instigators. The police were blamed in every riot for their connivance with the extremists. Muslim fundamentalists, too, were involved in some cases. But politicians of both communities remained behind the scenes. None of them got any punishment.

The action against the police and other officials was a simple departmental inquiry, which ended with a warning, censure, or demotion. Unfortunately, politicians and criminals have got so intertwined in our society that prosecution or punishment depends on political convenience, not legal advice. Invariably, those who get away are Hindus.

Take Gujarat. It is a standing shame. No action has been taken against chief minister, Narendra Modi, in view of political considerations. Around 20,000 Muslims are still refugees, with no means of livelihood and no future. Even belated action against those who were responsible for the massacre can mollify opinion in the country and abroad. But it is a prestige issue for the BJP. Or, is

Gujarat a dress rehearsal for the party's hidden agenda?

One is, however, stumped when one sees that Muslim fundamentalists are tearing a leaf from the BJP book of hatred and hostility. Their number is small. But when they are able to get fatwa (cheaper by the dozen these days) in favour of their wrong action, they cause a serious concern.

The most recent instance is that of the attack on the Bangladesh novelist, Taslima Nasreen, at Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. Members of the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) who came to her book launch attacked her. The organisers protected her at the risk of their lives. The MIM got fatwa in its favour in no time, as if it was ready beforehand.

Still, criticism of any religion is not in order because its followers feel hurt. But one cannot stop writers who enjoy freedom of expression. I was sorry to see on TV chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad of Jammu and Kashmir and UP Congress chief Salman

Khurshid advocating that authors should avoid writing on religion. This is, in fact, defending the MIM. Both are Congress leaders. They should have joined issue with fundamentalists.

The best of works in the world are those that challenge religion and its authoritative attitude. What the MIM members did attacking Taslima physically smacks of fascism. One does not have to agree with the author, but she must have her right to say. This is what differentiates a democratic setup from a theocratic or

dictatorial state.

What the MIM members exhibited was deep-rooted religious prejudice. I hope it is not spreading among Muslims. Liberals of both communities need to work on such elements to retrieve them.

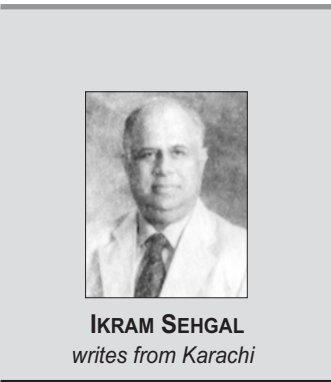
Extremists among Hindus and Muslims have failed to realise that our trust with destiny is to build a secular state. This is not dependent on whether Pakistan is an Islamic state or not. The ethos of the freedom struggle was to build a secular state. And that is what Jawaharlal Nehru did. I feel disappointed, even after 60 years of independence that the Hindu-Muslim question has not been sorted out.

I had imagined that it would be within a few years of independence that the pluralism, which the British had methodically destroyed, would reassert itself. It is clear that this is not taking place. The nation must introspect to find out why?

When organisations like the Shiv Sena, feeding on hatred, continue to attack Muslims, and when even the elected MLAs at Hyderabad are not willing to apologise for their action, it is clear that our society has become thickly coated with the muck of religion. It cannot be wiped out easily. What the government can ensure is, at least, that the parties do not have the name Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh appended to them.

Kuldeep Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist.

The real rulers of Pakistan



IKRAM SEHGAL

writes from Karachi

SIXTY years into our independence, the canard is that military rule alone destroyed democracy, no one speaks about the bureaucracy's role in initially bringing democracy to its knees, and then benefiting hugely by the facade of successive military rule.

The irony is that some bureaucrats, extremely close to all the military and bureaucrat rulers, have now become born-again democrats, and are leading the holier-than-thou charge against the military.

From Aug 1947 to Sep 1948, the Quaid was governor general (GG) of Pakistan and Liaquat Ali Khan was the prime minister (PM). The reins of power were firmly in the hands of those committed to democracy, and even after the Quaid's death on Sep 11, 1948,

when Khawaja Nazimuddin became GG, the dominance of democrats was maintained till Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated on Oct 16, 1951.

Senior bureaucrats persuaded Khawaja Nazimuddin that in order "to sustain the democratic traditions" he was required to be a powerful PM on the lines of Liaquat Shaheed, the GG's post to remain largely ceremonial as it had become after the Quaid's death.

This manipulation was engineered by another bureaucrat, Iskander Mirza, to make Ghulam Mohammad, a member of the Accounts Service, who had become finance minister in the first Cabinet, the GG. The first Indian graduate from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, in 1920, Mirza belonged to the hated Mir Jafar family of Bengal, and was born and brought

up in Bombay.

He served in the army for six years as a cavalry officer (Captain) before joining the Indian Political Service (IPS), becoming the defence secretary to the first cabinet in 1947.

After Liaquat's death, democracy was in a twilight zone. Khawaja Nazimuddin fought a series of losing battles against the all-powerful bureaucracy, being finally removed as PM by Ghulam Mohammad. Democracy in Pakistan was actually murdered on April 17, 1953, but, unfortunately, the then chief justice, the Honourable Mohammad Munir, let the killers go free. Mohammad Ali Bogra was handpicked to replace him. Iskander Mirza went to serve as "Pro-Consul" in a faraway Satrapy as Governor East Pakistan.

With his close friend Gen Mohammad Ayub Khan (while

remaining C-in-C) he joined the Bogra cabinet as interior minister and defence minister respectively. Challenging the GG's despotic authority, Bogra was replaced by Ch Mohammad Ali. Making Ghulam Mohammad a mental case, Mirza became acting GG and removed him to become GG, promoting himself from Maj to the rank of Maj Gen.

In 1956, Pakistan became a republic, and Iskander Mirza its first president. By 1958, he had installed and removed four PMs, Choudhry Mohd Ali, Husain Shahed Suhrawardy, Il Chundrigar and Feroz Khan Noon. Since there was no way he was ever going to be elected in his own right, in the face of the deteriorating political and economic conditions, he declared martial law on Oct 7, 1958 and made the C-in-C Pakistan Army, Gen Ayub, the martial law Administrator

(and the PM).

Democracy's corpse, kept in an open casket for over 5 years, was finally buried. Conspiring to oust the very armed forces officers who had supported him, he was himself removed by the army on Oct 27, 1958.

In 1958 and 1959 there was martial law in Pakistan, thereafter Gen Ayub Khan ruled through a civilian cabinet with a few retired army generals. Bureaucracy again became all-powerful, a mixture of politicians and technocrats becoming part of the troika. Only East Pakistan continued to feel the domination of the army, the GOC 14 Division having far more authority in influencing civil affairs ther.

Between 1960 and 1968, bureaucracy was the dominant partner of the technocrats and politicians. A popular democratic movement, initially led by Air Marshal Asghar Khan and taken over by politicians in both East and West Pakistan, brought Ayub down in 1968. He handed over power to Gen Yahya Khan, the C-in-C Pakistan Army; the ranking bureaucrat, post-haste, issued a notification that "the CMLA would report to him," Fida Hussain. This was short lived!

The tragedy is that having preided over the freest and fairest elections in Pakistan's history, Yahya Khan was persuaded by the

losing politicians and a coterie of bureaucrats not to hand over power. Gen Yahya Khan's military rule ended three and a half years later, on Dec 20, 1971, after a violent civil war and the loss of the war with India, which divided Pakistan into two parts, West Pakistan keeping the name Pakistan and East Pakistan becoming Bangladesh.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became Pakistan's president and civilian chief martial law Administrator (CMLA) on Dec 20, 1971. He remained president till Aug 14, 1973, and later, under the 1973 Constitution, he assumed the office of a powerful PM and Fazal Elahi Chaudhry became president. Bhutto must be given great credit for exhuming democracy from its grave and resuscitating it after 20 years.

Democracy's downfall was nationalisation on Jan 1, 1974. This made bureaucrats all-powerful again, by proxy, heading most of the state-owned enterprises and the nationalised ones. On July 5, 1977, Gen Ziaul Haq seized power and became CMLA, relieving Fazal Elahi Chaudhry as president on September 16, 1978, and remaining so till his death in an aircraft crash on August 17, 1988.

An appointed Majlis in 1982 gave way to partyless elections in 1985; with Mohammad Ali Khan Junejo becoming PM. Zia removed Junejo in May 1988 and assumed day-to-

day control. During the Zia period, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, a member of the NWFP civil service before it was merged into the civil services, became an absolute ruler. His source of strength was the nearly 100 or so state-run enterprises headed by bureaucrats, and only a handful of army officers were in civilian posts.

On Zia's death, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who was made chairman of the Senate by Zia, became acting president, being elected president by the assemblies on Dec 13, 1988. From Dec 2, 1988, the born-again democracy was kept "under control" by the bureaucracy with active help from the army. As president till July 18, 1993, this bureaucrat sent two elected PMs home on flimsy grounds.

If the army had any illusions that they were the masters, Ishaq Khan dispelled them by retiring his active collaborator in keeping democracy in a straitjacket, COAS Pakistan army, Gen Aslam Beg. Ghulam Farooq Leghari, another bureaucrat-turned-politician, was elected president on Nov 14, 1993. Before being made to resign on Dec 2, 1997, he ousted his own party PM Ms Benazir, and was planning to send home another PM, Mian Nawaz Sharif who had become all-powerful.

Mohammad Rafiq Tarar was elected president on Jan 01, 1998, remaining so till Jan 20, 2002.

Instead of making democracy work, Mian Nawaz Sharif went off on a binge byf sacking all those he did not like, or making life so miserable for them that they had no option but to quit. When he tried this with the COAS, Musharraf and his close aides were waiting for him, they threw him out.

The first real involvement of the army in the governance of the country for an extended period of time came during Musharraf's rule. Technically, there was no Martial Law, after 2002 an elected government took office. The glaring difference with previous military rules was the influx (a la bureaucracy) of nearly 700-800 armed forces officers into civilian posts.

Except for brief periods of Martial Law the army was always used as the facade behind which an unholy troika of bureaucrats, politicians and technocrats has been the real ruler of the country.

Can anyone explain why the nationalised industries, profitable when taken over in 1974, were almost all bankrupt (or nearly so even after being subsidised many times) when de-nationalised, and why there was (and is) no accountability thereof? Those who count still remain behind the scenes, very much in power!

Ikram Sehgal is an eminent Pakistani political analyst and columnist.