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#### Climate change and Dhaka Declaration

Time to implement recommendations

HAT the declaration made in Dhaka, following a sixday long 'International Symposium on Climate Change and Food Security' jointly sponsored by several national and international agencies, has helped to highlight is the fact that it is not only an environmental issue but also one that affect our very existence. And one couldn't agree more with the comments of the visiting Iceland President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson that climate change has the potential to be the most significant challenge to human security in the near future.

At a time when the international community is seized with problem of global poverty, it stands to be further aggravated by climate change which, according to experts, has arrived sooner than expected. Therefore, the organisers must also be complimented for emphasizing on the fact that the thrust of any future action ought to be on the most vulnerable sector that climate change will affect food and agriculture.

The most painful reality of climate change is that it is the poorer countries that stand to suffer most, while it is the rich countries, whose life style is motivated by unabashed consumerist behaviour, that are responsible for the high carbon emission. And it is the poorest in the poor countries that have the least capacity to withstand the effects of climate change.

We are happy to note the many practical recommendations made at the symposium including regional networking and shifting to non-fossil and renewable sources of energy. Perhaps the most significant of those is the one that relates to stimulating research activities that would allow formulation of tangible mitigation measures. We have spent quite a bit of our energy and time over the last few years highlighting the different facets of our lives that climate change is likely to effect. While there may be difference of opinion regarding the intensity of the phenomenon among different experts, there are no two opinions regarding the need for countries likely to be most affected to get down to evolving substantive action plans that would help them tackle the phenomenon effectively.

Here we reiterate the sentiments of the chief advisor that the richer countries must play their due role in ameliorating a condition that they are primarily responsible for. In this regard the more affluent ones must not only reduce their carbon emission, they should at the same time help the developing countries with technology that would allow their pace of economic growth without impacting global climate adversely. For the poorer countries it is the question of adaptation the great part of which can be successful only by determining how to adapt and getting the required funds to implement those measures.

The recommendations are very good but concrete action is needed to follow those up.

### Safety nets missing the needy

Correct allocation of resources warranted

OR a country that has a significant poverty problem, with an additional 4 million people slipping below poverty line due to the recent and on-going hike in the prices of essentials, there remains far too much ineffectiveness and inefficiency in the government's approach to the issue.

There is no more crucial issue for the country than to ensure food security and that the very poorest of the poor, those who are in danger of serious malnourishment (or even of starvation) and all the attendant miseries of such an abject miserable existence, be taken care of and provided for.

We acknowledge, as a nation, that we have a responsibility to the most wretched among us, that it is government's duty to reach out to them and provide some kind of a safety net, and that it is in everyone's interest that each Bangladeshi receives at

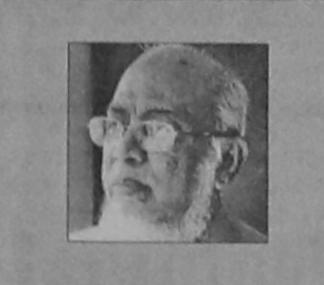
least the minimum sustenance. Thus it is inexplicable why the funds that are allocated for this grave purpose are not more effectively and efficiently distributed. In the first place, there is a regional mismatch between where the funds are most needed and where they end up. In other words, such a solemn and sacred duty such as distribution of food relief is, for

want of a better word, politicised. Even worse is the corruption that accompanies the process, which means that many of those in need never see the funds, which often end up in the pockets of locally influential people and their cronies. Local government representatives such as UP chairmen and members are involved in drawing up lists of recipients for purpose of distribution of subsidies and food through VGF and VGD cards. Usually their loyalists and favourites monopolise the safety net allotments. We suggest that independent influential elements from the local

community be involved in the exercise. When the finance ministry meets today it can undertake no more important a task than to simply make sure that safety net funds and materials go where they need to go. The allocations need to be made on the basis of regional assessments of needs, and the process will have to be monitored and streamlined to ensure that the succour end up in the hands of the needy.

If the government is able to put in place a lasting improvement in the way safety net funds and materials are allocated and to ensure their more effective delivery, then it will be able to claim that it has achieved something of lasting good for those most in need.

## For China it is mission accomplished



M. ABDUL HAFIZ

S the curtain fell on the Beijing Olympics on the L evening of August 24 the joy written on the faces of the Chinese was palpable, and so too was the relief at the end of an event that marked their comingout party as a sporting world

The Chinese confirmed it emphatically in the Olympics, grabbing 51 gold medals, eclipsing the 36 won by the world's sole superpower, which finished second. With its gold medals won deservingly, China emerged as the first Asian nation, since the modern Olympics began in 1896, to win the unofficial crown as the world's greatest Olympic

Three cheers for winning the "truy exceptional games of 29th Summer Olympiads," in the words of IOC President Jacques Rogge at the closing ceremony.

For China, the Games, that set

PERSPECTIVES

The Beijing Olympics, which ended a few days ago in an outpouring of fellowship among the assembled, was a mission superbly executed by China. The effect it will have on the rest of the world -- how well or poorly governments and people will view the real China that has been glimpsed, and how they will connect with an indispensable nation -- will be profound.

45 world records and the host's Asia" label was stuck to her achievements therein, will firmly entrench here newly acquired stature after a century of humiliation at the hands of foreign pow-

Not surprisingly, one of the most discussed topics in the past few days was "the realisation of a century old dream." In 1908, the youth magazine Tianjin raised three questions with regards to its dreams about Olympic participation. When can China send an athlete to the Olympics? When can it send a team of athletes to the Olympics? When can it host the Olympics?

These questions could have been crazy at that time, but we know the answers now. In 1932, China sent a sprinter to the 10th Olympics games in Los Angeles. Four years later, a Chinese team took part in the 1936 Berlin Games. But neither won a medal.

Olympic credential. It wasn't until 1984 in Los Angeles that China bagged its first Olympic gold media. After that China

Yet, it took 100 years for the Chinese to host the games and to surpass the US at a major international sporting event. For the Chinese, the symbolic value of both the achievements is indeed adjust to its obsessional sense of enormous, and was aptly competition, not only to its described by Orville Schell when search for wealth-producing he wrote in the Newsweek that . resources. what the Games mean to the their sports talent program that Chinese without understanding their history of humiliation."

Susan Brownell, saw the Chinese hosting of the games as the Chinese people's "collective redemption for the national suffering of the past century."

This partly explains why China

grandiose and expensive games in Olympic history, and did not tolerate any attempt from any quarter to spoil its party. At work also was the bruised inner psyche didn't look back, and moved of a nation in the face of manifest disgrace.

> Now China, winning the most gold medals, will unavoidably become a metaphor for the manner of its ascent as a sporting power. The world will have to

are not a model for other nations, chiefly the regimented nurturing American sports historian, of children of championship potential. Life is also about fun and freedom, which cannot be dispensed with -- even for national glory.

As for the handling of the dissent in Tibet and Xinjiang, the Hence, the "sick man of East was prepared to mount the most world will look for signs that a



We have achieved what we wanted.

stronger China will find it easier to ease up a bit.

Nevertheless, the Beijing Olympics, which ended a few days ago in an outpouring of fellowship among the assembled, was a mission superbly executed by China.

The effect it will have on the rest of the world -- how well or poorly governments and people will view the real China that has been glimpsed, and how they will connect with an indispensable nation -- will be profound.

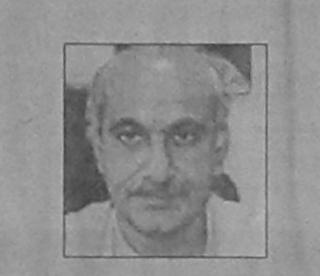
It is futile to think that the justfinished Olympiad was going to be anything other than a measuring gauge to evaluate a reawakened great civilisation, accompanying, of course, commensurate power and prestige.

The important achievement of the 29th summer Olympiad, it is observed, is that it helped promote mutual understanding between China and the world.

It is believed that this is something that will have a positive effect in the long run. Many even reckon that China's embracing of full-fledged democracy is now a matter of time. A rejuvenated China will not miss the opportunity to become stronger with an elixir of political and civic emancipation.

Brig (retd) Hafiz is former DG of BIISS.

# Three questions for the wandering Indian



M.J. AKBAR

sky is much more vast in Canada. That could only be an illusion, right? Wrong. The horizon is not limited by claustrophobic cement, concrete, stone; the vision is not trapped by the tensions of road-crawl, or blocked by the arrogance of bullies who believe that a steering wheel has lifted them out of the demands of common decency.

It is not distance that makes Canada seem like a frontier, although it takes a while to ingest that London is only a midway point between Delhi and Toronto. This frontier is not merely the boundary wall of the familiar; it is also the gateway to new space. I am in the pretty urban village of Waterloo, obviously within British-Canada, for French Canadians are unlikely to institutionalise the memory of Napoleon's defeat.

But the tensions of the 19th century have thinned to inconsequence. Waterloo is the home of CIGI, the think-tank started by one of the creators of the ubiqui-

O jaded Delhi eyes, the Litous Blackberry, which is my a ingat that much touted rate, but

little.

Billionaires in Canada do not believe that the only duty of shape policy and perspective with the help of gardeners gathered from the finest academic

question tour: Can rising India cross the hurdles without collapsing into a painful hobble? Where are the roots and branches of Muslim terrorism? Is nearly a hundred soldiers already to the Taliban, with no end to the war in sight; the voter, if not the government, is beginning to flinch just a little.

I suggest a little adjustment in the focal lens, and the India story becomes much clearer. India may be growing at 9% or thereabouts each year, but every Indian is not growing at that lation. impressive pace.

Perhaps 20% of India is grow-

nearly 80% can choose a number from the lower single digits. The imbalance is both demographic money is to make more money. and geographic. The result is Money can also seed ideas, and virulent social conflict, the worst stream being an epidemic called Naxalism.

This has become a three-question tour: Can rising India cross the hurdles without

collapsing into a painful hobble? Where are the roots and branches of Muslim

terrorism? Is Pakistan a failed state, and what does this mean for the war in

Afghanistan? Canada has lost nearly a hundred soldiers already to the Taliban, with no

end to the war in sight; the voter, if not the government, is beginning to flinch just a

There are many tributaries, and diplomatic nurseries in the including caste and communal tensions. Moreover, aspiration is This has become a three- the right of every youth in a free society, and India is indisputably free. That is the core strength of modern India. But aspiration is also the parent of frustration.

Until we manage these con-Pakistan a failed state, and what tradictions, instead of fooling does this mean for the war in ourselves with silly World Bank Afghanistan? Canada has lost mantras like the trickle-down theory, which is such a solace to limp minds like that of finance minister P. Chidambaram, the India story will always seem vulnerable to sudden, even if temporary, descent into chaos. If it is any consolation, China has worse problems lurking behind the propaganda and dictatorship, but that is very poor conso-

At least the phrase is becoming, gradually, more accurate: it is Muslim terrorism, rather than Islamic terrorism. As I have argued before, Islam does not permit terrorism, even during the worst phases of war.

An increasing number of American and Canadian intellectuals and decision-makers have also begun to realise that warmongering is not the only appropriate response to the problem. A simultaneous battle has to be

fought, with equal vigour, in the minds of the young. At the core of this debate is a question: where lies justice? If the armies of some Western nations have travelled thousands of miles merely to impose forms of neoimperialism, then the war will continue.

If they have gone to induce the emergence of modern, equitable societies and nations -- although the job would be far easier in the hands of men who build schools than generals -- then the battle for the mind can be won.

The 21st century has given us all that we could ask for, but it forgot to give us peace. Peace cannot come without understanding. Understanding is

impossible without dialogue. Dialogue can only be possible between equals, or it becomes a monologue. The world will not move forward on an axis of evil; that axis can only push it into reverse direction.

An axis of good is perhaps an axis of equals. This is the first principle of democracy, a point drum-beaters.

dismiss Pakistan as a failed state, or underestimate the Pakistani's desire to protect the cohesion of his nation. But the moment has come for clarity: Pakistan must reject theocracy as a failed idea. That is the real battle corroding the vitals of Pakistan.

for not merely Pakistan, but the in the forefront of the war against the foreign presence in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

crats raised in order to chip away at Pervez Musharraf's credibility: why was Pakistan fighting America's war against fellow-Muslims? The non-theocrats, to use a clumsy term, consist of both democrats and autocrats in Pakistan. But both the civilians and the generals are being pushed into the American corner by a combination of events and

The fog of this war is intellec-

cians are dying in friendly fire than anyone might want to count. The boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan is notional in many respects, and this is not only because more Pashtuns live in Pakistan than in Afghanistan.

equally sentimental. The world will move towards peace only on often forgotten by democracy's It is counterproductive to

There is an enormous danger whole of South Asia, in the increasing appropriation of nationalism by theocrats, since they have positioned themselves

This is the question that theoan absence of real options.

tual, and more Pakistani politi-

There is no real dividing line on the battlefield where the Taliban is conducting operations against the Nato alliance. In fact, a rational assessment would indicate that the intellectual and political battle has to be fought far more vigorously in Pakistan than in Afghanistan, because it is the Pakistani street that will determine the outcome to a far greater degree than the Afghan

One would have to be a substantial fool to suggest that these answers are comprehensive. But if they take a crucial debate a step or two forward, then the purpose will have been met. It is not only the sky that is vast in Canada. The mind is also more open than one finds upon travelling a little to the south of this

Canadians, by and large, have a more intelligent view of the world than the neo-con ideologues who have shaped the imperial policies of Washington in the last eight years. But Canada does itself, and its cause, an injustice when it sends only troops to Afghanistan. Guns may pacify the present, but it is only butter that buys the future.

M.J. Akbar is Director of Publications, Covert.

# A door opens for reform in Pakistan

The betting in Pakistan is that the coalition won't last long enough to tackle the economy, let alone the broad problems of disaffection and militancy. That may be. But wait and see won't work for long: for everyone's sake, Pakistan's fledgling government needs help now.

PAULA R. NEWBERG

EFORE the ink was dry on Musharraf's resignation letter, and before Pakistanis could celebrate the end of his nine-year rule, remorse filled the air.

Washington and New Delhi, both crucial to Pakistan's stability, lamented the end of one-stop diplomacy, stating official statements with "let's wait and see what democracy brings."

With threthened Pakistan's borders and limping economy, the danger is not of having lost a comfortable relationship with Musharraf, but of nostalgia due to the opportunities that political change might bring.

Self-fulfilling prophecy is a familiar handmaiden to failed policies in this corner of Asia. Although the false promise of efficient military rule has frequently disappointed Pakistanis, pliant donors have often invested

the military with the attributes they want and hope to see.

After 2001, Musharraf was army's return. expediently billed someone who could save economy, align Pakistan with the West, stop terrorism and remove tainted politics. This was myth masquerading where everything, including nuclear technology, was for sale.

By sidestepping the critical relationships that bind citizens to their state -- the very politics Musharraf eschewed so contemptuously -- Pakistan lost its bearings. Costumed variously as the tone-deaf general, Musharraf led Pakistan through rapid cycles of cross-border enmity, institutional degradation, political corruption and civil strife that inevitably eluded the "reconciliation" he

now claims to have sought. The narrative of the past nine years echoed those of earlier eras: neighbourhood wars and domestic inequities gave sanction to army rule, thwarting civilian politicians whose clumsy attempts at statecraft led to the

Sixty years after independence, Pakistan's tribes and sects still crave a credible accommodation with the state over longstanding grievances and inequities, its politicians still search for meaningful participation, and its leaders seek a place in the region and

These needs and intentions define the state more acutely than its often violated constitution. The dominant story is therefore about the unfinished business of citizenship, about who governs whom, and how and why, and what citizens can expect from their state. The troubling arena of domestic politics is also where Pakistan collides with its neighbours, allies, patrons and the broader interests

of global security. Pakistan has long viewed its eastern and western borders as frontlines for its domestic politics,

electoral politics into campaigns to achieve strategic advantage. Nowhere is this clearer than in the lightly governed, highly corrupted western border region, where necessity.

Here, an anti-terror campaign aims to stop the kinds of extremism that make their way westward

Where the West sees criminals, Pakistan sees its own citizens, renegade and under-represented though they may be -- staunch sectarians exiting the international state system and equally stalwart secular nationalists trying to enter it, now caught up in retrograde militancy when their own provincial allegiances fail

The conditions of borderland battle have set tribes and militants against one other: the Pakistan army, Nato and US on one side, extremist sympathisers within the Pakistan military and intelligence establishments on another, and now, separately, local residents who decry militancy, sectarianism and the incapacity of successively

transposing the failures of its weak Pakistan governments to contain, mitigate and dispel these

explosive grievances. Filled with victims of violence and thousands of displaced persons, the borderlands have spun global ambitions encounter local out of control partly because Pakistan can't decide whom to please -- the Americans fighting al Qaeda, its own army reluctant to fight other Pakistanis, a jumble of -- al Qaeda cells that seek to insurgents who are nonetheless Pakistan, and redesign global how best to understand its own interests. To Afghanistan and the West, however, split attention is seen as weakness and, more likely,

deception. Similar failures dog Pakistan's dealings with India. Although Musharraf is retrospectively credited by New Delhi with stabilizing Indo-Pakistani relations, his own intelligence forces have been implicated in attacks in India, on Indian civilians working in Afghanistan, a bombing in India's Kabul Embassy and of course, the Kashmir insurgency.

Pakistan reads Kashmir's unrest through the lenses of its own instabilities, seeing in Hindu-Muslim tensions the same incomplete promises of citizenship that color Pakistani society. It's an accurate appraisal, unseen ironies

notwithstanding.

But when it leads to interference in Kashmir or in India -- and surreptitiously justifies using foreign military assistance to seek an elusive parity with India's military rather than fight terror on its western border -- this analysis embraces hostility and duplicity.

Pakistan can afford neither, but it needs more than Musharraf's departure to alter its foreign policy change, from the periphery of its governance, offers a ray of hope for the future.

It's rare for citizens to speak truth to power and rarer to win, but Pakistan's civil society overturned Musharraf's abuse of civil liberties, dislodged the president lic opinion and the army toward a and set the tone and content -- if not a sure path to success -- for Pakistan's parliament and parties.

Other groups have now followed, including villagers who have chased militants from their homes in the Frontier. Politicians from minority provinces are planning to contest for the presidency. Although the weak ruling coali-

tion may not meet the ethical or fundamental policy issues -- up the challenges it implies: to Reprinted by arrangement.

including the role of the judiciary and the constitution -- and not just positions and favour. Their public disputes are among the most transparent political discussions to which voters have been privy in a very long time.

These domestic issues critically affect the state's fortunes. At least one coalition member, the Awami National Party, recognises the delicate relationships between undermine Afghanistan and citizens in name if not deed -- and fortunes. The impetus for that citizen rights and border security, and came to office with plans to deal with militants sensitively and

responsibly. If this pattern can be carried over to more substantial dealings with Afghanistan and India, and if the desire for peace can lead pubmore liberal stance on Kashmir, then this fragile government might -- unexpectedly, counterintuitively, no doubt inelegantly -provide the region an opportunity

to recast its relationships. For this to happen, Pakistan will finally have to recognise that cross-border belligerence, on its east and west, cannot overcome its own inequality and poor goverefficacy standards set by civil nance. That is a hard lesson to society, disagreements among the learn, and one that will stick only if Yale Center for the Study of

take a long, serious view of Pakistan's governance and the possibilities it might one day offer

This means helping Pakistan to democratise Musharraf's personalised command structure and the electoral system he designed to thwart popular politics, working with parliamentarians with whom they may not agree, and ensuring that Pakistan's government can recognise and represent its own interests, even when they may diverge from those of

their allies and neighbours. The betting in Pakistan is that the coalition won't last long enough to tackle the economy, let alone the broad problems of disaffection and militancy. That may be. But wait and see won't work for long: for everyone's sake, Pakistan's fledgling government needs help now.

Paula Newberg has covered Pakistan's politics for almost three decades and is the author of Judging the State: Courts and Constitutional Politics in Pakistan.

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