

GROUND REALITIES

Militant attack on naval base Compounding chaos in Pakistan

PAKISTANI security forces have reclaimed the Mehran naval base in Karachi after an 18-hour battle with militants who had earlier infiltrated it. The attack on the base by the Pakistani Taliban, which has claimed responsibility for the assault, left ten security men dead and at least twenty injured. This latest predicament in which Pakistan finds itself comes only days after some naval buses came under fire from the militants. In October 2009, the headquarters of the Pakistan army in Rawalpindi came under a similar assault, leaving open the question of how much of a breach of security has occurred in the country's armed forces. The Mehran incident only reinforces the feeling that Pakistan is today in a most vulnerable state from the very militants its notorious inter-services intelligence has often been accused of patronising.

There is little question that Pakistan's people are trapped in conditions their government is unable to handle. Certain regions of the country, such as Waziristan, have clearly slipped out of government control and into the hands of the militants. The mountainous borders between Afghanistan and the Pakistani provinces of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (former North-West Frontier Province) have been easy routes for militant elements to move around freely. Add to that the recent sighting and killing of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad only yards away from Pakistan's elite military academy. Compounding matters further for Pakistan is the regularity with which American drone aircraft have been pounding militant positions. President Obama has held out the promise of more such attacks should they become necessary.

The attack on the naval base is a patent reaction to the Osama killing. What is worrying, though, is the absolute inability of the Pakistani authorities to prevent the militants from operating so freely as to target the country's military establishments. It will be easy to suggest that the Islamabad government take adequate measures to halt the drift to further chaos. The reality, however, is that for now the militants clearly have an upper hand. And Pakistan's military, long the dominant voice in the country, salvaging its image. The picture is disquieting for Pakistan and the region. Pakistanis deserve a better deal.

Scourge of forced labour

HC order should make a difference

THE High Court direction to the government to stop forced labour at brickfields and other enterprises not only comes as a relief but also brings to the fore the occupational hazards that vulnerable workers are exposed to.

We have heard of women and children being forced to work at different brickfields to the extent that their limbs are bound in chains to prevent them from escaping at their leisure time. Reports have it that employees of several brickfields in Savar and Bandarban were found in shackles. This brutal means of enslavement is an outright disdain shown to human rights and values.

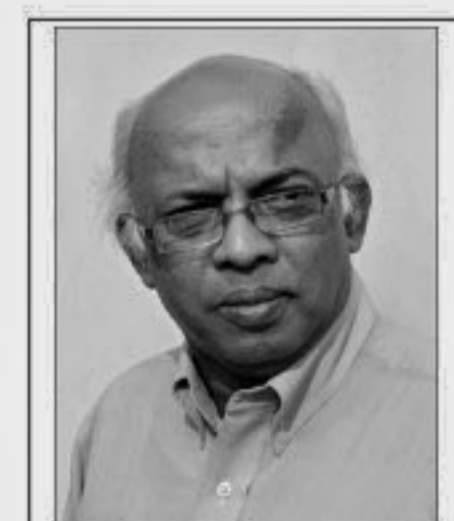
The story of slavery does not end in the brick fields. There are reports of inhuman circumstances that child workers are made to labour in other enterprises. Underage boys and girls, some in their infancy, would be made to work as help in motor workshops, ship-building yards, market places, restaurants or as vendors.

These tender souls are often meted out harsh treatment. They are deprived of basic rights of proper food and security and also right to enjoy leave. They are exposed to dangers of fatalities due to slipshod arrangements at work places. Their compensation packages are next to nothing. They can hardly keep their body and soul together.

This is the worst kind of exploitation by the privileged class. These practices go against the very spirit of labour law along with universal declaration of human rights and provisions of international law.

The government should have the court directives implemented. It must come down hard on the errant employers who resort to such callous practices. It can immediately introduce strong mobile teams to monitor job and employment conditions at different work places.

Labour rights should be ensured and child labour banned. Any one found guilty of breaking the law should not be shown mercy, for this is an outright denial of human rights and dignity.



SYED BADRUL AHSAN

THIEVES sometimes follow in the traditions set by their politicians. When Abdul Qadeer Khan peddles the idea that

had Pakistan been privy to nuclear arms in 1971 there would be no Bangladesh, he only reminds us of the flaws his country has systematically suffered from, to its eventual shame and regret.

You think back on the killing and rape and pillage the Pakistan army indulged in so cheerfully in occupied Bangladesh forty years ago. And then you come to the present, to pity that same army which must now contend with the (till recent) presence of a global outlaw residing within yards of its principal training academy for officers, which must watch horrified as armed men invade its headquarters in Rawalpindi and set chaos loose among its brave jawans. There is something of comeuppance there.

So we are not surprised at A.Q. Khan's fulminations, for he is not the first Pakistani to display a propensity for the barbaric to be brought into a handling of civilised people elsewhere. Back in the 1960s, Field Marshal Ayub Khan, always prey to delusions of grandeur, saw nothing wrong in threatening Bengalis with the language of weapons should the latter insist on carrying their autonomy movement forward.

In case you have missed it, the fact remains that until its not too glorious defeat in the 1971 war, Pakistan consistently pursued policies distinctly racist in tone when it came to dealing with Bengalis. In the 1950s, Iskandar Mirza made himself a silly spectacle when he spoke of shooting the very respectable Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani like a dog. Bhashani was to die a venerated figure in politics. It was Mirza who did not find a grave in his beloved Pakistan.

Leading Pakistanis have not quite been known for their sophistication of language. As foreign minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto told the world that Pakistanis would eat grass but would



BRETT LAMB

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have the atomic bomb. Well, Pakistanis did not eat grass. It was just that A.Q. Khan stole nuclear technology from the West and scampered back home. You now raise the question: is nuclear power so crucial as to have a nation eat grass to come by it? Bhutto's education, now that you think of it, had been misplaced.

At the United Nations Security Council in 1965, he described the Indian delegation led by the eminently honourable Sardar Swaran Singh as dogs. He got away with it, just as he was to get away with his puerile behaviour before the same forum in December 1971. Lyndon Johnson, Alexei Kosygin and Harold Wilson despised him. In early 1971, he decreed that any West Pakistani lawmaker travelling to Dhaka would have his legs broken. In 1974, he did have some legs broken -- those of his party colleague and minister J.A. Rahim and Rahim's son.

Large sections of Pakistanis have

not quite got over their time-honoured attitude to Bengalis. Any demand for political rights in East Pakistan was always, for them, an assault on Pakistan's integrity. Pakistan's break-up in 1971 (and you can check it up in the history Pakistani schools teach their children) was the result of a conspiracy by treacherous Bengalis and India's Hindus.

General Yahya Khan, having had the political negotiations in Dhaka aborted through stealthily making his way out to Rawalpindi on March 25, 1971, felt not a bit of embarrassment terming Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of the party winning the elections three months earlier, as a traitor to the cause of Pakistan.

Subsequently, he would refer to Indira Gandhi as "that woman." In the mid-1960s, Ayub Khan would demonstrate his contempt for the short-statured Lal Bahadur Shastri, until Shastri taught him a lesson in

September 1965.

Language, then, has generally been a casualty at the hands of the mighty in Pakistan. Bangladesh's freedom fighters were "miscreants" (and these "miscreants" eventually ran Pakistan out of Bangladesh). For years on end, the Pakistani establishment promoted a lowly propaganda programme it called "Crush India." We now know who got crushed in the end.

Pakistan has since its creation found itself regularly caught on the wrong foot. In January 1948, Mohammad Ali Jinnah sent Pakistani soldiers, disguised as tribals, into Kashmir. It was a blunder that was to leave a dispute festering over time. In 1960, Francis Gary Powers took off from an American base in Peshawar in a U2 aircraft and was soon shot down over the Soviet Union. The incident left Pakistanis red in the face.

It was consistent Pakistani provocation in 1965 which impelled General J.N. Chaudhury to have Indian soldiers march toward Lahore. When Pakistan's air force attacked Indian bases in early December 1971, the act swiftly led to conditions where, in addition to losing East Pakistan to the Mukti Bahini, Pakistan was threatened with obliteration in the west. In 1999, Pakistan's army chief Pervez Musharraf kept Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the dark as he ordered his forces into Kargil, leaving Pakistan once more vulnerable to charges of aggression.

In early 1971, Z.A. Bhutto cheerfully described the hijackers of an Indian aircraft to Lahore as heroes. The Indians swiftly imposed a ban on overflights between West and East Pakistan. The Pakistani military, through Inter-Services Intelligence, beefed up the Taliban and cheered its ascent to power in 1996. In 2008, the terrorists who hurled themselves on Mumbai came from Pakistan by sea.

Abdul Qadeer Khan has only tried to build on this tradition. Why expect any better from a felon, one who should have been hauled up before the International Criminal Court long ago and put away for good?

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Top IMF post reserved for Europe, why?

EDITORIAL DESK, *The Yomiuri Shimbun*

An unprecedented scandal involving the former head of the International Monetary Fund has left the organisation's top post vacant.

No time should be wasted in selecting a new IMF chief to ensure that the organisation will be able to regain its international credibility, which has been diminished by the scandal.

Former IMF Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who was arrested and indicted on charges of a sexual assault on a New York hotel maid, resigned as head of the IMF.

Although he denied the charges, it was clear he was no longer in a position to direct the IMF, a world organisation tasked with such important duties as overseeing economic policies of member countries. His resignation should be considered inevitable.

Hailing from France, Strauss-Kahn assumed the post of IMF managing director in 2007 after serving in such positions as French finance minister.

In the global financial crisis that followed the collapse of Lehman Brothers in the autumn of 2008, he had a major hand in leading policy coordination among the Group of 20 major countries and regions, including Japan, Europe and the United

States.

In dealing with Europe's financial crisis, Strauss-Kahn delivered good results in speedily working out bail-out packages in collaboration with the European Union for such faltering economies as Greece and Ireland.

Although some have recently ques-

omy must also be watched.

The IMF's role in ensuring stability of the global economy remains very important. It should continue to expedite reform of financial regulations to prevent global financial crises and rectify imbalances among world economies.

Considering that the IMF was founded about 65 years ago, the practice of reserving its top post for Europe seems to be no longer considered a matter of course. This practice should end, and candidates for the IMF's top post from Asia and Central and South America should be considered.

tioned the necessity of the IMF, Strauss-Kahn's ability to take effective action can safely be said to have enhanced the presence of the organisation.

The world's financial markets have recovered a degree of stability, and global business activities are improving. However, many challenges remain, such as instability in the Middle East and soaring crude oil prices, in addition to the still smoldering fiscal problems in Europe. The impact the great East Japan earthquake may have on the world econ-

Given these key issues, the absence of a chief must not be allowed to impede the IMF's role. The question is, who is the right person to succeed Strauss-Kahn?

There has long been a tacit agreement about the top posts of the IMF and the World Bank, both of which were established after the end of World War II: The successive heads of the IMF should be Europeans, while the presidents of the World Bank should be American.

In Europe, French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde is among the

names cited as possible candidates to replace Strauss-Kahn.

However, it should be noted that the landscape of the world economy has changed drastically in recent years.

After the financial crisis that followed the Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy, such emerging economies as Brazil, China and India have conspicuously gained strength, increasing their quota subscriptions to the IMF and therefore their say over IMF policies.

Considering that the IMF was founded about 65 years ago, the practice of reserving its top post for Europe seems to be no longer considered a matter of course. This practice should end, and candidates for the IMF's top post from Asia and Central and South America should be considered.

It appears the United States, which holds the world's largest quota subscription to the IMF, will have a decisive say in the selection of a new IMF head. Whether a successor to Strauss-Kahn is selected through a highly transparent process will serve as a touchstone for gauging the prospects for IMF reform.

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THIS DAY IN HISTORY

May 25

1895
The Republic of Formosa is formed, with Tang Ching-sung as its president.

1940
World War II: The Battle of Dunkirk begins.

1963
In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Organisation of African Unity is established.

1981
In Riyadh, the Gulf Cooperation Council is created between Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

1985
Bangladesh is hit by a tropical cyclone and storm surge, which kills approximately 10,000 people.

2000
Liberation Day of Lebanon. Israel withdraws its army from most of the Lebanese territory after 22 years of its first invasion in 1978.