

The US Republican Party contemplates disaster

Influx of illegal weapons

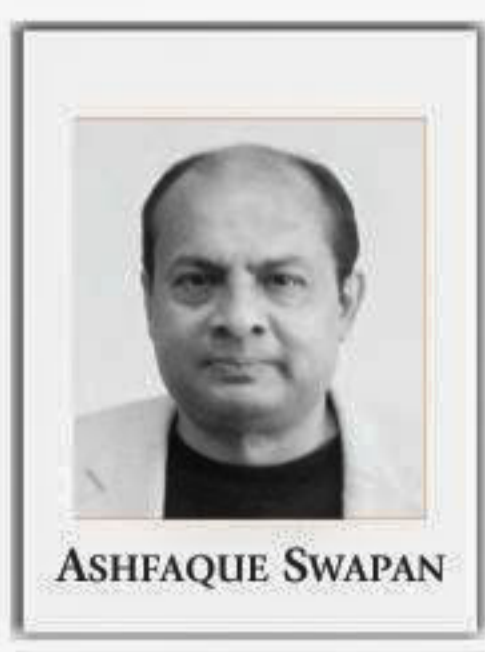
Border vigilance needs to be tightened

It is little wonder that the weapons used in the Gulshan attack were obtained from across the border as we understand from police statements. It needs little reiteration that there has been of late increased proliferation of illegal weapons and ammunition in the country. Its random use and instances of police recovery of these materials in raids of extremists' dens and hideouts bears our fear. The sophisticated weapons and munitions in possession of these non-state actors are of service category and very sophisticated. Many encounters between the law enforcing agencies and the extremists and common outlaws have involved the use of small arms by the criminals. Little doubt that all of these have found their way clandestinely inside Bangladesh. Reportedly, a large number of small arms factories have sprouted up just across our borders and along with it has grown drug factories as cottage industry; and there are takers for both in Bangladesh. We have been calling from time to time to beef up the efforts to recover illegal weapons and enhance border vigilance to check the inflow of illicit weapons. The matter must be given top priority.

Land grabbing at Kuakata

Remove illegal structures immediately

ILLEGALLY constructed structures have once again started to spring up on the Kuakata beach, defying a High Court directive issued in 2011 and this time it is being done by just one man. Abdul Kuddus has reportedly built 18 sea-facing stores and "leased" them out to several businesses for a hefty fee. The problem, of course, is that the land on which these shops were erected belongs to the republic, not any individual. The local civil servants have vowed to remove these structures immediately but the question remains as to how it was possible for someone to build them under the very nose of the administration in the first place. Were they built overnight without anybody watching? Grabbing of land belonging to the state or the socially weak has become a scourge across the country. Parks, pavements, playgrounds and even parts of streets are occupied on a whim by powerful quarters. But setting up stores on a sea beach takes the matter to a whole new level. Does anyone care about how much they will affect the panoramic view of the beach? Will any tourist want to go to a beach only to be greeted by a bleak sprawl of shoddily constructed low-lying structures? Authorities should waste no time in removing the unlawful shanties on the beach of Kuakata. And Abdul Kuddus, no matter how powerful or well connected, must be held accountable for his misdeed.



ASHEFAQUE SWAPAN

THE countdown of the US presidential race has begun, and the entire world is wondering, aghast, if the good people of the United States, in their infinite wisdom, will actually elect a self-confessed sexual molester and incorrigible liar, a.k.a. New York tycoon Donald J. Trump.

Take a deep breath. Despite the recent brouhaha over Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton's negligent handling of emails, I still believe Clinton will win. Winning US presidential elections takes a level of organisation and planning that is beyond the erratic Trump. Let's take a closer look at the serious long-term damage caused by Trump. Trump was a fixture in the New York tabloids for decades. His bombast was so over the top that it was almost comical. Many dismissed him as a pompous oaf. Nobody is laughing now. Least of all the Republican Party. The party has been torn apart. Trump has provided a laser focus for the rage of a constituency of the Republican Party that is seething. These are mainly non-college educated whites. As millions of manufacturing jobs have disappeared, their economic world has collapsed. For years and years, instead of providing answers to their economic woes, the Republican Party has indulged their xenophobia and prejudice.

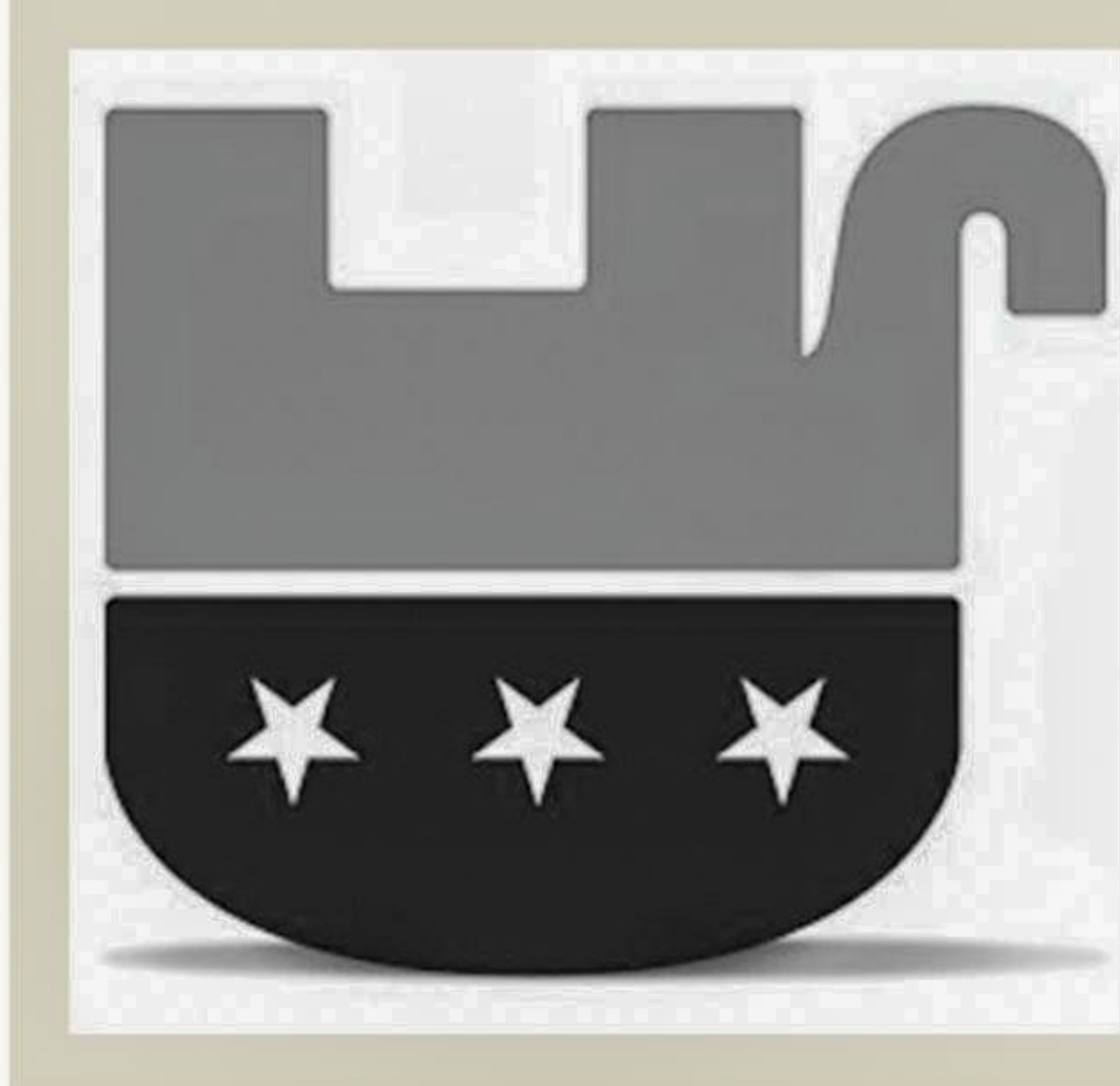
Trump's rants against the Republican and Democratic establishment, the political class, America's foreign trading partners - all of this may seem transparently bogus to anybody with a passing familiarity with the issues, but it resonates deeply with the disaffected. This angry Republican constituency is out for blood. They want to deal a devastating blow to the Republican political class that they feel has taken them for a ride. Trump has been exceptionally astute in gauging their anger - and he has turned it into political gold. Now he has a core group of people around him that includes his family members and those associated with the fringe and extreme rightwing news website Breitbart.com.

Breitbart.com is so extreme that it makes conservative media channel Fox look mainstream. Its boss Stephen Bannon currently serves as Trump's campaign manager.

The party establishment is appalled and shell-shocked. *Politico* described its situation recently: "Far from the halls of the Hoover Institution and big Washington policy shops is a force they cannot control: The Trump campaign, a small collection of social-media gurus, Breitbart alumni, and Trump family members who have managed to capture

is just taking a walk. If Trump loses, his supporters may well turn their rage inward. That could mean more political mayhem. To be fair, Trump did not create this resentment, he is just capitalising on it. Similar resentment has led to the rise of xenophobic, sometimes outright racist, rightwing parties in many countries in the West - Eastern European countries, Greece, France, the UKIP in Britain. Even the Democratic Party has not been immune in the US. Who would have thought that an elderly Socialist

extremist tea party, spreading vicious critiques of Democrats. Fox News, right wing talk radio hosts, politicians all participated. Now the tiger has turned on its rider. *The National Journal* wrote in a scathing recent commentary: "Republicans will now have four years to think about what they did to themselves this year, plenty of time to contemplate the consequences of handing over their party's car keys to the tea-party movement and watching as the quintessential tea partier, Donald Trump,



"It's like Humpty Dumpty fell and broke, and a giant lawn mower ran over it, acid was thrown on the pieces - and a bunch of racist idiots ran off with an arm and a leg. How do you put it together? I don't know."

-Republican consultant John Weaver, talking about the present crisis of the Republican Party, to *The Boston Globe*

the majority of Republican voters in the US, and who may use their new axis of the GOP, or both. As the old establishment looks on in horror, the civil war in its ranks has already begun." This civil war will be ugly, and it will happen regardless of whether Trump wins or loses. If he wins, then his constituency owns the party - with the conservative and Republican establishment left to wonder about their relevance. As former House Speaker John Boehner, Republican of Ohio, had noted acidly, a leader without followers without

from Vermont would seize the imagination of the millennials this year? Sen. Bernie Sanders presented an unexpectedly robust challenge to Hillary Clinton. But to the credit of Democrats, they managed to resolve their internal differences. Sanders is now campaigning for Clinton. No such luck for the Republicans. That may have to do with the party's less-than-stellar record. Substantial parts of the party establishment have been happy to fan the flames of resentment, promoting the

drove the car over a cliff." Whether Trump wins or loses, the bloodbath in the Republican Party will not be a pretty sight. "The likelihood of the Republican Party surviving this, of there being another Republican president in the future, is small," a movement conservative who served in the Bush White House told *Politico*. "I don't think the party survives." The writer is a contributing editor for *Siliconer*, a monthly periodical for South Asians in the United States. He has been writing for US-based South Asian media for over 25 years.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

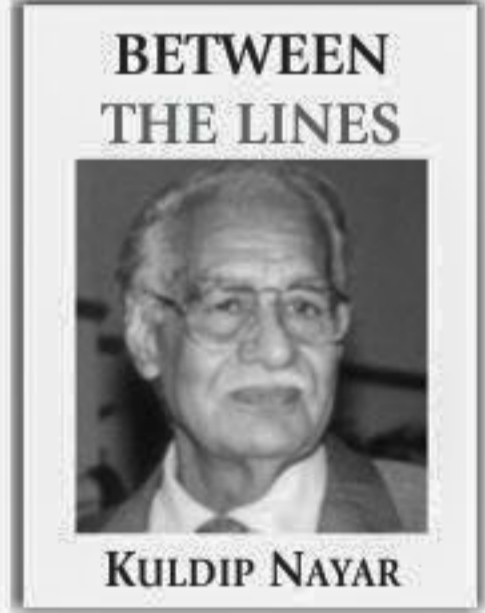
letters@thedailystar.net

Education should be about more than job prospects

University students these days have developed a habit of wanting education just to get a successful office job. There is nothing wrong with seeking a respectable job, but very rarely do they focus on what education is really for. Simply securing bank or other office jobs does not qualify as success. In any case, our country does not need more successful people. It desperately needs more peacemakers, humanitarians, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every shape and form. I believe that true education focuses on values instead of theories, human beings rather than concepts, consciousness rather than abstraction, questions instead of answers, conscience rather than ideology and efficiency. We must open the minds of our next generations to the true value of education and educate them about the case against such herd mentality. Selim Reza
On email

Poor toilet and restaurant facilities at ferry ghat

Congestion at the Daulatdia - Paturia ferry ghat is a common occurrence, caused mainly by the Padma river. When such gridlock prevails passengers, particularly women and children, face severe inconveniences due to lack of proper toilet facilities and the availability of healthy food. It is worse during holiday seasons such as Eid and other occasions. I request the concerned authorities to come forward to solve these problems as soon as possible. Md. Abdul Karim
Alamdanga, Chuadanga



KULDIP NAYYAR

ANOTHER school has been burnt down in the Valley. This is the 25th in the last two months. What it conveys is that those who are fighting for separation from India are not interested in education. They want the boys to turn into stone-pelters. How does this help the youth?

I was recently in Srinagar and talked to some of the stone-pelters. They said they wanted an independent Islamic state and that India should recognise this. I told them that we were already exasperated of one Islamic state. How did they expect India to help them establish another one on its border? They said that this was your problem, not theirs. Their demand questions the partition itself. When the paramount position of the British lapsed, it was left to the ruler to accede to any of the two countries, India or Pakistan. The Maharaja of Srinagar wanted to stay independent but when the regular and irregular soldiers of Pakistan came right up to Baramulla, he acceded to India. But India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru promised to hold a plebiscite as soon as peace returned to state. True, things are normal in a way but everything can be upset if and when the people's consent is enumerated. It would not be India versus Pakistan but the Gita versus the Koran. The youth may not be aware of all this but since more than 90 percent people in the valley are Muslims, their natural desire is to establish an Islamic state. I told the boys that any change in the borders of India would have to be approved by its parliament. But apparently this argument of mine did not satisfy them.

In the heart of Srinagar, some Pakistani flags are flying even today. But this is to irritate New Delhi. What they want is their own country which naturally would be Islamic. New Delhi has woken up to the problem and Home Minister Rajnath Singh has visited Srinagar to assess the situation. Apparently, he has not liked what he saw. New Delhi's response has been to send more forces to Srinagar. The fact is that even the Hurriyat leaders, who represent separatists, did not want to meet the Home Minister. Obviously, there

is no meeting point. Former state chief minister and National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, who is all brim and stone when not in power, has said that the Indian leaders should meet the Hurriyat representatives and hold talks with Pakistan. Why couldn't he or his son Omar Abdullah pursue this line of thinking when they were in power? The Indian parliament should discuss the problem threadbare. It is not facing the fact in the valley. True, the very accession is being questioned. But the situation was worse when Sheikh Abdullah, the popular Kashmiri leader,

that the Sheikh's charter of autonomy has long been thrown out of the window. All the promises that were made to him before the accession have been violated in letter and spirit. It is New Delhi's will that is prevailing, not that of the valley. New Delhi should have realised by this time that the closer Srinagar comes to India, the farther it goes away from the minds of the people. It is a make-believe situation but it matters since it gives a vicarious satisfaction to the valley that it is free and separate. The Sheikh was able to keep this aspiration alive because he did not allow New Delhi to tinker with

Nehru that some parts of the country can have their own constitution and the flag. That was the spirit which guided Kashmir to convene the constituent assembly and approve of what the Sheikh had promised. The first thing the state constituent assembly did was to endorse accession and said that the alliance with India was final and cannot be challenged. This is only on paper because the reality in the valley has changed. The youth has gone a different way. By burning down schools the youth has, no doubt, expressed their anger. But must it visit on schools which are the places for learning? By reducing them to

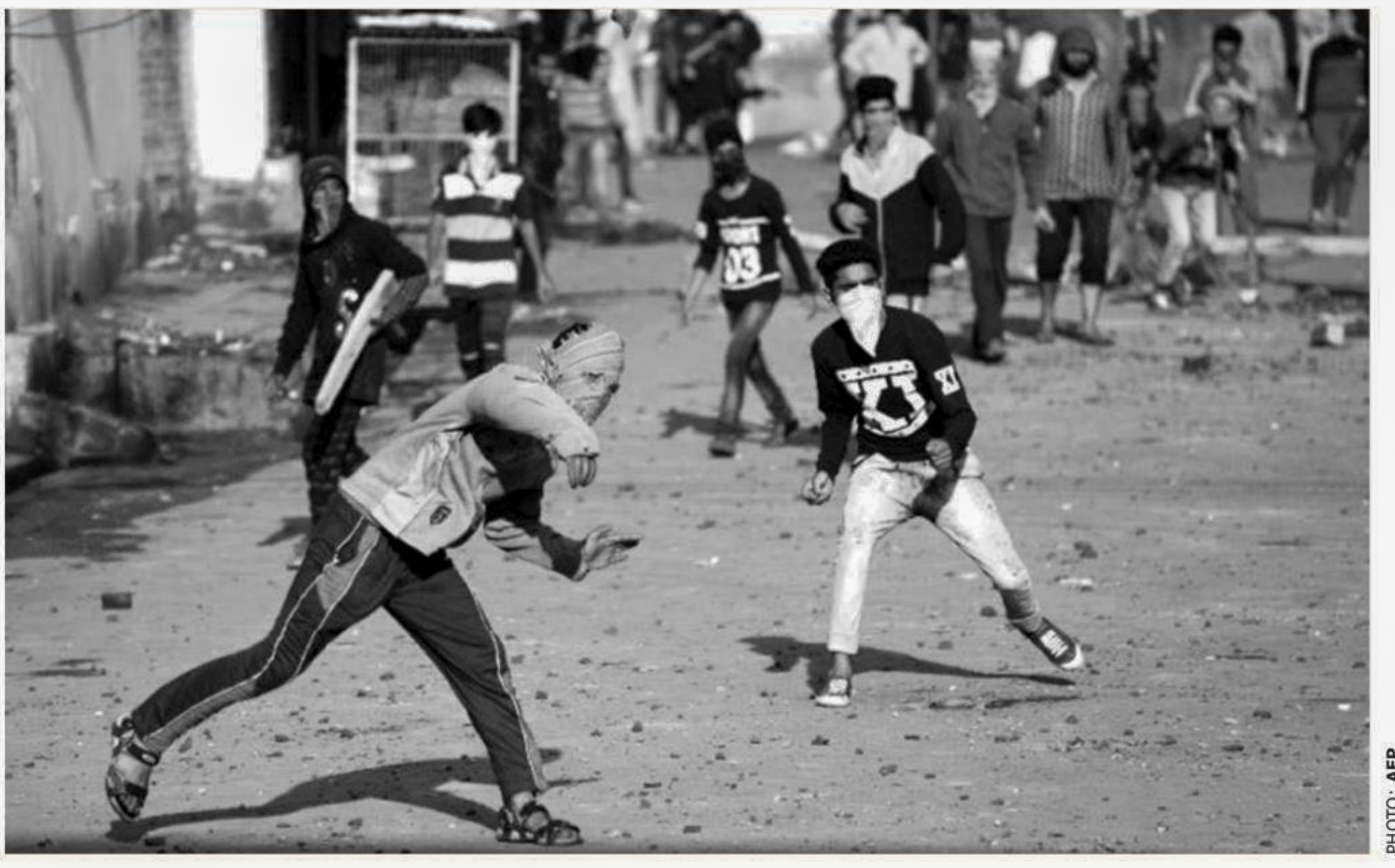


PHOTO: AFP

joined India. He even organised the Kashmir militia to fight the Pakistani troops. If the Sheikh could influence the Kashmiri opinion at the time when the question staring at him was either to join secular India or Islamic Pakistan, why the Mehbooba government, which has come through a free and fair electoral process, is not able to rally people around her? She is right when she says that only a few miscreants were creating trouble. But the others, the majority, is keeping quiet and posing the real problem. New Delhi has not realised, more so under the Narendra Modi government,

autonomy, beyond the subjects of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. The Mehbooba government would have liked the same arrangement but it has to give leeway to New Delhi since Mehbooba is dependent on the BJP to stay in power. New Delhi could help her by allowing Mehbooba to act independent. But the BJP government, which is guided by the RSS, does not want to give the impression that Kashmir was in any way more independent than the other states in the country. The party is not mindful of the autonomous status of Kashmir because it is opposed to the entire philosophy of

mere stones and ashes does not help. The idea of separatists may be to get the students back on the streets and resort to stone pelting. This is a sad scenario and seals the future of students. It is for them to realise that without education they will have no other go except what they are being goaded to do. India is a vast country which offers various opportunities. Education gives students the tool which they can use in the job market. Surely, stone-pelting cannot be a tool by any stretch of imagination. The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.