



A thought for today

A democratic Pakistan is the world community's best guarantee of stability in Asia

BEZARIR BHUTTO

Sharif Ousted

Judicial order weakens Pakistan government

In a big jolt to the Pakistani government, its Supreme Court ordered the disqualification of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif over the Panama Papers case. Following the judgment, Sharif stepped down from office, yet again failing to complete a full term as Pakistan's premier. It will be recalled that last year the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists had leaked documents from Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca, which indicated Sharif's children may own at least three off-shore companies registered in the British Virgin Islands. These companies were involved in dealings that suggested the Sharifs owned assets beyond their known sources of income.



The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) constituted by Pakistan's Supreme Court to probe the matter earlier this year maintained that the Sharifs failed to produce information that would clarify their assets. It's on the basis of the JIT report that the adverse court ruling against Sharif was delivered. With Sharif's PML-N holding a comfortable majority in Pakistan's national

assembly, the Pakistani government doesn't face an existential crisis. Nonetheless, with only a year to go for elections in Pakistan, Sharif's ouster will surely initiate a political churn in that country.

While the evidence may indeed point to illegalities committed by Sharif and his children, Pakistan's judiciary tends to crack down on political corruption while leaving misdemeanours committed by other influential sectors of society untouched. It has a poor record when it comes to, for example, conviction of terrorists. The overall effect of this tendency is to strengthen the army and security establishment vis-à-vis civilian institutions. Sharif's dismissal, too, will reinforce the army's leverage over the civilian government. This may not matter very much when it comes to India-Pakistan relations where, in any case, the army holds the cards. But it will weaken already fragile civilian democracy in Pakistan.

Woman Vs Potholes

RJ Malishka raps Mumbai's monsoon woes

Like every year in memory, this monsoon also came to Mumbai and other Indian cities bringing a fantastic bounty of potholes and traffic jams. Mumbaiers could cry at their fate but being stalwart souls they just swim, leap, wade, wait their way through it – even accompanying these capers with some singin' in the rain. Radio jockey Malishka has actually sung up a storm. Her rap video about the city's monsoon woes – 'Mumbai, tula BMC war bhariosa nahi ka' – went viral. This allegedly made BMC so feverish that it put Malishka in the dock for breeding mosquitoes.



Shiv Sena controls the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. Its spokespersons ask why Mumbai's potholes are being targeted. Yuva Sena members demand a Rs 500 crore defamation suit. If only they felt as passionately about citizen demands for safe, smooth and uncongested roads. It's surprising that they are less agitated by potholes than by a pothole rap video – which incidentally has crossed 60 lakh views.

One of the multitude of wits supporting Malishka suggests ironically, maybe the potholes are not so much holes as containers of free chai for the birds, or high tech speedbreakers that ensure that traffic moves slowly and with a picturesque 'Incredible India' bumpiness. But the folks running BMC don't seem to appreciate irony/ parody/ creativity. They take themselves too seriously. They should take their job at least as seriously. Respect the taxpayers who have made BMC the richest municipal corporation in India. Don't attack Malishka for rapping their woes.

Captain America: Civil War

While the Chinese military flexes its muscles in Asia, America is besieged by scandals

Nayan Chanda



American television networks have found the most riveting reality programme of all – the Trump Show. While the president's daily outpourings and his Twitter storm threaten and insult politicians in Washington, fascinating and mortifying his fellow citizens, dark clouds gather over a large part of the world – from Bhutan to the Korean peninsula. It is becoming increasingly clear that the chaos in Washington, which Trump disparages as a "sewer", is encouraging America's rivals and ambitious dictators to press their advantage.

In just the past few days, China has issued dire warnings to India to withdraw its troops from Doklam area and reminded the US not to come to India's aid; it has cautioned Vietnam to cease and desist drilling for oil in South China Sea waters it claims; it has warned the US navy and air force to stay clear of China's exclusive economic zone and has buzzed an American spy plane. It sent a bomber fleet to fly along Taiwan's air defence zone. For the first time, China sent a warship inside Australia's EEZ to conduct surveillance of joint US-Australian military exercises. While the Chinese action in Australian waters was within its rights, its aggressive moves in the South China Sea – which have largely gone unchallenged – have raised increasing concerns.

Speaking at a security forum in Colorado a senior CIA official recently cautioned that "the Chinese continue to think they can get away with and push the envelope on coercive, more assertive approaches." He told the forum that Chinese leaders are pushing the narrative on the need to take control of disputed waters of South China Sea as "something the Chinese need to achieve". North Korea, which continues to enjoy Chinese support, was this week ready to launch yet another long-range missile. It has ramped up missile development to the extent that the Defense Intelligence Agency now estimates that within a year North Korea could have a nuclear-tipped ICBM to target the continental US.

While the Chinese military flexes its muscles, a White House besieged by scandals surrounding Trump associates' possible "collusion" with Russia during the election and a Republican-dominated Congress gridlock over almost every piece of meaningful legislation remain preoccupied with a civil war they have created. President Trump, deeply worried about the deepening probe into his team's multiple secret meetings with Russians, has engaged in increasingly angry public lashings of justice department officials, notably of his most loyal supporter, attorney general Jeff Sessions.

He is angry with Sessions for recusing himself from the Russia investigation because of his own unreported meeting with the Russian ambassador. Trump blames him for opening the door to special investigation which could unearth embarrassing, if not incriminating evidence of Russian involvement in the Trump campaign. There is dark murmuring in Washington that Trump's Twitter shaming of a "VERY weak" Sessions is designed to make him resign as preparatory to firing the special prosecutor Robert Mueller who has been appointed to investigate Trump's Russia connection. In recent days his investigation has widened to examine the Trump family's financial dealing with Russia.

To Trump's chagrin, Congressional Republicans and Democrats – who are otherwise bitterly divided on every issue – have passed a near unanimous bill tightening US sanctions on Russia, Iran and North Korea. It is a sharp rebuke for a president who went out of his way to befriend President Vladimir Putin at the G20 summit and then proposed a joint cybersecurity operation, dismissed out of hand by Republican leaders. For Trump to sign the sanctions bill would be a bitter pill after long doubting that Russians were involved in hacking the election. But to veto would court even more controversy as it could be easily overturned by the legislature, further inflaming Trump's relations with his own party. Russia, meanwhile has warned retaliation if the bill is passed. The Trump Show looks like it may not end well for its star.

'Communalism' Vs 'Corruption'

How 'mahagathbandhan' unwound is a good example of how 'secular' camp undoes itself

Shaibal Gupta



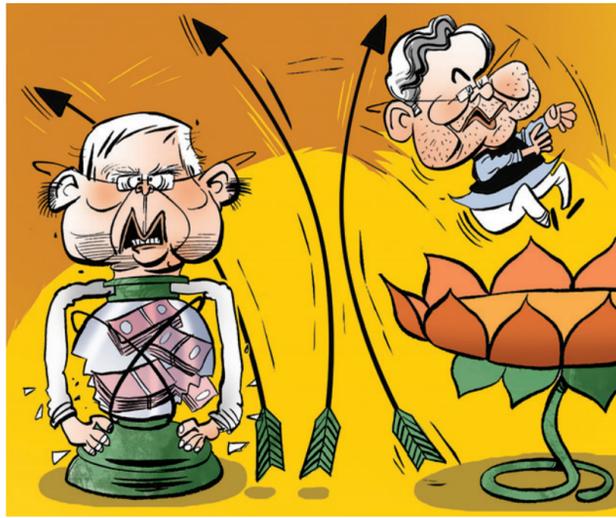
The tradeoff between 'communalism' and 'corruption' has reached a decisive stage in India. Since the Bofors scandal, the constituency of secularism has shrunk and that of 'communalism' has expanded continuously. It is a sad spectacle that at a certain point, to save 'secularism', persons of secular credentials had to defend people steeped in corruption.

In the context of Bihar, even though the fodder scam was out of the radar, the present spate of scandals surrounding Lalu Prasad and family created great discomfort in the mahagathbandhan. Sushil Modi bared one scandal after another, creating a massive dent in the mahagathbandhan's image in general and that of chief minister Nitish Kumar in particular. By dissolving the mahagathbandhan ministry, Nitish has stolen BJP's thunder.

In the realm of administration, the mahagathbandhan could not recreate the magical performance of earlier two terms of the NDA government in Bihar: Nitish initially did not have the natural captive constituency of Lalu, but over the years he could build massive pan-Bihar social support riding on the agenda of development. This agenda was further sustained when it was tied to probity and 'zero tolerance' to corruption and crime.

The tripod of development, probity and crime containment could build 'Brand Nitish', with national and international resonance. In his third term, unlike BJP's complete commitment in earlier two terms, foot soldiers of RJD continuously sniped at Nitish because they could not get leeway in influencing the administration. The trauma of association with RJD was on public display when Shahabuddin, after his release on bail, made fun of Nitish with tacit support from his party's high command.

Ironically Tejashwi Yadav, Lalu's younger son who was deputy chief minister, appeared to be a symbol of a reinvented RJD. He seemed to defuse the crisis between RJD and JDU, which indicated the mahagathbandhan might



complete its full term. But the sudden surfacing of a spate of scandals involving Lalu's family put a big question mark before its legitimacy.

Even the deputy chief minister, who had earlier received opprobrium from many quarters, was embroiled in the scandal directly. Being very young he could have resigned and got himself legally absolved, because he has a long innings to play in the state. One cannot run the government on the basis of legislative majority only. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi with 400 plus members of parliament, or Lalu Prasad with huge social support in the early 90s, frittered away their moral hegemony because they could not fight the allegation of corruption.

It is a sad commentary that the bulk of the socialist movement, and social justice movement later, became afflicted with the malaise of corruption. Till now, communalism has been an esoteric idea. In recent times, it has become tangible in some places.

After the communal conflagration of Bhagalpur in the late 80s Bihar

The trauma of association with RJD was on public display when Shahabuddin, after his release on bail, made fun of Nitish Kumar with tacit support from his party's high command

essentially saw peace, even during the NDA period. Whatever may be the character of BJP nationally, in Bihar the basis of its growth has essentially been a development agenda. The BJP high command displayed confidence in Sushil Modi by anointing him deputy chief minister, instead of bringing forward fringe elements. This indicates the reiteration of past NDA policy.

Brand Nitish is anything other than 'communal'. Once upon a time Nitish and Sushil were considered to be 'Siamese twins' of Bihar's development politics. Socially, they will be able to craft the

broadest possible 'coalition of extremes', which will keep communal convulsions at bay.

Administering Bihar with probity was not an easy task. Leakages of public money in Bihar, which Nitish managed to contain, had a peculiar character. Here funds for state programmes would be siphoned off for private accumulation right at the 'input' stage. Unlike in the ryotwari and mahalbari tenurial systems in some parts of India before Independence, the social position of an individual in Bihar was measured not in terms of his placement in the productive structure, but in terms of his capacity to weaken the state structure through leakages.

Further, Bihar had another distinction of recruiting human resources which were not qualified enough for the task of state administration. This not only affected the quality of governance, it also resulted in organised siphoning off of resources from the state exchequer. Unfortunately, even though the 'input' related scamsters had staggering accumulation, it did not go into industrial investment but only promoted conspicuous consumption.

For example, one fodder scam kingpin hired a chartered plane, filled with relatives, attendants and minions, and flew to Australia for a surgery. Another scamster accumulated so much wealth that he had to float a bank to legitimise his resources. It is not that corruption is not there in India's developed states; indeed, scams are possibly much wider there in terms of magnitude. But instead of 'input' scams, these states have witnessed post-production scams, characterised by turnover-based, profit-sharing arrangements. The present scams confronting Lalu were mostly input-related. Unfortunately Congress remained a mute spectator; neither Sonia nor Rahul Gandhi could intervene.

Nitish had stopped input-related scams in Bihar; but the 'probity'-centric culture he had built in his first two terms was on the verge of being frittered away because of Lalu's obstinacy in not permitting Tejashwi to resign. Had Lalu taken a reasonable position against 'corruption' charges, 'secularism' might have triumphed.

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A tank for JNU: Its VC has a brilliant proposal which must be taken forward

Lalit Mohan



Whoever thought of awarding graduates of the National Defence Academy degrees issued by Jawaharlal Nehru University must have had a great sense of irony. The army and JNU – each a centre of excellence in its own right – are as different as chalk and cheese. The university does not teach any military science or practice, but still awards bachelors' degrees in these subjects.

But now, to bridge this gap M Jagadeesh Kumar, vice chancellor of JNU, has come out with a brilliant proposal – station an army tank somewhere in the campus. That would forge a strong bond between the university and the armed forces.

It is a great idea, but one must not stop at that. Why not also have a fighter aircraft positioned at an appropriate location within JNU? The air force must also get its due honour. And the third arm of our defence forces should not feel left out. So a naval vessel should also be parked somewhere on the campus grounds. In fact if a retired aircraft carrier can be spared for the university, it can be used as a playing field as well.

But these gestures by themselves are not substantial enough if the university has to be recognised as a



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centre of military education. It needs to do more. It has a large green cover and is therefore an ideal location for a jungle warfare school. It would be inspiring to have guns booming in the background

as patriotic fervour is being instilled in the classrooms.

To further inculcate the spirit of nationalism all professors can be given military ranks. They should also wear army fatigues while on their teaching duty and be called instructors. They should carry firearms, but only after they have been told which end to fire from.

The students, likewise, should be called cadets and be prescribed a uniform. A black topi, white shirt and brown trousers would be most appropriate. They should be expected to begin the day with surya namaskar and to salute their superiors. Not in the western army style, though. A pranam of the dandvat variety would instill pride in our ancient culture.

In the new avatar of the university all cadets will be expected to think alike. Any dissent will be treated as indiscipline. The Upanishadic tradition of questioning will only land us in trouble if practised in the present.

Universities have no business encouraging independent thinking. In any case, with an army tank stationed on JNU premises, the country will not need think tanks any more. They should all be abolished forthwith. Big Brother will be very happy.

The JNU vice chancellor has come out with the germ of a great idea which, if also transplanted in other centres of learning, can transform education in India.

they said it

The unnatural Grand Alliance died naturally



– Sushil Modi

I entered government with a clean slate, with a keen desire of writing a positive story for people of Bihar, only to find an opportunist rival!



– Tejashwi Yadav

The ant that breaks the line, is the one that finds new sources of food for the community. Rebellion is fundamental to innovation



– Shekhar Kapur

Sacred space

Affluenza

The human race has had long experience and a fine tradition in surviving adversity. But we now face a task for which we have little experience, the task of surviving prosperity.

Alan Gregg

dilbert



How To Realise Our Potential As Spiritual Beings

Ezekiel Isaac Malekar

Life is filled with a great paradox. That is, the more we become self-actualized, self-indulgent and self-motivated, the more selfish and unhappy we become. But we cannot fulfil our spiritual nature by being selfish.

Life, for all of us, is a spiritual journey with many ups and downs. We don't just go forward; we sometimes go backwards and we even fall backwards. Yet, we must redouble our efforts to go forward. A spiritual journey is never ending and it has many twists and turns. Even if we fall sometimes, or falter, we should still always get up and persist in continuing with our journey.

We must always be aware that we are spiritual beings and always assume responsibility to improve ourselves. A human being, by nature, wants to change the world. We want to make sure that we should not just live, but strive to

make a difference. We know, that because of our spiritual nature, we want to leave our mark on the world. We want to make the world a better place. We live in order to better ourselves and to better the future.

We all live in six dimensions – north, east, south, west, up and down. But there is also a seventh dimension, the spiritual dimension. In order to be a spiritual being, we have to assume responsibility for ourselves and for others. The word responsibility means, to respond, to respond to the challenges at hand. We cannot act selfishly, because, if we act selfishly, we will be filled with depression and then we will not be able to fulfil our spiritual nature.

When we shirk our responsibilities, we cannot function as proper human beings. We lose out on spirituality. In

order to become complete, we need to assume responsibility for others and ourselves to fulfil our potential. We also constantly have to improve ourselves and realise that our actions have consequences. We must always moderate our ideals with compassion. If our life is filled with spiritual values, then only we will understand the importance of mercy, compassion, love, dedication and devotion.

According to Judaism, spirituality is a process of personal transformation. Spiritual wellness is a personal matter involving values and beliefs that provide purpose and guidance for our living. It is generally considered to be a search for meaning and purpose in human existence, leading one to strive for a state of harmony with oneself and others while working to balance inner

needs with the rest of the world. Spiritual wellness involves meditation, prayer, affirmation, repentance, charity, compassion, mercy, kindness, capacity for love and forgiveness and tolerance.

It is our moral responsibility and our joy to give this spiritual uplift to the world. The most important requirement in order to be a spiritual being is to realise that we have to continually improve. People who live just in the present usually are miserable. They cannot deal and cope with life because they have no vision of where they are going. They have no goals to work for and these goals have to be goals that are not selfish but goals that are good for us, our family, community and the world, generally.

Let us all hope that we will assume responsibility for ourselves, for our family, for our country and the world. Follow Rabbi Ezekiel Malekar at [speakingtree.in](http://www.speakingtree.in) and post your comments there.

