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Jammu & Kashmir: What



SALEEM SAFI

Pakistan and India are at daggers drawn since Independence. The bone of contention between the arch rivals, besides some other factors, is the Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir, continuous violation of human rights and denial of UN resolutions on plebiscite in the disputed region.

An unfinished agenda of Partition, Jammu & Kashmir till recently enjoyed a special constitutional status according to Article 370 of the Indian constitution.

Pakistan and India engaged in direct wars in 1965 and 1971 and also confronted each other in Kargil. Moreover, the armed forces of the two countries came face to face on a number of other occasions. But the Indian rulers never dared to change the special status of Occupied Kashmir. However, Narendra Modi, the right-wing prime minister of India, foolishly changed the special constitutional status of Occupied Kashmir and annexed it by abrogating Article 370.

India has been committing atrocities in Occupied Kashmir since its occupation, but it is the first time in history that the Indian government imposed a curfew in

the whole valley and turned Occupied Kashmir into a cage and an open prison.

The government of Pakistan has been trying, for the past 72 years, to internationalize the Kashmir issue by bringing it up on international forums. But India has been trying to suppress the issue by branding it a bilateral problem. In the recent past, India even refused to treat it as a bilateral issue by calling it an 'internal matter' of India.

But the Kashmir issue has become global for the first time due to Modi's stubbornness and Indian atrocities and the inhuman curfew in Occupied Kashmir. The issue of imposed curfew and violation of human rights has been raised by American and other international media, debated in the UN General Assembly and even discussed at the level of the UN Security Council.

It has been said that the Modi government has thrown a 'loose ball' towards Pakistan and now it is Pakistan's turn to hit a sixer (to use cricket terminology). With this move by Modi, the independence of Jammu & Kashmir has reached a stage of 'now or never'. But the question is: did Pakistan manage to exploit the opportunity and how many runs did Pakistan make on Modi's loose ball? I think that our government failed to make even a single run. Instead of hitting a six, the Pakistan government has been waiting, like a failed batsman, for another move by India. I think that the biggest reason for wasting a chance of hitting out has been our unnecessary reliance on the United States instead of trusting our own strength.

During the first visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to the United States, I was in Washington DC. At the time, I had warned that what was going on at the Jammu & Kashmir front was happening with a mutual understanding between Modi and Trump. It was based on the fact that Trump had announced mediation between Pakistan and India before his meeting with Imran Khan — which indicated that he already had a plan in his mind for

Jammu & Kashmir. Students of politics like us were also warning that the US might have told India that New Delhi would be accommodated on the eastern border in exchange for Pakistan's role on the western border. However, the jubilation of meeting with Trump was so high that our ruler did not pay any attention to this speculation.

But a few days after Trump's announcement of mediation, Narendra Modi ended the special status of Jammu & Kashmir by abrogating Article 370. The United States did not bother or show any serious concern. When Prime Minister Imran Khan requested President Trump about the Jammu & Kashmir issue, during the former's second visit to the US, Trump failed to play any effective role due to Modi's denial of any mediation. Frustrated by the US's attitude, Imran Khan spoke aggressively in the UN General Assembly. While it was indeed an impressive speech, the glaring fact is that such a big issue could not be solved merely by speeches.

The Jammu & Kashmir dispute was indeed internationalized for the first time in history due to Modi's madness but it is also a painful fact that Pakistan failed to even hold a meeting of the OIC on this. This despite the fact that currently the OIC is being headed by Saudi Arabia where Gen (r) Raheel Sharif has been sent to defend the kingdom. Even now we are busy in solving the kingdom's problem by mediating between Riyadh and Tehran. We are continuing to commit blunders: we offended Russia by getting close to the US. Perhaps that is why the Russian foreign minister did not even mention Jammu & Kashmir in his speech at the UN General Assembly.

Though Modi made Jammu & Kashmir a global issue, we failed to cash in on Modi's blunder and win support at the international level. It is indeed a failure of our foreign policy that only two countries (Turkey and Malaysia) out of all of the Muslim world and China in the rest of the world highlighted the Kashmir issue in

the UN General Assembly.

An informal meeting of the Security Council had been called on the will of China but we could not pass a resolution on Kashmir. Recently, the Chinese president visited India and — according to Indian claims — the Kashmir issue was not discussed during his visit.

Perhaps the Chinese president thought that when Pakistan's prime minister himself seems to have forgotten Kashmir and gotten engaged in mediation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, then why should he offend Modi on the Jammu & Kashmir issue. We got nothing on Kashmir from the UN and nothing also from the OIC. We could not even pass a resolution via the UN Human Rights Council on human rights violations and curfew by India in Occupied Kashmir.

Modi is not ready to take back his decision on Jammu & Kashmir and the world powers seem to be in no mood to pressurize him. However, the innocent Kashmiris are still facing the brunt of Indian atrocities and barbaric curfew. Now the question is what option Pakistan has, and what is our strategy to get Kashmiris of the ordeal they are under? We do not get any satisfactory answer to this from our rulers. Facing failure on the Kashmir front, Prime Minister Imran Khan is now seeking mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia — perhaps to divert attention. We may not be able to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Iran because we cannot pressurize them, but these two countries are in a better position to play a role between Pakistan and India. However, both countries have not come forward to mediate between Islamabad and New Delhi. But our prime minister is travelling from Tehran to Riyadh to become the saviour and end the Saudi-Iran animosity. The million dollar question is: how will the oppressed Kashmiris feel when they see Imran Khan busy in solving the Saudi Arabia and Iran problem instead of getting relief for them? I would think it would be quite painful if one were to walk in the shoes of the caged Kashmiris.

Double standards

Prime Minister Imran Khan became part of the 'Human Chain' formed to show solidarity with the people in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). Speaking on the occasion, he said, "we will continue reminding the international community that eight million humans have been locked up in Kashmir." He also took the opportunity to highlight Western media's double-standards, pointing out that "the proportion of coverage of the Kashmiri people is much less as compared to the issue of Hong Kong." The two situations running almost parallel, inevitably, call attention to how they are treated in news coverage. One is a humanitarian crisis created by relentless bloody repression, the other a political protest campaign dealt with considerable restraint. The siege of Indian-held J&K has continued for more than nine weeks. During this period, dozens of young men have been killed by occupation forces; thousands of others, including political leaders, businessmen, and journalists have been thrown behind bars; custodial torture is common practice; countless women have been subjected to harassment and sexual abuse; and many denied medical help have died. The UN Human Rights Council as well as independent rights organisations such as Amnesty International, have been expressing grave concern over the humanitarian disaster in the occupied region.

Yet it hardly finds mention in news and views programmes of major Western news networks. In sharp contrast, the protests in Hong Kong continuously get the first, if not the second spot in headlines. The protesters' initial demand for the withdrawal of a controversial law has long since been accepted, but they have kept demonstrating asking for the Chief Executive's resignation and some other measures. Their demands may or may not be valid, but peaceful they are not. They have attacked government buildings, including the legislature, to which the government have been responding by resorting to tear gas shelling — not an unusual sight in countries such as ours.

Clearly, what is happening in Hong Kong pales in comparison with the situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir. From the news perspective, Kashmir is far too serious and hence of much greater news value than Hong Kong. But here the principles are thrown out of the window. In one case, the news is blown out of proportions whilst the other more serious one is ignored. Hong Kong is played up to show China in a bad light, and Kashmir disregarded because it exposes gross human rights violations by India, an attractive market for Western countries' goods and military hardware. The unsavoury reality is that the 'independent' Western media are not so independent when it comes to covering events in countries where their governments' interests are involved. Political agendas take precedence over what the people need to know.

Kate's pretty outfits



RAFIA ZAKARIA

bring out their prescriptions and jauntily — if predictably — condemn the West. The remainder, the large silent suffering, say nothing, continue to worry about their jobs and their lives and the pressure of family demands and the general torture of a country made for the few.

None of this is a problem, for as far as dissecting the royals is concerned, the British have done it themselves. In a lecture titled 'Royal Bodies' and published in The London Review of Books, Hilary Mantel, celebrated as Britain's most eminent living author, sums it up: "Kate seems to have been selected for her role as princess because she was irreproachable, as painfully thin as anyone could wish, without quirks, without oddities, without risks of the emergence of character. She appears precision made, machine made" and "a jointed doll on which certain rags are hung", "a shop-window mannequin", with no personality of her own, entirely defined by the clothes.

In Mantel's view (and she was criticised for her comments) Kate and everything she represents is a tragedy; the pitifully predictable duties, ribbon-cutting and cake-cutting, fashion and frippery. All of this was on display as Kate and William took rickshaw rides and danced with the Kalash (one wonders if the Kalash's dutiful function as royal entertainment can become an argument for their preservation) and things back home in Britain remained submerged in a miasma of uncertainty.

The queen herself, ashen and leaden, was during the days of the visit enacting her own pantomime. On October 15, the monarch, all dressed up in her jewels and baubles and sporting the actual crown,

read out a 'Queen's Speech' detailing the plans and provisions of a government that is sure to end before the month is up. Her speech was pointless but it was its very pointlessness that highlighted the situation of the monarchy itself. Lacking any real relevance to what happens in the United Kingdom, the queen and prince and duchess are all sentenced to scripted roles, the forever props who may not step outside their polite smiles and nods.

All of this makes the clothes, especially the duchess's clothes, terribly important. As Mantel would put it, it is she who was selected for the clothes rather than vice versa. In this regard, the designers who had a part in producing the clothes the princess wore can claim a bit role in the royal production of modelling: health, wealth and glamour.

It is all very well in Pakistan, however, for the "jointed doll on which certain rags are hung" also happens to be the model of the ideal Pakistani woman. The tittering Pakistani elites, decked out themselves and all set to gasp and gaze at the visiting royal couple, love such women. Young women and girls all over the land are regularly selected as wives and daughters-in-law based on their ability to be the best jointed dolls on which certain rags can be hung.

There are other more pernicious reasons that Pakistan adores royals of all sorts. Pakistani society continues to be tied to primordial identities, the accident of birth determining the station of life, inherited wealth passing generation after generation into the same hands. Who your father is and who your grandfather was are matters of crucial importance here and now; all of this is to say that while the world may

have turned away from such limiting fictions, they are carefully preserved and proclaimed in the land of the pure. Naturally, in such a society, the adulation of royalty is not a thing of the past: a vestigial treat of tradition, it is alive and well and a value in the present.

Pakistani pretences tend to hide acts of puppetry. If the royals are facile and perfunctory in the United Kingdom, while prime ministers and parliaments make the real laws and legislation, it is not quite the case in Pakistan. Those enacting the rituals of democratic government are the frail puppets on whose skeletons offices and titles and the hopes of the harangued hapless masses are hung. The rituals and rules of governance are acted out for public consumption with some fervour, the services of a small army of talk-show hosts deployed as emissaries of their legitimacy. The matter of representative government hangs by a thread in Pakistan, a thread that can unspool an entire fabric at first tug.

Given all of this, Pakistanis need not object to the British royals, for their fashion choices or their frippery or the choreographed tedium of their tour. They should lament the contrast that the appearance of princes and princesses of a figurehead monarchy highlights at home. In what century will the purveyors of inherited wealth and privilege in Pakistan be figureheads, no one can say. What can be said is that while the British royals seem to have moved on from tragedies past, new faces and races adding to their numbers, the Pakistan they visit periodically to remind themselves that it's not that fun to rule all the world, remains stubborn and stolid, still nursing a forever frail and fee-



FATF and the elite

DURDANA NAJAM

India's chagrin, Pakistan has not been blacklisted in the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) plenary meeting held in Paris from October 16 to 19, 2019. The decision to retain Pakistan on the grey list was upsetting for the optimists back home, who had expected the new financial team to pull Pakistan out from this pit. Not only has Pakistan been unable to meet the expectations, but its performance was also way too dismal. Of the 27 action points, only four could be accomplished. It was a foretold decision, though. In August the Asian-Pacific Group on Money Laundering had reported the snags preventing Pakistan from crossing over the grey list.

A blacklisted Pakistan would have reinforced India's recognition of Pakistan as a country that supports terrorism. Indian media and the senior politicians from the BJP had been bombarding the news space with the blacklist projection since August. Therefore, retaining the grey list slot was a better outcome than sliding down to the blacklist. Still, it was disturbing to see the Pakistan government revelling over India's unfulfilled desire rather than feeling embarrassed about the further squeezing of its space internationally.

When shall we understand that it is just not enough seeing India from eyeball to eyeball on the Line of Control? The economic sphere is the actual field to throw India off-balance and gain the confidence of the international community, as a country with responsible institutions. Of all the anger over India's forced annexation of Kashmir, we could not sustain even for a day the self-imposed embargo on pharmaceutical trade with India. It so happened because while we had been purportedly fortifying our security, India was pitching the American and European pharmaceutical companies to shift their production facilities to India under the 'import substitution' mechanism. By virtue of this geographical change, India became the exporter of more than 50 per cent of our pharmaceutical raw ma-

terial. Pakistan has a debt economy that moves in a typical circle. We take money from the debtors, spend a part of that money on buying imports — since we depend largely on the outside world to keep our product basket from getting depleted — use another big chunk to pay the interest on the debt taken previously, and spend the rest on running the government. For the welfare and development projects, we again look up to the international donors. Lately, loans doled under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor have financed many development projects.

Pakistan received reprimand on four overriding compliance failures. One, the absence of an overarching organisation for consolidated enforcement of the FATF's policies and procedures, since the provinces and the federal government have been found working in silos. Two, lack of understanding of international standards, as established by the FATF, in the government circles leading to general non-seriousness. Three, the failure to implement domestic laws on anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism. Four, giving amnesty to the business class instead of putting them in jail for tax evasion. The buck of this failure stops at the Financial Monitoring Unit headed by a hand-picked director-general. He should answer as to how his team has been unable to detect and report the transactions that the FATF radar could discover easily. This incompetency or lack of political will is an outgrowth of the nexus between the political elites and influential bureaucrats. The case of former State Bank governor Ashraf Wathra explains this riddle. In one of their meetings he was severely snubbed by then finance minister Ishaq Dar on saying that "foreign currency was leaving the country from all international airports... there is need to tighten control on these installations — including checking of all VIPs." The panacea for most of Pakistan's economic woes, including the FATF, lies in appointing competent people who also have the wherewithal to defeat this collusion between the political elites and the bankers.