

The Business

Chief Editor

Irfan Athar Qazi

E-mail: editorthebusiness@yahoo.com

thebusinesslhr@gmail.com

Tijarat House, 14-Davis Road, Lahore
0423-6312280, 6312480, 6312429, 6312462
Cell # 0321-4598258

1st Floor Ahmed Plaza near Zong Office
Susan Road, Faisalabad, Ph: 041-8555582

ISLAMABAD / RAWALPINDI
N-125 Circular Road, Ph: 051-5551654,
5532761, Cell # 0300-8567331
KARACHI
3rd Floor Kehkashan Mall 172-I Block II PECHS
Opp Rehmania Masjid Main Tariq Road
Ph: 021-34524550, Cell # 0300-8251534

Planning death

A body set up by the government in New Delhi to investigate communal riots which took place in February this year in the Indian capital has found that the deaths and violence which took place were essentially planned by the government with the support of police and administration. Fifty-three persons, most of them Muslims, died during the riots while another 200 were injured. The protest was staged over the new citizenship act introduced by the government of Narendra Modi under which persons from five neighbouring countries would be given fast-track Indian citizenship, except for Muslims. The law was seen as discriminatory by many groups including India's 170 million Muslims.

The Delhi Minorities Commission noted that the worst communal violence seen in India for decades was triggered when groups which supported the law were encouraged by administration to attack Muslims and their supporters staging the protest. While the Commission has recommended action against all those responsible, its findings are not binding and the BJP alongside the police has already denied that any BJP leader was involved in the horrendous violence that took place in the capital city of the world's largest democracy.

India today is a democracy only on paper. The successive actions taken by the BJP make it clear that the party wishes to turn secular India into a Hindu state where Hindus enjoy superiority over other groups. Muslims, the largest minority in the country, are in particular being targeted. The rest of the world has largely watched this in silence. During the riots, 11 mosques, five madrasahs, a Muslim shrine and a graveyard were attacked and badly damaged. The controversy over the law is continuing. But the BJP government has made it quite clear that it intends to continue following the controversial policies which it is currently pursuing. While human rights groups in India have protested these actions, there has been a failure to convince PM Modi to change his stance. The riots in New Delhi spelled out the nature of this stance. The report from the DMC has made it clear that the violence was quite deliberately orchestrated and was intended to hurt as many Muslims as possible as a means to prevent further protests and deter opposition to the dangerous new laws the BJP continues to bring in. We have already seen the manner in which it has effectively snatched away autonomy from the state of Kashmir, turning it into two union territories under federal control. The sentiment against Muslims has spread quickly across India, notably in the electronic media, and some way has to be found to check this before it is too late to reestablish peace in India and give the Muslim minority within it a sense of security.

DR A Q KHAN

Recently I read a very good article in these pages. 'The dangers of incompetence' written by Ms Kamila Hyat. I read it very carefully and found it well written and to the point.

That reminded me of a verse by the retired commissioner of Bahawalpur and a dear friend, Mr Murtuza Berlas and also worried me about how so many foreign nationals of Pakistani origin have managed to hijack so many top positions. They are here making hay while the sun shines and will then return to their adopted countries with nice bank balances. I am sure it is possible to find people within the country who are just as competent. More than a thousand years ago there was once a very learned scholar in Iraq by the name of Imam Maufiq. His students usually managed to rise to high positions. At one time, three very good, intelligent friends were his pupils. They were Nizamul Mulq Toosi, Omar Khayyam and Hassan bin Sabbah. They pledged to help each other whichever one of them rose to a high position. Nizamul Mulq Toosi became prime minister to Jaluddin Malik Shah, the king. Omar

A good team

Khayyam, the great poet and astrologer, was accommodated by Toosi. Hassan bin Sabbah became an evil genius. He prepared a false paradise full of beautiful girls where he took people and gave them alcohol to drink and hashish to smoke. Once under his influence, they were brainwashed to become fearful assassins.

The following piece comes from the book 'Siasatnama' by Toosi and translated by Mr Shah Hassan Atta. Some things were applicable only at that time, but many are still valid today. "It is essential that a ruler must have refined, educated well-mannered companions. The king should be able to talk to them feeling free and easy. If the king mixes with his rich courtiers and forces' chiefs too frequently, they will lose their fear of him and respect for him. These people will start taking liberties - whoever is posted at a responsible position must not take liberties with the king. They should never be allowed to do this. Using their clout with the king, such people can indulge in illegal and immoral activities.

"Every citizen must be able to respect the king and be afraid of his powers and status. The king must select refined, educated, intelligent courtiers. Yes, his advisers may take some liberties (but within limits). The king needs to have the company of good, intelligent people to relax with, to share happiness and jokes with, etc. Since such a person is always with the king, he should also serve as a good friend. If the king is in danger, that person should be willing to give his life to protect him. The king should be able to freely talk to his personal guards. He cannot lighten his heart by talking to every Tom, Dick and Harry. He should be able to talk to them about other kings and rulers and they should also be his informants and sometimes work as his spies.

"Since the advisors have a special status, they can talk freely and easily to the ruler. They should, therefore, be of noble origin, well-educated, knowledgeable, honest, good orators and joke tellers. They are supposed to always keep up the mood of the ruler. Advisers are all-comprising

officers who keep the ruler busy and happy. They must be quick at pleasant jokes. They should never annoy the ruler and it will also be good if they are handy with weapons. Advisers should never try to be teachers; never say 'don't do this, don't do that.' They can only tactfully advise (especially against gambling, drinking, etc.). They should be very careful when discussing state affairs, wars, action against another state, etc. Wars, travel, negotiations with other states, etc should be left to experts in state affairs.

"The hakim can help with the choice of foods and fruits and the palmist/astrologer can point out the best time for any particular work. The adviser should not play hakim or astrologer. Those two can become a pain in the neck if given too much freedom. They should be kept under control and should be called only when needed. "The personal secretary should be intelligent and well-educated and have some experience of being in the company of rulers. He should be polite, sharp, humorous, quick and smart. All advisers should be ranked - some will sit with the ruler while others will stand. The ruler should not collect



Dirilis: Erdogan

NOOR AFTAB

There have been appeals by international leaders and organisations to Ankara to preserve the status of Hagia Sophia, which was originally a church and one of the most important icons of Byzantine heritage before the Ottomans converted it into a mosque. It was then turned into a museum by Mustafa Kemal Pasha Ataturk after the founding of the Republic of Turkey, a political move made during the radical secularisation of the young republic, emerging from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire.

Many believe that the decision to restore Hagia Sophia as a mosque came at a time when the Turkish government was looking to redirect public attention from domestic issues. This is not the first time that a politician has acted at an opportune time to counter waning popularity. But this particular decision has sparked a global debate as the monument in question is of utmost significance to Christian and Islamic history. It is a unique symbol representing both a bridge and chasm between two worlds.

Many Muslims also raised their voice against the verdict, including Islamic scholars. The architectural wonder predates the advent of Islam and any decision to change its status through conquest naturally raises questions and is considered unfair to the community it belonged to.

Analysts have cited historical examples of pluralism from the Islamic empire to critique this move. Turkish writer and journalist Mustafa Akyol states that at least during the first four centuries, the majority of the population residing in the empire was actually Christian. He claims this was because no forcible conversions or expulsion of non-Muslims took place in that period. Not until the 20th century did such divisions manifest themselves, and this he attributes to a modern force called nationalism.

One of the most prominent cases in this regard is the Conquest of Jerusalem by Caliph Umar (RA) in 637 AD. He refused an invitation to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as he feared it might set a precedent to turn churches into mosques.

The controversial move has certainly triggered a strong reaction from the West. However, when Western countries attack Turkey on abandoning secularist principles, it is important to note their own pattern of selective secularism. European countries like Spain, Portugal and Greece were once under Muslim rule centuries ago. There are countless examples of mosques from those eras being converted into



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churches or being left in a dilapidated state. For Turkey, the same action translates to an "Islamic dream" or a provocation to the "civilised world".

Erdogan's rhetoric also resonates with an abandonment of the desire to join the European Union, after waiting at its doorstep for over 60 years. Ankara has realised that no matter what steps are taken, it can never be "Westernised" enough to be granted admission to the Union. The prejudice is too deep-rooted and if they're not seen as equals, it's really not worth it.

The restoration of Hagia Sophia as a mosque is Erdogan's tribute to Sultan Mehmed II, the conqueror of Constantinople, and epitomises his Ottoman-era nostalgia. He has already proclaimed his irredentist vision, likening Turkey to a sleeping giant now awoken from a long slumber. Ankara has not forgotten how the Ottoman Empire was dismembered at the hands of European powers following World War I and is reclaiming that lost sovereignty. However, Ankara must remember that learning from the past is much more important than living in it. The world has witnessed time and again that nationalism is one of the most destructive and divisive forces in human history, but political leadership across the globe today seems to have forgotten that lesson.

Letters to the Editor

Where's SAARC?

This refers to the news story, 'Nepal offers locust bounty as swarms threaten crops.' It was reported that the desert locust swarms which have devastated or damaged vast agricultural heartlands in Pakistan and India over the past three or four months are now entering Nepal in leaps and bounds. The two remaining major South Asian countries, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka should brace themselves for an expected onslaught. As expected, South Asia has common issues (which most inhabitants and power centres of this region fail to recognise - such as the monsoon), and our region is having to experience its worst infestation in decades. Which brings us to the point of Saarc, a regional platform conceived and pushed ahead with much fanfare back in the

early 1980s. It was thought to be a brainchild of the then President of Bangladesh, Husain M Ershad. Can anyone tell where it is now? Where is Saarc hiding, when South Asian countries need it the most to tackle the locusts infestation? While Asean, the EU, the SCO, and the African Union regional groupings are still present and trying to achieve something worthwhile for their member states, Saarc remains hostile to one perennial issue: Pak-Indo hostility.

There is still time to tread in a new direction, with a new vision, with renewed confidence. Trump thought he could bring this about; at least, he offered to. Perhaps it's apt to conclude with a controversial remark: the growing influence or involvement of two leading world powers in South Asian affairs may not bode well for this region. It could postpone the dawn

of a new vision far, far, ahead to the detriment of all South Asian people.

Abbas R Siddiqi
LAHORE

KE and Karachi

How can we survive the debilitating load-shedding in Karachi? This issue of power outage is unbearable and everyone is now just constantly anxious. No one takes notice of this issue - even though this has been going on for a few years, especially in the rainy season. Karachiites are really disappointed in K-Electric's services. This crisis will become more serious if the government does not take any strong steps to tackle it.

Muhammad Haider
KARACHI