

The Business

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Textile sector ex-

Our textile sector being flush with export orders and finally operating at 100 percent available production capacity textile group exports suddenly shrank 6.75 percent month in February 2021. The mystery only deepens when we consider that this decline followed a 10.79 percent y-o-y jump in January 2021. One very obvious reason for this change of trend is the resurgence of Covid-19 and return to lockdowns in many parts of Europe, Pakistan's prime textile export market mainly because of the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) Plus facility. And even though textile producers had only just boasted that most companies were pretty much over-booked till June this year, they might now have to brace themselves for more bad news down the road as well. For not only could a lot more of the available orders also be cancelled, now there's really no telling what might happen after June, especially in light of warnings of a possible third wave of the coronavirus originating from central Europe and spreading to the periphery even as the vaccines are being rolled out. Yet no matter how badly everybody has been caught off guard by the virus once again, it still explains only half our problem.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), the squeeze in February was led by a decline in value-added exports. And since the government was informed in advance about the many bottlenecks in the supply of yarn, which is used in the production of value-added goods that fetch the best prices among textile exports, its own decision-making paralysis is also a big part of the problem. As recently as a fortnight ago, the commerce ministry was pushing the government to green-light duty-free import of yarn from Central Asian Republics (CARs) through Afghanistan because the usual fallback market, India, was out of the question for the time being. Yet no decision has been taken so far.

The downtrend is now expected to continue at least till the end of the fiscal year. That upsets not just expectations but also revenue projections, on which the whole International Monetary Fund (IMF) reform programme and bailout facility stand. Even if the pandemic has delivered a painful punch to the textile sector at a very sensitive time, the government's own lack of focus has also played no small part in the whole affair. It almost beggars belief that something so important has been allowed to languish so far down the priority list at a time when the government tries to make as much noise as possible all the time about the need to shore

Iqbal-Jinnah's view of Hindu communism — II

DR MUHAMMAD MUJEEB AFZAL

The 1928 Congress' rejection of the Lucknow Pact, in which it had accepted the principles of separate electorates, concept of weightage — Muslims should receive more than their demographic share in terms of representation in the Muslim minority provinces — and one-third share in the legislative, through the Nehru Report convinced Allama Muhammad Iqbal that the establishment of a separate region for Indian Muslims was the only way to avert the threat of the Hindu Raj in an independent India. He perceived autonomy through self-government as essential for the survival and self-preservation of the Muslim community and its way of life in India. In this regard, in 1930, at the annual session of the All India Muslim League at Allahabad, he proposed the formation of a Muslim autonomous unit consisted of the Punjab, NWFP, Sindh, and Balochistan within or without the British Empire as the only solution for the communal problem in India. He declared that his proposal was in the best interest of India and Islam because it would provide peace and security to all Indians through establishing an internal communal balance of power. He argued that his proposal would also provide an opportunity to the Indian Muslims to modernize and bring them closer to the original spirit of Islam, their traditions of law, education, and culture.

Like Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah started his political struggle as an ardent supporter of Indian nationalism. At that time, he disagreed with the efforts of Simla Deputation, a 35-member delegation under the leadership of Sir Aga Khan III, about a separate electorate for the Muslims; on the contrary, he wanted to unify both the communities to have a joint struggle for Home Rule (self-government). He was a liberal democrat and wanted to have a state where all the citizens could live freely and enjoy their religious and social life. In the Lucknow Pact, his proposal for the reservation of one-third representation was for the protection of minority rights in majority provinces and applied to both Hindus and Muslims in their respective majority provinces. His passionate and unbiased work for communal unity earned him the title of the 'ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity'. His approach to the communal problem in India was that

communities should be defined in socio-religious terms but be treated with political equality and protected through secular constitutional power-sharing formula. But, the narrow-minded and violent Hindu communalists confronted his approach; Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi initiated the process, he wanted to use religion for the mass mobilization of the Hindu community. In the 1920 annual session of the

Congress at Nagpur, the gradual and constitutional political approach of Jinnah was rejected, and 'Mahatma's approach of religious mass mobilization for the attainment of swaraj (independence) was adopted. This religio-political approach for mass mobilization resulted in a decade of communal Hindu-Muslim violence instigated by the aggressive-violent campaign of Shuddhi and Sangathan movements against the ordinary Muslim masses. Jinnah still wanted to have a Hindu-Muslim concord; in 1928, he offered the Congress that the Muslims were ready to give up the separate electorates in return for the reservation of one-third of seats in the Central Assembly. The Congress rejected his proposal; later, its two claimed moderate leaders Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru, in their Nehru Report, went back on all the previously accepted promises of the constitutional protection for the Muslim minority. The All India Muslim League rejected the report and Jinnah presented his charter of 14 Points with the demands of a federal form of government and separate electorates for the minorities. In 1937, the Congress again betrayed the Indian Muslims and Jinnah, in the formation of the provincial government in United Provinces (UP-present-day Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand). Despite an informal pre-election alliance, it refused to form a government with the Muslim League and formed a Hindu majority government in the province; its UP Legislative Party had only two Muslim legislators. This compelled Jinnah to declare categorically that he believed in a Hindu-Muslim pact but it could not be achieved at the destruction of one and survival of the other.

The 1937 Hindu majority provincial governments of the Congress convinced Jinnah and the Muslim community that after the British withdraw, no constitutional arrangement could safeguard them against the emergence of a permanent Hindu majority and conversion of the Indian Muslims into a permanent minor-

ity. In such a Hindu majoritarian system, the Indian Muslims would be completely shut out of power and would be forced to live as a helpless minority. At this historical juncture, Allama Iqbal advised Jinnah that in a Hindu majority state, the enforcement and development of the Shariat (Islamic way of life) of Islam was not possible and that Islam and Muslims could only flourish in a free state. Furthermore, an independent Muslim state was essential for the economic prosperity and peace in India. The demand for self-preservation, fear of the establishment of a destructive Hindu Raj, and desire for participation in the processes of modernization were the basic elements of the context in which the Indian Muslim nationalism took its final shape. Pakistan emerged as a consensus of the entire Muslim community of the Raj both in the minority and majority provinces.

Jinnah declared that the Muslims of India were not merely a religious community rather a nation with their distinct way of life, history, culture, and civilization. Therefore, the Hindu-Muslim problem was not communal rather national and it could only be settled based on the principle of sovereign equality for both the Hindu and Muslim nations. On August 11, 1947, in his first speech to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, presided by Jogendra Nath Mandal, Jinnah, as the Governor-General of Pakistan, reiterated his constitutional approach to religious matters, he declared religious freedom and political equality for all citizens of Pakistan irrespective of their faith. The evolution of post-independence India from secular-Hindu-majoritarianism to explicitly Hindu-majoritarianism justified the foresightedness of the forefathers of Pakistan. Despite its secular claims, the Indian state and society remained susceptible to a communal discourse of its political leadership. The Indian political elite used the rhetoric of secularism to mobilize the Indian Muslim minority for electoral purposes while they continued to suspect their loyalty to the new state of India as potential citizens of Pakistan. Minister of Home Affairs Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel actively participated in the rebuilding activities of the Somnath Temple as a symbol of the Hindu political revival. Additionally, he removed all Muslim officers from important positions in his ministry. The Indian Muslim community faced similar communal attitudes in other fields as well; most of

their energies were wasted in the preservation of their symbols of identity, such as the Urdu language, the Muslim Personal Law, the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), and Article 370 of the constitution that attempted to ensure the Muslim majority status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Their population was 13.5 percent but their representation in the Lok Sabha was around 2 to 6 percent; an almost similar decline was witnessed in other aspects of Indian national life from education to government jobs. Thus, long before the rise of Hindu nationalism, the political marginalization and the socio-economic ghettoization of the Indian Muslim community were completed. The rise of BJP has further increased their socio-political irrelevance to the Indian national life. At present, there are only 22 Muslim Members of Parliament (MPs) in 545 members of Lok Sabha; around 14 states have not

elected even a single Muslim MP in the last 25 years. In this hostile environment, the Indian Muslims had failed to protect essential elements of their community's identity like Article 370 and the Babri Masjid. The Muslim Personal Law was amended without the consent of the community. With the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019, Indian Muslims are now facing the real possibility of becoming second-class citizens in their own country. In this Hindu Raj, Indian Muslims are being repeatedly told that they are a minority and their community's memories, artifacts, architecture, and culture are not a part of the Hindu nation. On the protest of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Furqan Ali, a headmaster of a government primary school in Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh, was suspended because his students recited a poem written by Allama Iqbal, "Lab pe aati hai dua ban kay tamana meri" (May longing come to my lips as supplication of mine O Allah!). Similarly, the Sangh Parivar had demanded from the Aligarh Muslim University to remove the portrait of Muhammad Ali Jinnah from the walls of its student union office where it was hung for the last eight decades, since Jinnah was an honorary member of the students' union.

The writer is on the faculty of Quaid-i-Azam University (School of Politics and International Relations). (Courtesy monthly Hilal)

Concluded



The spirit of Pakistan Movement is an all enduring panacea — II

PROF. DR. MUHAMMAD IQBAL CHAWLA (R)

What seemed mission impossible in 1940 at the time of Lahore Resolution became possible within seven years when in the 3rd June Plan put forward by Mountbatten, India was partitioned into 'Bharat' and 'Pakistan'. Jinnah had turned the Muslim community into a nation, and on the basis of nationalism, he demanded a separate homeland in the Lahore Resolution and in 1947 changed the political map of British India.

What a revolution it was to get freedom from the British monarchy and the Hindu hegemony. It is not less in importance than the American Revolution because the Americans got independence from the British only where the Muslims got freedom both from the colonists and their apparent clients — the Hindus. The creation of Pakistan can be characterized truly as a 'Revolution' when it emerged as an independent nation in 1947. However, it is widely believed that from the very first day forces of evil represented by those groups of people who were masters of corruption, treachery, and disloyalty to the millions who had dreamt of a respectable place to call their own started betraying that sacred trust. Like the woman who in 1947 lost nearly her whole family to killings by Hindus and Sikhs while escaping from east Punjab shouted slogans of 'Pakistan Zindabad' with joy on seeing the Pakistani flag when she neared the border of the new state of Pakistan.

The citizens of Pakistan have yet

to realize their dreams and reap full benefits of independence. The political goal of Pakistan indisputably was nothing if it did not refer to social, economic, agricultural, cultural, industrial but most important of all educational progress, in ways and means whereby it would find its place in the finest, most civilized, advanced and strongest — in all respects — nations of not only this region but also the leading representative of the Muslim world while sitting in the company of other advanced nations of the world in an equal setting. Our history is different from that of any other country in the sense that there was indeed what can be called the First Phase of the Pakistan Revolution brought about by the widespread political awareness among Muslims ready to face four times the number of their opponents at any level and at any moment at the call of the Quaid and the Muslim League regardless of their personal and collective fate; its follow-up has been missing. Pakistan of 2021 has yet to achieve what was expected of the new nation.

The reasons are manifold and must be urgently and thoroughly addressed radically by people who are as loyal as the earlier band of Muslim leaders or the country would have failed in its historic mission of creating a NEW homeland for the Muslims of the sub-continent. Immense sacrifices would be needed to fulfill the initiation and fruition of this Second Phase of the Pakistan Movement.

While the first phase of that movement of our survival gave us a piece of territory after which most of its true leaders quickly departed

from this world or were sidelined by the rising crop of crooks and opportunists, the Second Phase of the Pakistan Movement is imperative to imbue the (remaining) Pakistan with what was envisaged by the Quaid and his associates in countless speeches and statements about the true future of the holy land for which they were fighting. Otherwise, it is feared by many, that the foundations of remaining Pakistan will get weakened and give way as had happened once before and may be unable to face the accumulated results of deceit, treachery, crockery, fraud, and endless lies spewed from all sides who command the major avenues of power in various guises at various levels.

In the new state of Pakistan there was the hope of a glorious future for the suffering millions especially in West Punjab and East Bengal but the chicanery and crookedness gradually engulfed the country and though there was a continuous struggle in the right direction, however, forces of darkness eventually overwhelmed the good forces and now Pakistan, overwhelmingly is in deep straits and most of its population has been unable to progress to the level as was envisioned and promised by Jinnah and other founders of Pakistan during the movement for Pakistan.

It is a common perception that most decisions are influenced by the IMF, the World Bank, and the likes about our economic arena which affects the totality of our lives for hundreds of millions of our people who see no positive glimmer of hope in the gloomy environment whose masters are nothing but clever opportunists. It is

surprising when going through the speeches and statements of the Quaid to his political antagonists in the 1940s the numerous references to the 'fight till death' through which he and his followers were ready to defend their honor against far more numerically powerful and numerous opponents while continuing their struggle for independence at the same time. A similar movement, which can be appropriately termed the 'Phase Two' of Pakistan Movement, is now needed to save the remnant of the country from the problems which stares its millions right in their faces. No time must be lost to set this movement into motion by inspiring the youth of the country, especially, through compulsory physical training, intense hard work, volunteering, and urge to sacrifice their all for their country, their faith, their families and fellow national brethren as the world around us is both changing and moving ahead rapidly. A similar stirring of the citizens of Pakistan is needed now, led by dedicated and hardworking leaders. These are the people of Pakistan who will not stop at anything less than the goal of laying unshakable foundations of those aspects of Pakistan for which Mr. Jinnah repeatedly called out such as the highest levels of integrity and of attaining the best in business, sciences, and all other major areas of life.

The writer is former Dean of Arts and Humanities and Chairman, Department of History and Pakistan Studies at Punjab University. (Courtesy monthly Hilal)

Concluded

COVID-19: The third wave is here

DR RANA JAWAD ASGHAR

In early December, we had a peak in the second wave of Covid-19. Our number of Covid-19 cases started to decline but then plateaued around 1,000-1,500 daily cases and stayed there for weeks. In January and February, cases declined sharply for many weeks straight in the rest of the world. This decline in daily reported cases was up to 90% in many countries including our neighbour, India. Why we did not see this sharp decline could be due to many reasons. There is no such thing like a plateau in an active epidemic or pandemic. This only happens when a disease becomes endemic, meaning its more than normal and staying at a high level. At this moment there is no chance of endemicity as large swaths of our population are still vulnerable. So, when cases appear to be staying at a higher level for weeks in a pandemic, field epidemiologists have a serious problem of disease underreporting.

By January, we started to see a slow increase. The overall numbers were still small and case positivity very low but a consistent increase was visible.

Though the national positivity rate was still under 5%, our big cities were continuously above this threshold. In Islamabad, which tests more than any other city, this pattern was more obvious. The number of daily deaths started to increase and doctors in hospitals and clinics started reporting an increased number of clinical cases. Some doctors in different cities of Punjab told me that they did not see such numbers of Covid patients even in the first or second wave. My physician colleagues also reported that patients are declining Covid-19 diagnostic tests and instead they have to rely on signs, chest x-rays, and other tests and CT scans. There were also reports of patients with Covid symptoms but negative PCR tests. We already knew it's difficult to diagnose the UK variant with the current PCR techniques.

Given that, anyone could have easily understood that the slow rise in cases over the past weeks is actually a fraction of true cases in Pakistan. I was surprised when three weeks ago, a decision was



made to basically open all of Pakistan. Schools were opened at 100% capacity alongside the easing of other restrictions.

Government-owned data no matter how deficient, showed an increasing trend. We needed to strengthen our defenses then to not become more vulnerable since the UK variant is more transmissible and lethal.

Given this scenario, why then did the government decide against its own health intelligence? If governments do not invest in disease reporting systems and improve it, they are less likely to rely on it in their decision-making. That is a vicious circle across the world. Health intelligence is more than a disease reporting system but when we do not have the basic blocks right then the whole system collapses.

The result is with us. Hospitals are under pressure and doctors in Punjab are seeing unprecedented number of Covid patients. Outbreaks do not occur randomly, there are reasons why a disease spreads in a certain population and not in others. There is also always a preventive measure we need to identify and use to protect our population.

Science as a subject is extremely low in our national priorities. But when the world is fighting a war, we need to be more serious in evidence-based decision-making.

The third wave of Covid-19 is here but we could have prevented it or minimized its impact. Please use masks and increase fresh air ventilation in all offices, shops or any building used by the public. We could still minimize the impact by just following SOPs.