

The Business

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An un-Islamic practice

The Federal Shariat Court (FSC) has declared the practice of *vani* or *swara* - as it is called in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - as un-Islamic, observing that giving away a minor girl to settle disputes is against the injunctions of Islam. The practice is usually defended in the name of tradition. When needed the concept of 'badli-i-sulah' is also invoked, though it has no relevance to the context. In fact, the consent of the woman/girl to be married is necessary, which is why she is asked three times in the presence of two witnesses if she agrees to be wedded to the man chosen by her family. But *vani* marriage is not only a sad occasion, girls as young as two or five years of age, even in early teens, are unaware of what it means. There have been several instances wherein on attaining adulthood they have refused to accept the marriage but found it impossible to wrest freedom. And as pointed out by jurist consultant at the Federal Shariat Court, in most cases the girl is deprived of her basic rights, hence is subjected to discrimination; also she cannot file legal suit for *khula* (dissolution of marriage). Unfortunately, it is not only the village elders presiding over *jirgas* who regard females as lesser beings condemning little girls to a life of servitude in forced unhappy marriages, anti-women prejudices are all pervasive. Former military ruler General Pervez Musharraf had embarrassed himself by making some irresponsible comments about rape victims, drawing censure from rights organisations as well as certain Western leaders. Apparently, it was to impress his foreign detractors that in 2004 he got passed a legislation outlawing *vani*. The law on its own has had limited effect because in rural areas the police tend to side with local influential people. Since 2004, only in a handful of cases men have given up their claims to marry female relatives of murderers or those accused of some other wrongdoing.

All the inhuman practices prevailing in the country for the last many decades should be abolished and the human aspects should prevail not under any external pressure. Civil society members have been trying to change things for the better. But political parties, especially the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), the self-proclaimed guardians of religion-related matters, have remained indifferent about this inhuman practice. Now that the Federal Shariat Court has ruled *vani* as un-Islamic, they should ensure it is implemented effectively. That though is a

Cricket and the country



RAFIA ZAKARIA

Pakistan needed a victory — there is little doubt about that. The past year brought unspeakable challenges: a pandemic, regional conflicts boiling over, famine and joblessness and so much uncertainty across the world. Cricket stopped when the Covid-19 pandemic struck, and so did the diversion that the game provided to the cooped-up and to the suffering. The year 2021 brought back some signs of life, but they were feeble. When Pakistani cricket attempted to make a decisive comeback in Pakistan, a likely fake message sent to the New Zealand cricket team about to begin playing in Pakistan crushed the dreams of so many cricket fans. England also pulled out.

All that is in the past now. The story of the past couple of weeks or so has been how a team of very young players, led by the ever calm and composed Babar Azam, led millions to the sort of jubilation that they had been denied for a very long time. The first win against India was tremendous, but the subsequent wins against New Zealand and Afghanistan proved that it was not a one-off or fluke event.

The wins have done more than just delight Pakistanis who are physically present in Pakistan. The country's par-

ticular reputation as a labour-exporting nation means that millions of its cricket fans are spread all around the world. As is visible in the telecast of the matches, so many are expat workers in places like the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East. Then there are still more in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. For all of these Pakistanis, cricket matches are a moment in which they connect with the country they had to leave in order to get employment. Deprived of home itself, a cricket victory is the best of home. The diversity of this particular audience is evident on various digital platforms, where fans from Pakistan join others from all over the world in post-

also second-generation Pakistanis, who themselves may have never actually lived in Pakistan. Speaking in English and Urdu and a mixture of English and Urdu, they retell the story of the match like a golden fable passed through the ages as a national legacy.

These digital exercises in faraway togetherness, made possible by cricket wins, perform other functions as well. According to figures from 2020, Pakistan outdid both India and Bangladesh in the number of workers that it sent abroad (competition obviously is not limited to cricket). In summer this year, the Ministry for Overseas Pakistanis reported that Pakistan had become a regional leader in 'Manpower Export in 2020', sending almost

Pakistan is now over \$2 billion, a huge lifesaver for a cash-strapped economy that is forever falling short of foreign exchange.

The pandemic has been particularly difficult for this population. The intricate and complex Covid restrictions in place in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and nearly all other parts of the world mean that even though travel has once again become possible, it is still arduous, expensive and risky.

This means that the past two years have seen families split apart, expatriate workers missing various occasions that would have otherwise been a short flight away, others being stuck either at home or more likely wherever it is that they are working. In retrospect, for a labour-exporting country, a global pandemic is a disaster, even greater than the one faced by all other countries. It means that the jobs made bearable by jet travel are suddenly rendered unbearable and out of reach because of a sudden and unpredictable catastrophe.

Record-breaking labour mobility (a better term than 'manpower') has been a gift for Pakistan. The re-emergence of the Pakistani cricket team as a highly competitive world-class team is likely to be a gift not only for Pakistanis in Pakistan but also for those who reside overseas. Coming together for a game re-energises bonds and memories in a way that perhaps nothing else can. The poor labourer working to clean floors in Saudi Arabia or serving burgers in Dubai may not have a whole lot to look forward to; but a cricket match provides one occasion for that. Watching one's team shine makes all sorts of people in all kinds of situations keep their chin up and deal with the world with more spring in their step. One cannot allot a numerical value to this lift in spirits, this hopeful increase in self-esteem; Pakistani cricket fans would argue that it is because it is quite simply priceless.

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game celebrations. Groups on WhatsApp are one category of these, the messages constituting a bouquet of the international reach of a national sport and its dramas.

The recently launched platform Twitter Spaces, which allows people to join a sort of public chatroom where speakers take turns, is another that seems to be providing a flourishing venue for celebration. Aatif Nawaz, one of the commentators of BBC Sports, has hosted one after each of the three matches. The delight and banter of fans from far corners of the world, all united by a game, is very endearing to listen to. Included among these are

225,000 workers abroad, a number that exceeded the export labour of both India and Bangladesh in a pandemic year.

The most common destination for Pakistani workers was Saudi Arabia, which saw over 136,000 workers migrate there in 2020, followed by the UAE and other GCC countries. These workers added to a total of over 11 million Pakistanis who already live and work abroad. If these numbers are adjusted to include those who have taken their families with them, it likely amounts to a figure that is probably close to 25m people. The foreign exchange that they send back home to



Pakistan committed to regional, world peace

BY SARDAR KHAN NIAZI

Pakistan has always worked for peace, stability, and the elimination of terrorism in the region. Pakistan firmly stands by the global and regional institutions and states to bring sustainable peace in the region and the world.

Pakistan's contribution to the global war against terrorism is a clear reflection of our desire for the peaceful resolution of all disputes. Pakistan is opposed to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Of late Corps Commanders Conference held at GHQ took note of evolving regional security situation, India's baseless propaganda, especially gross human rights violations, being committed in Indian Illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK).

The Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Ambassador Munir Akram also raised alarm about the threat posed by India's quest for regional hegemony to international peace and security. He was speaking at the UN General Assembly's First Committee, which deals with disarmament and international security matters.

The actions of India's fascist regimes are in violation of the UN Security Council resolutions that call for a plebiscite to enable the Kashmiri people of IIOJK to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. India has unleashed the most brutal reign of terror and oppression on the Kashmiri people and against its own 200 million Muslim minority. India's belligerent rhetoric has compounded the regional security situation. To camouflage its crimes, it has resorted to the world's most notorious disinformation campaign. Pakistan will continue with the full spectrum deterrence to counter and defeat any potential Indian aggression.

Reacting to Munir Akram's statement, A. Amarnath, counselor in India's Permanent Mission to the body, claimed Kashmir was an integral part of India. Pakistan rejects India's claim that Jammu and Kashmir is its integral part, observing it is an internationally recognized disputed territory, the UN-supervised plebiscite will decide its final status.

Pakistan has been and will continue to highlight India's state terrorism against the people of Indian-occupied Kashmir. Indian state terrorism in Kashmir will not be able to dampen the indomitable spirit of Kashmiris seeking their inalienable right to self-determination nor will India's attempt to divert attention



from its sponsorship of terrorism ever succeed.

India has financed, facilitated, and directed state-sponsored terrorism against Pakistan and other neighbors. The desire of India for great power status, despite its domestic political and economic disarray, can endanger international peace and security. How one can ignore the threat posed by Indian oppressive policies and its massive militarization drive.

The extremist ideology pervasive in India today, along with its offensive doctrines and hegemonic pretensions; its search for conventional and strategic military dominance spells danger. The history of Indian aggression against its neighbors, its refusal to engage in a dialogue or mediation on dispute resolution and confidence building, also present a clear threat.

India spent \$73 billion last year on the acquisition and development of new conventional and non-conventional land, air, and sea weapons systems. It has also nuclearized the Indian Ocean; deployed anti-ballistic missile systems; acquired anti-satellite weapons; and increased the range and sophistication of all its delivery systems.

The states that are so eagerly providing these advanced weapons systems and technologies to India must know that India has deployed 70 percent of its weaponry and forces against Pakistan. Peace and stability in South Asia can be achieved through the resolution of disputes, maintenance of a balance of conventional and strategic military forces between Pakistan and India, and reciprocal measures for nuclear and missile and military restraint between the two countries. Pakistan's proposal for a strategic restraint regime in South Asia remains on the table. On Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), India's remarks are unfair. Regional and international security concerns demand nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in the region and the world.

A serious threat to Pakistan

BY COL MUHAMMAD HANIF (R)



Since signing of the defence and nuclear deals with the US in 2005 and 2008 respectively, and especially after having been declared as US's close defence partner in 2016, as part of its Indo-Pacific Strategy to contain China's peaceful rise, India got a major opportunity to purchase high-tech military weapons systems of its choice from the western military powers, apart from Russia, with whom it already had strong defence relations.

To purchase the most modern weapons, while India uses China threat theory, it also possesses a lot of Forex reserves to purchase the weapons, as over the years it has amassed an impressive amount of \$ 641 billion reserves.

Although, despite the above-mentioned hefty amount of Forex reserves, as per the Business Standard, India is still 101st in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2021 of 116 countries, and is behind its neighbours Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. This widespread hunger prevails in India because, instead of spending on its poor population to end the hunger, India has used its foreign exchange reserves to purchase modern arms and military equipment to become a major power. For this purpose, the Modi government is spending a huge amount of US dollars for purchasing costly weapon systems. Following are the major examples.

According to the Economic Times, India has signed 182 defence deals over the last 3 years and in the current year. The defence equipment included ships, missiles, rockets, simulators, tanks, guns, aircraft, helicopters and radars.

As per India Today, on 22 October 2021 India signed a contract worth Rs 423 crore with the US for procurement of MK 54 Torpedo and Expendable (Chaff and Flares) for the Indian Navy. These weapons are the outfit of P-81 aircraft which is used for Long range Maritime Surveillance, Anti-Submarine Warfare and Anti-Surface Warfare (ASW). According to the Nikkei Asia, in February 2021, the Indian government had announced a large-scale defense equipment renewal project, worth \$130 billion, to be spent on arms procurements in the coming eight years. India's weapons procurement from the United States had jumped from meagre USD 6.2 million to a whopping USD 3.4-billion in 2019. Recently, India has purchased 36 French Rafale fighter jets, fitted with scalp and meteor missiles having beyond visual range of 300 kilometers, worth \$9.4 billion, out of which five aircraft have already been received by the Indian Air Force. India also plans to upgrade 59 of its MiG-29 aircraft and buy 21 more from Russia for about \$1 billion.

According to India Today, as per the deal already signed with Russia, India will receive the first batch of the sophisticated S-400 anti-aircraft surface-to-air missile system in October-December 2021.

The S-400 is known as Russia's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile defence system, which can destroy incoming hostile aircraft, missiles and even drones at ranges of up to 400 km. In addition, India is about to order 12 Russian-made Su-30MKI fighters for \$1.53 billion. Moreover, as India wants to replace the fleet of its aging fighter aircraft, competitors for the 115-plane purchase include the F-21, Boeing's F/A-18E/F, the Rafale, the European Typhoon, the Swedish Gripen E and the Russian MiG-35 and Su-35. Indian companies would assemble the new jets on license.

Lockheed Martin of the US has also offered the co-production of F-21 Fighter aircraft to India in collaboration with Tata. Despite the US expectations that an economically and militarily strong India will act as a bulwark for containing China, it is more likely that India would never fight with China to implement the US Indo-Pacific strategy. In fact, by becoming

a partner in the US Indo-Pacific strategy, India is basically exploiting this opportunity to get the western economic investments and the modern weapon systems to become a major economic/military power. Hence, the above discussed arms buildup by India and the most modern weapons systems it is acquiring will be mainly used against Pakistan. In this context, India's acquisition of the modern aircraft, like the French Rafale with BVR range of 300 kms, F-21, the Russian SU-30, and 35, and the Russian S-400 anti-missile system with 400 kms interception range and the naval weapons, like the nuclear submarines are a serious threat to Pakistan's sovereignty. India can use the modern aircraft for the so called surgical strikes in Pakistan just to prove its air superiority and show to the world that it is an uncontested regional power. In case of a war, because of such superior weapons, Pakistan's nuclear threshold will be lowered.

Therefore, to deter India from violating Pakistan's sovereignty, it is necessary that Pakistan should also acquire a limited number of the matching conventional weapons. In this context, although the past successive governments in Pakistan have failed to build the required Forex reserves, as, comparing India and Pakistan's size/population, Pakistan should have built at least one sixth of India's Forex reserves, equal to \$ 120 billion. But, up till October 2021, Pakistan has got Forex reserves of only \$ 25 billion.

Still, Pakistan can spend about \$5 billion to acquire a limited number of high-tech modern weapon systems to fail India's plans of establishing its conventional military dominance over Pakistan. In this context, it is a right step that Pakistan Army has recently inducted the state-of-the-art Chinese-origin HQ-9/P HIMADS, high to medium air defence system, which nearly matches the capabilities of the Russian S-400 anti-missile system.

Similarly, Pakistan also needs to procure on priority a limited number of modern aircraft matching the capabilities of Rafale, F-21, and SU-30 and a few nuclear submarines.

—The writer is a former Research Fellow of IPRI and