

The Business

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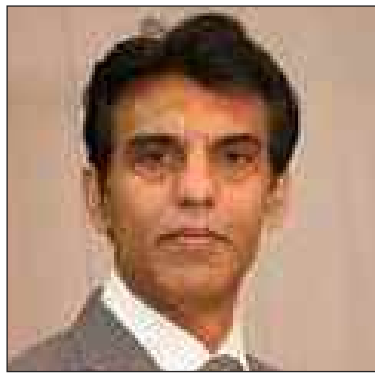
HR abuses in India

Some 21 countries have taken notice of a serious regression in human rights under the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging News Delhi to improve its protection of freedom of religion and rights of religious minorities. A few days later, six international human rights groups, including World Organisation for Human Rights, World Organisation Against Torture, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, issued a joint statement pointing out various legislative and other actions that have made it "lawful to discriminate against religious minorities, particularly Muslims. Ignoring censure by rights organisations, the Indian government continues to promote its Hindutva agenda, which affects Christians also but its main target is the Muslim community. Hindu vigilantes associated with the BJP have lynched several Muslims on mere suspicion of eating or possessing cow meat, even transporting cows, they regard as a sacred animal. Many old mosques have been demolished. BJP ruled Karnataka state has legally banned wearing of hijab by Muslim students to school; hardline Hindu groups are demanding a similar ban in other states. Several Indian states have passed or about to do so anti-conversion laws, in violation of constitutionally protected right to freedom of belief, in order to prevent Hindu women from marrying Muslim men.

The saffron-clad anti-Muslim hate spewing Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath, believed to be Modi's successor as prime minister, has been bulldozing Indian Muslims' homes and businesses on flimsy pretexts. At one point he also threatened to kill a thousand Muslims if they killed (in self-defence) one Hindu. If that was not outrageous enough, last December at a religious event attended, among others, by a member of the ruling BJP, a leader of the Hindu extremist outfit Mahasabha went so far as to call for Muslim genocide saying, "even if just a hundred of us become soldiers and kill two million of them, we will be victorious." Unfortunately, none of this worries the Western countries claiming to be standard-bearers of human rights.

It is worth noting that last April the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, a bipartisan independent body, for a third year in a row, recommended that India be designated "a Country of Particular Concern", saying religious freedom conditions in the country had "significantly worsened in 2021". That prompted a Democratic Party legislator Ilhan Omar to raise the question "what does Modi need to do to India's Muslim population before we will stop considering them a partner in peace." The answer is 'nothing' as long as it serves Washington's interests. Just the other day, State Department spokesman while commenting on Washington's ties with New Delhi, said "India is an invaluable partner, not just in the region but as it relates to a

Race against catastrophe



DR ABID QAIYUM SULERI

There is no good or bad 'COP' when we talk about the annual Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

This year was the 27th COP, and like the earlier 26 COPs, this COP had some good and some bad news for developing countries like Pakistan. If the sign of successful negotiations is that their outcome equally displeases the negotiating parties, then this COP was successful too. Before I share my disappointment, let me start with the good news first. As the president of G77 and China (a group of 135 developing countries), Pakistan displayed excellent climate diplomacy. It successfully fought the case of getting a loss and damage fund established. The devastation due to this year's unusually heavy monsoon resulting in super-floods in Pakistan was a living example of the extent of losses and damages that a country with a negligible share of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) could suffer due to the historic emission of the rich world.

"What goes on in Pakistan won't stay in Pakistan" was the punchline used by Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman in mobilizing the support at COP27 for a loss and damage fund. The fund is not a charity or donation but a mechanism by which rich countries would provide money to help the climate-vulnerable developing world to repair the damages wrought by a warming globe.

The idea for such a fund was

floated 31 years ago (before the UNFCCC was formally established) but has met great resistance from the leaders of the developed world, who were not willing to talk about anything that might suggest liability or compensation for their historic role in warming the planet and hence causing climate change. They were mindful that, through computer models, climate scientists could quantify the role that greenhouse-gas emissions play in a given disaster – and therefore the enormous sums they could be on the hook for. This is why they resisted the inclusion of 'funding for loss and damage' as an agenda item during any previous COP. Overcoming that resistance and deciding to set up a new UN fund, the details of which will be agreed upon by November next year, is good news for developing countries.

The second good news is that COP27 agreed to tinker with the global financial system to make it more responsive to the climate crisis. International financial institutions or IFIs (World Bank, IMF, regional development banks, etc) are separate from the UNFCCC, so COP cannot require them to reform. However, 200 countries have sent a strong signal that they expect the IFIs to do more in the context of the climate crisis, suggesting how that should happen.

Before coming to that, let me explain why the role of IFIs matters in tackling climate change. Last year, the World Bank concluded that by 2050, without more mitigation and adaptation, 216 million people would be displaced within their own countries by climate change. Mitigation (reducing the emissions) will require massive investments, not only in renewables but in switching to low-emission technologies and providing farmers with alternatives to chopping down forests. Adaptation (living with current and future global warming) to a warmer planet will require vast sums for building flood defences and heat-proofing infrastructure. The World Bank also estimates that, globally, every dollar spent on climate-change adaptation brings an average of \$4 in benefits.

According to a report jointly commissioned by Britain and Egypt as the

past and current hosts of COP, developing countries require a combined \$1 trillion a year in external funding to meet the goals set out in their Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs (the climate action plan set out in the Paris Agreement). In addition to the countries' own expenditures, this funding is needed to cut emissions, deal with deadly disasters, and restore nature. This money cannot be mobilized through the existing UNFCCC mechanism which is why the role of global, regional, and national financial institutions becomes important.

Lack of access to finance for climate emergencies can drive developing countries even deeper into debt, as Pakistan discovered this year. According to the Economist magazine, countries at higher risk of natural disasters already have debt-to-national income ratios that are 11.2 percentage points higher than those that are less vulnerable.

Access to loans becomes challenging due to the (negative) opinion of credit rating agencies about lending to climate-vulnerable countries and often the (harsh) conditionalities attached to such funding. In a welcome move, parties at COP27 seized on a set of proposals by Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley. The proposal is to expand the lending capacity of the World Bank and other development banks by allowing them to take greater financial risks. An additional \$1 trillion can be unlocked without any shareholders (America is the largest for the World Bank) having to put in any more money. The extra financial risk is justified when set against the harm that climate change will cause.

The closing text adopted at COP27 called on multilateral development banks and other IFIs to "reform their practices and priorities" to channel money where it is most needed.

It also encouraged such organizations to "define a new vision" with "channels and instruments that are fit for adequately addressing the global climate emergency". Though the text does not mention specifically the "debt for nature swaps", an instrument through which the lenders give concessions in return for environmental commitments, the language opens the window for

countries like Pakistan to get debt relief in exchange for flood rehabilitation through "debt for flood rehabilitation swap". The bad news is that, while providing hope for finance to developing countries, COP27 failed to expedite the curbing of greenhouse gas emissions.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries were required to submit their national plans (NDC) on reducing (or curbing, in the case of developing countries) their GHG emissions. These were to be resubmitted only every five years, a provision known as the "ratchet". The NDCs submitted at Paris would have led to a temperature rise of more than 3C, far higher than the target of 1.5-2C. Hence, in Glasgow (COP26), countries agreed to hasten the ratchet and submit new NDCs yearly. However, few countries submitted revised NDCs this year in line with the ratchet, and current NDCs would see a rise of about 2.5C.

The final text of COP27 contains a provision to boost "low-emissions energy". This term is quite vague and can cover energy from wind and solar farms to nuclear reactors and coal-fired power stations fitted with carbon capture and storage. Many interpret it as gas, which has lower emissions than coal but is still a major fossil fuel. Text like this, no follow through on the phasing down of coal, and an absence of a formal agreement to reduce the world's fossil fuel use have disappointed many.

With all the shortcomings of COP27 output, the decision to set up the Loss and Damage Fund is a huge success. However, our struggle does not end here. Unlike many of the missed promises and unmet pledges developed countries made to developing countries in the previous COPs, the Loss and Damage Fund must be set up and filled with cash. There has yet to be an agreement on how the finance should be provided and where it should come from. The question of who would get these funds, and how the competing requests for its access would be met still needs to be solved.

I foresee our negotiators spending sleepless nights in many more COPs. The only problem is that the rapidly changing climate will not give us time to linger on this issue indefinitely. It's a race against catastrophe.

PTI TO SHOW CARDS IF NO POLLS AFTER COAS APPOINTMENT



Russia's pragmatism

DR SALMA SHAHEEN

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 20, 2022 and since then the intensity and scope of its military operation have been faltering. Vladimir Kvachkov, a retired Russian colonel who was released from prison in 2019 and who recently resumed his political career, argues that "the course and outcome of a special military operation (SMO) are directly related to military-political goals and objectives."

The declared goal of the Russian SMO in Ukraine is the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine. While little success has been achieved from this military operation, there are three important steps that Russia took recently, which demonstrate the rationality and prudence of Russian President Vladimir Putin's military strategy while simultaneously driving the current conflict to becoming a long protracted war in 2023. These steps include recurrent retreats, new state-of-emergency laws introduced in October 2022 and the appointment of a new commander in Ukraine. The Ukrainian forces have successfully driven the Russian army out of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson so far. Kherson was the first regional capital that the Russian forces captured and it was celebrated with Putin's declaration that Kherson would be Russia 'forever'. Eventually, Russia had to withdraw as its forces became overstretched, undersupplied and extensively exposed to the Ukrainian forces. Earlier, the Kyiv counteroffensive rattled Russian military operations resulting in the forces' withdrawal from the city in March 2022.

Even though this defeat was a major blow to Putin's goal of regime change and signified his poor military campaign, Russian Deputy Defence Minister Alexander Fomin described it as a move aimed at "increasing mutual trust, creating the right conditions for future negotiations, and reaching the final goal of signing a peace deal with Ukraine", during peace talks in Istanbul. These withdrawals have given Russia some time to rebuild its combat-ready force. The Kherson withdrawal may allow Russia to move its troops to the more advantageous defensive positions on the east bank of the Dnipro River, difficult for the Ukrainian forces to penetrate because they effectively damaged the major bridges over the river as part of their military operations. But they can also shift the Ukrainian forces closer to Crimea that Russia annexed in 2014. Kyiv now vows to have no negotiations with the Kremlin until the Russian forces leave Crimea.

To tackle harsh temperatures of the winter, Russia's retreat and shift to defensive positions is a prudent decision to control wartime losses. Many Russians are now tired of the war. Under these circumstances, any reductions in losses as a result of the

withdrawal will be welcomed by the Russian nation. The recurrent retreats also indicate Russia's willingness to cede space for concessions, which is a rational pragmatic approach.

Previously, the Kherson retreat could minimize, to a smaller extent, the international ire that drew heavily upon Putin after he announced martial law in four annexed Ukrainian provinces. The new state-of-emergency laws introduced in October provided the heads of the four Ukrainian provinces – Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Kherson – along with the heads of the provinces of Crimea and Sevastopol powers to maintain law and order and increase production to support Russian military campaigns in Ukraine.

The enactment of these laws include a pinch of prudence as they aim to strategically defend captured objectives in terms of annexed provinces instead of expanding the geographical scope of war. Simultaneously, economic mobilization in those regions is crucial to support the Russian war effort.

Undoubtedly, the Russian forces have suffered a series of crushing defeats leading to reverses from southern and north-eastern Ukraine that raised questions about military preparedness and battlefield command. The wartime losses for Moscow were enormous, resulting in widespread criticism within Russia. Unable to withstand Ukrainian counteroffensive, the withdrawal from Kyiv and Kharkiv was made but it upset the Russian ruling class. To pacify criticism especially within the Russian elite on Russian military performance, the change in war command is a step in the right direction, primarily due to the new general's reportedly high reputation and wider acceptance within the system.

The appointment of General Sergei Surovikin in October 2022 as the "commander of the joint group of forces in the areas of the special military operation" is seen as a rational development in Russian strategy. Ben Barry, a senior fellow for land warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, reportedly notes this new development as an element of 'realism' and believes that Russia can prepare for a fresh offensive to take initiative.

The joint command under Surovikin is thought to unite dispersed autonomous army groups under one. Previously, the new commander warned against holding Kherson for long. The Russians forces had been struggling to keep the area under control. Surovikin's recent withdrawal from Kherson suggests a shift in his strategy to build a strong defence of the territories Moscow has captured so as to avoid relocation and repositioning of borders. Clearly, Russia is shifting to defensive warfare. Putin launched a major SMO to protect Russians living in Donetsk and Luhansk, the south-eastern regions of Ukraine, and eliminate any threats to Russian

Whatever happened to ethics?



KAMILA HYAT

While the question of corruption is one that continues to stalk the country today, the Toshakhana affair and the alleged sale of a watch taken from the state gift repository by Imran Khan – currently making headlines and dominating the news – is also an issue of ethics.

Ethics seems to be a simple matter, but it is fairly complicated in real terms.

For the Toshakhana affair, for example, we need to look a little beyond the law, the rules, and the regulations that have been put down in writing and also at the ethics of our leaders and the manner in which they act.

From an ethical point of view, it is clear that purchasing a gift item, given by the leader of a country with which Pakistan has long-term ties, from the repository and then selling it at a much higher price than what was paid to obtain the watch is both unethical and discourteous.

The details of the case are still being disputed. But if the watch was indeed sold in the manner that has been suggested, there are aspects to this which go beyond that of corruption.

When leaders act in an unethical manner, they set examples that others, including junior leaders of political parties, in the country follow. We have already seen a decline in ethics in our country. Most people say it began after the 1960s and 1970s as corruption gradually seeped into bureaucracy and many other places. Besides cor-

ruption, we have also seen a rapid decline in ethics and manners. We can witness this moral degeneration in not only offices but also education institutions where students have no qualms about cheating and carrying out dishonest acts to get better marks in exams and tests.

There was a time in the country when this would not happen and when professors at top universities would not accept plagiarized theses or publish content plagiarized from books originally published by writers across the globe.

Lack of ethics also affects other aspects of life and the quality of life people lead. All of us may have had doubts about the work carried out by say, automobile mechanics or others working at home or other settings. We also see work done to construct or repair roads and how contractors show lack of ethics when procuring materials.

As a result, such constructions are rarely satisfactory and fail to withstand the damage caused by nature and heavy vehicular use for at least a few decades.

In Germany, the Autobahn – or motorways – last for years without major problems. In our country, roads collapse every few years, leading to frequent repair work. Even the motorway itself is frequently under repair with signs marking where construction work is underway. We wonder if this is simply a result of unethical practices carried out when the road was being constructed.

The same lack of ethics affects our political environment and the electoral process as well as other factors surrounding these.

For example, every candidate contesting a general election will admit that their campaign spending is more than the amount specified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Most claim it is simply not possible to conduct a viable campaign within the amount set by the ECP. We need to consider what to do about this and how to allow people who do not have big bank accounts to enter electoral races.

The law states that every individual has the right to contest a general election or to apply to any position in the country's political sphere.

In reality, it is not possible to implement this law. Many unethical deeds form a part for every election ranging from stuffing ballot boxes to creating lists or cutting out the names from these lists to try and secure a victory.

The examples set by leaders also affect other

aspects of life and all that goes with it.

If Imran Khan can engage in unethical behaviour, ordinary people on the street, milk sellers who mix water in milk, merchants who add water to dilute liquids they sell or butchers who inject weak animals with water to make them look heavier and healthier, and others will have an excuse for engaging in such acts.

They can always say they are only imitating the leader and the man who was elected to the top position in the country by the people. We wonder if people are even aware of this or if this will be a consideration in the next election.

What is true is that along with the issue of corruption and wrongdoings, we need to look at ethics and practices of ordinary people. Ethics should be part of school curricula. This addition is as important as ensuring that education standards are universal across the country or that all children are taught at the same level. This may be the only way in which we can create a more ethical and just environment in the country.

We need to create a society where children are taught to be more honest than the generation that came before them. At the moment, this is simply not true. The elderly in the country are often more aware of ethical behaviour than their children and, in most cases, more so than their grandchildren. Our leaders have set terrible examples. Top economists and analysts have noted that corruption and unethical behaviour at the top trickles down to the people creating problems in society, which are not easy to resolve.

We need to take steps to create a more ethical place. Of course, we have examples of hotel staff who returned money left by tourists or cab and taxi drivers who brought back phones left in their vehicles. These individuals need to be admired especially since they come from a society where such behaviours are not common.

But at the same time, we need to remember that in many societies, such actions would be the norm, not the exception. It is this norm towards which we need to move. And this can happen only if our leaders at the top of the pyramid set the right examples and ensure that we are not constantly inundated by scandals that have hit us constantly over the years and continue to make the news today as we engage in our quest to understand the actions of politicians and what they achieve through their deeds.