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THE SOUTH ASIAN MAGAZINE

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# HIMAL

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Vol 11 No 7 July 1998

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Buddha under the nuclear canopy.  
The Sakyamuni in Bhumisparsha Mudra  
(courtesy Patan Museum/Rupert Steiner)  
against the backdrop of a 1957 nuclear  
explosion over the Nevada Desert.



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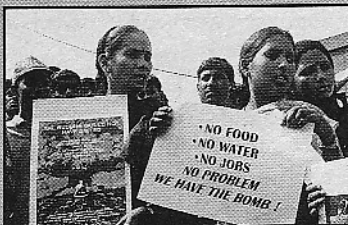
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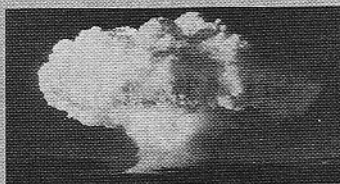
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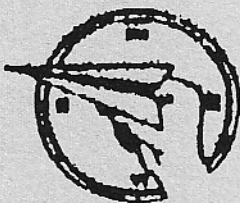
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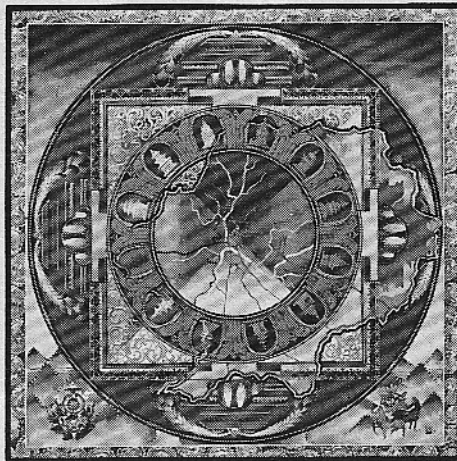
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## Writer's clarification

Having gone through Dipak Gyawali's comments (Mail, April 1998) on my article on large dams ("Large dams, larger issues", March 1998), even as I do not wish to demand space in HIMAL for an extended debate on this subject, I feel a few corrective/clarificatory remarks are called for.

(i) Gyawali classifies my article as one of two "coily pro-high-dam" write-ups. Coyness (which implies an unwillingness to say clearly what one has in mind) is not a quality that I admire or practise; I do not know where Gyawali found coyness in my article. I would request Gyawali to re-read my article as well as my review of Patrick McCully's *Silenced Rivers* in HIMAL ("The Prosecutor's Brief", December 1997) and ask himself whether "pro-high-dam" correctly describes my attitude. Perhaps he feels that anyone who does not declare himself to be anti-dam must necessarily be pro-dam. Incidentally, Gyawali may be surprised to know that in the water resources circles in India, many regard me as a renegade who has joined the anti-dam lobby! This is perhaps the price that I have to pay for trying to be scrupulously fair and receptive to arguments on both sides.

(ii) Gyawali says that I (a former "top water hureaucrat") am "undergoing a paradigm shift", and describes this as "praiseworthy". I thank him for that compliment, though it sounds slightly patronising. The implication is that someone who was on the wrong side earlier has now begun to see the light. Avoiding that fashionable and imprecise term "paradigm shift", let me merely say that my thinking has been slowly evolving. Even when I was Secretary Water Resources, I was aware of the issues and concerns relating to large dams, which had begun to be voiced. That awareness has become sharper over the years; hut even now, when confronted with the argument that the projected future water and

energy needs of a growing population render such large projects inescapable, I find it difficult to say "No" with confidence. I regard this as an unresolved controversy. I hope that we shall get a definitive pronouncement on this question in two years when the World Commission on Dams established by the World Bank and the IUCN completes its work and submits its report.

(iii) My questioning of Gyawali's use of the expression "Big Brother" in his review of *Converting Water into Wealth: Regional Cooperation in Harnessing the Eastern Himalayan Rivers* (HIMAL, Jul/Aug 1995), had nothing to do with what he describes as my "paradigm shift", nor was it a "knee-jerk reaction": it was a carefully considered objection. My point was that BUP (Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, Dhaka), IIDS (Institute for Integrated Development Studies, Kathmandu) and CPR (Centre for Policy Research, Delhi) were equal partners in the study and that there was no "Big Brother" or "Small Brother" among them. I stand by that statement. As for Gyawali's argument that by "Big Brother", he meant not India or CPR but the dominant point of view

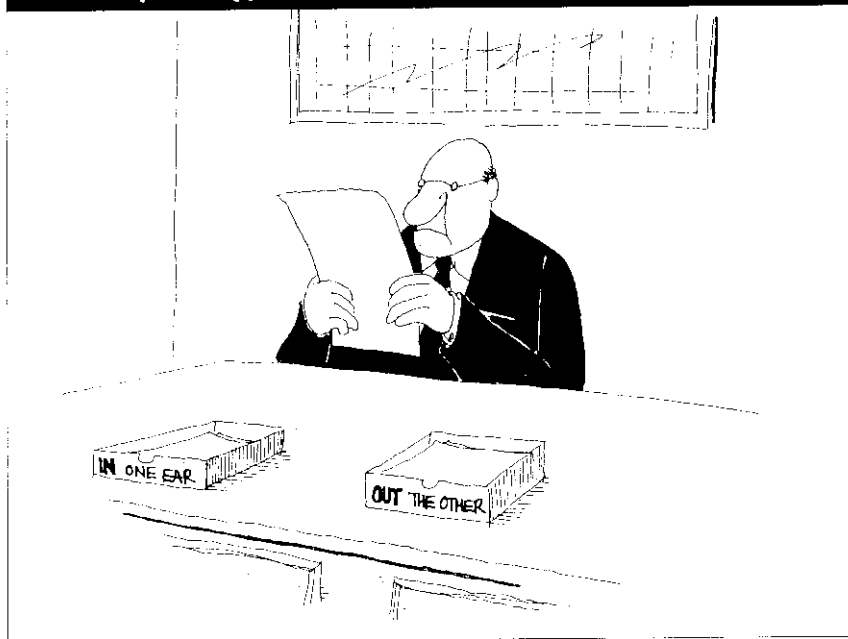
or the Establishment, and that there are Big Brothers in this sense in Nepal and Bangladesh as well, this seems to me a bit disingenuous – something of an afterthought. In his review the context does not support this interpretation.

(iv) Gyawali accuses me of ignoring an alleged act of censorship in the IIDS publication. The group as a whole (BUP/IIDS/CPR) had joint responsibility only for the consensus publication, *Converting Water into Wealth*. Each institution had full editorial responsibility for its own 'national' publication. I would leave it to the editors of the IIDS book, *Water Resources Development: Nepalese Perspectives*, to answer Gyawali's charge of suppression of 'alternative' points of view.

(v) I am not arguing against "passionate conviction". Anger at injustice and inequity are understandable. I would merely say that we should be conscious of the possibility that anger, however justified, has the potential for clouding and distorting our thinking.

(vi) Lastly, I disagree with Gyawali on the "political economy" question. At the heart of the big

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Ketaki Sheth  
*Inside Outside*

I stayed a week at the **Vajra**, by which time I had become so fond of it that I stayed another.

John Collee  
*The London Observer*



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dam debate lie questions of ways of living, relationship to nature and the role of science and technology. The political economy issues of equity, the incidence of costs to some and benefits to others, the operation of vested interests, collusion, etc. are undoubtedly important, but even if they are successfully resolved, the other and more basic questions will remain.

Ramaswamy R. Iyer  
New Delhi

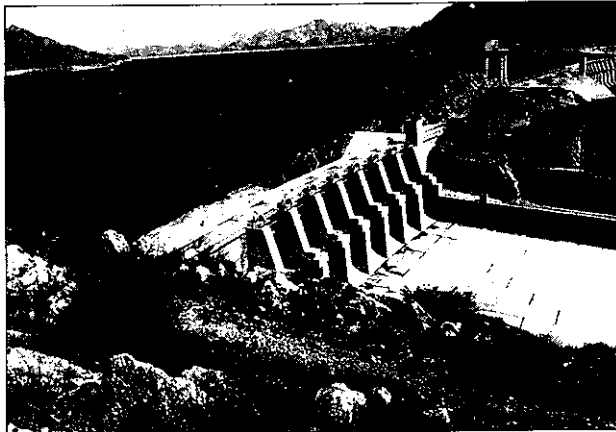
### Damn Kalabagh

Himal's scepticism about Kalabagh Dam ("A real dam in Pakistan", Follow-up, May 1998) is right on target. Proposals for the large-scale irrigation and power dam at Kalabagh evoke fierce opposition in most of Sindh and the North-Western Frontier Province, even as the idea receives strong support from some regions of Punjab and the establishment. A recent seminar of the Islamabad-based Society for Citizen's Rights offered much for reflection to proponents of the dam. We believe these discussions merit wider circulation, since issues of local injustice and inequity in "national development" dominate South Asia.

For us, a number of important lessons emerged from the presentations. First, the controversy surrounding Kalabagh is fundamental and wide-ranging: from the very need for any large-scale dam to the ability of effective mitigation and fair compensation for adverse environmental and social impacts. Second, opposition to the dam is both intensive and extensive, and is highly likely to come under international scrutiny. Third, information gaps remain an obstacle to informed debate and discussion, in part because of the very low credibility of government and its agencies, both federal and provincial.

Proponents of Kalabagh, as the

dam lobby usually does, paint a grim picture of unmet food and energy needs for a rapidly growing population (at around 3 percent). Some also argue that Kalabagh is essential to offset the silt-induced, rapid reduction in Tarbela Dam's capacity. There are a number of reasons why dissenters are unconvinced on the urgency of building Kalabagh. These include, first, the well-known fact of a substantial surplus of power capacity to continue in the near future. Second, no evidence has been presented to establish that unsubsidised costs of future hydel power will compare favourably to other sources of energy. Third, is the absence of systematic comparisons of the cost of Kalabagh water with



the cost of alternative ways of increasing deliveries of water in the irrigation system and of reducing waste in its use. And these can be very, very low as the economist Ayub Quth (to whom the Himal article referred) points out. Fourth, dam proponents ignore the fractional cost of providing additional storage at Tarbela through sedimentation removal techniques and raising the height of the reservoir. Fifth, if at all a hydel power project is to be commissioned, there are no apparently overriding reasons to reject the cheaper Basha Dam in favour of Kalabagh Dam. Finally, there is a curious fatalism about our population growth, despite the obvious success of our neighbours in addressing this issue. It can't be

Islam that is at fault since both Iran and Indonesia have population control programmes that put Pakistan to shame.

Discussions at the seminar clearly established the presence of contentious adverse impacts of Kalabagh. First, it remains doubtful whether water flows in the Indus are adequate to fill up the dam in most years, unless the existing Provincial Water Accord is violated or modified. Second, if fresh water flows below Kotri are reduced, the impact upon people who depend upon agriculture and fisheries in coastal Sindh is highly likely to be disastrous. Fudging of data by Water and Power Development Authority, and the refusal to undertake comprehensive, credible studies only add to the alarm.

Third, the people of upper Sindh are unlikely to be coerced by Islamabad to reduce water flows even further below what they already lose through blatant violations of the Water Accord. Fourth, when irrigation supplies increase, the cumulative impact upon the already high levels of water-logging and salinity in the Indus Basin could be severe. The National Drainage Programme will take many years to drain water from the basin to the sea, and even that is highly problematic in view of the likely opposition from coastal districts. No alternatives to draining the effluent into the sea have been explored.

Fifth, there are the well-known fears of people in areas of NWFP about an increased risk of devastation from floods. There are also fears of further water-logging and salinity in the areas surrounding the proposed reservoir. Proposed technical modifications are unconvincing to them. Sixth, is the issue of implementing fair compensation and satisfactory resettlement of the thousands of men, women and



children who will certainly lose houses and lands submerged by the dam. Major and continuing failures in the large water projects such as Tarbela, Ghazi-Barotha and Chotiari inspire little confidence in government.

The seminar also raised fundamental issues about funding construction of the Kalabagh Dam. First, there is little likelihood that government can find counterpart funds necessary to attract international aid in the near future. Whatever we may wish, neither the burden of debt servicing nor of defence is likely to disappear. Second, if private infrastructure funds are attracted to finance the dam at the usual high returns, it is doubtful whether the project remains financially or economically viable when all unavoidable adverse impacts are fully compensated and close to a hundred thousand persons resettled. Third, will we then have to submit to wholesale privatisation of the irrigation and drainage system, as proposed by the World Bank in the National Drainage Programme? Fourth, if the beneficiaries of the dam are highly localised, there appears to be no compelling reason to fund the dam through tax burdens on current and future generations of the entire nation.

The most important lesson of

the seminar is the urgent need for broad-based, public consultations on crucial issues of moral and legal rights to life and livelihood that surround claims to water. Any prior interventions by the state and its donors which affect historic claims to the Indus waters will be largely viewed as an arrogant and oppressive repudiation of such fundamental rights in a democratic federation of communities and citizens. Only in recognising this can we seriously begin work towards forging a national consensus on whether or not to build Kalabagh or any other dam. Meetings of the Council of Common Interests will remain a poor substitute for responsible and responsive governance.

The Kalabagh Dam project pits state versus communities, the Centre versus territories, and nation versus federation. When the Centre in Lahore and Islamabad defends the construction of Kalabagh with public resources of the federation, it can do so only on the basis of a socially abstract calculus of national development, and the ideology of a majoritarian state – which alone can propagate greater inequity and poverty among its peoples, devalue community rights over resources, and blatantly promote territorial expansion by the Centre.

Development carnivores are

joining the Punjab establishment in making Kalabagh the rallying cry for a crusade against unbelievers. These are ominous portents for Pakistan as a just, equitable, and democratic federation.

*Aly Ercelawn, Muhammad Nauman  
and Omar Asghar Khan  
Karachi and Abbottabad*

### Relevant non-nationalism

Our region is not just ridden with poverty of the masses but also of a positive outlook (on ourselves as well as our neighbours). Your non-nationalistic approach is even more relevant now than ever before.

*Mecnal Shrivastava  
Umtata (Transkei)*

### For your information...

To begin with I must say that your magazine has cheek, and its sentiments are well placed. However, I wish to correct an error in your April issue.

In the "Voices" section you quoted from the wonderful *The Friday Times*, or more specifically, the Ittefaq Nama column which regularly appears on the back page of the paper. To make it clear, Ittefaq is the name of the company that the Sharif family owns, and Nama means journal. It is a satirical diary about Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The initials "NS" that sign the Nama stand for Nawaz Sharif.

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Further, although no one really knows who writes these diaries, it is believed that the writer is no one other than the paper's Publisher Jugnoo Mohsin (who is the wife of Najam Sethi, the editor).

Also, the back page of *The Friday Times* is usually reserved for satire and political gossip. The satire usually includes parodies or sarcastic diaries about prominent movers and shakers like President Rafique Tarar, Imran Khan, Army Chief Gen Karamat and those of the kind. These diaries are brilliant as they incorporate the individual quirks of each of these personalities. Just thought I'd clarify matters.

*Ahmad Rafay Alam*  
*School of Oriental and African Studies, London*

#### **Make it cheap**

Your April 1998 cover stories on Native Computers made interesting reading, raising several pertinent issues about how and whether computer use can become widespread in South Asia. I have little argument with any of them.

But as a dabbler in computers myself, I thought none of your writers touched on one issue in particular: the price of computer hardware. Here are some thoughts on it.

Harsh Kumar (in "Local Language vs purchasing power") does say that "small-time shopkeepers" in most towns in India have the purchasing power today to buy computers. I don't doubt that, but I suspect that for the benefits of computers and the Internet – there are some benefits, I assure you! – to truly spread, the costs of computers will have to come down significantly.

Today, you can get a Pentium-based PC with a grab-bag of goodies for something like INR 40,000. As

always with hardware, the same amount of money would have bought you a less powerful machine six months ago, and if you wait another six months, you'll get another quantum leap in bang for the same buck. The advances in technology produce the illusion that computers are always becoming cheaper.

But 40,000 rupees is still a lot of money. A perfectly adequate machine for most people's needs can be built for far less money: INR 10,000, let's say. That's the direction computer manufacturers will have to take some day, if they truly want the vast numbers in South Asia to take to computers.

The point is that for most DTP/accounting/word processor uses, for using email and the Internet, you really don't need Pentium power, Windows 95, the latest Microsoft Office suite, 32-X CD-ROM drive, 2.1 GB hard disk drive, 32MB of Ram, all that. You can do all those perfectly well with a 386 or 486, with Windows 3.1, with 2MB RAM and perhaps an 80MB hard disk.

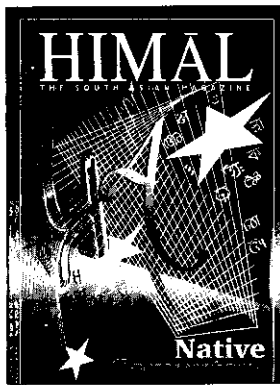
Such a computer can certainly be assembled for less than INR 10,000 today.

Vendors will laugh at those features, calling them obsolete. But they shouldn't. Inexpensive machines, used by lots of ordinary people for serious purposes, is the way to spread the word about comput-

ers. A certain Steve Jobs at Apple Computer was the first one to have had that thought and learnt that lesson, in the late '70s.

The real promise of the computer revolution, it seems to me, is not the glamour of the Web, the power of fancy multimedia CD-ROMs and so forth. It is instead in the chance that many millions can have access to information cheaply.

*Dilip D'Souza*  
*Bombay*



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SOUTH ASIA

# THE INDO-PAK BOMB

FUNNILY ENOUGH, THE India/Pakistan nuclear tests of May 1998 were triggered by a Tamil lady from India's south. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, humiliated by a mere 13 days in office the first time around exactly two years earlier, was unwilling to lead his party through another ignominious early ouster. And so when the querulous partners in his shaky coalition, most importantly J. Jayalalitha of the AIADMK, threatened to pull out of the BJP-led government, Vajpayee went nuclear.

It was as simple as that. The resulting nationalist wave would sustain the government a few months longer. A political party's short-term interest had decided national policy with grave regional and international fallout.

After India tested, Pakistan tested. Two countries, made essentially of the same people sharing the same history and sensibility, having land borders and adjacent population centres, now make plans to cap their missiles with nuclear tips. They contemplate atomic war. What was unthinkable in April became hard reality over the course of May.

Pakistan had it easy in explaining its own tests – it was only responding to India's. It was India that had to resort to unconvincing *ex post facto* justifications, such as the sudden emergence of a 'China threat'. As for the unfairness of the international non-proliferation regime, why did India alone among the 180-odd non-nuclear weapon states feel that it had to make the point? Nuclear hegemonism could have been fought by making common cause with other powerhouses of the South, from Brazil to Indonesia.

At the United Nations and elsewhere, India has long reserved for itself the high moral ground, armed with reference to Gandhi, Nehru, Tagore, Ashoka and Buddha. Today, India speaks the language of power and machismo. But has this buttressed its own security? Whereas earlier India was one ahead within the Subcontinent, with Pokhran I, now Islamabad stands shoulder-to-shoulder at the doors of a South Asian Armageddon. India seems to have hurt its own security by goading the overt nuclearisation of Pakistan, a much more unstable state than itself, with fewer failsafe mechanisms in its polity.

The Indian and Pakistani public's so-called support for the blasts, based on superficial

polling, does not persuade. What does 'support' mean when it comes from a public unaware of death in a massive fireball, the impact of economic sanctions, or the inevitable crowding out of the social sector? In a Subcontinent where leaders are not even bothered to devise a nuclear doctrine before they go about exploding devices, how can one take the 'opinion' of the 'public' seriously?

Let us also note that the television cameras which focused on people stuffing *laddoos* in Delhi and Rawalpindi streets did *not* show the hundreds of millions who were not distributing sweets. Even among the middle class, the idea is sinking in after the initial elation of nuclear ejaculation, that the Subcontinent is suddenly vulnerable. A conflagration is much more likely here, today, than ever was during the tactical rivalry of the Cold War or in China's low-intensity animosities. Pinch yourself and dare to accept that there is a *real* possibility of a nuclear war in South Asia. Just as 'Hiroshima' and 'Nagasaki' mean more than just names of cities today, so could 'Kanpur', 'Multan' or 'Ahmedabad' tomorrow.

But do not say this to the analysts who speak with such self-assurance of "mutually assured destruction". After decades of waiting on the wings while the Western doctrinal gurus pontificated, these South Asians have gone quite MAD. On both sides of the Wagah/Attari divide, they are delirious with newfound importance. But then they represent the same demographic slice as those who ordered the tests. The India/Pakistan bomb, one may say, is but part of a single programme of the political elite on both sides to keep the entire Subcontinental populace at bay.

Some misguided young hijackers sought to make the point when they took a Pakistani airplane off its route – that the tests then being contemplated by Islamabad did not have the support of the Baloch. In the same vein, we do wonder how much the Rajasthan tests speak for the Indian Northeast or the Deccan aboriginals, the Muslim poor or the Hindu poor. Does even the Indian South support Pokhran II with the same vehemence as New Delhi's charmed circle? And what of Nepalis and Bangladeshis who stand in the direct line of fallout when a India/Pakistan bomb goes off in the Indus-Ganga-Brahmaputra basin?

If anything is to be salvaged from Pokhran and Chagai, perhaps it is a region-wide movement to wrest the initiative away from the 'defence analysts' and into the hands of the economists, environmentalists and social-scientists among whom 'peace' is not a dirty word. It is 'war' that is obscene, especially when laced with radioactivity.

THIS ISSUE OF HIMAL IS A COMPENDIUM OF THE MOST COMPELLING WRITINGS AGAINST THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN THE SUBCONTINENT TO COME OUT SINCE THE BLASTS IN CHAGAI AND POKHRAN. WE DID NOT FEEL A NEED TO PRESENT THE PRO-NUKE ARGUMENTS FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT WE DO NOT AGREE WITH THEM.



Fortunately, times have changed enough that one can fight the nuclear agenda without being tarred 'anti-national'. Rational and considerate Indians and Pakistanis have raised their voice and staked a claim on the mainstream discourse. This has been the beneficial fallout of the blasts, and the anti-nuclear message should now be taken beyond the liberal confines of the English literati to the larger Hindi- and Urdu-reading public. Everyone should know that after the euphoria of going nuclear, all you are left with is radioactive earth.

pute the number of schools, hospitals and other such monuments for welfarism that could have been built with the money exploded at Pokhran." Said *The Indian Express* front page edit, "This is the end of ambiguity – and hypocrisy...This is a time for popular euphoria and celebration." *The Hindustan Times* called its front pager "A Moment of Pride" and asserted: "The smiling Buddha of 1974 has now blossomed into a new assertion of the country's right to arm itself in a manner which it believes is best suited to its security interests."

Only *The Times of India* sounded a note of caution. "The maelstrom of destruction which lies at the point of a nuclear impact is called ground zero: today India represents this epicentre which will inevitably send shock waves throughout the region and the world beyond. More than a demonstration of India's enhanced nuclear capability, the tests represent a political statement by New Delhi under the saffron flag. Unfortunately, it is not clear to what extent the Vajpayee government has thought through the strategic implications of its decision." But this was in the inside pages; the front page reportage about the explosions was gung-ho and upheav.

Little wonder that the political and intellectual class that takes its cues from the English press was very wary of coming out with adverse statements in a situation where

they could sound "unpatriotic". Only a handful of journalists, known opponents of the bomb like Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, wrote strongly against it and for their effort received a number of threatening calls.

All political parties, save the Left, hailed the "scientific achievement" the tests represented. Some even tried to take credit: the Congress and the United Front governments claimed that the nuclear programme was encouraged under their respective regimes which was why it could come to fruition on 11 May. On the

other hand, the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) said they would study the implications before making a statement, while the Forward Bloc condemned the tests outright as "a waste intended to divert the country's attention".

Anti-nuclear placards at Delhi protest.



## INDIA

# CRITICAL MASS

**THE HEAT WAVE** had the country in its grip. The usual problems of no water and no electricity were attendant. Fifty years into independence and every Indian knows that even the most basic amenities are still a pipe dream. Then, on 11 May, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee summoned the press corps, strode on to a flag-festooned podium and proudly announced that the country now had the Bomb.

The momentous announcement was initially met with stunned silence and then, prompted by much chest-thumping bravado from the Sangh Parivar, the beleaguered population found a cause for celebration. (Astonishingly, while the rest of the world and the country knew nothing of the impending explosions, the RSS mouthpiece, *The Organiser*, came up with an issue devoted to commemorating the 1974 blast in Pokhran and talk of nuclear testing, hang on the day the tests were conducted.) The celebratory mood was also encouraged by the elite media. A front page editorial in *The Pioneer* titled "Explosion of Self Esteem" said: "India's battle to regain self-esteem, both internal and external, is several steps closer to a victorious conclusion thanks to the government's aplomb."

As for opponents of the bomb, the paper was derisive: "The proponents of butter over guns will take out their calculators to com-

What fuelled the jingoistic fervour was the threat of sanctions and condemnation from the rest of the world. That these came from a set of countries determined to maintain their own nuclear stockpiles only added to the feeling of righteous anger. Beset with all manner of internal ills, it appeared attractive and macho to take on the rest of the world even as military and strategic analysts toted out arguments about why the security environment had necessitated the tests.

Then, two days after the first tests, the earth shook again and the series of five tests was completed. But this time around, all the leading dailies, even as they supported the tests, also sounded warnings and advised caution in dealing with global opprobrium and sanctions. And the editorial pages did carry opposing viewpoints. Many began questioning the need to go nuclear just when India was building bridges with China and trying to establish diplomatic rapport with Pakistan.

On 16 May, 45 mass organisations, including NGOs working in the field of development, human rights, peace, environment and with women formed "The Movement Against Nuclear Weapons" (MANW). They said they represented a silent majority whose sentiments were not considered while going in for

nuclearisation. "National pride does not come by becoming a member of the big nuclear club but by getting out of the club of 10 least socially developed countries," said Nityanand Jayaraman of Greenpeace International. They marched through busy thoroughfares of the capital city to register their protest. Buddhists joined in the protest, asserting that they felt insulted because India had conducted nuclear tests on the birth anniversary of Lord Buddha, "a day of peace when we pray for the end of hatred and violence". They organised a sit-in at Rajghat, the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi. But the BJP government was not listening. On the same day, celebrations were declared throughout the country during which the BJP organised a series of functions attended by top leaders and party functionaries. Crackers were hurst and candles lit. They vowed to build a temple dedicated to the Goddess Shakti at the site of the explosions.

On 18 May, former Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral gave an interview to *The Indian Express* saying his government too had the nuclear option before it, but they chose not to go for the bomb. "In my balance sheet, economic development was most important. Arms and ammunition alone do not make a country strong. Otherwise, North Korea would have been a power today and the Soviet Union would not have collapsed," he said.

Initially, business and industry shrugged off threats of sanctions, saying that they would not really affect the economy as India was too big and quite self-sufficient. But slowly analysts began to see the difficulties ahead and realised that the sanctions would pinch.

On 20 May, Prime Minister Vajpayec visited Pokhran with a large entourage of prominent political leaders. They flashed "V" signs and the prime minister addressed the assembled gathering. But local villagers boycotted his meeting, saying they were suffering from after effects of the explosions. They complained of burning eyes, bleeding noses and respiratory problems. Scientists asserted there had been no radioactive fallout.

In Bangalore the same day, the Centre for Education and Documentation (CED) held a meeting to condemn the tests, but unfortunately, it was disrupted by the Hindutva brigade.

Two days later, Calcutta-based scientists, intellectuals and human rights groups wrote to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India asking him to stay "any further nuclear explosion by the Government of India". The letter said the government had acted in a manner which was "absolutely against the people's fundamental rights to life and personal lib-

**The triple test at Pokhran ends three decades of nuclear debate, self-denial and fence-sitting. Several times in recent years Indian leadership - irrespective of party affiliations in an era of shifting coalitions - came close to taking the plunge. It is just as well now that this momentous step has been taken by leaders who have always believed in unabashed and unambiguous nuclearisation. More reassuring, even for those who have been arguing for restraint and ambiguity, is the fact that these leaders also enjoy an impeccable reputation in terms of personal integrity and national commitments. It is, therefore, reasonable to presume that they have chosen to make so bold a departure from the past after a great deal of deliberation as to what is best for India's interests. The scientific wherewithal has been there for several years now. The only thing that lacked was the trigger device of political will and the kind of supreme conviction that enables leaders to move away from the familiar, well-trodden path and thereby find themselves a place in history....**

This is a time for popular euphoria and celebration. And celebrate we must as this success demonstrates to the world a remarkable scientific capability built during a quarter century of international technology transfer restrictions.

*(Shekhar Gupta in "A moment of pride", editorial in The Indian Express, 12 May 1998)*



erty guaranteed by the Constitution”.

On 23 May, several top Indian scientists issued a strongly-worded statement condemning the nuclear tests. They belonged to elite scientific institutions of the country. The statement, echoing the beginning of a movement, was circulated through e-mail and is now posted at its own web-site where several scientists working in India and abroad have signed to register their protest. The statement says: “The horrors of a nuclear war cannot be forgotten...can we feel happy and secure in a situation which every country feels proud of its nuclear weapons capability and is convinced of the deterrence tactic?”

But even as anti-nuclear sentiments were coalescing, Ashok Singhal, president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, called the nuclear tests an “empbatic assertion” of Hindu pride and said he favoured a constitutional amendment to make India a Hindu state. He said the movement for the construction of a Ram Temple at Ayodhya and the recent nuclear explosions had a common theme: “Both were aimed at awakening the Hindu pride.”

The pro-bomb lobby was increasingly hijacked by the forces of Hindutva until ultimately Prime Minister Vajpayee was compelled to call a halt to partisan celebrations.

On 26 May, Congress President Sonia Gandhi finally came out openly against the nuclear tests. The opposition at last got its act together and lambasted the government in Parliament for going in for the tests without seeking a national consensus. The government appeared completely on the defensive and the opposition felt the tests could worsen rather than improve the security situation.

The 28 May Pakistan tests proved just how accurate they were. But the government was pleased and said their own testing was now justified. Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani made a strong speech condemning the Pakistanis and warning them of dire consequences if they planned any misadventures against India.

Belligerent voices began to be heard from both sides of the border, causing more and more people to consider the security implications. Activists gathered on 29 May to stand around a busy Delhi traffic intersection with placards protesting nuclear bombs. “*Na Hindustan rahega, na Pakistan rahega. Ab to sirf Kabristan Rahega*” (Neither India, nor Pakistan will remain. What will remain is a graveyard) read one.

These activists then got together to form MIND, or the Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament, and have been meeting every

Friday for demonstrations. Their preamble reads: “There was a national consensus in favour of elimination of all nuclear weapons; there was a national consensus that in the absence of any tangible movement towards global disarmament, India must keep its nuclear option open. This consensus has now been breached in the pursuit of narrow political ends and in the name of a fake national consensus supporting nuclear weapons that is now belied in Parliament and in the streets. The Indian government’s dangerous move has now brought forth a similar Pakistani response which also needs to be condemned.”

*-Mitu Varma*

## PAKISTAN

# CHAIN REACTION

**AFTER THE FIRST** shell-shocked moment following news of India’s nuclear tests, a heated debate began in Pakistan on whether or not there would or should be a ‘retaliation’ by the Sharif government. The pressure to test began mounting on Sharif with each passing day – fuelled immeasurably by a belligerent BJP-led government’s threats on Kashmir. The honour of the nation appeared to be at stake, at least as claimed by politicians and the pro-bomb lobby. Some pro-bomb demonstrations were held by religious parties. “O enemy, which nation have you taken on!” proclaimed one banner at one such demonstration staged by the right-wing religious party Shabab-e-Milli in Lahore soon after India’s second set of tests.

The country’s major political parties were not far behind in calling for Pakistan’s own tests. Sensing the public mood, they urged a “befitting response to India”.

Pro-test articles also appeared in the print media, but equal space was given to both pro- and anti-testing writers and analysts by most English-language newspapers, particularly *Dawn* and *The News*, while *The Nation* reflected mainly pro-bomb views.

Writing in *Dawn*, Karachi-based political analyst Kunwar Idris, a widely respected former bureaucrat, termed the advice to test as “jingoistic, emotional or selfish, but not sincere”. It was being offered, he pointed out, by an opposition leader “who is fighting for her political survival”, by “politicians lost in the political labyrinth”, by “retired generals with political ambitions but no programme”, and “demagogues who will not suffer its consequences”.

"The sanctions will be much more biting for Pakistan, if it explodes the device," warned economic analyst Imtiaz Alam in *The News on Sunday*. "Apart from a debt of USD 32 billion, we need an annual foreign investment and aid of USD 5 billion. Our total revenues are insufficient to meet expenditure on defence and internal debt. In the absence of a rent economy, such as oil, there will be nothing to survive on."

Defence analyst Ejaz Haider also urged a cool-headed, "proactive rather than a reactive" role from the Sharif government. "As a recognised threshold nuclear power state with demonstrated missile capabilities, Pakistan's security can be reasonably assured without testing a nuclear device," he wrote in the weekly *The Friday Times*.

Many analysts also pointed out that this was the right time to gain a moral edge over India, which has traditionally enjoyed a better image world-wide. Random interviews by newspaper reporters and a telephone survey based on people calling in to *The News* indicated "an overwhelming concern for Pakistan not to retaliate" by conducting its own test.

The results of this survey, undertaken in Lahore, Islamabad and its twin city, the former garrison town of Rawalpindi, published on 18 May, showed that of the hundreds who had dialled in to record their responses, a large number thought that Pakistan should take "advantage of this golden opportunity to have its debt written off" while an almost equal number believed that "the country should not bow down under international pressure and should demonstrate its own abilities".

Pro-bomb hardliners were in no mood to listen to voices of reason, however. "*Pakistan ka bacha bacha atom bomb hai*," intoned an activist of a religious party – "Each Pakistani child is an atom bomb".

Anwar, a paanwalla, echoed this sentiment. "We have been saying we have the bomb so we should just drop it on India. Why bother to test it first?"

Asked how the country would cope with the sanctions certain to be imposed in such an eventuality, he retorted: "If our leaders can get away without paying loans worth billions of rupees, we should do the same with the US and other countries. Who is going to catch us?"

Opinion in the Urdu press was overwhelmingly pro-testing. Certainly, there were exceptions, like the left-leaning Zahida Hina, columnist for *Jang*, arguably Pakistan's most powerful newspaper, and, surprisingly, also the influential conservative writer Mujibur Rehman Shami, also a *Jang* columnist, who

wrote several pieces advising the government not to act hastily as the consequences could cost the country dearly.

The government seemed to be listening. "We want to act responsibly and not blindly follow the Indian path," Sharif told reporters in Islamabad on 16 May – but did not rule out the possibility of such a test in the future.

"Ours is a mature nation," asserted Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed at a press briefing the same day. "We can't act in madness as India did in the past and particularly now." But he too, reiterated that the government was keeping its options open, given the "immediate danger posed to the country's security".

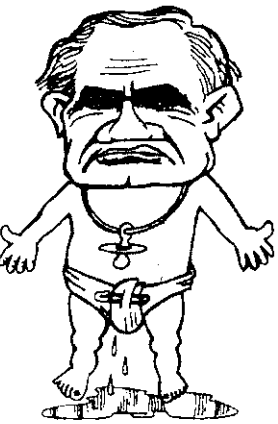
It was this danger that set back Pakistan's anti-bomb lobby. Although some bravely stuck to their position of calling for a unilateral renunciation of the nuclear option by Pakistan, others only called for restraint.

But analyses from London and Washington, reported by the local press, indicated that the government's "measured response" and assertions of being "responsible" notwithstanding, Islamabad was already making preparations for an underground nuclear test. It was obvious that political factors, rather than a mature long-term policy, were behind Sharif's decision. As he told President Clinton over the telephone, he would not survive for long if he did not test.

An equally important factor behind the decision was the slap on the wrist India received from an 'indignant' world. It became clear, as political analyst M.A. Niazi commented, looking back at events in an article in *The Nation* of 21 June, that the "Western powers were not going to attempt to crush India and its aspirations. They were also not going to offer Pakistan all that much to desist from following the nuclear path."

The tension ended with a bang on 28 May. Pictures of jubilant Pakistanis distributing sweets were duly flashed in the national and international media, mirroring the response to the bomb in India two-and-a-half weeks earlier. All those who had been arguing, for strategic reasons, that Pakistan should not detonate its nuclear devices yet, were effectively silenced by the blasts. As the afore-mentioned *Jang* columnist Mujibur Rehman Shami put it, things changed after 28 May. "It is a closed issue for me. Once the tests were conducted, it became our duty as Pakistanis not to question them, or create further problems or rifts," he told HIMAL, when asked why he didn't write more articles on the issue afterwards.

The government press, both radio and tele-



The Urdu daily Nawa-e-Waqt of 30 May showed A.B. Vajpayee wetting his diapers upon hearing of the Pakistani tests.



vision, reacted similarly. Prior to the Pakistan tests, discussions on the issue were being held in these media and views that questioned the sagacity of tests were allowed on air. But that ended after 28 May, and the Emergency; no criticism of the tests were broadcast after that.

Most opinion-makers seem aware of the horrifying potentials of a nuclear war. But it was left to the progressives among them to highlight the issue even as they were accused of being traitors to the nation. They pushed for a de-escalation of the tension that has been dangerously fuelled by militant statements from politicians on both sides of the border, and which had been duly circulated by the independent as well as the government media.

Strategists like Imtiaz Bokhari and Inayatullah warned through newspaper columns that nuclear deterrence is a myth, pointing out that possession of nuclear arms by Pakistan and India is very different from the nuclear-armed status of the USA and the former USSR.

Zahida Hina, the columnist for *Jang*, argued forcefully for the two governments to sit down and reflect seriously on the real issues their countries face. "It is their responsibility," she wrote, "to try and stop this dangerous race. Those billions of rupees which they spend on buying and building weapons should be used only to improve the situation of their people, and to search for a way that leads to development instead of suicide."

Her voice against nuclear proliferation in *Jang* was joined in Lahore by journalist Imtiaz Alam in his own articles in the same newspaper. Like Hina, his pre-test columns made the case for Pakistan not to follow India along the nuclear path, and continued along the same line in the post-test period. "The feedback," says Alam, who was until recently a writer in English, "has been tremendous, far more than I have ever had in my years in the English press. I've received literally hundreds of letters and phone calls in response." Most, he says, have been supportive of his point of view, and have congratulated him for sticking to this apparently unpopular stand. But, predictably, some writers and callers have also been hostile or downright abusive.

On the whole, however, writings in *Jang*, a paper generally perceived to be conservative, have overwhelmingly been aggressive, first urging the prime minister to respond to India's tests in kind, and then congratulating him for doing so. The slogan "Now or never" was, in fact, coined by Asadullah Ghalib, who is in charge of the editorial pages of *Jang's*

**Nations confronted with a hostile adversary, in the ultimate analysis, put their security above all other considerations. And that is what Pakistan's leaders correctly decided, after much thought, deliberation and reflection. And also after evaluating the international community's reaction to India's nuclear brinkmanship. Sadly the international community has never cared to draw a distinction between the country that initiated the nuclear arms race in the Subcontinent and the country which simply had to respond to safeguard its security. Nor does this community distinguish between a status-driven nuclear programme and a security-driven one. From this international blindness to sub-continental realities, Pakistani leaders could draw only one conclusion: Pakistan's security cannot be assured by anyone else, but itself. That is the lesson also of our history as well as the lesson of the post-Cold War era. Pakistan therefore took the only option available – declaring itself as a nuclear power by conducting five nuclear tests whose seismic aftershocks will reverberate for some time to come.**

*(Editorial in The News, 30 May 1998)*

Lahore office. But at the same time, Ghalib also wrote that dissenting points of view should be listened to and not opposed with violence.

The "post-test" period has also been characterised by political uncertainty. The declaration of Emergency on the night of 28 May was unanimously condemned by all political parties even those that had backed Sharif's decision to test. Hard on its heels, while announcing his National Agenda, Sharif threw another bombshell at the nation, tossing off in a single sentence his decision to go ahead with the construction of the Kalabagh Dam, an issue that has been termed by analysts as the most divisive politically, and one which poses a threat to the integrity of the federation of Pakistan itself.

It is these issues which have been taken up by groups like the Advocacy and Development Network in Islamabad, and the Joint Action Committee for People's Rights in Lahore. At a peace rally organised by the latter in Lahore on 19 June, Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Asma Jahangir spoke out against the politics of fanaticism. "We challenge the premise that 90 percent of the people want war or nuclear weapons," she declared. "Voices have been silenced, and the fanaticism is endangering the entire South Asian region."

*-Beena Sarwar*

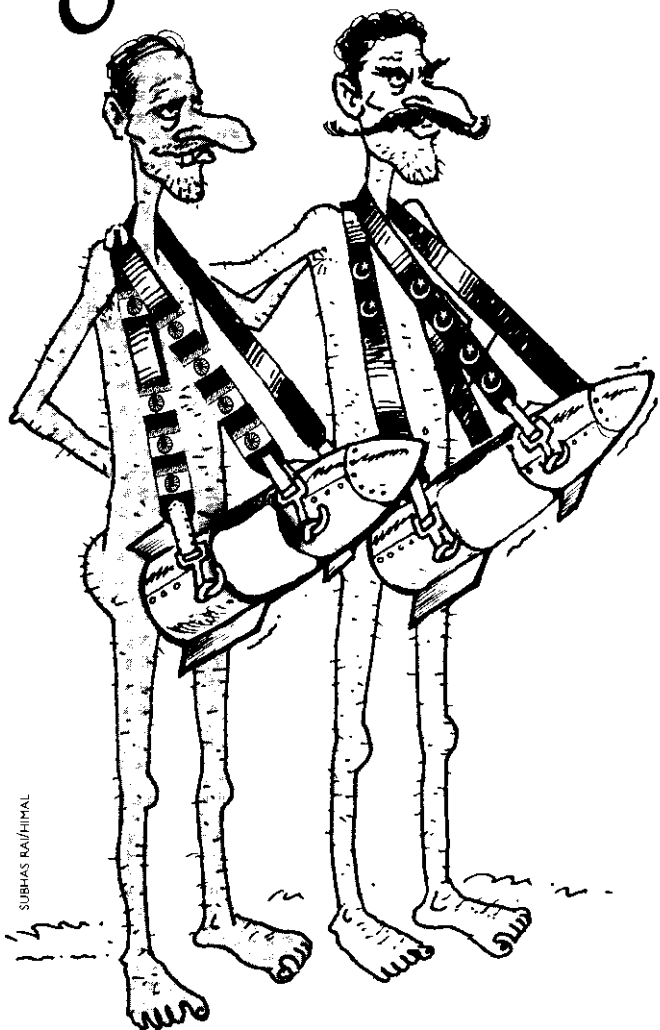
# Nuclearism, genocidal men

by Ashis Nandy

Nuclearism is the ideology of nuclear weaponry and nuclear arms-based security. It is the most depraved, shameless, and costly pornography of our times. Such an ideology cannot be judged only by the canons of international relations, geopolitics, political sociology, or ethics. It is also a well-known, identifiable, psychopathological syndrome. The following is a brief introduction to its clinical picture, epidemiology, and prognosis.

Nuclearism does not reside in institutions, though it may set up, symbolise, or find expression in social and political institutions. It is an individual pathology and has clear identifiers. Many years ago, Brian Isley argued in his book, *Fathering the Unthinkable*, that nuclearism went with strong masculinity strivings. Isley was no psychologist, but the works of Carol Cohn's and others have endorsed the broad contours of Isley's analysis. They show that not only the language and ideology, but the entire culture of nuclear weaponry is infiltrated by hard, masculine imageries and those participating in that culture usually suffer from deep fears of emasculation or impotency. Indeed, that is the reason they participate in that culture with enthusiasm.

Such masculinity strivings or drive for potency usually goes with various forms of authoritarianism. Even people ideologically committed to democratic governance may vicariously participate in subtler forms of authoritarianism asso-



ciated with nuclearism. There is support for this relationship outside psychology, too. Robert Jungk's work on the nuclear state shows that secrecy, security, surveillance, and police state methods invariably accompany the nuclear establishment in every country. In that sense, the culture of nuclearism is one of the true "universals" of our time. Like Coca-Cola and blue jeans, it does not permit cultural adaptation or edited versions. It is the same in Paris and Pokhran, Lahore and Los Alamos.

Nuclearism is framed by the genocidal mentality. Eric Markusen and Robert J. Lifton have systematically studied the links. In their book, *The Genocidal Mentality*, Markusen and Lifton make a comparative study of the psychology of mass murderers, in Nazi Germany, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and among the ideologues of nuclearism today and find remarkable continuities.

In the genocidal person there is, first of all, a state of mind called "psychic numbing" – a "diminished capacity or in-



# ality and psychic numbing

clination to feel – and a general sense of meaninglessness”. One so numbs one’s sensitivities that normal emotions and moral considerations cannot penetrate one any more. Numbing “closes off” a person and leads to a “constriction of self process”. To him or her, the death or the possibility of the death of millions begins to look like an abstract, bureaucratic detail, involving the calculation of military gains or losses, geopolitics or mere statistics. Such numbing can be considered to be the final culmination of the separation of affect and cognition – that is, feelings and thinking – that the European Enlightenment sanctioned and celebrated as the first step towards greater objectivity and scientific rationality.

The genocidal mentality also tends to create an area protected from public responsibility or democratic accountability. Usually such responsibility is avoided by re-conceptualising oneself as only a cog in the wheel, advancing one’s own bureaucratic or scientific career like everybody else, by taking and obeying orders from superior authorities faithfully, mechanically, and without thinking about the moral implications of the orders. The Nazi war criminals tried at Nuremberg at the end of World War II all ventured the defence that they were under orders to kill innocent people, including women, children and the elderly, and could do nothing about it.

The other way of avoiding

accountability is to remove it from individuals and vest it in institutions and aggregates. As if institutions by themselves could run a death machine without the intervention of individuals! After a while, even terms like the military-industrial complex, fascism, imperialism, Stalinism, ruling class, or American hegemony become ways of freeing the actual, real-life persons from their culpability for recommending, ordering, or committing mass murders. In a society where genocidal mentality spreads, intellectuals also find such impersonal analyses soothing; they contribute to the creation of a business-as-usual ambience in which institutions are ritually blamed and the psychopathic scientists, bureaucrats and politicians who work towards genocides move around scotfree.

In acute cases, the genocidal mentality turns into necrophilia, a clinical state in which the patient is in love with death. Indeed, he or she wants to sleep with the dead, in fantasy and, in extreme cases, in life. Saadat Hassan Manto’s famous story, “Cold Meat” or “Thanda Gosht” is, unknown to the author, the story of an ‘ordinary’ murderer and rapist who, while trying to satiate his sexual greed during a communal conflict, confronts his own with necrophilia and is devastated by that. Those interested in more authoritative case studies can look up Erich Fromm’s *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*.

Nuclearism does not remain

confined to the nuclear establishment or the nuclear community. It introduces other psychopathologies in a society. For instance, as it seeps into public consciousness, it creates a new awareness of the transience of life. It forces people to live with the constant fear that, one day, a sudden war or accident might kill not only them, but also their children and grandchildren, and everybody they love. This awareness gradually creates a sense of the hollowness of life. For many, life is denuded of substantive meaning. The psychological numbing I have mentioned completes the picture. While the ordinary citizen leads an apparently normal life, he or she is constantly aware of the transience of such life and the risk of mega-death for the entire society. Often this finds expression in unnecessary or inexplicable violence in social life or in a more general, high state of anxiety and a variety of psychosomatic ailments. In other words, nuclearism begins to brutalise ordinary people and vitiates everyday life.

Studies by the likes of William Beardslee, J.E. Mach and Eleonora Masini show that these traits express themselves even in adolescents and children. Even children barely eight or 10 years old begin to live in what they consider to be a world without a future; they are fearful and anxious about their life, but unable to express that fear and anxiety directly, because in a nuclearised society the fear of nuclear death is made to look like an abnormal psy-

*There has been so much testosterone pumping around in the old men who are running the country that you’d think you were in a school backyard watching an inter-house football match. Pakistan always had a machismo problem: now our leadership has fallen prey to the oldest schoolboy fantasy. We have a big one, we’re being told. (Tarun J. Tejpal, “Delhi Diary”. Outlook, 8 June 1998)*



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personal world, and unable to love. The mindless violence such a personality anticipates or plans is a pathetic attempt to fight these inner feelings of emptiness, and the suspicion and the fear that one's moral self might already be dead within. You father the unthinkable because you have already psychologically orphaned yourself. You make contingency plans to kill millions because you fear that your innermost core has already been cauterised against all normal feelings and human rela-

choneurotic state.

Many neurotics and psychotics at first look like charming eccentrics. To start with, nuclearism may appear a smart game and the partisans of nuclear weaponry may look like normal politicians, scholars, or defence experts. After all, the Nazi killers, too, were usually loving fathers, connoisseurs of good music, and honest citizens. However, beneath the facade lies a personality that is insecure, doubtful about one's masculinity, fearful of the inter-

tions. Acquiring the power to inflict death on millions, and by living with the fantasy of that power, you pathetically try to get some confirmation that you are still alive. However, that confirmation never comes. For in the process of acquiring that power, you may not be dead physically, but you are already dead morally, socially and psychologically.

*A. Nandy is a well-known psychologist and writer based in Delhi.*

## The Pain of Hiroshima\*

by Atal Behari Vajpayee



Some nights  
my sleep is suddenly disturbed,  
my eyes open,  
and I think that  
those scientists who invented  
atomic weapons:  
When they heard the news of,  
the terrible genocide of Hiroshima-Nagasaki,  
how did they sleep at night?

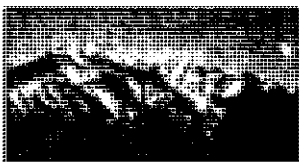
A speck in the teeth,  
a mote in the eyes,  
a thorn stuck in the feet,  
take the sleep from my eyes,  
my peace of mind.

The death of a relative,  
the demise of a loved one,  
the passing of an acquaintance,  
in fact even the parting of a pet animal,  
fill the heart with such pain, such sorrow that,  
sleep does not come, even on trying.  
From side to side, turning all night.

But the inventors  
of that ultimate weapon  
which, on the dark night of the Sixth of August, Nineteen Forty-Five,  
danced the dance of death in Hiroshima-Nagasaki  
and took the sacrifice of over two hundred thousand people,  
crippled thousands of people for life.

Did they, for a second even,  
get the feeling that what they had done  
was not right?  
If so, then time will not put them in the dock,  
but if not then history will never  
forgive them.

\*"Hiroshima ki Peedha", from *Meri Ikyaan Kavitein* (My 51 Poems) by Atal Behari Vajpayee, Kitab Ghar, New Delhi, 1995. Translated by Amitabha Bagchi.



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# When mountains die they turn white

by Eqbal Ahmad

DAWN, KARACHI, 4 JUNE 1998

I saw on television a picture more awesome than the familiar mushroom cloud of nuclear explosion. The mountain had turned white. I wondered how much pain had been felt by nature, God's most wondrous creation. The great mountain in Chagai will turn in time to solid ash! And we, who are so proud of our mountains?

India's mindless right-wing leaders who started it all and then proceeded to goad Pakistan into baring its nuclear capabilities may never acknowledge that they have committed a crime against India and its neighbours, and that not one good – strategic or tactical, political or economic – can accrue from their blunder. An Indian scientist, Vinod Mubayi, rightly says that the RSS has now killed Gandhi twice: his body in 1948, and his legacy 50 years later.

India shall suffer for some time to come from the effects of these killings. It had enjoyed what the French call a *prejuge* favourable in world opinion, a mystique of being uniquely ancient and pluralistic, a land of Hindus and Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Zoroastri-

ans, the spiritual home of Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu, Father Daniel Berrigan, and Martin Luther King. In a single blow, the BJP government has destroyed India's greatest asset. And more.

After decades of bitter squabble, India's relations with China, the world's most populous country and a fast growing economic giant, had been

preceded and followed anti-China rhetoric. India's greatest single foreign policy achievement of the last two decades was thus buried away like nuclear waste.

For nearly four decades, India's rate of growth had remained low at around 4 percent per annum. Economists the world over dubbed this mysterious consistency

as the 'Hindu rate of growth'. Then a decade ago, the curve began to move upward reaching a whopping 7.5 percent last year. Hope had never prevailed so widely in India since independence, and international capital had

begun to view it as a grand investment prospect. Economists expected that in the next decade India will maintain a 7 percent rate of growth, just about wiping out the abject poverty that so assails its people. This expectation too has been interred in the Pokhran wasteland. International economists now estimate that in the financial year that ended on 31 March, India's growth would show a decline from the projected 7.5 percent to 5 percent; these estimates are based not on the effects of sanc-



Chagai Hills near ground zero.

improving for the last six years. The Sino-India amity had reached a level significant enough for Chinese leaders to counsel Pakistan, their old ally, to resolve its disputes with India. In a conversation with me a few weeks ago, former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral cited Sino-Indian cordiality as a model for Indo-Pakistan relations. A high-level Chinese military delegation was in India when Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee proudly announced his first three nuclear tests. These had



tions but on the adverse turn in the investment climate.

Excepting a few interregnums, such as the short-lived government of I.K. Gujral, India's governments have not been very sensitive towards their neighbours. At regional and international conferences, a participant is often astonished at the antipathy delegates from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives and Bangladesh express towards India's policies. But I believe nothing had shocked and angered its neighbours more than India's unilateral and surprise decision to carry out its 3+2 nuclear tests, thus starting a spiral of nuclear arms race and opening the way to potential holocaust in South Asia. They have a right to anxiety and anger as nature has so willed that they are no more safe than Indians and Pakistanis are from the nuclear fallout.

It is commonplace in Pakistan to hear that India seeks regional hegemony. A reminder is necessary perhaps that hegemony requires a recognition of superiority by consent more than coercion. Delhi's latest actions deny rather than affirm the premise of hegemony. Pakistan does not have hegemonic ambition, yet I hope that Nawaz Sharif's government had been gracious enough to at least inform our neighbours before the tests in Balochistan.

Each historical time has had its own temper. But one factor has been common throughout history to the attainment of progress and greatness. Historians of culture describe this one factor variously as syncretism, openness, pluralism, and a spirit of tolerance. Where ideas do not clash, diverse influences, knowledge, viewpoints, and cultures do not converge, civilisation does not thrive and greatness eludes. The rightist environment of reli-

gious chauvinism and intolerance which the BJP and its allies promote in India – it pervades Pakistan for other reasons – is deeply harmful to India's future. Nuclearisation of nationalism has further degraded this environment. The tests have worsened the xenophobia of Hindutva supporters. Reaction no less than a habit of emulation among fundamentalist adversaries, will undoubtedly reinforce right-wing sentiments and excesses in Pakistan. In recent weeks BJP supporters stormed a meeting of anti-nuclear scientists, attacked art-



ist M.F. Hussain's home and destroyed his paintings, in retaliation of US sanctions, assaulted trucks carrying Pepsi and Coca-Cola, disrupted a concert by Pakistani musician Ustad Ghulam Ali. "The atmosphere of intolerance has been gaining ground recently," says an editorial in *The Hindustan Times*. In Pakistan, government-owned television darkly and repeatedly suggested that opponents of a nuclear test were foreign agents.

India's leaders have long viewed nuclear weapons as a currency of power. They will soon realise that this is a counterfeit. Hiroshima and Nagasaki had shown the nuclear to be a non-usable weapon morally. Korea, Cuba and Vietnam proved it to be unusable politically and militarily. By the mid-1960s, nuclear weapons had ceased to be a significant component of power. The rise of such non-nuclear

giants as Germany and Japan and the collapse of the Soviet Union, a nuclear superpower, rendered the possession of nuclear weapons quite incidental to the equation of power in world politics. No advocate of nuclear tests has refuted me either in Pakistan or abroad. Then what in heaven's name were India's rulers seeking by detonating five nuclear devices? And why do we insist that Pakistan had no option but to follow India into the dumb pit?

I, and many others, had argued that Pakistan's best option was to let ambiguity serve the purposes it had served for a decade. There is no way to prove now whether we were right or wrong. The deed is done. A mountain is dead. But history demands that it be noted now that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's initially good instincts were overwhelmed by forces in and out of Pakistan. Our knowledge of the factors

that led to Pakistan's decision to carry out the tests is not complete, but enough is known to identify the main factors: The most important was the provocations of BJP leaders.

There were too many to recount here. These included a warning by L.K. Advani, India's interior minister, that Pakistan should note a change in South Asia's "strategic environment"; Prime Minister Vajpayee's statement that his government might forcibly take Kashmiri territory under Pakistan's control; the handing over of Kashmir affairs portfolio to the hardline home minister who had so enthusiastically overseen the destruction of Babri Mosque; and actually heating up of a limited hot live conflict along the Line of Control. Pakistan's chief of army staff returned from the front line with an assessment that we may in fact be witnessing the slow beginning of a conventional

Train travel in one of the world's latest nuclear powers.



war. To my knowledge, Delhi did little to reassure Islamabad. These developments greatly reinforced among Pakistani officials a sense of foreboding. This was accentuated by what a decade of embargo under the Pressler Amendment had done to the weapons sustainability of Pakistan's armed forces. During the decade of Mohammed Zia-ul Haq, our defence forces reverted to heavy reliance on US arms. In the last decade these have suffered not merely from obsolescence but also from a paucity of reliable spare parts. Pakistan could find itself unable to sustain a war with India without soon running into serious supply problems. In a military environment such as this, army leaders are likely to put a high premium on an assured deterrent capability. This much is known to interested military analysts the world over.

It is astounding that under these circumstances, and after

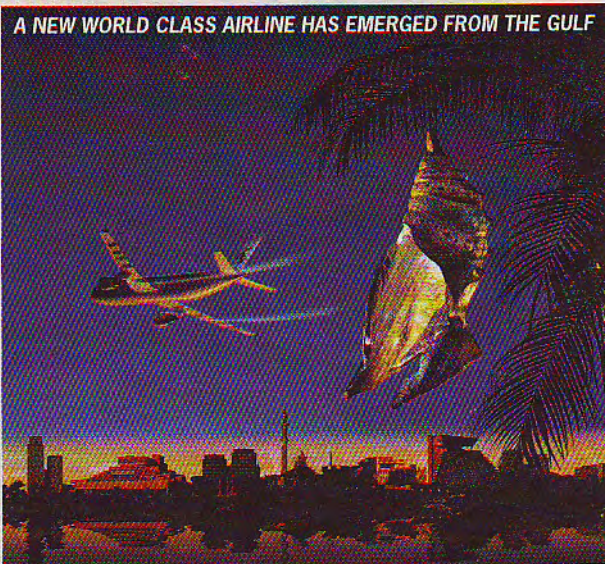
testing their nuclear device, India's leaders would engage in provocations, verbal and military. Officials and legislators in Washington might also note that their anti-nuclear sanctions actually compelled a speedier development and testing of nuclear arms.

In an environment so fraught, the government needed political support. Instead, Pakistan's opposition leaders – all except Ghinwa Bhutto, Air Marshal Asghar Khan, and Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari – were in the streets taunting Sharif to 'explode' a nuclear bomb. The pack was led first by Jamaat-i-Islami leaders who were soon overtaken by Benazir Bhutto. She seems to have sensed in this national crisis an opportunity to restore her flagging fortunes. I know of few gestures in the ugly repertoire of Pakistani politics as revolting as her demagogic toss of bracelets at Nawaz Sharif. The G-8

responded mildly and in a divided fashion to India's tests, signalling a soft response to the menace at hand and enhancing the Pakistani sense of isolation and risk. Finally, like the Indian tests, Pakistan's response was a tribute to the hegemony of the nuclear culture and notions of deterrence so assiduously promoted by the West during the Cold War.

The leaders of India and Pakistan have now appropriated to themselves, as others had done before, the power that was God's alone – to kill mountains, make the earth quake, bring the sea to boil, and destroy humanity. I hope that when the muscle-flexing and cheering is over they will go on a retreat, and reflect on how they should bear this awesome responsibility. △

*E. Ahmad is an educationist and political columnist based in Islamabad.*



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## Letter from Nagasaki

# Dear Pakistanis,

by *Mariko Kitano*

THE NEWS ON SUNDAY, LAHORE, 14 JUNE 1998

**I AM SICKENED** – sickened to my stomach – at the sight of these jubilant faces ‘celebrating’ Pakistan’s nuclear tests. These are the faces of unashamed ignorance. These are faces that have never even given a thought, let alone seen, the evil that is manifested in nuclear arms. I have seen it first hand. I am the granddaughter of a survivor of Nagasaki, and I bear the scars of that living hell in my deformed feet, one eye that cannot see and a left hand that only lies motionless at my side. My mother too is a victim of severe physical deformities that she has inherited genetically from my grandmother – all thanks to the ‘miracle’ of nuclear energy that Pakistan and India are celebrating so fervently today.

How can any sane human being believe detonating nuclear devices provides security? Is sitting on a ticking time bomb a position of security (the people of Chernobyl have an answer to that)? Is sitting on the brink of nuclear war a secure position to be in? I think not.

After letting a crazed dictator rule their lives for 10 years, this is certainly the most regretful thing that the Pakistanis have ever done, and now they will surely have to pay dearly. I see children on the street, begging for enough money to have just one scrap of food, women carrying malnourished babies, begging for alms, old people dying in gutters.

And they will all continue to die, for instead of listening to their pleas and seeing to their needs, the Pakistani government has now pushed them even further down on their list of priorities, if they were even there to begin with. Instead, now they will be selfishly and pompously pumping even more of the national exchequer into this utterly ludicrous game of one-upmanship with India. Nuclear bombs will not put food on that starving child’s plate.

I studied Islam while doing my doctorate in reli-

gious studies. I learnt that human beings are considered the highest form of life. I’m afraid I don’t believe that anymore. Of all the creatures on earth, humans are the ones who have never evolved, we were born barbarians and we shall remain so, no matter how many veils of civilisation we cloak ourselves in.

We are the only creatures on earth who continuously devise more and more devious ways to kill our own kind. The more weapons of mass destruction we can come up with, the more pompous we become. Killing people is the only way we can feel good about ourselves.

And how easy it is for us to forget. We have been making the same mistakes since the dawn of time and each new generation conveniently forgets the mistakes of its ancestors. The Jewish nation faced the worst kind of barbarism at the hands of the Nazis, and then turned around and did exactly the same to the Palestinians. So too in Bosnia; and let’s not forget the treatment of the Christian minority in Pakistan of late. Hell struck Hiroshima and my home of Nagasaki, and the world still went on blindly with the nuclear arms race. It is true, a human being will bring down the worst kind of atrocities on another human, simply because he thinks the same can never happen to him.

Why do you think Japan never entered the arms race? Because we experienced the horror of nuclear energy in our homes; we saw our loved ones charred in front of our eyes; our houses crumble like sandcastles. Neither India nor Pakistan have seen the sightless eyes of a newborn in Hiroshima and Nagasaki who till this day is born with defects through no fault of his own. And that is what enables the people here to celebrate. I pray no Pakistani mother has to one day look down at her newborn baby and see two cold, vacant blue spots where the child’s eyes should be.

*(Translated from the Japanese by Erum Rahman.)*

*M. Kitano holds a doctorate in religious studies from Osaka University and was in Lahore at the time of the Pakistan nuclear tests on a personal visit.*



# The truth explodes

by Kanti Bajpai

THE TELEGRAPH, CALCUTTA, 16 MAY 1998

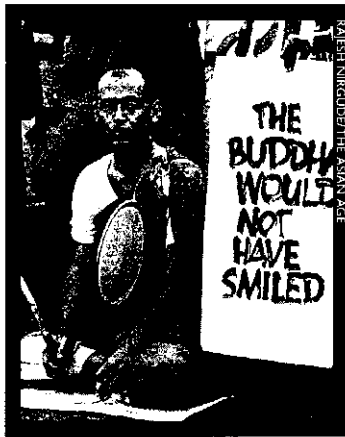
What caused India to test five nuclear devices and why at this time? The government and its spokesmen have made three claims. One, that the nuclear environment around the country is dangerous. Two, that valuable scientific data for the future will be generated. Three, that India will achieve greater leverage in global nuclear politics. All three claims are exaggerated, if not specious.

First of all, the nuclear environment around India is the same as it has been for some years now. Indeed, it may be more benign than in the past. The Chinese have some 300 nuclear weapons and Pakistan is reputed to be capable of putting together a dozen crude devices. However, this has been the situation since about the late 80s or early 90s. Nothing much has changed in the past four or five years.

George Fernandes has announced there are missiles in Tibet pointed at India. This is a story that has been around for over a decade. In any case, it is far more likely the missiles there are pointed at Russia and other targets, that India is not the worry. The fact is no one knows much about the missiles in Tibet and, in any case, it is not a new development.

It is also being suggested that the test of the Ghauri missile by Pakistan, about one month ago, pushed India into testing. That this merits a nuclear test is hard to understand. India has its own mis-

siles, the Prithvi and Agni. It has aircraft which could deliver nuclear weapons. If the Ghauri was such a threat, a stepping up of the missile programme would have been a sufficient response. That Islamabad would get something like the Ghauri could not have been a surprise anyway. Pakistan has



always made it quite clear it will beg, steal or borrow to keep up with India in the nuclear and missile race.

On the other hand, there have been developments which have made the nuclear environment more benign. The reduction of the United States-Russian nuclear arsenals has lowered nuclear danger globally. While both states have a long way to go in disarmament, they have reduced their weapon stocks. The comprehensive test ban treaty was another positive step, even if India did not find it possible to join. In particular, the treaty stops the Chinese from conducting any further tests, which is welcome to In-

dia. The recent agreement between China and the US to limit Chinese exports of missile and nuclear exports is also a potentially good development from India's point of view.

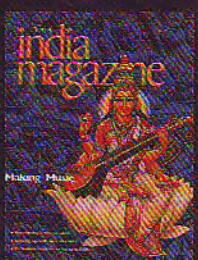
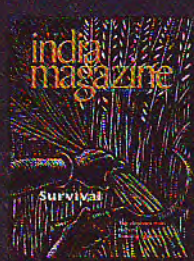
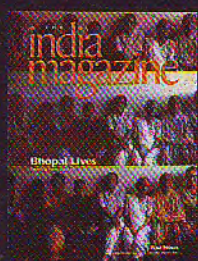
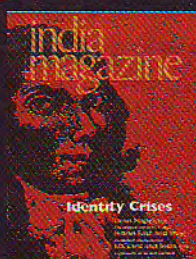
The security environment in India's vicinity more generally has improved too. Since 1981, with China we have been engaged in a series of negotiations: over the border delimitation and confidence building measures. As a result, India has reduced its forces along the border by two divisions and redeployed those forces in Kashmir and the northeast. India's trade with China has grown from a few hundred millions to nearly two billion dollars in a period of five years or so. With Pakistan things are not so rosy, but even here we have seen the institution of foreign secretary level talks. On assuming office, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government made a series of friendly and moderate statements. Relations with Pakistan may not be greatly improved, but they are no worse.

The government has also claimed the tests will generate valuable scientific data, data for a programme of subcritical, hydronuclear or computer simulated tests. These tests have the advantage of not being contrary to the CTBT which bans nuclear explosive testing. They could be the basis of a weapons design system which does not contravene the treaty. This claim is credible up to a point: any test must generate a certain amount of information which

Bombay  
protest 26  
May 1998.



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would be valuable for future weapons design.

However, the question is are the 11 May and 13 May tests enough for weapons design and serial production? Probably not.

First, India tested three different types of nuclear weapons: three low yield devices, a fission device that was possibly bigger than the 1974 one, and a thermonuclear device. These presumably will yield three quite different, not cumulative types of data.

Second, the key challenge ahead is to get enough miniaturisation of the weapon so that it can be mounted on top of various delivery vehicles, particularly missiles. This usually involves several tests. If so, we are looking at further testing down the road. Conceivably, India will get enough information from the tests to carry on a programme of subcritical, hydronuclear and computer tests which will solve the miniaturisation problem. But this will not be known until the data are thoroughly scanned and analyzed. Until then, India is unlikely to promise to sign the CTBT or give any other commitment on testing.

The third claim is that the tests will level the playing field in global nuclear politics. India will be a recognised nuclear power, and the nuclear rules of the game will have to change to accommodate it. In return, New Delhi sees itself as joining parts of an international nuclear order such as the CTBT and the fissile materials cutoff treaty (FMCT). The government has suggested it may adhere to "some of the undertakings in the CTBT," would put its weight behind the FMCT negotiations in progress and even respect article one of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty which enjoins states not to transfer nuclear technology, materials and devices to other countries. The FMCT negotiations are stalled for a variety of reasons. And, anyway,

India has always abided by article one. The immediate point of interest therefore is the CTBT.

In 1988, India objected to the CTBT on two grounds. One, that it did not call for a timetable for complete disarmament. Two, that it permitted subcritical, hydronuclear and computer testing. Have the tests helped in this respect? In spite of the five tests, it is highly unlikely the nuclear weapons states will give up their weapons. Also, given that India has conducted its own low yield tests, it will not want a ban on those instruments. Thus the Pokhran blasts will have little or no effect on the CTBT rules.

Apart from this, India's interest in a limited accession to the treaty makes little sense. The CTBT basically has only two obligations – not to conduct nuclear test explosions and not to encourage or abet others in doing so. It is far from clear what adherence to some part of the treaty would mean. Clearly, India would have to accept the basic undertaking not to test or encourage testing. What New Delhi will probably resist is intrusive, on-site inspection of its facilities. The question is would India's rejection of the verification measures be acceptable to the other parties to the treaty? This is extremely doubtful since verification is vital to the success of a test ban.

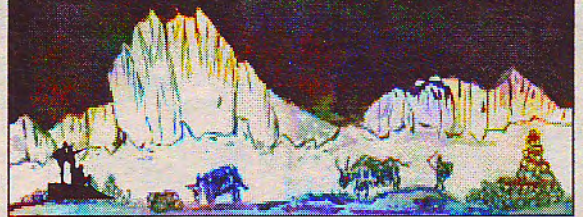
The government's case for conducting the tests is poorly explained at best and dubious at worst. Ironically, the result could be greater insecurity, not security. In one go, India has worsened relations with China, Pakistan and the US. They could retaliate in a number of ways. Pakistan could increase its support to the

Kashmiri militants. China could resume aid to the northeastern insurgencies and solidify its relations with Pakistan which were under pressure. The US could not only impose sanctions but also give a more sympathetic hearing to Kashmiri separatists. All this may reignite the Kashmir violence which we have just brought under control.

Indians have been too easily carried away by the celebrations over the tests. In a democracy, the government's claims, whatever they are, deserve close scrutiny. Unfortunately, in this matter they have been applauded uncritically, most of all by the press. This ill serves the nation's security or its democracy. △

*K. Bajpai teaches at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.*

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# Summer of 2004

An accidental nuclear war between India and Pakistan will not be an accident.

by Syed Rashid Naim

INDIA ABROAD, NEW YORK, 29 MAY 1998

It is the summer of 2004 – a long and typically sweltering summer in the Subcontinent. A summer made even more unbearable by the inability of Asia's newest nuclear powers – India and Pakistan – to provide uninterrupted water

and electricity supply to their major urban centres.

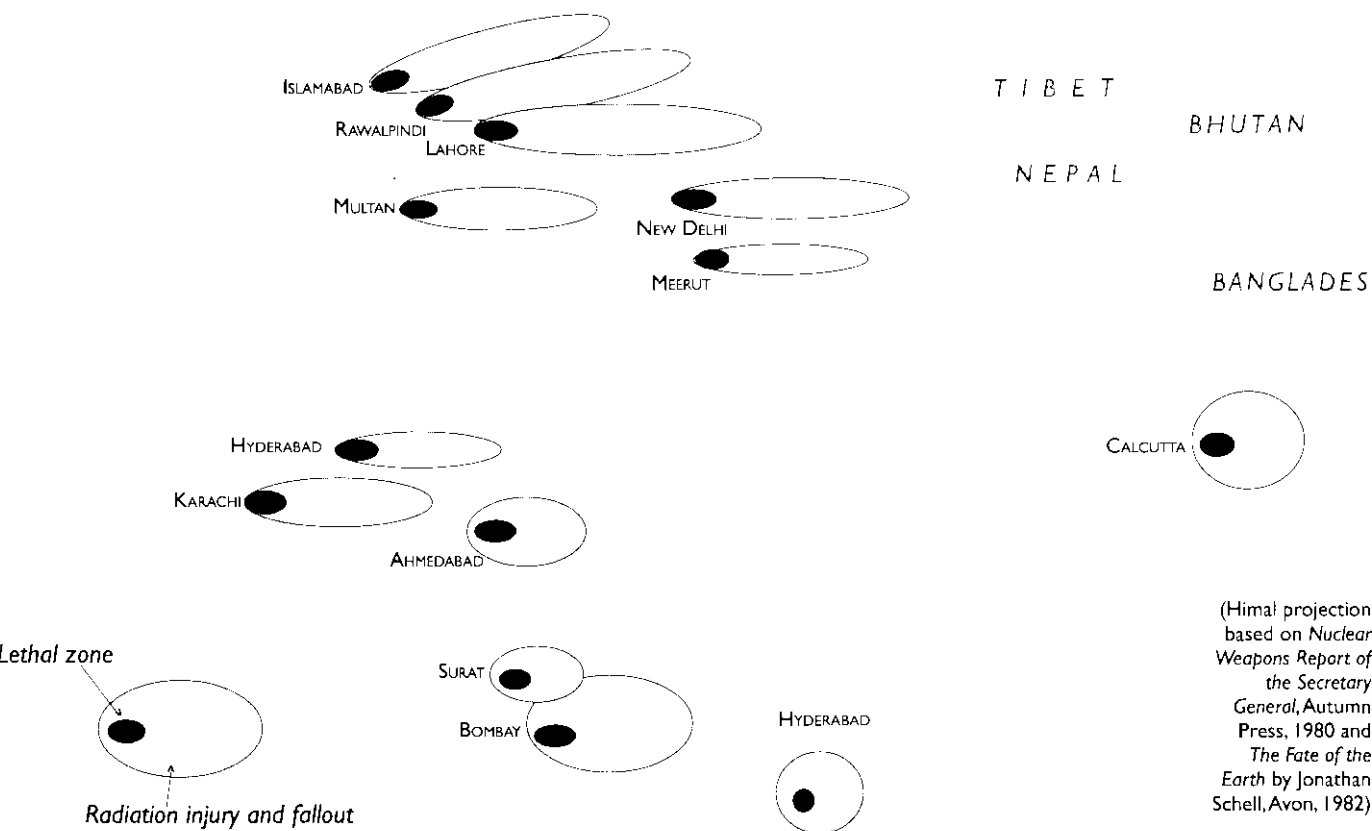
The euphoria over becoming nuclear-weapon states has long since evaporated, and tempers are running high on either side of the border. Battered by sanctions, the economies of

both countries are barely limping along. And there is internal disarray as disenchanted citizens take to the streets day after day to protest the power and water shortages, and the lack of economic progress.

Politics reflects the civic dis-

## All-out India-Pakistan Nuclear War

Lethal damage and radiation fallout from the detonation of 15 KT to 1 MT warheads above major Indian and Pakistani cities. Early March, prevailing westerly winds 80-120 km/h at 7,000 m over the northern Subcontinent.



(Himal projection based on Nuclear Weapons Report of the Secretary General, Autumn Press, 1980 and The Fate of the Earth by Jonathan Schell, Avon, 1982)

array. The 2003 general election in India has thrown up yet another hung parliament, with the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies managing to retain power by a whisker. In Pakistan, a fresh constitutional crisis has once again paralysed the government.

### Gathering storm

Far removed from the tumult of the cities, along the India-Pakistan border in Indian Punjab, 12-year-old Kewal Singh, a shepherd, is beating the mid-day heat with a nap under a banyan tree. As he wakes up toward evening, he realises that some of his small herd of cattle have strayed across into Pakistan.

Kewal Singh is not worried – this has happened before, and he has always managed to sneak across and bring them back. This time, however, his luck runs out. As he crosses the border, he comes across a Pakistani Army patrol.

It is then that Kewal Singh makes a fatal mistake. He panics, and makes a run for it. The Pakistan pattol shouts after him, asking him to stop, and then lets off a volley of bullets that mows Kewal Singh down. The return of the young shepherd's body to his wailing relatives makes for a poignant sight on TV screens across the country. And politicians, to divert attention from the very real problems plaguing the cities, make capital of it. Almost in unison, they launch an anti-Pakistan tirade.

Rhetoric soon evolves into action. India announces that it will rigorously patrol the border, both to protect Indians and to deal harshly with any Pakistani national who happens to wander into India. Troops are sent to the border to reinforce the Border Security Force (BSF). The Pakistanis respond with a troop build-up of their own. Tensions run high all

along the border.

About the same time, a long-scheduled Pakistani military exercise gets underway. Provocatively named "*Peshwa Ko Roko*" (or, stop the Peshwa, a reference to the Maratha warrior king Shivaji, a figure revered by the votaries of Hindutva), the exercise takes the Indians by surprise.

New Delhi, unaware it is a planned exercise, considers it an act intended to escalate tensions. In response, it launches a hurriedly improved military exercise – Panipat IV.

"*Panipat ki chauthi yudh Bharat nahi harega*" (India will not lose the fourth battle of Panipat), declares the BJP-led coalition's defence minister. The home minister also gets into the act: "If Pakistan doesn't come to its senses, we will act proactively and destroy its puny nuclear weapons even before they can get them into the air."

### Tensions build up

In a pretty little village near the border, nine-year-old Yusuf Khan decides he must visit his cousin, who lives a bare kilometre across the line of control (LOC). Like Kewal Singh, Khan also knows ways of slipping across the border and returning safely that neither the Indian nor Pakistani authorities are aware of.

But his luck, too, runs out as he encounters an Indian patrol and, like the hapless Kewal Singh did just a month ago, decides to run for it. "*Terrorist Hai! Maro!*" (He's a terrorist. Shoot!), shouts the soldier leading the patrol, and another victim is added to the mutual paranoia of India and Pakistan.

Witnessing the incident is a Pakistani patrol which opens fire on the Indians. Both sides suffer casualties in the ensuing exchange of fire.

Over the next week, as tensions and clashes increase, both the Indian and Pakistani governments find that they do not

have any mechanism or communication links to defuse the crisis. Communication has, in recent years, been limited to public posturing and threats. Each side decides it has no option but to assume the worst and acts accordingly. More troops are mobilised. Both military exercises are extended indefinitely.

### THE NUCLEAR OPTIONS

Since Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons – mainly on long- and intermediate-range missiles – are not protected

#### LIKELY CASUALTIES OF A NUCLEAR WAR

City	Population	Deaths
<b>INDIA</b>		
Delhi	8,419,000	6,252,000
Bombay	12,569,000	9,132,000
Madras	5,361,000	4,020,750
Calcutta	11,022,000	8,266,500
Hyderabad	4,274,000	3,205,500
Ahmedabad	3,280,000	2,460,000
Surat	1,519,000	1,139,250
Baroda	1,115,000	836,250
Meerut	834,000	625,500
<b>PAKISTAN</b>		
Karachi	10,337,000	7,752,750
Lahore	6,652,000	4,989,000
Lyallpur	3,010,000	2,257,500
Rawalpindi	1,720,000	1,290,000
Hyderabad	1,200,000	900,000
Multan	1,015,000	761,250
Gujranwala	900,000	675,000
Peshawar	425,000	318,750
(India Abroad, 29 May 1998)		

against a nuclear attack, both countries have adopted "Launch on Warning" postures.

This is designed to launch nuclear weapons even before an attack is confirmed so as to insure the weapons are not destroyed on the ground. The nuclear weapons, on a hair-trigger, are now in the highest state of alert.

Pakistan intelligence analysts are convinced that India's actions conclusively show it intends to launch a pre-emptive attack on Pakistan's nuclear weapons, possibly with

low-yield tactical nuclear missiles. After all, they argue, India has the capability and the move would give it a permanent advantage over Pakistan.

However, the Pakistani analysts are also worried. Summer is not the best time to attack India with nuclear weapons. During the period of the south-west monsoon (June to September), the wind direction is towards Pakistan, bringing with it the fallout of the nuclear blasts.

Indian intelligence is also convinced that the Pakistanis are about to launch a pre-emptive strike against Indian nuclear weapons. After all, given strategic reality, Pakistan would tend to use its fewer weapons pre-emptively.

What's more, the analysts say, with the winds blowing away from India, this is the best time to strike. If we wait till after September, they say, when the northeast monsoon (December to March) is underway, the winds will be blowing towards India, bringing the fallout back into the country. And with targets such as Lahore just across the border, this would be unacceptable.

### **Pressing the N-button**

Gen Musa is fed up. The officer in charge of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, and the man – thanks to Pakistan's unsophisticated command and control system – with the finger on the nuclear hutton, is sick of Pakistan's quibbling intelligence analysts and the lack of vision of its political leadership.

Why do they fail to see reality, Gen Musa wonders. He is convinced the Indians are preparing to attack Pakistan's nuclear-weapon sites. Pakistan will be destroyed as an independent nation, and he, as the commander of Pakistan's missile forces, will have to answer to his Maker for his failure to protect his country.

As he sits frustrated and

fuming at his command headquarters, he gets word that some forward radar units have picked up what appears to be hostile Indian missiles or aircraft. The officer reporting to him is, however, not certain: It may well be a flock of birds, we are not sure, he says.

But Gen Musa is. He orders the launch of 10 missiles with one megaton yield nuclear warheads – each targeting an Indian city. It is called a "Scenario D" attack. The Indian radar and satellites pick up the Pakistan missiles as they are launched, and even before they reach their targets, the nuclear hutton is pressed by the Indians as well. The missiles, also with one megaton yield warheads, take off, heading for eight Pakistan cities.

### **Armageddon**

Under "Scenario D" – which involves the targeting of large urban centres for maximum damage – the Pakistani missiles explode in Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Surat, Indore, Baroda and Meerut.

These centres have been chosen either for their military, political or economic importance or for the psychological impact their destruction would have on India. Punjab's cities near the border are spared.

The Indian missiles target the Pakistan cities of Karachi, Lahore, Lyallpur, Rawalpindi, Hyderabad, Multan, Gujranwala and Peshawar. Again the purpose is to decimate Pakistan's population and industrial centres.

The devastation is unprecedented. Given the high population density of South Asian cities, the immediate casualties amount to millions (*see chart*). Many more of the initial survivors of the attacks as well as millions of others in India and Pakistan die as a result of the fallout from the blasts as well as from the chaos and famine

which follow in both countries. Lahore, for instance, is completely wiped out as the whole city falls within the "lethal zone" of a nuclear attack. And for 140 square miles downwind – assuming a windspeed of 15 miles per hour – the fallout would be high enough to kill the entire population over the next few weeks.

### **The way out**

This is, of course, a worst-case scenario. One could assume that no sane political leadership, either in India or Pakistan, would deliberately trigger off a nuclear war. Yet, it could be set off accidentally, and both New Delhi and Islamabad need to develop a mechanism to pre-empt it. They have to adopt deterrence postures and put in place effective confidence-building measures.

A deterrence posture includes stating clearly when and under what circumstances the nuclear option would be resorted to and, more importantly, conveying to the opposite side the will to use it if the need arose.

Alongside, confidence-boosting measures are imperative. This implies an immediate end to dishing out rash and wild threats against each other, followed up with regular formal and informal meetings between the political and military decision-makers. Both need to make no-first-use a cornerstone of their nuclear posture. The sooner the two set out to achieve these goals, the safer will the people of the two countries be.

The introduction of nuclear weapons into the India-Pakistan equation has not made – at least in the short run – the Subcontinent a safer place. It has only made it more dangerous.

*S.R. Naim teaches political science in Atlanta.*



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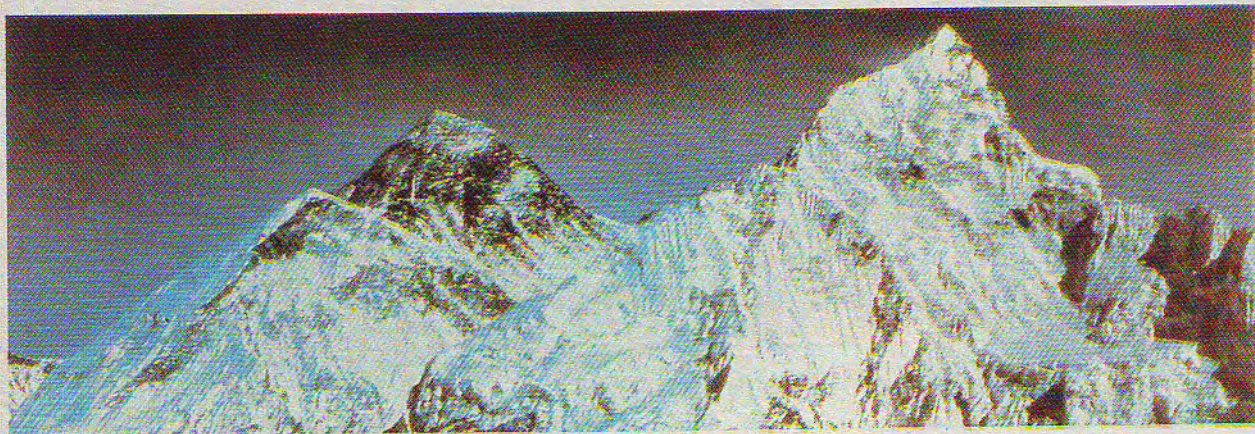


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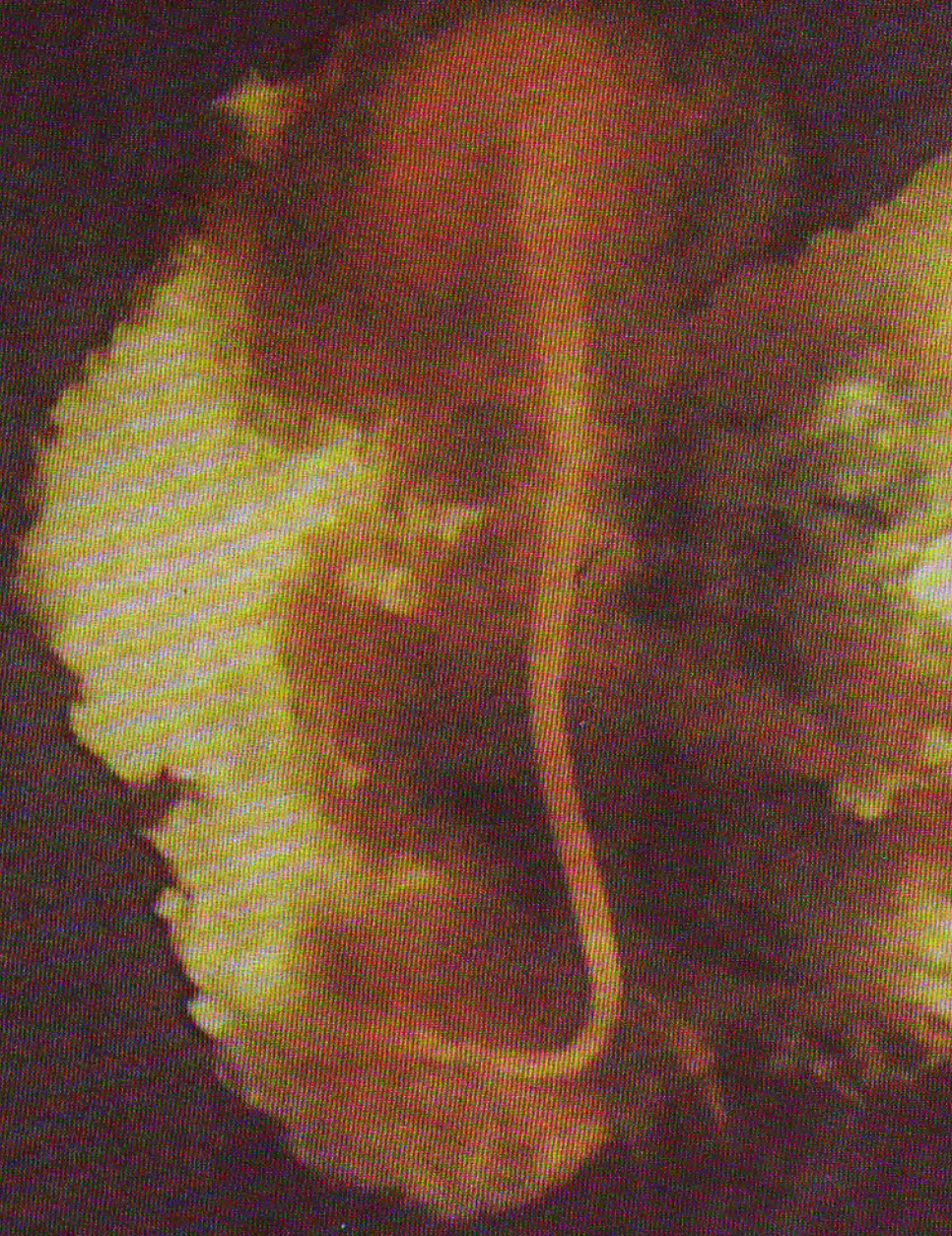
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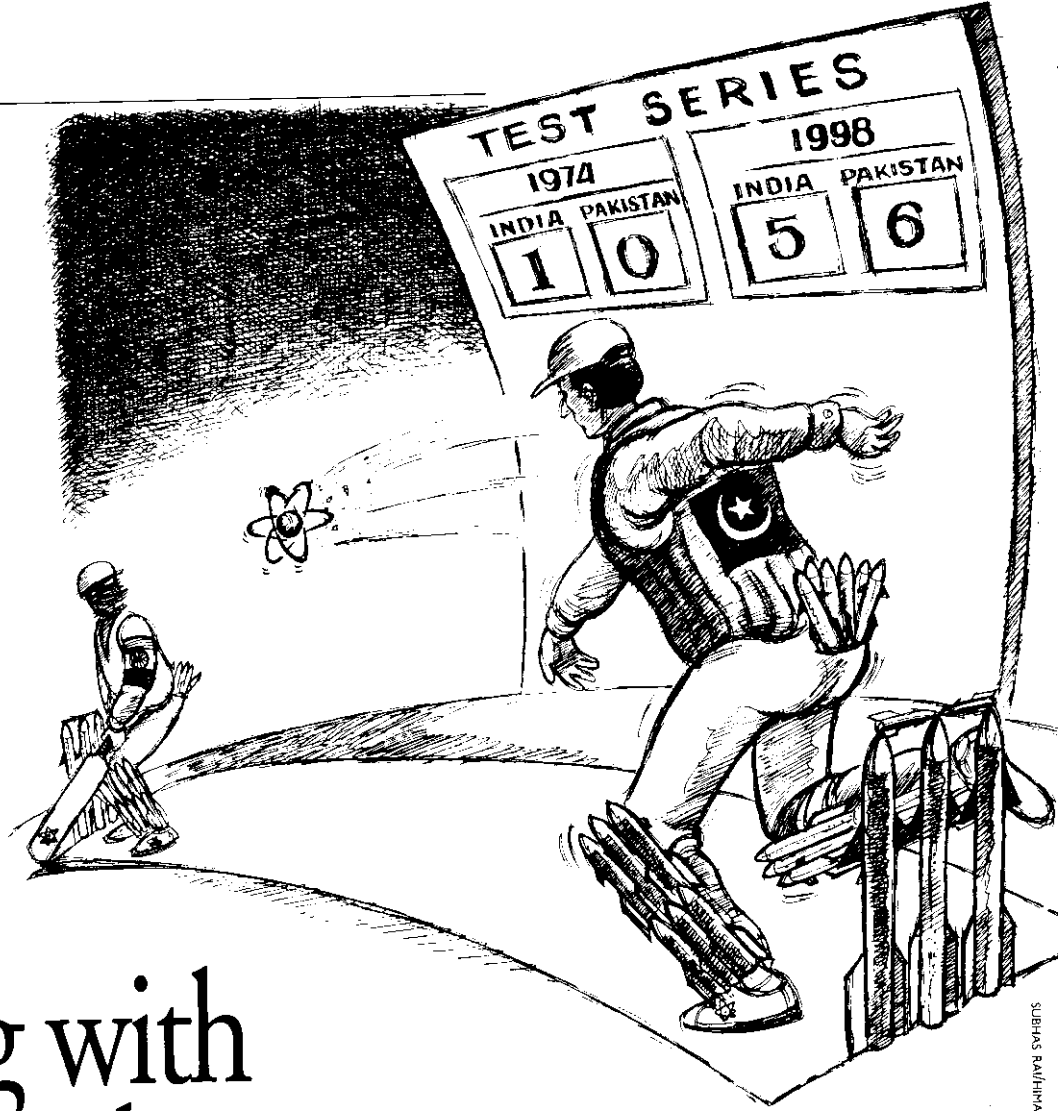


# HIMAL

THE SOUTH ASIAN MAGAZINE

BUDDHA UNDER THE NUCLEAR CANOPY





# Living with the Bomb

by *Pervez Hoodbhoy*

DAWN, KARACHI, 6 JUNE 1998

The nuclear nightmare has come true. Taunted, jeered, and threatened by BJP India until it could resist no more, Pakistan too has gone nuclear. Understandably, as of the time of this writing, joyous crowds are still dancing in Islamabad over its stunning response to Shakti '98. They, like the crowds which had celebrated in Delhi just a while ago, are quite oblivious to the real meaning of what has really happened. But as the nuclear cycle advances to the next notch, and harsh economic re-

alities start to bite, the real gravity of the situation will inevitably sink in. Meanwhile the cabal of neo-fascists and RSS fanatics in Delhi – the same that had planned the 11 May tests – is pondering its next move.

Let us face facts. Our world changed irreversibly and totally just three weeks ago; it is now a world where nuclear annihilation henceforth shall always be just around the corner. Generations to come – if they come – in both Pakistan and India will agonise over how it all really happened. But it is fruitless to

ask for history to be undone. Instead pragmatism demands that we look towards what is next and delineate what needs to be done for mutual survival. With the primal, bestial, and instinctual responses of the two huge nations in the present state of strong arousal, the ongoing cycle of action and reaction desperately needs interruption. Unless moderated and cooled, this lethal competition has an obvious end point.

The immediate formulation of effective war-avoidance measures is crucial. This means de-

SUBHAS RAI/HIMAL

vising a set of technically sound procedures and devices that will make difficult the unauthorised, unintentional, or accidental use of nuclear weapons. Indeed, it is highly probable that should nuclear war ever take place, it will not be by the conscious design of Pakistani and Indian leaders but, instead, through miscalculation or unintended use of the weapons in some form. These horrific possibilities will remain as long as nuclear weapons remain. But one can – and absolutely must – work towards reducing probabilities. Otherwise India and Pakistan may provide to the world the first proof of failure of nuclear deterrence.

Consider first the issue of launch authority. In Pakistan there already exists a nuclear coordinating authority consisting of the president, prime minister, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, the chief of army staff, and the airforce and navy chiefs. In India there is certain to be a corresponding body. Among other things, one hopes that the rules for the two nuclear bodies have been written so that complete unanimity is required of all available members as a condition for launching a nuclear strike; the disagreement of even one member should be sufficient to halt a strike.

Even more importantly, the weapons should be configured so that local commanders, missile operating crews, or pilots, are not able to conspire into launching a nuclear strike on their own initiative. Failing this, a small group of wrongly informed or zealous officers from either the Pakistani or Indian side could start a full-scale nuclear war if they are in possession of the necessary codes and keys. Pakistan, in particular, has a long history of coups and extremist officers who have defied authority and tried to seize power. One should not dismiss the nuclear dangers that

this poses.

Recognising that unauthorised use was a dangerous possibility, much effort was devoted by the US in the late 1960s onwards towards developing technical devices known as Permissive Action Links (PALs). These highly sophisticated computer-chip based safety devices prevent an assembled nuclear weapon from being armed unless all pre-programmed requirements are satisfied. This includes the final launch permission received from the proper authority, possibly received directly by the weapon through radio contact.

Now that nuclear weapons are here to stay on the Subcontinent, one hopes that the advanced nuclear weapons states will share PAL technology with Pakistan and India. It is a virtual certainty that the first generation of the Indian and Pakistani weapons do not possess adequate safeguards. The one natural objection to sharing PAL technology is that it also reveals details of weapons design. However, it cannot hurt to make known the general principles of PAL design in sufficient detail so that Indian and Pakistani bomb designers could adapt it for their own weapons.

While unauthorised launch is a chilling possibility, there are certainly other dangers as well. In fact there are numerous examples where miscalculations by military leaders in Pakistan and India have provoked wars and near catastrophes. In 1965, President Field Marshal Ayub Khan, father of Pakistan's hawkish foreign minister, had sent paratroopers to Kashmir in the hope of stimulating the local population to rise up in arms against unpopular Indian rule. While he expected an Indian response in Kashmir, to his surprise India attacked across the international border and a full-scale war ensued. In 1987, General Sunderji's infamous Operation Brasstacks nearly provoked

a war with Pakistan, a war which no one really wanted at that time.

Can future miscalculations or conflict escalation be avoided? Unless the two armies are separated from each other along the Line of Control in Kashmir, this will be very difficult. It is therefore in the mutual interest of both countries to agree to a large presence of United Nations troops in Kashmir. By doing so, Pakistan will have succeeded in further internationalising the Kashmir issue, and India will have gained in having slowed the flow of Pakistani supported militants across the border. Will India agree? Even if it does not, it has been pointed out by international relation experts that the Security Council could request an urgent Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice without the consent of either government.

To conclude: it is absolutely imperative for Pakistan and India to have the best possible command and control systems, working hotlines, and satellite data gathering systems. This diminishes the chances of accidental war, as well as preemptive strikes motivated by unfounded or imaginary fears. But there will be no margin of safety left if Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons are stored in assembled form rather than as separated components, and if the delivery of nuclear weapons is by missiles rather than aircraft. A 2-5-minute flight time, almost zero chances of interception, and the impossibility of recall make nuclear-tipped missiles the most fearsome and dangerous element in the nuclear game. If either country deploys its missiles, or keeps ready-to-use bombs, life shall then dangle from a single strand of hair.

*P. Hoodbhoy is Professor of physics at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad.*



# The Patriot Games

by Shiv Visvanathan

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, BOMBAY, 23 MAY 1998

Antonin Artaud could not have done better. The timing was so immaculate and surreal.

Celebrating the 50th year of our independence, Atal Behari Vajpayee erased in one stroke the legacy of the national movement and its modernist aftermath: Panch Shila, non-alignment, non-violence and the dream of a world of alternatives. It was a killing of the fathers that Freud would have been intrigued about.

The props were simple. A man pretending to be prime minister. The national flag as backdrop. Vajpayee announced that "India today carried out three underground nuclear tests at Pokhran at 3 45 pm." A quick terse announcement. A political statement to be followed by a technical briefing. One correspondent even felt it was like an American press conference. As American as apple pie and Hiroshima.

The obscenity lay at several levels. It was not just the presence of Pramod Mahajan with a fascist bully boy smile, standing at the back playing Pierre Salinger in pyjamas. It was the timing.

On Buddha Purnima, India exploded three nuclear bombs. The era of the pseudo-secularists has actually arrived. Only a civilisation illiterate about itself would knit the bomb and Buddha together. Yet strangely, Bud-

dha was the signifier of continuity for both nuclear events. When Pokhran took place in 1974, the news of the blast was conveyed to Mrs Gandhi as "Lord Buddha has smiled". History repeats itself, first time as a tragedy and second time as illiteracy. Gandhi was once asked what do you think of Western civilisation? And he said "It would be a good idea".

If he were to return today and had been asked "What do you think of Indian civilisation", he might remark "that would also be a good idea". In fact, the first thing that went out

of the window was the ideal of a civilisation with its notions of myth, religion, morals, good conduct and tradition. We abandoned it all for history and the Nation State. Welcome to the amorality of the Patriot Games. The Patriot Games is played on a subtle chequer board. Let us state its moves.

of the window was the ideal of a civilisation with its notions of myth, religion, morals, good conduct and tradition. We abandoned it all for history and the Nation State. Welcome to the amorality of the Patriot Games. The Patriot Games is played on a subtle chequer board. Let us state its moves.

*Step one.* It enacts the national movement as a simulation. There is a new sense of imperial oppression and there are new liberators. First, there is George Fernandes, the eternal adolescent and the army as cho-

rus complaining about China. There is a touch of caring here. When George talks of snowmobiles for our jawans, I love him for it. Then there is the drumbeat of middle class machismo overthrowing Babar, Clive and Churchill in cafes and the Internet.

Militarise. Muscularise. Masculinise goes the modernist litany from Mambalam to Matunga. It is a plea for technology as a sign of toughness. If only we would get our act together, we would be taken seriously. We have the fourth largest army in the world. We have

the third largest pool of scientific talent. Beware. We are one of the six in the nuclear club.

Beating the drums are two kinds of *shakas*; the RSS and the scientists in designer khakis. The Ramannas and the Iyengars and the Brahmin hawks like K. Subramaniam. Hearing Raja Ramanna say "Our boys have done a wonderful job" reminded me of an old Groucho Marx joke. Groucho is pretending to be a scientist. He gets up and says "I am going to make a great contribution to science. I am planning to retire". I am reminded of the old men of Indian science, the Menons, the Swaminathans, the Ramannas. I wish they would retire. They have done enough damage to the idea of peace, sustainable



Artaud's Ford in Patriot Games.

development and the transfer of technology. This generation of scientists are not like the Ramans, Sahas or Kosambis. It is a generation of clerks salivating at every bell ring from the state. The Nation State. Sorry, the National Security State which is against democracy and peer review, which will not even allow a simple economic audit of the Indian nuclear programme. Scientific connivance and political illiteracy make perfect bedfellows.

*Step two.* Stage a spectacle. Carry out a controlled experiment with all its grandeur and secrecy. A circus no one saw but everyone has heard about. Did you hear that India exploded three bombs at 3.45 in the afternoon? A state secret to be shared by all. What more could a democracy want? The first three experiments encapsulate the history of the bomb from Pokhran 1974 to Pokhran 1998. There is progress for you. India has joined the nuclear club. Club is the key word. Not community. Not movement. Club. Suddenly a whole nation feels upwardly mobile. We have arrived, after a long pregnancy. Look at the way we read our history. The early efforts at nuclearism were shrouded in ambiguity and hypocrisy, with weakness. Remember how Narasimha Rao backtracked under US pressure. But now we have moved from ambiguity to clarity. Clarity. A bully is clear. So are the stupid. Truth is more complex. But we have outgrown truth as we become a national security state.

*Step Three.* Declare a holiday. Create a festival. Tell the people the bomb is for them. Fernandes is already claiming people should be involved in security. Involvement... Participation. The lovely language of World Bank governance. Now we know his sibling. Wonder what his German socialist friends think of Fernandes. Hello, Petra Kelly. Didn't know

your Judas friend, did you? When Petra died, George and Jaya Jaitley shed crocodile tears over her "suicide" at Gandhi Peace Foundation. Wonder how Petra would have reacted to this green Judas had she lived? Khadi and Nuclear bombs can only exist in complementarity in a mind like George Fernandes'. The radioactive Gandhian.

There is a tremendous sense of euphoria, of achievement. Of competence. Of David against the Goliaths. Every – almost every – Indian stands proud at being nuclear, of becoming Goliaths. Look at the long lines waiting with flowers to congratulate Vajpayee. The Prime Minister stands bedecked and bewildered like the bridegroom of the year. Our tryst with destiny is complete. Everyone feels nationalistic. Pass out the harfis. It could be a hockey match. A Tendulkar century. A riot or a nuclear blast. We are happy with all four spectacles. Our scientific Tendulkars have struck effortlessly five times in a row. The crowd is berserk with joy. Yet there is a sadness when everything is a spectacle. A match. A riot. A blast. When there is little difference between these events. Worse. People forget that the worst kind of consumerism is the unquestioning consumption of science.

The BJP got it right. It knows that nationalism is tough to beat as a populist idea. After all, caste is fragmentary and class is divisive but the Nation represents the whole. Look at the way dissent is silenced. Every political group wants to be implicated, get a lick of the nuclear ice-cream. The Congress insists that it was Rajiv and Indira who made the ice stick. The UF insists it is a three-in-one ice-cream. The first layer belongs to Indira, second to Gujral and the third to BJP. A truly coalitional ice-cream. A national nuclear ice-cream. Even communists are salivating wonder-

ing if there is a Soviet component they could lay claim to. What is worse, they know you can't criticise nationalism. When Vajpayee fights the US imperial bully, Bardhan and Basu will clap. Dissenters sound silly. Praful Bidwai on BBC sounds as if he has got up from a hangover and murmurs the first thing that comes into his head, that "It is a BJP plot to look decisive." He is right but when he mouths it, the message has all the inanity of "the butler did it". The audience orchestration is superb. Gujral loves it. And Ramanna. And K. Subramaniam. And Jasjit Singh. Throw in a touch of Raja Mohan



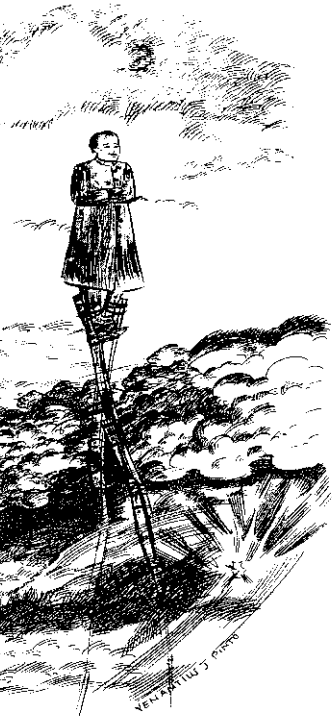
and Bharath Karnad. It is an orgy of agreement. Prim and proper. All the newspapers quote IAEA as saying "it was not illegal". The patriot games of Vajpayee beats any Asiad spectacle of Indira and Rajiv. Even luck favours the BJP. Abdul Kalam is the ideal citizen and scientist. Ascetic as P.C. Roy. As nationalist as Meghnad Saha. A bachelor wedded only to science. You don't get them better. It is as if Aslam Sher Khan were





to score the winning hockey goal against Pakistan. All of India seems to be celebrating. We have beaten China, Pakistan, USA, Germany and Britain. We have gate crashed into history. Every Indian feels proud. We have won the Battle of Plassey, the Swadeshi struggle, the 1962 China war, all at one go. It is victory as virtual reality. *Saare jahan se accha, ye nuclear India hamara.*

There is truth in the lie. A convincing truth. A fragment of history. The nuclear club has been a coercive and hypocritical one. It is a search for monopoly. A demand of good behaviour by the one nation



that has used the bomb twice on a people. The amoralism is stunning. Whether it is Thatcher, Blair, Bush or Clinton, you can't get lower than that. Third rate moralism dished out with equal ladles of Dale Carnegie and Ron Reagan. The Original sin pretending to be the Immaculate Conception. The Indians were brilliant in their counter response. Not since Krishna Menon played Chanakya in English were In-

dians so pleased with their own performance. It was the debate on CTBT that convinced India that it was on the right track. Arundhati Ghosh was superb as Rani of Jhansi. Translate that as Joan of Arc for first world illiterates. It showed us as powerful dissenters of the global world. That set the stage for our moral crusade. But we were not just heroic. We were realists. It is this transition from Nehruvian idealism to global pragmatism that needs to be emphasised. It is like switching from the old Ambassador car to the new Maruti. Morality is now more slick, mobile and profitable.

Implied in this is a sense that mere goodness is weak, that good guys are dead guys. What one needs are good guys with nuclear sharpshooters. Acquire the nuclear colt, look the enemy dead in the eye and talk of a nuclear free world. Peace is what tough guys understand. Suddenly every Indian feels a nuclear bulge in his biceps. The *akhada langurs* show it to the world. The Mani Dixits play it down. To see this in operation one had to watch his performance in *Aap ka Faisala, Aap ka Adalat*. It was a debate between Dixit and Kanti Bajpai, professor of International Relations at JNU. Bajpai is the peacenik as scholar. Quiet. Quietly courageous. Full of question marks and footnotes. Bajpai understands peace. He knows it is a slow bumbling process and Indians have played a great role in its evolution. He is honest, ready to cite chapter and verse when Indians have sinned. Ironically he appears shy, hesitant, ectomorphic. A PhD, still fresh behind his ears.

Mani Dixit is like an old bear, amiable with a pot of honey inside, oozing the experience of power. The foreign secretary as hero. Talking to his IIC group. He exposes the hypocrisy of USA, the nukespeak of China. He underlines the In-

dian efforts to be moral. The struggles with complexity and ambiguity; of how Nehruvian idealism was whipped into muscular pragmatism. It is time to tell the world we are tough like you, that we are high calorie nuclear heroes.

Kanti Bajpai is sincere, persistent but Dixit is tough, clipped, amiably dismissive. A politician who smells a crowd. History is about tough guys. No more subaltern pap, old chap. We are pragmatists now. Love me, love my bomb. The crowd loves it, applauds, happy to be a part of history. Even compere Manoj Raghuvanshi's moustache quivers like a weathervane in the right direction. How many Agni missiles did Gandhi have?

To the potent nationalist gin, the BJP adds the right twist, a touch of swadeshi lime. The bomb is Indian. Conceived by Indian science. Executed by Indian technologists. We don't smuggle technology like Dr Khan. No nuclear Dawoods please, we are Indian. Our nuclear bomb is as home grown as Ahdul Kalam. The MIT in his bio data stands for Madras Institute of Technology. Between Kalam, K. Subramaniam, Dixit, Ramanna the *swadesi hum kissi se hum nahin* is echoed clearly.

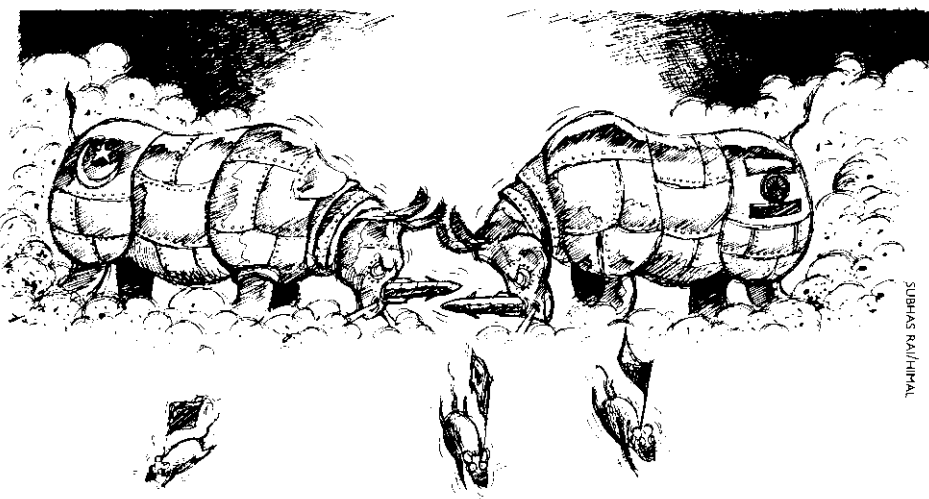
There is a hijacking and distortion of discourse that we must challenge. The new Dandi march must begin at the villages of Pokhran by challenging the trustees of this new official morality. We have to state that the above cast of characters cannot define our moral universe, any more than ethical mutants like Clinton or Thatcher can. We have to apply to the bomb, the Gandhian model of technology as one enhancing innovation, community, debate, trusteeship, and love.

*S. Visvanathan is with the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi.*

# The shatterer of worlds

by Achin Vanaik

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI, 14 MAY 1998



SUHANS RAI/HIMAL

inside the BJP and government as well as outside it which is pushing for India to do this. And, of course, once this happens, Pakistan will follow suit and the regional nuclear arms race will begin.

Expect the bomb lobby to react in two ways to such a development. On the one hand, there will be the appeal to national chauvinism about the need to counter any Pakistani nuclear threat in the name of national security, ignoring that Pakistan is the reactor. On the other, there will be the claim that it doesn't really matter and that, in fact, Pakistani acquisition and deployment of nuclear weapons capability will enhance its self-confidence and therefore improve the prospects of peace through active nuclear deterrence. What will be missing will be any recognition of the simple truth obvious to all

**I**ndia's bomb tests are morally shameful and politically foolish. Any act which legitimises or promotes the production or deployment of these evil weapons of mass destruction whether by the US, China, India or any other country deserves to be criticised at least on moral grounds even if the overall judgement is that such considerations must be subordinated to 'national security concerns'. Indeed, historically India had always cited the moral factor as a major reason why it would not behave like nuclear elites elsewhere. That nobody amongst the new army of applauders has even bothered to point to the moral dilemma intrinsic to this act reveals most strikingly the general mood of

the Indian elite and strategic community. But since nobody, barring opponents, are bothered by this, let us go to the political dimension.

Amongst the numerous reasons why this act is so foolhardy, there is space here only to highlight one – it unleashes a political dynamic which is outside India's control and whose ultimate end cannot yet be forecast. More precisely, there will now be tremendous domestic pressure on Pakistan to carry out its own test in retaliation. If this happens, which is more than likely, the pressure on India to go a step further and openly deploy nuclear weapons will become intense. As it is, there is a powerful lobby both

but the 'nuclear expert' that the initiation of such nuclear rivalry both reflects and qualitatively exacerbates the hatreds, tensions and suspicions that have made this the only part of the world that has had for over 50 years a continuous hot-cold war between two countries, and with no end in sight.

It doesn't stop here. For all the talk of the Chinese nuclear threat against India, this supposed threat has always been an abstract one arising not from the actual behaviour of China but







from two other directions. First, there has been the deceptive slant given by vested Indian interests to the interpretation of the China-Pakistan relationship. This has falsely been made out to be a near nuclear alliance when it is actually nothing more than a relationship of cooperation in dual use of materials and technologies and arms carried out for mutual economic, technological, commercial and political benefit. One can imagine the uproar there would be in this country if China were to supply Pakistan with its most advanced fighter aircraft or help it set up two nuclear reactors. Yet this is exactly what Russia is doing with India. The Pakistani hawk who screams that this indicates an alliance between Russia and India which is strategically directed against Pakistan is as fundamentally mistaken as the Indian hawk who makes the opposite but equivalent claim about the

China-Pakistan relationship.

Second, there has been the deliberate and calculated invocation of China as potential enemy at this juncture, even at the risk of worsening China-India relations for no justified reasons. The purpose of Fernandes' recent tirade against China now stands revealed. It was to lay down the ideological rationale for the bomb tests to come. This could not have been pegged to claims about Pakistan's nuclear provocation because of its essentially reactive diplomacy. It could only have been pegged to the need to counter a future threat from a 'potential' enemy, China, or on the need for India, too, to be seen as a 'great' power, win world 'respect', etc. This last factor is the real reason for the bomb tests. This action is not the expression of a mature, calm, confident and relaxed nationalism, but of the very opposite! For a long time now

what we have been witnessing in India, is an insecure, tension-filled mood of frustrated and uncertain nationalism amongst the Indian elite and middle classes. It is precisely because this promotes the search for a more aggressive 'resolution' of existing problems that the BJP-RSS combine has been able to make the political inroads that it has.

It is not in the least a coincidence that the party which has pursued the most aggressive and viciously communal form of cultural nationalism has also been the party with the most aggressive nuclear position. It has been the only party whose official position was that it would "exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons" as distinct from merely keeping the option open. Fifty years after independence there is a widespread sense within the Indian elite, that the country has not 'made it' internationally. China has its

## Nuclear-tipped poverty

by *Mahbubul Haq*

EXCERPTED FROM DAWN, KARACHI, 21 MAY 1998

**WE CAN ONLY** hope that this nuclear explosion does not start an intense arms race between India and Pakistan – not to speak of the reaction of China. Already, India and Pakistan together have spent USD 70 billion on defence during 1990-96 (compared to only USD 12 billion on education) and they have six times more soldiers than doctors. Basic social agendas await as arms accumulate.

India and Pakistan have now become the illiteracy capital of the world, with 330 million illiterate people and 45 million out-of-school children, nearly half of the world's total. About 370 million people survive in absolute poverty, below an income of USD 1 a day. Over 200 million people have no access to basic health services, over 300 million lack safe drinking water, 740 million have not seen even elementary sewerage facilities, and 70 million children are seriously malnourished.

The recently-published report on Human Development in South Asia 1998 (OUP) presents a shocking socio-economic profile of India and Pakistan which have now fallen behind even Sub-Saharan Africa in most human development indicators. Such a combination of desperate poverty with modern nuclear weapons is not only obscene, it can be extremely dangerous.

For the first time in history, we have two desperately poor nations, with an array of nuclear arsenal, staring across the borders with naked hostility. Any slight miscalculation and the world will forget Somalis and Rwandas as small footnotes in history compared to the tragedy that could befall the South Asian Subcontinent and that could involve the entire world. The real responsibility for these escalating tensions must be put squarely on the doorsteps of India.

economic miracle, smaller far eastern countries are treated as success stories, India is not listened to seriously, we are a great civilisation, we must shape the twenty-first century along with other great powers, etc. These are the sentiments that dominate. This is a context eminently suited to the near desperate search for some perceived short-cut that can somehow change such a situation or be thought to do so. There has been no change in the external environment or in threat perception that explains what has now happened. It has everything to do with changing self-perceptions.

The sheer lack of sobriety in much of the public response, the near-hysterical character of the adulation is not only pathetic but deeply disturbing because of the out-dated mind-set it reveals. In the more complex and difficult world we live in, great power status of the conventionally sought kind is neither as important as it was once (and still) thought to be, nor as easy to attain, nor pivoted as significantly on military might. Certainly, nuclear weapons are

not only irrelevant to the issue, but so self-defeating as to be part of the problem, not the solution.

After what has happened there are still two vital paths to pursue. The first is to call a halt to the line where it now is and to adamantly oppose further movement by India towards open development and deployment of nuclear weapons or indeed any further tests. This is a path which both anti-nuclearists, appalled at what has happened, and many of those who support the tests can together follow. The other path must be travelled by those who have supported the tests but are rightly hostile or worried by the way in which the BJP has hijacked the nuclear agenda. Even as they may feel or publicly declare that these tests are desirable and still contribute to a strong India, it will be the most shameful abnegation of their political and moral responsibility if they do not also declare publicly that they are motivated by a vision of Indian nationalism that is fundamentally opposed to the ugly anti-democratic, communal, intrinsically

helligerent Hindutva that is the guiding force of the BJP-RSS project for constructing a Hindu rashtra.

The latter are systematically seeking to hijack the discourses on national security, national interests, national greatness, etc, to legitimise their versions of all these and to use the impact of these tests as part of that larger project. This cannot be effectively confronted by doing what the Congress or UF have done – clamouring for a share of the credit. The feeble official response of the CPI and CPI-M is equally disgraceful. This can only be done by a consistent differentiation of one's own politics and an equally consistent attack on the ideology of the BJP-RSS even on issues where there seem to be an agreement. Is it too much to hope that the 'strategic experts' and others who approve of the tests but not of the BJP-RSS will do as much?

A. Vanaik is a journalist who is active in the nuclear disarmament campaign.



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# Technology and nuclear theology

by Giri Deshingkar

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, BOMBAY, 30 MAY, 1998

After the recent round of nuclear explosions, a top nuclear scientist reportedly said that until the tests Indians had to read their ancient classics to feel proud; now they would not have to do so. This scientist, who celebrated the event by popping a champagne bottle, forgot in that moment of glory that our ancient classics were our own; what he was celebrating was just a special case of import substitution; the devices/weapons the Indian scientists and engineers had produced had been invented by the West, then imitated by China and were already within the easy reach of many developed countries. The idea of measuring the achievement of the Indian civilisation on the scale of megatons of destruction can, however, be considered a conceptual breakthrough of a particular kind of Indian!

The quest for the Indian "big bomb", to use the words of Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, has produced reams of West-bashing with streams of adjectives like "double-speak", "hypocrisy", "Western nuclear theology" and so forth. Until the tests, the adjectives applied to India included "nuclear brahmacharya", "self-restraint" and such other terms usually applied to sexual abstinence. But now that the devices/weapons have made India enter

nuclear 'grihasthashram', an Indian nuclear 'varnashram' theology is taking shape.

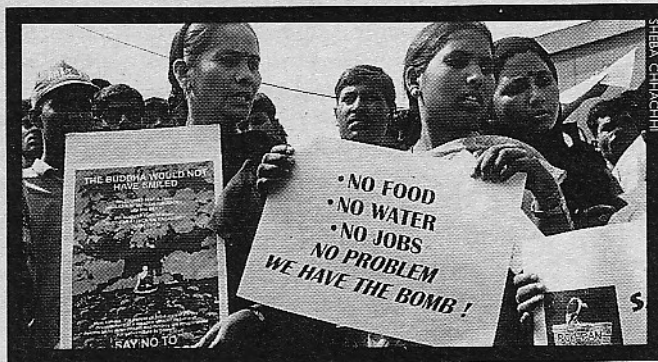
The first article of faith in this theology is that nuclear weapons are the currency of international power; the other currencies are secondary. What if Indians are poor? They now have the same currency as the Nuclear Five. The Chinese are supposed to have 'proved' this

ventional forces. No other nuclear country has accomplished this feat but India can. Unless it is assumed that nuclear weapons would, with absolute certainty, eliminate war between India and Pakistan, it is difficult to see how expenditures on conventional armed forces can be significantly reduced by India.

A further article of faith says

that a no-first-use pledge by India will clear all doubts about India's basic peaceful intentions. Those who believe in this must think that an Indian declaration will be ipso facto more trustworthy than the

*Just say "No": anti-nuke protesters in New Delhi on 16 May.*



point inasmuch as China was given a permanent seat in the UN Security Council and the US was not only forced to recognise it but to 'engage' with it, despite its anti-China stance. It is a small matter that China, in its non-nuclear incarnation, i.e., the KMT's 'Republic of China', was already a permanent member of the Security Council and that the US 'engagement' with China was contemplated as far back as in 1961 but the Vietnam war came in the way. Closer home, did Rajiv Gandhi go to China because it was a nuclear weapons power?

The second article of faith is that nuclear weapons, exuding power as they do, allow or even lead to, cutting down on con-

Chinese declaration made in 1964 and repeated many times since. Despite the declaration and the statement "neither side shall use its military capability against the other", contained in the India China joint agreement of November 1996, India pointed at the Chinese nuclear threat as the principal reason for nuclear testing. India clearly distrusts the Chinese pledge. What if Pakistan, likewise, rejects the Indian pledge as untrustworthy?

India's nuclear theologians put forward 'deterrence' as the clinching argument, one which did not work for the West but will work in the case of India. For several years they swore by the concept of 'recessed deter-

rence', now they have abruptly switched over to overt deterrence. Perhaps, we should start by asking what is being deterred by what? By the 12 KT fission bomb? By the three types of sub-KT bombs? And by the 45 KT fusion bomb? The first four types can only be Pakistan-specific; the sub-KT variety can only be military target-specific either on the battlefield or in the war-zone. There are rumours in India's north-east that these mininukes are meant against the insurgents there. Is their use in battlefield situations credible, considering that meteorological conditions in areas close to the Indian border will be entirely unpredictable? Even a neutron weapon would be problematic in that case. The same applies to Pakistani bombs used in border areas. Without credibility, there can be no deterrent effect.

One law of deterrence is that madmen/fanatics cannot be deterred, that for deterrence to be effective, rational behaviour on the part of the adversary must be a prerequisite. But India's image of Pakistani leaders from Jinnah to Nawaz Sharif does not tally with this. Further, since the new theology has abandoned the notion of recessed

deterrence (and also the claim that the 1974 test was a PNE), following another law of deterrence, the Indian arsenal must be made visible in order to make it credible. That means visible deployment of weapons with their carriers in all varieties to deter those on the other side. How can that step be avoided? Deterrence is also a function of holding out infliction of 'unacceptable damage' on the adversary. How to determine what is unacceptable to the Pakistani rulers or the Chinese rulers? A minimum deterrence against China will not look so minimum vis-a-vis Pakistan.

Some of the Delhi think-tanks are convinced that despite the concept of deterrence, which is of 1950s vintage, the reason why 'Western nuclear theology' went on to advocate several other concepts such as the 'flexible response', 'battlefield nukes', 'neutron bombs and so forth and psyched the political leaders into getting weapons designed and manufactured in quantities to suit each such concept was because of the burgeoning growth of the US nuclear military-industrial complex. These strategic think-tanks fondly believe that there is no such thing in India and there never will be. Such beliefs need to be treated with abundant caution.

Already the fact that there were five different tests as well as supplementary claims about other achievements tells us that they were nuclear laboratory (and the Defence Research and Development Organisation/DRDO) driven. It is not the political leaders who, through a discussion among themselves, told them what kind of devices/weapons the labs were to work for and make. Funds were allocated and the labs were left to themselves. The only role played by the political leaders was about when to go public. We know from the reactions of the scientists and engineers to

the debate over whether India should sign the CTBT that they panicked at the prospect of their 'scientific research' coming to an end if India signed the treaty. We also know that the nuclear labs have been working on uranium enrichment, thorium enrichment, nuclear propulsion for submarines, miniaturisation, ruggedisation and a host of nuclear military related technologies. How many of these owe themselves to political directives? How many at the labs' own initiative? Since secrecy is paramount, we will never know. But now that the government is speaking about signing the CTBT after "negotiating with key interlocutors", we will need to see whether by using the prime minister's latest slogan, "Jai Vigyan", they seek exponentially higher allocations to weaponise the devices for serial production and then for stockpile stewardship as well as 'fail safe' and 'command-and-control' technologies. In all nuclear weapon countries, experts have a way of hamboozling their political leaders with science fiction projects in the name of national security. Can India be the sole exception? By taking over BARC (Bhaba Atomic Research Centre), the government has already created a BARC-DRDO complex under the ministry of defence. ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) and the air force can be integrated into that at appropriate times. It will become an even more formidable lobby.

New revelations about the genesis of the Indian bombs show that successive prime ministers of India, with the sole exception of Moraji Desai, have supported the Indian weapons programme. Even Rajiv Gandhi, while he initially had doubts, did nothing to curtail support to the labs. Thus, there never have been any internal constraints on the labs, only external US pressures to prevent actual testing. Thus, for all prac-

*In a secular society, it is important to maintain the distinction between the sacred and the profane and resist the attempts to make a free interaction between the two in the public realm, especially when the attempts are driven by political and sectarian motivations. Often these attempts end up misappropriating the sacred for profane ends. The well-planned and widespread celebrations of the nuclear tests were intended to take partisan political advantage of them. The VHP proposal now goes a step further and links up nuclear power with the primordial energies of a religious symbol, makes it an element of jingoistic nationalism and seeks to sell it to the people as packaged patriotism.*

*(Editorial in Deccan Herald, 23 May 1998, commenting on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's plan to build a temple at Pokhran dedicated to the goddess of power, Shakti)*





tical purposes. India's nuclear (and space) labs have been functioning as autonomous entities, with the most tenuous of political controls, making demands on the exchequer under the cover of secrecy. In case the government does attempt financial control as is supposed to have happened in the case of development of the Agni, well-placed leaks pressurise the government to give up the attempt. Now, after the tests, the new mood is to defy US pressure. No cost is too high for national security. So the labs have an open field. So of course do the strategic think-tanks which will soon be incorporated into the National Security Council.

Indian nuclear theology holds that there can be no nuclear arms race in the Sub-continent unless Pakistan receives technical help from other powers. We will leave it to history to prove whether the Pakistani scientists are hopelessly dependent on foreign technol-

ogy. But we have all along been led to believe that the US has deliberately allowed Pakistan to buy technology from the US market and it has moreover turned a blind eye to China-Pakistan nuclear collaboration. What will prevent both from continuing to do just that in the future and thereby sustaining an arms race between India and Pakistan. Or are we prepared to conduct an Osiraq-type raid on Pakistan's Kahuta which will nip the race in the bud?

Our own brand of nuclear theology raise more questions than it can answer. The deed is done; the nuclear labs have presented the country with a fait accompli. Those who have asked them to do so have given no evidence that they have thought through the consequences of their action; the damage limitation exercises currently underway bear testimony to that. While the prime minister has to some extent controlled the aggressive political

clamour made against the background of the new 'geo-strategic situation', the scientists continue to air plans for hyper-planes firing missiles from space, reusable precision-guided missiles with nuclear warheads and such other Star Wars-like technological advances to enable India to achieve a global nuclear reach well beyond Pakistan and China. To encourage the whole country to move in that direction, the prime minister has declared the day of Pokhran II, 11 May, also the day of Buddha Purnima, as "Technology Day", effectively equating technological progress with nuclear bombs. The scientist quoted at the beginning of this piece was not speaking out of turn. The bombs have indeed produced a new worldview for Indian civilisation.

*G. Deshinghar is with the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi.*




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# No time to think



by Zia Mian and A.H. Nayyar

THE NEWS, KARACHI AND LAHORE, JUNE 16

For decades, military planners in the United States, former Soviet Union, and the other nuclear weapons states have convinced themselves that their nuclear weapons are a deterrent. The nuclear annihilation that would follow if these weapons were used was supposed to make any enemy stop, think, and decide that war was not worth the consequences. To make sure that an enemy had no doubt about these consequences, all the nuclear weapons states created nuclear arsenals designed to fight a nuclear war. Nuclear deterrence was built on assuming that one day the simple fear of nuclear weapons would not be enough and the weapons would have to be used.

The reliance on nuclear weapons that could be used in a real war led each nuclear

weapons state to live in perpetual fear of a surprise attack that would make their weapons useless. This fear was greatest during the Cold War, when each side thought the other could not be trusted. The US and Soviet Union addressed their fears by building enormously complex early warning systems that would let them know they were about to be attacked and give them time to launch their nuclear weapons before they were destroyed.

The early warning systems of the superpowers had another crucial role. Since any war would have meant nuclear war, both sides wanted to make sure that war did not begin by accident. Early warning systems created time during which people could make decisions using real information about what was actually happening

rather than responding simply on the basis of fears of what might be about to happen.

The US built and still operates the biggest and most sophisticated early warning system. It is based around a missile warning system and works by collecting information from satellites that can detect the launch of missiles from another country and radars around the world that can follow the missiles to see where they are going. The information is transmitted from these satellites and radars to where it can be processed by computers and then analysed and interpreted by people. To make sure that this is done seriously and properly, this assessment is done at several places separately. If the information is determined to be reliable, it is sent to more senior people who are supposed





to decide how to respond.

When the satellites and radars say that missiles may have been launched towards the US, there is a Missile Display Conference among the commanders of the places where the analysis of the information is carried out. If they decide that the danger is serious, and not a mistake made by the satellites, or radar, or somewhere along the communication system, or a mistake by one of the people who is supposed to interpret the information, then a Threat Assessment Conference is called. This includes the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and senior military commanders.

At the same time as a Threat Assessment Conference is called, a state of alert is declared, fighter aircraft take off, nuclear-armed bombers are told to start their engines, and missiles are readied for launch. This is the last step before a Missile Attack Conference. This is where the President is told what has happened, and asked to decide what is to be done.

Both the US and the Soviet Union, now Russia, had these multiple levels of decision making because they had the time to check, and double check, to make sure that they knew what was happening. Their satellites and early warning radar systems gave them information within one and a half minutes of the possible launch of a missile. They took about two and a half minutes to work out what was happening from this information. A meeting could be called and a threat determined a few minutes after this. In other words within about six or seven minutes, it was possible to decide if a nuclear attack may have started. Since the missiles would have taken about 25 minutes to travel from the US to the Soviet Union or in the other direction, there was still time for a final confirmation that the missiles were real.

There was even time left to find out if there had been an accidental launch of the missiles, and to decide what to do.

### **False alarms**

Given the terrible consequences of nuclear war, enormous financial and technical resources were invested in setting up and running these early warning systems, and trying to make them fool-proof. However, history shows that these systems failed. Not once, or twice, but frequently. There is no real history of all the failures. It is known, however, that between 1977 and 1984 the US early warning system showed over 20,000 false alarms of a missile attack on the US. Over 1000 of these were considered serious enough for bombers and missiles to be placed on alert.

Some of these incidents give terrifying insights into how easily even the most carefully designed and technologically advanced warning systems can go wrong. Two instances will suffice. In November 1979, the US missile warning system showed that a massive attack had suddenly been launched. Jets were launched, and a nuclear alert declared. There was no attack. There were no missiles. The warning was due to a computer that had been used to test the warning system to see how it would behave if there was an attack. Somebody had forgotten to turn off the computer after the exercise.

A second example was even more dramatic. In June 1980, the early warning systems showed that two missiles had been launched towards the US. This was followed by signals that there were more missiles following the first two. A Threat Assessment Conference was called. The situation was considered to be sufficiently serious that the President's special airplane was prepared for take-off. Again there was no attack, nor any missiles. The reason for the

mistaken signals, and interpretations, was eventually traced to a computer chip that was not working properly. The repeated failures of the US early warning system led at one time to an official enquiry which reported that the system "had been mismanaged... by the Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Department of Defence". In other words, every institution assigned to make sure the system worked had failed in its task.

It was not just the US system that failed. While there is little information yet on how the Soviet Union managed its nuclear weapons warning systems, there is at least one example from recent years that suggests it cannot have worked any better than the US system. On 25 January 1995, a Norwegian rocket was launched to take scientific measurements. The Norwegian government told the Russian government in advance that this would happen. Nevertheless, when the rocket was picked up by Russian radar it was treated as a possible missile attack. It seems a warning was sent to the Russian defence minister's headquarters, the Russian military leadership, and to the commanders of Russian missiles that an attack may be underway. A message was then sent to Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President, and an emergency conference called with nuclear commanders over the telephone. Boris Yeltsin has confirmed that such an emergency conference did take place.

### **Fear and paranoia**

The lessons for India and Pakistan are obvious. Experience shows that in any real crisis involving the two, fear and paranoia soon become overwhelming. One need look no further than the recent panic about a possible pre-emptive attack on Pakistan's nuclear facilities by India. The fear was there despite

a nearly ten-year-old agreement not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. In the absence of basic trust, generals on each side will always assume those on the other side might want to launch a surprise attack, and will want, in turn, to be prepared to respond with nuclear weapons.

The need for early warning systems is therefore clear. But, even if Pakistan and India had the technology for early warning, and even if it worked reliably, they could not use it, geography has made sure of that. The time to take decisions will not be available to either Pakistan or India. Instead of the 25 minutes that the US and the Soviet Union had, it would take a Prithvi missile somewhere between three and five minutes to reach almost anywhere in Pakistan. It would take the Ghauri missile about five minutes to reach Delhi. In such a short time, an early warning system could give warning of what

might be happening, a meeting could be called, and then time would run out. There would be no time to decide whether the warning was real, or a mistake. The decision would have to be made on either launching the missiles immediately or taking the risk of the missiles being destroyed before they could be used.

In order to avoid such a situation, some people may suggest that India and Pakistan find a way to create time for the generals to make sure they know what is happening in any future crisis. It may be possible to create such time by an agreement whereby each side would keep its warheads stored separately from missiles and airplanes and let the other side check to make sure this was indeed the case. Any nuclear attack could then only come after the warheads were taken out of storage and then loaded onto missiles or planes, and an attempt to do so would be detected.

But this is, at best, a desperate measure. The lack of trust is so great that making sure an agreement was being honoured would require an extraordinary system of allowing inspections of each other's missile and airforce bases and nuclear facilities. There is no prospect of that happening. But, any agreement without such inspections would mean the generals on each side, fearing their counterparts had secretly hidden a few nuclear warheads with some missiles, would do the same. The nuclear dangers would remain despite an agreement, and might actually become greater.

The alternative is simple. No nuclear weapons mean no nuclear crises. No nuclear crises mean no danger of nuclear war.

Z. Mian and A.H. Nayyar are nuclear physicists and peace activists.

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# A nuclear family

More than one billion South Asians now live under a scary nuclear shadow.

by *Praful Bidwai*

THE TIMES OF INDIA, 19 JUNE 1998

The BJP's nuclear misadventure is proving incomparably costlier than earlier imagined. After the worst-ever buffeting at the Conference on Disarmament, P-5 meeting and Security Council, New Delhi has been delivered another wallop by the G-8, with Southern states joining them. This underscores our unprecedented global isolation: barring Iraq, Nuclear India has no allies. It just won't do to pretend that India is the Boy on the Burning Deck single-handedly battling the unequal global nuclear order. India has not challenged that discriminatory order; it merely wants to join it – on the discriminators' side. But the P-5 have created yet another category for India and Pakistan – nuclear-possessor, as distinct from nuclear-weapons, states (NWSS).

## Deterring deterrence

Three reasons explain why India has won no sympathy even from those who have no interest in perpetuating the global nuclear order, viz. the bulk of the world's 185 states. First, India knew better. It was neither innocent of power realities nor so cynical as to embrace nuclear deterrence. Ever since Gandhi

taught us that "the moral... from the supreme tragedy of the Bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs...", we consistently argued that nuclear deterrence is profoundly immoral, illegal and strategically irrational. Besides being "abhorrent", it is fraught with instability, ratcheting up of threats and counter-threats and



hence an arms race. When Foreign Secretary Salman Haidar told the Conference on Disarmament in 1996 that "we do not believe that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is essential for national security and... the existence of nuclear weapons diminishes international security", he was distilling the essence of a long-standing doctrine – "fundamental precepts". The same goes for India's 1995 World Court plea that use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and their manufacture and possession should be declared illegal.

Second, what India has offered post-Pokharan-II by way

of restraint is wholly incommensurate with the gravity of its nuclearisation. A moratorium on testing means very little. There have been many in the past: in 1958-1961 between Washington and Moscow, and in the 1980s and 1990s in each of the P-5. These can be lifted at will and have no legal value. New Delhi is confused and vacillating about no-first-use. The belated show by India and Pakistan of willingness to talk sense after fire-and-brimstone exchanges and threats of using nuclear weapons and "winning a nuclear war against India in 90 minutes flat" is unconvincing. It is a deflect-the-G-8-pressure reaction unconnected with the inner logic of nuclearisation deriving from great-power ambitions; exclusivist nationalism; and a Hobbesian assumption about the world where life must be nasty, brutish and short. Sobriety, restraint and conciliation sit ill with nuclearism.

Third, the South Asian strategic reality is truly alarming. This Subcontinent is far likelier to witness a nuclear attack/exchange than the NATO-Warsaw Pact ever did, barring perhaps the Cuban missile crisis. This is not because our political-military leaders are more irrespon-

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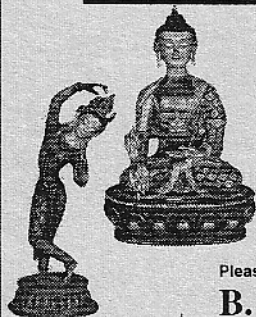
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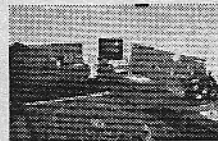


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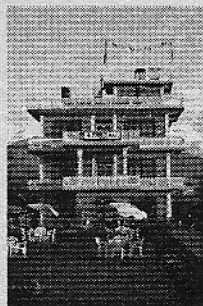
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sible than America's or Russia's, but because this is the world's only region which has had a continuous hot-cold war for 50 years. There are too many flashpoints, mutual hatreds, suspicions, fears. What else can explain the sacrifice of hundreds of men to frostbite at Siachen, the world's most insane – and highest-altitude – war?

### Megadeath

Nuclearisation has aggravated matters. Both states are now capable of delivering nuclear warheads to big cities – with the remotest chances of missile interception. (Indeed, as Purulia showed, even slow aircraft have low chances; and there exist no real missile defences anywhere). Missiles will cut flight-time to just three minutes – too short for preventive action, and bound, according to former Naval chief N. Ramdas, to trigger instant retaliation with devastating consequences. At no point in the Cold War was lagtime less than 30 minutes. There were, besides, scores of early-warning systems, hot lines, permissive active links and crisis defusing devices. There are none between India and Pakistan. An MIT physicist has rigorously analysed a bomb scenario for Bombay. Early deaths: 800,000. This is 10 times worse than Hiroshima.

This is too frightening to contemplate. Yet living under the shadow of a Pakistani/Indian Bomb, with a multitude of possible triggers, could soon become a scary reality for more than a billion people. This must not happen. Crossing the fire-break between nuclear tests and production/deployment of weapons means surrendering ourselves to the merchants of megadeath.

India and Pakistan must not get sucked into deterrence and then try inadequately to secure themselves by dangerous tech-

nical means. To keep out of that trap, they must reject woolly notions of "minimal deterrence" and negotiate a no-use agreement, while agreeing never to test or make nuclear weapons. However, given past hostility as well as intense domestic instability, this will not be enough. Treaty obligations are required. We would do well to examine the Comprehensive Test Ban dispassionately. It has been wrongly – and in the ultra-nationalist heat of the CTBT debate – castigated as discriminatory and equated with the NPT. This is unfair. The CTBT is non-discriminatory: unlike the NPT, it imposes equal obligations on all and makes no distinction between NWSS and others. True, it does not ban all tests, only test explosions. But, this is adequate to prevent further weapons refinement.

### Humbug

If the CTBT were not an effective restraint measure, US weapons labs and the Republicans would not have opposed it tooth and nail. Nor would Moscow and Beijing (which lack computer simulation expertise) have made its entry-into-force conditional upon 44 states' signature. The CTBT is not a full-scale disarmament measure. Nothing short of a nuclear elimination treaty can be. But unless we insist – which we nor others ever did – on Big-Bang disarmament, all partial measures are worthy if they promote step-by-step disarmament. The CTBT has been criticised on grounds of intrusive verification. But this is essential to plug loopholes. Besides, the treaty only allows for geographical and time-barred on-site inspections in keeping with international law and national sovereignty, unlike in Iraq.

There is a self-serving argument, which holds that the true nature is irrelevant. Because India has mastered sub-critical

testing, it should sign it. This won't do. We should sign the CTBT not because that is expedient, but because it conforms to universal, equal criteria. That means rejecting sanctimonious humbug and admitting we were devious. The loss of face in changing a stand on one treaty would be minuscule compared to self-injury from violating sensible doctrines of 50 years' standing.  $\Delta$

*P. Bidwai is a Delhi-based anti-nuclear journalist-activist.*

## Violence disrupts peace



**SCENE FROM ISLAMABAD'S** Holiday Inn where a press conference held on 3 June was disrupted by the Shabab-i-Milli, the youth wing of the Jamaat-i-Islami. The meeting, called by the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, to protest the nuclear tests by both countries had hardly begun when the panelists were heckled with shouts such as "traitors to Pakistan", "get out of here" and so on. And when the Shabab-i-Milli activists entered the hall, the violence began and could be stopped only when the hotel staff intervened.

A fortnight earlier on 20 May, in Bangalore, the Centre for Education and Documentation had called a meeting to protest the tests. At least 100 scientists and academicians had gathered at the venue. Midway, a group of about 20 activists 'saffron goons' stormed in, shouting slogans against the participants, effectively ending the meeting. They said the participants were all "anti-nationals" and "Pakistani spies".

# Unclear Days

We pick up the news diary of Lahore resident, **Farjad Nabi**, beginning 17 days after Pokhran II, which also happens to be the day of Chagai.

## 28th May

The astrologers are predicting 21st June 1998 as the date when war will erupt between India and Pakistan. They also say that if it does not then the rest of the year will pass peacefully.

Foreign Minister Gauhar Ayub has stated that guesstimates of when the nuke tests will take place are just like guessing how many days should the eggs remain beneath the hen.

The Action Committee of Traders in Peshawar has suggested to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that he should do an *Istikhara* on whether to conduct tests or not. An *Istikhara* is a procedure whereby consolation is sought from Allah, who gives signs in the seeker's dreams.

Pakistan Transport Workers Union Punjab has urged the PM and the army chief to carry out the tests. Quoting history, the union president said that when Gandhi had asked how will Pakistan be made, the freedom fighter Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar had slapped him and said, "That's how".

Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) as part of its cleanliness drive has rounded up 28 cows and exiled them from the city. The operation was filmed on video.

## 29th May

Five nuclear tests have taken place today followed by imposition of financial emergency, freezing foreign currency accounts and suspending fundamental rights. The PM has quit his secretariat and called for an austerity drive.

The PM spent sleepless nights in the run-up to the blasts, says a special correspondent. Not only did he seek advice from technical and professional people but from laymen also, including his driver and chef, Shakeel.

Headline: Nuclear blasts: masses celebrate, elites frown  
Daler Mehdi, the Sikh bhangra singer, has said that the blasts have pushed Lahore and Amritsar thousands of miles apart.

Cricketer Inzamam ul Haq has observed that we are healthier and stronger than Indians anyway.

All-Pakistan Truck Drivers Union has offered to supply ammunition to frontline bunkers free of cost, whenever the need arises.

TV Monitoring Cell reports that when PM Vajpayee was announcing the news of the Pakistani tests in Lok Sabha,

the jaw of Minister Madan Lal Khurana dropped and his lips formed an "O". The jaw remained dropped for the entirety of the announcement. Moreover, while talking to newsmen later Defence Minister George Fernandes repeatedly licked his lips as if his mouth had gone dry.

Kate Winslet is learning yoga.

The Metropolitan Corporation has impounded 136 more cattle. It is not confirmed if this operation was filmed or not.

YWCA Pakistan in a letter to YWCA World has condemned nuclear blasts by India.

## 30th May

Hearing of 45,000 cases suspended as they were based on issues of fundamental rights, now suspended under the Emergency.

Celebrations have taken place in Bangladesh too.

All-Pakistan Cement Manufacturers Association congratulates PM on carrying out nuclear blasts.

BJP is responsible for Pakistani tests, says Shabana Azmi.

Chairman, Pakistan Film Producers Association, has announced collaborative filmmaking with Iran. He suggested that dropping the "Islamic Bomb" should be through the medium of cinema.

Children hard of hearing are more intelligent, say Australian doctors.

At Chagai, where the tests were conducted, some camels and goats have died after the blasts. Some people reported bleeding from the ears and nose. One woman has gone blind. But people of the area say for the sake of their country even if the tests were conducted in their homes they would have been as happy.

Despite a stay order from the court, Metropolitan Corporation Lahore loaded 29 cattle in a truck and left them outside city limits. President, Cattle Owners Association, has protested against this action claiming a loss of over Rs 7 lakhs. The cattle are still missing.

Flimsier Retime has said that as we are in a state of war we should not watch Indian channels on the dish antenna.

PTV is recording morale boosting songs and plays.

Snippets from headlines in reaction to the tests: "Malaysia fears", "Nepal concerned", "Vietnam hopes", "S.





Korea regrets", "IAEA deeply regrets", "Turkey worried", "Greenpeace calls", "Euro-Atlantic Council condemns" and "Israel sticks (to its stance)".

13 intermediate students sustain burn injuries while lighting fire-works at the Crescent Hostel of Islamia College, to celebrate conducting of nuclear tests.

Kenya embarrasses India in one-dayer.

Headline: Forget Kashmir, says Vajpayee

### 31st May

One more nuclear test. Nawaz Sharif given tumultuous welcome in Lahore. Addresses rally.

Newborn named Atom Khan.

Speaking at the rally in Lahore, the PM asked the people if they had heard his speech on TV. Most of the people raised their hands but some did not. On this the PM said that he prays that there is a TV in every home.

Headline: Woman gives birth two years after being widowed

### 1st June

PIA flight from Karachi to Islamabad delayed because of a cat entering the aircraft. Cat still not found.

Interior ministry has instructed its departments to switch off air conditioners when leaving office.

Hamas congratulates Pakistan on nuclear tests.

Cement Industry has refused to bring down prices.

Gambling has become second nature to Lahorites, we can't eradicate it, Superintendent of Police.

Twins born in Wazirabad named Nawaz Sharif and Qadeer Khan (the latter is the architect of Pakistan's nuclear programme).

PTV clocks up record business with congratulation ads.

Headline: Hydrogen bomb awaits government signal

Ginger Spice quits Spice Girls.

Headline: Man dies in accident

Sri Lanka's top police **commando chief has gone missing** while swimming in the sea.

### 2nd June

Israel had planned to attack nuclear test sites, Pakistan tells USA.

PM starts using Toyota Corolla instead of Mercedes Benz.

Pakistan Olympic House will auction scrap today.

Nawaz Sharif's father was opposed to nuclear tests in the beginning but later agreed.

Whenever Pentagon computers played out a war between India and Pakistan it always ended after the use of nuclear weapons. Report.

Biharis in Bangladesh congratulate Nawaz Sharif.

Punjab Government will provide fax machines to all jails

in the province.

Pak nuclear tests have shattered the dream of Brahman Raj. In case of war, Sikhs of Eastern Punjab will destroy Indian army's supply line, says Babbar Khalsa International.

India increases defence budget by \$ 1.2 billion.

Punjab Food Department hands back Rs 2.8 million to Finance Department as part of the austerity drive. The money was meant for buying motorcycles for the department.

Only if we could make the atom bomb too: Taliban.

### 3rd June

UNICEF will give Vitamin A to 5 million Vietnamese women and children.

25 billion years ago one third of life on earth was annihilated due to extreme heat.

Metropolitan Corporation Lahore arrests two hutchers for supplying illegally slaughtered animals.

Performers at the local theatre improvise an "Atomic Qawwali" on stage. Words are to the effect that "we have only blasted the small one/we still have the big one".

Barri Nizami the poet who wrote *Dam Mast Qalandar Mast Mast*, the qawwali which shot Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan to fame, dies in obscurity.

Government cuts non-development expenses by 50 percent. Import of tea, oil and milk to be reduced. National holidays cut from 20 to 11.

Headline: Drug dependence eroding nation's foundations

The deputy commissioner bans the movement of stray cattle in the city.

A monthly meeting of the Floral Society of Punjab Club was held. Ms Naveen Munir demonstrated different arrangements on the occasion.

### 4th June

Baseball won't affect our culture, President, Pakistan Baseball Federation.

Federal Health Minister has suggested that every Pakistani should donate at least 500 dollars to the government to help cope with the economic crisis which has arisen after the sanctions. He, however, did not explain how each person would be able to do that given that Pakistan's per capita income is less than 500 dollars. Since explosion the world has started taking us seriously, Speaker, Punjab Assembly.

Headline: Arabs envy Pakistan

Ginger Spice may join BBC.

In the wake of the financial crunch following the nuclear tests, Punjab's education budget is to be slashed by 33 percent.

WHO lowers daily dioxin dose.

Seven dacoits attired in police uniform loot a house.

Police have arrested a Punjab University clerk for printing fake degrees and recovered a printing press from his house.

### 5th June

Police beat Balochistan on the first day of National Baseball Championships.

Cattle eviction drive in 11 localities of Lahore underway.

### 6th June

Masih Prem Party (Christian Love Party) burns 100 Indian films after announcing boycott of Indian goods.

Bomb blast in Lahore cinema. Three dead. One injured.

Imamia Students Organisation holds seminar to observe Ayatollah Khomeini's death anniversary.

### 7th June

Police suspect that the injured and one of the dead in the cinema bomb blast were accomplices in what turned out to be a mishandled operation. There are striking similarities between the two. Both were wearing the same kind of homemade underwear and both were uncircumcised showing a commonality of religion. The suspect is in police custody at the hospital.

### 8th June

Bomb blast in train kills 25, 70 injured.

GM, Railway, gives Rs 1,000 to each injured.

Thieves uproot two electric poles and make away with supply wire worth lakhs, in Muridke a town outside Lahore. The residents are still without electricity.

The American Embassy has added a new question in the visa application form for Pakistanis. The question asks the applicant to please mention if they are a member of a terrorist organisation or a drug mafia.

### 9th June

Farah Fawcett gets plastic surgery done.

Now a war with India will last only an hour and a half, Foreign Minister, Gauhar Ayub.

The Punjab government has declared Tuesday as the weekly holiday for barbers.

An Iraqi woman is being taken to court for having eight husbands "at once".

The injured in the cinema blast has admitted that his name is Ashok and that he is an Indian.

Police and Army reach finals of National Baseball Championships.

Rs 3 billion allocated for poultry industry. 16,000 new poultry farms in the next financial year.

Budget of Ministry for Women's Development and Special Education has been cut by 50 percent under the austerity measures.

Defence budget may be increased by 20 percent.

Headline: Pakistan can benefit from big arms market - Nuclear tests improve image in Gulf States

A Lahore-bound train left behind four bogies on the track containing over 100 passengers. Driver stated that the engine was too weak and he had to lessen the load.

### 10th June

15 die in Karachi cyclonic rains.

MCL veterinary squads have impounded 117 buffaloes which are to be shifted outside metropolitan limits.

An average Pakistani consumes 21 kg of sugar every year compared to 12.8 kg consumed by the average Indian.

Report by Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock.

Pakistan needs 60 to 70 nuclear warheads to achieve credible deterrent capability, say Pakistani scientists.

Monica Lewinsky poses for Vanity Fair.

A training workshop for the newly-elected councillors of Sargodha Municipal Corporation was attended by only eight out of a total of 62 councillors. An administrator revealed that reasons for low turnout could be that three councillors are illiterate, two primary, three under middle (class eight) and 18 middle. Only five had done their graduation.

PTV to telecast play with the message of adopting simplicity in lifestyle in view of the sanctions.

Cricket, not trade with India - Gallup Survey.

Police win National Baseball Championships.

Indian spy hanged. Balbir Singh, who was arrested in 1989 on spying charges was hanged in Sahiwal Jail.

Balbir had converted to Islam in jail and used to pray five times a day. Last words, "War is of no use, Pakistan and India should hold talks and tell my brothers and sisters that I had become a Muslim".

### 11th June

On the instructions of Foreign Minister Gauhar Ayub a milestone has been put on the highway near Islamabad which reads, "Srinagar 306 kilometers".

The prime minister is moving into a simpler office on the third floor of the Cabinet building. Rs 1 million has been released for the initial interior refurbishing and decoration. Another Rs 30 million will be spent on elevators, alarm, airconditioning, lighting and security systems.

Typhoid killed Alexander: Researchers.

Pakistan's external debt \$ 25 billion.

Ad in newspaper: Before going to sleep every night ask yourself, "What did I do for Pakistan today?"

Pakistan names 28 players for Asia Baseball Cup to be held in India.



## National identity on the tarmac

**STEALING THE SHOW** from Pakistan's nuclear scientists in the run-up to the revenge blasts in Chagai was never going to be easy. But three Baloch nationalists gave it a try anyway, and their attempt was heart-rending both in its amateurishness and its denouement.

Their stage was a PIA Fokker plane bound for Karachi from Gawadar, in the extreme southwest corner of Pakistan. Brandishing pistols, the three young men stormed into the cockpit fifteen minutes into the flight and ordered the pilot to take the plane to India. The captain made as if to comply, and told the hijackers that he was landing in Rajasthan's Jodhpur for re-fuelling on way to New Delhi. He touched down, instead, in Pakistan's own Hyderabad.

The "poor and illiterate-looking" – as one passenger had it – Baloch men fell for the gambit. The passengers too were stumped for a while; some of them horrified at being in India, prime enemy territory in these frenzied nuclear times, started reciting Quranic verses.

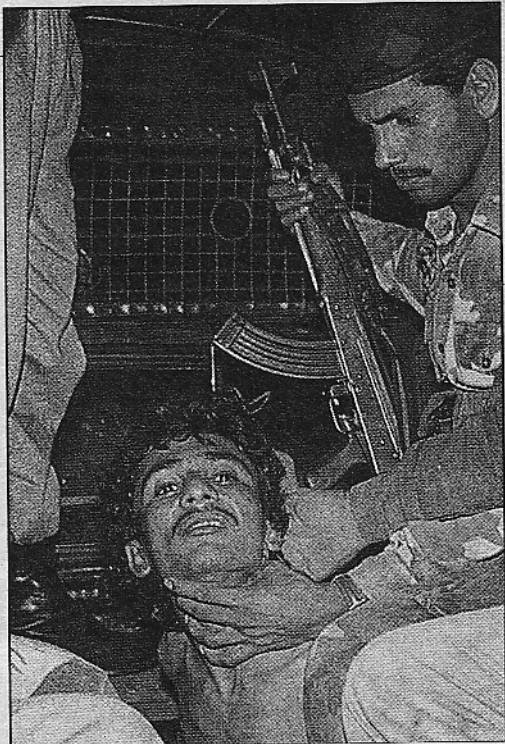
Outside the plane, Hyderabad's very Pakistani officials had to quickly devise a plan to make their airport (and themselves) look properly Indian (read "Hindu"). Sepoys were deployed at the mosques to keep the muezzins from going on air with their call to prayer and giving the game away! In order to forge a more authentic India, it is reported, the airport staff was asked to wear dhotis. It is not clear where the appropriate cotton cloth was found at such short notice, but the hijackers in all likelihood were not sartorial sophisticates when it came to what Hindus wear.

The simulation became even more 'authentic' as the official negotiators assumed names, straight out of Hindi films. Hyderabad's commissioner became "Dilip" and his deputy was "Gopi". The SSP of police became "Manoj" for the duration of the drama. The trio, it is said, eschewed

a "Salam walaikum" and managed a creditable "Namaste" when they met the hijackers.

Suspecting no trickery and believing themselves to be safe in India, the hijackers waited for the arrival of Pakistan's envoy in New Delhi, with whom they had demanded to speak. In the meantime, they put up a show of traditional Baloch hospitality. True to tradition, Sabir Rind, Shabbir Rind and Shahsawar Rind from the Tarandoz clan of Balochistan, ate their meal only after serving the 21 passengers. The Balochs also invited the 'Indian' officials to eat, offering them chicken instead of beef. One also gifted a traditional Baloch lungi (wraparound) to an official. And like all good men, the Balochs allowed the women and children to get off the plane.

Then came the moment of truth, nine hours into the drama. The Indians suddenly turned into Pakistanis, the plane was stormed, and the three young men realised that they had never left Pakistan. They were whisked off by the police, to confess later to being Indian agents. "These fools continued to believe they were in India until their arrest," said Captain Zuhair Ahmed with a touch of bombast.



Fools or amateurs, and criminal hijackers certainly, the three Balochs had a significant message to deliver, something which was considerably underplayed by most of the Subcontinent's nuclear-charged media. The trio represented the best or worst faces of deprived Balochistan's angst. All along the drama, they told the passengers: "We have no enmity with anyone. We are against the government of Pakistan. They have money for an atom bomb, but don't have anything for Balochistan. Thousands of people were killed in floods [in Turbat], but there is no aid. Our area is under-developed, but nobody cares."

Clearly, these were not your typical agents.

## Ministers resign, fools hijack

The Balochistan government, which has long felt marginalised by Islamabad, announced that it did not have any sympathy for the hijackers. Chief Minister Sardar Akhtar Mengal was quick to condemn their action, saying that he believed in a peaceful and democratic struggle for achieving the rights of Balochistan. Nevertheless, he was in for a rude shock, four days and five blasts later. Pakistan had tested its nuclear devices in his own Balochi backyard of Chagai district, and he was not informed beforehand. The chief minister threatened to resign. And that is the way it goes, chief ministers threaten to resign (and rarely do), while foolhardy young men skyjack civilian airliners.

# Gen. Scissorhands

ON 5 JUNE, the Sri Lankan government imposed the latest blackout on war news after the government forces, battling for over a year to establish a main supply route between Vavuniya and Jaffna, suffered some very heavy casualties. Confirming the losses in Parliament, Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte claimed that the military gave as good as it got and imposed even more fatalities on the Tamil Tigers. As for most Lankans, especially residents of Colombo, the wailing of ambulance sirens was sign enough that the war was going badly.

On all previous occasions when the government decided to begin censorship, the director of the government information department was named to be the concerned authority. But this time it is the army HQ which is vetting the news. General Ratwatte is on record saying that censorship became necessary because newspapers were publishing classified information. He accused one newspaper, which he did not name, of publicising a military plan complete with a map that led to the calling off of a whole military operation. Predictably, the minister was silent on leaks in the military establishment itself that made such publications, if they

had happened, possible.

Protest against news censorship came from the local press and foreign correspondents accredited to Colombo. Independent newspapers dashed off protest editorials, while the government-controlled press made lame excuses about what they say is a necessary evil. Given that the Sri Lankan press as well as the corps of foreign correspondents in Colombo have not as a rule been irresponsible, the present restrictions are widely regarded as unnecessary.

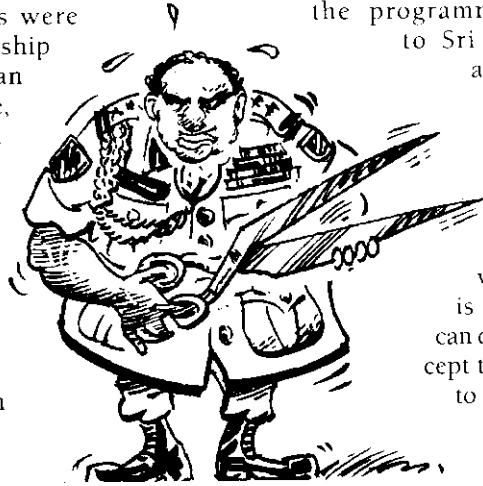
There were signs that the foreign correspondents at least would be exempted from censorship some days after it came into force. There have been precedents when the foreign press were let off the censorship hook quicker than the locals. This time, however, that did not happen probably because the local press began to scream apartheid!

Meanwhile, a most peculiar situation has arisen. News that has been

'red pencilled' by the censor is freely accessible to anybody with a radio set tuning on to the BBC programme. Sandesaya, relayed both in the Sinhalese and Tamil languages by the state-owned Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) after the night newscasts. And this has nothing to do with the general perception in Sri Lanka, as in other parts of South Asia, that the Beeb is truly independent. It springs from an agreement between the BBC and the SLBC that requires Sandesaya to be relayed exactly as it is produced without any deletions or alterations.

True, BBC stringers in Colombo are subject to the same rules as any other foreign correspondent and thus not allowed to transmit any uncensored war news out of the country. But that does not prevent the BBC London office from gleaned information that the army censor may have blocked and including it in the programmes beamed to Sri Lanka. The authorities

have had this anomaly pointed out to them, but given the agreement with BBC, there is nothing they can do about it, except turn a red face to the public.



## Censorship on sale

**THIS SHOULD GO** down into one of the guidebooks of Bangladesh. If you are itching to say something against the memory of "Bangabandhu" Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, be forewarned that you will be doing so at your own peril. For immediate confirmation, sceptics can ask the Ananda Bazaar Patrika (ABP) Group of Publications, Calcutta's leading newspaper chain. Well, this is how the story went.

February the twenty-first is a red-letter day for Bangladeshis. It was on this day in 1952 that several students, rooting for Bengali as a state language of Pakistan, were ruthlessly shot down in Dhaka. Since then, the day has been dog-eared to mark the anniversary of the language

movement in Bangladesh. Neighbouring West Bengal also goes along for the ride, and special commemorative issues of magazines during this time are not a rarity.

So when *Desh*, ABP's literary fortnightly with a large readership in Bangladesh, decided to take out a special issue, it made for sound editorial and marketing sense. But they would not have known the kind of trouble they were getting into when they commissioned a piece from Badruddin Umar, Bangladesh's well-known historian-litterateur. They did, soon enough, when the magazine found itself spurned by the Bangladeshi authorities. Culture cops took offence to Umar's article, specifically his

observation that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was nowhere in the scene when the language agitation was gaining ground in the then East Pakistan. That, for them, was vintage blasphemy. *Desh* must be banned!

Cut to the *Desh* management, for the story does not end there. What would they do now, knowing only too well that Bangladesh was an important bread-winner and that the West Bengal market had been steadily deserting them in recent years? Well, the way out would seem to be to make an appointment with the Bangladeshi deputy high commissioner in Calcutta, and tell him that printing the article was an unpardonable error, and that it had crept in without the knowledge of the editor who was out of the country. And agree to reprint, after of course trashing Umar's piece.





King Jigme lunches with subjects.

## Pink slips in Thimphu

**BHUTAN-WATCHERS ARE** scratching their heads. What to make of the sudden upheaval King Jigme Singye Wangchuk seems set to bring about in his little Himalayan redoubt? His moves have been described as relating to "wide-ranging political reforms", but in Bhutan, especially, things are never the way they seem, and it is best not to make weighty analyses until the events play themselves out in Thimphu.

King Jigme, who both rules and reigns in Druk Yul, is an astute politician besides being monarch. He may well have seen the need to respond to changing times and expectations (within and without his kingdom) by creating a sense of movement. He

*Lo and behold, that is exactly what happened and a diluted Desh made it to the newsstands of Bangladesh. Moral of the story? When freedom of expression does nothing more than drain your pocket, just make liberal use of your scissors. Of course, there will be many in this market-driven age who will not fault the Desh management's action; but, once upon a time, in the 1960s, there was a magazine which got together a whole lot of Bengali writers and artists under the banner of artistic freedom. This magazine would not fail to carry fiery articles against the lack of artistic freedom in countries like China and the Soviet Union. Were those the follies of youth, someone should ask of this fortnightly called Desh.*

*Meanwhile, the question remains, was Bangabandhu a late-comer into Bangla language politics?*

may, on the other hand, merely have been responding to resentments within the ruling elite of Thimphu by easing out people who have held top-most positions for much too long. Then again, he may have been responding to pressures being applied by the select band of donor governments which Thimphu has cultivated.

Whatever be the trigger, the king's proposal for portfolio revisions that was handed over to the speaker of the Tshongdu, the National Assembly, is significant merely because it is happening. Fourteen ministers appointed by the king stand to lose their jobs, while the six directly elected and the two chosen by the clergy are to continue until their three-year terms expire. What is interesting, is that the ministers being eased out of the cabinet are those who have been part of Bhutan's ruling polity during some of the most volatile as well as productive periods of modern Bhutanese life and times. Their terms as *lyonpos* (ministers) have coincided with significant advances made in educational, environmental, tourism and health areas. They have also presided over a period when the pressures of Westernisation and modernisation impacted on Thimphu, and they helped craft a sophisticated accommodation with New Delhi, as well as successfully wooed a handful of donor governments to be steadfast funders of Bhutanese development.

The changes planned by King Jigme may or may not have something

to do with the Lhotshampa refugees matter, which has been the longest-running and biggest crisis in the history of modern Bhutan and which has brought a lot of unwelcome publicity for the Dragon Kingdom's kingly regime. The crisis was entirely self-generated by Thimphu's *lyonpos*, of course. All the individuals who ruled the roost during the census exercise of the late 1980s and who gave the orders of depopulation that created refugees of more than a hundred thousand people are still in place in the summer of 1998. They include Dawa Tshering – foreign minister and the smiling and sophisticated face of Bhutan to the world for over 26 years – and Dago Tsering, who as home minister did the king and the *dasho* (nobility) elite's bidding in throwing out the refugees.

The other reading of the changes, as Bhutan's national (and government-owned) paper *Kuensel* would have it, is that the shuffling in Thimphu represents a gradual bid to democratise governance, and to give more authority to the 150-member Tshongdu. This latest move is said to come in line with the policy of decentralisation pursued by King Jigme over the past 15 years, where local committees have been formed to decide the development agenda and local matters.

All that one can say at this stage is that King Jigme, who remains very much in charge of affairs in his kingdom, may be out to do some good. This good, certainly, is planned for the citizens of Bhutan presently within Bhutan, but it may be that the changes may well work towards the benefit of those who have been pushed out, under the authority of the very individuals the monarch is presently about to push out of his cabinet.

# Comrade Lama

**WHEN ON** 5 May 1998, Amar Lama stepped out of prison a free man, his release was greeted with disbelief by the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), and its breakaway faction, the CPN (ML). Lama was no ordinary prisoner. For all of five years his fate had been inextricably linked with an incident that has haunted Nepal on and off during those years. On 17 May 1993, a Mitsubishi Pajero carrying the all-powerful General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML), Madan Bhandari, and the Party Organiser, Jeevraj Ashrit, plunged into the Trishuli river at Dasdhunga in central Nepal. The sole survivor of the accident was the driver, Amar Lama.

Lama's deposition before various investigation commissions was that on trying to wipe the vapour off the windscreen on that rainy day five years ago, he had lost control of the vehicle and it had fallen into the river.

After the initial shock, talk began of the senior communist leaders having been assassinated and suspicion quickly fell on Lama, for the simple reason that he had survived. General Secretary Bhandari's wife, Vidya Bhandari, immediately after the accident had publicly vouched for Lama's integrity as a party faithful, adding that he was "like a brother" to her. Her tune, and that of the party that she became increasingly active in after her husband's death, however, changed soon enough.

The investigative commission set up by the then Nepali Con-

gress (NC) government attributed the accident to the carelessness of the driver. It was not a verdict that the opposition CPN (UML) was willing to accept, for in the meantime, the communists had formed two separate commissions, both of which suspected foul play behind the incident.

The CPN (UML) took to the streets immediately after the government commission submitted its report on 17 June 1993. Luckily for the then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala (back in the seat once again today after four years), even as the protests were intensifying, huge cloudbursts wiped out road links with the capital and large parts of the country's eastern plains were inundated. In the face of the national calamity, the communist agitation lost steam, and was stopped altogether after an agreement was reached to form another commission under a Supreme Court judge. This time the CPN (UML) would have a say in its formation.

However, before the commission could submit its report, the CPN (UML) itself came to power in November 1994 affirming that the "accident was a conspiracy". And when the commission did present its report, the government sat on it for a month before going public with it. The commission, much to the CPN (UML)'s discomfort, dismissed the conspiracy theory. And although the communists officially accepted the report, they made it an article of faith that the Dasdhunga mishap was part of a conspiracy, to be resurrected whenever it suited them.

Meanwhile, the Chitwan District Court charged Lama with

murder, sentenced him to life imprisonment, and confiscated his property. This ruling, approved by the Appellate Court, was unprecedented given that under the circumstances the accused should have been tried under laws governing a traffic accident, not murder. In desperation, Amar Lama appealed the judgement in the Supreme Court.

It is interesting to note that, save for one, the various human rights organisations in Nepal did not raise a single voice against the way Lama had been treated by the law. The left-leaning organisations would have nothing to do with Lama given their proximity to the CPN (UML), while the others were inexplicably silent on Amar Lama's incarceration. The only consistent voice against Lama's treatment came from the well-known senior scholar-statesman, Rishikesh Shaha.

When the Supreme Court took cognisance of Lama's appeal and reduced his sentence to two years and a fine of 500 rupees, he had already served four years, 11 months and 19 days behind bars. He was released on the same day of the Supreme Court decision.

The expected protests (which even included a statement from Vidya Bhandari, now a CPN-UML member of parliament) were, however, muted. As a CPN (UML) leader puts it: "Had the Party been undivided and not busy bickering between themselves, the Supreme Court decision would have become a much bigger issue. But now they are making perfunctory statements just to keep the party workers happy."

A self-proclaimed Gandhian, a free Amar Lama says, "CPN (UML) has taken charge of the government two times after the Dasdhunga accident. They used government machinery to investigate the accident. But they could come up with nothing. They have used me and this incident merely to pull down the Congress government."

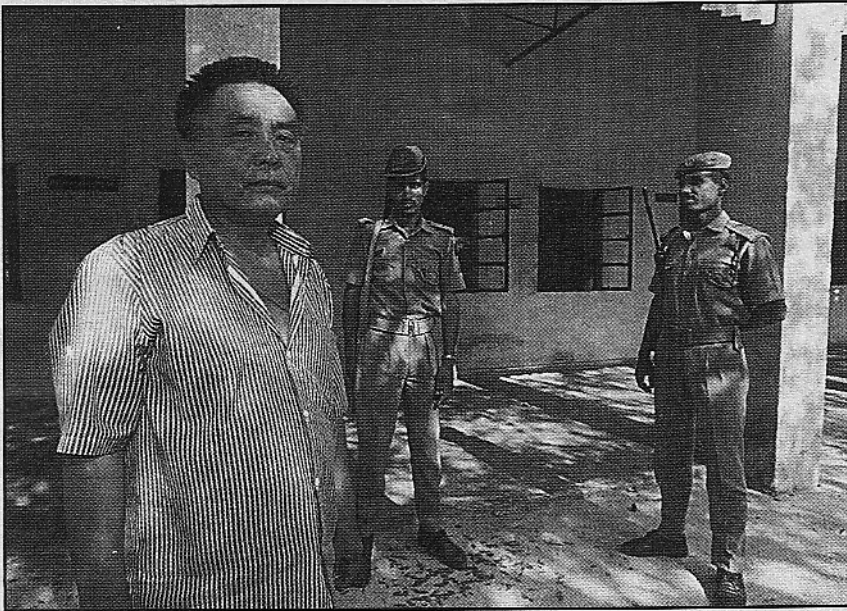
Lama now plans to enter politics, although he has not yet made up his mind which party (of the left) he will join. He would do well to carefully chose his options.

-Rajesh Ghimire



*End of ordeal:  
Lama walks free.*





In custody in Delhi.

## Rongthong's release

**IF THERE WAS** some reaction to his arrest, Rongthong Kunley Dorji's release on bail by the Delhi High Court on 12 June was a much muted affair, with the news reduced to a one-column bit in the lesser pages of the Indian English national dailies.

But what does this release of the Bhutanese dissident leader after spending a little over a year in Delhi's Tihar Jail signify? A strategic shift in South Block's policy towards the Bhutanese state? An agreement between Thimphu and New Delhi to allow an act of judicial travesty to be corrected? A move to help old friends in the wilderness by the Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes, who before the high appointment had been actively opposing the refugee-creating Bhutan government? None of the above, most likely. The release on bail of Dorji seems merely the end-result of a court system which could not justify incarcerating him any longer. The proof just was not there to extradite Dorji to Bhutan as a criminal, as Thimphu claims. Sending back this political prisoner (which is what he was) would have brought on the wrath of even those reporters and diplomats in Delhi who have insisted on treating the Bhutanese government

with kid gloves, and on turning away from its policy of turning a seventh of its population into refugees.

Perhaps Dorji's release will act as a shot in the arm for the Druk National Congress, the five-party Bhutanese democracy group which he heads. But, going by earlier practice, this is unlikely. The refugee leadership is a divided house, and in the past it has been unable to take advantage of events in its favour.

So, for the moment, all that can be said is that Rongthong Kunley Dorji was unfairly in jail in New Delhi, and now he is out (albeit still having to remain in the Indian capital and report to the Delhi Police). He also now has the badge of having served as a "political prisoner", which always proves useful to other politicians who are known to be more street savvy than Dorji. What a pity, though, that he was jailed in a third country, India, rather than in his own.

Which reminds us to remind the world that there is a certain Tek Nath Rizal still behind bars in Thimphu, a political prisoner who has by now stayed almost a decade in jail. There is no judicial embarrassment in Thimphu to keep him firmly where he is.

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# Waiting for the bite

Sanctions could have an impact on many levels of the Indian economy.

by Prabhu Ghate

Soon after the 11 May nuclear tests, the US, Japan, Germany and a number of other countries announced the suspension of fresh aid, besides humanitarian assistance, to India. The US sanctions are the most far-reaching and include the suspension of further export credit and guarantees from the Eximbank and the Overseas Private Insurance Corporation (OPIC), military sales, commodity assistance, and direct bilateral aid. Of these, the first one is the most important since the US is the largest investor in India, especially in the power and telecom sector with their huge demand for funds, and all US investors depend on Eximbank for credit equipment. Moreover, the law under which the US is mandated to impose sanctions against any non-nuclear country conducting tests also requires the US to oppose loans from multilateral financial institutions (MFI) such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

There has been much wishful arithmetic in the Indian press on whether the US with its vote share in these organisations will be able to block loans. But now that the G-8 countries – including France and the UK, both of which had not suspended bilateral aid – have supported the cut-off of loans from the MFIs except for humanitarian purposes, the fate of loans is no longer in doubt. The only hope was that the World Bank interprets “humanitarian” broadly to let through a number of social sector and poverty-related new loans, and that is precisely what happened when the WB let through a number of such

loans in the last week of June, including the Andhra Pradesh restructuring loan of USD 543 million (see *Himal* December 1997).

Gross aid disbursements in the Indian budget for the new financial year that just began (1998-99) are estimated at about INR 100 billion (about USD 2.4 billion) compared to total plan outlays of INR 720 billion, and plan capital expenditures of INR 280 billion (aid finances mostly capital expenditures). Thus aid provides a non-trivial share of plan expenditures, and is particularly high in some sectors such as power (one-third of central sector plan outlays). This year about 69 percent of the aid is to come from the two MFIs, about 27 percent from Japan and 3 percent from Germany.

## Net aid

This year's disbursements will not be affected since they come mostly from loans already approved in past years. Ironically, what cushions the impact of the cut-off is the huge backlog or pipeline of disbursing loans that amount to about USD 18.5 million. Theoretically, India could continue to draw on the pipeline for some time to come. But this will be of little use to new projects that were about to get new loans under this and next year's programme.

There has been a massive shift in the last couple of years of fresh commitments to certain reforming states and sectors. Thus, while the Andhra Pradesh restructuring loan has been cleared, a number of agencies in the power sector such as

PowerGrid and National Thermal Power Corporation will be badly hit. The ADB was developing a huge USD 1.8 billion loan to Indian Railways over the next five years along with bilateral co-financiers (some of whom called the day after the blasts and asked to be counted out). Infrastructure generally will be badly hit.

It has been pointed out that when one takes repayments of principal and interest into account, net aid actually turns negative (by INR 8 billion this year). It was precisely to increase the level of net aid that the WB and ADB have been stepping up their commitments of fresh aid. The World Bank was to increase its programme to USD 3.3 billion in the financial year 1997-98 that ended in June (of which only about USD 900 million worth of loans got through before the sanctions) and the ADB was expected to provide USD 1.3 billion this year. Since it does not lend to the social sectors, as it does not offer IDA-type soft loans to India, nearly all of the new ADB lending will be hit. And unless the pipeline is replenished soon, net aid flows will turn more strongly negative.

As important as the direct impact of the sanctions on aid is the indirect effect on the investment climate and the cost of non-aid sources of external borrowings. Part of the sudden worsening of sentiments is due to the lacklustre budget coming on top of the sanctions-inviting blasts, as also the downgrading of India's credit outlook by the two leading international credit rating agencies: from “stable” to “negative” by Standard and Poor's,



and from "investment grade" to "speculative grade" (which is a double downgrade) towards the end of June. The combined effect has been massive sales of securities by foreign institutional investors, a net outflow of portfolio investment, declining share prices, and depreciation of the rupee. While India's foreign exchange reserves are a comfortable USD 28 billion, Moody's has forecast a loss of reserves of USD 5 billion this year. Sentiment is unlikely to turn positive unless there is concrete progress by India and Pakistan in initiating talks, curbing the threatened arms race and addressing some of their underlying problems.

Although it is too early to show the numbers yet, direct foreign investment is also likely to suffer a sharp decline. Even existing proposals are in jeopardy. About 15,000 MW of private power projects were reaching financial closure, with power purchase agreements already finalised. About 40 percent of these projects had US promoters who were relying on Exim

or OPIC loans and guarantees. (OPIC and Exim are reported by the US Commerce Department to have Indian proposals worth USD 15 billion before them, although, of course, not all of these would have materialised. However, given the commercial implications – India is the second largest overseas power market after China – these agencies will probably be the first to be exempted by Congress, should there be a softening of the sanctions).

While some of the private projects will be abandoned (cynics say many of them were not going anywhere anyway), other promoters will try to switch to European equipment suppliers and sources of export credit, including Enron for its Phase 2. (General Electric, Enron's suppliers, have licensing agreements in Italy). However the requirements are so vast that the European export credit agencies may not be able to handle all of them. (Apart from US Exim, the two other main export credit agencies, the Japanese OECF and German KfW, are par-

ticipating in the sanctions). As for commercial borrowings, they are likely to see a 2 to 3 percent add-on to the existing country risk premium. This will raise the cost of the projects, a price that will be passed on to consumers through higher tariffs.

The impact of sanctions are multifarious and are still evolving. Much depends on how India decides to react and also on whether it retaliates against the "sanctioning" countries by giving preference to "non-sanctioning" countries (in further oil exploration contracts, mining and telecom leases, and in speeding up clearances). So far, the government has fallen over backwards to try to accord liberal treatment to US and Japanese investors (e.g. the rather sudden patch-up with Suzuki over Maruti). More important, the impact will depend on how long the sanctions last, which in turn depends on how soon India is seen to make progress on the non-proliferation front and improvement of relations with Pakistan. △

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Who controls the channel changer in your family? No Nobel Prize for guessing. In mine, and in most other families we know, the Alfa Male holds the gadget. And if he is absent during Japan vs Croatia, then it is his son, and if sonny hoy has gone to the loo then it is his six-year-old heir apparent. The women in the family have better things to do than watch 22 guys with overdeveloped thigh muscles half-way around the world kicking balls for five weeks – better things like ensuring that a steady stream of popcorn, chips and other snacks flow into that male-bonding, armpit-reeking den, the tv room.

Nothing has brought out the patrilineal pecking order of South Asians more vividly in recent years than control over the remote control during the World Cup. It is the modern icon bestowed upon the clan leader as a symbol of his power and glory – something like what the ceremonial flint-tipped femur axe was to our ancestors. For the outsider, one glance at the remote-holder and it is immediately clear who is boss.

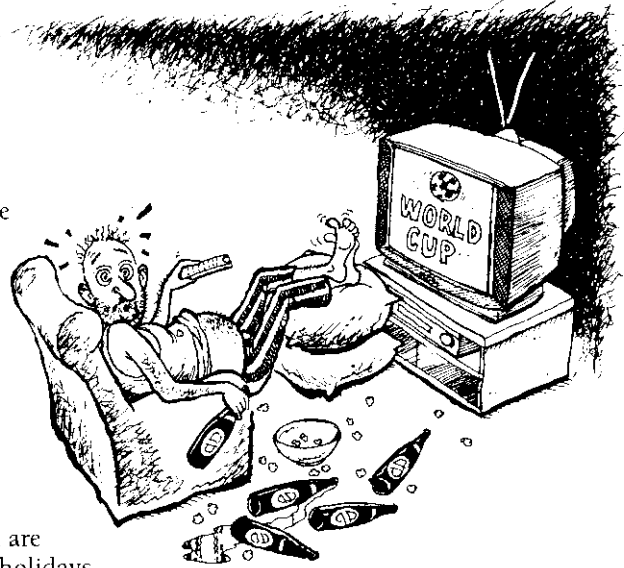
The South Asian dominant male holds on to his electronic sceptre as if he would be naked without it. Bestowing custody of the remote to the crown prince during the commercial break is a time-honoured tradition of laying down the rules of clan succession so that there is no bickering once the patriarch makes final departure for the great soccer stadium in the sky. "And my beloved channel changer I hereby bequeath to my eldest male progeny, Phanindra. May he use it justly and with responsibility."

There used to be a time a couple hundred millennia ago when remotes only turned the television on or off. Today's household is full of remotes: a separate one for the VCR, another one for the satellite decoder,

a remote to control the speed of the ceiling fan, a remote for the aircon with timer, the CD remote and the FM remote, a remote-sensing keyboard for the computer, a garage door opener, a remote car lock, and the mother of all remotes – a remote that turns the house master switch off when you are leaving for summer holidays. Such is the relentless march of technology that pretty soon you'll be able to flush the toilet with a remote, turn on the shower and adjust the hot-cold mix while still brushing your teeth with a remote-controlled tooth brush.

Look at all remotes past and present: they are toys that can make it easier to play with other toys. So you can play them without – what a repulsive thought – touching them. And because toys and boys are made for each other, they are designed mostly for use by members of the male species. When will they start designing a remote-controlled iron, a remote-controlled vacuum cleaner, or babies that can be switched on and off at 50 yards by pointing a laser beam at their bellybuttons? That is when we will know that the consumer electronic industry has finally become gender sensitive.

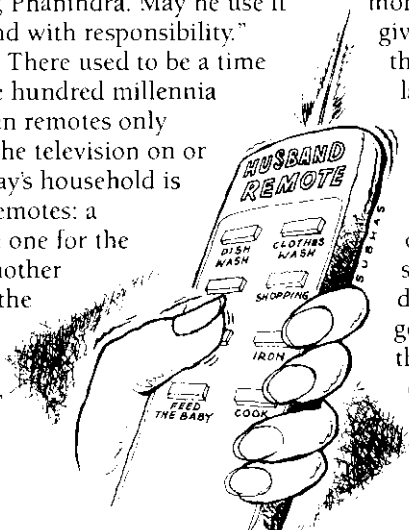
A recent rush of revelations purporting to prove that nature is more dominant than nurture has given our menfolk all the excuse they need to explain away their laziness. Biological determinism and post-feminism are on a collision course. Prof Michael O'Boyle (that is his real name) of the Psychology Department of the Iowa State University suggests in a Channel Four documentary that men are genetically programmed so that they cannot iron, cannot cook, cannot wash and cannot do



more than one thing at a time – like if they are watching Cameroon vs Scotland, they cannot possibly answer the doorbell. Says O'Boyle: "Electrical activity in the male brain is concentrated mainly in the right half. In the female brain it is spread across both."

Wow. That means it is technically possible to interfere with the electrical impulses in the right brain by a wife equipped with a Husband Remote. This gadget (it may be called "Turbo Cerebellum 586") will be similar to one of those control stations for flying model aircraft, and with it wives of the future from the comfort of the living room sofa can electronically insinuate their husbands to do the dishes. It will mark the greatest leap forward towards gender equality since women got the vote. The laser signals will tamper with the electrical pulses on the right-side of the male brain and force hubby boy to at last help with the ironing even though he may be congenitally averse to it.

It will take some time for scientists to design and craft these Guidance Systems for Multi-tasking Males (GSMM), so we may have to wait for the next World Cup before we can channel male energies away from pumping iron and to the ironing board. What's that? Well, all right, we'll let you watch the finals while ironing the knickers.





.....and you thought you'd seen it all !



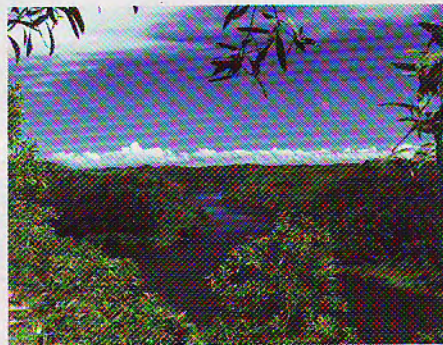
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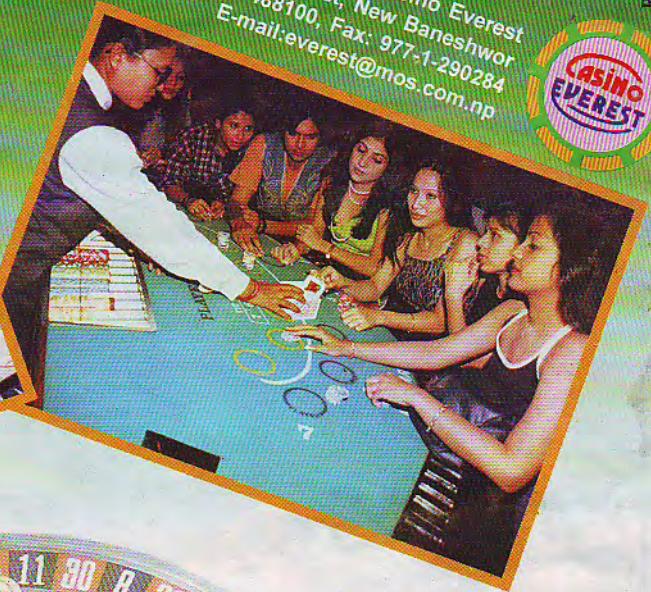
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