



#### A thought for today

Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic State – to be ruled by priests with a divine mission

**MUHAMMAD ALI JINNAH** 

# Call The Bluff

Islamabad's threats to the US offer excellent diplomatic opening to New Delhi

urrent fulminations by Pakistani officials and politicians against the US, together with Islamabad apparently having prepared a "three-option toughest diplomatic policy" against the US and Nato, provide New Delhi with an excellent opportunity to achieve its objective of diplomatically isolating Pakistan. It should not fail to seize the moment.

The Pakistan establishment's central obsession is India, and it has leveraged its ties with the West to keep a much larger India off balance. During the Cold War Pakistan offered its services to the anti-Soviet alliance, in return for Western aid to be used against India. 9/11 saw a return to this paradigm as Pakistan wove a whole narrative around how it was taking on Islamist extremism, even as it kept that spectre alive by offering sanctuary to regional and global terrorists.



That narrative, however, is past its sell-by date and its discrepancies have become glaringly apparent. While Pakistan's providing a base to groups like the Haqqani network in Afghanistan or to insurgent groups in Kashmir has led to mayhem in the region, including the deaths of innumerable Indian and American troops, Pakistan's role in nuclear proliferation to North Korea now enables the latter to threaten to rain down destruction on South Korea, Japan and mainland US.

Last month President Donald Trump called on Pakistan to end safe havens for terrorists. The US has many policy instruments available to get Islamabad to do this - and New Delhi must cooperate and encourage Washington down this path. India can, for example, offer its ports and airports to supply Nato troops in Afghanistan should Pakistan block access to the overland route -

this would be an excellent way of leveraging Pakistan's India obsession to bring it around.

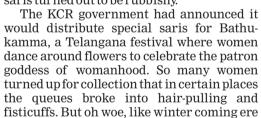
Having had its way for so long Islamabad now threatens to play its China card – it even fantasises about a new Cold War where it will square off with Russia and China against the West and India. But China has stakes in the global order as well and it too has a lot to lose from the jihadi militias Pakistan harbours. If, let us say, the US fails to bail out Pakistan during its next financial emergency, it would be interesting to see how quickly "iron brother" China rushes to assume its liabilities. It's past time to call Islamabad's bluff and get it to end support to terror, which destabilises the region and the world.

# Say Sorry For Sari

Women rightly put Telangana government on the mat for substandard freebies

reebies help win elections. Like it or not, true or false, this is an article of faith in India. Sometimes it means mixer-grinders or farm loan waivers and sometimes it's just making sure that dry voting days get a dousing. These are not all birds of the same feather but they flock together, as far as political parties attempting to influence voting behaviour are concerned. Of course the precondition for pulling off this ruse is giving voters something they actually want or value. Any old rubbishy thing won't do. This is where the Telangana government has stumbled this festival season, by first

getting the ladies very excited at the prospect of free saris and then equally angry when the saris turned out to be rubbishy.



summer were half done, instead of the promised handloom these saris were just poor polyester. Some women made bonfires of them. Others complained these are not even good enough for cleaning floors. More sad than glad rags.

Further north it's some Uttar Pradesh farmers who have gotten a rude shock, discovering that their much-anticipated loan waiver is only for less than a rupee. Geniuses who expect this kind of therapy to allure voters may need medicating themselves. On the upside. how thrilled would Indira Gandhi and Pupul Jayakar be at how the taste for handloom has gotten broadbased. If only broken promises would become passé like polvester.

## **Testing times**

*Just D thing to add to your already* long list of medical check-ups



Do you feel exhausted and depressed all the time? The reason for your tiredness could be that you work long hours at your job. And the reason for your depression could be that, like all of us, you're daily exposed to news of murders, rapes and other

But medical science has another reason for your fatigue and depression: you could be suffering from a chronic lack of Vitamin D, and you should immediately go and have yourself checked up for a lack of it.

Apparently, a great majority of Indians – by some estimates as many as 90%

of us – suffer from Vitamin D deficiency without even realising it. This is strange. Because one of the major sources of Vitamin D is sunlight, of which we have no dearth in most parts of the country, through most times of the year. But for some reason – maybe because of a national phobia that exposure to

the sun will darker our skins - this abundance of sunlight fails to give us our necessary dose of Vitamin D, and we need to take a dietary supplement to make up the shortfall.

Vitamin D is the latest addition to the already **Second** opinion long list of things for which we have got to get ourselves regularly tested: blood sugar, cholesterol, triglycerides, thyroid being some of them.

Every now and then – more and more now rather than then – medical science discovers yet another thing for which we ought to get ourselves tested, Vitamin D being the latest but most certainly not the last. So far medical science has identified only a handful of vitamins, but there's

a whole alphabetic range of vitamins awaiting discovery, all the way to the yet-to-be identified Vitamins X, Y and Z. And after Z? Z+1, Z+2, and so on? There seems to be no end to all the things for which we need to get ourselves tested. And the more tests that we have to undergo, the more we have to pay

So if you're feeling tired and depressed it could be because of a lack of Vitamin D. Or it could be that you're just fed up with all those tests and check-ups.

Or should that be costly cheque-ups?

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# An Impoverishing Politics

Cruel food and farm licence raj destroys livelihoods across the board in BJP ruled states



This is not an article about Hindus and Mus-It's about livelihoods being cruelly taken away, possibly because of prejudice, equally because of a creeping

licence raj for a particular sector. Aale Naavi Qureshi walks around with a laminated copy of a licence issued on January 17, 2015, by authorities in Noida, UP. It permits him to continue

running his traditional meat shop that sells mutton and chicken. The licence is valid for five years until 2020. But three days after BJP came to power in UP in March this year, the police came round and asked him to upgrade the shop to include tiles, geysers and new pipes. He did so, spending Rs 3 lakh. Yet he

was told that his licence was no longer valid (something open to a legal challenge). Now out of work for nearly six months, this large man weeps and says that the government wants us to educate our children when we have to pull them out of schools - "Send me to the border to fight our enemies, find me some other work, or kill us all.'

Dilshad, who once owned three small tempos that carried meat to butcher shops from the Ghazipur slaughterhouse in Delhi, has lost two vehicles to the financiers and finds little use for the third. Production is down to half at Ghazipur as the entire supply chain is hit. In the past the labour that carted animals made Rs 500 a day. Now many have returned to their villages. Dilshad's family has taken to selling bananas on a cart.

The crisis hitting small butcher shops, cattle farmers and transporters of meat in the arc of states around Delhi – Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh – is a tale of slow death with an occasional lynching such as that of Pehlu Khan thrown in. Last week the Rajasthan police closed investigations into six people named by dairy farmer Pehlu Khan in his dying statement



But the story is not just about cows and buffaloes but about mutton, chicken and fish as well. It's also not just about Muslims but Dalits and some Gujjars as well. Meet Jaggu who ran a pork meat shop in Noida; also shut down for five months leaving him no choice but to work as labour. Meet Imamuddin, who would collect fish from a pond, carry it in a basket on his head and then squat on a pavement and sell it in a semi-urban part of UP. He is being asked for a licence, from whom he does not know, from where he does not know.

What he does know is that other street hawkers are not being asked to run in hoops in the manner in which those dealing in non-vegetarian food, raw or cooked, are. He points out that many of his fellow fish mongers are Hindus. At the subsistence level at which Imamuddin and Jaggu survive, the real oppressor is the police not the politicians who obviously don't care.

There is a Kafkaesque illogicality

It's moved beyond beef, to all things non-vegetarian. Since it makes for poor economics,

presumably it's about making a

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about the process meat shop owners are being subjected to. Alfaiz Moinuddin also walks around with a licence he shows to anyone who would care to listen. In Loni, Ghaziabad district of UP, he has been asked to connect his shop to sewer lines that do not exist and therefore the shop lies closed. He stresses that many employees were non-Muslims.

While their livelihood has been seriously threatened, there is income generation for police and petty bureau-

Cattle farming too has become a risky business. Shaukat Ali from Alwar district of Rajasthan, recently faced the trauma of ten milk producing cows being taken to a gaushala by police and cow vigilantes as they were being moved between state borders. In the gaushala the cows were not milked properly resulting in their udders being blocked and subsequently infected. After paying bribes, the family got their cows released but found them sick so is tending to them. They now request Hindu cattle farmers to sit in front of the vehicles when cattle has to be transported.

From farming to exports, these individual stories highlight the acute distress a systematic assault on the meat business has caused. It's happening across religious lines, with sections of Hindus also becoming collateral damage in what appears to be actually targeted at Muslims. Dalits, who work as labour in the meat business and tanneries are hit; middle caste farmers who cannot sell old cattle are impacted.

Whichever way one looks at it, the only people who benefit would be those who gain from extortion and/ or are ideologically driven. As we can see, it's moved beyond beef, to all things non-vegetarian. Since it makes for poor economics, presumably it's about making a symbolic gesture against people who are not seen as voters of the new rulers of states in the cow belt.

The suggestion that this is motivated by a desire for civic cleanliness rings hollow: the biggest hit on the meat business has come from UP, where the constituency of the chief minister is disease ridden and packed with garbage.

The butchers and slaughterhouses are on their knees, ready to comply with reasonable rules. They insist their crisis should not be viewed from an identity lens but an economic lens. Still, one can't miss the nasty prejudice determined to impoverish people who are part of a traditional profession practised across

## 'Constitution makers gave strong clause for common civil code ... on Rohingyas, not possible to give concessions'

Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi is Union minister for minority affairs and was recently elevated to cabinet rank by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He spoke to Rohit E David on why he thinks ushering in a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a constitutional mandate for the NDA government and why he thinks there will be no backtracking on the government's hardline stance against Rohingya refugees from Myanmar:

■ Do you feel that India needs a **Q&A** secular UCC?

The people who gave us the Constitution gave us a very strong clause that government of India should work towards a common civil code. This is the constitutional mandate for every

The law commission is trying to build a consensus on this issue. Now let's see what they come up with. People think that the common civil code is an attack on their religious rights, which is completely wrong. Everything will be debated first before UCC comes out.

■ The latest edition of the International Religious Freedom Report says that India didn't act against cow vigilantes and has failed to protect religious minorities. Your response?

India is the biggest democracy in the world. We have a track record of tolerance, unity and harmony. Some people surely try to derail our agenda of

SELF-RESPECT

IS LIKE A PRISON

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dilbert

development. I'm confident the people who are trying to do the same will not succeed. The world should understand that if India is united today then it's only because one can find tolerance Every now and then, different

reports do come. I don't want to go into them. The fact is minorities are well protected in India. In states where a law exists saying that cow-slaughter is banned, there

definitely the law will take its own course. In places where people are trying to impose their own super-law, then that is certainly a serious criminal act. This criminal activity should not be given the security cover of a communal act.

The central government reportedly in the process of withdrawing its support for Jamia Millia Islamia's status as a minority institution. Why?

GOALS ARE A FORM

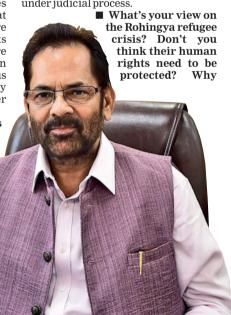
OF SELF-INFLICTED

SLAVERY.

As far as the socioeconomic upliftment and empowerment of minorities are concerned, we have said that we will give empowerment without appeasement. Earlier appeasement had hijacked empowerment. We only heard talk about community, caste, religion and based on these non-issues

appeasement would happen. In the last few years many different

committees were made. All of them said one clear thing that people living under the poverty line, especially among Muslims, are a huge number. However with regards to minority status for this institute, I cannot say much because the matter is still under judicial process



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can't we take a more humanitarian approach? There are many refugees who

are living in India legally. As far as Rohingyas are concerned, this is a serious issue and it is definitely not possible in this case to give any type of concessions, because of several security What are the priorities you have

set for yourself as cabinet minister?

For the last three years we have been continuously working in the government. My priority has been development with dignity, combining it with dignity of the poor. We want to empower all the poor and fulfil PM Modi's commitment to this cause with all force. In the coming days whatever schemes are there – education, roads empowerment, employment - I would like to make them strong at the

Over the last three years, one of the biggest achievements of this government has been that we have been completely corruption-free. Also, a positive and constructive environment has been created to do work.

I'm a party worker, I was general secretary of BJP, vice-president and then spokesperson. I have also been given charge of different elections. So, I have been given different responsibilities and I have carried these out with honesty. The target PM Modi has set for a new India, we will fulfil it.

### **Sacred**space

Continue To Evolve

*No one is born a good citizen;* no nation is born a democracy. *Rather. both are processes* that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.

Kofi Annan

# The Albert Camus Way: Triumph In Tragedy

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The recent epidemic of reported suicides, is cause for concern. How to prevent it? First, there needs to be greater awareness of the issue. Albert Camus's philosophical essay, 'The Myth of Sisyphus', talks about the "absurdity" we all face-the feeling that life is meaningless.

Sisyphus was an evil king of ancient Greece, condemned by the gods to death. Even as Sisyphus escapes death by sheer treachery, he is mortified by the gods to the unrealisable task of rolling a huge boulder over the top of a hill. The moment he reaches the top, he watches, as it tumbles back to the bottom. He is cursed to repeat this cycle for eternity. Despite the barren task, Sisyphus soldiers on with the task at hand. So, in popular parlance, the word 'Sisyphean' epitomises any infinite and burdensome action that yields futile results. But could this also have another,

not-so-negative connotation? Camus juxtaposes the analogy

of Sisyphus to the misery that man undergoes with "absurdity". The essay is premised on the idea that, at some point, people seek answers to the "ideal" in this world, only to be confronted with unpleasantness and chaos everywhere. One gets the feeling that life is meaningless. Camus calls this 'absurdity".

Camus sees three possible philosophical responses emerging to this state of hopelessness: firstly, an act of reposing faith in God; secondly, suicide; and, lastly, an act of defiance in continuing to live, despite understanding the futility of

About faith in God, Camus becomes subjective, as he attempts to gloss over it as an illusion. He then treats suicide as an escape, without obtaining answers to the meaning of the

"ideal" in life, which one was craving all along. Camus prefers the third option, a life of subjugation, to the misery of circumstances, with an attitude of acceptance.

Can meaninglessness be justified? Camus answers it from the standpoint of Sisyphus. Sisyphus, though embarking on futile labour, is fully aware and conscious of his fate and

that he cannot escape it, but he can endure it. With the "absurd", there is no hope or faith. But, by embracing hope-

lessness-one is aware of the limitations in life. Sisyphus doesn't contemplate suicide as an option; on the contrary, he discerningly revolts against his speaking fate. In doing so, he gains inner strength and moral courage, to rebel. Camus affirms that, by his

rebellion, Sisyphus is free-from the anxieties of life – and chooses a life that is without appeal. At this stage, one is

indifferent to the future and cherishes the present to the fullest, even if it is deplorable. Camus is impressed: Continuing a life in misery with a profound understanding of it, is more momentous than suicide, which serves no purpose. The situation is rather gloomy; yet Sisyphus is thoughtlessly immersed in his task and thinks neither of hope nor of gloom. He is fully aware of the absurd, and is the master of his fate.

Camus sees a small measure of gratification and also triumph in tragedy. Camus praises Sisyphus as an "absurd" hero for his surmounting response of resilience to a hostile environment and demonstrating that buoyancy in crisis is an admirable quality. Maybe, the word Sisyphean can now be read with a positive connotation!

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