

**Azim Premji University**

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# Balochistan's future

Vikas Kumar



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## Urbanisation is a serious business

The UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), which recently concluded in Ecuador's capital Quito, was an important event that underlined the importance of urbanisation as a major economic and social force in the world and sought to address the challenges it poses to governments and societies. The UN-sponsored Habitat conferences are held once in 20 years and the Quito conference was the third. It was attended by 193 countries and it adopted the UN's New Urban Agenda which is a road map for the future. The agenda is especially important for developing countries like India where urbanisation is gaining strength. It is estimated that by 2030, two-thirds of the world's population and 40% of India's population will be living in urban centres. Such a big shift in population in a short time presents both problems and opportunities.

The New Urban Agenda highlights the need to provide cheaper and affordable housing to great numbers of people, to create more jobs, to make cleaner energy and better transportation available and to ensure social equity to the urban population. It also conforms to the Paris agreement on climate change. It is important for cities to be more inclusive and sustainable than they are now. Cities are engines of economic growth but iniquitous growth can create more social tensions and conflicts. Future urban habitations will also have to pay more

attention to the needs of women, children, aged persons and those with disabilities. Urban governance will become very important and powers will have to be further decentralised to lower levels to cater to the needs of the people. Many of the ideas in the agenda are in general terms because it is difficult to articulate the specific needs of urban centres in a multiplicity of nations in different stages of development. But they provide guidelines for policies and action for governments and authorities everywhere.

While the agenda has been widely welcomed, there is some disappointment over its failure to fully accept the 'right to the city' as a part of it. The 'right to the city' recognises access to urban space and services as a basic human right for all, including slum dwellers and those living on the streets. India, which has a large slum population, was among the countries which opposed the proposal. The UN agenda is not binding, but it provides directions to all countries on how to design and handle their urban future. It is a reminder to India that it has to take its urbanisation process more seriously and adopt better policies and initiatives to deal with it.

## Ban on burqa not justified

If the coastal districts of Karnataka have been a source of worry for some years now because of growing incidents of communal clashes and moral policing, there was at least a sense of relief that the state administration had managed to ensure that the menace had not spread beyond Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts. But, that veneer of satisfaction has been shattered in the last few days with some private college managements of Hanagal, Hirekerur and Akki Alur in Haveri district trying to impose a ban on girl students coming to college wearing burqa, their traditional dress. It seems the trouble started with the colleges setting uniforms for all students. Some boys, apparently under the influence of right-wing outfits, complained to the heads of institutions about a handful of girls being allowed to come in burqa, and as a supposed mark of protest, started wearing saffron scarves and dhotis to class. Instead of taking the boys to task for their provocative action, the managements decided to ban the girls wearing the burqa, which resulted in their parents withdrawing them from the colleges.

The college managements' action is both disturbing and alarming. Religious freedom is guaranteed to all religious communities under our Constitution and following one's religious practices is a matter of fundamental right. If some Muslim girls want to wear the burqa, it is their choice and nobody else has a right to sit in moral judgment. If wearing uniform is an issue, all that the colleges can and should do is to ask the girls to follow the

rules, and leave the choice of burqa to them. Depriving the girl students of education for some silly reason and in the process, disturbing communal harmony are extremely condemnable and the state's Higher Education Minister Basavaraj Rayareddy has done well to warn the colleges concerned of stern action if they do not withdraw the circulars banning the burqa in classrooms. The state government should ensure that banning or imposing uniforms on religious lines is not just stopped but also does not spread to other schools and colleges.

Failure to act against cases of causing communal disharmony was one of the reasons for the people of Karnataka to throw out the BJP and bringing the Congress back to power in 2013. But the record of the Siddaramaiah government in this respect in the last three-and-a-half years is far from satisfactory. With nearly 300 cases of communal disturbances, resulting in 19 deaths and injuries to 865 people in the period between 2013-2015, Karnataka was dubbed the third most sensitive state in the country after Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.



# Comment

## BALUCHISTAN'S FUTURE

## Region's importance to Pak

While questioning Pak presence in Balochistan, India must asses feasibility of Baloch secession vis-à-vis Pakistani state's structure.

By Vikas Kumar

The Indian government has begun to experiment with the coordinated use of non-military and sub-military options to deal with the Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism. However, it is too early to say if there is a sustainable structural change in India's Pakistan policy and if the new policy will force Pakistan to reconsider its approach towards India.

Questioning Pakistan's presence in Balochistan is part of this new policy. Two months ago, this catapulted Balochistan into our drawing rooms. Sections of the media rushed to predict Balochistan's (impending) secession overlooking the barriers to a Bangladesh-style stand alone secession.

This is not merely sensationalism or partisan rant. It betrays a lack of familiarity with Balochistan. Hardly any of Indian journalists, diplomats or academics have spent time in the Pakistani Balochistan. This is reflected in the [death](#) of depth in news coverage and commentary on Balochistan.

The feasibility of Baloch secession has to be assessed vis-à-vis the Pakistani state's structure. There are two types of large countries (in terms of area or population). In Pakistan-type large countries, which include Saudi Arabia, China and Russia, ethno-linguistic/religious minority provinces account for a very large share of the country's area. However, minority provinces account for a small share of area in the India-type large countries, which include Bangladesh.

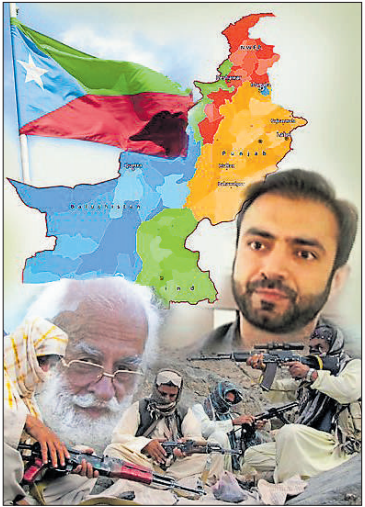
Pakistan is divided into four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan) besides administrative units of Islamabad and Federally Administered Tribal Areas or FATA (in addition, it has occupied Gilgit-Baltistan and parts of Kashmir and Jammu).

The balance of power between these ethno-linguistic provinces is crucial for Pakistan's integrity. No Pakistani government, noted a former Census Commissioner of Pakistan, is "prepared to face census results which sharply changed inter-provincial ratios." Unsurprisingly, Pakistan has not conducted a census after 1998.

Pakistan is precariously held together by an imploding Islam, an imported language (Urdu that is the mother tongue of a minority), the supposedly existential threat posed by India, and the world com-

munity's fear of balkanisation of a nuclear [Pakistan](#). The USSR, which was structurally akin to Pakistan, collapsed after its core province Russia found the cost of maintaining the Union unbearable. Likewise, a sufficient condition for Pakistan's disintegration is that the Union ceases to be beneficial for Punjab.

Punjab, the only province that suffered dismemberment in 1947 and whose main population centres are close to the Indian border, accounts for about a quarter of Pakistan's area and more than half of its population. Union with other provinces provides Punjab with strategic depth vis-à-vis India and access to the outer world. Punjab will be landlocked without Sindh and Balochistan.



Punjab depends on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Jammu (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan for water and on Sindh and Balochistan for minerals and energy. Without Sindh, it will be deprived of access to Pakistan's commercial hub, Karachi. Similarly, without Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad will find it difficult to control Gilgit-Baltistan.

Pakistan's military assets are distributed across provinces to evade India. This expands the reach of the Punjabi-dominated military. So, Punjab is the only province that has an abiding material, strategic and emotional interest in Pakistan's integrity and also the means to protect its interest militarily.

The PoK is five times smaller and 10 times more densely populated than Gilgit-Baltistan. Contrary to popular perception, it is [Gilgit-Baltistan that is part of J&K's Ladakh region](#), which is far more important to Pakistan than the PoK. Gilgit-Baltistan connects Pakistan with China and insulates Pakistan's Pashtun regions from India. Without Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan cannot credibly threaten India's sovereignty in Jammu and Kashmir.

Gilgit-Baltistan's rivers and glaciers

are vital for Pakistan's water, food and energy security. Building dams in Gilgit-Baltistan is not politically costly: it is sparsely populated; it is ethno-religiously different from Pakistan; it is not represented in the Pakistani Parliament; its citizens cannot approach the Supreme Court; and, it is beyond the reach of media. Pakistan's dependence on Gilgit-Baltistan will only increase because of climate change and the continued dependence of the growing population upon agriculture.

### Poorest province

Balochistan, which is the poorest province, accounts for barely 5% of Pakistan's population and about two-fifths of its area and two-thirds of its coastline (Iran and Afghanistan's Baloch provinces account for a small part of their area and population). Mineral-rich Balochistan is a crucial site of Chinese investments, hosts Pakistan's nuclear and missile test sites and provides naval depth vis-à-vis India.

Economic stagnation and military oppression have pushed many Balochs into Sindh and West Asia. The Baloch presence in Balochistan is being further eroded by Punjabi and Pashtun settlers. However, unlike most other parts of Pakistan, Balochistan is not landlocked and unlike Sindh, it does not depend on Punjab for water. The sentiment of the decades-old Baloch insurgency is best captured by the late Nawab Akbar Bugti's observation: "I have been a Baloch for several centuries... a Muslim for 1,400 years... a Pakistani for just over 50."

Dependence on Indus river, occasional access to power in Islamabad through the Pakistan People's Party and dependence on the Punjabi-dominated army to control Karachi etc tie the semi-arid Sindh to Punjab.

The Mohajir/Pashtun-dominated Karachi accounts for one-fifth of Pakistan's GDP and half of its tax revenue and is the most important hub for international air and maritime transport. Sindh is a swing state because it is the largest minority province, the only province other than Punjab whose inclusion in Pakistan is not legally/historically questionable, and has close relations with both Punjab and Balochistan.

Given its small population and Punjab's abiding material interest and military capability to contest secession, Balochistan can become independent only if Baloch insurgent and tribal factions unite and Sindh loses faith in Pakistan. India's capacity to facilitate Baloch unity and unrest in Sindh and the response of Afghanistan, China, Iran, and the US to Indian manoeuvrings require a separate discussion.

*(The writer teaches at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru)*

## RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

## Nobility in giving

Some heartwarming gestures speak of the magnanimity of the human spirit.

By Sudha Devi Nayak

Random acts of kindness by ordinary people stir our hearts and lift our souls. These acts, except for a few, often go unsung and are forgotten in the daily grind of living.

A write-up in a newspaper tells us of a waiter in Houston, US, who "lifted the spirits" of a dejected woman by paying for her grocery at the local store, and was rewarded for his kind efforts with a 500-dollar tip by her grateful daughter. She had paid the tip for a bill of 37 cents. We are struck by the nobility of ordinary human nature on one hand and infinite gratitude on the other.

Closer home, there was a similar report that made my eyes moisten.

Akhilesh Kumar, an engineer, was in Mallappuram, Kerala for an official meeting. At the end of the day, he returned to his hotel and ordered a plate of parantha and chicken curry. Before he could start eating, he saw a small boy of 10 looking at him through a window. He gestured to the boy to join him. The boy came in with his little sister and they were treated to a good meal.

The children, who were ragpickers, left after the meal and Kumar called for the bill. The cashier brought him the bill which had two sentences in Malayalam: "We don't have a machine to bill a humane act. All the very best." Kumar later put this up in a Facebook post that went viral. I was as much touched by Kumar's gesture here as I was by the cashier's sensitivity in the matter.

These heartwarming gestures speak of the magnanimity of the human spirit, the recognition that every human being has a claim on another. Not all of us are capable of such generosity as we pass up

many opportunities for doing a little good and easing the burden of those less fortunate. These acts are done without prior thought or expectation of reward and they come as a ready response to a human need. The result is a sense of happiness to the giver as well as the recipient.

The acts of philanthropy of the rich and the famous often hog the limelight and notch up several column inches and media space. However, it is these small gestures we see and experience in our careworn lives and selfish striving which teach us that life is as much about giving – be it our resources or our own selves – as it is about taking.

Albert Einstein said that since our life is based on the life and labour of others, we must give in the same measure we have received and are still receiving. The unwillingness to empathise and merely struggling one's shoulders leaves the spirit poor and deprives us of the human quality that distinguishes us from the lesser beings of Creation.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### ‘Encounter’ of SIMI activists dubious

Sir, Apropos "8 Simi activists flee from jail, killed in 'encounter'" (DH, Nov 1). The killing of eight undertrials belonging to the banned SIMI outfit appears to be highly questionable. The police's claim about a jail break and the subsequent encounter, and a statement by Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Bhupinder Singh about the "mode of escape" appears dubious, unconvincing and highly contradictory. In addition, a purported viral video, aired by several TV channels, shows the cops shooting the dead/injured suspec-

ts at point blank range, with no weapons around as claimed.

The 'encounter,' just when the trial of the suspects was about to conclude – as their advocate Tahavur Khan says – reeks of deep scheming. Encounter or not, this definitely accounts for extrajudicial killings. The truth behind the whole incident – including the supposed killing of head constable Ramshankar Yadav by the suspects – needs to be thoroughly probed by a Supreme Court-monitored SIT. **MOHAMMED TAHSIN**, Mysuru

### Justified killings

Sir, The killing of eight Simi activists, who escaped from the Bhopal jail, by the police in an "encounter" has raised a controversy. The opposition parties, based on unverified video-recordings, have described the encounter as fake. Those killed had a serious criminal background and were accused in many cases. Even assuming that the police were not totally justified in killing them, the police obviously did not want to take chances. Moreover, we cannot measure with golden scales the action of the security forces while dealing with dreaded criminals. The killed activists were a scourge and anti-national. One need not shed crocodile tears for their exit. **K R JAYAPRAKASH RAO**, Mysuru

### End discrimination

Sir, Apropos Kuldip Nayar's "Govt should find solution" on the triple talaq issue. Majority of the people want the practice of triple talaq to end, and don't want any discrimination on the basis of religious faith against women. India remains a patriarchal society and women have to wait for years to solve problems relating to divorce in courts. Does triple talaq offer any mechanism to review the intent to separate as the courts do today? It is high time the Muslim Personal Law brings in a clear rule to root out this evil. The only civilised way is a uniform civil code to ensure that every man and woman is treated equally, as promised by the Constitution of India. **VINOD C DIXIT**, Ahmedabad

### Uniform growth

Sir, With many highly industrialised states being ranked low in the Ease of Doing Business index, it is not clear on what parameters the rankings are done and what the objective criteria are. It is necessary that all states are given equal opportunities to grow uniformly and none is left behind in the growth story by the publication of lopsided data. **V PADMANABHAN**, Bengaluru

### More letters on 'Net Mail' at [www.deccanherald.com](http://www.deccanherald.com)

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## SPEAK OUT



“(To) take away the supreme sacrifice of Indira Gandhi, they have brought in Patel's birth anniversary... This is a diabolical plan of the BJP-RSS.”

**Digvijaya Singh**, Congress leader

The very ink with which history is written is merely fluid prejudice.

**Mark Twain**

## IN PERSPECTIVE

## Smart energy for a smart city

The govt must reassess how India produces and consumes energy, and work towards a lower-carbon future.

By Prashant Kumar

The Government of India's bold, new initiative of 100 smart cities has put the need for efficient infrastructure under the scanner for the last year. The Smart Cities Mission (SCM) is nothing less than a challenge given the rapid and chaotic urban growth which has resulted in traffic congestion, air pollution, rising greenhouse gas emissions, and poor public health.

At the rate at which urbanisation is taking place, the country is also about to face substantial increase in energy demand in the next few decades which will translate into higher demand for electricity. Despite making significant strides to meet the energy requirements, the sector encounters a series of concerns like availability of fuel and its environmental impact. All this is nothing but a reflection of the fact that cities are struggling with the growing urban population.

At this stage, the government's step to seek sustainable development and smart solutions for the future has been quite a relief. The SCM promises an inclusive development to drive economic growth. A key feature of the mission is energy management.

In the Paris Agreement last year, India had also pledged that non-fossil fuels would account for 40% of its total energy generation capacity by 2030. In this regard, utilising energy from cleaner alternatives such as gas can play a crucial role in India's transition to a smarter future.

The importance of a cleaner fuel at this stage cannot be stressed enough. Natural gas is not only credible and a clean source of energy that can address the growing energy demands of India but it also offers a fuel option that is cheap, safe and much more efficient than other sources.

The price of natural gas at the burner tip is also lower than liquid fuels, and is likely to remain so in future. The advantages of natural gas thus extend to India's quest for energy security and cost reduction, and also its cherished ecological goals.

However, currently, the level of gas utilisation in India is less than 9% of the country's overall energy requirements, against a world average of 24% of the overall primary energy mix. Even though the gas industry has witnessed reasonable growth in terms of demand, it has remained limited to just a few regions and states whereas large parts of country continue to struggle with basic infrastructure for its distribution.

Thus, extensive fiscal, policy and regulatory actions are required which should encourage gas production and consump-

tion. The overall framework should provide incentives to energy users to make the transition to gas by allowing a reasonable return on investments.

A major challenge is that of taxation. Despite enormous environmental and health benefits associated with use of gas as a fuel, natural gas trade attracts higher tax rates compared to competing fuels. Thus, under the current system, delivered price of gas from the same source of supply varies considerably on account of taxation differences. For instance, the VAT rate on gas in Tamil Nadu is 4% whereas in Uttar Pradesh it is as high as 26%.

Such high tax rates render natural gas an unviable investment option. Interventions should be made to accord the status of "Goods of Special Importance" to gas under section 14 of CST Act 1956, that limits the power of states to levy tax and other incidence to a maximum of concessional rate of tax under CST, which is currently 2%.

### Regulatory framework

An enabling policy and regulatory framework is also critical for the development of gas infrastructure. However, India unlike other countries, does not have a single Central body that is responsible for energy policy and regulatory affairs. This results in inconsistency for sectors namely coal, oil, electricity and gas. The option in front of the government is to create policies that allow the right balance of fuel mix, which is to say bringing the usage of coal, liquid fuels and natural gas at par in the mix.

India will continue to grow its existing towns and smaller cities into future cities but all of this demands cognisance and inclusion of smart solutions in policy administration. There is also an urgent need to enhance the quality of life of citizens and promote eco balance.

In the last two years, the government has launched various projects for urban sector such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Housing for All (Urban), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Smart Cities Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission and Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRI-DAY) etc.

However, ultimately there is a need for integrating these initiatives in a way that they aren't at loggerheads with one another, making way for more holistic development. For instance, natural gas will not just help India achieve its 2030 pledge but it will also offer a long term solution to the rapidly diminishing air quality in the country.

Thus, the government should reassess how India produces and consumes energy and, together with its stakeholders, work towards a lower-carbon future. It is imperative that such sustainable solutions be at the core of smart cities development. *(The writer is a Fellow at University of Sussex. He was formerly with Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi)*

## OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 years ago: November 2, 1966

Nine killed in Vizag firing

Hyderabad, Nov 1. Nine people were killed at Vishakhapatnam today, including seven in police firing on a 3,000-strong mob which attempted to enter the head post office in the morning.

When a party of police present on the spot prevented the mob from surging into the post office building, the crowd started pelting stones at the police, injuring several policemen. Fire was opened when the crowd tried to overpower the police.

25 years ago: November 2, 1991

Model Kannada schools to open in all taluks

Bangalore, Nov 1. Education Minister M Verappa Moily today said that model Kannada schools would be opened in all taluks of the state by the next academic year. Participating in the Rajyot-

sava Day celebration organised by the Department of Public instruction, Moily said the government was keen to promote Kannada as medium of instruction from November 14, Children's Day. Singing of poems by renowned Kannada poets like Kuvempu and Bendre would be made compulsory.

