

Is The Indian Media Obsessed With Pakistan?

■ Dr. M.N. Buch

Pervez Musharaf, the former military dictator of Pakistan now disgraced and under trial on various counts for heinous offences, still seems to make the headlines in India. For example, he is reported to have stated in Pakistan that in Kargil Pakistan had India by the neck and it is the fault of the politicians that the Pakistan Army withdrew. This is widely reported in the Indian Press. Of course the statement is a lie, put forth by an aggressor who made an entirely unprovoked attack on India without, if we are to believe Nawaz Sharif, the approval of his own government. The Government of India gave a suitable response and the Indian Army and Air Force between them gave a thrashing to the Pakistan Army. How concerned Musharaf was about his own jawans is proved by the fact that Pakistan refused to acknowledge the bodies of their own troops and several of them were give funerals by our Army, with full honours and religious rituals. Obviously Musharaf will make such outrageous statements, but why is the Indian media giving him time and space? The Butcher of Baluchistan is no one to twist the history of his own misadventure in India, but if he does so what he should meet with in India is the crashing silence of being totally ignored.

Let us take the case of Hafiz Saeed, Lakhvi and Dawood Ibrahim. Notwithstanding the Pakistani sponsoring of the attack on Bombay on 26.11.2008, Pakistan will neither surrender these persons to us, nor will it bring them to justice. By doing so Pakistan would accept the role of its State apparatus in this attack, which it will never do. Only India could accept the role of Indians in the attack on Samjhauta Express and bring the criminals to book. That being the case why does the Indian media, especially the electronic media, continue to give so much time to discussions on these criminals who will continue to spew hatred against India? India would be entitled to covert action to quietly neutralise these persons but it is about time that channels such as Times Now stopped wasting airtime in testing our patience by arranging slanging matches between some so called Indian experts and a few persons from Pakistan who will obviously take a pro Pakistan stance.

Since birth Pakistan has been suffering from many major problems. The first is that it abandoned democracy after Liaquat Ali Khan, the then Prime Minister, was assassinated. The Army has played the dominant role in Pakistan politics and despite the fact that there is an elected government in power, on major issues the Army determines how government will act. The second issue is Pakistan's preoccupation with India in which, partly because of its national psyche and partly because of the trauma of the Bangladesh War, both State and non State actors are active in trying to destabilise India. Unfortunately terrorism is a double edged weapon and the terrorists often attack their own progenitors. Pakistan is facing this problem and making a complete hash of it.

The third issue is Afghanistan and the Pakhtun areas of Pakistan. Here, again, Pakistan's support of extremist groups of Islamic bigots, while virtually destroying Afghanistan, has had its repercussions in Pakistan also. This, in turn, has led to the fourth issue of a disintegrating economy which certainly adversely affects that country. In this scenario there is a group of people, largely the more modernised sections of society and the academicians and intellectuals, who are voicing their concern and trying to bring sanity to that country. This voice is feeble, but it is what India should be highlighting and supporting. It is in our interest that civil society in Pakistan strengthens, democracy is thereby supported so that eventually the influence of the Army reduces and the economy is assisted to build itself. One realises that faced with Islamic fundamentalism the modernisation of the Pakistani State would be difficult. But it is this which should be the focus of our media and not some attack by a terrorist group of Pakistan on either Indian or Pakistani targets. I am not suggesting that the Indian media withdraws into

an Indian cocoon. Pakistan will always be an area of concern for us, but let us view it in perspective. The Prime Minister, by his outreach to our neighbours, to China and the West in which Pakistan hardly finds a place, is on the right track. Will the media follow suit?
