

A relationship that can become truly 'special'

News that David Laws, Chief Secretary to the Treasury had resigned at the weekend for abusing parliamentary privileges (he had claimed £40,000 as rent, which he paid to his partner. This was repaid in full, but in the light of the Cameron-Clegg "shared ambition to clean up Westminster," Mr Laws had to go), will have turned public attention away from the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition Government's decision to broaden Britain's foreign policy vision from its exclusive groove with the United States. The manic desire of successive British governments to keep in step with Washington, whatever the cause or cost, led to the Blair regime's misadventure in Iraq and, arguably, in Afghanistan as well. The expense in British lives and treasure has been crippling.

Now, at long last, there is a mood swing in response to yawning global realities. The Queen in her recent speech to Parliament spoke of her Government's intention to elevate Britain's historic relationship with India from the mundane to the truly dynamic. Better late than never. On the eve of Indian independence in August 1947, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, on behalf of the new Congress-led Indian government, invited the departing British Viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten, to remain as the first Governor General of free India (which he did), surely a gesture that said much for the Indian leadership's desire for a close partnership with their country's erstwhile rulers. Free India's decision to remain in the Commonwealth was further proof of intent, one that transcended the rhetoric of time-bound anti-colonialism. The significance of these Indian moves were never truly appreciated in Whitehall, where the view was that India's new rulers were "men of straw;" that Indian democracy would come tumbling down in due course prevailed over routine diplomatic courtesies. Winston Churchill in his final years as British prime minister saw things differently, but Cold War considerations triumphed over common sense, hence Muslim Pakistan was viewed as a staunch ally in Washington and in London, as a bulwark against Communism and the Soviet Union, when all Pakistani leaders desired were arms on the cheap to settle primordial scores with 'Hindu' India.

Post-war British policy was in many ways a continuation of the Raj preference for the subcontinent's Muslim separatist groups, from the Aligarh movement in 1883 to the formation of the Muslim League in 1906, with the blessings of Lord Minto, the British Viceroy. The spread of Islamist Pakistan-based terror-

Maoist outrages cannot continue

The latest Maoist outrage in India involved a train crash in the state of West Bengal in which some 175 innocent lives were lost. This was the latest of a series of brazen Maoist insurgent attacks on India's security forces and civilians and government property. This has reached an alarming level and points to a possible loss of nerve in New Delhi. Any such perception among India's two predatory neighbours, Pakistan and China, is likely to lead to more mischief-making in Islamabad and Beijing. Faced with a challenge that seeks to destroy the Indian state and all its works, the Government has to display the necessary resolve to meet the threat head-on. The time for pussyfooting is over. The excuse that the Maoist challenge is seeded in tribal discontent is plainly irrelevant. The leaders of the insurgency are neither tribals nor peasants, but

Sri Lanka's dark night continues

The International Crisis Group has called for an international commission of inquiry into the killings in the closing stage of the country's long and bloody civil war. The Tamil Tigers were the root cause of this conflict and their ruthlessness and brutality have been well documented. These will surely be aired time and again if new investigations are made into the origins and course of the conflict. However, the latest call for an all-encompassing inquiry has been driven by increasing revelations of the Sri Lankan Army's reported massacre of Tamil civilians, including women and children.

Sri Lanka now run by a family cabal, headed by President Mahendra Rajapakse, appears impervious to calls from the international community, including the United Nations, for an impartial investigation into the conduct of the war in its final phase.

Truth will out whatever the efforts of the Colombo authorities to conceal the facts. A year after the end of the civil war, one of the Indian doctors, who treated Tamil refugees has revealed that there were "massive casualties" among the civilian population.

"We were not prepared (for what we saw) when we reached the camp...the extent of the injuries...long lines of people," the doctor told the Hindustan Times newspaper on condition of

ism to the United Kingdom and the United States may have finally brought home the truth of Frankenstein's Monster on the prowl far from its native shores.

This is the negative narrative, but the positive was seeded by the first British Governor General, Warren Hastings, in the last quarter of the 18th century. He encouraged the first English translation of the Gita by Charles Wilkins, helped establish the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the platform for Sanskrit scholarship following centuries of decline, and paved the way for a remarkable generation of British Indologists, such as Jones, Colebrooke, Carey, Wilson, Prinsep, Hodgson and others, whose discoveries illumined India's classical past.

"These will survive when the British dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist, and when the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance," wrote Hastings prophetically. India's social and cultural renewal in the 19th century can be interpreted as part of an Indo-European dialogue with British interlocutors. Lest it be forgotten, the founder of the Indian National Congress, in 1885, was a Briton, the revered Allan Octavian Hume. This truly was a period of seed-time and remedy and it created the foundations of the new India, with its respect for the rule of law, intellectual freedom, the right of dissent and constitutional government based on universal adult franchise.

On these and more, there is a firm meeting of contemporary British and Indian minds. The Indian diaspora in Britain play an important role in every facet of national life, from business to the professions, academe and politics, the latest peer of Indian origin to take his place in the House of Lords is the Conservative Dolar Amarshi Papat. There are many like him in the second chamber, and also in the House of Commons representing the major political parties. Some Indians have brought their wisdom and skills to a wider world. Lady (Shruti) Vadera, who as business minister at Gordon Brown's side during the negotiations to prevent a financial meltdown in 2008, is once again in harness in Dubai. As public figures, they all constitute a valuable bridge between Britain and India.

The emergence of India as a significant economic, technological and military power on the regional and global stage gives Britain a second chance to press the reset button and move the relationship between the two countries to a level worthy of its potential.

(See Media Watch, page 12)

are urban malcontents like Germany's terrorist Baader-Meinhof gang of the 1970s, whose members killed simply to satisfy their blood lust. Period.

The Indian Maoists have declared war on India and her people. Having taken up the sword they must perish, if need be, by the sword. There must be no further twaddle on 'development' and human rights. There was scant consideration of the human rights of those whose lives have been wantonly destroyed.

India's paramilitary forces have long been ill-trained and under-equipped. Neglect by governments down the years has brought the country to its present pass. It is time to bring the Indian Army's Special Forces into play. If they require help from the Indian Air Force, this must be made available. The Maoists must be brought to heel as quickly as possible.

anonymity. "We were overwhelmed by what we saw. It was clear the people (the internally displaced) had been battered. We were treating hundreds of patients every day. Shell injuries, bullet injuries. More than 80 per cent of these patients said either someone in their family was killed or someone in a family they knew was killed or injured. Nearly 80 to 90 per cent of the 120-odd patients had a story of death or injury to recollect," the doctor said.

"Someone lost her husband, someone's parents died and someone's neighbour had bullet wounds. Families from Kilinochi and Mullaitivu were the worse-hit." Based on the doctor's figures, casualties - deaths and wounded - would be in the region of 30,000.

The patients treated at the Indian camp were among 300,000 displaced civilians fleeing the 'no fire zone' on the northeast coast of Mullaitivu, where they were trapped from February 2009. This zone was in fact a battlefield between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan army. Children were the worst sufferers in this conflict.

Without political and constitutional reforms there can be neither true peace nor the desired prosperity in Sri Lanka. A Rajapakse family dictatorship is no answer to the island's woes.

Thought for the Week

I submit to you that if a man has not discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.

- Martin Luther King Jr

A tete-a-tete with Britain's Asian entrepreneur

By Neha Parikh

One would think that it would be hard to find humility juxtaposed with success. That its rare to see fervour and logic sail the same boat. Youth, sans the recklessness! But I did find this almost utopian seeming combination. It was at an interview with one of UK's leading British Asian entrepreneurs. Any guesses?

We all know him as Bhanu Choudhrie of the C & C Alpha Group. With his group's presence in majority of the sectors, like the aviation, hospitality, real estate, healthcare, agriculture and water desalination plants, they have recently ventured into the financial sector in the US markets. Geographically present in the UK, UAE, Philippines, Singapore and India, this young entrepreneur is as global and mobile as his business.

When asked about his 'young' success, he joyfully admits to it making him happy, but quickly informs us of the great responsibility he feels it brings with it. Attributing his success to the people who he works with, his colleagues and his senior management team of different companies he says, "They are the real professionals who have managed to take the different businesses to the levels we have achieved today. My responsibility is to make sure that they are doing what they are there for."

With a professional and scientific approach, his team and him take to deciding what investments to take on and which ones to steer clear of, he tell us of a particular business venture in the sports industry that seemed appealing at the face of it, but a detailed study showed them the



Bhanu Choudhrie

clear downside.

Speaking of India, Mr. Choudhrie really feels that the upcoming Common Wealth Games are a great opportunity for not only India but its athletes also to show to the world that they can do wonders. He feels India could specially learn from the UK when it comes to sports. That not only cricket, but hockey, which is India's national sport and others can be transformed into successful businesses like the Premier Leagues.

The very health conscious Mr. Choudhrie told us how regular gym and exercise keeps him healthy and is a great stress reliever. He also told us how he loves watching mindless cartoon shows as a way of busting his stress away.

This article is just a snippet of the vast and well accomplished life of this young businessman and philanthropist. In his interview he talks about everything from sports to business strategies to the upcoming common wealth games in India and much more.

Our readers are promised a more detailed insight into this Asian achiever's life in our forthcoming special issue of 'The British Asians' on July 10.

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