

Pakistan has Lost Touch with the Nation

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While Pakistan didn't celebrate its 63rd Independence Day on Saturday out of deference to the 14 million people affected by unprecedented floods, its media talked of missing empathy and failures of Pakistan as a nation. Leading daily *The Nation* in an editorial said curtly "The state of Pakistan has lost touch with the nation and every successive government fails to deliver to the people the very basics which Pakistan was supposed to provide". Dawn on the other hand said in its editorial said: Somehow the level of empathy that ought to be on offer is missing this time round. According to the UN, some 13.8 million people have been displaced or otherwise affected by this summer's floods while over 1,500 have been killed".

Miseries greater than Tsunami & Haiti

It is said that the number of affected people are now greater than those hit by the 2004 tsunami and the earthquakes in Kashmir and Haiti in 2005 and 2010. A total bigger, it should be stressed, than the victims of those three terrible disasters put together. Yet, the kind of spontaneous public support, large-scale donations and assistance by volunteers that was in evidence following the 2005 earthquake is nowhere to be seen.

True, some organisations are doing their bit and the government is scrambling to make up for its initial failures. But still there is something missing: widespread giving and the ability to relate to the plight of people who have lost everything.

"In part, perhaps, the public has not been so generous in its support because the death count has been nowhere near the devastation caused by the 2005 earthquake. Also, it must be remembered that earthquakes are sudden cataclysmic events and can kill thousands within minutes while floods build up over time. There is often an advance warning, at least in the lower riparian areas,

and this can lead to a sense of inevitability and the feeling that there is little one can do in response. Nothing is further from the truth. There is plenty that we as a nation can and must do to help those whose lives have been shattered by the ongoing floods. We need to open our hearts, and our wallets, to our fellow Pakistanis. The immediate concern is relief work but the long-term rehabilitation that most affectees will require should not be forgotten.

Quaid's Pak is missing

The Nation on the other hand was more scathing. It said: Sixty three years today we became an independent nation, as a result of the vision and sheer struggle of the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The inspiration for Pakistan was also embedded in the thinking of Allama Iqbal, but to make Pakistan a reality required a man as determined and single minded in his pursuit of a homeland for the Muslims - but one where every citizen would be free and equal and the nation would move forward on the basis of Unity, Faith and Discipline.

“Yet sixty three years later, we have lost sight of the Quaid's Pakistan. He stressed the evils of corruption and nepotism and our leaders have succumbed to these evils and imbibed them as part of their political creed. He stressed equality for all which would result in national unity yet today we are torn apart by ethnic and sectarian cleavages and are seeing our minorities live under a constant cloud of insecurity.

“While Jinnah saw women as being a major driving force for national development, and women indeed played a key role in the independence movement, sixty three years later women are still struggling against abuse. Quaid-i-Azam saw Pakistan as an Islamic welfare state but today the poor are becoming increasingly marginalised as the gap between the rich and them increases. Education, which the Quaid saw as essential has lost its significance for successive rulers till we have been reduced to seeing the farce of the ruling elite flaunting their fake degrees while genuine degree holders can barely get employment.

US lethal embrace

“The Quaid saw Pakistan as a leader within the Muslim World and a state which would conduct its foreign relations on a basis of equality and mutual respect and dignity. And in our early years we were in the forefront of supporting Muslim causes but successive rulers pushed us into a dependency mode where a costly flirtation with an imperialist US became the norm. Whenever the US winked at us,

we rushed into its lethal embrace and today we are once again suffocating in this embrace which is killing our people even as it destabilises the state structures.

“The state of Pakistan has lost touch with the nation and every successive government fails to deliver to the people the very basics which Pakistan was supposed to provide. It is not that we have no achievements. Our nation has rallied around and risen from the ashes of one crisis after another. We have achieved goals against all odds including our nuclear capability. Despite economic setbacks, military debacles and a constant cyclical disruption of the state’s political structures we have continued to make progress and keep abreast of global developments, albeit at a slower pace than we could have. This land is rich in resources but these are being depleted and destroyed by a hostile and corrupt state structure and a continuous stream of inept governments.

“Today, as we stand in a flood-devastated Pakistan with depleted resources and an out of synch state and government, it is the people who with all their suffering continue to be the hope for the green and white. It is the people who always continue to rise to defend their freedom and their country and who always will. As long as there is this nation of Pakistan there will always be hope. After all, we are Pakistan. Let us raise the standard of Unity, Faith and Discipline again.

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