



SHENZHEN			
B Shares index			
BOE Tech	1.94	1.75	1.94 + 0.18
Bengang Steel	3.13	2.96	3.11 + 0.16
China Intl Mar	9.45	8.66	9.25 + 0.63
China Merchts	5.55	5.00	5.51 + 0.37
China Vanke	5.09		+ 0.28
Chong Chang	4.00		+ 0.31
Foshan Elec	9.00		+ 0.26
Guand El Pwr	3.96		+ 0.22
Gg Prv Exprss	3.50		+ 0.22
Shand Chenm	3.90		+ 0.22
SZ Chiwan Wh	17.60		+ 1.00
SZ Nanshan	7.10		+ 0.40
Yantai Chang	10.90		+ 0.50
B share price quote			

HONG KONG			
Hang Seng Index			
Aluminm Cp H	4.17	4.13	4.17 + 0.05
Bk East Asia	22.85	22.70	22.80 + 0.10
BOC HK	14.40	14.35	14.40 Unch.
China Pacific	14.15		Unch.
China Resources	23.65		Unch.
China Telecom	5.15		Unch.
China Mobile	29.05		Unch.
China Overseas	2.95		Unch.
China Resources	2.70		Unch.
China Resources	6.20		Unch.
China Resources	44.60		Unch.
China Resources	4.33		Unch.
China Resources	22.80		Unch.

TOKYO			
Nikkei 225 index			
Advantest	8150	7990	8110 + 110
Aeon	1658	1630	1630 + 10
Ajinomoto	1197	1188	1190 - 2
Asahi Glass	1171	1157	1164 - 1
Astellas Pharm	3880	3850	3850 + 20
Bridgestone	2160	2125	2125 - 15
Canon	5970	5860	5860 + 110
Cent Japn Ry	872b	861b	861b + 2000
Chubu Elec	2550	2535	2535 + 10
Dai Nipp Print	1726	1706	1706 + 5
Daiwa Sec	675	668	668 + 5
Denso	2500	2480	2480 + 10
Denso	2500	2480	2480 + 10

NEW YORK			
index			
Aland	2.32	2.29	2.30 + 0.02
Devits	7.05	6.95	7.00 Unch.
Group	14.60	14.40	14.40 - 0.10
Keppel Corp.	12.20	12.00	12.10 - 0.20
Neptune Orient	3.64	3.56	3.56 - 0.08
OCBC	14.10	14.00	14.00 - 0.10
Ancor	7.20	7.14	7.18 Unch.
AMP	6.66	6.57	6.63 + 0.07
ANZ Bking	22.15	21.97	22.11 + 0.15
BHP Billiton	17.33	17.15	17.15 - 0.22
CBA	38.37	37.92	38.28 + 0.33
Coles Myer	9.61	9.40	9.60 + 0.12
Foster's Group	5.45	5.38	5.39 - 0.06
Insurance Aus	6.32	6.17	6.23 + 0.03
Macquarie Bk	55.29	54.55	54.80 - 0.38
Nat Aust Bank	31.50	31.06	31.50 + 0.25
News Cp CDI B	22.20	21.82	22.12 + 0.17
Pub Broadcast	15.55	15.32	15.40 - 0.18

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IIAS NEWSLETTER

International Institute for Asian Studies

Does culture matter?

Ravni Thakur

A modern airport, like in any other country, far better than our Indian ones. A lady at the visa counter in a smart blue uniform scans my face in quick movements. She chats lightly with me. 'So you are from India - your films are very popular here'. A quick smile and my passport is handed back to me. I have an onward flight to Karachi. Delhi to Lahore is fifty minutes, Lahore to Karachi, one and a half hours.

Karachi. The night air is warm, a faint tinge of sea breath. It is a city of approximately seven million, Pakistan's largest industrial town, its answer to Mumbai. Home to the Sindhis, the Muhajir Punjabis, and Pashtuns. The site of devastating violence, hard to imagine as one whizzes through the streets on to the conference site. I can only focus on the brightly coloured trucks and buses. Superb popular art. Colour erupting all over the tin. Here, the roads are better. The traffic chaos, the mixed bag of animals, three-wheelers, two-wheelers, Hyundai's (Santros) and Suzuki's (Marutis), beggars, street-hawkers, jostling for space, just the same as in India.

Clifton is the defense area and my companion Karamat Ali, an active social worker and prominent trade unionist, very active in SAARC solidarity, points out the differences in the defense colonies and the rest. 'The Pakistani army is like your Indian politicians,' he says to me, 'they grab the best deals'. We laugh as we go to visit a friend of his, it is party time. That too is just like here. Politics, books, a little Murree beer, Indo-Pak relations, Afghanistan, the role of America in the sub-continent, regionalism within Pakistan. 'Change always starts from Karachi', says the host, 'and things are better now. Zia really finished the left. Today Musharraf is facing American pressure where civil and political rights are concerned. He can't hang a Bhutto and get away with it'.

inate. Strange-looking rocks, horses ridden with flair on the beach, an ordinary middle class scene like anywhere in India or elsewhere. I drive through Clifton and on to the Bhutto residence. There is no visible presence of the Bhutto PPP domination - it is army rule. A photo of Zardari, though, hangs outside the house.

I am here to attend a conference organized by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Research. The conference is made up of a diverse set of participants from the SAARC countries, here to discuss and debate the kind of interventions civil society can make in the SAARC social charter. It is a two-day conference, the focus being on human security and making SAARC states nuclear free. NGOs, trade unions and, of course, journalists and academics from Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The issues are real: massive poverty, escalating military budgets, regionalism within nations. The key note speaker, Prof. Saith, talks about changing the way poverty is measured and making it a category of fundamental human security, measured in health, education, nutrition and leisure - anything other than the 'under one dollar paradigm' imposed on the third world. People comment on the UPA's employment-guarantee scheme in India. Just another scheme. Populism at its best. Humour the left.

The Baluch are unhappy with the Gawadar port and city project. 'We don't want Chinese condominiums' says one participant, 'we want basic security and rights for our people'. Punjabi domination is a constant theme, filtered through jokes, through bonhomie, and sometimes, outright anger. Tensions simmer under the surface, control too tight, America, China, the Taliban, all extra categories that figure under the discourse of social justice. They also talk about whether the PPP has made a deal with Musharraf. A PPP delegate points out a deal

In the daytime, the sea and the defense colony next to it dom-

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could have been done eight years ago. 'American pressure today', I say. The idea is digested and shrugged off nonchalantly. America is not popular. Notions of Islam, Asia, South Asia are categories that crave an end to 'WASP' domination. But then domination, like economics, has macro and micro levels. Within countries, within states, within villages. And the two are closely intertwined.

It is a beautiful house. Mohatta Palace. Jinnah's sister lived there till her death. An art gallery now. Grand lawns, old English interiors, high ceilings, a perfect setting for paintings, decorations, embellishments. The exhibition is on 'Karachi during the British Raj'.

A large number of families, affluent, English-speaking, through the gallery - unlike India. It is Sunday and the exhibition, curated by Hasan and Hasan, is brilliantly put together. It showcases the lifestyles, the fanfare, the books, the clothes, the ambience of a city, industrial, multicultural and prosperous. The Parsees as philanthropists figure prominently as does the Aga Khan. The sheer wealth of material collected and exhibited from that time, from guns to belts and the interior of houses, deserves accolades. It is an upper class exhibition and showcases their lifestyles, how closely intertwined these were with the British. The shanties, the poor, the maids and the Indians are missing. What is not - how vibrant Karachi was, and is.

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Lahore as a city is completely different. The first thing that strikes me when we start driving is how old and beautiful the trees are. They remind one of Delhi. It has areas like Greater Kailash and markets like South Extension. In other words, I feel completely at home. Anarkali Bazaar, my grandmother had said. Buy some cloth. I do. It is a rambling quarter, like Chandini Chowk, small narrow shops, attar, cloth, jewelry, shoes. It is all very familiar, including the bargaining, talk about rapprochement, how India and Pakistan should become friends and open borders. The place where I buy had outlets in Amritsar in the old days. But I also hear stories about Hindus who stayed behind converting and never revealing who they were. Stories about families separated for years.

The Lahore Museum is a beautiful old English building and has one of the best Gandhara collections in the sub-continent. Apparently Peshawar had one, but it was destroyed. Majestic Grecian figures, life-size. Beautiful carvings, tracing his route to enlightenment. Then there is the mosque at night, adjacent to the old fort, truly divine. The light shining off its perfect domes, ethereal. There is not a soul around and one can sense the age of Lahore. It traces its history to the mythical composite times. A friend told me myths about Luv and Kush and how in ancient times Lahore derived its name - from Luv to Luvhore and then Lahore. Nice story. Speaking of older, intermingled civilizational roots, lived today through music, costume, language and poetry. The Delhi of Ghalib and the Lahore of Ranjit Singh perhaps. Punjabi is the city's language.

I attend a wedding, that of a young woman who ran away from a forced marriage and now works with Asma Jehangir. It's also just like India, the marriage hall, the couple on the dais, the woman in a beautiful saree, photographers, socialites, celebrities. The divide is so silly, when every other part of the world is pledging regional solidarity. But then human beings are silly and we all fight. The point is can we make up?



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I stay at the home of friends - Tahseen and his family. They are migrants from Kangra, my home region in Himachal Pradesh. The eldest brother, Prof. Azizuddin, retired from Government College Lahore. 'My contribution to Pakistan has been creating civil servants', he says with a wry grin. In reali-

ty, his father and he were active in Pakistan's labour movement and worked within the Communist Party. He was twelve when they had to leave Shahpur in Kangra. 'Pakistan never had a vibrant democracy because when it was created it lost its middle class. The majority were landlords and the rest artisans. The Hindu middle and professional class that existed in Lahore migrated to India'.

He is right. But partition is only a blot in the memory of the slowly aging, old memories, passing fragments, the violence and the language, music, kangri songs, dying out amongst the younger generation. Instead, Hindi TV serials, *saas bhi kabhie bahun thi*, *kasuati zindagi ki* are big hits with the younger and middle-aged generations. The fifteen year-old daughter sits alongside her mother to watch Star Plus. They are not surprised that all the big Indian stars are Khans. That doesn't explain the popularity of Aishwarya, a unisex fantasy - girls wanting to be like her and boys just wanting her. Just the same again.

I visit Tahseen's office. He runs one of the largest NGOs in Pakistan. They pay special attention to gender rights, democracy and peace between India and Pakistan. He has visited India several times. He belongs to the old Left and has many stories to tell about the time under Zia. He is also one of the most courteous men I have ever met. But I meet courtesy all over. When I go to do my police report, the officer there says these borders are created by the English maam. Good memories in retrieval. Through Tahseen, I meet several other NGO friends from the women's movement. 'In Pakistan we kept religion out but you used symbols like Kali as feminist symbols' says Lalla, a founder of the Women's Action Forum. I see few women in burquas, fewer than in Hyderabad. They are smart, articulate, and yes it is just as much a class society. I also meet theater and Christian NGOs. The Tsunami has just hit. Everybody is busy trying to reach friends in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. It is an interconnected world and there is a sigh of relief when no damage is reported amongst those personally known.

The People's Theatre Group that I go and visit has offices in Model Town, Lahore. They work with SAF and other aid projects to deal with gender, bonded labour, forced marriage, property rights. They work in different regions and at the village level. I see some of the films made on their work: powerful, direct, and emotive. Paolo Frere is the idol here. Social issues and community participation. Role change - the victim as aggressor and the aggressor as victim. Polarised dichotomies in gender relations, land relations, handled simply and directly. 'We work with the state because the work is more important'. So true. Except in India, we work despite the state.

The creation of modern nation states and boundaries is not cultural, but geopolitical, territorial and religious. The micro in nationhood - fault lines stronger than historical materialism or the modes of production and imagined solidarity. Fault lines are stronger in history and language, the Hindi we speak, the Urdu they do, born out of Babur's march across India. Even the names of cities, of squares, are marked by a constant rhetoric of distrust at the state level. Lots of hope - but still one step forward, two steps back. And maybe culture does matter. <

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