

The Weekly

OBSERVER

Explosive reception greets Bhutto in Pak

Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan after a self-imposed exile of eight years. After all the uproar, she has finally made it back to her home country.

Nawaz Sharif was packed off to Saudi Arabia before he could breathe in even four hours of his native air. Ms. Bhutto, however, showed the world her political power and diplomacy with the powerful reception that she got in Karachi.

Really powerful, for that matter. More than 150 people lost their lives and thrice the number injured in the blasts at Karachi that targeted her. That a former Prime Minister could evoke such degrees of detraction and adulation in a country is just amazing. The hundreds of thousands of people who came to greet her, and the attention that the extremists gave her by throwing two bombs on her say it all.

Bhutto holds a sway on the military also. She is still negotiating with Musharraf on the power sharing deal under which the General has resigned as the country's military chief and has got himself elected as the President of Pakistan.

The General also freed her from the corruption charges related to her previous two stints as Prime Minister. This paved way for her smooth return to her land. She has probably realized that it is not possible for her country to have pure democracy, and therefore, it would be safer and more profitable for her to step into the muck a bit.

It does not matter whether Bhutto had a tainted report in her office as PM. Whether the so-called supporters that turned up in infinite numbers to receive her or the rallies taken out in

Karachi and Sindh were full of paid slogan-shouters. Do Pakistan and India share a bond in this matter? Regardless of all, the turnout was awesome. She has proved herself to be a



relentless leader, capable of diplomacy and tact.

But isn't she taking a risk with the people of Pakistan who apparently support her so sincerely? By joining hands with a military

ruler, isn't she gambling her already precarious chances of ruling the country? What drives her? The desire to sit on the powerful throne as the Prime Minister of Pakistan once again? Or concern for her nation suffering in the clutches of an unstable military regime? Would she be able to restore some stability in a nation plagued by hunger for power? Is she also just a victim of the same? Such questions keep popping in one's mind.

The drama is yet to unfold as Bhutto tours the country and gathers more popular support as well as factional distrust. The Supreme Court of Pakistan is still to judge both her corruption case and the re-election issue of the general.

But we cannot be very hopeful about this. After all, ever since Zia-ul-Haq, Pakistan has been dominated by military forces, although there were the so-called democratic governments off and on. All we can wish for is some change in Pakistan's ruling government so that India can expect its long-standing problems of Kashmir, nuclear weapons and border issues to move towards a peaceful reconciliation. Ms. Bhutto has generally taken a pro-India stance and will hopefully do so in the future.

This definitely may be a far-fetched hope since the converse may also be true. Bhutto may not succeed and the military regime

may turn worse. Then, India cannot afford to rely on these hopes. We might as well stay wary and view the developments in Pakistan with a thoughtful eye.

Much ado about dressing

No jeans, no high heels and no accessories. In the recent archaic move that will reduce all stone age customs to shame, the IT companies in India have decided to put a noose around the neck of their employees to make them dress 'decently'. In Pune, IT sector companies are taking a call on what their employees should wear. And the companies in other cities like are following suit. Come to think of it, is there anything more ridiculous than dictating what employees should wear to office? It's like telling your girlfriend she needs to lose a few pounds. The response will be the same: It's none of your business and besides, I think I am looking great.

The primitive move seems to have originated from some complaints by employees who said they were getting distracted because some of the female coworkers dressed provocatively. While the IT professionals are grappling with the rule, the definition of 'distracting dressing' has come under the scanner, which is entirely subjective and can be debated until the kingdom comes.

Don't the companies place enough faith in their employees' discretion in dressing up according to the occasion? And even if the management decides to turn the screws on the employees, how

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Nuclear deal sends shockwaves as UPA makes a U-turn

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's decision of putting off the nuclear deal has come as a shock after so much persistence to promote the deal. When confronted by Prakash Karat's warning of withdrawing support from the UPA alliance, Manmohan Singh's government chose submissive surrender and gave up something it considered of supreme national interest.

The Indo-US nuclear deal has been one of the most dominant issues subjected to discussions and debates across the nation for the past two years. It has touched nearly every decision-maker-including the business and scientific communities. It has definitely been one of the most talked about things on the political front. The Indian government proceeded with the negotiations and the agreement with a full awareness of its implications in the domestic sphere. If it felt that the agreement would attract political repugnance in the country, there were numerous occasions in the past two years when the government could have called the deal off. Wasn't the UPA government aware of the Anti-American stance of the Left from the beginning? If it were to give in to the fear of the government collapsing why did it defend the deal with so much aggression in the first place?

Manmohan Singh's first convincing defence of the deal was in the Rajya Sabha speech of 17 August 2006, where he sketched a parallel between the nuclear deal talks and the economic reforms proposed by him in 1991; Singh argued how successive governments had benefited from the policy of reforms, speaking in favour of the deal. Almost the same aggression was witnessed in August this year when the prime minister dared the Left parties to withdraw support on this issue. So why the unexpected about-turn now?

The primary reason is that a number of UPA constituents, particularly

the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) were unwilling to face elections at this point of time. DMK leader M. Karunanidhi and RJD chief Lalu Prasad strongly believed that saving the government at home was more important than getting nuclear energy



US president George Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh meet in New Delhi
By Google Images

from the U.S.

Whatever the reasons may be, India's decision to freeze the nuclear deal will have serious repercussions in its position in the international community. Whether nations will rely on India in future is a question that remains ambiguous.

,much can they possibly do to enforce the dress code considering they are treading a risky legal ground. If they fire an employee, can they defend in court why the rule is indispensable for the job?

Instead of dictating a dress code, which will inevitably generate massive resistance, the companies can invest in workshops to push the abysmally low threshold for distraction of those employees who have a hard time concentrating on their work.

The choice of clothing should be comfort-driven as long as safety is not an issue. Though the popular notion is that casual wardrobe leads to casual relationships and less productivity, it will just be the reverse for productivity if not for relationships, if this theory is put to test in work place.

Comfortable employees translate into better efficiency unless something goes terribly wrong. Until then, there is no need for companies to moonlight as self-appointed upholders of propriety.

Editor:
Akansha Pradeep

Photo Editor:
Debi prasad

Page Designers :
Akansha Pradeep

Karen Solomon
Sameer Ranjan Bakshi
Pooja Gautam
Snigdha Poonam
Gayathri Vaidyanathan
Shubhi Mehrotra
Anil Das
Proof Readers:

Richy D Alexander
Chitra Phalguni
Itika Sharma
Namitha Viswanathan

Address:
Opp. BGS Int'l Residential School,
Nityanandanagar, Kumbalguclu,

Kengeri Hobli, Bangalore- 560060

Telephone: 28237907 / 28437903

Email: editor@iijnm.org

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