

Security and Pakistan Army

ALTHOUGH the year 2014 started witnessing more attacks by the terrorists yet overall it may be expressed that after many years of terrorism, that gripped Pakistan, there is some degree of optimism about the security situation in coming months due to Pakistan Military's role in countering insurgency and taking steps in North Waziristan recently. Armed Forces of Pakistan have traditionally been on forefront in any type of natural or man-made crises. The tragic misfortunes called for quick response and timely arrival of relief goods under arrangements of Armed Forces of Pakistan not only spoke of their professional competence but also won the respect of entire nation.

The Armed Forces had always been in the forefront to help save those who fell in the ill-fated category of bereaved victims of natural calamities, ie, earthquakes and flash floods. Now is the time to appreciate the commitment of Armed Forces in providing relief to disaster hit victims especially in Balochistan when country faces internal security problems and for that Army's role is crucial. This would boost the morale of the Army in carrying out operations where and whenever desired. Mainstream media should not only condemn those who attack the military convoys proceeding to calamity-hit areas to provide relief to victims but also appreciate military's role and resolve in this regard. The Pakistan Armed Forces are the best organized institution in country. In addition, the Pakistan Armed Forces are the largest contributors to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. But it is very unfortunate to see that over past about a decade a concerted campaign has been launched in country to libel and dent Pakistan Army as an institution.

On security fronts, the Armed Forces have done more than its capacity and now it is the job of the new civilian administration to rehabilitate the displaced population and restore their confidence in the government. Previously, though life was returning to normal in FATA but much yet was needed to be done. Again the rehabilitation work was proceeding but the needed funds for the task were not available. The security situation in FATA, compared to the past, remains pretty disturbed and it would continue bleeding as talks with Taliban, the way things are taking shapes, might not bring the desired fruits. The US could help the Provincial/Federal/FATA governments in their rehabilitation and development work and for that matter it is recommended that funds should not be given to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which do not enjoy good reputation in the tribal areas.

The conservative people of FATA disapprove of NGO girls in sleeveless shirts lecturing women on their rights. The Americans working in Pakistan are often suspected to be CIA agents and government officials who meet them are wary on that account. This apprehension affects smooth working and causes unnecessary delays. The US must stop its covert manoeuvring in Pakistan. Still, there is lack of maturity and depth in US-Pak relations that needs to be bridged through people to people contacts as the US will stay in the region even in post-2014 despite of the fact that the Obama administration is facing domestic pressure to review and reassess the US interests in Afghanistan for the quickest possible withdrawal. Although the rapid departure of the US from Afghanistan is yet another issue that has to be seen in larger regional perspective. Many analysts speak of possible and potential positives and negatives about whether the US should completely withdraw from Afghanistan or not. Fingers are crossed. But looking at recent happenings one thing is for sure since the US is losing international support as the allies want to go home, it (US) has to leave Afghanistan with minimum foot presence coupled with structural presence in the shape of Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA). Again, according to the BBC News, the US “President Barack Obama recently has promised a new US foreign policy based on ‘collective action’ with allies abroad” and this has to be seen on the part of the US allies as to how much they could stretch their muscles abroad in post-2014 era which seems unlikely.