

# The unwelcome Pakistani

15-1

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**W**hat fun. The redoubtable Maulana Fazlurrahman, leader of the Opposition has been manhandled (?) on a trip to Paris. It seems the French Constabulary also accused his sponsor of inviting a known terrorist to France. Finally our *mullahs* are facing the suffering that the rest of us have known for a long time now.

Pakistanis are no longer welcome in any country of the world. As far as the EU is concerned, we are not issued visas unless a sponsor invites us to visit. A Pakistani going to Paris for a holiday is a thing of the past. To visit the Louvre, gaze at the Mona Lisa — not if you are a Pakistani. The Colosseum in Rome — only in books and magazines for you, if you are a Pakistani.

Oh, and it's not all one-way. The EU and the state department have travel advisories telling their citizens to avoid Pakistan, so their poor citizens will have to go elsewhere for a good holiday missing the delights on offer here. Their citizens will never know the wonders that exist in our great country, they will only read of the poverty without firsthand knowledge, unless they are stout hearted and are prepared to ignore their government's advice... very difficult for the average citizen.

We need to take a serious look at the workings of our foreign office and the way that our tourism department is projecting our country. On both counts, Pakistan has been brought to pariah status by the other countries. It is a disgrace because I, for one, am proud to be a Pakistani, and am bewildered by the treatment being meted out to our citizens by foreign embassies. The standing in line in scorching sun, the questioning. Surely our government should do something about it, but does it have the will. Our wretched FO, complete with their three piece suits and Oxford accents cannot be bothered with the treatment handed out to us ordinary citizens. Our FO staff actually thinks they are of a different nationality, and therefore are not

really concerned.

Mr. President, your famous accountability should take a close look at the performance of these two departments, because in both instances it is the nation's pride that is at stake, and being sullied. The Arab states call us the "*miskeen* Pakistanis". Can we get any lower?

We cannot expect any relief from our newly elected MNAs and Senators, because they are all part of the VIP culture, and know not the rigours or humility of lining up for a visa. The entire top echelon of the FO deserves a sound shaking up, and should be made to do the rounds at various embassies to see the treatment that we, the citizens, receive. It is the prime responsibility of the government to protect its citizens in other countries. The US government is well known for bringing its entire might to bear on any government in defense of even one of their nationals. The president will himself pick up the phone to send a clear message. Doubly shameful for us is the fact that no Indian national is treated in the same manner as a Pakistani. This is a very serious matter and shows the ineptitude and callous indifference of our FO.

An important gauge of success or failure of a government is how other governments treat its citizens. Mr. President, today our government has succeeded in putting our people so far down that it would need superhuman effort to bring us respect of any kind internationally. This is an issue that should be addressed by the president, and not left to the fuddy dummies in the FO, who will invariably explain that it is the Pakistanis themselves who have brought about this condition.

To have a Pakistani as head of a UN body is all very well, but if it is not translated into a higher respect for our 'green passport' then all the effort is wasted. It is such a pity that we, belonging to such a great country, have to suffer such indignities that could be addressed if our government made up its mind to do so.

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