

# The right approach

## Kamran Shafi

**T**he arrest of a former naval Chief of Staff by Marshal's deputies and FBI agents in Austin, Texas; his incarceration in a county jail like any two-bit criminal; and his appearance before a US court of law in handcuffs and fetters (or "leg restraints", as the Americans call chained ankles) wearing an orange prison uniform, should send a chill down many a corrupt spine. This is the thin end of the wedge as they say, for these monumental happenings - what could be more monumental than the humbling of a once powerful chief of one of the armed forces? - take on a life all their own. They are much like an innocent-looking, very small ball of snow that rolls down a hillside, quietly collecting more and more snow around itself, until it becomes an avalanche that knows no path, that roars its way down destroying all before it.

No sirs, this is no small matter, the disgracing of Admiral Mansurul Haq, even though the other services, particularly the army, might well make cruel jokes about the navy. "Pakistan Navy Company Limited", we used to pejoratively call it in the sixties, quoting conventional wisdom that said that every Chief Petty Officer was a rickshaw owner, every officer had a shop, to which businesses they went in their free time. Silly, I am sure, for neither its small size, nor its unimportance in national affairs (read our several episodes of Martial Law), is the fault of the navy's officers and men. Who surely are as good or as bad as their brothers who serve in the airforce and the army. I mention this merely to point out that one hopes the gravity with which NAB is pursuing the cases of corruption against Admiral Mansur is not due only to the fact that the navy is looked down upon as an 'inferior' service. Which it is not.

NAB should beware, for there is already much in our press as to the misdeeds of others who wore uniforms of a different colour than the one worn by Admiral Mansur. Indeed, there are grave charges of huge corruption against many another service

officers, a fact much written about in the press. Indeed, if Texas was the undoing of Admiral Mansur, then may I refresh the memory of my readers by calling to their attention the stories about Texan ranches owned by other services chiefs and Chiefs of Joint Staff, one of them, if rumour is to be believed, actually transporting thorough-bred horses from stud-farms in Pakistan on PAF aircraft. Indeed, the riches of the scions of some former generals are yet to be explained satisfactorily. Being an "Actuary" in the

**It is not long now that the snowball will become bigger, and nobody will be able to do anything about it. Mark my words. It must also be pointed out to those sitting in their ivory towers, that a whitewashing job on the Mansur case will just not do. The whole world, particularly Amreeka Bahadur is watching**

former's case, and "International Banker" in the latter's, simply don't wash. Their known riches are much too dazzling for anyone to believe this nonsense. Indeed, may I remind my readers of stories told about fabulous properties in Manhattan, New York; and in Knightsbridge (opposite Scotch House, a stone's throw away from Harrods), London.

So then, gird your loins boys, for the day of reckoning is at hand, despite what the Godfathers from across the seas ordain. It is not long now that the snowball will become bigger, and nobody will be able to do anything about it. Mark my words. It must also be pointed out to those sitting in their ivory towers, that a whitewashing job on the Mansur case will just not do. The whole world, particularly *Amreeka Bahadur* is watching. And no matter how very much the Establishment, in this country and abroad, might like to protect the successors of their once-upon-a-time-stooges, the US and other Western media will have its bright spotlights on this country during the coming trial "of the first (but certainly not the last) 'four-star' General/Admiral" in the sorry history of this country. What then, is the way out?

The only way is to have an open trial of Admiral Mansur; let him name names should he want to, and should he have the gumption; let everyone see justice being done in the broad and harsh daylight of the Pakistani summer. It would be wholly wrong to let him plea-bargain his way out, as it was wrong in the cases of those allowed to do so in the past. The letting-off of those who have reportedly made billions by paying piddling little sums back has left a bad taste in the nation's collective mouth. Let it not

be repeated this time around. It is my fervent hope that this trial of this Admiral will be the watershed in accountability; that the government of General Musharraf will, finally, show that it is above taking sides; that all are equal in its eyes. What better way in which to start anew? What better way, despite the failure of its key ministers to make a difference thus far, than a signal that the man occupying the highest pinnacle of government is true to his word.

**W**hich immediately brings me to the ringing criticism of no less than 11 ministries of the government of Pakistan by the Chinese government delegation sent here last month to evaluate development projects proposed by government in which China's help had been sought. According to news reports of early this week (not rebutted yet), the visiting Chinese Vice Minister An Min told his own government that the development projects submitted by the 11 ministries were "unfocused and haphazard". He went further to say, "...each minister had made several very general proposals which were somewhat incomprehensible. There was no focus nor a sense of priority." It is also reported that our govern-

ment has been asked by the Chinese to "prioritise the projects and remain focussed."

There it is, then. An honest, outside appraisal of the bright sparks who adorn the federal cabinet of the Land of the Pure. I personally am not surprised at all, and am on record having said often that, barring a very few, most ministers have a plethora of personal (political and business) axes to be ground. Why then should they be expected to give of their best to the government that they serve? Indeed, the same is true for the provincial cabinets, the CE himself saying he was annoyed at his orders not being carried out in the expeditious weeding out of corrupt officials, in this case. What then should be done? Many years ago I had occasion to visit South Korea several times, during which I noticed that there was a daily report in the newspapers of some minister or the other calling on the president at Blue House (the South Korean equivalent of America's White House) for a one on one meeting to explain the activities of his ministry during the past, say, 10 days; which of the president's directives given during the last meeting had been carried out, and if not, why not; and to receive orders to be carried out before the next meeting.

We should replicate this model, with one of the CE's Personal Staff Officers taking notes of orders given which could then be transcribed and be available to him when that particular minister next showed up. Governors of provinces could be included, indeed. A far more effective way to keep a check on implementation than the far too many cabinet meetings (melas, actually) with dozens of people milling about the Committee Room. More than anything else it would give the CE an ideal opportunity to chew out those ministers/governors not pulling their weight, in privacy. This may well be the only way for the CE to keep a firm grip on what goes on in the plush Governor's Houses, and in the rat and cockroach infested corridors of the Pak Secretariat, Islamabad the Beautiful.

**The author is a retired army officer and a freelance columnist**