

The Good and the Bad in KLB

B.A.Malik
Former Ambassador
Islamabad

The News
October 10, 2009

THE Kerry-Lugar bill is the hottest topic of the season, and many commentators are floating an opinion even without reading the text of the bill.

The good news is that the supporters claim, and rightly so, that there is nothing in the legislation which is contrary to the national interest of Pakistan. The clauses relating to terrorism, democracy, proliferation and economic development do not impinge upon the sovereignty of the country.

The army has also publicly confessed that the parliament is the best forum to take a final decision on this crucial matter. The military's acceptance of the principle of civilian supremacy symbolises the finest moment in the 62-year-long history of this country. I salute the armed forces for this monumental paradigm shift.

The bad news is that opponents of the bill are using the rubrics of independence, national security and self-respect allegedly compromised by the US legislation as a smoke-screen to tempt the security forces to dislodge the civilian dispensation. Even the erstwhile king's parties who have no idea of what national independence means are shouting at the highest pitch of their vocal cords that the KLB demeans the philosophy behind the creation of Pakistan. This mysterious demeanor of the anti-KBL parties is the best joke of the year.

The ISPR spokesman by issuing a press statement about some unspe-

cified reservations of the top brass over the bill in question has provided grist to the anti-KLB compatriots who were probably waiting for some excuse to cry wolf and subvert the democratic process.

The press has not lagged behind in this raging controversy over power politics shorn of principles. The print and electronic media are projecting the army as a parallel government and trying to create a wedge between the civilian and the military leadership.

In my opinion the self-styled champions of national interest who are opposed to the bill are indirectly advocating the sixth martial law. If this is not the case, where were these gladiators and where were their national honour and national self-respect when the country was run over by its own armed forces five times over a period of 50 years under the covert connivance of America which they are now condemning zealously?

If the anti-democracy elements with the support of GHQ and possible blessings of Washington succeed to topple the civilian government once again, I may seriously consider surrendering my citizenship because my capacity to bear the shock for the sixth time has sunk to rock bottom.

I am fully aware of the flaws in our democratic system but it is no business of the army to liquidate the gains of the democratic process under way. Our army is the best fighting force in the world as long as

it remains out of the political business of the state.

It must be understood that our present problems are the outcome of repeated military interventions any way.

Under the present circumstances the responsibility of the parliament has increased manifold. Even if the parliament fails to deliver, the army must remain off the domain of politics because the Constitution provides an answer to all contingencies. This is the cardinal principle of democratic politics professed by Jinnah and the Bhuttos.

The insane debate over possible army takeovers must come to an end if the country has to survive.

B.A. MALIK
Former ambassador
Islamabad