

The Truth International

1st October 2020

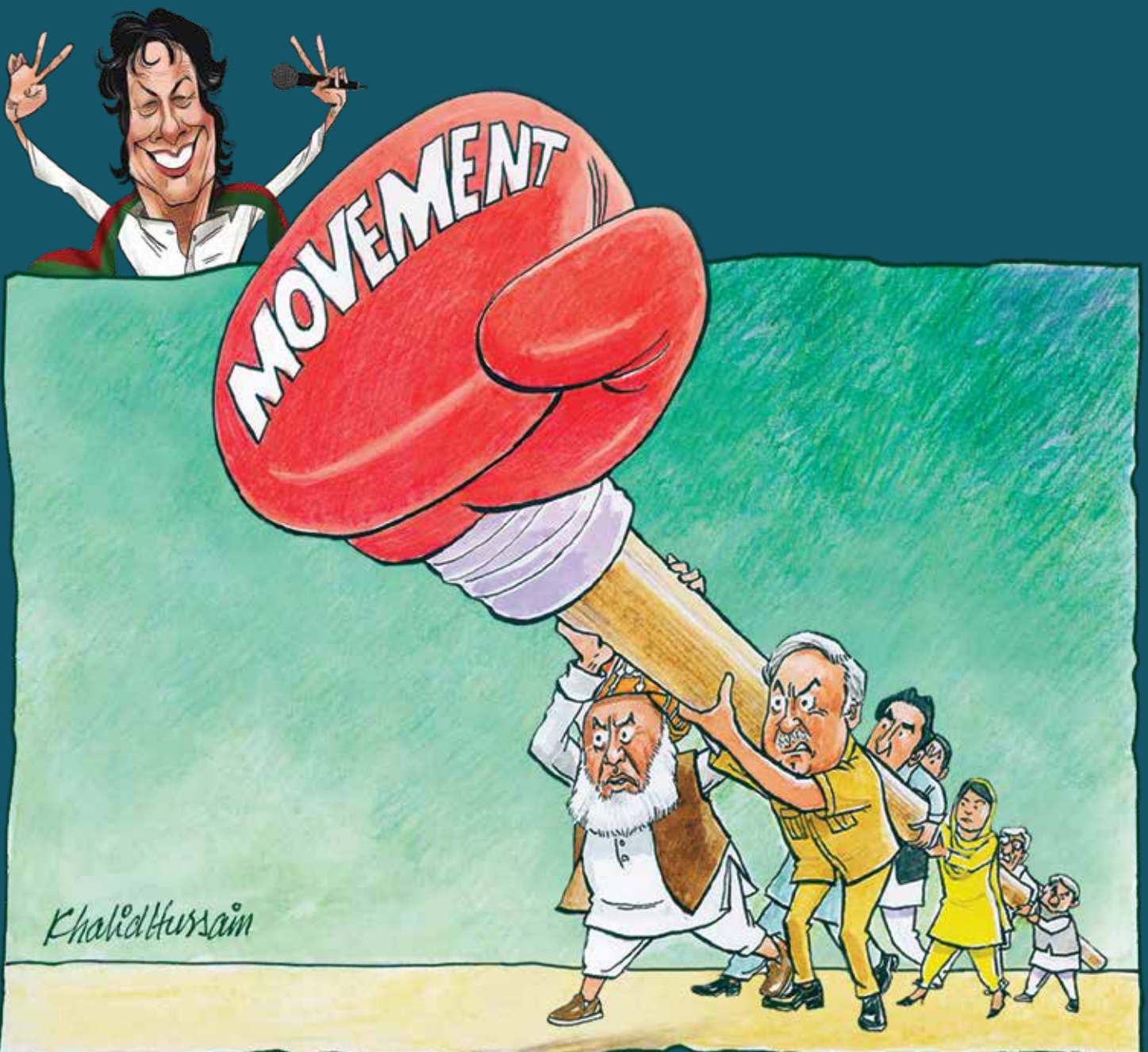
Pathetic Performance of Govt,
Opposition Weaken State Writ

APC in Islamabad overshadowed by
the 'Mujhe Kyun Nikala' Part 2

Shocked and bewildered:

The tragedy of Motorway incident

Is PML-N Ready for Agitation against Establishment?



Rs. 435

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- Group - D General Category

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Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani

Islamabad, the 25th September, 2020

**Message from H.E. Senator Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani
Chairman Senate of Pakistan**

I would like to congratulate the management of The Truth International on publication of its international edition. In today's globalized and interconnected world, we are living through the information age and generating more information than ever before. These excessive flows have made it difficult for the citizens to differentiate between information and disinformation. Under this backdrop, the publication of a quality magazine which helps generate a positive image of Pakistan is also the need of the hour.

In our collective efforts to promote the positive image of Pakistan, the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the world's oldest and largest parliamentary forum H.E. Gabriela Cuevas Barron visited Pakistan from 23-28 August, 2020 on my invitation. This was the first-ever high profile visit at the level of the incumbent IPU President which is a significant parliamentary and diplomatic breakthrough. It is heartening to know that the Truth International covered the visit of H.E. Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President IPU in an effective manner by publishing her special interview which highlighted the changing global perspective of Pakistan as a peaceful player in the international community.

I hope that the Truth International plays its due role in highlighting the multidimensional challenges on the economic, developmental, geo-political, and security related fronts faced by the people across the globe. I also hope that this publication would pave way for converting political and cultural divergences into peaceful convergences for shared ideals of peace, prosperity and progress of all the citizens of the world.

(Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani)

Three in one

By M. Ziauddin



PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN is stranger to governmental power. He is even more of a stranger to the systems on which governments run in this country. That is perhaps why he had to take so many U-turns in the first two years of his rule—to

adapt to an entrenched system. This has certainly affected the governance part of his rule which has remained far from ideal.

The opposition led by Shehbaz Sharif of PML(N), Bilawal Bhutto Zardari of PPP and Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman of JUI on the other hand had remained in the hands of a leadership which never ever on its own had taken on a government of the day. With Nawaz out of the game, Zardari attending court cases and the Maulana out of parliament the performance of the opposition had remained equally poor.

The three—Nawaz, Zardari and the Maulana---were there at the so-called APC on Sunday and as anticipated the conference has asked for PM's resignation failing which it has warned of a march on Islamabad by the end of January next year.

The government has already started its own equally aggressive campaign in the media to paint the opposition, especially Nawaz Sharif in the most slighting colors.

However, the three mainstream parties are so similar in their respective approaches to problems confronting the nation and the country that their rule since 2008 appears as if exercised by one single political party. The two-year rule of the PTI does not seem any better or worse than the five-year rule of the PML-N (2013-2018) which in turn did not differ much in quality from the rule of the PPP from 2008 to 2013.

Indeed, ideologically, all the three are indistinguishable. Politically, each of the three sets itself apart from the other two on the basis of its own peculiar self-serving slogan. The PML-N draws its inspiration from being a party with economic bias. The PPP does it from being one championing constitutionalism. And the PTI from being a corruption masher. All three draw their economic

philosophy from the so-called free-market economy—unregulated, dole dependent and privatized.

The decisions in a free-market economy are influenced by the pressures of supply, and demand. In countries like Pakistan, which are not very strong in governance, this system without fail gives rise to mafias who—driven by the profit motive—hoard, black market and smuggle creating artificial shortages leading to all round price increases. Meanwhile, the attempt to achieve the IMF-dictated macroeconomic stability leads to austerity which in turn ends up in stagflation.

The reason why all the three governments look the same despite having been led by three different political parties is because the guiding spirit dictating the governments of the day from behind the scenes is one and the same. This guiding spirit—undiluted capitalism-- is not a new arrival on the scene. It has been there all along—at least since late 1950s. Its compulsions for being uniformly rigid in its guidance all these years manifest the very nature of the state that Pakistan had become in the very first decade of its independence.

It is, therefore, almost impossible, indeed, to create a social-welfare state out of such a state, no matter how one went about trying to build one even on the lines of Riyasat-e-Madina.

It is this very contradiction that renders every successive government, no matter of which colour and hue, lose its luster within months of its coming into power. They get called out within months. And that is when the media start speculating about the fate of the incumbent. That is when rumors start circulating about ouster dates and how that ouster would come about: mid-term elections; or in-house change; or even the minus-one type.

Any break from this state of affairs will require long-term government intervention. However, the bias of free market economists against public-sector investment in the new and emerging areas as well as in social infrastructure (education&health) has prevented investment in tech-driven ventures the private sector is unwilling to enter.

Indeed, the total break from strategy of mid-1970s of establishing modern heavy industry has undermined Pakistan's ability to change the structure of production, from low-value products towards high-value, technology-intensive out-put.



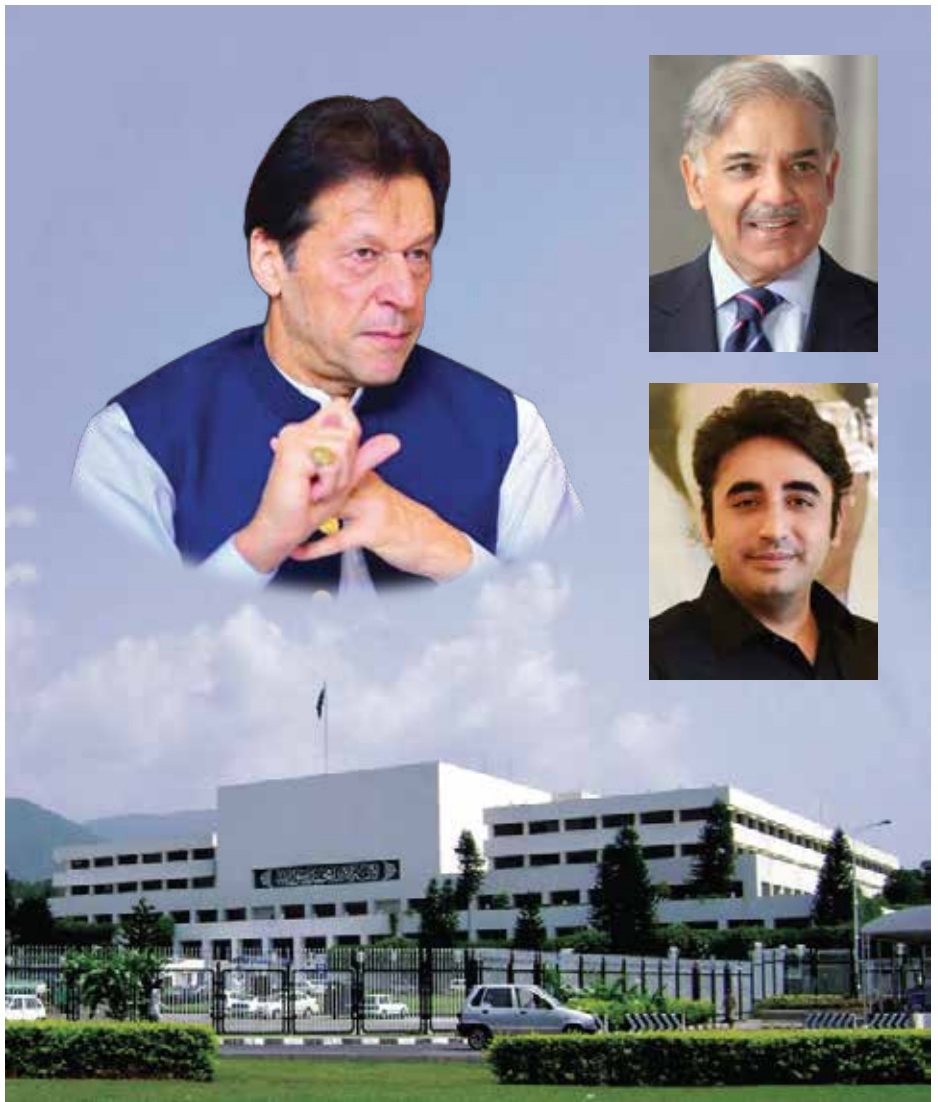
Government - Opposition DOUBLE DISAPPOINTMENT

By Hammad Ghaznavi

WHAT DO YOU CALL this situation when the government fails to deliver, and the opposition fails to play its role? Can the double disappointment be simply described the failure of the politicians as a species? Or is it the failure of the present political setup, based on the experiment called the hybrid system, wherein politicians are hamstrung on both sides, government and opposition? There may be two or more opinions on who is responsible for this system malfunction; but it is a disaster, all agree.

This all-encompassing failure is unprecedented in the sense that previously at least one side of the political divide performed better than the other. Is this situation going to change after the All Parties Conference and the formation of Pakistan Democratic Movement? It will not take long before the answer to this question is known to all.

In our history, no civilian government has had such a cozy arrangement. With the powers that be on the famous same page and the opposition in total disarray, these two years have been a dream arrangement for Prime Minister Imran Khan. How it all turned into a nightmare for the hapless masses is a tragic tale. Use any yardstick to measure the performance of the incumbent government, it leaves, to put it mildly, much to be desired. Economy, even before the pandemic, was in tatters. Almost every indicator showed a downward trend. The GDP growth rate plummeted from around 5.8 to minus, the most irrefutable indicator of slowing down of the economic wheel. The government borrowed from left, right and center, adding Rs. 11.35 trillion to public debt in two years, which was more than the total debt the previous government had taken in its 5 years term. From the circular debt to tax collection, things looked plunging.



When an economy goes in a coma, it thumps the masses hard. Inflation has been soaring continuously, making life tougher for the common man. Prices of fuel, electricity and gas multiplied, Rupee crashed, essential food commodities' prices witnessed major climbs, and unemployment increased. In a word, on the economic front, the government has nothing much to show.

Accountability, the main slogan and the pillar of PTI politics, has been proven a charade. The government is continuously mired in scandals, one after the other, medicine, wheat, sugar and more, but no government official or minister has been held accountable. From the Peshawar BRT to Malam Jabba, a lot needed to be looked into but that was not to be.



The accountability drive remained one sided, only against the opposition leaders, particularly those refusing to toe the line. National Accountability Bureau, allegedly in cahoots with the government, hounded the opposition, but could not



prove a single case against the leaders of the opposition parties. The accountability drive of NAB, and other government agencies like Federal Investigation Agency and Anti-Narcotics Force, failed to successfully conclude even one case against 'corrupt' politicians. The superior judiciary in its various judgements and observations termed the NAB a biased and an arm twisting apparatus to kowtow the opposition leaders. The accountability drive, in brief, has lost steam during the last two years without even partially achieving its pronounced targets. A colossal failure!

Besides political victimisation, the government's record on human rights in general also looks rather unpleasant. The number of missing persons has multiplied rapidly during the last two years, and the incidents of such abductions didn't remain confined to Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Forced abductions have even reached the capital. Law and order, in general, has deteriorated in the country.

Freedom of expression is another front where the government attitude appeared foul. The conventional media has faced unprecedented hardships in the last two years. The 'press advice' has gagged the independent press. Freedom of expression is witnessing a new low during the Imran Khan rule.

The government now seems keen to control the social media, the only platform accommodating independent opinion. Some laws have already been made to achieve the goal. From the task forces formed when the PTI came into power to the 'discovery' of offshore oil and gas reserves, nothing seems to have worked for the government. In a word, the government's failures are all encompassing, the constitution and the federation included.

Ironically, while the government was failing miserably almost on all fronts, the opposition also failed in performing its role to a great extent. The opposition remained disunited and confused during the period, inside the parliament and outside. For two years without a letup, it remained stuck in its struggle to fight the NAB and its various tools of coercion. The opposition could not devise a united strategy to brave the NAB storm and was seen suffering the Bureau's references and investigations. The main opposition party, Pakistan Muslim League (N) supreme Nawaz Sharif along with his daughter Maryam Nawaz remained jailed, but his party could not stage even a single sizable protest to challenge the NAB, allegedly working at the behest of the government. When Nawaz and Maryam came out of jail, they kept their mum, which many thought alluded to some sort of deal with their captors.

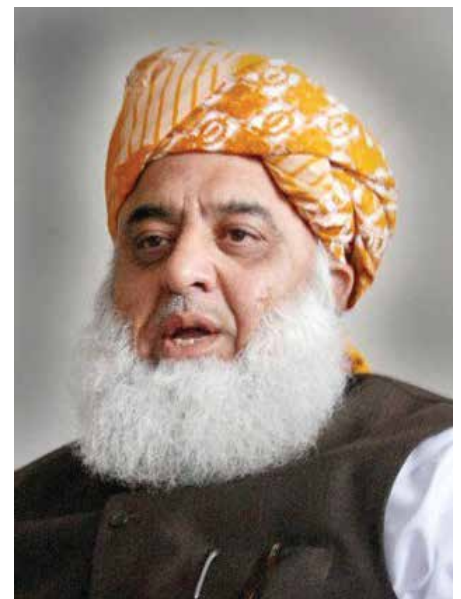
PML (N), it is an open secret, has division among its ranks. Not many in the party seem to have the backbone to support the Sharif's anti-establishment stance. Hence, the confusion.

The opposition looks toothless in the parliament as well. Despite its numerical strength in the upper house, it has failed to meaningfully impact the legislation. From the election of the chairman Senate to the

recent FATF related legislation, the opposition MPs couldn't stay united, at times voting against the party directions and at others just disappearing at the time of vote casting.

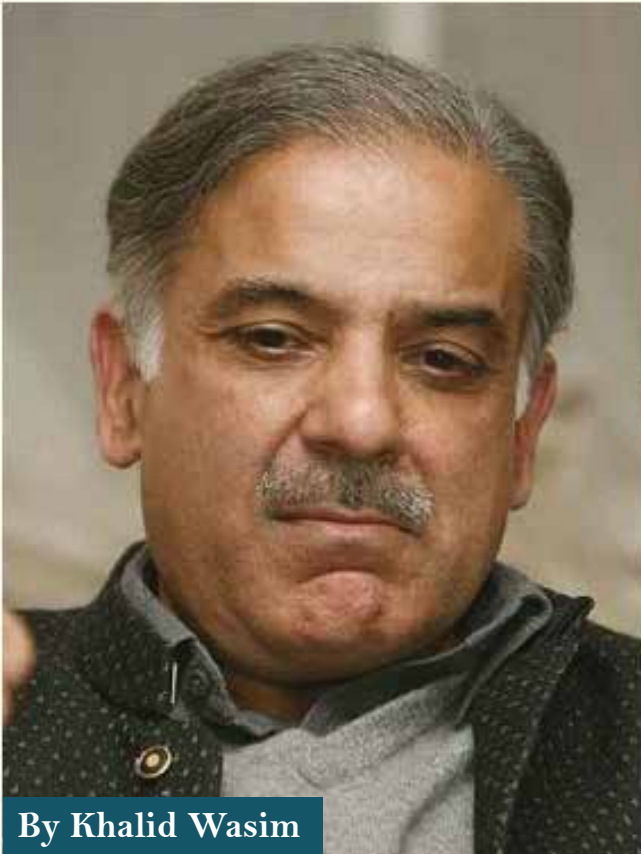
In the last two years, the only opportunity to show their street muscle to put the government on the back foot came the opposition's way during Fazalur Rehman's Azadi March. The opportunity was squandered as both PML (N) and Pakistan People's Party stayed half-hearted, perhaps trying to seek, of course separately, some backdoor concessions from the powers that be. Even on that count the two parties failed.

It took the opposition two years to understand the contours of the hybrid dispensation. And the outcome of this appreciation is Nawaz Sharif's recent fiery speech, and the All Parties Conference plan of action, that is, the only way to get out of this political pit is taking the bull by the horns. How successful this strategy will be is yet to be seen. The failure of the previous approach, however, is transparent.

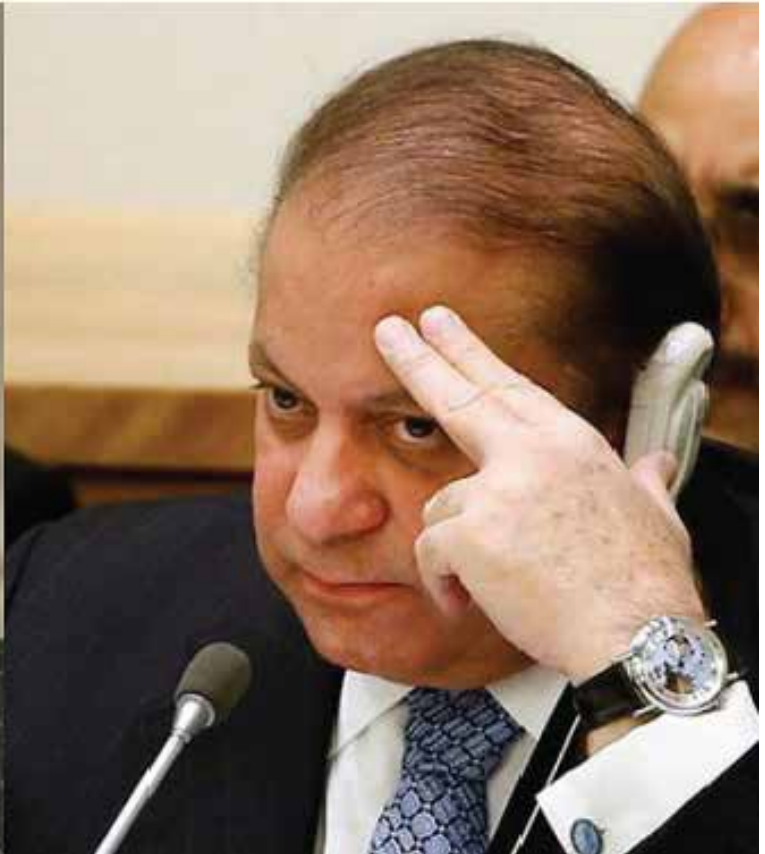


All said, it seems almost impossible for the political forces, be it the government or the opposition, to perform their roles in a meaningful fashion under the hybrid dispensation, a euphemism for controlled democracy.

Is Nawaz becoming a political hitman for his own PML-N?



By Khalid Wasim



THE MUCH-HYPED OPPOSITION'S All Parties Conference (APC) in Islamabad on September 20 was overshadowed by the Mujhe Kyun Nikala, Part 2, series speech of deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif and the political storm caused by one after the other disclosures about secret contacts of the opposition parties with the military top men.

The aggressive speech of the PML-N's supremo in which he took the establishment head on has put, on test, the whole opposition, specially his own party who is not ready to resign from parliament or stage protest on streets. Majority of PML-N leaders do not want to see their leadership pursuing an aggressive anti-Establishment policy and are hopeful that the younger Sharif, with the help of his contacts in the establishment and his past relations will one day manage to find some reprieve for the party that has been facing repression since the PTI came into power in August 2018.

Some in the PML-N believe that it was out of despair that NS had finally burst out after getting no respite and positive signals from the concerned quarters despite showing complete restraint, keeping the Vote Ko Izzat Do slogan abandoned for over three years and fully cooperating with the government inside the parliament over key legislations.

However, the anti-Establishment image which the PML-N supremo had once again tried to build for his party, came down crumbling within 24 hours of his hard-hitting and aggressive

speech at the APC via a video link from London when Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed disclosed the very next day that the key opposition figures, including Shahbaz Sharif and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, had met Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and spymaster Lt-Gen Faiz Hameed just days before the APC. The PML-N was then found to be on the back foot when a military spokesman revealed that its senior member and former Sindh governor Muhammad Zubair (close to Maryam Nawaz Team) had already twice reached out to the Army Chief to discuss the legal and political cases of Mr Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz.

It all happened at a time when the political experts and TV anchors were still analyzing Mr Sharif's speech and they had not even discussed the country's future political scenario in the light of the 26-point APC declaration and likely fate of the newly-formed opposition's alliance Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) aimed at ousting the present two-year-old PTI regime through a three-phased agitation plan. In meeting with COAS, the opposition members, reportedly, wailed about the NAB role.

The PML-N leaders initially argued that they had gone there to discuss the issue of national importance and the meeting could not be termed secret as leaders of other political parties were also present in it. But the party did not find any immediate response to the revelation by DG ISPR Maj-Gen Babar Iftikhar that PML-N's Muhammad Zubair twice met the army chief, once in the last week of August and then on September 7 in the presence of the DG ISI

and that both the meetings were held on Mr Zubair's request. The PML-N leaders preferred to keep mum over the development and left it entirely on Mr Zubair to fend for himself.

Maj-Gen Babar said the COAS made it clear to Mr Zubair that the legal cases being faced by Sharifs would be decided by courts and political matters were to be dealt with the parliament. According to him, the PML-N leader was advised by the COAS to keep the army out of political matters.

A visibly perturbed and under-pressure Zubair was later seen on different TV screens giving explanations, stating that Gen Bajwa was an old friend and their families had cordial relations. He, however, admitted that in these meetings, Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz came under discussion, but said he had not sought any relief for them.

In one of its reports about these secret meetings, Daily Dawn quoted an unidentified senior PML-N parliamentarian as saying that he wasn't surprised at all to hear about the party leadership's "backchannel contacts" with the military establishment. He also agreed with the perception that Nawaz Sharif's scathing remarks about the army at the APC could be a result of the impression he got from the contacts that there was no flexibility on the other side. He further said it was an open secret that the party supremo's departure for London had been facilitated.

Amid criticism on his party over secret contacts with the establishment and in an apparent damage control move, Nawaz Sharif has now directed his party members not to hold meetings with the military representatives without prior permission of the party leadership. It is yet to be seen as to how he will ensure implementation of his directives while sitting abroad.

Of course, all these happenings must be shocking for the few optimist democrats living in this country, but for a majority it was not for the first time that the effort of the deposed prime minister to portray himself as a transformed and visionary statesman has failed.

In the past, the PML-N many a time remained successful in making a sizeable population believe that the party leadership had learnt from its past mistakes, but each time the people later realized that actually it was their mistake to think so.

After 1999 coup first signs of transformation in Nawaz Sharif were witnessed as this was for the first time that not only the Sharifs, but the PML-N leaders and activists, had to face state brutalities and jail miseries. Then one fine morning, the nation came to know that the Sharif family had left the country for Saudi Arabia under a deal at a time when many diehard party workers and leaders were either still behind the bars or had been facing the wrath of the Musharraf Regime. The claim of the Sharifs that they had not signed any accord to stay away from politics for 10 years was also proved to be false when the then PML-Q government released the copy of the agreement brokered by some Arab personalities.

Then came 2006, the year when two arch rivals of the past Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto signed the historic 36-point Charter of

Democracy (CoD) in London with an emphasis on restoration of the 1973 Constitution in its original form through constitutional amendments and agreeing on a new political code of conduct for themselves. The two parties-PPP and PML-N had vowed to make all secret and security agencies accountable to elected governments and to replace NAB with a powerful accountability commission.

It has been written in the CoD that "the military dictatorship and the nation cannot co-exist – as military involvement adversely affects the economy and the democratic institutions as well as the defence capabilities, and the integrity of the country - the nation needs a new direction different from a militaristic and regimental approach of the Bonapartist regimes, as the current one". And this is what Mr Sharif was exactly telling the nation on Sept 20 after 14 years.

The two parties had also vowed to refrain from seeking the establishment's help in their efforts to destabilize each other's government. But the nation saw as to how Mr Sharif sought intervention of the military during the movement for the restoration of the judges and taking the memo scam, involving former ambassador to US Hussain Haqqani to the Supreme Court.

It was also the PML-N which committed first violation of the CoD when at the time of the passage of the 18th Amendment, it opposed the amendment suggesting that the judges of the superior judiciary shall be appointed through a commission headed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan "who has never previously taken oath under the PCO (Provisional Constitutional Order).

In his Sept 20 speech while referring to the 2016 Dawn Leaks, Mr Sharif said a joint investigation team (JIT) comprising officials of secret agencies was constituted, but it failed to prove the charge. Can Mr Sharif tell as to who had constituted the JIT when he was the country's prime minister? Does he have a reply as to why he sacked his information minister over Dawn Leaks? Can he explain why he removed his one of the ministers for talking about the role of establishment in the 2014 PTI sit-in while giving an interview to BBC?

No doubt that returning to the country with his daughter, few days before the 2018 elections leaving his ailing wife on the death bed in London knowing that he would land directly in jail was his most stunning and courageous act which, according to some political experts, also helped his party winning more than the expected seats in the polls. However, at a time when his presence in the jail simply could have caused some difficulties for the ruling PTI, he somehow managed to get relief from the courts which allowed him to go abroad on medical grounds despite the fact that he was undergoing a jail sentence.

Most of the opposition leaders belonging to the other parties and even in the PML-N believe that it is time for Mr Sharif to return to the country, if he really wants to see the newly-formed PDM running a successful anti-government campaign. It is upto Mr Sharif now to decide whether he wants to run the party through a remote control like MQM's Altaf Hussain or he prefers to return to the country to lead the campaign, which he could do even sitting in the jail.

Rifts within PML-N visible now, opposition not in a position to launch agitation: Shibli Faraz

Opposition endeavors to get NRO will not succeed

By Mishaal Ashraf

IN LIGHT OF THE RECENT political events following the All Parties Conference, disclosure of opposition leaders with meetings military leadership was enough to fuel the political atmosphere. But DG ISPR's disclosure in talk show that former Governor Sindh and confidant of Maryam Nawaz, Muhammed Zubair met COAS in the presence of DG ISI, twisted the tail and jolted the momentum of opposition, which it was gaining after Nawaz Sharif hostile speech at APC. DG ISPR further explained that issues related to Nawaz Sharif and Maryam were discussed in the meeting. Firebrand speaker Sheikh Rashid's statement added fuel to fire when he claimed that Nawaz Sharif wanted NRO for his daughter and on refusal he delivered harsh speech against the Establishment.

In such situation The Truth International correspondent spoke to Federal Minister Shibli Faraz to gather his insight on how things have unfolded and how government see calls of agitation on roads and in future possible sit-in by the opposition in federal capital.

Q) In your opinion why the opposition parties once again get united for the ouster of government?

Opposition just want to create a confrontational environment so they can obtain NRO since it has been their primary objective throughout their political career. Even now, they are trying to pressurize the government so they can be bail out from the cases of corruption they facing in NAB. They tried to exercise it at every instance and spoke Indian language. For example: in case of the FATF law, they attempted to gain relief but failed miserably.

Q2) Why the opposition has taken such an aggressive approach while dealing with the government?

In public, PML-N leadership will take a hard line but when in private, they have representatives like Muhammad Zubair who will carve a path out of this mess. As long as things go in their favor, the institutions are fine. But when it does not, they make sure all hell breaks loose. There is not an iota of public interest in their mind, they just want to protect their business interest.

They imagine themselves to be above the law and this has harmed not just them but their party and workers as well, leading them towards defeat. Within their party, there is so much divide and splits. Now these differences increasing uncontrollably as if they have attempted a suicide attack on themselves.

Q) Do you feel that the government could be harmed by the aggressive approach adopted by the opposition?

These are all verbal antics. So many of their members are in contact with us and when it comes to agitation, they neither have



the capacity nor the strategy to execute protests to actually endanger the government, which is why it does not scare us.

For us, economy is our main concern but then COVID-19 happened. Fortunately, we were able to defeat it and have seen quite a bit of success in this regard. If Nawaz Sharif or the opposition are truly sincere to the people of Pakistan, they should come back and bring their wealth and families to Pakistan. That will provide credence to the claims of commitment and sincerity they sell to our public.

Their foreign assets have hurt our foreign policy as well because when something comes in the way of their wealth, they make the necessary compromises to salvage their private resources. The fact of the matter is that all that was said for public consumption. At the end of the day, it is all rhetoric but at the back end of the scene, they will be negotiating to find a way out.

Q) Did the opposition ever approach the government for NRO?

Had we adhered to their draft for NAB reforms, it would be paramount to granting them NRO. In the 34 articles they proposed, each of them tried to undermine corruption in one way or the other, whether it was time barring old cases, or raising the minimum limit of corruption – anything that could spare them from being convicted for corruption. From the case of FATF law, it provides proof of how we refused to grant them NRO, not today, not tomorrow and not anytime in the future, Minister concluded.

Opposition gearing up for battle royale, says Kaira

Central PPP leader says his party and PML-N are on the same page; hopes armed forces and judiciary will operate within their constitutional limits

By Oroba Tasnim Siddiqui

CARRYING A HISTORY of mistrust and betrayal, opposition parties have again gathered to launch a campaign against the PTI government led by Imran Khan. For this purpose, they have formed Pakistan Democratic Movement and set up a committee to finalize an agitation strategy in various phases. The announcement includes public meetings, protests, long march and sit-in in Islamabad and no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister.

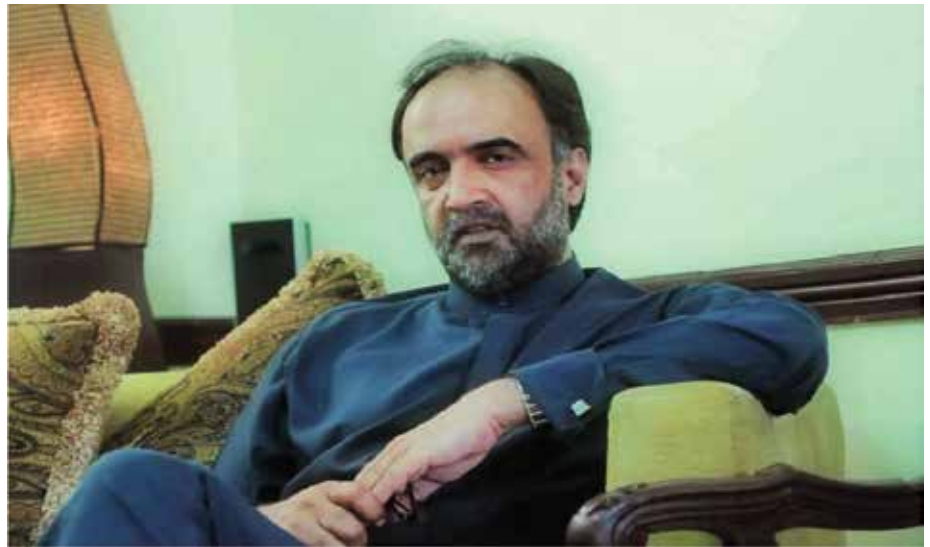
The Truth International spoke to central leader of PPP Qamar Zaman Kaira to know the modus operandi for agitation and other options and whether this alliance will work when there had been repeated incidents of mistrust among major political parties.

Kaira spoke candidly and provided an insight into the thought process and reasons for hosting an All Parties Conference by his party last week.

Q) There have been a couple of APCs earlier but they could not succeed. Knowing this, why did you hold another APC?

I feel those APCs did not fail. We sat together, cooperated and discussed various issues according to which we made certain decisions. The first APC was held right after elections in 2018 to highlight the case of unfair and rigged polls. Maulana Fazlur Rehman was of the view that a complete boycott of the assemblies was the only way forward, but we relented. We believed this would provide a vacuum for non-democratic forces to intervene and we did not want to create a situation whereby there was even a slight chance of democracy being derailed.

The second APC was held in light of the Kashmir dilemma. We discussed the entire issue and brought it to national and international attention. We felt it was important for the government to rectify its



course of actions and fulfill the promises made to the public. We advocated the cause of governance and in return we received abuses, cases against us and treason allegations. The way the government responded was a fascist approach and given the social, economic, and industrial situation of the country, even PTI supporters are disappointed.

The fact that Imran Khan publicly declared himself as the only option due to absence of a replacement is a sign of his failure to perform. Nawabzada Nasrullah once said that graveyards are full of indispensable people but no one is ever indispensable for a country.

Q) The two major parties in the APC, PML-N and PPP, have a history of mutual distrust. They have continuously made promises to one another but failed to live up to each other's expectations. Nawaz Sharif has even sided with dictators to target PPP and has betrayed you multiple times. How do you think you can trust one another?

Time is a great teacher. In the past, the distrust stemmed from broken promises and betrayal but now this has to be transformed into a state of trustworthiness. There is no other option for us in the

current scenario. The country is marred by social, political and economic collapse and to overcome this situation there is no other way but to unite and move forth. Previously, we had to work with the murderers of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in the national interest. Our politics is in the national interest and we feel that Nawaz Sharif has learnt from the past, so we are in a better position to move forward together.

Q) Before the actual APC, there is backstage discussion also known as pre-party. Was there one before this APC?

Yes, like every APC, discussions were held prior to the main conference. However, the details cannot be shared with the media. Nawaz Sharif has confessed publicly that he made mistakes. There were grievances on both sides but considering the current situation, it is imperative that we ignore past mistakes and start with a clean slate.

Q) Do you think this alliance is limited to protests or will it expand to a wider electoral alliance?

It is too soon to say anything. The public expects us to help out with the problems that they are facing. Regarding the alliance,

discussions will continue but as of now, we are more inclined towards setting the date, time and manner of these protests.

Q) There are two factions in the PML-N; one is more inclined toward protests whereas the other one is not. How do you think these protests will be held?

There is difference of opinion in every party but once the leadership has made a decision, that is considered the ultimate policy. All the stakeholders were present in the APC and they agreed upon the declaration and have given each other confidence regarding its implementation.

Q) Will this movement stop at protests alone or will it reach a point where you dissolve the Sindh Assembly and render resignations countrywide?

We have decided that we will approach this in a very systematic manner and will move step by step. An All Parties Committee has been formed and it will decide the mechanism, timing and approach that we are going to follow, whether protests, public awareness or something else. They will be responsible for the decision-making process which will be announced in a couple of days.

Q) Nawaz Sharif's statement seemed more anti-establishment than anti-Imran. Does the PPP agree with that?


The Supreme Court in its decision regarding NAB specifically stated that it was an institution that was used for political engineering. Imran Khan was not in power when these cases were initiated but it clearly shows that there is a power beyond politicians that derives this manipulation to meet certain political objectives. We do not want to disrespect the armed forces or the judiciary. What we want is for them to operate within their constitutional jurisdictions so an air of professionalism can be created. Mirza Aslam Baig and Hamid Gul are on record where they have admitted to intervention by the army and agencies in establishing Islami Jamhoori Ittehad to pressurize the PPP. All we want is for the institutions to remain within their assigned constitutional limits so that each pillar of the state can perform through a collaborative process, not the terror of the fist.

Q) There is a lot of discussion going on over the opposition's meeting with the Army chief. What was the purpose of this meeting?

Yes, this meeting was held at the invitation of COAS General Qamar Bajwa. Political

leaders, including government and military leadership, were present. The main agenda was to discuss declaration of Gilgit-Baltistan as the fifth province while some other matters also came up. It's a misconception that it was a secret meeting. It is very unfortunate that instead of the Prime Minister, the army chief called this meeting to discuss constitutional and national security-related issues. During the PPP and PML-N governments, whether it was the Kashmir issue, Waziristan operation or national security, all the decisions were taken in meetings chaired by the prime minister at the PM House or Secretariat. In those meetings, apart from government and opposition, the top leadership of armed forces and security agencies also participated. The PPP has never been against the constitutional role of the army. It is sad that PM Imran Khan considers the opposition anti-Pakistan and an enemy. He doesn't want to shake hands with opposition leaders. It also shows his incompetence. Imran Khan should realize that those whom he labels as traitors have been elected by the people. The PM is insulting the voters by refusing to meet elected opposition leaders.

Revenue Division
Federal Board of Revenue
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Salaried Individual Taxpayers

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Shocked and bewildered: The tragedy of Motorway incident

Despite rapid advances in the high-profile case, negligence has marred efficacy of the investigative process



By Ahmed Faraz

THE MEMORY OF THE TRAGIC ZAINAB CASE was still fresh when news of the gruesome Lahore Motorway gang-rape once again shocked the nation. The most appalling aspect of this case is the negligence and incapability shown by the police and government to withstand pressure which has marred the efficacy of the entire investigative process.

The incident occurred on September 9 when a 35-year-old woman departed from Lahore for Gujranwala through Ring Road towards the Eastern Bypass. She paid the regular Rs30 toll tax to enter the motorway but at 2am her car ran out of petrol and stopped when she reached the 3km mark.

She contacted the 130 Motorway Police helpline to seek assistance but was informed that their jurisdiction did not extend to that particular area. Meanwhile, two robbers came from the nearby jungle and ordered the woman to come out of the car. Upon refusal, they broke the window of the driver side and forcefully pulled her out of the vehicle.

Not only did they rob her but also tried to force her into a ditch along the road. She managed to wriggle free and pleaded for help from a passing by motorist, but he was scared off by one of the armed robbers. However, the passerby Khalid Safdar informed police on the 15 emergency helpline instantly. He could see a person at the rear of the car while the children were seated inside. The woman pleaded for mercy as the robbers again tried to take her into the ditch. When the robbers took her children into the ditch she followed them and became a victim of rape.

Following Khalid Safdar's call, the Dolphin Force dispatched two officials, Ali Abbas and Touseef Khan. On reaching the site they saw a child's abandoned shoe. They resorted to aerial firing and called out to check if the car's occupants were in the vicinity. Startled by the noise the robbers fled towards the jungle.

The officials descended into the ditch where they saw a very terrified mother trying to protect her children. To assure

her, they flashed their torches onto their uniforms. They brought the woman and her children back to the motorway where she fainted. She was taken to Khawaja Saeed Hospital for medical assistance by the local police who had arrived by then.

Most probably the woman would have been killed had the Dolphin Force officers not arrived on time. Later the Punjab Forensic Science Agency (PFSA) and police gathered circumstantial evidence and were able to retrieve a watch and ring belonging to the woman from the ditch where she was raped.

Due to the high-profile nature of this incident, the PFSA was able to swiftly identify the alleged perpetrators from the provided evidence. One of them, Abid Malhi, was already an accused in the rape case of a woman and her young daughter in Bahawalpur in 2013. Following that incident, the people had expelled his entire family from the locality.



IG Punjab Inam Ghani then wrongly informed Chief Minister Punjab Usman Buzdar that a man named Waqarul Hassan was Abid's accomplice in the case. The news was broken to the media at a press conference by Law Minister Raja Basharat and Information Minister Fayyazul Hassan Chohan without proper verification. It was stated that the accused had been successfully identified and their profiles were flashed across the media.

Such information is not disclosed prior to arrest in order to ensure the accused do not flee. While the police were trying to arrest Waqar, he turned himself in within hours and declared his innocence. His DNA sample did not match the evidence. However, he informed the police that Abid had links with his relative Abbas.

The investigation was undertaken by 28 teams. Two DSPs, Hasan Haider and Ali Butt, and their team carried out geofencing of the crime site. They traced and shortlisted a number which was registered in the name of Shafqat.

Shafqat was then arrested from Dipalpur and admitted to the crime within minutes. He told the police that Abid was his accomplice in the crime. He also informed that Iqbal alias Bala Mistri had initially accompanied them with the intention of robbery but had returned midway.

The police had registered the case under Sections 376 and 392 and later included Section 7 of Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 in the FIR. As a result, he was produced before an Anti-Terrorism Court and not the local court and the police requested physical remand.

As per the disclosed information, both accused have a past criminal record and their identities have been verified by the victim.

Amidst all this, an irresponsible statement was made by the CCPO Lahore Umar Sheikh who censured the woman for choosing such a late hour for travelling, for which he later apologized publicly.

Some of Abid's close relatives were arrested but he remains at large. His wife Bushra Bibi was arrested from Manga Mandi after she earlier managed to flee with her husband. A few days ago, police in Nankana Sahib raided his relative's house upon receiving information but he had already fled. However, his brother-in-law Arif along with his brother Sabir were taken into custody.

The scope of investigation has been expanded and details have subsequently been shared with all the provinces. Punjab police are also monitoring all the entry and exit points of the province.

Police believe that Abid may alter his appearance and have also shared his images depicting how he might look. Police have also shared pamphlets announcing Rs250,000 reward for those who help in his arrest. Directives have also been issued that video clips of the accused be broadcast and anonymity would be granted to those who help in this arrest.

The police believe that the accused could use mosques, imambargahs and shrines to hide and have issued guidelines for strict monitoring of these sites.

Following this incident, 250 officials of the Special Protection Unit have been assigned on the motorway to ensure the security of travelers whilst motorcyclists have been barred from traveling across the Eastern Bypass.

Regarding the leaked information, an inquiry has been ordered by the Punjab Chief Minister.

Chairman of the investigation team, DIG Shahzada Sultan, stated that eight raiding teams have been allocated various districts to ensure Abid's arrest. He believes that as it happened in the Zainab case, Abid will be not be able to escape the law-enforcement agencies for long.



A strategy committee without a strategy

Chohan forced to dissolve Media Strategy Committee for inapt handling of motorway incident and claims of members acting for personal benefits

By Qasim Malik

THE MEDIA STRATEGY COMMITTEE of the Punjab government has been doing more harm than good, says a senior leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, explaining how it has finally been exposed by insensitively handling the infamous Lahore Motorway gang-rape case.

This viewpoint came in the backdrop of the 35th Punjab Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Usman Buzdar to discuss progress on the gang-rape case. Strong reservations were conveyed to Information Minister Fayyazul Hassan Chohan for inappropriate treatment of the incident on electronic and social media by members of his Media Strategy Committee.

The minister was informed about spokespersons leaking sensitive information about the case to social and electronic media. Statements of committee members on news channels were also found to contradict the policy of the party and government.

“The party leadership and the Chief Minister expressed displeasure over the leakage of important information by the spokespersons,” a Cabinet member disclosed.

Chohan returned red-faced to his office and ordered issuance of notification for immediate dissolution of the committee on September 14.

“Consequent upon the direction of the competent authority, the Media Strategy Committee of Punjab is hereby dissolved with immediate effect. All advisors, focal persons of print/electronic media and coordinators under the minister information are hereby dissolved,” reads the notification. However, social media teams were retained.

The Media Strategy Committee was constituted to highlight Punjab government policies and defend its stance in line with the party slogan of “Naya Pakistan”. But it eventually turned into a platform to offer party positions allowing members to exert pressure in government and private offices.

Though the number of committee members as well as advisors, focal persons of print and electronic media and coordinators surged to around 70, a majority of them were rarely in contact with media persons and just blew their own trumpets. “Only a few members were in contact with the electronic media persons to represent the Punjab government but their knowledge was never up-to-date and at times they earned embarrassment for the party,” a veteran party spokesperson said.

He added that neither the new members expressed their desire to discuss and understand party policies and guidelines nor the minister ever called a committee meeting to review performance and assign duties.

Some members believe the committee was dissolved for failure in its proper management. It is hoped that the committee will be reconstituted soon, a parliamentarian who was previously part of the committee, said. Only non-political members have faded into

oblivion while the active ones are still representing the government on electronic media, he added.

The parliamentarian said the committee members were neither getting any remuneration nor perks and privileges but agreed that there were reports from different offices regarding undue pressure by the members.

A senior party leader told this reporter that he had never taken the committee seriously as it was never at par with the expectations of the party. “The committee was a classic example of quantity rather than quality,” he said.

He maintained that the Information Minister himself was incapable as he failed to project party and government affairs in a serious and effective manner.

Before it came to power, PTI had capable spokespersons to defend and project the party’s stance and policies, he said. After it formed the government, a swarm of incompetent and vested interest parachutists occupied the party’s major offices, including the task to defend and project the party in the media, he added.

Expressing his disappointment, he said: “No one knows who is doing what?”

He regretted that the committee never met to seek advice of senior party leaders and added that even a WhatsApp group was not properly used to disseminate the party policy to the committee members.

Another veteran party spokesperson said a large number of party members had lobbied to be included in the Media Strategy Committee in order to attain power and used the forum for their personal benefit. “The ever-increasing number of committee members had become more of a liability,” he said and added that only a few regular spokespersons appeared on talk shows and other engagements on electronic media.

“The print media sector was wide open, yet no one was there to respond to media persons’ questions,” he said.

Commenting on the inactive WhatsApp group to coordinate and share information, he said most of the members remained blank about party policies and were unable to put up a logical and effective defense.

Prime Minister Imran Khan regularly holds meetings of party spokespersons to review performance and pass on further directions, but this was not the case in Punjab as Chohan was unable to lead them from the front, a party spokesperson said.

“Since no collective wisdom is being applied to defend and project the party and its government in Punjab, the governance issues in the province have compounded,” the spokesperson.

Chohan was contacted while some questions were forwarded to him but he chose to refrain from commenting on the matter.

Dilemma of Karachi – who owns it?

By Azfar Ashfaq

WHETHER IT'S Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan Peoples Party or Muttahida Qaumi Movement, all of them have claims on Karachi. However, none of them takes the responsibility to address the problems faced by the financial and economic capital of the country.

Recently Prime Minister Imran Khan announced a development package of Rs1.1 trillion under the Karachi Transformation Plan in the wake of unprecedented rains that left the infrastructure of the metropolis in tatters and its civic agencies struggling to mitigate the woes of its residents.

The city was made a single district consisting of 18 towns during the military regime of Gen Pervez Musharraf. After the end of his tenure, it was reverted back to five and later six districts (the seventh one has been recently approved) by the PPP government that has been ruling Sindh for the past 12 years.

The PML-N government formed the Karachi Infrastructure Development Company in 2013, which was later converted into the Sindh Infrastructure Development Company by the PTI government in order to directly fund the city's projects due to allegations of widespread corruption against the PPP government.



Out of the total, around Rs572 billion would be spent on mass transit system and rail and road transport systems. The second major chunk – Rs267 billion – has been allocated for solid waste management, cleaning stormwater drains and the resettlement of people living in encroachments built on the waterways. A sum of Rs141 billion would be spent on sewage treatment plants, Rs92 billion on water supply projects and Rs41 billion on roads.

After the announcement of such a comprehensive plan, Karachiites hoped that things will get better. However, their happiness proved short-lived when the PTI and PPP legislators engaged in a war of words over the share of federal and Sindh governments in this package.

During the past 20 years, successive governments did not show seriousness or commitment to resolve the civic problems faced by the citizens of this city. Due to this negligence, Karachi has become 'Kachra-chi' as depicted by piles of garbage and overflowing sewage.

Since 2016, Karachi has been ranked among the 10 least liveable cities in the world. In terms of population, it is among the 10 largest cities of the world but will definitely top the list of the worst-run cities if there is any.

The recent monsoon rains exposed the performance of the PPP-led provincial and MQM-led local governments to such an extent that the Prime Minister was forced to intervene by sending army-led National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to clean the city's stormwater drains.

When the PPP government in Sindh declared only two subdivisions in Malir District as calamity-hit areas following heavy rains last month, both the PTI and MQM-P condemned what they called a pick-and-choose move. PTI's city president Khurram Sher Zaman said the Sindh government had once again showed ethnic bias and chose the areas where a by-election was going to be held soon.

The establishment is also concerned about the situation in Karachi. A top-ranking member of the security establishment held a couple of meetings with the city's stakeholders not to discuss law and order issues or security concerns but to find out immediate solutions to cleaning the stormwater drains, water scarcity, lifting of garbage and transport issues.

The establishment's intervention has resulted in the formation of a coordination committee comprising federal and provincial ministers, but this initiative is widely considered as yet another experiment that is bound to fail like the previous ones.

Not long ago, during Musharraf's era, Karachi was progressing at a fast pace. The reason was said to be the attention given by none other than the country's head who not only gave the city an empowered local government system but also monitored its development while routinely chairing meetings in order to get firsthand knowledge about the issues, bottlenecks and pace of work.

Karachi embarked on the journey of development in 2001 during the four-year term of Naimatullah Khan, the first city nazim or city mayor, and this pace continued under Syed Mustafa Kamal of MQM who became the mayor in 2005.

Unprecedented funds were given to Karachi and in addition to the annual development budget of the city, Musharraf approved an initiative called Taameer-i-Karachi Programme under which federal organizations were made to contribute a total of Rs29 billion for the city's development.

With the rise of PPP to power after the general elections in 2008, the city's situation started deteriorating. After the elected local government set-up was dissolved in February 2010, the PPP-led provincial government took charge of the municipal affairs by appointing bureaucrats as administrators.

Later, based on its majority in the Sindh Assembly, PPP passed the Sindh Local Government Act in 2013 through which it deprived the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation of key municipal functions. As a result, the mayor is not responsible for the maintenance of the water and sewerage system, the lifting of garbage, building control, etc.

Karachi is the only city in Pakistan that has been divided into districts. According to the Census 2017, the population of the six districts of Karachi (excluding its rural population) was 14.9 million, whereas the population of Lahore, which is still one district, was 11.1 million.

While Karachi contributes a major portion to Sindh's total revenue, the provincial government in return has been giving it peanuts – around Rs150 billion in 12 years (while the estimated cost of Lahore's Orange Line project is over Rs200 billion).

A former bureaucrat, who also worked with the Sindh Finance Department, says the provincial government collected over Rs1,771 billion in terms of taxes during the past 12 years and Rs1,506 billion, or 85 per cent of the total amount, was contributed by Karachi. Sindh received a total Rs4,975 billion from the federal divisible pool in the past 12 years of the PPP rule and a large part of the amount was taxes collected from the urban centers of Sindh, particularly Karachi.

The total federal and provincial receipts of Sindh during the past 12 years stand at Rs6,481 billion and what Karachi received during this period is a paltry sum of around Rs150 billion. In the fiscal year 2020-21 alone, an amount of Rs232 billion was allocated for development projects of Sindh and the share of Karachi was just Rs26.04 billion, or 11 per cent of the total development budget.



The PPP-led government is neither ready to devolve powers to the local government nor does it want to provide them with enough funds. Recently, the Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah, while citing a World Bank study, had claimed that Karachi needed \$9-10 billion for infrastructural development but neither the federal nor the provincial governments had that amount of money. What he forgot to mention was that this money is needed over a period of 10 years.

As the four-year tenure of local bodies in Sindh ended on August 30, MQM-P spokesman and federal minister Aminul Haque said the PPP had been taking all decisions with regard to the urban parts of the province in view of its own political interests.

PPP leader and Sindh Information Minister Nasir Shah, however, sees his party's government in the province as the only viable solution for Karachi's myriad problems.

The issues faced by Karachi can only be resolved if the federal government or the provincial government takes ownership. It will continue to tread the path of destruction if the conflict between parties ruling the center and the province continues. Today, the people of Karachi are suffering but tomorrow the whole country will feel the brunt if the engine of the city's economy stops.



When nightmare becomes reality for Karachiite

By Hasan Kazmi

ON 27TH AUGUST this year, many Karachiites would have woken up with the huge thunder and soon after it started raining cats and dogs.

The seventh spell of the monsoon season was predicted to be more severe than previous ones, and met department predicted heavy urban flooding, yet there were literally no measures whatsoever taken by either the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation or the Sindh government.

The roads in the entire PECHS area especially block 6 were flooded and the residents started to worry as it was still raining very heavily and water level was contently rising.

I, myself being a journalist, immediately started calling to ministers including Nasir Hussain and Saeed Ghani as well as other powerful people to tell them the situation in my area. However none of them bothered to receive the SOS calls, the others rain emergency numbers were also not attended.

It was the time when the rain water, started entering in my house. Needless to say that K-electric switched off the power supply as soon as the rain was started.

In the next 20 minutes there was water everywhere in my home and it was kept rising and in next 10 minutes everywhere valuable thing was submerged, be it a furniture like sofas, bed, tables, chairs or anything you name it was floating in water.

There was over 3 feet of water inside the house and about 6 and a half feet on road outside.

I had never felt myself so helpless before in my life, my hard earned household items were being destroyed in a filthy water.

Around 6 pm on that day, I decided to leave the house as water level was constantly rising and I was now worried about my life and the government agencies were nowhere to be found. All my efforts were went in vain because the water level outside



the house was over 6 feet and it was impossible to go out.

My car, which I parked outside was also drowned although I parked it on a pavement which was 3 feet higher than road level.

I tried to call emergency numbers but realised that mobile signals are not available as well.

It was a miserable night with no end in sight, it stopped raining around midnight, so we managed to get to the roof and stayed there till the sunrise.

By the time the water level was down to 4 feet and I somehow get to the Shara-e-Faisal which is about a kilometre away from my place. Luckily perhaps, mobile signals were available at Shara-e-Faisal so I called a friend who lives in North Nazimabad to come and get me out of this situation. When I reached his place, got myself cleaned, charged a mobile, (generator was running) and opened Facebook, the first post I saw was from Saeed Ghani who posted last night that Shaheed-e-Millat underpass in cleared.

I think it is important to mention that Saeed Ghani is also elected from my area and ironically, he never bothered to visit his own constituency and somehow worried more about the underpass. I would also like to mention that infamous politician, anchor and religious scholar Aamir Liaquat Hussain is also elected from this area and of course he has no interest in the people of this area as well.

That was the time when I finally, lost confidence, in the entire governmental system, be it civilian or non-civilian. This story is not limited to me, the entire area suffered badly however, none of the government officials ever bothered to visit the area as yet.

Being in the media for 24 years and in journalism for over 18 years, I always tried my best not to become a news myself. This is why I kept mum on this issue and only after insistence of a friend I pulled some courage to write the devastating story of my life which left me financially broke and mentally shattered. The recovery story is a tale itself.

Punjab smarting from metro headache

Province in a fix whether to carry on or terminate metro bus services and stalled train project in face of huge cost

By Intikhab Hanif

THE THREE METRO BUS SERVICES in as many cities of Punjab and the stalled, rusting multi-billion-rupee Orange Line Metro Train in Lahore is a thorn in the side of Punjab which it finds difficult to carry on or terminate. The reason for the forced marriage is the high economic cost in both cases of either continuing or abandoning these projects.

These were the flagship projects of the previous PML-N government of Mian Shahbaz Sharif. The bus services rolled out on elevated pathways costing nearly Rs1 trillion. The cost of travelling on these buses was found higher than the general spending power of the intended commuters. The government had declared it a welfare project and claiming the cost through tickets would have defeated this slogan. The answer was “public money”, which the government began to pay in subsidy worth billions of rupees. The subsidy for the metros and their feeder route buses is Rs8.1 billion for the current year. It was Rs8.3 billion for the last financial year.

The PTI government also found the project financially unbearable but is not able to wrap it up in view of the billions of rupees already spent and the compulsory repayment of the loan.

“The PTI government is in a fix,” a cabinet minister said. He kept mum when asked about the launch of the Peshawar Metro Bus service by the government of his own party. Many questions are raised on the design of the service, its quality and cost, though.

The Shahbaz regime had introduced the bus services and launched the Orange Line Train Project after scrapping the \$2.4 billion Mass Transit System devised earlier by the Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi government. In the first phase it had to link Hamza Town to Shahdara, claimed Mr. Elahi at a press conference he addressed on January 23, 2010, to express his displeasure over abandoning, what he said, was the best ever transport system for the city.

According to sources in the repository of all government



The province is bound to pay the subsidy in future no matter which party is in power.

The PML-N government went home in the 2018 elections. The new PTI government did not like the bus system because of the high cost but could not do away with it.

Similarly, the former PML-N government began the Orange Line Train Project with billions of rupees Chinese loan and completed its pathway despite litigation and objections from all sides. Nevertheless, it could not start the service.

information in Punjab, the Orange Line Metro Train infrastructure was built under a Chinese loan of \$1.6 billion. Many say it was obtained at a high interest rate. Officials say it is a secret under the CPEC agreement but assume it to be around four per cent. Even if the interest rate was not higher, the principal amount of the loan has itself grown manifold because of the devaluation of the rupee against the dollar. The repayment of the loan and the interest will remain the headache of every Punjab government for a long time to come.

Here comes the operational side. Under the arrangement it required a separate contract for which basic work had been completed. But, the authorized Punjab Mass Transit Authority (PMTA), headed by Chief Minister Usman Buzdar, cancelled the multi-billion rupees O&M (Operation and Management) contract after reportedly finding irregularities in it. The reasons were many.

Sources in the Chief Minister House say the Rs60 billion contract awarded to a Chinese company for running and managing the train for around 10 years was cancelled in June last year on various legal and technical grounds given by different departments and agencies concerned.



The cancelled contract was reportedly designed by former PMTA managing director Sibtain Fazle Haleem whose own term in office had expired six months earlier. He was nevertheless given an extension in his contractual service.

Insiders claim that the request for proposals of the bid was publicized without seeking approval of the competent authority. The approval was sought after selecting the contracting party. The legality and financial aspects of the bid were got checked by the authority from different departments and agencies.

The authority under the chief minister rejected the bid on the grounds that the contract was to be for five years but was given for 10. Its operational cost was also high despite the fact that the whole train project was owned by the provincial government.

The authority re-advertised the job and the government is in the process of selecting the most suitable bidder. It is likely to be a combination of a local and a Chinese enterprise.

But the issue is not so simple. The government will have to pay around Rs440 million monthly to the contractor for the operation and management of the train service. The combined burden of running the train is estimated at Rs10 to Rs11 billion per year which the province is required to pay as subsidy. This includes subsidy on ticket if it is fixed at Rs50. The Punjab government has now reportedly fixed the fare at Rs40, which means more subsidy.

Officials say the breakeven rate for a one-way ticket is estimated at Rs175.

Buses: The Shahbaz government had introduced the metro bus system in Lahore, first spending Rs30 billion on its pathway which became controversial. Many disagreed with the declared cost and claimed it was much higher.

The Lahore metro service was followed by the Rawalpindi-Islamabad and Multan metros whose installation cost Rs34 billion and Rs 30 billion, respectively. Ticket was Rs20 per person. Feeder bus service was also launched in Lahore. The Punjab government is at present paying Rs8 billion annual subsidy for the three bus and the feeder facilities. It doesn't like it, but there is no other choice.

Insiders reveal that the operational contract of the Lahore metro is expiring in September. Bids for the new contract are required to be invited six months prior to the expiry date under the rules. The authorities concerned did force the Mass Transit Authority board to invite the bids in January, but they have just been opened.

"The key word is that the present lowest bid offer is Rs304 per km as against Rs360 per km on which the contract was awarded eight years ago. This difference indicates something fishy in the previous contract," one official says.

He says the new bid offer, if accepted, would mean saving of Rs250 million annually.

"We are paying the contractor to run buses on our infrastructure and we do not even own them," another official said.

The bus service remained suspended for three to four months due to the coronavirus lockdown. But the company has claimed subsidy for this period under the force majeure clause of the agreement. The authority could have sought a waiver from the company under the same clause which it did not. Now the government is bound to pay Rs580 million for the non-operational period. The company has reportedly sought a three-month extension and if granted it would mean another higher subsidy for the period.

The bus service covers one route – from Shahdara to Gajju Matta—whereas it has 150 bus routes as per official record. For that, the city requires 2,500 buses which, according to common perception, would have been much cheaper to run compared to a white elephant like metro bus service.

The Shahbaz government was covering these routes through another company, the Lahore Transport Company, paying it huge subsidy, according to unconfirmed reports. It has stopped operations and the buses have gone missing.

The Multan metro is riddled with more issues. Those in the administration say Multan needed a proper sewerage system and not this bus service. The claim is proved by the low turnout of passengers, indicating that the number of beneficiaries is much lower than the amount spent on the project.



8th FPCCI Achievements Awards Ceremony at a Glance





BRT project in state of cessation after 35 days

By Ghulam Dastgeer

OPERATION OF THE LONG-AWAITED and much-trumpeted project of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government—Rapid Bus Transit (BRT) — came to a grind halt exactly on 35th day of its opening.

None other than Prime Minister Imran Khan inaugurated the project on August 13, declaring it the best among all the metro bus projects in the country.

Nevertheless, the administration of the project — TransPeshawar — had to stop the service on September 16 sine die after the fourth incident of fire in the BRT buses.

TransPeshawar's spokesman Muhammad Umair Khan said that the service would be resumed after a thorough check-up by the manufacturer company.

The stoppage of the bus service added insult to the injury because the project remained a constant source of embarrassment for the PTI government right from its very inception.

For instance, even announcement of the project drew flak from the opponents of the PTI. Earlier, Imran Khan had explicitly opposed such projects and would sarcastically call them 'jangla bus'.

The stipulated time for the completion of the project was six months, but it took the PTI government 34 months to open the bus service. It merits a mention here that the project is still incomplete and may take few more years to be fully completed.

The incomplete portions of the project include: cycle track, parking spaces and commercial plazas. Besides, out of the three depots only one could be completed hitherto.

According to the official statistics presented in the provincial legislature, the initial cost of the project was 49.346 billion rupees which later jumped to Rs. 66.346 billion and its present cost has touched the figure of Rs. 71 billion.

The cost escalation is linked with the frequent changes in the design of the project. As many as 37 major changes were made in the design.

Interestingly enough, the provincial government paid a huge amount of Rs. 1.253 billion for the detailed engineering design. However the design failed to assess that the bus track at Gul Bahar and Tehkal would lead to massive traffic jams and the construction work on these two points was demolished to replace the grade-level track to flyovers.

The cost of the project registered around 35 per cent increase, but on the other side the number of buses decreased from 300 to 220 to ply on the 27.5 kilometre bus corridor and seven feeder routes. The government borrowed \$471 million from the Asian Development Bank. The provincial government, as per a news report, would have to pay Rs. 15 billion to the ADP as mark-up for this 20-year loan. Later, the government borrowed another \$122 million from a French bank. The provincial government's share in this project was Rs. 7.465 billion which was later raised to Rs. 13.117 billion.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Transport Shah Muhammad says that the project would not need any subsidy if the daily flow of passenger ranges from 0.35 million to 0.4 million. Otherwise, the provincial government would have to pump in extra money to grease the wheels of this bus service.

The provincial government, though, boasts that it would be a non-subsidized project, but the Auditor General of Pakistan report discloses that the project needs an annual subsidy of Rs. 1.6 billion.



The PTI government, a self-proclaimed harbinger of corruption-free Pakistan, has to stop the process of its inquiries more than once.

Hearing a petition filed by a local leader of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (F) Amanullah Haqqani on July 19, 2018, Peshawar High Court Chief Justice Waqar Ahmed Seth declared the BRT project "shady and shaky". He directed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to delve into the project and submit a detailed report within 48 days.

However, the PTI government succeeded to stop the investigation by getting a stay order from a bench of the Supreme Court, presided over by then Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar.

Again on December 7 last year hearing identical petitions, PHC Chief Justice Waqar Ahmed Seth declared the project as "vision-less" which was started without any feasibility study "to determine its economic, financial and technical viability." "Per kilometre cost of the BRT is Rs. 2.427 billion, which is exorbitantly high," the verdict further stated. This time, the PHC chief justice ordered the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to probe into the matter and submit its report to the PHC within 45 days.

But instead of getting itself absolved of the allegations regarding anomalies in BRT, the PTI again challenged the PHC verdict before the court, which also restricted the FIA from holding any investigation into the project.

The PTI government emerged successful to get the orders from the Supreme Court to stop investigations in the BRT project, but probably it remained oblivious to the investigations of the Provincial Inspection Team.

On April 01, 2019, the Provincial Inspection Team, in its report submitted to the chief minister, pointed towards the kickbacks of Rs. 7 billion in the project. The report further stated that the BRT project was started without any comprehensive plan, which led to huge cost-escalation.

The Auditor General of Pakistan's report issued in February further substantiated the findings of the Provincial Inspection Team. It stated that the Rs. 10.4 were wasted on "unauthorized variations."

The report also figured out payment of Rs. 95 million as salaries without approved pay structure and another Rs. 45 million "unauthorized payment" to officers.

As compared to the Peshawar's BRT project having 27.5-kilometer bus track with 31 bus stations, the Lahore Metrobus has a 27-km route with 27 stations. The Lahore Metrobus was completed in 11 months while the Peshawar BRT took 34 months for its partial completion. The cost of the Lahore Metrobus—Rs.29.65 billion—is also less than half of the Peshawar BRT.

Pakistan efforts to get rid of FATF grey list under minute scrutiny

Political considerations of US can influence FATF decision



By Mehtab Haider

AMID PASSING THROUGH 15 pieces of legislations from the Parliament despite having a thin majority in the Upper House of Parliament, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led government has demonstrated its strength and grip on power to get smooth sailing on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) front.

There is no easy way out for graduating from the grey list but Islamabad is hopeful of a positive outcome at least on account of recognition of its progress towards implementing 27 action plans from the watchdog working against money laundering and terror financing at international levels.

The plenary virtual meeting of FATF is scheduled to be held from October 21 to 23 for evaluating Pakistan's performance towards implementing 27 action plans to graduate from the grey list. Pakistan was placed on the grey list in June 2018 when Islamabad remained unable to comply with the required 40 recommendations placed by the international watchdog on account of curbing money laundering and terror financing in line with UN Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1373 in the aftermath of 9/11, 2001.

With recent enactment of legislation, the increased documentation requirement have multiplied difficulties for common Pakistanis as the banks and financial institutions were bound to comply with KYC (Know Your Customers) and CDD (Customer Due Diligence). Experts

consider the move in a right direction that would help the country to achieve documentation of the economy. But a common Pakistani would have to justify its source of any unusual income otherwise he or she could be charged under money laundering or terror financing act. However, the experts believed that the documentation of the economy will ultimately be beneficial for the country as it will bring many sectors in the tax net by end of the day.

With enactment of Anti Money Laundering Law 2020, the money laundering had become a cognizable offense and the amount of penalties increased manifold to bring it in line with FATF standards.

Pakistan was placed into the grey list in June 2018 by the FATF when Islamabad failed to comply with 40 recommendations to curb money laundering and terror financing. In order to be excluded from the grey list, the FATF placed a 27 points action plan and granted one year timeframe to implement it and graduate from the grey list till October 2019. However, Pakistan could not comply with the full demand or wish-list so a six month extension was granted. The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak provided another six month extension that would be exhausted in October 2020.

With eruption of new controversy after surfacing of un-authorized FinCEN documents where some Pakistani banks were also allegedly found involved into money laundering, the FATF stated that it is aware of

press reports about the disclosure of suspicious activity reports (SARs) documents filed by financial institutions with the US Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN). "We will not comment on information from SARs or suspicious transaction reports (STRs), which is confidential information under the FATF standards," the statement said.

Irrespective of this, the FATF emphasises the importance for all countries to fully and effectively implement the FATF standards and for the private sector to fulfill its responsibility to detect and help prevent money laundering and terrorist financing, which includes filing suspicious transactions reports with competent authorities.

In supporting the fight against money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing, the FATF has not only developed robust standards that over 200 countries and jurisdictions have agreed to comply with, but initiated multiple projects in recent years to improve the efficiency of anti-money laundering prevention systems. The FATF's work helps ensure a coordinated global response to prevent organized crime, corruption and terrorism in which both the public and private sectors have important roles to play.

In recent months, FATF placed around 20 countries including Pakistan as jurisdictions under increased monitoring which are actively working with the FATF to address strategic deficiencies in their regimes to counter money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing.

When the FATF places a jurisdiction under increased monitoring, it means the country has committed to resolve swiftly the identified strategic deficiencies within agreed timeframes and is subject to increased monitoring. This list is often externally referred to as the 'grey list'.

Pakistan will have to comply with the remaining 13 points out of the total 27 action plans as Islamabad was already declared largely compliant on 14 points in the past. According to the list of remaining 13 points of 27 action plan (1) Pakistan will have to demonstrate effectiveness of sanctions including remedial actions to curb terrorist financing in the country; (2)

Pakistan will have to ensure improved effectiveness to check terror financing of financial institutions with particular reference to banned outfits; (3) Pakistan will have to take actions against illegal Money or Value Transfer Services (MVTs) such as Hundi-Hawala; (4) Pakistan will have to place sanction regime against cash couriers; (5) Pakistan will have to ensure logical conclusion from ongoing terror financing investigation of law enforcing agencies (LEAs) against banned outfits and proscribed persons; (6) Pakistani authorities will have to ensure international cooperation based investigations and convictions against banned organisations and proscribed persons; (7) The country will have to place effective domestic cooperation between Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) and LEAs in investigation of terror financing; (8) Prosecution of banned outfits and proscribed persons; (9) Demonstrate convictions from court of law of banned outfits and proscribed persons; (10) Seizure of properties of banned outfits and proscribed persons; (11) Conversion of madrassas to schools and health units into official formations; (12) To cut off funding of banned outfits and proscribed persons; and (13) Pakistan will have to place permanent mechanism for management of properties and assets owned by the banned outfits and proscribed persons. FATF already provided the list of cases and persons to the government of Pakistan against whom it wanted actions to be taken.

Finally, the fate of Pakistan on account of grey list would be decided this month. The FATF issue possessed political dimensions because every Pakistani justifiably raised this issue that why Afghanistan was not placed in the grey list?

The political analysts believed that through FATF, Washington DC wants to keep pressure on Islamabad policy makers to play their role in making a US-Taliban truce a success. Otherwise this lingering sword would continue to haunt Pakistan in months ahead. This could be proved that Pakistan was under scrutiny on account of two reviews one from joint working group of FATF and second ongoing mutual evaluation report (MER) from Asia Pacific Group (APG). Pakistan's scrutiny simultaneously on these two accounts cannot be justified so this hanging sword might continue on our heads through multiple ways.

However, Indian wish to slide Pakistan into blacklist might not materialize keeping in view progress made by Islamabad in the last one and half year period. But Islamabad will have to focus upon prosecution and convictions of those who facing serious charges in money laundering and terror financing cases. After strengthening legislation prospects, the law will have to be implemented effectively to ensure writ of the state and for coming out from the grey list.



PIA in nosedive: Fasten seatbelts and hold tight

Airline hit by turbulence over pilots' fake licenses, ban on flights to many countries and mismanagement at all levels



By Hamza Qureshi

IT WAS JUNE 24, 2020, when Pakistan's Federal Minister for Aviation, Ghulam Sarwar Khan presented the preliminary investigation report of the PIA Airbus PK8303 crash that took place in Karachi on May 22 and in the process opened Pandora's box.

He announced on the floor of the House that 30% of flying licenses issued to pilots in Pakistan are fake. In the wake of the PK8303 crash, this confession was nothing short of a bombshell. All major international news outlets widely covered the minister's statement.

The issue of pilots' licenses started in 2018 after the PIA ATR plane accident in Panjgur. No one was injured but the plane never flew again.

The then Chief Justice of Pakistan, Saqib Nisar took notice of the crash and ordered checking of the credentials of all pilots. There were indications of irregularities in the credentials of 53 pilots.

Coming back to the May 22 crash, the process of investigation remained shrouded in mystery. The Aviation Minister announced in a press conference that the preliminary report will be made public in a month.

PK8303 crash report and Pandora's box

The Airbus PK8303 report was first presented in a cabinet meeting. According to aviation sources, as the pilot was blamed for the accident, the issue of training and licensing of pilots subsequently came under discussion. The Prime Minister directed that

along with the crash report, the case of fake flying licenses should also be brought in Parliament.

The PTI government's desire (read weakness) to hold former governments responsible for all the shortcomings is well understood by officials of the Aviation Division and Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA). One of these PCAA officials is Deputy Director General (Regulatory) Air Cmdre (retd) Nasir Raza Hamdani. He was deputed to PCAA from PAF in 2016/17 and wanted to be integrated in the PCAA after his retirement.

Mr. Hamdani is now retired and temporarily serving in the PCAA. Sources claim that the listed requirements for the advertisement of the DG-PCAA post were tailored for Mr. Hamdani.

On the other hand, despite repeated demands by the media and other agencies, the Aviation Minister could not provide the list of pilots. Later, he changed his statement and said the licenses were not fake but dubious.

The PCAA submitted a list of 262 pilots to the Supreme Court of Pakistan. However, the names and license numbers did not match, and eventually, did not serve the purpose. According to our sources in the Aviation Division, the list was prepared by Mr. Hamdani.

Were all licenses fake? Dubious?

According to a PCAA report submitted to the Supreme Court, 141 pilots (out of 262) belonged to PIA. As per PIA management sources, 35 of the 141 pilots had nothing to do with PIA.

There are 50 pilots whose licenses were suspended for taking flight duty and written exams on the same day. However, there is no such restriction under any CAA law. Mistakes are found in the computer records of 17 pilots. Meanwhile, cases of more than 10 pilots are pending in the courts.

Moreover, two PIA pilots, Syed Solat Raza and Kashan James Ingham Khan, are accused of cheating in 8/8 exams for the air transport pilot license whereas they never appeared for any such exam. Their commercial pilot licenses have been suspended on this charge.

Furthermore, 24 names included in the list of 141 PIA pilots were not counted in the list submitted by the Director-General of PCAA to the Supreme Court. Later, 40 of the 141 PIA pilots were cleared by PCAA. PIA and PCAA have agreed that these 40 pilots were wrongly added to the list.

An airline with 1 of 3 pilots with fake licenses – Let's ban them!

In the wake of the issue the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the UK suspended PIA flight operations to European countries for six months.

In the past, EASA had banned PIA from flying any other aircraft except Boeing 777s to Europe, citing substandard aircraft maintenance.

The PK8303 crash report declared the pilot and air traffic controller responsible and the Safety Management System (SMS) not being created. Patrick Ky, Executive Director of EASA, openly expressed complete distrust in the PCAA and PIA. The PIA replied on June 28, but EASA was not satisfied with the response and on June 30 suspended its flight operations.

Ky wrote in a letter that two consultative meetings between EASA and PIA were held on June 13, 2019, and September 3, 2019. The PIA presented a plan to rectify the shortcomings, which EASA approved, but the airline failed to satisfy EASA on the SMS issue.

The US Federal Aviation Administration and UK's CAA also forbade all Pakistani airlines along with chartered flights from operating in their air space. The United Nations is also prohibited from chartering planes from Pakistan for its operations.

Recently, the UAE banned PIA from transporting passengers carrying visit visas to Al Ain and Abu Dhabi airports as well as restrictions by Saudi authorities.

Dark clouds are also hovering over PIA flights to Canada, the only destination across the Atlantic. The PIA administration fears that this route may be closed at some point too.

Naseem Ahmed, an expert on flight safety and air accident investigations, says under the Chicago Convention, it is the responsibility of the State of Pakistan (PCAA) to establish a SMS to protect passengers and aircraft.

SASI Pakistan extends its hand of assistance to PIA and PCAA

PIA is a corporate member of International Society of Air Safety Investigators (ISASI). SASI Pakistan has been arranging different courses in aviation safety for PIA including on risk management,

safety management system, aircraft accident investigation and continuous airworthiness.

However, the State of Pakistan still could not issue a State Safety Program, which provides the foundation for SMS at the operator's end.

Immediately after the PK8303 crash, EASA offered all help through SASI Pakistan to establish an independent accident investigation organization. This was conveyed to the Aviation Secretary and PCAA. Unfortunately, there was no response for availing any assistance. The preliminary investigation report on the crash, identifying it as pilot error, also was not in line with modern investigation philosophy.

Unfortunately, CAA also cancelled the preparation of the State Safety Program on the pretext that the International Civil Aviation Organization audit has been postponed.

What PALPA has to say about this episode?

The Pakistan Air Line Pilots' Association (PALPA) issued a press release calling it a 'poorly constructed conspiracy'. They said: "The pilots in general and PIA pilots, in particular, have been put on the center stage of a poorly constructed conspiracy. The list started with 262 pilots, of which the vast majority has been targeted on the wrong interpretation of duty time... The whole foundation of this saga stands no grounds in the court of law, as courts have already started giving relief to the affected pilots and questioning the very competence of PCAA. To ensure a manipulated result out of this mismanaged adventure, pilots are now being harassed through show causes and suspension orders, bypassing regulations. The regulator is playing in the hands of PIACL management and committing a heinous crime."



What's next?

PIA has appealed against the decision, but this time it will not be easy to get approval. PIA has already run an ad asking airlines to operate chartered flights to the UK and Europe on its behalf.

A few days ago, a senior PIA management member shared his concerns with this correspondent on the longevity of PIA flights to Canada. With the Middle East, North America and Europe restricting their skies for PIA, no silver lining is visible.

Are these now-inevitable were avoidable?

Aviation experts say the debacle could have been avoided if the minister had kept his silence. There are several airlines of Latin America, Africa and the Far East which are much weaker than PIA in technical expertise and general administration, but EASA only warned them and their flight operations were not majorly affected.

What Pakistanis should fear about their political future?



By Umer Farooq

PAKISTAN WAS BORN at a time when Cold War was heating up at the international stage—dynamics of superpower rivalries and its impacts on developing countries of the Third World shaped the domestic political structures of countries like Pakistan as well as carved their external relations and shaped the character Pakistani state developed at the international stage.

Militarization of Pakistani state and society is undoubtedly the gift that Cold War dynamics of international and regional politics brought at our doorsteps. Our international masters perceived the military manpower that Pakistani society had been producing, since First World War for the western countries, as their assets in the geo-political competition with Soviet Union. Therefore these Masters did not object when their local allies, the Pakistani military commanders, made authoritarianism into a political and governance norm in our society, despite the fact that Western countries continued to harp on spread of democracy as their stated policy all around the world. It is of little surprise that all the three main military dictators in Pakistani history kept the façade of democracy to meet the public relationing requirements of their international masters.

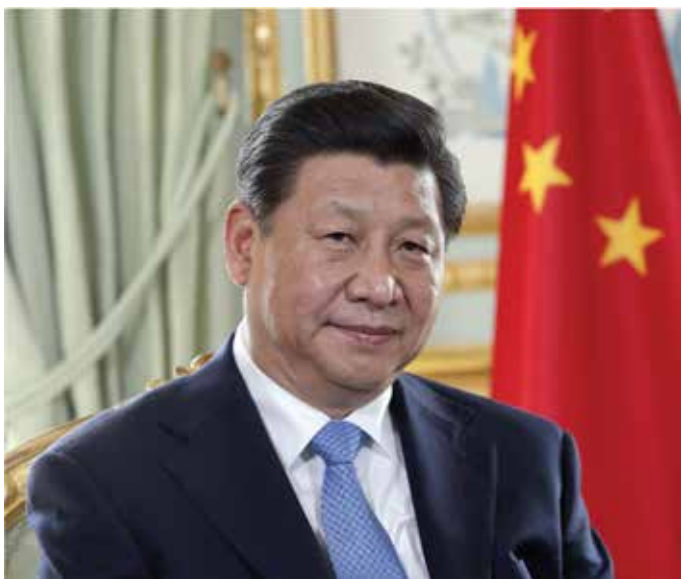
There are many political historians of Pakistan's political history who see a direct link between Pakistani ruling elites' international connections and the shape Pakistan's domestic political structures took during the last seven decades—primarily characterized by authoritarian tendencies in the state machinery and support-

ing social and economic classes of the society. It was a roller coaster ride, which took us on a journey from military rule to a system of “controlled Democracy” to a democracy under grave threat from military and intelligence establishments. Although US was a champion of human rights and democracy around the world, but our allies in Washington were sitting in Pentagon and CIA headquarters in Langley, as they, perhaps, are not as averse to a form of authoritarianism favorable to them, as were the American Liberals.

Pakistani political history saw the re-emergence of electoral democracy in Post-Zia (1988 onwards till 1999) and Post-Musharraf (2008 till date) periods. Although two successive civilian elected governments completed their tenure in the latter period they, however, continued to face grave threats to their survival from the military and intelligence establishments.

The signs and bad omens pointing towards of re-emergence of authoritarianism have started becoming visible on the horizons not so long ago. Two simultaneous developments—one at the international stage and the other in our domestic politics—is about to rock our political system again. Firstly, the era of international geo-political competition between superpower rival is about to re-emerge, after a thirty years period of uni-polar moment for Washington that started in the wake of collapse of Soviet Union. Secondly, Pakistani military and intelligence establishments have again showing signs that their tolerance for the word “democracy” is dwindling.

Experts of international politics say that geo-political competition—leading to conflict, tensions or confrontation—between rising power and established power is inevitable as is clear from human history. So any moment this will start between Beijing and Washington. But it is again going to be a very colorful competition—there is every chance that it would become a competition between two ideological rivals. Washington, a champion of democracy and human rights will again have the mantle of human freedom in its hands knocking on every door around the world to spread the message of democracy. China has a political system of different kind—where its leadership has very successfully acquired legitimacy from the populous on account of the economic affluence it has been sharing with all the classes of Chinese society. Chinese people are happy. One thing is certain; you cannot call Chinese system a democracy. Westerns call it authoritarian form of government where the ruled have no say in the election of the government and governance of the country. American experts who see a storm of ideological rivalry and competition about the hit of shores of international politics, say that Chinese model will coax authoritarian rulers around the world to resist western pressure on them to democratize and to allow more civil liberties and freedom in their countries. Authoritarian tendencies and authoritarian institutions will increasingly hold sway over societies and state's political cultures as the success of Chinese model will become more pronounced in the coming years.



In the past, Pakistani state and the authoritarian institutions within it have always proved themselves extremely malleable in the face of international pressure and lure of political and economic models from other countries and societies. The lures of Chinese model are extremely glittering—absence of free media and absence of democratic accountability are the two major features of Chinese system, which will appear very attractive to ruling elite in Pakistan. And we are increasingly showing signs that we are moving into Chinese camp as another Cold War between Beijing and Washington seems to be around the corner.

But Chinese model has obvious problems: Firstly, Chinese model is premised on the basic feature that Chinese state will share economic affluence with the people in their society. This would not have been possible without the immense success of the private



market principles that China utilized since 1990s to create the economic miracle that lifted large numbers of Chinese people from abject poverty. Sharing of economic affluence with lower classes allowed Chinese Communist party to continue to rule China through authoritarian political system. Pakistani society is not showing any signs of economic success in the foreseeable future therefore the question of sharing economic affluence with majority of the population doesn't arise. And abject poverty and political repression could be lethal combination as far as volatile Pakistan society is concerned.

Secondly, Pakistan's ruling elite is highly westernized in their lifestyle—At the social level they feel more comfortable with western culture and interact and hobnob more easily with the political, business and military elite in the western societies. Their tastes, their sense of fashion and idiom is all under the influence of western societies. How far Chinese culture could attract them is question which is yet to get a convincing answered.

Authoritarianism is knocking at our doors nonetheless. Our institutions, which are already deeply immersed in authoritarian tendencies, are getting formally into Chinese orbit with each passing day—a shift which is reminiscent of their Cold War attitudes and behavior. Apparently Pakistani military is fulfilling an American desire to arrange a direct negotiating process between Afghan Taliban and Afghan government, but it is also a way of facilitating Russian, Chinese and Iranian wish to create and legitimize a solid block inside Afghanistan, which could resist the emergence of ISIS (or any other terror group) on the respective borders of these three regional powers. What exact influence Pakistani system will get from authoritarian regimes in these three regional partners will be clear in the next two to three years. Signs of curbing the media freedom and repressing political opposition and civil liberty movements are already becoming visible in our society. There are people in our society who are ready to make the prediction that Chinese authoritarian influence might manifest itself a little more formally. Presidential form of government has always suited the tastes of our authoritarian institutions at a more formal level. But in the love for their taste they might plunge the country into a turmoil.

Pakistan, Russia bilateral ties strengthen in SCO Summit 2020



By Ishtiaq Hamdani

RECENTLY, PAKISTANI Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi arrived in Moscow on a two-day visit to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit and was received at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport by some Pakistani officials and senior officials of the Russian Foreign Ministry and former Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Alexei Dedodov.

This visit was conducted upon the special invitation of his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. During this visit, Russia highlighted some significant progress on the South-North Gas Pipeline in Pakistan, including enhancing bilateral relations. Russian Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Maria Zakharova was asked about the key points of the agreement between Pakistan and Russia and the possibility of bilateral cooperation on the situation in Kashmir and Afghanistan.

On September 10, Maria Zakharova responded that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi met on the sidelines of the SCO Ministerial Council meeting. During the meeting, they exchanged thoughts on the prospects of Russia-Pakistan partnership in politics, counter-terrorism, trade, and economy. Maria said that it was agreed to continue to build strong relations between the two countries - efforts to complete the flagship project, the construction of the North-South Gas Pipeline from Karachi to Lahore, as soon as possible. This was the second meeting between Russia and Pakistan's Foreign Ministers in two years.

Both the ministers highlighted the fundamental issues of the region in the international agenda, along with the promotion of all

sectors. In context of the Afghan situation, Maria stressed that direct International Afghan Talks in Doha were part of a mutually integrated partnership of key parties that ensured the initiation of talks. Observing the attitude of the spokesperson and the Russian media, Russia is highly interested in building a North-South gas pipeline from Karachi to Lahore and is ready for a lasting relationship realizing the geopolitical and diplomatic importance of Pakistan.

However, during his two-day official visit, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi attended a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Moscow where he focused on boosting Pakistan's bilateral relations with other SCO member countries. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi's meetings with his Russian and other counterparts on the sidelines also proved beneficial in exposing Indian extremist behavior during Corona situation in the region.

Countries in SCO include Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, India, and Kyrgyzstan. While Iran, Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia have the status of observer countries. Russian President Vladimir Putin attended the SCO meeting via video link.

Shah Mehmood Qureshi, along with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, Secretary General of the SCO Vlad Mirnorov and the Foreign Ministers of the SCO member states addressed the meeting. Shah Mehmood in his comprehensive address, presented a proposal to promote regional cooperation. The virtual, meeting of the SCO Foreign and Health Ministers in May and July 2020

shed light on the need for multinational, decisive and participatory efforts to tackle the Covid-19 where, the United Nations can play an important role, with the World Health Organization (WHO). He underlined the need for public health experts, scientists, and researchers and offered complete support in sharing Pakistan's experiences with the world on dealing effectively with this pandemic.

Shah Mehmood thanked China for the effective support to the international community, including Pakistan, in tackling the Coronavirus crisis, for providing financial and technical assistance. While calling attention to the economic effects of the global epidemic, he brought up the proposal by Prime Minister Imran Khan on "facilitating global debt repayment" for developing countries. He criticized the exploitation of global epidemic for politics gains and false allegations.

While emphasizing upon cooperation instead of confrontation, he defined SCO as a ray of hope during such uncertainty and brutal competition. "On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, we strongly support the SCO's insistence that the United Nations play a central role in promoting global peace and security and global development," he added.

Peaceful resolution of long-standing disputes is a prerequisite to achieve the goals of development, economic development, poverty alleviation and improvement of the social standards of public. In this context, the UN Security Council resolutions should be implemented in its true sense. "We strongly condemn and oppose all illegal and unilateral measures to change the status of the disputed territories in violation of UN Security Council resolutions," he further said.

Referring to Afghanistan, Qureshi said that a stable Afghanistan is essential for peace and stability in the region and the world. Pakistan has explained earlier that there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict and a political settlement through negotiations is the only way forward. As a shared responsibility, Pakistan has played and supported the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. The peace agreement between the United States and Taliban is an important step in this direction and is a historic opportunity to work together for a comprehensive, broad-based and inclusive political settlement.

At the same time, it is important to be aware of the role of those who create "disorder" from within, who do not want peace and stability to return to Afghanistan. Qureshi said that the process of this inter-Afghan dialogue would not be free from difficulties. Only with concentration, patience, perseverance, and unwavering determination will it be possible to achieve these goals.

The return of Afghan refugees with dignity should be an integral part of peace talks. "Terrorism and extremism are our top priorities", he observed. Those who are carrying out state terrorism against the illegal occupation of the areas should be held accountable. Referring to Iran, he said that we share the position of the SCO partners on the effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian Nuclear issue. We believe that the SCO's consideration of protecting space from the arms race, the Convention on Biological Weapons (BWC) and the International Information Security will be useful for discussion here.

New, legal regulations are urgently needed to address the growing problem of disarmament. He added that forging closer ties with regional partners was an embarrassment to the fruits of the growing merger between the European-Asian Economic Union (EEU) and the Belt and Road Project (BRI). BRI's flagship project, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (C-PEC), promotes the SCO's vision of regional connectivity and economic integration.

Due to SEO's extensive experience in poverty alleviation, Pakistan has proposed the establishment of SCO Joint Working Group and SCO Center of Excellence for Poverty Alleviation. He further suggested few recommendations:

- ▶ SCO members must work together to tackle Fascist ideology and violent nationalism globally.
- ▶ It should focus on promoting projects that connect the regions to achieve sustainable development.
- ▶ Combined scientific and technical resources for joint research in a variety of areas including the development of an effective vaccine for the corona virus and its universal access.
- ▶ The forum of SCO should be promoted for regional development and a global organization based on the goals of the "Shanghai spirit".

Qureshi while briefing his Russian counterpart on the ongoing Indian atrocities in Occupied Kashmir said that India has made a vicious attempt to change the demographic ratio in Occupied Kashmir. However, the Russian media has been full of references to the SCO's national security summit on the new map of Pakistan.

India is unable to acknowledge Russian proximity to Pakistan. It strongly objected to the new map of Pakistan at the SCO meeting. During the speeches of Russia and Pakistan, Indian officials walked out without any confrontations. Moreover, India was delusional to expect Russia to celebrate China's participation in the Caucasus 2020 military exercises.

Although the fact that the Pakistani Defense Minister did not attend the recent SCO Defense Ministers' conference in Moscow, is not a good omen for Pakistan, the Foreign Minister's trip should have been extended to speak to Russian media since India has openly ostracized Pakistan in the Russian media. On the contrary, the press briefcase at the Pakistani embassy has been empty for over five years.

An important aspect of bilateral relations between the two countries is peaceful settlement in Afghanistan. For Pakistan, the conflict in Afghanistan, ongoing for 40 years, is a great concern for Russia and Pakistan alike. With a shared border, Pakistan has become victim to cross-border terrorism, drugs and refugees. India has also used Afghan territory against Pakistan for years.

Relations between Russia and Pakistan are booming in various fields of military-technical cooperation, science, education, information technology, artificial intelligence research, social and cultural relations. The two countries need to improve their mutual image for public opinion – strengthening the bond of friendship.

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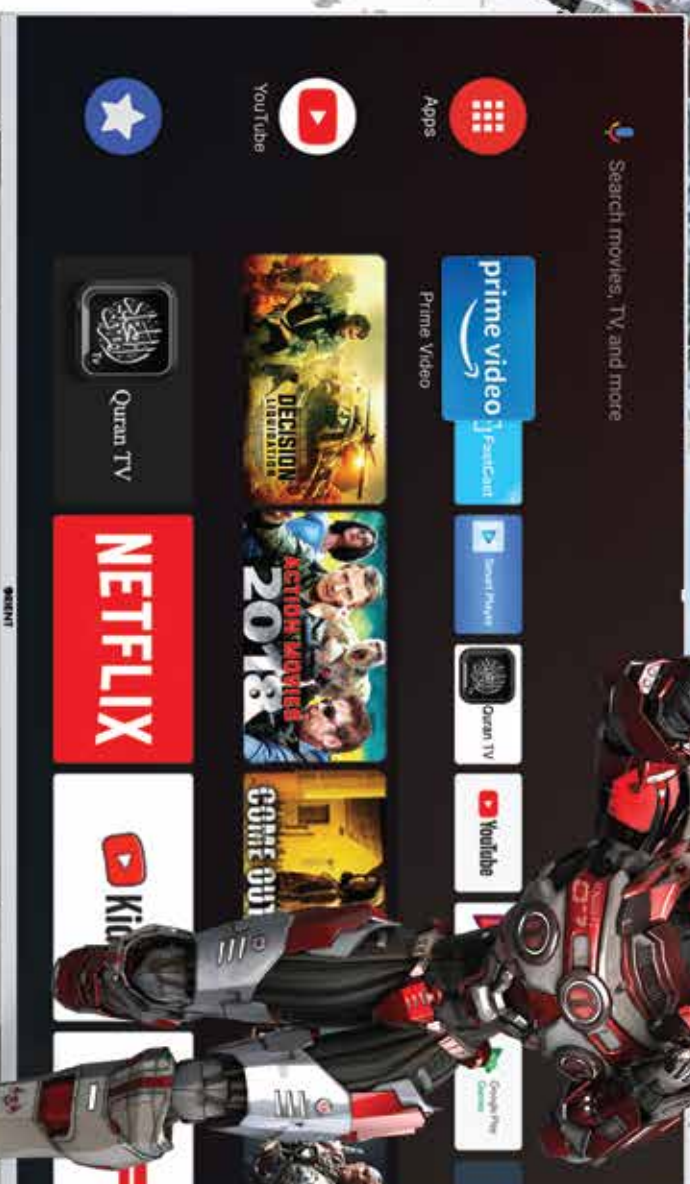
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Black September in Jordan: An overview of the 1970 war



By Ibrahim Moiz

THIS MONTH MARKS FIFTY YEARS SINCE THE “BLACK SEPTEMBER” 1970 war in Jordan, a fateful episode that would have far-reaching consequences in the Middle East. Pitting the Jordanian monarchy against a coalition of Palestinian militants, this war marked the first occasion of a postcolonial Arab state turning on Arab non-state actors – a pattern that has since often been repeated. It marked the end of some major Arab leaders’ career, the start for other leaders, and saw both Jordanian monarch Hussein bin Talal and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat entrench themselves. Finally, in the violent expulsion of Palestinians from an Arab country, it broke a loose etiquette of at least formal solidarity with the Palestinians by Arab states – one that has significance fifty years later as other Arab monarchies line up to recognize Israel.

Hussein drew on an inner circle of military veterans that represented various strata who shared his concern. They included his own cousin Zaid bin Shaker, Habis Mujalli, Nadhir Rushaid had, and Wasfi Tal. The irony was that they had fought with distinction against Israel. But they saw the Palestinian fighters (known as fidayins) as dangerous adventurers and as a potential “state within a state”.

Confrontationalism came alongside increased clashes with the army during spring 1970 after Hussein’s stop-start attempts to limit fidayins’ activity. Iraq’s interior minister Saleh Ammash was twice dispatched to broker a ceasefire, once privately offering Arafat a coup against Hussein – which the fidayin leader declined.

He also declined a surprise offer for the prime ministry by Hussein, who instead appointed two pro-Palestinian officials – Abdul-Munim Rifai and Mashhour Haditha – to the prime ministry and army command respectively. But this proved a token gesture, since Hussein and his aides quietly manoeuvred in the background on their own. Tension in between Jordan authorities and Palestinian groups had a rude shock in midsummer 1970, when the border war (in between Arabs and Israel) suddenly ended with a ceasefire – accepted by first Egypt and then Jordan – brokered by American foreign minister William Rogers. For Washington, the purpose of this plan was to displace Soviet support for Egypt and become kingmakers on both sides of the Palestine dispute. Thus, while the fidayin unanimously condemned it, it was the Marxist groups who went furthest.

Hussein’s military council emerged from the shadows; he sacked Rifai, replacing him as prime minister with retired general Muhammad Daud, and brought the bedouin general Habis Mujali out of retirement to replace Mashhour Haditha. They were aided not only by Zaid bin Shaker, the king’s cousin, but also by Mohammad Ziaul-Haq, a then-unknown but ambitious officer with the Pakistani contingent in Jordan who unilaterally offered his advisory service and thus made his first notable appearance before seizing power at home years later.

Thousands, both fighters and civilians, were killed in the following days as the army slowly but surely won control of Amman and the refugee camps in the area; among their

thousands of captives were Fatah's prospective "kingmakers" Khalaf and Qaddoumi, belying the pair's confidence in their ability to unsettle the crown: although many Jordanian soldiers did defect, their number was far less than expected and not enough to tilt events notably.

A bigger concern to Hussein by now was diplomatic action by other Arab states. Hussein soon agreed to a ceasefire, brokered by a dying Gamal Abdel-Nasser, with Arafat in Cairo. "Black September" was over, and its winner was undoubtedly the Jordanian regime.



Aftermath

In spite of the shattering blow to their morale, initial events after September 1970 did not bode particularly badly for the fidayin: they were initially permitted to continue small-scale action against Israel, but under Jordanian surveillance, and the terms of the ceasefire seemed generous enough in the circumstances. There was enough time for the fidayin factions to introspect and attempt to coordinate their forces better, an attempt that largely failed owing to the mistrust and bitterness that prevailed as they traded blame. But Jordanian state remained cautious.

Black September was a convulsion in the region. It marked Nasser's last bow; hours after mediating the ceasefire, the Egyptian dictator succumbed to a heart attack. But it had more direct consequences in other regional countries: Israel took the opportunity to mop up fidayin bases in the West Bank, while the Baathist regimes of Iraq and Syria were directly convulsed in autumn 1970. Hardan Abdul-Ghaffar, Iraq's powerful second-in-command, was scapegoated for Baghdad's non-intervention by his colleagues, exiled, and soon murdered, marking another step in his rival Saddam Hussein's ascent up the ranks. In Syria, meanwhile, the failed expedition was the last straw for the ruling junta, as defence minister Hafez Assad mounted a bloodless coup and set up a personalized dictatorship around his faction of the Baath, which tacitly assisted the marginalization of the fidayin over the next years. Finally, the ouster of Palestinians from Jordan also gave right wing Maronites a useful precedent to mount their own attack on the Palestinians in Lebanon, a major factor in the civil war that would erupt in the mid-1970s.

In the aftermath of the defeat, and particularly Jordan's refusal to come to terms in 1971, the fidayin remained at cross-purposes. Arafat and Wazir, in particular, tried to set up a fidayin base in Lebanon, bolstered by a number of Jordanian military defectors who soon assumed top positions in the fidayin ranks to build a "state within" the Lebanese state: these included military commander Saad Sayel, Abu Moussa Muragheh, and Attaullah Attaullah.

But other fidayin – and by no means exclusively the Marxists – adopted different tactics, including hijack, murder, and sabotage. But Banna was only an extreme case: though Fatah had early condemned the Marxists' inflammatory approach, revenge was a powerful motivator, and a number of Fatah commanders including Khalaf himself soon dabbled in spectacular acts of sabotage and murder, carried out by semi-independent networks named after "Black September".

Black September had taught the fidayin a brutal lesson, since learned by other non-state militants in theatres as far-flung as Afghanistan, Syria, and Chechnya. Local popularity, rhetoric, and theory proved no match against the power of state repression – even a state as apparently fragile as Jordan. The irony was that the fidayin had dreamt of upstaging the Arab capitals in the war on Israel, but ultimately ended up relying on and being disappointed by them. Fragmentation, with the ensuing indecision and argumentation, was also fateful; not only did Marxist maximalism alienate the fidayin, but non-Marxist groups such as Fatah failed to capitalize on their fleeting opportunities to pre-empt the royal offensive.

The reality was that the majority of the fidayin, in spite of fringe rhetoric, never seriously intended to displace the crown, while the Jordanian regime, with the cold ruthlessness of state interests, ultimately did decide on and commit to their displacement. Especially when weighing the rebuffed attempts at reconciliation by the Palestinians in the winter of 1970-71, it is difficult to avoid the impression that, whatever the fidayin excesses, they were more sinned against than sinners: Black September saw a state use hook or crook to implement its monopoly of force.



India no more a country for Muslims

By Tavleen Singh

PANDEMIC HAS BROUGHT a temporary lull in hate campaign launched against Indian Muslims. It is a campaign that will serve mostly to help our homegrown jihadists convince more and more ordinary Muslims to lend support to their evil cause.

The Delhi Police filed charges last week against people it blames for the February riots. Everyone charged or arrested so far is Muslim. The Delhi Police narrative says that it was jihadist groups who planned the riots with the specific purpose of maligning India's fair name on the day that Donald Trump was expected to be in Delhi. The plot was hatched in Jamia Millia, says the charge sheet, and Shaheen Bagh was not a protest by Muslim women fearful of losing their citizenship, just part of this jihadist plot. So how do we explain that most of the 53 people killed were Muslims? Or why most of the properties destroyed belonged to Muslims? Or why mosques were attacked but not a single temple?

These are questions that the police will have to answer in a court of law. But, as someone who was in Delhi then, and as someone who has covered more Hindu-Muslim riots than most reporters, I present today my version of what happened. I leave it to you to decide whether we are seeing justice being done or a twisted version of justice. In my narrative, the events that began on December 15 last year, with Jamia Millia students protesting in the streets, have a larger context. This larger context is that ever since Narendra Modi won his second term he has followed an agenda that, whether intentionally or not, seems to have the singular purpose of showing Indian Muslims that they are inferior citizens in the 'new India'.

The lynching of Muslims that began in Modi's first term continues and is no longer restricted to beef and cows. Two weeks after his second term began, Tabrez Ansari, 24, allegedly a small-time thief, was tied to a pole in a Jharkhand village and beaten for hours by a mob that ordered him to say 'Jai Shri Ram' with every blow. When he was finally 'saved' by the police, they took him into custody on charges of stealing instead of to the hospital. He died of internal injuries four days later. His killers were proud of what they did and posted videos of him being beaten slowly to death on social media, but the police charged nobody with murder. Ansari's lynching was a reminder of the savagery that lies just below the surface in India, but this kind of public execution has happened so often now that it no longer surprises or horrifies.

It was when Parliament passed the first discriminatory law in our history as a modern nation that Muslims began to notice that Modi's second term brought for them a frightening new reality. This was that citizenship could be weaponized against them if the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was just the first step in creating a National Register of Citizens (NRC). The Home Minister promised that this would happen and it was only when thousands of Muslim protesters poured into the streets of cities across India that the Prime Minister noticed the need to say that his government had no plans yet for an NRC. Muslims were not reassured because the very next day a National Population Register was announced that sounded as ominous.



Muslims waving the national flag and carrying the Constitution continued protesting in cities and on university campuses. It was after police entered the Jamia Millia campus and beat up students in libraries and hostels that the Shaheen Bagh protest began. The women who sat in protest through long winter nights and cold winter days said they were worried about losing their citizenship. They told me that there were millions of indigent Muslims who did not have the documents to prove that they had always been Indian citizens. So it was not the CAA that concerned them but the possibility of an NRC.

They wanted to talk to the Home Minister and explain their fears. But, there were elections in Delhi and he chose to portray Shaheen Bagh as a den of jihadist traitors and said as much in an election speech. Other ministers heard the dog whistle and Anurag Thakur used a public meeting to get his audience to say that 'traitors to India deserve to be shot'. It would be valid to ask who will decide who is a traitor and who not, but Modi's ministers made it more than clear that the traitors were those who protested against the CAA. Just before the violence erupted, BJP leader Kapil Mishra warned protesting Muslim women that they should end their protest or face serious action 'once Trump leaves'.

There is no question that once the violence began, jihadists became involved. No question that a municipal official from the Aam Aadmi Party was found to have stored an assortment of firebombs on his roof and no question that Hindus were among the dead. But, the real victims were Muslims. The atmosphere in Delhi was so permeated with hatred against them that an attempt was made to blame Covid entirely on Muslim preachers. The pandemic has brought a temporary lull in the campaign of hate that has been launched against Indian Muslims, but tensions remain high and too often find expression on our more venomous news channels. It is a campaign that will serve mostly to help our homegrown jihadists convince more and more ordinary Muslims to lend support to their evil cause. What happened in Delhi will happen again and again in other Indian cities. Courtesy Indian Express

Enigmatic Brexit: A Peek into Causes and Consequences

By Dr Khalid Bajwa



AS THE WORLD EVOLVES, new paradigm shifts and alignments have surfaced with far reaching economic, social, strategic, security, and political consequences. Needless to say, Brexit was not an isolated incident. With nationalism and far right movements gaining momentum, new global blocks have emerged, currently in their embryonic stages. Despite being strategic allies with the European Union, the United States continues to openly encourage countries to leave the EU and pursue xenophobic and Islamophobic policies.

However, it is surprising as to why the US is interested in breaking apart its most trusted ally. This policy appears to be that of destruction of former allies and creation of new partnerships. The trust between the two has dwindled leading to US's strategy to create splinter groups within the EU. Nevertheless, this has not gone unnoticed. Composed of first world, wealthy nations, the EU is focused on safeguarding its interests and coming forth as an independent bloc – ready to ward off US's attempt of disintegration. A new rivalry is set to see formation as the UK is likely to side with the US in this struggle. However, the exact timeframe is unclear.

With a plethora of new alliances emerging, the key players are still the US, EU, China,

and Russia. It is pertinent to note that these shifts will not be constrained, rather will move towards other parts of the world, including the Middle East and the Subcontinent. In this scenario, India could emerge as a significant player if it is able to resolve issues with neighbouring Pakistan. Historically, EU was the symbol of peace in the world order following World War II. But with Brexit, this journey appears to have been scrapped. Since the declaration of Brexit, attitudes have changed and former friendships leading to acrimony, may result in animosity in the near future.

Following the 2008 financial crisis, austerity became a subject of policy in the UK. Due to the failure to upend lower income classes, populist parties were able to manipulate locals in their campaign against immigrants, leading to undue hostility between communities. Historical tilt towards the left is no more as locals flock in numbers to the right, offering themselves to their former adversary with the belief that the real enemy are those immigrants taking up their jobs.

This is a clever strategy adopted to create a scapegoat for social inequalities prevalent in society. The only viable option posed is the complete elimination of such minorities – modest replica of the late 19th and early 20th century. However, these concerted efforts can be tamed through the saner elements in society but due to political interests manifested both within and outside the Conservative Party, it appears to be a mountainous task. To subdue divisions within the party, David Cameron attempted to settle the rancour through the promised referendum but that only worsened matters. Leading the 'Remain' campaign alongside the reluctant opposition leader, a grave mistake was committed by Cameron.

Not only was it ill-planned but the timing could not have been worse as Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence party stirred the patriotic sentiments of the marginalized people. Arguably the most

influential modern leader of British politics, he has been able to dictate political agenda for years. Basing the 'Leave' campaign on lies, rhetoric and distorted facts, it eventually slumped into a populist anti-immigrant propaganda to settle previous scores. Warnings from independent research organizations, government, IMF and Bank of England were largely ignored as Farage played with fear and fire.

Clear divisions struck as urban, middle and educated classes opted to remain whilst rural, upper and lower classes were swayed towards the leave vote. Important to note is that serious repercussions could arise as Scotland and Northern Ireland, two components of the United Kingdom opted to remain while England and Wales voted to leave. Since the Brexit vote, more Scots have agreed to independence thereby, resulting in a weakened Union whilst the exit deal commits to a formal border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the Union.

The primary objective of Brexit was to monitor and control border inflows due to the stated belief that immigrants were taking up jobs. However, statistically they have been basically filling the gaps in the job market where locals were unwilling to work. Unfortunately, Brexit is symbolic of the regressive global populist movements opposing globalization and free trade in a bid to revive the 'Global Great Britain'. A proposed benefit advocated by Brexiteers was to negotiate Free Trade Agreements independently of the EU standard procedures. However, it poses serious problem regarding the quality of products in adherence with minimum rules, regulations, and standards – a hard pill to swallow.

On the contrary, UK hopes to reap maximum benefits from the EU which is unlikely as it may undermine the competitiveness and encourage members of the EU to quit the Union. For the EU itself, Brexit presents an existential threat in the face of rising populist parties in member states combined with international strikes ready to cause destruction.

Procurement worth billions for coronavirus still out of public sight

Despite 12 letters and NAB warning provincial governments and departments are not willing to hoist purchase information on PPRA websites

By Abdul Sattar Khan

NOTHING CONCRETE has happened in response to the four letters by Transparency International Pakistan (TIP) regarding foreign and local procurement of medical products/ equipment related to coronavirus amounting to billions of rupees that were sent to Prime Minister Imran Khan and three provincial Chief Ministers – Usman Buzdar (Punjab), Mehmood Khan (KP) and Mir Jam Kamal Khan (Balochistan).

These letters categorically stated that all those federal and provincial departments which opted for emergency procurement by selecting ‘Alternative Methods of Procurement – Direct Contracting’ be asked to hoist/upload the information about awarding the contracts on the relevant Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) websites.

There is no bar or restriction on emergency procurement. Not only Pakistan but countries around the world are opting for coronavirus-related emergency procurement by selecting ‘Alternative Methods of Procurement – Direct Contracting’. However, not hoisting or uploading details about the awarded contracts on the PPRA website is a grave violation of Public Procurement Rules both at the federal and provincial levels.

Investigations revealed that not only TIP issued four letters, three were issued by Sindh Services General Administration and Coordination

Department (SGA&CD), two by Sindh PPRA office, two by NAB Karachi to Sindh government, and one by KP Inter-Provincial Coordination Department. However, it was all in vain as no information regarding procurement worth billions of rupees of medical products has been released on the relevant PPRA websites.

Despite issuance of these 12 letters expressing concern during the past two-and-a-half months, the federal and provincial governments and departments are yet to start hoisting details and information about the massive foreign and local procurements.

Out of the total, eight letters were issued by provincial governments to all the administrative secretaries, commissioners, deputy commissioners, Accountant General Revenue, IG Police, IG Prisons, Provincial Ombudsman, and heads of autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies. But they have remained completely unresponsive and apparently no importance has been given to these letters.

While the situation remains uncertain, the attitude of the federal, Punjab and Balochistan governments is raising serious concerns as they have surpassed the Sindh and KP governments for not even bothering to issue a single letter or to respond to TIP, according to information of this scribe.



Billions of rupees of public funds are being spent on the procurement of medical products/equipment but the same public is not aware of the price/rate, quality and quantity of these items. All such information is being kept secret as if its publication will harm national security or go against national interest.

TIP had not written a similar letter to Sindh government because it had assured to hoist or upload all the details about the procurements on the Sindh PPRA website. Yet hardly one or two provincial departments have started doing so while the rest have kept on awarding contracts of billions of rupees without hoisting or uploading the information.

As far as NAB is concerned, according to the information of this scribe only its Karachi office has taken up the issue twice while the remaining regional offices chose to remain silent.

Going through the contents of the 12 letters reveals that it was the Sindh PPRA office that highlighted this issue for the first time.

TIP issued the letters on May 21 while Sindh PPRA office raised the issue on May 15. So it can be inferred that TIP did not issue a letter to Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah just because Sindh PPRA office had already raised the issue for the first time in Pakistan.

However, all the letters primarily referred to TIP's communication and again and again requested all the departments to hoist/upload all the details and information but with no progress whatsoever.

After issuing the first letter on May 15, Sindh PPRA office again issued a letter on June 2 categorically stating that "it has been observed that the procuring agencies have not yet hoisted contract award documents including Contract Evaluation Form, Contract/Agreement Form, Letter of Award/Bill of Quantities".

Further pushing the Sindh provincial departments, the letter says, "In future all the contract award information be hoisted on PPRA website within 15 days of award of contract".

One letter of Sindh PPRA office even went to the extent of urging the provincial departments that "if the procuring

agencies are convinced that disclosure of any such information shall be against the public interest or may jeopardize national security, it can withhold only such information from public disclosure subject to the prior approval of Sindh CM".

The people of Karachi recently witnessed massive damage inflicted by heavy rains and once again questioned the competency of Karachi Water & Sewerage Board (KWSB). It is worth mentioning that on June 3, Sindh PPRA office issued a letter to MD of KWSB stating "once again requested to hoist the information about emer-



gency corona-related procurement on PPRA website".

Sindh PPRA is the only PPRA office in Pakistan that has not only issued three letters but also taken the lead, while the two provincial and one federal office did not issue a single letter in this context.

On June 11, NAB Karachi office issued a letter to Chief Secretary Sindh stating "it has been observed with great concern that despite clear instruction by Sindh PPRA office and concerns raised by TI Pakistan, provincial procuring agencies are still initiating procurements by opting Alternative Methods of Procurement – Direct Contracting without hoisting of contract award information on Sindh PPRA website.

"This is a serious state of affairs that put a big question mark on the observance of aspects, related to transparency and accountability and judicious utilization of public funds."

NAB Karachi urged the Chief Secretary to initiate disciplinary proceedings against those responsible for violation of rules in addition to "providing list of all procurements from 1st March 2020 till to-date".

It also referred a sample to the Chief Secretary about how to collect the information and dispatch it to NAB.

On July 16, after a gap of one month and five days, NAB Karachi office reminded the Sindh Chief Secretary in rather strongly worded instructions that the requisite information is still awaited. "It is one again requested to expedite the matter and report of the same be forwarded to NAB by 31st July 2020."

Taking the second reminder from NAB Karachi more seriously, on the instructions and approval of Sindh Chief Secretary, Sindh S&GAD issued another letter on July 27 to all the administrative secretaries, commissioners, deputy commissioners and heads of autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies to ensure hoisting/uploading of all requisite information about awarded contracts.

Covid-19: UK and Europe enter second wave with scattergun approach

By Syed Humza Imam



AFTER CURBING THE FIRST surge of coronavirus infections through the summer, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has now declared UK's second wave of coronavirus. The government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance has issued a warning of 50,000 daily cases in mid-October, raising its status to second-highest Level 4, indicating exponential rise. New cases reached 4,422 this week, the highest since early May.

Thus far, the response of the UK government remains limited. Fearing severity of second wave of pandemic now 10 pm curfew has been imposed on restaurants, bars and other hospitality venues gatherings of over six people have been banned. Johnson has laid the responsibility of curbing the virus on the public, stating "the only way we can do this is if people follow guidelines".

Having been criticized for their delayed response which led to UK statistics peaking alongside the highest excess death rate and the worst recession across the world. The UK government is under pressure to act promptly as the second wave hits. However, as with the first wave, it is balancing a difficult dilemma by erring on the side of minimizing economic havoc and protecting liberties.

Inconsistency regarding coronavirus precautions has itself plagued the credibility of government messaging. Last month, Chancellor Rishi Sunak Exchequer introduced the unprecedented 'Eat Out to

Help Out' scheme, giving restaurant goers 50 percent off every meal, subsidized by the government - an effort to get the public flocking back to restaurants. 64 million discounted meals were ordered in the first three weeks alone.

Additionally, at the start of this month, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab insisted that workers should swiftly return to offices insinuating the 'work-from-home' is damaging the economy. However, a day later, Health Secretary Matt Hancock banned social gatherings of more than six people, following a 'concerning' rise in the number of cases. A week later, a maximum £10,000 fine was introduced to those caught not adhering to government restrictions, while Michael Gove, the de-facto deputy to Boris Johnson, has told people to "work from home if they can".

The public's response to this mixed messaging has been apathetic and support in the government's response has fallen to a new low according to the latest YouGov polling, with 63% of respondents saying they have handled it badly. The government has been unable to recover on polling ever since Dominic Cummings, the Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister, remained unrepentant despite a brazen breach of lockdown rules in April.

Any response to the second wave would hinge heavily upon the efficacy of the UK's £10bn coronavirus test and trace system. Demand for tests is currently four times higher than capacity, while 90% of tests were failing to reach tracers on time. Just 1.9% of people using a home test kit in England got their results within 24 hours in the week commencing 9th September. Consequently, faith in the system is dwindling, being condemned as "barely functional" and "in meltdown" by Munira Wilson, the Liberal Democrats' health spokesperson.

The rest of Europe is also brink of a second wave, undergoing "alarming rates of transmission" and a "very serious situation" according to WHO Europe Director Hans Kluge, adding that weekly cases have exceeded those reported during the March peak. In late August, Kluge said

the gradual increase in Europe's cases could be partly explained by "the relaxation of public health and social measures, where authorities have been easing some of the restrictions and people have been dropping their guard."

New restrictions were also announced on Friday in Madrid, which accounts for approximately a third of all new cases in Spain, according to the Spanish Health Ministry, as the country reported a record 12,183 daily cases on 11th September. France recorded 13,215 new cases in 24 hours on Friday, according to data released by its National Health Agency, its highest tally since April.

Italy recorded its highest tally since May on Friday with 1,907 daily cases. Authorities there said in late August that approximately 50% of new infections had been contracted during summer vacations, around the country and abroad, most among young adults who have not been cautious with social distancing and mask-wearing guidelines.

Like Spain, Austria has seen its biggest spike in its capital. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz tweeted that the situation was "particularly dramatic" in Vienna, which has more than half of all registered new infections, declaring "We are at the beginning of the second wave. We are facing difficult months in the autumn and winter. The number of infections is increasing from day to day".

While cases are rising, this can partly be attributed to increased levels of testing, and daily deaths in Europe are down from 3,788 on 18th April to 504 on 18th September, on a seven-day rolling average, according to the latest figures from Johns Hopkins University. It is still believed that the UK's leading scientists see a vaccine as the way out of this pandemic - its possibility doubtful. However, they agreed that the virus is not milder now than it was in April, and rising transmission is a "serious problem that we have to deal with collectively in the coming months."

Writer is Research Graduate at King's College London and former President of Oxford University Liberal Club.

International Cricket returns home as Zimbabwe gears up for series against Pakistan

By Ali Abdullah

AS COVID-19 recedes in Pakistan, Pakistan Super League's remaining matches have been scheduled for resumption in Lahore. There is hope that international cricket will once again return to Pakistani grounds, stirring excitement among Pakistani cricket fans. Similarly, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and relevant Zimbabwean authorities have confirmed to the media that Zimbabwe cricket team will tour Pakistan in October.

As per the unofficial schedule shared by the PCB, Zimbabwean team is expected to land in Pakistan on 20th October. The visiting team will acclimatize with Pakistan weather and ground in two weeks while Bio Secure Bubble is planned to ensure the security of Zimbabwean team. Initially, it was decided that all matches will be played in Lahore but this decision has since been changed keeping in view the remainder of PSL5 matches. The series against Zimbabwe has now been scheduled to be held in Rawalpindi and Multan.

Another official privy to PCB matters stated that this decision was made considering the attempt to display a softer image of security in more than one city of Pakistan. Sharing details of these matches, PCB officials on condition of anonymity said that Zimbabwe will play three T20s and three ODIs during the upcoming tour. Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium will host all three T20Is and the beautiful stadium of Multan will be the venue for ODIs.

It is worth mentioning that Zimbabwe's last visit to Pakistan was in 2015 – the first team to visit Pakistan following the terrorist attack on Sri Lankan team in 2009. Zimbabwe and Pakistan have played a total of 59 ODIs and eleven T20Is. A look at Zimbabwe-Pakistan ODIs shows that Pakistan has an excellent record against Zimbabwe. Out of a total of 59 matches, Pakistan won 52 matches whereas, out of the remaining seven matches Zimbabwe won four, one was drawn and two ended in no result. Therefore, Pakistan has never lost an ODI match against Zimbabwe and has remained unbeaten in T20s against Zimbabwe.

Pakistan team and nation and now set to welcome Zimbabwe in October – the perfect season to resume cricket following the global



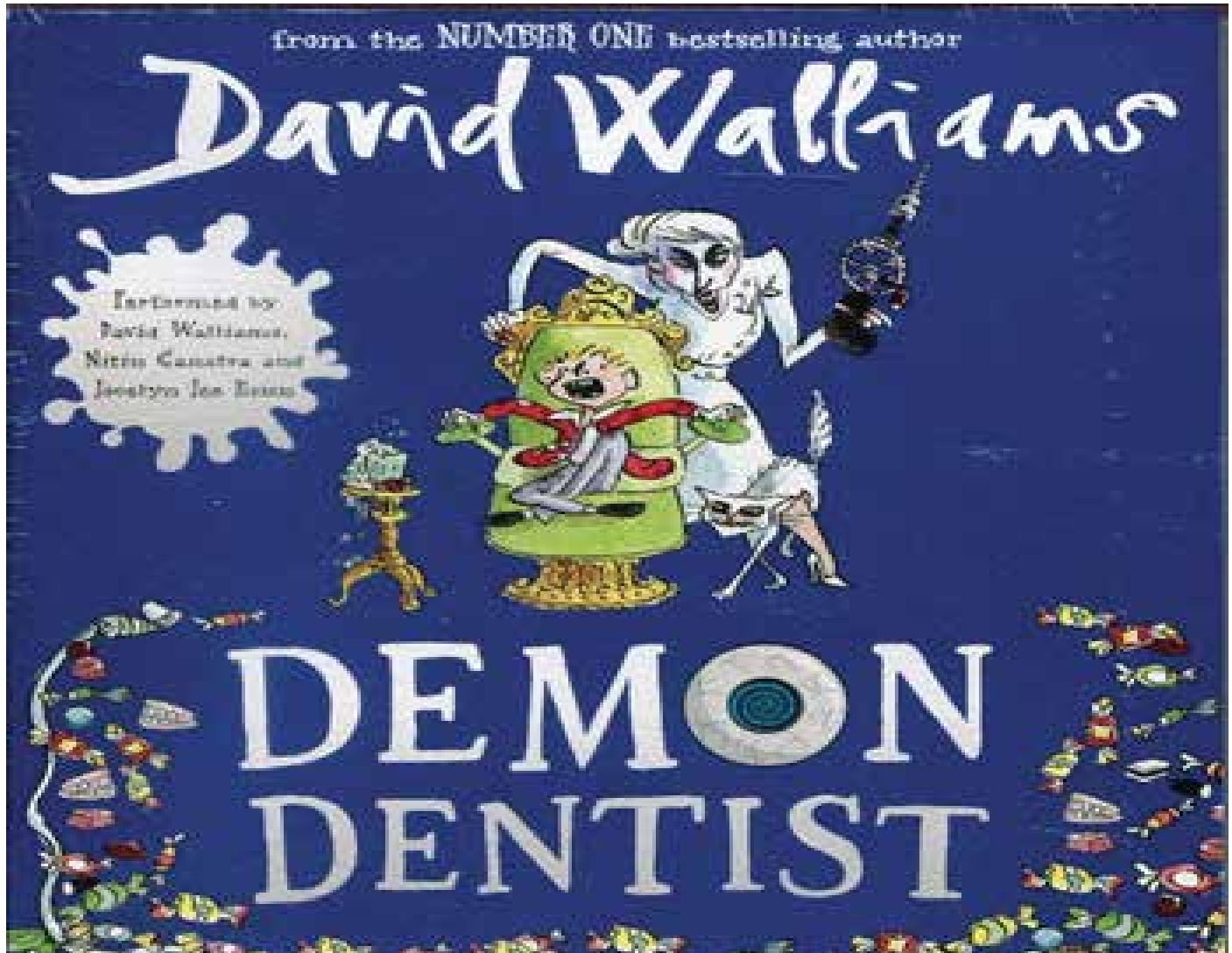
pandemic. In the same context, another mega event which remained incomplete due to the spread of COVID-19, PSL 5 will also be resumed later this year. PCB has announced the resumption of this tournament in November. The group stage matches had been conducted; it is now time for the much-awaited qualifiers and the subsequent stages. The top four teams will be competing against each other to secure the trophy.

The qualifying teams are Peshawar Zalmi, Multan Sultan, Lahore Qalandars and Karachi Kings. Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings have played the qualifying matches in the previous editions and Peshawar won the title, whereas the Sultans and the Qalandars will play this round for the first time. Multan Sultan is leading the points table up till now.

According to the Karachi Kings coach, their international players will come to Pakistan for the remaining matches of PSL5 whereas other teams have not confirmed anything regarding their overseas additions. The teams will be in action from November 14th and the final will be played on 17th November.

All these matches will be held in Gaddafi Stadium Lahore, considered the best cricket venue in Pakistan. This ground is previously known for producing legends like Imran Khan (now Prime Minister of Pakistan), Majid Khan, Hafeez Kardar, Fazal e Haq, Wasim Akram amongst many other notable names.

Book Review: The Demon Dentist



Reviewed by:
Alizay Ashraf

Author:
David Williams

ISBN:
978-0-0624-1705-3

Publisher:
HarperCollins Publishers

Pages: 448

THE DEMON DENTIST is a book by David Williams. It tells the story of a 12-year-old poor boy Alfie, whose teeth are totally rotten. When a strange new dentist comes to town, Alfie is suspicious and thinks something might be wrong. With his new friend Gabz, he investigates why the dentist, Miss Root is giving out free sweets and acidic toothpaste which can burn holes through the stone. He realizes he is in big trouble when she straps him onto the dentist's chair and starts pulling out all his teeth.

It is a funny tale, inventive and original with fantastic illustrations. With plenty of silliness in the characters, they are extremely fun to read about. I liked this book because it was comic, a bit spooky and totally unbelievable. The made-up word alerts were fun too.

This book is suitable for children above 7 as there are some parts which may scare children from visiting the dentist's clinic. It is grisly and also has dark humor.

The writer delivers the inside gripping with characters you care about and their usual hilarious flare. The characters are also well drawn, in particular Alfie, who also takes care of his disabled dad. The end of this book is very exciting, heart-aching and leaves you with a mix of emotions.

The moral of the book is that love is more important than anything and we should care for everyone. I strongly recommend this book to children above 7 because not only did I enjoy it but I learnt a lot from it.

Poor artist from Sindh despite odds making his mark as an artist

By Palwasha Khattak

BORN IN 1995 to a poor family in Tehsil Khapro which is one of the most backward areas of Sindh, Bhimraj completed his matriculation from Government National Islamia High School, Khapro. Yet, despite his best efforts, he was unable to pursue further studies. Son of a part time farmer and teacher, he assist his father at farm and in the spare time paints and sculpts.

While talking to TTI, Bhimraj told that he made over 150 paintings and statues. He made paintings and statues of renowned personalities like Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Fatima Jinnah, Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Furthermore, he made statues of animals, birds as well as Hindu gods such as Shiv Shankar, Sherwali Maa, Hanglaj Mata, Rama Pir, Bhagat Kabir and Saint Nainoram. From the first sculpture that he made of himself, Bhimraj has sculpted and painted various homeland heroes—an attempt to glorify those that have sacrificed so much for Pakistan .



Young Abdul Moez setting new records in web & graphic designing

A SEVEN-YEAR PAKISTANI BOY, Abdul Moez has set a new record in Information Technology by mastering web and graphic designing. Moez is a grade 3 student in Lahore.

In an interview, Abdul Moez gave credit to his teachers and parents for his success. “Because of the hard work of my teachers and prayers of my parents, I was able to learn all of this,” said Abdul Moez.

About his new work, Abdul Moez said he is currently working as a freelance graphic designer also working with famous company Coral Draw. Furthermore, he also has full expertise on social websites like Facebook and YouTube. He wants to improve the image of Pakistan and make it a famous place.



میرا پاکستان، میرا گھر



Under the vision of the Government of Pakistan to provide affordable housing to millions of Pakistanis, National Bank of Pakistan shall extend low cost housing finance plans through its mortgage products.

Through this ground-breaking initiative we are committed to build a prosperous future for the Nation.

Details will be announced shortly.

