

# The Truth International

15<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Provincial Incisive Reviews of Senate  
Neck to neck contest seen

Qatar LNG Bargain  
New deal a bit cheaper but other considerations too

Biden Mideast Moves to Readjust Positions  
US reintroduces a balance

## Jo Jeeta Wohi Sadiq Sanjrani Win Again - Confirms Sanjrani is Sadiq Afridi is Surprise



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## Are we on a Collision Course?

By M. Ziauddin

**M**aj Gen Babar Iftikhar, DG ISPR, has advised against dragging army into politics. The armed forces already have their "hands full" with the "huge responsibility of looking after security, internal and external threats" ---A message for Pakistani politicians across the board.

Buying and selling votes is a crime. More so if this is being done by the very people who are demanding respect for the 'Vote' (Vote Ko Izzat do!). On the other hand, those who had wanted the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) to approve a hurriedly promulgated Ordinance and instruct the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to stop this practice forthwith also did not appear to be occupying any higher moral pedestal.

The PPP and PMLN, as per their pledge in the Charter of Democracy should have gotten rid of the vote selling-buying bias from the Senate polls through the 18th amendment. That they did not think of tackling the issue even during the following eight years the two remained in the saddle in Islamabad one after the other makes their failing even more unpardonable.

But Prime Minister Imran Khan matches the blame equally as even after having suffered from the menace in 2018 when a number of his party MPs from KPK sold their votes he did nothing other than kick out the suspected culprits from the Party. Even more inexcusable was his move to join hands with the PPP to topple the PMLN government in Balochistan and then getting Sadiq Sanjrani of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), PTI's coalition partner in Quetta elected as Senate Chairman despite not having the required number of votes to defeat the opposition's candidate. He repeated the unpardonable act when the opposition tried to have Chair-

man Sanjrani replaced through a no-confidence vote.

And by not seeking opposition's cooperation for getting the proposed October 2020 amendment to Senate polls passed by parliament the PM had missed one more opportunity to fix the wrong well in time. The opposition equally shares the blame. It was only just about a month before the forthcoming Senate polls that the PM suddenly woke up seemingly with a sense of extraordinary urgency and promulgated the above mentioned futile ordinance.

The move failed and PDM candidate, former PPP Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani won a Senate seat from Islamabad despite not having the required numbers to defeat the ruling coalition candidate, federal finance minister, Hafeez Sheikh. He is now bidding for the Senate Chairman's seat. In his emotionally charged reaction the PM blamed the ECP for Sheikh's defeat. The ECP responded through a press release asking him to behave. The PM accuses the opposition of buying as many as 20 of his party members to tilt the result in its favor. A video is in circulation showing one of candidate Gilani's son allegedly bribing a couple in return for getting their votes cancelled. One of the PTI members from Karachi has publicly admitted that it was a sting operation. No money is said to have passed hands. In Balochistan, the PTI announced a ticket for a person who was not even a member of the party but alleged to have bought it paying millions. When questioned, party people tried to justify this decision by saying that he was a joint candidate for the PTI and its coalition partner BAP. However, after an outcry from the local rank and file of the party in the province, the PTI took back the ticket from him. He then decided to contest as an

independent. And indeed, after winning he has joined the PTI with the PM himself awarding him the coveted membership in full public glare.

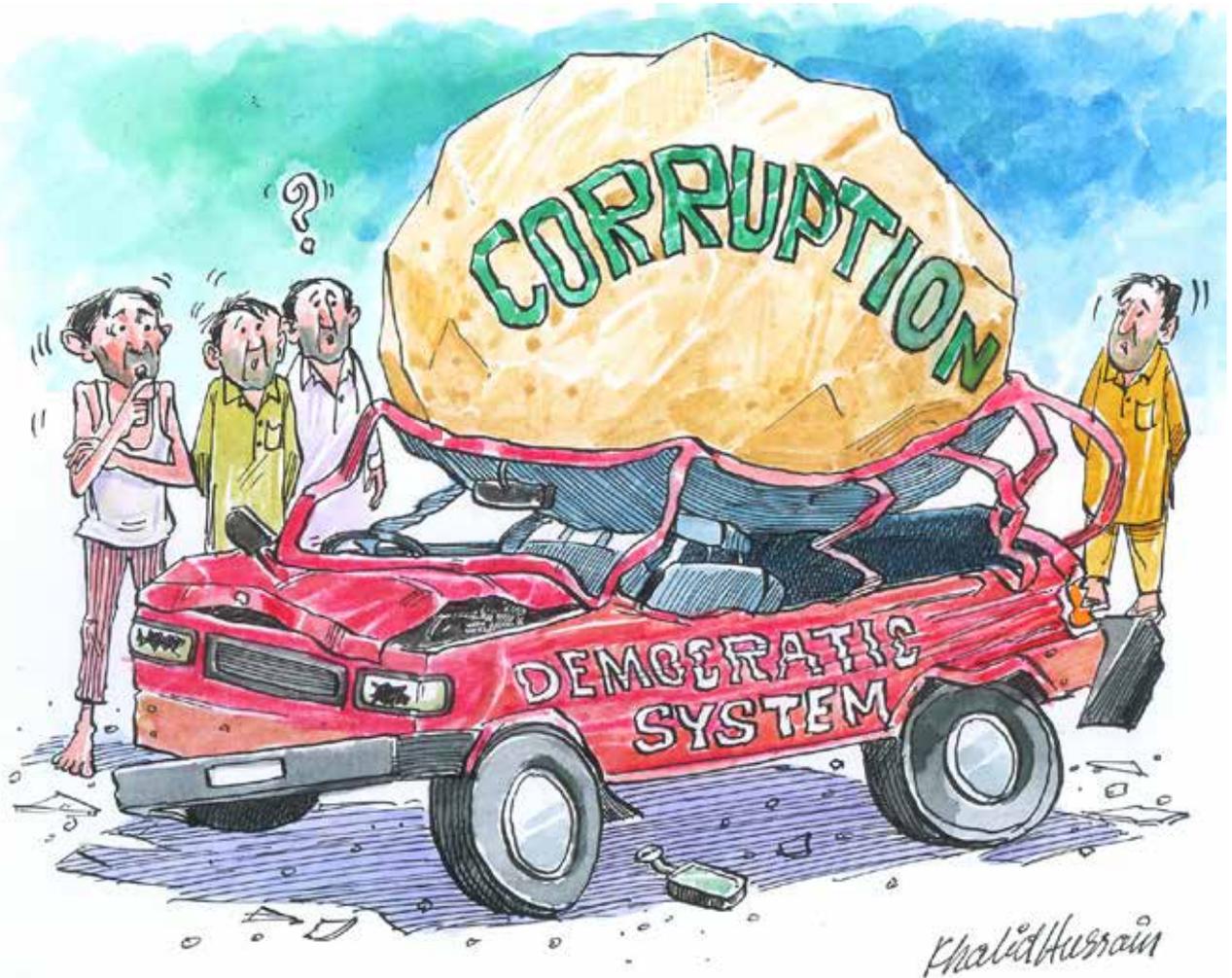
What happened the other day in front of the parliament building when the PM was seeking vote of confidence inside was waiting to happen since the day PTI coalition government took oath of office in 2018. The crowd of PTI 'goons' which attacked the PMLN leaders including former Prime Minister Khaqan Abbasi, former Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal, former Information Minister Maryam Aurangzeb had appeared to be necessarily inspired. Every politician worth his/her name, including the Speaker of the National Assembly, Asad Qaisar has personally condemned the incident.

The defiance to the authority that Imran Khan showed from the container and the abusive language he had used against the then government, especially the leadership of PMLN, PPP and JUI (F) were passed off then as political exaggerations indulged in by the opposition in electioneering mode. But to continue in the same mode even after becoming the country's PM was bound to elicit the same from the other side. And what happened in Daska was the logical outcome of the rude rhetoric having taken over the senses of the politicians at large with political tolerance taking a back seat.

The PDM had boycotted the confidence vote session on the grounds that it was unconstitutional because the president had advised the PM to obtain vote of confidence without mentioning any reason, whereas under the relevant rules the president could advise the PM to do so only if he was satisfied that Imran Khan had lost the confidence of the House.

## Jo Jeeta Wohi Sadiq Sanjrani Win Again - Confirms Sanjrani is Sadiq Afridi's Surprise

*The elections that were won by rejected votes. The neck to neck competition resulted a narrow victory by alliance led by the government by the candidates from smaller provinces.*



By Khalid Wasim

After a high-stakes and thrill-filled Senate election mired by controversies, the country finally has a new and, as expected, a completely hung Upper House of the Parliament. The government-backed Sadiq Sanjrani has managed to retain the Senate chairman office for another term -- thanks to the eight rejected votes.

The Senate elections, which had never got much public attention in the past, this time remained the topic of general discussion and debates on the national and social media for almost three months because of a number of controversies that hit the process, starting with the filing of a presidential reference to the Supreme Court of Pakistan by a desperate government in December last year seeking an open ballot to the detection of spy cameras inside the Senate hall hours before polling for the offices of the chairman and the deputy chairman.

The dramatic events that took place during this period literally turned the whole country into a theatre as the people watched all the happenings like a thrill-filled comedy and action movie in which they saw the characters engaged in wheeling and dealing, exchanging currency notes under the table like members of the underworld mafia, abusing and fighting with each other on the floor of the parliament as well as on the famous D-Chowk on the Constitution Avenue.

Senate voting results were very suspiciously interesting as Yusuf Raza Gilani took more than his actual identified strength as was from his clear party position. More interestingly, the PDM even called it a democratic victory. They also claimed that they got the votes of the opposing side. That claim was also raised before the Election Commission by the government alliance.



On the other hand the election of Chairmanship was almost quite near to the party position identified as earlier, only the rejected votes worked in favor of the winning candidate. However in the Deputy Chairman's election, Afridi took more votes than parties' stated strength.

As per independent calculations, PDM and Government Alliance had 49 votes each in the senate. The winning candidate got 48 votes and Yusuf Raza Gilani defeated by getting 42 votes. Now PDM maintained it as a rigged election.

What was done in National Assembly senators' election for federal seat, it was almost repeated in the Senate Chairman and Deputy Chairman's election.

The Sanjrani's victory in the opposition-dominated house has not come as a surprise for many as previously he had survived a crucial vote of no trust despite the fact that at that time the difference between the number of treasury and opposition members was nearly seven times higher than now.



It was after a close and nail biting contest that Mr Sanjrani, who belongs to the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), was declared winner by Presiding Officer Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah through a ruling rejecting seven controversial votes that had been polled in favour of Mr Gilani. The chair rejected another ballot which had apparently been wasted intentionally as the voter had stamped both the candidates. Now PDM has decided to challenged this ruling in court of law.

Mr Sanjrani, secured 48 votes against Mr Gilani's 42 votes.

Later, Mirza Muhammad Afridi from the erstwhile former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) became the new deputy chairman as he defeated Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri of the opposition with a 54-44 vote.

Surprisingly, the rejected votes had acquired all the more significance than the valid polled votes since the defeat of the opposition's no trust motion against Mr Sanjrani in August last year. In the crucial one-on-one contest in the National Assembly on March 3 on a general seat from Islamabad, Mr Gilani as the opposition's Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) candidate had defeated Finance Minister Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh with 169-164 votes whereas seven votes were rejected meaning thereby that the

number of rejected votes exceeded the margin of victory.

These rejected votes are sighted with suspicion amid allegations of the use of money and involvement of the establishment and agencies in the election process. Before the March 3 Senate elections, Yousuf Raza Gilani had stated that he believed that the establishment was neutral in the Senate election process. The other opposition parties in the PDM, including the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F), distanced themselves from Mr Gilani's assertion, but preferred not to speak on the matter as before the March 3 elections as a strategy. But soon after an upset victory by Mr Gilani and the prime minister's vote of trust, the opposition parties, including the PPP, once again started raising fingers at the establishment. Now Gillani repeated that establishment has no role in chairman senate elections.

The first special session of the new Senate began with a noisy protest by the opposition led by PPP's Raza Rabbani who claimed that "secret cameras" had been installed at the polling booth. Amid

slogans of "shame, shame", the PPP senator termed it a violation of Article 226 of the Constitution which called for maintaining secrecy of the ballot.

On the opposition's demand, the presiding officer not only ordered the changing of the polling booth, but also referred the matter to a committee for investigations. The cameras above the polling booth had been detected by PPP Senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar and PML-N's Musaddiq Malik during the inspection of the polling booth.

After Sanjhrani's victory, the treasury members are now advising the opposition to accept the defeat with a big heart and patience, forgetting that after the defeat of Dr Hafeez Shaikh, they had not launched a tirade against the ECP, but also made every effort to prevent the Commission from issuing Mr Gilani's victory notification. The PTI has also filed a petition before the ECP challenging Mr Gilani's election on the basis of a leaked video showing Mr Gilani's son Ali Haider Gilani telling the PTI MNAs about the techniques to waste their votes before the March 3 elections is still with the ECP.

Though, the government has managed to retain both the offices of the chairman and the deputy chairman, the fact that despite being



the largest party, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) will not be in the driving seat in the Senate has caused great frustration within the ranks of the ruling party despite the fact that all the results of the Senate election – except the one – had remained as per expectations. The upset caused by Mr Gilani by defeating Federal Minister for Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in a one-on-one contest on a general seat from Islamabad for which polling was held in the National Assembly, however, shattered the ruling alliance and forced Prime Minister Imran Khan to seek a fresh vote of confidence. Now this confidence, to some extent has been restored.

On March 6, the Prime Minister obtained a trust vote from the same assembly where his nominee had faced defeat at the hands of the opposition only three days back. The premier won the vote of confidence with 178 ballots cast in his favour — six more than required. The opposition parties, however, stayed away from the session.

The opposition later rejected the vote of trust, alleging that Mr Khan had secured the vote by using “state institutions” and the “secret agencies”. The opposition also questioned the act of seeking trust vote from the members who had been accused of selling their votes in the Senate election.

PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz while addressing a press conference after a party meeting attended by all senior PML-N leaders on March 7 alleged that two ruling party MNAs who had resisted the pressure were “locked up in a container for four hours” in a facility at Golra in Islamabad and forced to vote in the premier's favour. She alleged that the government had kept a watch on each MNA using “drone cameras.”

## SENATE COMPOSITION

After the Senate elections, the strength of the upper house has been reduced to 100 senators. Presently, it consists of 99 senators as Ishaq Dar, who has been living in London in self-exile, has not taken oath as a senator.

The ruling coalition includes 27 members of the PTI, BAP (12), MQM (3) and one each of PML-Q and PML-F. Besides them, the three independent senators are also sitting on the treasury benches.

The opposition senators include 21 of the PPP, 17 of the PML-N, five of JUI-F, two each of ANP, BNP-Mengal, PkMAP and National Party. The Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) with one senator is neither the part of the government nor the opposition's alliance and its lone senator had abstained from the voting in the Senate chairman and deputy chairman elections.

## TEST FOR OPPOSITION

At the time of nominating Mr Gilani and Mr Haideri as the joint opposition candidates for the Senate chairman and deputy chairman office, respectively, the PDM had announced that the office of the leader of the opposition would now go to the PML-N despite the fact that the PPP is the largest party on the opposition benches with 21 senators.

There was resentment within the PPP ranks over the PDM's decision and now when both Mr Gilani and Mr Haideri had lost the elections, there are reports that the PPP is considering to re-open the matter. Many in the PPP believe that it is the party's right to get the office of the opposition leader and they remained silent when



the PDM made the decision only for the sake of unity and because they do not want to create difficulties for Mr Gilani in his election for the Senate chairmanship. Following the announcement that seven votes cast for Yousaf Raza Gillani were rejected because the stamps were not correctly placed on the ballot paper, PPP Senator Farooq H Naik tells the presiding officer: "You do not have the right to reject the vote if it has been stamped outside the box in front of the candidate's name."

"The rejected votes that you are talking about have been stamped within the boxes in front of the candidates' names," he said, adding that the rules are silent regarding where one can stamp on the ballot paper.

"Why should the voter suffer due to the mistake of the secretariat," says Naik to the presiding officer.

In response to the argument, the presiding officer says that the stamp must be placed in front of the candidate's name to be considered valid.

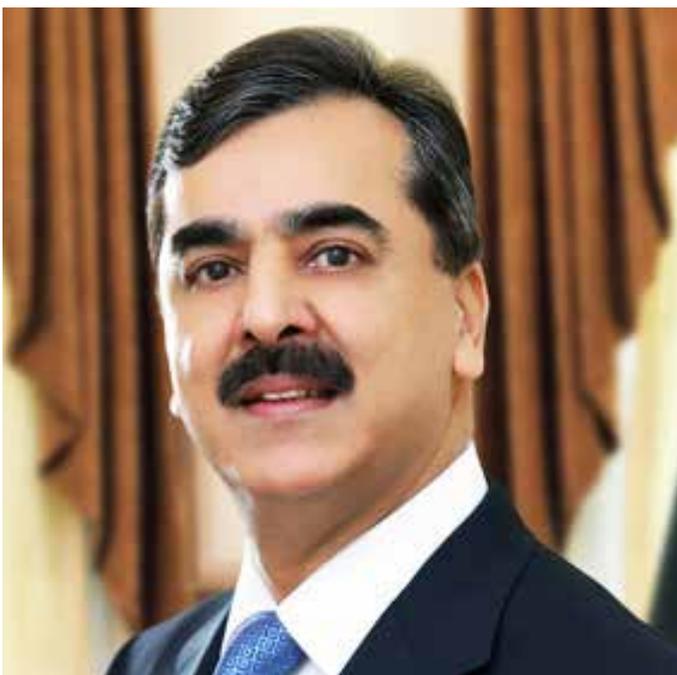
Adamant that Gillani is the "actual winner," of the election, the Opposition has decided to take the matter to the election tribunal.

The polling for the Senate chairman's post started at 3pm, presided over by officials from the Senate Secretariat. The process of voting completed at 4:40 pm, but counting started after the official time, i.e. 5pm. The polling time for the election of the deputy chairman of the Senate was completed at 6:59pm, while the results were announced at 7:08pm.

Jamaat-e-Islami Senator Mushtaq Ahmed abstained from casting his vote in the elections. The senator's name was called twice by the presiding officer but he did not get up from his seat.

The senator had already announced that he will not take part in the elections after his party boycotted the polls.

*Khalid Wasim is Islamabad based senior journalist. He writes on political issues.*





# The Deal that Handed PTI the Walkover in KP

*An eleventh-hour understanding between treasury and opposition helps stem horse-trading while letting PTI optimize its gains in Senate Election in KP.*

By Syed Fakhar KaKaKhel

The ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) grabbed 10 out of 12 seats in the senate elections from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, four of them going to one influential family.

Awami National Party (ANP) and JUI (F) each secured a general seat while the other two member parties of the opposition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) lost out – the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on a technocrat seat and Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) on a general seat.

“I can tell you that money was used in this election”, ANP parliamentary leader Sardar Hussain Babak told this scribe. “Even members from opposition parties took money but the candidates getting their votes lost out due to our election strategies”.

The five PTI candidates to win general seats were federal information minister Shibli Faraz, Liaqat Tarakai, Faisal Saleem Rehman, Zeeshan Khanzada, and Mohsin Aziz. With the exception of the last named, all these Senators are linked together by family ties.

The two opposition senators to be returned were Maulana Atta-ur-Rehman of the JUI-F, a brother of party chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman; and Haji Hidayatullah Khan of the ANP.

On technocrat seats, PTI’s Dost Mohammad Mehsud and Humayun Khan Mohmand emerged winners while Farhatullah Babar of PPP, who was backed by the joint opposition, lost out. PTI’s Sania Nishtar and Falak Naz Chitrali won on women’s seats, while Gurdeep Singh claimed a minority seat. PML-N’s Abbas Afridi and BAP’s Taj Mohammad Afridi lost their seats in the general category.

Interestingly, a record thirteen members of the KP provincial assembly, most of them from the ruling party, spoiled their ballots in the first go. The returning officer issued them fresh ballot papers upon request.

The opposition Jamaat-i-Islami abstained from the elections in the National Assembly but took part in the elections in KP with its three MPAs casting their votes after cutting a deal with the PDM and contested election on the seat reserved for women.

The JUI (F) and ANP believe that they were hopeful on technocrat and woman seats too but fielding of an extra candidate by PML (N) seems to have spoiled their chances.

The PML (N) nominated Abbas Afridi on the general seat despite reservations expressed by other components of the opposition



alliance. Soon after nomination of Abbas Afridi, rumours spread that members of ANP and PPP were approached to switch their loyalties.

Sources from the opposition confirmed to this scribe that it was already decided that Abbas Afridi would not try to get votes from the opposition benches and would secure his seat by poaching ruling party lawmakers. But after taking the rumours seriously the opposition parties met to discuss the issue and restricted communications by their members.

Despite all out efforts, there were still reports of horse-trading in the house. It was decided by JUI (F) and ANP to approach PTI for settlement in Khyber Pakhtunkwa like the formula followed in Punjab. Though not confirmed publicly, there are reports the parliamentary leaders of JUI (F) and ANP met with Chief Minister Mehmood Khan in this regard.

The PTI was expecting a seat in the general category by fielding Taj Afridi from the coalition partner Balochistan Awami Party (BAP). Chief Minister Mehmood Khan had not only to accommodate the BAP candidate but also to convince his own member Liaquat Khattak, who lost his portfolio from the cabinet after the Nowshera election fiasco.

After his ouster from the cabinet, Khattak formed his own faction inside the party. He was the second PTI lawmaker to develop

differences with the leadership after former provincial minister and Imran Khan favourite Atif Khan.

In the senate election, four of the tickets were given to his relatives including two cousins, Zeeshan Khanzada and Faisal Saleem. With such splinter groups inside the ruling party it was a major challenge to secure their seats in the senate.

Despite the Prime Minister's expression of anger against wealthy candidates in the senate it was his party that awarded four tickets to industrialists with bags full of money on general seats. Sources close to the ruling party confirmed supply of funds to the tune of PKR 40 million to party members by the ruling party.

This was the situation where the Chief Minister of KP and his close associates had no other way left but to welcome the opposition proposal not to allow PML (N) candidate Abbas Afridi to damage the loyal vote bank of these parties through horse-trading.

As a result of this understanding, the PTI sacrificed their allied candidate Taj Afridi, while the opposition cut short its manoeuvring to secure a technocrat seat for PPP's Farhatullah Babar.

Dr Humayun Mohmand, a well-known plastic surgeon and health consultant to the Prime Minister, defeated Farhatullah Babar.



# Punjab Gives PM Khan the Jitters

*The Daska disaster and the setback to his government over Senate's Islamabad seat may well portend the end of the dream run for Imran Khan's party.*

By Ahmad Waleed



**It all started in Daska:** The government was left with egg on its face after it failed to win the National Assembly seat in the by-elections despite allegedly engaging in massive pre-poll and polling day rigging.

Its failure to demonstrate its vote bank is intact will continue to haunt the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf party for the weeks, months, and probably years to come.

The move on the part of the 11-party opposition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) to field former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani had already perturbed the ruling party. They smelt a rat; something was cooking up. The battle for the control of the Upper House of the Parliament picked up momentum.

An attempt in the Parliament to force open ballot for Senate election was aborted. A parallel effort in the Supreme Court of Pakistan fizzled out and the Election Commission of Pakistan determined it was free to hold the Senate election through secret ballot like in the past.

The Daska fiasco and defeat on almost all the by-election seats in the country dealt a serious blow to Prime Minister Imran Khan's government. While the major focus was on the Islamabad seat where Yousaf Raza Gillani was to give Imran

Khan the shock his life by defeating his Finance Minister Hafeez Sheikh, the Chaudharis of Gujrat used their good offices in striking a deal with the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) bigwigs to reach a political deal on Senate seats. And they managed it successfully.

The seats were divided among the parties in proportion to their strength in the Punjab Assembly. It was a rare master stroke in the recent political history where two arch rivals – PML-N and PTI – agreed to make such a cordial arrangement. The Pakistan Muslim League-Q got one seat while PTI and PML-N had five each. There were no political wheeling and dealing involved and it all went smooth as silk.

The credit goes to the speaker of Punjab Assembly, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, who paved way for the negotiations through back-channel contacts. Everyone woke up to a pleasant surprise amid the toxic political atmosphere in the wake of the Daska debacle. Neither of the parties was ready to budge from their hardened positions but the power brokers in Punjab made the moves very furtively.

And yet, the news of a patch-up between the two bitter rivals on Senate seats from Punjab came as a surprise. Nobody was willing to believe until the mediator went public and announced that a historic deal

has been done. Still, the two rivals steadfastly refused to break their silence.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif kept mum when asked how her party had struck a deal with sworn enemy Imran Khan's party. "I think it is better not to say anything on this," remarked Maryam to a query by journalists on the day the adjustments were made public. Some circles believe Maryam Nawaz was kept in the dark on the development.

Neither was there a word from the Buzdar government. It suited both the parties though.

The PML-N was seemingly happy that it would now focus more on the high-value Islamabad seat where Pakistan Peoples' Party – a key member of the PDM coalition – had fielded its candidate against PTI's Hafeez Sheikh. The PTI leadership also breathed a sigh of relief, knowing full well the party was beset with infighting and would be better off making a deal than entering the contest.

A seasoned politician, Speaker Punjab Assembly Chaudhry Pervez Elahi proved his mettle once more while Chief Minister Usman Buzdar, Imran Khan's famous Wasim Akram Plus, was left out of the loop yet again.

Observers say Buzdar's inability to deal with party infighting at this critical juncture combined with his anaemic grip of governance has rendered him a lame duck chief minister of the largest province of the country.

However, the way things are developing, this may be the least of Prime Minister Khan's worries. Both the backchannel deal over the Senate seats from Punjab and the Gillani win from Islamabad lend credence to Bilawal Bhutto's claims of bringing about a political change. Which of the myriad political fronts the PDM opens to test Khan is entirely up to the opposition coalition's leadership.



# Fissures Bedevil PTI's Sindh Alliance

*Not only are PTI's differences with coalition partner GDA widening, the party's internal rifts are also worsening.*

By Razak Khatti

Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) seems unequipped to deal with the serious fissures in the ranks of its political alliance in Sindh that the Senate election has brought to the fore.

The most prominent of the fissures at this point is the alienation of the PTI ally Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) after its head Pir Sadaruddin Shah unexpectedly lost his Senate run on account of betrayal by its PTI allies.

Well-placed sources tell The Truth International (TTI) that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had offered its conditional support to GDA in securing this seat against some favours in the election. However, the GDA took a dim view of the offer, believing its position was secure given the support it expected from the PTI-MQM alliance in the Sindh Assembly.

It was a rude shock for the GDA to discover it had been let down by its allies when election for the seat of the Senate took place and the results were announced. Smarting from the double blow of loss and betrayal, the GDA has chosen silence over protest – which does not bode well for the PTI-led coalition.

The other of the fissures arises from the urban-rural fault line within the ranks of the PTI itself. The urban faction of the party dominated by Karachi-based MPAs – put in the driving seat by the central leadership – pays no heed to the needs, opinions, or grievances of public representative of the party belonging to the rural or interior Sindh.

This state of affairs seems to have finally drove two of the party's MPAs from rural Sindh to openly break ranks with the party to vote PPP candidates.

PTI MPAs from Interior Sindh constituencies have been facing three major issues since the current regime came into power. The political policymaking process is in the hands of those leaders of PTI on the provincial level who had no deep-rooted connection with the political

developments in Interior Sindh.

This is the reason why whenever this Karachi-based leadership of PTI in Sindh talk about political issues they share enormous similarities with MQM-Pakistan. Two and a half years of PTI's urban-led approach to Sindh politics has pushed the interior Sindh MPAs so hard they are unable to support or defend the party's narrative anymore.

The second issue is that the federal government has not granted any developmental funds for areas like Jacobabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Daharki, etc., nor has it been able to provide any federal jobs for the citizens of these areas.

Thirdly this is another major issue that no government functionary is appointed of their choice on the local level who could assist their voters in resolving their issues.

How can an elected representative handle and satisfy their voters in the backdrop when there are no developmental schemes in his constituency and he cannot fulfil his promise to provide jobs to his voters? These elected representatives have no say in the government offices to have the issues of their voters resolved at the local level.

This was the scenario which forced MPAs Aslam Abro and Shehryar Shar to openly revolt against their party.

According to Qazi Asif who is a senior journalist based in Karachi, Aslam Abro has been in the middle of conflicts with feudal lords of Jakhрани tribe in Jacobabad. According to Asif, Abro supported PPP in the Senate's election in return for help to sort out his chronic issues with Jakhranis.

Also, the PPP-led provincial can also throw some developmental schemes Abro's way, and allow him a say in the transfers and postings of government officials in his constituency, helping him placate his constituents. His decision to break ranks with his party, therefore, seems to have

been dictated by the exigencies of political survival.

Likewise Shehryar Shar was also facing almost similar issues with his local political leadership.

Another issue is that despite being allies there is no ideal working relationship between PTI and MQM-Pakistan.

When it was time to change opposition leader in the provincial assembly then MQM-Pakistan had demanded the slot of opposition leader from PTI in the assembly. This was the reason that MPAs of MQM-Pakistan were not ready to sign the motion aiming to appoint opposition leader nominated by PTI in the Sindh Assembly. However, they later signed it when pressure was mounted on them from the quarters concerned and Halim Adil Sheikh secured the slot of opposition leader in the assembly.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) as per its numerical strength in the Sindh Assembly was supposed to obtain six seats in the Senate election of 2021 but it bagged one extra seat via toss when the cast votes stood equal for opposing candidates in the recently held election.

On 3 March, during Senate's election, Faisal Sabzwari of MQM-Pakistan bagged as much votes as Sherry Rehman of PPP-P but he lost the seat when decision was made on a toss.

Analysts say the root cause of all these problems is that PTI in 2018 general election won seats for its candidates who had no political grounding and no exposure to parliamentary politics.

This is the main reason that with the passage of time the political affairs seemed to be deteriorating instead of improving. Now a time has come that there are differences among the rank and file of PTI and fissures between PTI and its allies is deepening with every passing day.



# IK rides his Moral High Horse

*Seen from Islamabad, the FATF whitelist looks more and more like a moving goalpost.*

**By Hammad Ghaznavi**

If anyone is fit to lecture the nation on morality, it is my Prime Minister Imran Khan as he has set high moral standards, both in personal life and politics. The Supreme Court of Pakistan under honourable Chief Justice Saqib Nisar has certified him as Sadiq and Amin, perhaps the only Pakistani politician who has cleared the high bar of article 62 and 63 of our constitution. He is, hence, legally authorized to cast the first stone, a privilege that he avails often. In the last two weeks, in his three addresses -- to the nation, parliament and cabinet -- he resorted to pedagogy underlining the importance of morality in the life of nations, and flogged the corrupt PDM leadership for its poor moral standards.

Imran Khan's morality talks have enraged his detractors, who, blinded by enmity, argue that IK is a man of unenviable morality both as politician and human being. Nothing can be farther from the truth for IK is genuinely Mr clean and handsome to boot. (Imran-haters are particularly infuriated at the mention of his Greek-god looks.) I'm not a blind follower of IK, so instead of brushing aside all the allegations against my leader in a sweep, I will puncture all one by one through cognitive process.

To start with, Frederik Obermaier, a German investigative Journalist, revealed in 2017 that IK too had avoided paying taxes to the UK using an offshore firm, Niazi Services Limited, and in 1984, he had mortgaged a one-bedroom apartment in London through this company. IK later declared his flat through a tax amnesty scheme in 2,000. How stupid this allegation is, for it didn't involve Pakistani taxpayers' money, and it was a matter between the UK and Imran Khan. Next, please.

Aleema Khan, IK's sister made properties in USA and Dubai worth hundreds of millions of Rupees through sewing machines, and declared these in 2017 in a tax amnesty scheme, when a reporter had already unearthed the properties. It's another unintelligent accusation. She later paid Rs 29.5 millions to FBR in fines. It was not Shaukat Khanum Hospital's money. Period!

Another question about the political morality of IK was raised by Hakim Muhammad Saeed many moons back, when he said that IK would be

brought into politics soon, as there were international forces that wanted to control Pakistan through their 'man'. About this accusation, the lesser said the better. This hokum by Hakim sb was perhaps a result of an overdose of Rooh Afza.

Likewise, Abdul Sattar Edhi once accused Imran Khan of being a part of a conspiracy hatched by Gen (Retd) Hameed Gul to replace the elected government of Benazir Bhutto. This is a baseless allegation. Edhi was a dedicated philanthropist but was not interested in taking a bath often, that too in Karachi's sultry weather, which led to muddled thinking.

There's a long list of similar mindless allegations -- from Bani Gala residence's regularization to Zaman Park House recent construction not justified by IK's tax returns, from a stack of ATMs to a heap of scandals. These airy allegations don't deserve more space. Fast forward.

This morality talk started the day Yusuf Raza Gillani won the Senate elections. PM accused PDM of buying votes, something rather immoral. Now, it will be quite inane to talk about the vote of no confidence against Sanjrani sb about one and a half years ago, when the opposition's majority was converted into minority. After all two wrongs don't make a right.

One word about Mr Moral Vowda, who on the day of Senate elections, cast his vote and then immediately resigned from his NA seat, to become a senator. The next day the Islamabad High Court declared his affidavit regarding his nationality false, which meant, he fooled the entire system for two and a half years. Now, this may be described sheer immorality. But what has IK to do with it? Vowda perhaps fooled IK as well. And why is it immoral if Abdul Qadir from Baluchistan, whose ticket was withdrawn by IK, contested and won a Senate seat, and then reposed full confidence in IK and joined PTI.

As we have seen, all criticism on IK's morality is a product of pathological hatred against Mr Clean. He is our saviour, a gift from God. He's a man with a grand vision who will fight alone, if need be, and never give NRO to the corrupt.

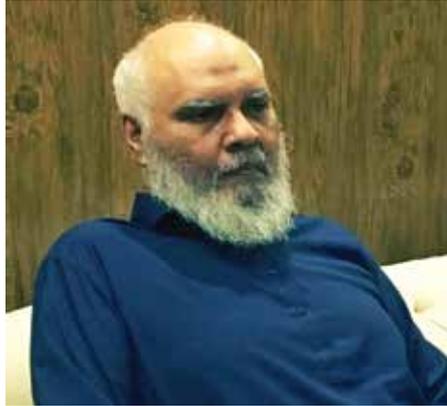




# Why Buzdar has been Strengthened

## City Notes

By M.A. Niazi



For some reason, everyone has been concentrating on the effects of Yusuf Reza Gilani's win on Imran Khan. No one has focused on what it meant for Usman Buzdar. Even though for him, it meant complete vindication. I mean, a lot of cognoscenti thought he should have fallen on his sword for not winning the Daska by-election, including the display of ineptitude which led to rigging being caught.

By the same token, Imran was supposed to win in the National Assembly. Well, not quite win himself, but get his candidate elected to the Senate from the National Assembly. So if Dr Hafeez Sheikh lost, what was he supposed to do? The Opposition suggested he resign. As a matter of fact, they clamoured for his resignation. Instead, he opted for a vote of confidence, which he obtained. So the 16 MNAs who switched sides supported him when it became a matter of an open vote.

Of course, we don't know whether vote resulted from opposition to Dr Sheikh from those who resented the ticket going to someone who had been imposed on the party rather than having struggled for it, or whether there was positive support from Seraiki members, perhaps those who had joined the PTI when the Seraiki Suba Mahaz merged with it, for the first Seraiki to become Prime Minister. Imran says he know who the 16 are, and presumably they know he knows.

Of course, now that the dust has settled, there remains the little problem of finding a

seat for Dr Hafeez Sheikh. The National Assembly would be out. Does the PTI have any safe seats left anywhere, after what happened in the Nowshera by-election, and after there was ECP interference in how the Daska by-election was being conducted to its natural end? So there seem only two possibilities, involving getting a PTI Senator from either KP or Sindh resigning and contesting that by-election. Only, we are no longer sure, now that Gilani has won, that either of these Assemblies will deliver the appropriate results.

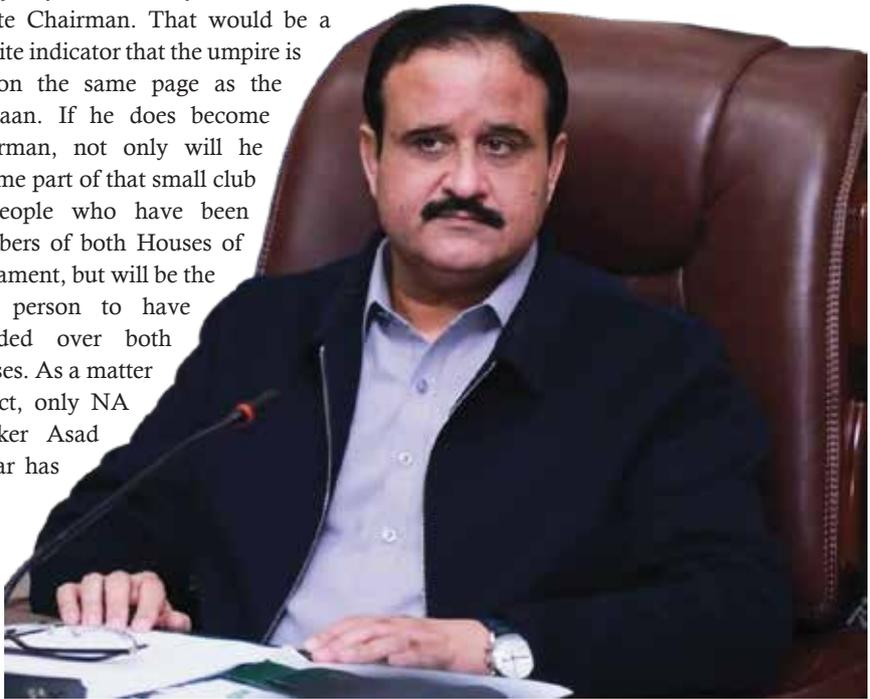
Yousaf Reza will be the first ex-PM to find a place in the Senate. Former CMs have been coming here before, such as Syed Abdullhah Shah of Sindh and Jan Muhammad Jamali of Balochistan (who became Deputy Chairman). In fact, Punjab is the only province not to have sent an ex-CM to the Upper House, the nearest being Sirdar Zulfiqar Khosa, who himself had not held the office, but whose son Dost Muhammad had held the office for 35 days while Mian Shahbaz Sharif did what Hafeez Sheikh is finding it so hard to do, find a seat in the House.

If the opposition can again cobble together a majority, Gilani may well be the next Senate Chairman. That would be a definite indicator that the umpire is not on the same page as the Kuptaan. If he does become Chairman, not only will he become part of that small club of people who have been members of both Houses of Parliament, but will be the only person to have presided over both Houses. As a matter of fact, only NA Speaker Asad Qaisar has ever

presided over two Houses, having been the previous KP Assembly Speaker.

Imran has got other worries. Like how India is walking all over England in Tests. How can Imran be a true ambassador for Kashmir so long as the Western powers continue to support India in cricket? To add to his woes, the biosecure bubble of the PSL was not just breached, but shredded, with three people falling sick, both support staff and players, and forcing the remaining matches to be postponed. Well, in Karachi, of the 14 matches that did take place, the first 13 were won by the team batting second. In fact, it was not until the Quetta Gladiators made 176-7 did a team set a target which they defended, as the Multan Sultans fell short by 22 runs. And it was not as if they had set a particularly stiff target. In six matches, the batting side had made more than 176, and had been overtaken. So you can't really tell, can you?

In this situation, how can Imran be expected to tackle the new Chief Election Commissioner, whom he revealed to be Mian Nawaz, in his address to the nation about being on the same page?





# Political Voices on Sit-in



## Maulana Fazl ur Rehman

We are adamant to proceed to Islamabad to topple this government. It has only been a source of misery and despair for the public and it is high time that the incompetent government is sent home in time. Otherwise, the public will continue to yelp in pain and there will be nothing left to salvage.



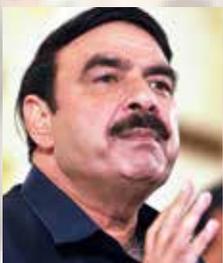
## Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

PDM is united upon this cause. We feel that there is no other way but to surmount pressure through protests. Only then will the government buckle in front of the demands of the people. For the people to be provided the relief they seek, they must come out and stand against this incompetent government as they continue to suck the blood of our public.



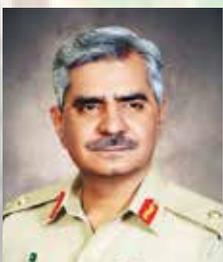
## Maryam Nawaz

We will proceed to Islamabad under the leadership of Moulana. The selected government must go and those who are the true face of the public must be brought forth. The people are tired of the ever-increasing inflation and unemployment rates and are ready to come out in scores to get rid of this menace.



## Sheikh Rasheed

We have no issue with the protests. It is their legal right and we will uphold it for them. They will be treated in light of their behavior. If they act under the ambit of the Constitution, we will treat them with respect.



## DG ISPR

Pakistan Army stands completely neutral and has no connection to politics. If the procession reaches Rawalpindi, we will provide them tea and serve it with utmost respect and dignity.

# Elon Musk Sends Bitcoin Value into the Stratosphere

*The rise and rise of the world's original cryptocurrency from the purchase of two Papa John's pizzas to USD 1.5 billion in investment from Tesla, Inc.*



By Javed Mahmood

Bitcoin has seen stunning fluctuations in its value since 9 February 2021 when Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla Motors, announced his company had made a hefty USD 1.5 billion investment in the premier cryptocurrency.

the richest man in the world in January 2021 with a net worth of USD 185 billion and he is the richest man whose wealth amounted to USD 185 billion.

and product architect of Tesla, CEO, CTO, and chief executive officer of the Boring Company; and founder and initial co-chairman of SpaceX.

the richest man in the world the month after the richest man when his net worth surpassed Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos.

has boosted its value it is the most valuable cryptocurrency these days one Bitcoin is worth USD 48,500. On 5 March 2021, the value of Bitcoin was USD 48,500 (just over PKR

On 7 February 2021, one Bitcoin was trading around USD 38,873, but its value surged to above USD 46,000 on 9 February 2021, when Musk shocked the world by disclosing Tesla had invested USD 1.5 billion in Bitcoin. He also revealed that very soon America's leading EV maker would start accepting Bitcoin cryptocurrency for selling its automobiles.

With this announcement, investors started making hefty investments in Bitcoin and its value exceeded USD 57,490 by 19 February 2021. Soon after Tesla's investment, Bitcoin also set a new record as the total value of this digital currency in circulation hit USD 1 trillion mark for the first time.

Nevertheless, a few days later, Musk issued another statement saying the value of Bitcoin was increasing in an abnormal manner. Unexpected spikes in Bitcoin value also shocked everyone in the United States and elsewhere and the American government officials and analysts started raising concerns about unprecedented growth in the value of this digital currency in the preceding weeks.

They also declared this cryptocurrency most vulnerable to shocks and fraud, and urged people not to make any investment in it. Consequently, by 28 February 2021, the value of Bitcoin plummeted to around USD 45,000, from where it slowly surged to around USD 48,500 in the first week of March.



7.7 million @ PKR 159 per USD).

Just two days after Tesla CEO announced his company's strategic investment in this digital currency, the value of Bitcoin crossed the average car price in the United States (USD 44,000) in February 2021, much to the shock of everybody. Many Americans worried about manipulation in Bitcoin value and its side-effects on the economy.

So far, the United States, Canada, European Union, Australia, and Finland are the only countries to allow legal trade of Bitcoin and some other leading cryptocurrencies. These countries, however, are using their security agencies to ensure this digital currency is not utilized in drug trafficking, illegal trade of weapons, terrorism, and other unlawful activities.

Online trading of this digital currency is being conducted in many countries that have legally banned it. Bitcoin is also being traded on several currency and stock exchanges in the United States and in some other countries.

## The Eight Major Cryptocurrencies

More than 1,600 cryptocurrencies are in circulation around the world today. However, Bitcoin (BTC), Litecoin (LTC), Ethereum (ETH), Bitcoin Cash, Ethereum Classic, Zcash (ZEC), Stellar Lumen (XLM) and Bitcoin Satoshi's Vision (Bitcoin SV) are the eight leading cryptocurrencies in the world at present.

Bitcoin was the original cryptocurrency introduced in 2009. In 2013, the United States legalized trading of Bitcoin currency and the US Treasury Department issued guidelines for trading this digital currency.

Some US States had already allowed the use of Bitcoin well before this decision of the US Treasury Department. Some other countries have likewise declared this cryptocurrency legal, causing its value to soar as massive investments have poured in.

When the US government legalized Bitcoin in 2013, the value of this currency was just around USD 13. Today, this digital currency is being traded in the range of USD 50,000.

## How to Buy Cryptocurrencies with Fiat Currency

The potential buyers of Bitcoin or any other cryptocurrency are required to open their cryptocurrency exchange account, update their personal identification information, a method of online payment and a secure internet connection. Common methods of investing in Bitcoin are bank account, debit, and credit cards.

Bitcoin ATMs are operating in countries which have declared this digital currency legal. Therefore, account-holders of this currency can get Bitcoin from its ATMs and through P2P exchanges.

## Fiat Currency

Government-issued currencies like Dollar, Euro, Pounds, Yen, and other such currencies are called fiat currencies that are being used to buy Bitcoin or any other cryptocurrency through online payment.

In the United States, some famous cryptocurrency exchanges are Coinbase, Kraken, Gemini, and Binance. Furthermore, the cryptocurrency buyers must use secure internet to maintain security and privacy of their information. It involves two-factor authentication along with the use of a strong password.

Importantly, by opening an account with any reliable exchange, accountholders can buy and sell any cryptocurrency, including Bitcoin. Further, the people have a choice to utilize hot or cold wallets.

Hot wallets are available online all the time while cold wallets are based on paper or hardware system. Hot Wallets can be operated from cellphone, laptop, computer and tablets, whereas cold wallet consists of paper and hardware which can be kept offline for security.

For example, the information maintained in the cold wallets can be stored in a USB that can be kept offline. In the cold wallet, paper wallet is considered the most secure option for maintaining Bitcoin currency and its related information.

## History of Bitcoin

Satoshi Nakamoto was the name used by the person or persons who developed bitcoin, authored the bitcoin white paper, and created and deployed bitcoin's original reference implementation – as part of which they also devised the first blockchain database, in the process, becoming the first to solve the double-spending problem for digital currency using a peer-to-peer network.



However, perhaps fittingly, the true identity of this person or consortium remains a mystery to this day.

In 2009, this Bitcoin was first made available online for commercial purposes. Nakamoto shared cryptography mailing list "Bitcoin P2P e-cash paper" that was linked to white paper, "Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic System" and both these links are still available online which provide information about basic concepts of this currency.

The first online economic transaction occurred on 22 May 2010, when an individual from Florida purchased two Papa John's pizzas by paying 10,000 Bitcoins.

Today, the value of 10,000 Bitcoins runs into millions of dollars because the value of each coin is equal to more or less USD 50,000. Thus, Bitcoin buyers and traders will forever remember historical connection between Bitcoin and Papa John's Pizza.



## Pakistan's FATF Conundrum

*Seen from Islamabad, the FATF whitelist looks more and more like a moving goalpost.*

By Oroba Tasnim Siddiqui

Pakistan had its sights firmly set on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) whitelist. Everything was on track, we were told; the goal was within reach – until it was not. Following a three-day virtual meeting last month, the FATF committee acknowledged the fulfilment of 21 out of the 27 conditions put forth, but refused to take the country off the grey list.

While Pakistani officials hope for a reprieve sooner rather than later, FATF President Dr Marcus Pleyer has reiterated the need for Pakistan to fulfil the remaining six conditions before an on-site visit can be approved.

“... the members decided by consensus that Pakistan needs to complete these six items for an onsite visit to be granted”, Dr Pleyer said. “As soon as the plenary decides that Pakistan has completed all the 27 items, then an onsite visit will be made”.

It is only after this visit that the final decision to exempt Pakistan from the grey list can be made.

Why Pakistan is finding it hard to come off the white list despite consistent attempts? There appears to be no simple answer to the question. “Perhaps there is more to the matter than meets the eye?” an official speaking on condition of anonymity told TTI.

It is important to understand the implications of the listing decisions. In case of blacklisting, the country is considered a high-risk jurisdiction subject to a call for action. The blacklisted country may face economic sanctions along with other prohibitive measures that are enforced by the member states of the FATF as well as other international organizations.

Blacklisting by FATF is seen as conclusive evidence of a country's



inadequacy to curb money laundering and terror financing. Because it is on the grey list, blacklisting hangs over Pakistan like the sword of Damocles. However, Turkey and Malaysia are said to have extended solid assurances to help keep Pakistan off the scroll of ignominy in case things go berserk.

While the FATF has no direct role in investigation, it acts as a strong monitoring force which keeps a strict eye on the occurrences within each country.

On the upside, Pakistan has successfully demonstrated that terror financing prosecutions in the country result in effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanctions. It has been able to enforce effective implementation of financial sanctions against most of the designated terrorists, preventing them from raising and transferring funds, identifying and freezing their movable and immovable assets as

well as demonstrating strict enforcement against terror financing violations of all kinds.

However, apparently we need to work harder to put our house in order before we can sway the lobbies holding up the decision to whitelist Pakistan.

Meanwhile, it will be constructive to remember that while friendly countries may help Pakistan keep its nose above the surface, it is up to the country itself to crawl out of the soup.

The authorities would do well to realise that the sooner Pakistan extricates itself from this ugly situation, the better it will be for the progress and prosperity of the nation and for the peace and development of the country.



# My Qatar LNG Bargain is Better than Yours

*The incumbent government's LNG deal with Qatar is nominally cheaper but there are other things to consider.*



By Khalique Ahmad

Late last month, Pakistan signed another long-term Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) supply contract with Qatar for additional 200 million cubic feet per day (MMCFD) at around 31 percent lower rate than 2015 contract for 500 MMCFD.

Soon after the signing of initial agreement at the Prime Minister Office, Nadeem Babar, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Petroleum, said that new agreement envisaged “the lowest ever publicly disclosed price under a long-term contract in the world” as of signing of the agreement and was achieved through the joint efforts of the political and military leaderships.

This reminds similar pronouncements by then petroleum minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi who spearheaded the realization of LNG import into Pakistan through setting up of first LNG regasification and storage unit

(FSRU) in the public sector but through the private sector and finalized long-term LNG import deals with Qatar and LNG trader Gunvor.

Taking credit for “game changer” LNG imports deal, Abbasi had also repeatedly claimed all those years that he had done the best deal of the time by securing the lowest long-term price and no major LNG purchasers – including much bigger players than Pakistan like Japan and India – had secured such a bargain until then.

“This agreement is being acknowledged globally as most cost effective deal for LNG. Pakistan will continue to import LNG from Qatar till 2032”, Mr Abbasi had said after signing the agreement with Qatar by calling it the “best available option,” that he had claimed would save the country USD 1 billion every year for 15 years.

The two deals are no apple to apple

comparison since the two have taken place with a gap of about 5-6 years under different global economic conditions, variables in the international oil and gas markets and gradual maturing Pakistani market.

For a reasonable comparison, it has also to be kept in mind that at least two governments had tried and failed to put in place LNG import arrangements and supply infrastructure and mechanism in multiple attempts over the preceding 11 years despite the ever increasing gas shortages.

The first steps is always the most difficult that becomes the basis of a long successful walk. Unfortunately, we have the habit of politicizing even the most crucial economic decisions that affect the lives of the people instead of taking advantage of the best of the collective wisdom.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

had been critical of the Qatar deal from the outset. Soon after coming to power, PTI government tried to renegotiate the long-term contracts with Qatar signed by the PML-N government in 2015-16 as oil and gas prices eased with additional LNG production facilities coming on line in various parts of the world including Australia and the United States.

Qatar had plainly declined even to discuss the existing contract saying it had over two dozen similar long-term contracts with other countries and did not want to set a precedent for contract openers but had offered to provide 20-25 percent price discounts on up to 200 MMCFD of additional LNG supplies given the close friendly relations between the two countries.

The offer did not materialize as Pakistan did not have the capacity beyond 100 MMCFD of additional quantities at the time and also because of disagreement within the cabinet members on political reasons.

Meanwhile, demand surged, gas network expanded and winter shortages started to reappear. Hence the feasibility for another long-term contract based on lessons learnt from expensive spot purchases in winter amid global supply disruptions.

The new Qatar deal would replace the two existing and expiring long-term deals. The fresh supplies, beginning January 2022, would replace an existing long-term contract of commodity trade with Gunvor that expired last December and another due to come to an end in 14 months from now. As such, the two new cheaper ships will replace two expensive ships of the past.

The new 10-year agreement, beginning January next year (2022), will deliver initially two ships per month (about 200 million cubic feet per day) and then go up to four ships per month (400 MMCFD) at the rate of 10.2 percent of Brent. In comparison, the first Pak-Qatar LNG contract was for 15 years, beginning 100 MMCFD (one ship per month) and going up to 500 MMCFD (five ships a month) at a rate of 13.37 percent of Brent. In crude absolute numbers, the PMLN deal is therefore expensive.

The new contract has a price renegotiation option after 4 years against after 10-years in the existing old contract. Interestingly, however, the timing of both contract openers for price renegotiations happens to be almost the same and may be taken up for discussions at or around the same time in 2026. So that does not make much of a difference. Also, both agreements would effectively come to an end at almost the same time after 10 years unless extended with mutual understanding of both parties.

Also, the total spot purchases as of December 2020 averaged at 11.90 percent of Brent compared to 13.37 percent of Brent in the three initial long-term contracts signed about five years ago. The new Qatar price at 10.2 percent of Brent is also 15-16



percent lower than average spot purchases of 11.90 percent of Brent and would ensure price stability and affordability along with supply security.

Based on the volume of new contract, Nadeem Babar said, the cost to Pakistan would lower by USD 316 million compared with the same volume under the existing long-term contract. "In 10 years, this works out to be USD 3 billion", he said.

"Pakistan is providing USD 170 million letter of credit (LCs) under the past contract compared to USD 84 million under the new contract, which is also almost half", he said but then skipped the point that committed quantities for supplies are also half of the past supplies.

Total supplies under the fresh contract could touch about 3 million tonnes compared to about 3.75 million tonnes of contracted quantities.

The Pakistan State Oil (PSO) would continue additional imports from Qatar under the new deal to replace its two term contracts already expired or about to expire with Gunvor to maintain its overall portfolio of about 6-7 ships per month.

Interestingly, even though Imran Khan the opposition politician had criticized the then government for keeping the contract under the wraps, Imran Khan the Prime Minister has himself not disclosed the additional contract either.

What materially changed the situation to Pakistan's favour this time is the fact that Qatar is spending about USD 30 billion on its North field development to expand its export capacity by almost 50 million tonnes per annum (up over 60 percent) in about a decade as demand in the African region is anticipated to decline with major developments in Nigeria.

Before Pakistan, Qatar also signed another long-term contract with Bangladesh that is reportedly well above 10.2 percent of Brent secured by Pakistan but is lower than 11 percent of Brent, which shows an aggressive marketing campaign by Doha to dent competing Australia and the US.

*The writer is an Islamabad based journalist.*

# Whistleblower Alleges NBP Flouted Rules in Awarding Prize Contract

*A trade union leader has blown the whistle on a lucrative contract that he says was awarded to a Karachi outfit majority-owned by a foreign firm – with the contractor allowed to leverage NBP resources to execute the contract.*



By Azeem Waqas

A leader of the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) Trade Union has raised serious questions as to the integrity of a contract worth billions of rupees awarded by the state owned bank to a company with 98 percent foreign shareholding.

A contract under the title of “Document Management System”, amounting to PKR 26.128 billion was awarded to a single bidder m/s A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd., for scanning, saving and retrieving of all documents of NBP, says Syed Jahangir, Secretary General of the NBP Trade Union.

Jahangir has filed separate motions with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA),

the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), and the Prime Minister’s Citizen Portal for investigation of this mega scam.

A Dubai based company – First Solution, UAE, has a 98 percent shareholding in m/s A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd., while Chief Executive Saqib Cheema and one Mr. Burhan both have 1 percent shareholding apiece, Syed Jahangir revealed in his application.

The CEO of First Solution, UAE is Mr. Adnan Malik, a former Citibank executive who served with in Citibank Africa in 2002-2003. He has also been working as a consultant in A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd., Pakistan, said Syed Jahangir.

The evaluation document of the said contract was published to the PPRA website on 15 June 2020 – indicating the contract was most probably awarded that month. The evaluation covers only one bidder.

Bids evaluation report shows that tender for the project was issued in November 2018 and its bids were received in November 2018. Eight bids were received and m/s A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd., was declared as the lowest bidder.

The report shows that m/s A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd., quoted PKR 0.95 per document for scanning and PKR 2.15 for indexing; PKR 115 to cover the cost of a box with seal; PKR 30 as cost of transferring

to the warehouse; PKR 19.50 per box as storage rental; and PKR 75 as retrieval cost.

Report shows that m/s 360 Technologies (Pvt.) Ltd; m/s OraTech Systems (Pvt.) Ltd., and m/s Systems (Pvt.) Ltd., also participated in the bidding but did not submit any proposal. While m/s Computer Research (Pvt.) Ltd; m/s M.M.Corporation; m/s Geoaxis and m/s Medici did not conform to the specific requirements in the bidding process.

This meant the bid from m/s A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd., was the only valid bid – and it was accepted as the lowest bid.

Syed Jahangir alleges the project is being executed using NBP resources – including workforce, offices, transportation, and logistics.

According to the Right to Information Act 2017, Syed Jahagir has asked NBP Management to share the prequalification notice; prequalification evaluation; prequalification criteria; tender notice for award of contract for PKR 26.128 billion; proof of publication in newspaper regarding award of contract for PKR 26.128 billion; bids received with names and credentials; bid evaluation criteria; detailed reasons for rejection of the other seven bids; grievances filed and disposal; document narrating A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd., profile, covering prior experience, existence of warehouses with addresses, etc., to all the stakeholders.

While talking to The Truth International (TTI), Syed Jahangir said that NBP management had ignored to check the financial status of Sarfraz Cheema, Chief Executive and his residence in North Karachi in an 80-yard house.

NBP management has not made any inquiry per Section 2 (f) of PPRA Rules 2004 to avoid “corrupt practices” about A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd., and has not shared its findings especially about shareholding pattern where Chief Executive Saqib Cheema and one Mr. Burhan, have 1 percent shareholding apiece and the Dubai-based First Solution, UAE has 98 percent shareholding, Syed Jahangir alleged.

NBP management took no action to resolve the conflict of interest while awarding the contract to recheck the CEO of First Solution, UAE Mr. Adnan Malik’s appointment in A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd., Pakistan as consultant and its implications, he said.

In his RTI request, Syed Jahangir has also asked the NBP management to provide the study conducted for importance of this project. He further enquires if the contract restricts the vendor to 100,000 documents or the same rate will apply if number of documents is increased.

He wondered where the number of documents (100,000 documents per branch per year) to be scanned had come from to

arrive at the figure of PKR 26.128 billion, saying a medium sized branch generated this many (100,000) documents (including cheques) in a week. If this turns out to be the case and the contract has no provisions to accommodate the additional documents at a lower rate, the eventual payment to the contractor would be many times the figure of PKR 26.128 billion being thrown around at this point.

Syed Jahangir is also seeking the copy of the agreement with A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd; a copy of the approval for granting contract to A.S.C. First Solution (Pvt.) Ltd; evidence of approval of NAB as required under National Anticorruption Strategy approved by the President of Pakistan; and any other contract related documents to meet the requirements of Public Procurement Rules 2004.

While talking to The Truth International (TTI), First Solution Group Head Communication Akram Kareem has denied all allegations of impropriety as baseless. Akram Kareem said: “The Document Management System is not a particular project but it is necessary for the bank to scan, store and retrieve specific documents. Its cost and scope has not been determined yet. The NBP is yet to decide how many papers are to be scanned for how many years and how much it would cost”.

Kareem said there was no basis to assume the cost at PKR 26 billion. He vociferously asserted the tender had been awarded to the lowest bidder, the tender process had been transparent, and there had been no favoritism in the project award as everything had been done according to the PPRA rules and laws.

He further maintained there was no need to share the information of the project with NAB.

Akram Kareem shared that the project had been initiated long before the appointment of Arif Usmani as the President of National Bank of Pakistan, which made allegations against him unfair. “He is an honest and competent Pakistani serving the country”.



# Tunisia

The Republic of Tunisia is a country in the Maghreb region of North Africa, bordered by Algeria, Libya and the Mediterranean Sea to the north and east. It is ranked amongst some of the smallest countries in North Africa and contains the Atlas Mountains, the Sahara Desert and much of its land is arable. The capital of Tunisia is Tunis and it is believed that the area was first inhabited by Berbers and Phoenicians in the 12th Century BC.

## Interesting Facts about TUNISIA



Tunisia's Cape Angela is not just the northern most part of Tunisia but also of the entire Africa.



Tunisia has 17 national parks, and the Ichkeul National Park is witness to thousands of flamingos, ducks, geese and storks on their migration journeys.



In El Djem, a city in Tunisia, one of the biggest amphitheaters exists, with an approximate space for 35,000 guests.



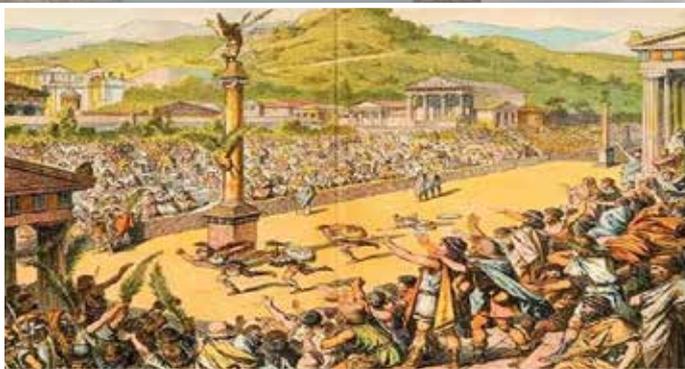
There are 700 monuments, mausoleums, fountains and madrassahs in the Medina quarter of Tunis.

# Greece

Greece also known as the Hellenic Republic is a country located in Southeast Europe. With a population of approximately 10.7 million, the capital rests in the ancient city of Athens. Greece is located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa and shares borders with Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Turkey. Greece is a historically illustrious country, birthing democracy, Western philosophy, literature, political science as well as science and mathematics.

## Interesting Facts about GREECE

1. Greek is one of the oldest spoken languages and has been around for over 3,000 years.
2. The Olympic games first took place in Greece in 776 BC.
3. Greece has over 250 days when it enjoys sunshine, estimation of 3,000 sunny hours per year.
4. For young men in Greek, military service is compulsory and can last from six to nine months.
5. Greece is home to more archaeological museums than any other country in the world.



# Biden's Mideast Moves Leave No Doubt America is Back

*America is back to the world stage, Biden said soon after he won the White House. Now he is affirming his assertion through concrete action in the Middle East.*



By Umer Farooq

In the first two months of his term the new US President Joe Biden put both a friend and an enemy of Washington in the Middle East on notice: A classified CIA report implicating Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman in the brutal murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was released to the press and the US Air force launched reprisal strikes against Iranian targets in Syria.

Both decisions indicate that President Biden wants to make clear that his administration had embarked on an important departure from the Trump administration, “which acted recklessly in its actions toward Iran and enabled the worst impulses of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy”.

In fact President Biden is essentially on a different course than any of his recent predecessors as he seemed determined to adopt a bolder approach to dealing with troublesome states in the Middle East – i.e., Iran and Saudi Arabia – espousing policies

counter to the agenda of Liberal International Order as envisaged by the new political establishment in Washington.

Biden’s election as President of the United States clearly indicates that the narrow-minded approach of former President Trump policies of withdrawing Washington from championing democratic and human rights causes internationally has been reversed. Washington once again will assert itself on high profile cases of human rights violations and promote democratic causes around the world.

Trump’s near-isolationist policies will have to give way to Washington’s penchant for espousing international causes that will uplift its image as a bastion of human rights, democracy, and the international impetus towards globalization. American experts have already started announcing President Biden is good news for those espousing the causes of climatic change and environmental issues.

President Joe Biden’s career as a politician is replete with evidence of his inclinations for championing human rights and democratic causes around the world. He belongs to the part of Washington’s political establishment that believes in the exceptional nature of American political system and philosophy— which in practical terms means that American political values like civil liberties, equality and freedom are universal values—, which can and should be enforced in every society around the world.

For this, Liberal Internationalists in Washington believe they have an inherent right to interfere in the affairs of other societies to prevent human rights violations in those societies. In American society this political idealism is often defined in religious idiom and language, although President Biden belongs to the secular and liberal faction of this idealist group.

The ideological groups in Washington which led and championed the interven-

tionist policies like Iraq and Afghanistan apparently look like political kin of Liberal Internationalists in American politics. But strictly ideologically speaking they are not. The neoconservatives, who formed the backbone of the Bush Administration, were in favor of using military force to spread American values of civil-liberty, democracy and freedom. In contrast, the Liberal Internationalism – the ideology Pres Biden espouses – does not necessarily favor use of military power to enforce American political values around the world.

What, then, is to be made of the US undertaking airstrikes against Iranian-allied targets in Syria? In other words why did the Biden Administration use the military option against Iran to convey what is essentially being described as a diplomatic signal?

In the American media, Biden's decision to launch strikes against Iran-backed militias in Syria showcases what has been described by the US political scientist Joseph Nye as "smart power". This is when hard power is employed alongside soft power in a carefully calibrated way to affect a diplomatic outcome. In this case, the US worked collaboratively with the Iraqi government and intelligence officials to develop and execute the planned strikes in Syria.

"The strikes themselves, which hit militia logistical and staging targets in Syria, were designed to signal the US resolve to stand up to Tehran's provocations. At the same time, they were calibrated in a way that would de-escalate tensions, avoiding a

more direct attack on Iran that could provoke its leadership further. Washington clearly telegraphed its actions as a direct response to attacks by Iranian-backed militias against US targets in Iraq in mid-February"

"Within the context of the wider negotiations around Iran's nuclear program, Biden is clearly communicating that certain behaviors will not be tolerated and Iran cannot affect the negotiations through destabilizing behavior".

American media is suggesting that on the one hand Biden wanted to punish Iran for its unruly behavior while on the other hand his administration wanted to keep open the option of bringing Iran to the negotiating table for talks on nuclear issues.

It could be easily assumed that the Liberal Internationalists and Neoconservatives –the first simply espousing political values without the use of military option and second advocating the military option for the spread of American values – are not very different when it comes to dealing with issues in the Middle East or Iran to be precise. In practice, both approaches boil down to the use of military power to assert American hegemony at the international stage. Only time will tell how different the liberal internationalist agenda of President Biden will be from the neocon agenda of President Bush.

However, when it comes to Washington's traditional friends, Biden has also diverged

sharply from Trump in his handling so far of Saudi Arabia. Biden has indicated that while he remains committed to Saudi national defense, he expects the kingdom to wind down its ruinous six-year war in Yemen and embrace a more progressive position on universal human rights.

Biden's commitment to these ideals, combined with the increasingly anti-Saudi sentiment across the other branches of the US government, indicates that President Biden would be under pressure from within his administration and traditional lobbies in Washington to deal more strictly with Saudi's violations of human rights and their antidemocratic impulses.

In such a situation, it should not be hard to surmise how far MBS would be allowed to continue his genocidal military campaign in Yemen.

Will Biden Administration champion human rights and democracy in other Muslim societies in the Middle East, Western Asia and South Asia? It is too early to predict.

The leaders of the hybrid regime in Pakistan have already started to throw around the word democracy in their public assertions much more frequently than before. Much will depend on whether the opposition parties succeed in internationally portraying the PTI government as a civil-military combine and as a violator of human rights.



# Exit America, Enter Chaos?

*With the Biden administration antsy to pull out of Afghanistan come May, can the warring sides in Afghanistan reach a deal in time to avert a descent into hell?*

By Tahir Khan

## The signs are not encouraging.

A superpower eager to exit Afghanistan after conclusively failing to impose any semblance of peace; a government in Kabul too weak to stand on its own; and large swathes of the country held by an adversary so plucky it will not deign to discuss peace with Kabul.

The last time all these signs aligned was in 1988 – and Afghanistan descended into a chaos so dark the world is suffering its repercussions still today thirty-three years later.

President Joe Biden's compulsion to meet the pull-out deadline agreed by the Trump administration is understandable. Extricating America from "endless wars" was part of his electoral platform. Any flexibility the administration shows in this connection will invite criticism from Republicans as well as from Biden's own Democrats.

Somewhat less understandable, at this distance at least, is Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's pointed emphasis on the 1 May 2021 deadline for the full withdrawal of American forces.

But the most unkindest cut of all was this coming from Blinken, "Even with the continuation of financial assistance from the United States to your forces after an American military withdrawal, I am concerned that the security situation will worsen and that the Taliban could make rapid territorial gains.

"I am making this clear to you so that you understand the urgency of my tone regarding the collective work outlined in this letter".

Taliban political envoys and an Afghan government team have not made any progress over the past six months in negotiations to decide a future political roadmap, the American peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has floated a power sharing formula that

could help the two sides reach a political settlement that ends the war."

The Taliban and the government team had started intra-Afghan negotiations on 12 September 2020 but have not even agreed on an agenda when there is no let-up in violence. Concerns are growing for further spike in violence as weather changes and a new fighting season is fast approaching.

Lack of progress in negotiations among Afghans to agree to a future political roadmap and continued violence may have forced the US to come up with its proposals.

But do the Americans realise intra-Afghan dialogue is a twosome game? How can you put the entire onus of making peace on Kabul? Where is the incentive for the Taliban to sit down with Pres. Ghani? More to the point, where is the disincentive for them not sitting down for talks?

It appears the Americans are counting on Pakistan to bring the Taliban to heel. However, Islamabad has repeatedly made clear its leverage over the Taliban is little more than moral suasion. There is no way Pakistan can convince the Taliban to talk or make peace unless they are willing to do so on their own.

Khalilzad held talks with the Afghan government and political leaders in Kabul and the Taliban in Doha earlier this month and shared his plan that also suggests a new constitution. This was Khalilzad's first interaction with Kabul and the Taliban under the Biden administration.

Afghan National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib and the Taliban spokesman Dr Mohammad Naeem confirmed on 7 March that the US envoy shared with them the plan and that they are reviewing the draft and will formally respond later.

The US envoy also discussed his plan with Pakistani leaders during his visit on 8

March and sought their support for the initiative.

Khalilzad's three-part Afghanistan Peace Agreement explains the guiding principles for Afghanistan's future, proposes a transitional peace government and political roadmap and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire.

The plan addresses the Taliban calls for establishment of an Islamic government to some extent as it says "a new High Council for Islamic Jurisprudence shall be established to provide Islamic guidance and advice to all national and local government structures." The High Council for Islamic Jurisprudence shall have a role in advising the judiciary.

A fifteen-member High Council of Islamic Jurisprudence (the "Islamic Council") shall be established within days of this agreement, to provide Islamic guidance on social, cultural, and other contemporary issues

"A transitional Peace Government of Afghanistan shall be established as of the date of this Agreement. The Peace Government shall exist until it transfers power to a permanent government following the adoption of a new Constitution and national elections," according to the draft.

The Executive Administration shall consist of a President, a Prime Minister, Vice-Presidents, Deputy Prime Ministers, cabinet ministers, heads of independent directorates, and other bodies.

The draft has recommended a new constitution and suggests a 21-member commission for its preparation, to be established within 30 days of the agreement taking effect, with 10 members named by each party to this agreement and the President naming the 21st member. Members of the constitutional commission will include both Islamic and contemporary legal experts.

Each side shall immediately announce and

implement, within hours an end to all military and offensive operations and hostile activities against the other. Neither party shall, under any circumstances, proactively attack individuals or units associated with the other. If either party takes action against the other in perceived self-defence, it shall immediately seek to de-escalate and report the action to the Ceasefire Commission.

It would be very difficult to convince the Taliban to accept any new formula in the presence of the Doha agreement. The Taliban “Rehbari Shura” or leadership council, the lone powerful decision-making body, have not discussed any new option since signing of the Doha agreement in February 2010 as the Taliban leaders still hope the agreement will be implemented.

Any change in the Doha agreement or considering a new plan like one Khalilzad’s power-sharing formula could not be acceptable to the Taliban as the group will not be willing to join the leaders of Pres Ghani’s incumbent administration. They could probably soften their position if Ghani resigns or the present set up is replaced by what the Taliban call an Islamic government with participation of all groups.

“We have already rejected the Kabul

administration’s proposal to join the present set-up as it is not reconciliation but a surrender,” a Taliban negotiator told The Truth International last week.

Islamabad had been the centre of hectic diplomatic activity over the past few weeks to explore ways for making the peace process result-oriented.

Afghan presidential envoy Umer Daudzai, Russian presidential envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov, Special Envoy of the Foreign Minister of Qatar for Counterterrorism and Mediation of Conflict Resolution Mutlaq bin Majed Al-Qahtani and American CENTCOM chief Gen Kenneth F McKenzie Jr discussed Pakistan’s role in the peace process with Pakistani leaders.

Daudzai represented Afghanistan in the first meeting of a Pakistan-Afghan group on the peace process that was formed during Prime Minister Imran Khan’s visit to Afghanistan last November. The two neighbours are now holding formal talks with Afghanistan on the peace process.

Officials familiar with the talks between Pakistani and Afghan leader say Kabul wants Pakistan’s help in a joint conference of Pakistani and Afghan religious scholars to issue a decree against the war in Afghanistan

as now the Taliban are fighting the Afghan forces. This has been a long-standing demand of Afghanistan that Pakistani scholars should issue a “fatwa”proscribing armed struggle in Afghanistan – like the one they issued to help Pakistan overcome militancy.

Pakistani officials told The Truth International that Russia has informed Islamabad it wants to revive the Moscow-format consultations to evolve regional consensus to take the peace process forward.

Russia had started the Moscow-format consultations in 2017 with the involvement of regional countries in the Afghan peace process, but had put it on ice after President Ashraf Ghani started an alternate initiative called the Kabul Process.

It was believed that the US was behind the Kabul Process to scuttle the Moscow consultations even as they were gaining momentum. The Kabul Process is almost dead now.

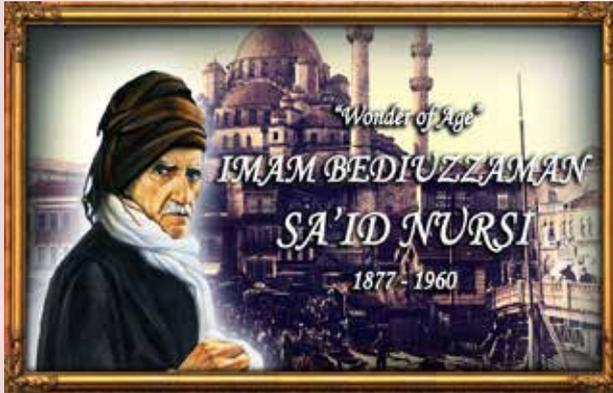
Diplomatic sources privy to the Qatari envoy’s discussions in Pakistan told The Truth International that he was “upset at the Taliban’s tough position” in the peace process and sought Pakistan’s help to convince the Taliban to show flexibility to take the peace process forward.



# Turkey from Kemalism to Erdoganism

*The making of Turkey's secular state and its evolution to embrace the past it once turned away from.*

By Azmat Mumtaz Saqib  
(Part 2/2)



The first Turkish religious leader to emerge in the Kemalist Turkey was Said Nursi (1876-1960), an Islamic philosopher who authored *Risale-i-Nur*, a Quranic commentary of more than five thousand pages.

The remarkable academic accomplishments of Nursi earned him the title “Badiuzzaman” meaning “the wonder of the time”. He lived through the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the World War I and the emergence of the Modern Turkish republic. He fought against Russians and was decorated for his bravery in action.

He fiercely resisted through his writings, British and Russian Occupation in WWI. He refused the offer of Mustafa Kamal Ataturk to join hands since he was opposed to secularism. Active against secular governments until 1950, Nursi never professed violent means. He was jailed and exiled several times in his life.

His Nurcu movement professed that everything in the world is sacred because everything is created by One God. He considered materialist philosophy the true enemy and advocated learning sciences not just for the sake of worldly benefits, but for the great Glory of Allah as the ultimate Objective.

Nursi insisted that his students must avoid the use of force and through positive action and maintenance of public order, the damage caused by forces of unbelief could be repaired by the healing truth of the Quran. He considered communism as the great danger of the time.

Said Nursi's influence persists through Gulen, Erdogan and presently through Erdogan.

The ideas advanced by Nursi had a profound influence on later Turkish leaders including Erdogan and Erdogan. Above all, his ideology continues to shape the Turkish thought today through the neo-Nurcu Gulen movement referred to as Hizmet (service), which is a 3 to 6 million strong volunteer-based movement in Turkey and around the world.

The Hizmet movement leader Muhammad Fethullah Gulen is a Turkish Islamic Scholar, preacher, Islamic poet, writer, social critic and activist-dissident living in the United States since 1999. In Turkey he was a local state Imam from 1959 to 1981.

Gulen's worldview does not divide the globe between Islamic and un-Islamic spheres but regards the whole world as the locus of serving humanity at large or through this service attaining good pleasure of God. It has its basis in the social and spiritual concepts of Ihsan (God-Consciousness par-excellence), altruism, and service.

The Gulen movement has been called “the modern face of Sufi Ottoman tradition”. Gulen has reassured his followers they can combine statist-nationalist beliefs of Ataturk's republic with traditional but flexible Islamic Faith.

Gulenists are technology-friendly, work within current markets and commerce structures and are savvy users of modern communications. They own educational institutions all over the world. Gulenists are estimated to own assets worth 30-40 billion dollars worldwide.

Imam Hatip (Khatib or preacher) high schools which educate imams of masjids and preachers of Islam, originally banned by Mustafa Kamal Ataturk, re-emerged in 1950s during the premiership of Adnan Menderes. In 2018, with their student enrolment at 1.3 million, these schools were expected to receive USD 1.6 billion in funding from Erdogan's government.

The graduates of these schools – among them many luminaries and leaders active in all walks of life in Turkey including Erdogan and many of his ministers – have played a significant role in the development of Turkey over the past three decades.

Another notable movement was the Turkish Milli Gorus (National Outlook Movement), regarded as a continuous Islamic Political Parties' movement since the 1970s.

The main object of the movement, led by former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan (1926-2011), was to restore the central role of Islam in Turkish society, to restore Islam as a national identity, and to make it the spiritual bond to achieve the cohesion of Turks.

The movement has both religious and non-religious themes, accommodating traditional Islam and modernism in the political sphere. A politician, engineer and academic, Erbakan was the member of the Grand National Assembly from 1969 to 1980 and again from 1991 to 1998.

He founded the National Order Party (1970-71), National Salvation Party (1973-1980), Welfare Party (1987-98), Virtue Party (1998-2001) and Felicity Party (2010-2011). Every new

party was formed when previous one was banned by the secular establishment.

After serving as deputy Prime Minister in three successive coalition governments between 1974 and 1978 and as Prime Minister of Turkey from 1996 to 1997, Erbakan was pressured by the military to step down as PM. He was later banned from politics by the Constitutional Court of Turkey for violating the separation of religion and state as mandated by the constitution.

The rise to power of Erbakan's Welfare Party was fuelled by Anti-West sentiments of Turkish nation after EU's 1987 rejection of membership application, and support of low income urban poor and conservative rural farmers.

Both the right and the left had been unable to solve the problems of unemployment, housing, healthcare, etc. The Welfare Party promised economic and social reforms and changed its outlook from 'Divine Order' to more mundane 'Just Order'.

After Erbakan's Welfare Party was banned, the National Outlook Movement (NOM) split into two factions. The traditionalists formed the Felicity Party (controlled behind the scenes by Erbakan) while the reformists created the Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan (b. 1954).

Erdogan became head of a local youth wing of Erbakan's National Salvation Party (MSP) while studying Business Administration at Marmara University in 1976. Later he became member of MSP, Welfare Party and Virtue Party.

In 1994, Erdogan was elected mayor of Istanbul to the shock of the city's more secular citizens, who thought he would ban alcohol and impose Islamic Law. Instead he emerged over the next four years as a pragmatic mayor who tackled many of the city's chronic problems including pollution, water shortage, and traffic.

Due to his fiery speech in response to the banning of the Welfare Party, Erdogan was sentenced to a 10-month prison term and banned from holding political office for life.

In 2001, Erdogan and Abdullah Gul established the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Erdogan asserted that AKP was "not a political party with religious axis", but rather a broad based centre-right party. In 2003, Erdogan publicly broke the relationship with the National Outlook Movement.

In contrast with the NOM's adherence to Islamic values and Islamic discourse, the AKP was trying to reconcile conflicts between modernity and tradition, universalism and nativism, reason and spirit.

The AKP's break with NOM manifested itself in three key areas. The first of these was the AKP's political philosophy of conservative democracy that entailed a refusal to use revolutionary rhetoric to change society; the establishment of limited government and the protection of individual freedom; resolution of political issues on the basis of consultation; acceptance and tolerance of different socio-cultural currents; and a firm belief that political authority and legitimacy should be based on rule of law and public support.

The second area of AKP's break with the NOM was the former's

political program of justice and development, which had been the classic theme of the rightist parties in Turkey since the 1950s. The purpose has been to fight the secular state elites and military bureaucracy in the shadow of the Kemalist ideology, relying on widespread public support. The idea was to share the benefits of economic development with the public and empower the people against the overbearing secular elites in national affairs.

Thirdly, AKP unlike NOM embraces the neoliberal economy and the idea of full integration into the global economy, prompting the rapid development of the Turkish economy. The AKP rejects any dogmatic anti-Western stance, and refutes Huntington's theory of the Clash of civilizations, instead focusing on dialogue among civilizations.

The AKP changed its foreign policy, actively sought EU membership, focused on the balance between the West and the East, and actively participated in various international organizations, which made Turkey an important player in global governance.

Despite some differences, the Gulen movement formed a tactical alliance with Erdogan's AKP against the praetorianism of the secular-military combine. This alliance helped catapult AKP to power in 2002, 2007, and 2011 elections.

Through this alliance, Gulenists gained influence in Turkish Police Force, Judiciary and defence forces. However, fissures emerged in the alliance in 2010-11, pitting the pro-Gulen Police and Judiciary against the AKP in a power struggle.

Things came to a head in 2016, precipitating an attempted coup d'état by a faction of Turkish military officers. Erdogan was able to mobilise the public in time to avert the coup and his government was quick to blame it on Gulen and his followers.

In the aftermath of the failed coup attempt, the Erdogan government arrested thousands of government functionaries including military personnel and judges. Over 10,000 government education staff were suspended and licenses of over 20,000 teachers working at private institutions were revoked.

Gulen denied involvement and some in the opposition blamed Erdogan of masterminding a staged coup to use as a pretext to crush his opponents.

For now, Erdogan seems to have the upper hand in the fight between secular and religious forces in Turkey, but the struggle is far from over. Turkey under Erdogan has emerged as a modern state with an Islamic social order championing the cause of oppressed Muslims the world over, quietly challenging Saudi leadership role in the Muslim world.

On the economic front, Erdogan's AKP was able to raise Turkey's GDP per capita from about USD 10,500 in 2000 to around USD 18,900 in 2011. His policies have boosted industrial growth and expansion bring prosperity to the common man.

At the same time, he has strengthened his own executive authority while weakening the influence of the secular and military praetorians. Erdoganism has rightly been described as the "strongest phenomenon in Turkey since Kemalism".

# Electric Flowers Growing in a Tech Wilderness

*Meet the Pakistani youth who have won worldwide renown on the power of their sheer grit and inventiveness.*

By Ahmed Mukhtar Naqshbandi

Inventiveness springs eternal in the human psyche. We can safely say the Sumerian potters who first invented the wheel were by no means the first humans to show inventiveness – nor will Steve Jobs or Elon Musk be the last.

On the other hand, inventions and innovations seem to require an ecosystem. This is precisely why the great majority of modern day inventions and innovations come from free-market democracies. Socioeconomic milieu and market conditions encourage and incentivize and promote innovation by rewarding inventors in a variety of ways. Universities and labs and corporate R&D facilities empower and enable them to translate their novel ideas to life.

Yet, the original spark for an innovation must come from the human genius – which is Pakistan’s ticket to the club. While our universities continue to lead the world in their stellar ability to churn out plagiarised papers and corporates show little interest in underwriting R&D, our young men and women continue to do us proud by awe-inspiring inventions and innovations on the power of their raw genius.

Take Remotebase for example: About 10-month old as of now, this Pakistani startup helps connect high-performing engineering teams with US companies. Recently it clinched USD 1.4 million in a seed funding round. The company has operations both in Pakistan and Silicon Valley and has raised the money to scale its operations by the end of 2021.

Then there is Aqsa Ajmal, an industrial design graduate from the NUST School of Art, Design & Architecture (SADA) made headlines early last year when she was named one of six global finalists for the prestigious Lexus Design Award.

With her novel project Pursewit, a sewing machine for the visually impaired, she has gained the distinction of becoming the first Pakistani to achieve the milestone. In the last week of January, Lexus named the finalists for the 2020 edition, who were chosen from a record-breaking 2042 entries from 79 countries.

A more recent revelation in this tradition is Syed Nabeel Haider, a 15-year old boy from Karachi who has developed an instant messaging app like telegram with features such as voice calling, community formation, channel creation, and features for the visually impaired.

Haider says the software is much more advanced than WhatsApp, and it took him three years to complete. The app also has a hidden talk feature, similar to WhatsApp that allows users to set chats to auto-delete and encrypt them.

According to his family’s recommendations, the boy called the software FF Meeting (family & friends meeting).

The teen innovator says the software creation took him longer due to the poor performance of his laptop, which he



Pakistani Startup RemoteBase



Aqsa Ajmal - Industrial Design Graduate



Raza Saeed - PakWheels Owner

purchased for PKR 10,000. “My father worked very hard to save money for me to buy the laptop, but its inefficiency lengthened the time to develop the app”, he was reported as saying.

The case of Farhan Masood is even more interesting, a college dropout who hated mathematics but was passionate about his work. As a result of his diligence, he was able to incorporate Urdu, Arabic and Persian characters in Windows back in 1997.

He is rightly recognized as a pioneer in bringing these languages to the internet but this achievement was just the beginning of the journey for Farhan Masood. For the past seventeen years, he has worked with high profile clients, using his creativity and innovation to build a name for himself in the industry.

Farhan’s biggest and most noteworthy project, however, is Solo Tech Corp, a company that is responsible for developing face recognition and retina or iris recognition as well as walkthrough scanners for security.

SoloMetric, another subsidiary of Solo Smart specializes in human recognition thereby attempting to provide smarter and more reliable security solutions. SoloSmart’s product SMARTXS went on to win the MIT Enterprise Forum Business Acceleration Plan Contest. Among the 165 participants from all over the world, SoloSmart’s product won and Farhan went on to complete a course at MIT.

PakWheels owner Raza Saeed is another your innovator from Pakistan. A LUMS graduate, he entered an international competition organized by IEEE along with his friends in his sophomore year. The product they propounded offered automating the meter reading process and having wireless meters that could communicate with central hub.

In 2002, the market needed this innovation so CONFIZ attracted clients and by 2005 the company was founded. Now it employs over 120 people and has a local and international client base.

But Raza’s entrepreneurial journey was only beginning. He acquired the PakWheels website which generated a great response. Today, the website is one of the largest internet portals in Pakistan with more than 45 million users and deals with the online buying and selling of cars.

Saeed has also launched NaiTazi.com, a portal website that will serve the purpose of yellow pages in Pakistan. Raza is a great example of people who invest time and energy to bring innovation to the table.

Remote work platform Convo founder Faizan Buzdar – the Pakistani prodigy who merited a mention by President Obama – needs no introduction. Although it was already garnering worldwide attention, Convo has risen in relevance following the outbreak of the Covid-19 global pandemic.

Convo enables business professionals to share documents, images and convey meaning. All of this happens in an environment where there is no need to log in and out of email or use one of the prime social media sites. It allows for campaigns and drives and thus far it is being used by 5,000 companies in some 156 countries.

Another noteworthy Pakistani startup is Pring, a social network

that can be used even without internet connectivity via the SMS protocol. This is an important feature especially for our country where internet connectivity is far from universally accessible.

Pring has grown tremendously over the past two years, expanding more than 18 percent with almost four users joining the network every minute.

This list of Pakistani innovators is by no means definitive. There are many others who have made it big on their sheer grit and talent – and indeed many more who are working their hearts out to bootstrap awe-inspiring solutions even as you read this.



Nabeel Haider - Telegram App Creator

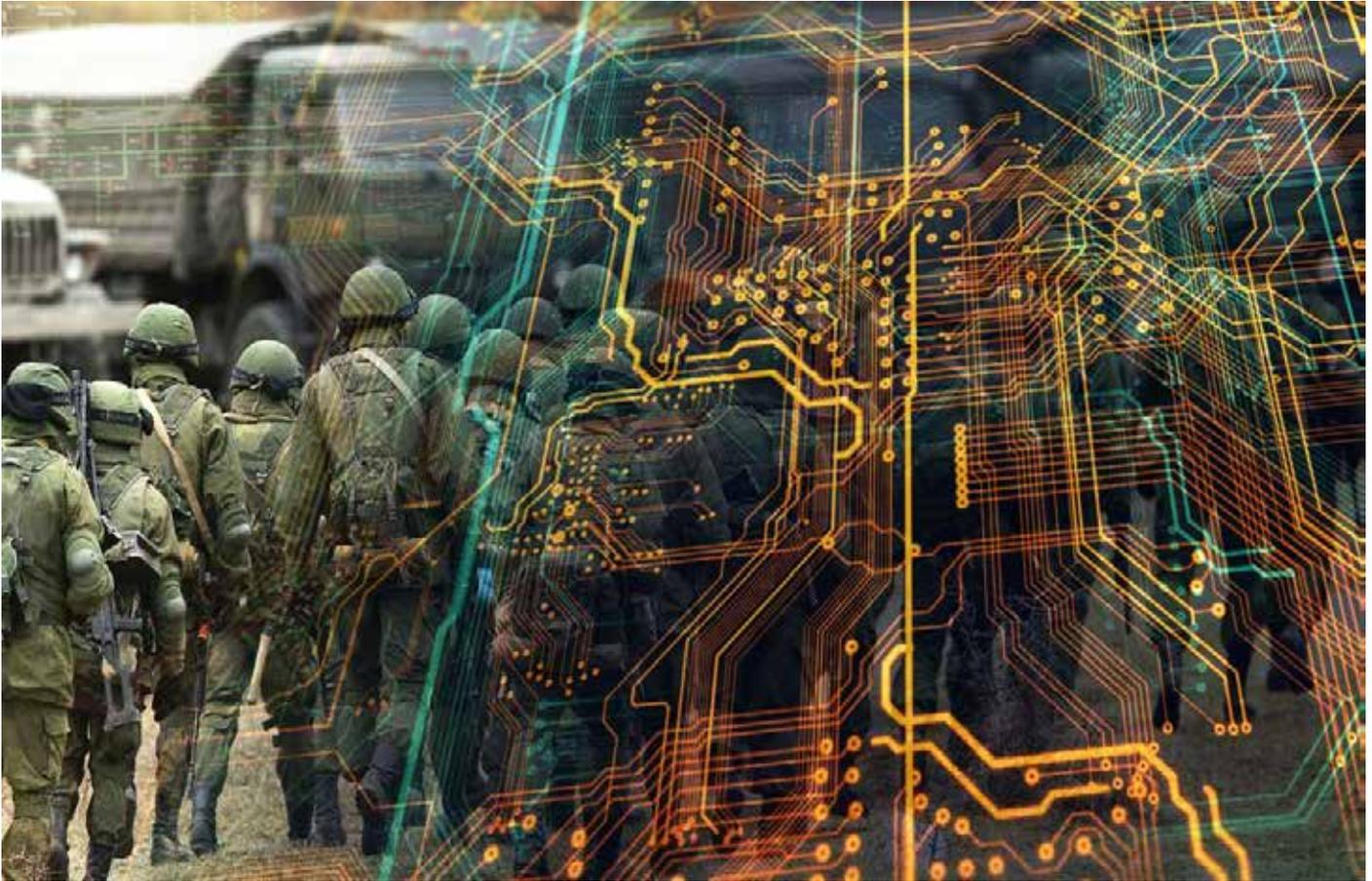


Faizan Buzdar - Convo Founder



Farhan Masood - Solo Tech Corp

# The Exigencies of Hybrid Warfare



By Mishaal Ashraf

“Tomorrow’s conflicts will not be easily categorized into conventional or irregular. The emerging character of conflict is more complicated than that. A binary choice of big and conventional versus small or irregular is too simplistic.”—Frank Hoffman

In the 21st century, the realities of conflict and the traditional concepts of war are misaligned. Ever since the end of Cold War and the emergence of a unipolar world, there has been a shift of paradigms. Hybrid war means the use of conventional and unconventional methods to achieve warlike ends resulting in subversion or coercion.

The term “hybrid warfare” has gained popularity ever since Russia’s annexation of Crimea and fomenting of instability in Eastern Ukraine. Examples of hybrid warfare can be found long in the past, stretching back to the Peloponnesian War, formidable armies like Napoleon’s Grand Army and Hitler’s Wehrmacht struggling to

combat irregular fighters who exploited vulnerable logistic bases and lines of communication.

Recent definitions of hybrid warfare are similar to Chinese theory of unrestricted warfare involving hacking, markets, and subversion of banking system, manipulation of currency, media disinformation, urban warfare and terrorism.

The use of this term gained currency in the 2000s to describe contemporary warfare, particularly because of the increasing sophistication and lethality of violent non-state actors and the growing potential of cyber warfare. Techniques like this are used with the intention to paralyse the decision making processes by spreading confusion and preventing the target from responding forcefully because of the absence of “authentic” military targets.

Hybrid war employs a wide spectrum of

conventional and sub-conventional tools for warfighting. If these tools of hybrid warfare are employed at the same time, the impacts can be catastrophic. It can lead stable states to turn into a chaotic mess in a matter of minutes.

A major principle of warfare is that non-military targets are avoided. But hybrid warfare has the advantage that an adversary is able to engage both military and non-military targets simultaneously. Hybrid warfare is political and diplomatic in nature as well, along with being military. As the Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz famously said, “War is the continuation of politics by other means”.

Exploitation of information is one of the most dangerous tools of hybrid warfare. This information exploitation can play a vital role to disrupt societies, where the right use of information can be imperious. In this situation, the role of social media is



# Can the Pakistan Film Industry Leverage Technology as an Equaliser?

*Time the Pakistani film industry to learn the ropes of the new worldwide marketplace enabled by digital content delivery platforms and compete with Hollywood and Bollywood on equal terms.*



By Zainab Umer

The painful decline that the Pakistani film industry saw beginning with the Zia military rule was real. We saw it decimate movie studios and theatres right left and centre to the point we are left with almost none. We saw it consign to oblivion the stars and starlets who once held the nation spellbound.

Yes, we used to have our very own heartthrobs and pinup girls in those heady days. Old timers still remember them wistfully. The very mention of Waheed Murad or Zeba is enough to leave many misty-eyed.

The point, however, is, while grieving has its place in human affairs, no loss warrants perpetual grieving. Eventually, you have to shed a tear and move on – and that is precisely what the Pakistani film industry needs to do, especially now that the opportunity has come knocking on our door.

The Pakistani film industry always operated at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the much bigger Hollywood and Bollywood markets. But in its heyday, Lollywood could give them a run for their money on the power of its sheer creativity and innovativeness. Do we still have those two commodities on hand? Because the time to put them to use has arrived.

Multiple waves of technological advances have revolutionised all aspects of the film business from creative development to production to promotion to distribution. We do not need miles of celluloid anymore, making retakes expensive. Nor are we limited by the political boundaries to the domestic audiences.

Most important, the hard-bargaining distributors cannot hold the filmmaker to ransom anymore. Digital content distribution platforms have arrived to help us

effortlessly deliver our productions to a worldwide audience and rake in revenues from all corners of the globe.

This alone is a great equaliser for film industries like Pakistan's. There is absolutely no need to feel daunted by how large the Indian film distribution circuit is – or to feel discouraged by how few movie theatres we have left in the country.

The only thing that matters now is if we are geared to harness these revolutionary new technologies and platforms – and there is no denying this is such a big “if”.

“We were in a state of coma for the last 30 years”, says filmmaker Jamshed “Jami” Mahmood. “And we’ve just opened our eyes. Our limbs aren’t working just yet”.

Jami is among a new breed of filmmakers who are attuned to the exigencies of the time, well versed with the disruptive

technologies of the day, equipped with the creative potential to walk the walk, and most importantly, undaunted by how bad things have been in our part of the world for decades.

The old guard of the industry could not comprehend why the Pakistani audiences are partial towards Hollywood and Bollywood flicks at the expense of Lollywood. The new crop is coming to the realization we humans are basically suckers for a good story well told; nobody cares who made the film and where as long as it is entertaining and riveting.

Sooner or later, this realisation will take hold and our filmmakers will break free of clichéd stories and hackneyed plotlines. Hassan Waqas Rana thinks we are not there yet. The writer-producer of the 2013 Pakistani action-thriller *Waar* believes filmmakers in Pakistan do not have enough faith in themselves to pull off a high-concept story.

“We [filmmakers] have these two theories: *Shawshank* or *Bollywood*”, says Jami. “But actually there is just one theory: It’s either a good film or it is not.”

If you look at the online delivery platforms like Netflix, you will find only a few Pakistani movies streaming alongside Hollywood and Bollywood content. The reason is simple: Pakistanis are producing hardly any good quality films that would be competitive at such platforms.

Nevertheless, industry veterans say a revival of sorts is in evidence. “The industry is re-emerging very fast,” said Nadeem Mandviwalla, a leading cinema owner. “But after 30 years of decline there is a lot of catching up to do”.

Before Gen Zia imposed his military rule in the country, the mostly Lahore based film industry was producing an average of 50 to 80 films per year. Zia’s martial law dramatically created an anti-culture environment that ultimately led to the decline of the film industry in Pakistan.

The Pakistani film industry never fully recovered from this shock. Even after Zia’s departure, it found itself under a pincer attack from obscurantist policies of successive civilian regimes and an avalanche of black-marketed and pirated editions of Indian movies.

Obscurantism, with its myriad manifestations in all walks of life, is still the biggest stumbling block in the way of the revival of the Pakistani film industry. To quote from a recent Dawn editorial, “Cinema in the country can only be revived and prosper in conditions that are conducive to creative thinking.

“Ensuring these conditions will require much more than government support for a few selected ventures. Essentially, we are talking of eliminating taboos that prevent an exploration of the cinema as one of the most powerful and globally popular means of communication”.

Apart from that, the Pakistani film industry has to pluck up the courage to compete with the latest Hollywood and Bollywood productions. The message for Pakistani producers, directors, and actors is: You need to be as glamorous as Katrina Kaif and as innovative in storyline as Amir Khan (hint: *Three Idiots*) to be successful in the domestic market.

Failing that, we have bankruptcy staring us in the face – financially as well as culturally.



# Why is Women’s Political Participation in Pakistan so Dismal?

*An array of factors conspire together to put women at a disadvantage in politics, as indeed in every walk of life in our society – and government apathy is the foremost among them.*



By Palwasha Khattak

Women’s participation in decision making and leadership roles is a prerequisite for democracy to work effectively. Groups with specific interests and requirements need to have a direct participation in decision making in order to ensure that their issues are on the agenda and the decisions being made incorporate their viewpoint.

Despite the efforts by society’s various sectors, gender equality remains a distant dream in Pakistan. Numerous

political, social, cultural, economic and religious barriers still prevent the advancement of women. According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2020, Pakistan is the third worst country in the world for gender equality, ranked 151st out of 153 countries studied.

When we say political participation, it means both in holding office and voting. Before delving into our main topic, a cursory look at women’s political participation seems pertinent.

Back in 2015, I did a research on the political affiliation of people in NA-125. While talking to the women in the families, an interesting fact about their voting behaviour surfaced. Asked who she would vote in upcoming election, a woman said, "I will ask my husband since he and his brothers make this decision for the whole family.

as 17 in the Senate. In 2013, their overall proportion of representation is 19.5% i.e. 228 out of 1170 members which was previously 19.9%.

Of the 228 women, 205 were on reserved seats for women, 21 on general seats and 2 came on reserved seats for non-Muslims. Of the 141 women in the Provincial Assemblies, 76 were in Punjab Assembly, 31 were in Sindh Assembly, 22 were in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, and 12 were in the Baluchistan Assembly.

Of these 228, 116 belong to PML-N, 41 belong to PPP, 23 belong to PTI, 15 belong to MQM, 9 belong to JUI-F, 4 belong to PMAP, 3 each belong to ANP and PML-F, 2 each belong to PML, BNP-A, QWP, JI, National Party, and 1 each belong to AJIP, NPP, PML-Z and PML-Q. In the National Assembly, there were 70 women out of a total of 342 i.e. 20.5%. In the Senate, there were 17 out of a total of 100 i.e. 17%.

A report published by Aurat Foundation on the 2013 general election said, "The decrease of women in the legislative assemblies, the reduction of women's reserved seats in local government and the decrease of women in senior positions such as ministers, speaker, advisors and cabinet members in the federal and provincial governments are all symptoms and evidences of the backward movement of Pakistani society in the context of gender equality and reforms".

The 2018 elections were bluntly called male-dominated as out of the total population of the country 207,774,520; women being 101,314,780 in number, only 183 women were contesting the polls. Despite this record number, the data released by ECP showed that only eight female lawmakers were elected on general seats.

Of the winning women candidates, four won on NA seats in Sindh, three in Punjab, and one in Baluchistan. No women candidates won a general seat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It was speculated that the higher women participation in elections was partially attributable to a provision in the Elections Act 2017 that bound all political parties to allocate at least 5 percent tickets to women on general seats for the NA and provincial assemblies.

Of the successful women candidates, three had contested on PPP tickets Nafisa Shah (NA-208, Khairpur-I), Shazia Marri (NA-216, Sanghar-II) and Shams-un-Nisa (NA-232, Thatta). Two winning female candidates, Ghulam Bibi (NA-115, Jhang-II) and Zartaj Gul (NA-191, DG Khan) had contested on PTI tickets, while the PML-N, Balochistan Awami Party and the Grand Democratic Alliance each had one winning woman candidate Mehnaz Akber Aziz (NA-77, Narowal-I), ZubaidaJalal (NA-271, Kech) and Fehmida Mirza (NA-230, Badin II) respectively.

They know best since we [women] don't understand what's happening in the world."

Her statement shows only one aspect of this grievous issue.

Coming back to women's representation in legislatures, let's see the picture painted in 2013 elections. There were a total of 228 women overall in the National and Provincial Assemblies, 70 in the National Assembly, 141 in all of the Provincial Assemblies, where-



# Unemployment - Employed Even Seeking Employment

*Underemployment is even bigger issue than unemployment in Pakistan*



By Azka Gouher

Unemployment is an issue common in many parts of the world. It was highest in Sub-Saharan Africa and occupied Palestine in 2019.

According to a survey, Pakistan's unemployment slumped fairly in 2007 lowering to 0.4% however it spiked to 4.45% in 2020. Pakistan boasts its percentage of youth while it is a matter of concern that the very youth contributes to a chunk of the country's unemployment. Its bigger hidden issue is underemployment, which is hardly measured by only a few.

According to UNDP's estimates, Pakistan has 64% of its population young while 29%

of it is aged between 15 to 29 years. The statistics by International Labor Organization (ILO) show that 8.54% of this youth is unemployed. While the figures are flabbergasting, one may wonder why a major chunk of flatterer youth makes no contribution to the country's economy.

Not to mention the mental and social devastation this cohort has to endure. The common causes highlighted by

Abdul Qayyum in 2007 in his research comprised the structural unemployment itself to be the reason of urban unemployment while others include faulty administration culpable for lagging behind in

emphasized policies to minimize the problem in the first place, chiefly in rural areas.

Recently emerged sectors like real estate, drinking or bottled water, security agencies, IT and software, higher education and universities, secondary education, FM radio & electronic media and other sectors have grown huge to consume the unemployed youth in urban areas.

But the absence of training mechanism for students to allow them what the market needs too is responsible for the perpetuation of unemployment in urban settings despite gaining higher education. The study found,

inter alia, a diminutive part of Pakistan owns resources to lead extremely luxurious life while others are subjugated with their lower incomes and remain depressed economically.

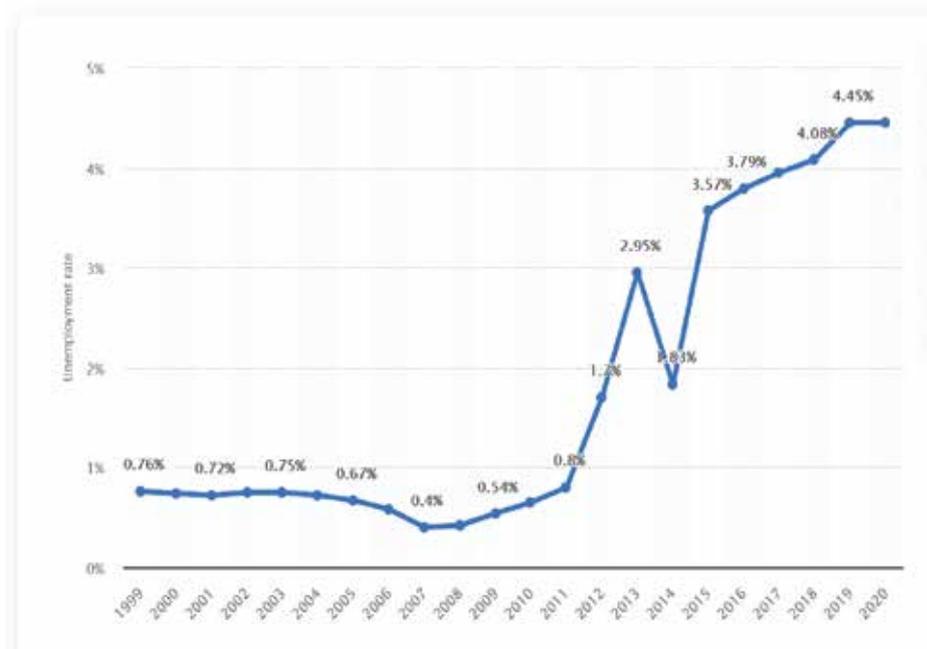
Either this strata remains deprived of opportunities or if at all they get any their wages are so meagre that the subsistence becomes difficult. Among these victims are our passionate young people who despite their acquired proficiencies and devotion to thrive end up with despair. The unemployment remains at the hand of low wages and absence of training mechanism for youth to make them aware of demand of the market. There is a huge gap between demand and supply, found the researcher.

In a focus group discussions, in research done by Iqbal & Khaleeq in 2013 identified interesting experiences of educated youth. According to the study, young people who do not know influential people are not prioritized in job market. Similarly, in government sector, if one wants to be appointed at a position they have to spend some amount of money (bribe) to get the job. This trend has internalized to an extent that it is not deemed offensive and the ones who still possess something called a conscience are forced to pay the money since they have no choice.

Not to forget, these practices have been highlighted in a scientific research. Additionally, private sector demands prior work experience for the job, identified the same study. Young graduates feel dejected when encountered with such cul-de-sacs. Not only no institution trains the youth for the demands of the market, they are not even made aware of what skills may help them to survive. What will help them? Paying off? Or their family members on high posts? Or, is it the experience they will never acquire sitting home?

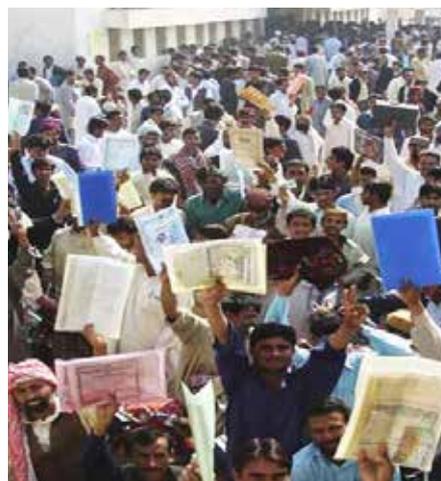
It is about time that some heed was paid to what unemployment puts our youth through. The bubble of family and friends being supportive of the ones who get to have no employment options readily available needs to be popped. Fresh graduates with amicable communication skills with no employment are told that they are a failure after a couple of years. The distinction of urban and rural societies having different responses to educated

## Pakistan: Unemployment rate from 1999 to 2020



unemployed youth does not exist. A research that was conducted in rural areas of Khyber Paktunkhuwa by a bunch of Sociologists in 2020 showed that young people who had at least a master degree but no employment were not only condemned but also stigmatized by the very family, friends and the community at large.

Since these young people who have spent at least 16 years of their lives learning things that no one needs in the outside world, they have to suffer through the persistent social pressure for acquiring a reasonable permanent employment which is not entirely their own fault. No one in their social circle apprehends that perhaps the system or the ones in market have contributed to their 'failure'.



Well thanks to the modernization, the role of women has become complicated than it used to be in primitive times. All they had to do was grow up, get married, give birth to off springs and nurture them well at home. Now, no matter if you are a protagonist of liberal feminism or not, inflation and education requires women to work for the sustenance in working class.

Although the Islamic ideology, based on which Pakistan came into being, does not regard a woman to be the provider, she is expected to be making big as well. Young girls after some time of graduation are constantly hammered with the similar questions and equally agonizing pressure by their families in addition the question 'when are you getting married?'

While it is hard to situate the blame for perpetuation of unemployment of educated youth, suffice it to say that we as a society needs to stop considering the problem of unemployment as heinous transgression. Rather we, as a social circle of the youth, need to prepare our children for what is coming up and support them instead of shattering their spirits. On the other hand, our government needs to take the statistics seriously, ponder upon what studies are highlighting and concoct some emphasized policies to curb the issue and take measures to form training mechanisms to direct the youth to the right path.

# CSS English Paper Setter - Sets New Records of Complexity

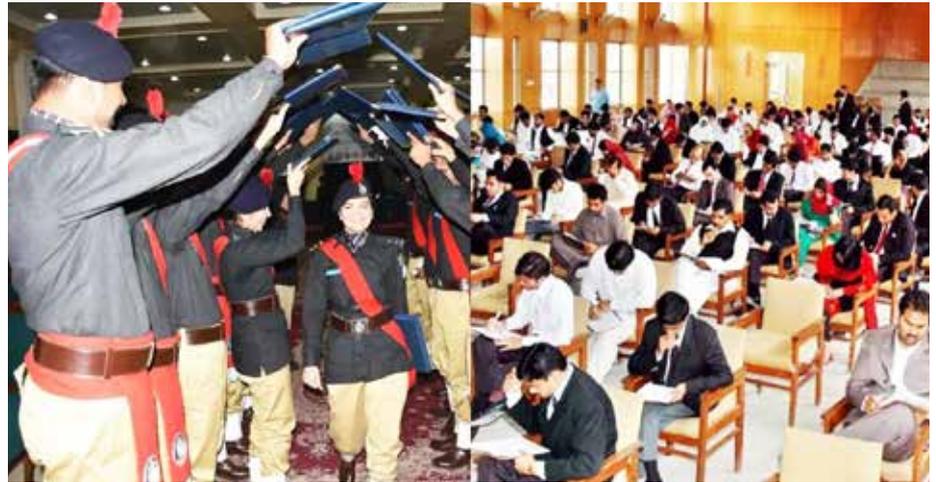
By Mariya Syed

The Central Superior Service (CSS) Exams are key competitive exams held annually by a federal level entity, the Federal Public Service Commission, to recruit civil servants for the post of grade 17 officers. The exams comprise of 10 subjects, with 5 compulsory subjects and 5 optional, worth an aggregate of 1200 marks. The eligibility criteria for the CSS exams is a Bachelor's degree, with an age limit between 21 and 30 years, allowing a relaxation of 2 years under certain circumstances.

Having interviewed several candidates who recently appeared for the CSS in 2021, we vicariously experienced this grueling process. The English precis and composition paper, part of the compulsory subjects, was a unique case this year. The English exams are notorious for being exceptionally overwhelming, where the paper, being divided into 2 parts, English essay and English precis, accounts for a total of 200 marks. Candidates each year decry the preparation that these two papers are too demanding and are often subject to failure due to these very papers.

This year, the English precis and composition paper, specifically, was spotlighted for being one of the most difficult exams. This exam was featured on various media platforms. Part 1 of the precis and composition paper, which consists of 20 multiple-choice, vocabulary based questions, was especially targeted for being highly unreasonable. Individuals claiming that the news was nothing more than sensationalism is far from the truth as some of the words from the MCQs portion were not even found on the Google search engine, as many Twitter users pointed out.

To add to the senselessness, it seemed that most of the words in the MCQ questions were lifted from the thesaurus, being almost unintelligible. Many of our interviewees, being avid readers, claimed that their vivacity as readers did not help much in the case of this particular paper as most of these words were completely new to them, never



having come across a single one in any book, novel or curriculum throughout their lives. The fact that these words were absolutely alien to the majority of the candidates represents a much deeper problem as it indicates the examiners' myopic vision in crafting exams, especially exams as substantial in nature as the CSS exams. Ideally, competitive exams should be mindful of the general educational standards of the country, this is not to say that competitive exams in Pakistan should be lowered in criteria due to the sorry state of education throughout the country. However, the English exams, specifically, ought to be more realistic. One does not determine the cream of a crop based on an inapt examination that aims to ascertain a candidate's competence on their ability to master a language that is unsatisfactorily taught, in the first place.

The general body of candidates that appear for the CSS exams are an amalgamation of the vast cultures that Pakistan encapsulates, speaking a variety of languages. However, the credibility of the candidates is discerned on the basis of a language that is foreign to an overwhelming majority, and is taught quite poorly in several educational institutions. The fact stands testament to the reality of Pakistani society, given the generally despicable state of the English-centered education offered by state institutions, as well. Consequently, candidates are left to

fend for themselves where their performance in the English paper is concerned as their scholastic background has deprived them of their grasp on the language. An examination as inconceivably difficult as the recent English precis and composition paper is all but a fair attempt at selecting qualified candidates for the civil services, as it has essentially necessitated the rote-learning of words more than the candidates' understanding.

The CSS exams are the foremost aspect of the bureaucracy in Pakistan, choosing generations of bureaucrats since Pakistan's inception. To the dismay of the general public and the candidates, themselves, these exams are alarmingly outdated. Not much has changed regarding the syllabus and the pattern of the CSS exams since Bhutto's civil-service reforms, and even those just altered the tenure of the civil servants and introduced the Common System. The CSS exams are in dire need of evolution, as they ought to measure a candidate's comprehension and applicability rather than reward one's ability to reproduce memorized content. The English exam, specifically, should be projected to discern the candidates' aptitude with regard to the skillful use of the English language, and not the anachronistic requirements of mechanically studying the list of words that are only found in the dictionary.

# Livelihood Crisis amid Climate Change

*So the Russians beat the world to a novel coronavirus vaccine. Big deal! High time we use it to save Pakistani lives*

By Eric Shahzar

The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted lifestyles of people from all walks of life while the global economy has been left on a ventilator. With all of this - an inequality virus has manifested and created a livelihood crisis like never before. However - mankind will soon defeat the COVID-19 pandemic but another planetary issue is adding fuel to fire. Accelerated climate change is causing disruption of unprecedented scale and nature. The livelihood crisis is here to stay and we must formulate a comprehensive plan to tackle the perils of climate change now.

Recently, Oxfam international released a damning report on the alarming inequality virus. Globally, billionaires have now more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up to 60% of world's population while shockingly, more than 735 million people are still living under extreme poverty. There is no doubt that the growing gap between rich and poor is undermining the battle against extreme poverty, damaging our fragile economies and tearing our communities apart. With the climate crisis gaining more momentum - which is effecting our economies adversely in light of COVID-19 pandemic- livelihood crisis will only become more destructive than ever before.

In Pakistan - where political instability is exacerbating our already deteriorating economy - the livelihood crisis is giving life to extreme inflation. In today's Pakistan - most people have lost the ability to have even two meals a day. We have had no shortage of crisis; wheat, sugar and oil. Now as climate change disrupts our agriculture sector through floods, droughts and extreme weather conditions - many climate experts now argue that formulating disaster risk management is key before it is too late.

Instead of investing into tackling the livelihood crisis created by climate change - the federal government has injected 98% of the climate change budget to the politicized billion tree tsunami project. We must also realise that accelerated climate change exacerbates other key focal areas such as food insecurity, livelihood crisis, and water woes.

Pakistan's looming water crisis - which again is heavily inter-linked with climate change - will make the whole country water-scarce if we do not take action. Our glaciers are melting, deltas are disappearing, rivers are contaminated while ground water availability is shrinking as well. With no water - the livelihood crisis will inevitably worsen. Pakistan's per capita water availability has come down from 5060 cubic meters per annum in 1951 to 908 cubic meters now. Climate stress is now adding fuel to fire.

In a country where our economy is already in a shambles and on the path of further deterioration, accelerated climate change could lead to record-breaking losses for our economy. It is crucial to highlight that the floods of 2010 cost the economy a staggering \$16 billion and all of this is expected to worsen. But unfortunately, nowhere have we seen policy makers and the federal government working to prevent horrendous implications. It is important to point out that our country runs on an agrarian economy. In the 1960s, agriculture sector was responsible for 53% of the total GDP. By 1980 to 1981, this number had dropped to 31%. But alarmingly in recent years, it has fallen even further to shocking 21.4%. The harsh climatic conditions from Sindh to K-P are already a story of despair. With the downward economic trajectory, climate change will make life more miserable for every citizen of Pakistan.

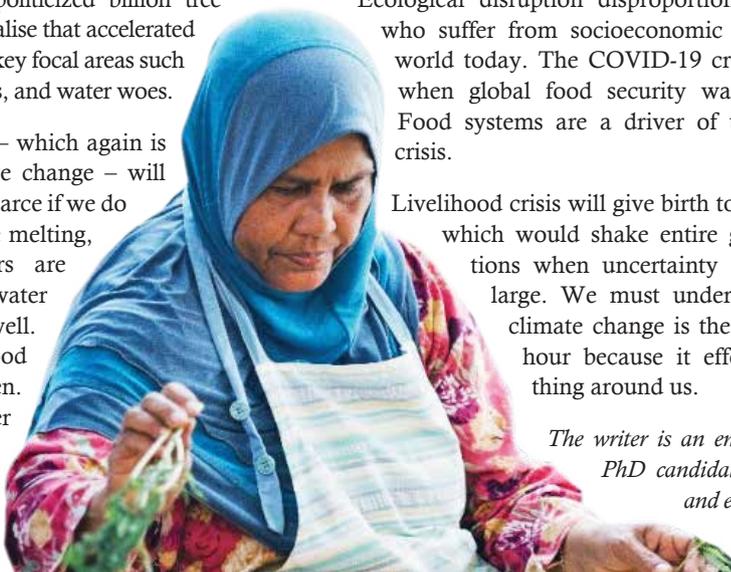
No country can solve a planetary crisis on its own. Pakistan must start climate diplomacy in South Asia to fight the rising livelihood crisis - which is once again a regional problem. Last year, the city of Karachi faced torrential rains, resulting in flashfloods at every corner of the city where the poor and vulnerable suffered the most. The same story was also visible in Bangladesh. Last year, about a third of Bangladesh was inundated by floods, with at least 161 people killed and an estimated 1.5 million displaced. Climate change could push more than 100 million additional people into poverty by 2030 in South Asia. The region is home to 22% of the world's population and has only 1.3% of global income and houses 60% of the poor.

Let's not also forget how the locust invasion of last year had also a deep affiliation with global warming and accelerated climate change. Warming seas that feed cyclones have also bred record-breaking swarms of desert locusts in Africa and Asia. Such plagues could grow bigger and more widespread with climate change in full action.

Ecological disruption disproportionately affects those who suffer from socioeconomic inequalities in our world today. The COVID-19 crisis came at a time when global food security was already strained. Food systems are a driver of the climate change crisis.

Livelihood crisis will give birth to political instability which would shake entire government institutions when uncertainty is already looming large. We must understand that tackling climate change is the urgent need of the hour because it effects literally everything around us.

*The writer is an environmentalist and a PhD candidate for climate change and ecological disruption in Pakistan.*



# Trans Health in Pakistan

By Maheen Dhanani

Globalization has transformed the way we comprehend various global systems and how we shape our personal and economic practices, values and ways. In the last few decades, we have been witnessed to a major transformation in education, policy making, digitization, and most importantly healthcare.

COVID-19 created a major havoc. it still remains, but it enabled us to see the bigger picture, Forced us to be more resilient, to make systems more efficient and effective despite the major barriers we face. Allowed us to create, adapt and innovate towards a better future for us and for the future generations. We witnessed a decentralized socio-political movement ‘Black Lives Matter’ in the same time which effected more regions than just the Americas and Europe, it brought major chaos in Pakistan and even caused one of our bigger multinational corporations, Unilever, to ultimately change their ‘Fair and Lovely’ product branding to ‘Glow and Lovely’.

There have been such major events in the past few months, we have countered a global public health catastrophe and are still dealing with it, we faced a huge anti-racism movement and made lots of progress in that area, but the transgender community is still facing so many hardships. They struggle to access any education, employment, and basic necessities such as access to quality primary healthcare in general.

The total number of transgender people reported by Pakistan’s Sixth Population and Housing Census is 10,418. These members of the transgender community in Pakistan were not termed as ‘citizens’ before 2009, they lived without NIC cards and even with no passports; their identities have forced them to face serious challenges, even in this technologically advanced developing era. They face much stigma and discrimination and suffer from serious healthcare disparities. There are not many healthcare specialists in our country for the trans community who can meet the needs of specific care that these health seekers require.

Kami Sid, an actor and trans activist points out that transgender persons can not afford healthcare treatments from private hospitals in Pakistan and strong discrimination are prevalent at the government hospitals against the community members prevents them from visiting public health systems.

The Aurat March has also proved to be a great advocacy for trans health. They have recently released their manifesto which asks for an increase to 5% of the national budget for health, which has painstakingly remained under 1% for many years, and for ensuring proper healthcare for the marginalized communities of Pakistan.

“We recognise gender-based violence and violation of our bodies as a healthcare issue since it disproportionately harms the physical and mental capacities of survivors, and their loved ones,”



- said a representative of the Aurat March early this year. It is the need of the hour to shift even a little of our focus to healthcare delivery effort.

The national healthcare delivery system of Pakistan must work towards the provision of adequate and efficient healthcare for the transgender community. Although in 2017, the senate committee approved a bill for complete legal protection of the transgender

community, there are still barriers present and such policies must be reassessed and more importantly implemented properly. In addition to this, it is appalling how there is no proper data or research for the trans community health care. In Pakistan’s defence it already has an overall under efficient and poor standardized EMR system but special attention must be paid towards these usually unnoticed communities if any advancement is to occur. We don’t even have any data for the number of trans deaths from COVID-19 or any other virus in that case.

The first step towards this would be understanding existing data and knowledge about the trans community and their health needs as a specific - it must be made a routine part of medical studies nationwide. Next would be to make available even the basic primary

health facilities for transgenders and to attempt to reduce the stigma around it. This would require strategic communications and marketing strategies by the national government. The provinces must align together and work towards this huge gap in the health sector. Only then can we actually move towards equality and gender inclusivity.

*The writer is a specialist in health services administration and a published author.*

# The Farm Boy Who Would Play Cricket

*At once inspiring and familiar, Shahnawaz Dhani's story is one of hard work, tenacity, and tons of raw talent.*

By Ali Abdullah

He used to help his father and brother in farming in the village of Khuhawar Khan Dahani near the city of Larkana in Sindh Province. But whenever he got a chance, he would start playing cricket with tape ball. His father did not like his playing cricket and wanted his son to become a government official.

This is the story of Shahnawaz Dhani – and a million Pakistani boys. For, there are a millions of homes in Pakistan where middle class parents strive to steer their children towards a secure future through a stable career avenue. Unfortunately, professional sports is not such a career avenue.

But another problem for Shahnawaz Dhani was that his father was also strongly against TV at home because he was afraid if TV came to his house, his son would quit his studies and spend all his time watching cricket.

Respecting his father's wish, Shahnawaz Dhani did work but instead of becoming a government official, he not only maintained his connection with cricket but also tried to find his future in it. This PSL season, as a 22-year-old fast bowler, he made it to the emerging category of the Pakistan Super League.

“We have some lands in the village on which we cultivate wheat and rice”, Dhani recently told BBC Urdu. “Similarly, there is a garden where guavas grow. I started my cricket with tape ball in the village. My playmates would wait for me to finish farm work so we could play cricket. They would send someone with a bicycle or motorbike to pick me up.”

“One day an official of Larkana Regional Cricket came to the village and after seeing my bowling invited me to come to Larkana U-19 trials”, says Dhani. “I had not played hardball cricket till then but I won the trials and played in the inter-district tournament”.

Shahnawaz Dhani has played his club cricket for Shahbaz Club of Larkana. His elder brother is a police constable who not only allowed Shahnawaz to play cricket after his father's death but also gave him all possible guidance in his sport and education.

Dhani has been playing first class cricket for two years. “I consider myself lucky to have the opportunity to join Sindh's First XI and now the Multan Sultans have included me in the emerging category in the PSL,” he said.

The story of Shahnawaz Dhani speaks to his passion and hard work. Equally, it speaks to the role of Pakistan Super League in attracting and grooming young talent.



## Corona Bowled Out PSL



By Ali Abdullah

The social forums are popping with the "PSL postponed" news. This is something good for players' health and something bad for the hearts of the cricket lovers.

Despite the COVID cases, the PCB and PSL management took an initiative to bring back entire cricket in Pakistan on a flake stage. They made it happen allowing a 20% crowd which was later increased to 50% in the stadiums. The response remained encouraging.

The postponement has not conveyed a good image of Pakistan across the globe. Discussing the incidents in-line, the series started when Zalmi's coach and skipper were allowed to enter the stadium despite breaching the bio-bubble.

The PCB had to go against its own policy as the Qalandars waited outside the National Stadium, Karachi. It is very hard that the virus could have passed onto others allowing

those who breached the bio-bubble in the ground without completion of three-day isolation.

It is important to highlight the detailed reason for why PSL 6 has been postponed.

Moving towards the next incident, Islamabad United revealed that one of their players is positive who turned out to be Fawad later. Other than that, a pile of records got scanned creating threats for commencing with the swing.

This was heartbreaking for the fans to witness the sudden cancellation without any speculations of being called-off shortly. Dan Christian decided to go home before he suffered any problematic scenario. Other than that, the coach Wasim Akram, being a diabetic patient, was sent home amidst having higher risks for the Coronavirus.

Repeating again, there are several prospects for the event being laid off as not only three

cases can be the reason. Proving the statement, Salman Iqbal, the owner of the Kings said, "We didn't know who was in the bubble and who was not. Also, there were people who weren't part of the bio-bubble on the playing field."

"I went into the bio bubble after isolating, to see if my teams' complaints about the lack of bio-secure protocols were true. There were so many lapses in the bio-bubble, one can't even imagine," he added.

The above-written statements clearly show that there are many factors behind the PSL being postponed. Salman claims that no bio-bubble and COVID protocols were followed. He also added that there were a few on the field following zero rules causing precautions.

Other than that, a reliable source on Twitter revealed that there were marriages organized in the hotels where players stayed, increasing threats for players.

# Making His Mark

## YASIR SHAH

*Meet the model turned actor Yasir Shah. You may know him best for his breakthrough performance in the Indian drama Khwaish. Since making his mark in television then, Yasir has had his fair of struggles in the Pakistani entertainment industry. But he is determined to keep going. We can see him next in the thriller web series titled Ranjish directed by Shoaib Khan. Let's dig some more about the talented actor!*



By Haider Rifaat

**When was your first big break as an actor?**

It was in the Indian drama series Khwaish by Ekta Kapoor. The drama remains my claim to fame project in India.

**I am curious to know why you decided to make your acting debut in India instead of Pakistan?**

I didn't decide that. The producers in India did. I didn't know anything about television production and wasn't even aware of it back then. I felt no difference spending ten years in Mumbai. It felt like living in Karachi or Lahore.

**Do you feel that your acting career has suffered over the years?**

Yes, indeed. I started my career in India working in television. Then when I came back to Pakistan, a few projects didn't work out. I started to lose self-confidence so I decided to dabble with production in an effort to try and sculpt things the way they should be. I brushed my production skills in a few television serials and now I am super glad to be a part of my new venture Ranjish.

**Speaking of which, tell us some more about your new web series Ranjish.**

Ranjish is a family thriller divided into eight episodes of season one. The basic plot is that of revenge.

**What kind of scripts do you like to sign?**

The way a story is narrated should have edginess and mass appeal. Yes, it is good if anything works and gets a good response but I have a certain taste and want to be a part of such projects. I agree I influence a project just to enhance its quality but this time around, I didn't feel the need to make suggestions in Ranjish. Everyone did their job.

**Do physical attributes matter so much in the show business? What is your take?**

Obviously, yes. Everybody's body type, face and class fit different characters, so it all depends on what kind of a story and character is given. Since I have been an avid fan of super heroes, maybe I am more into idolizing Marvel super heroes.



*Unplug with Yasir Shah*

**Fall or summer?**

Fall

**Favorite men's cologne?**

Black Orchid by Tom Ford. I have all the fancy oud.

**Last movie you watched?**

Denzel Washington's Equalizer and Mirzapur.

**A dream place to visit?**

Canada

**Who do you want to be paired with next?**

Hania Aamir

**A contemporary artist you admire?**

Pankaj Tripathi

**What would you be had you not been an actor?**

Fashion designer or maybe an event manager.

**A television drama or film you wished you had starred in?**

Meray Paas Tum Ho

**Your favorite gym exercises?**

Weight training and squats.

**Mystery or drama? A genre you like the most?**

I love mysteries and thrillers.



**Acting or modeling; your preferred line of work?**

Acting mostly but sometimes when I don't want to put in a lot of effort, I go for modeling.

**What more can we expect from you career wise?**

I am a producer already. I also direct small television commercials and fashion videos.

**What have you learned from your past mistakes?**

The more you are independent, the stronger you become.

**What has made you stronger as a person?**

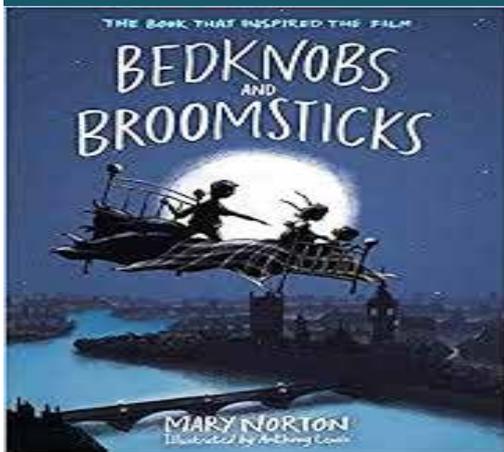
I am mentally stronger than anyone around me because I don't give up and am the hardest worker in the room.

**Any plans of tying the knot soon?**

I know I am late on marriage but I don't why. Maybe I am too busy building my career and working on other projects. I will get married sooner or later though.

## Bedknobs and Broomsticks

Author: Mary Norton  
 Reviewed by: Alizay Ashraf  
 ISBN: 84-9789-057-4  
 Publisher: Orion Publishing Group  
 Pages: 158



In this book, Carey, Charles and Paul find prim Miss Price injured by falling off her broomstick. For their silence, she bespells a bedknob to carry them where-ever and when-ever. In Bonfires and Broomsticks two years later, they bring necromancer Emelius Jones to visit. But his neighbors want to burn him at the stake for disappearing in the Great Fire of London.

The book is very enjoyable, fast and fun to read. It is touchy and inspiring, however it might be a little difficult for children to understand. The themes of the book are Witchcraft, spells and magic; music and dancing; war; Nazi invasion; war evacuees.

The book has excellent messages as well. It can teach that it is worth pursu-

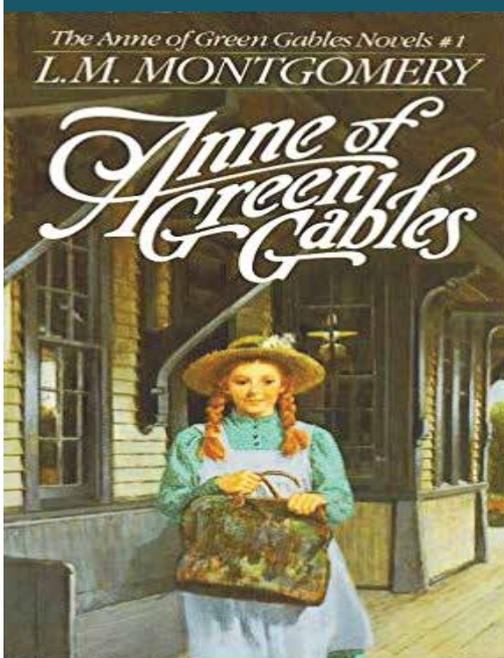
ing your dreams no matter where they take you and that if you cooperate, you can defeat a common enemy. Values in this movie that you could reinforce with your children include cooperation, independence and honesty.

There are great positive role models in this book as well. They are strong minded and work independently. It is a sweet, fun musical, with colorful, memorable characters, and teaches young ones about evacuation, in a gentle, magical way.

I really enjoyed reading this book. It is very interesting and joyful. I would recommend this book for children above the age of 12 to read as the book has some mild coarse language as well as some racist and sexist remarks.

## Anne of Green Gables

Author: L.M. Montgomery  
 Reviewed by: Alizay Ashraf  
 ISBN: 1-85813-780-2  
 Publisher: L.C. Page & Co.  
 Pages: 248



This heartwarming story has beckoned generations of readers into the special world of Green Gables, an old-fashioned farm outside a town called Avonlea. Anne Shirley, an eleven-year-old orphan, has arrived in this verdant corner of Prince Edward Island only to discover that the Cuthberts—elderly Matthew and his stern sister, Marilla—want to adopt a boy, not a feisty redheaded girl. But before they can send her back, Anne—who simply must have more scope for her imagination and a real home—wins them over completely. A much-loved classic that explores all the vulnerability, expectations, and dreams of a child growing up, Anne of Green Gables is also a wonderful portrait of a time, a place, a family... and, most of all, love.

Anne of Green Gables is a book that will make you fall in love with its "splendid" and "delightful" characters, but also throw you into the "depths of despair" along with its main character.

This is a character-driven book that makes you deeply in love with Anne, Marilla, Matthew and the other residents of Avonlea. Anne is smart and precocious and dreamy and imaginative. Marilla is strict and undemonstrative. Matthew is warm, shy, and loving. My favorite part of the story line has always been the ongoing academic competition between Anne and Gilbert Blythe, who is not to be forgiven for commenting on Anne's red hair when he first meets her.

Prepare to laugh at Anne's blunders and accident and prepare to grip the book with white fingers as she gets into scrapes and misunderstanding. You will be captivated by an effortless flow of beautiful imagery, delicate humor, and swift-paced narrative. L. M. Montgomery's prose is faster cadence, leaner style, and brighter outlook on the world. It's good-humored writing about a uniquely marvelous, good-humored heroine.

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