

# The Truth International

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

Tricky Mathematics of Senate Elections  
In anticipation of a nail biting contest

Implications, Complications & Explications  
Afghan peace calls for a shifting of gears

Inexplicably dithering over IPP deals  
Progress at snail speed

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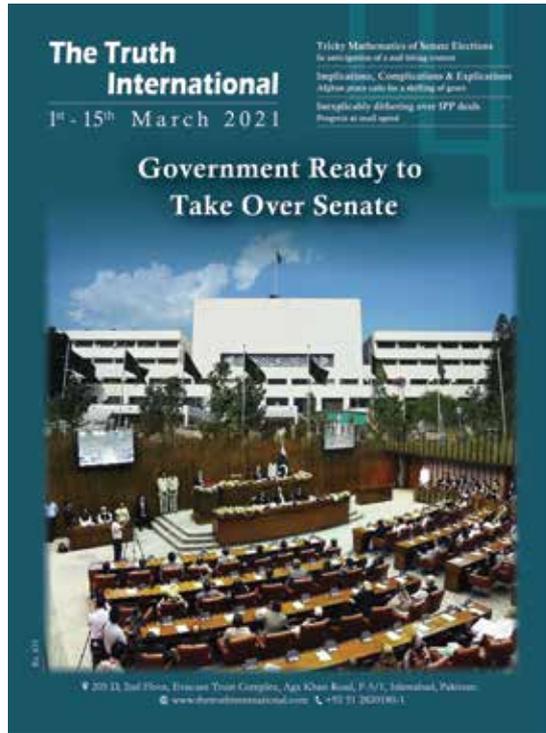
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## Look before you leap

By M. Ziauddin

The role of the Senate is to promote national cohesion and harmony and to alleviate fears of the smaller provinces regarding domination by any one province because of its majority, in the National Assembly.

The Election Commission of Pakistan has the legal authority to regulate all aspects of the Election Campaign to make such arrangements as are necessary to ensure that the election is conducted honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with law, and that corrupt practices are guarded against as prescribed by Article 218 (3) of the Constitution.

The whole purpose of holding an election, even an indirect one, is to enable the people's representatives to use their judgement to make a choice that is not chained to their party position.

The Supreme Court has continued to hear the case regarding the mode of balloting for the Senate elections even though the Election Commission had stated categorically that it believes only a constitutional amendment can change the process to an open ballot election. However, during the hearing some honorable judges in their comments remarked that seats in the Senate for a party should proportionally align with the total strength of the party in the assemblies. In such a case would there be any need to hold elections? All parties could be allocated seats as per their strength in the electoral college and that would settle the issue.

A more straightforward method to accurately reflect the political parties' representation in the Senate in the same

proportion as in the Provincial Assembly the seats to the political parties in the Senate based on votes polled in the last general election for the Provincial or National Assembly elections, as the case may be, will ultimately achieve the same purpose as expected from the open balloting proposal.

The existing mode of Senate Elections i.e. secret voting adheres to the intention of legislature to create the second chamber for providing adequate representations to the federating units and also allowing a second opinion differing with the one held by the majority in the lower house.

Earlier, the Senate Committee of the Whole feeling that there is a dire need to provide a mechanism for ensuring transparency and accountability in the Senate Elections has looked into the matter rather deeply. The most common complaint has been regarding voting by taking financial benefits from the candidates, which cannot be proved later on as Article 226, of the Constitution provides that elections shall be held by secret ballot. And even earlier, the mainstream political parties, the PPP and the PMLN had in the Charter of Democracy signed by the late Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif in 2006 had envisaged curbing the practice of buying of senate votes.

Again, there also needs to be a debate over the timing of the Senate elections which has invariably caused a dichotomy in the numerical strength of the majority party in the lower house and its minority position in the upper one making it almost impossible for it to frame urgently needed laws for at least the first three years in office.

These aspects of the issue can be debate if the matter is processed through parliament. It may be prudent, therefore, for all stakeholders to not rush to judgement on a matter that calls for deeper thinking and broader input. Democracy requires patience and due diligence to deliver even if urgency appears of utmost importance.

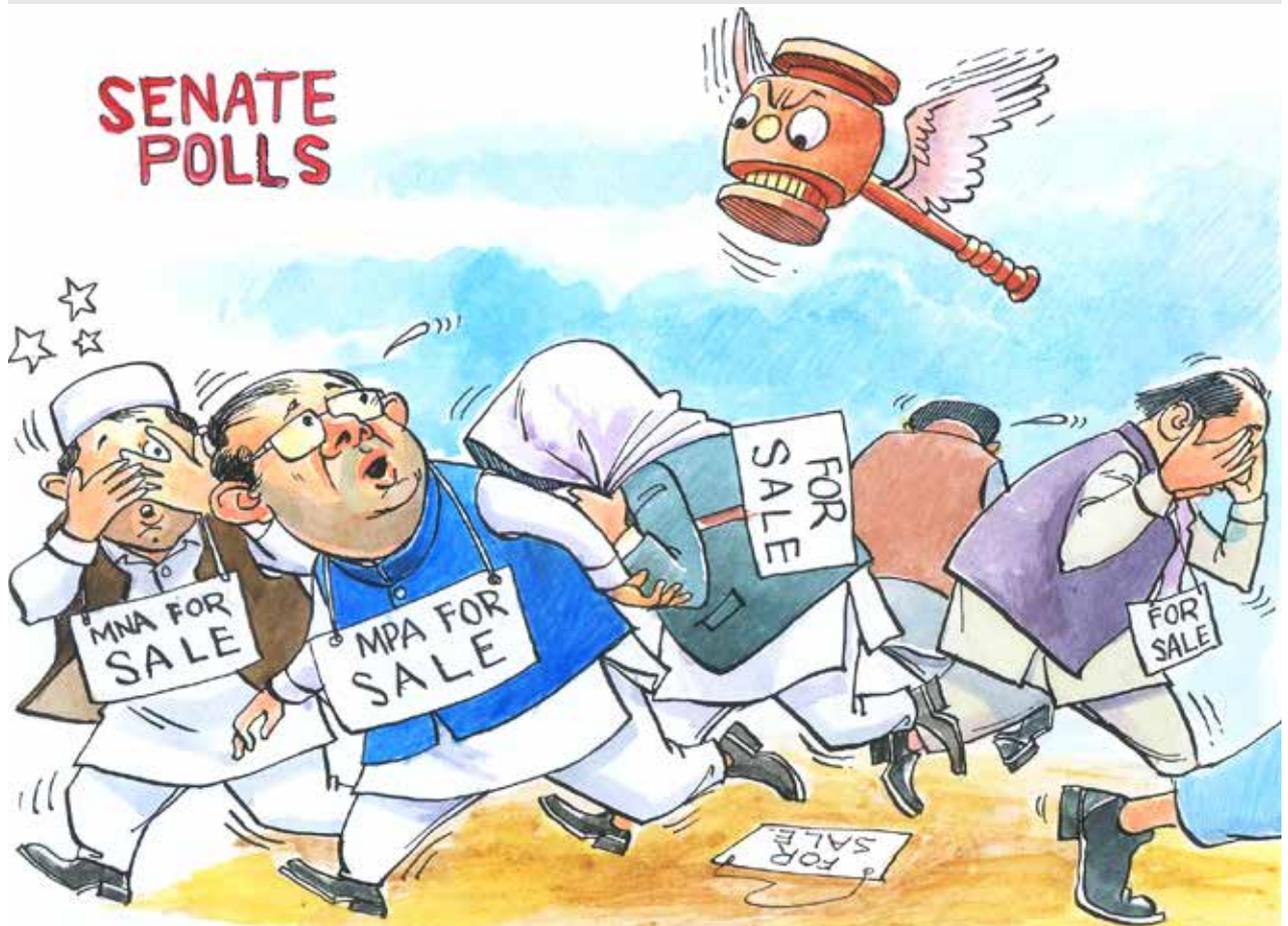
Federal government and political parties must, therefore, hold thorough consultations to reach a consensus decision on reforming the Senate election process instead of opting for hasty legislation without weighing its pros and cons.

It should be carefully and critically analyzed whether or not its existing proposal for amendment in the Constitution's Articles 59 and 226 would serve the purpose of bringing transparency and curtailing horse-trading and use of money in Senate elections.

In this regard the parliamentarians may consider the Senate Committee of the Whole's recommendations in its 2016 report on the "Mode of Elections of Members of Senate." The report had recommended reforming the current election method through secret ballot and single transferable vote (STV) by printing the voter's name on the ballot paper and allowing each party's parliamentary leader to access the voting records of his or her party's lawmakers after the declaration of results. In case a member is found to have voted against the party's direction, the report had recommended considering it a ground of defection, suggesting to amend the Constitution's Article 63A(1)(b).

# A Hard Sell Senate Election

*Why the March 2021 Senate election has become the most high-strung affair of its kind in recent memory*



*By Khalid Wasim*

A reference to the Supreme Court of Pakistan followed up by a first-ever conditional presidential ordinance; Supreme Court proceedings that have generated enough controversy for a whole generation; an emboldened opposition baying for the blood of the government; a ruling party acting brave and strong while coming apart at the seams.

These are some of the factors that have contributed to the unprecedented hype in the run up to the coming senate election. The fissures within the ranks of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have already become visible in all provinces, but in Sindh, KP and Balochistan, after the party leadership announced its candidates on 12 February 2021.

The strong reaction from its local chapters in the provinces over some nominations forced the leadership to go into an emergency session at Banigala on 16 February, a day before the extended deadline for submission of nominations by the candidates, to review the list in an effort to avert an insurgency-like situation.

Unlike other parties, the PTI had not formally invited applications from the ticket aspirants and the candidates were finalised solely on the “recommendations” of members of the parliamentary board headed by Prime Minister Imran Khan.

In Balochistan, the PTI had initially awarded ticket to Abdul Qadir, but later the leadership withdrew it and nominated Zahoor Agha as the sole party candidate on a general seat from the province. Abdul Qadir, however, is still in the race as an independent candidate.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa too, the PTI withdrew a general ticket from Najeebullah Khattak and gave it to another party man Liaquat Tarakai.

Prime Minister Imran Khan, however, rejected the objections and reservations shown by the local chapter on the nominations of Faisal Vawda and Saifullah Abro, the PTI's candidates on a general and a technocrat seat respectively from Sindh.

There is no doubt about PTI becoming the single largest party in the upper house of the parliament after the 3 March poll, but the fact that it will not be in a driving seat and will still have to rely on its allies and the opposition parties even for carrying out simple legislation has perhaps mad PTI a little jittery which is evident from the haphazard moves which it made in order to seek an open vote for the Senate.

A careful calculation done on the basis of the party position



in the National Assembly and all the four provincial legislatures, which form the constituencies for the Senate election, shows that if all the MPAs vote strictly in accordance with the party policy, then the country is going to have a completely hung Senate. So much so, that there is even a possibility that both the ruling and opposition alliances will have exactly the equal number of seats in the new Senate – i.e., a 50-50 stalemate in the 100-member house.

The calculations based on the party position in all the legislatures reveal that if all the legislators vote in line with the policy of their respective parties, the PTI is expected to win 20 seats, followed by six seats each by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and five by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

the ticket to Dr Shaikh, considered an outsider and known in the PTI ranks as a parachute.

The PTI must sweep the election in KP where it has been ruling for the past eight years. It is expected to win 10 out of 12 seats from KP. The remaining two seats can go to the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F) and the Awami National Party (ANP), which are contesting the election jointly from the platform of the opposition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM).

In Punjab, the main contest will be between the PML-N and the PTI and the latter is expected to win five seats, including three general seats. The party is expected to get two seats from Sindh and one from Balochistan, besides winning both the seats from Islamabad. The formerly ruling PML-Q, which had become extinct in

No.	Political Party	Present Senators	Retiring on March 11	Seats Expected to Win	Seats in New Senate
1.	PTI	14	07	20	27
2.	PPP	21	08	06	19
3.	PML-N	28	16	05	17
4.	BAP	10	03	06	13
5.	JUI-F	04	02	03	05
6.	MQM	05	04	02	03
7.	BNP-M	01	01	02	02
8.	ANP	01	01	02	02
9.	GDA	01	00	01	02
10.	NP	04	02	00	02
11.	PkMAP	04	02	00	02
12.	Jl	02	01	00	01
13.	PML-Q	--	--	01	01
14.	IND	08	04	00	04
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>

If things indeed turn out this way, the PTI, which got representation in the Senate for the first time in 2015, will become the single largest party in the Senate with 27 senators, followed by the PPP with 19, PML-N with 17 and BAP with 13 senators.

The most interesting contest is expected on the two seats of Islamabad — one general and one women’s — for which polling will be held in the National Assembly. A one-on-one contest between PTI’s Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh and former prime minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, a joint candidate of the opposition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), is expected on the only general seat from the capital. Dr Shaikh had previously served as the finance minister in Mr Gilani’s cabinet.

The competition between Mr Gilani and Mr Shaikh has acquired great significance because of the party position in the National Assembly where the ruling alliance has a majority of just 20 votes. The PDM leadership believes that Mr Gilani can secure the seat if he runs his campaign seriously as there are reports that many in the ruling alliance are unhappy over the leadership’s decision to award

the Senate in 2015, is set to once again get representation in the upper house as the PTI has agreed to support PML-Q’s Kamil Ali Agha on a general seat from Punjab.

While the PML-N is expected to see its senators returning to the Senate only from Punjab, the PPP will be getting representation only from Sindh. However, the PPP is expecting to get more than its share as the party leadership is hopeful that Mr Gilani will manage to win the seat from Islamabad.

The urban Sindh-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) can easily clinch a general seat due to its 21 MPAs in Sindh Assembly. However, more seats for the party depend on its understanding with the PTI and Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) as both the parties are part of the ruling alliance at the Centre.

In Balochistan, BAP is expected to win six Senate seats while the remaining seats may be divided among the JUI-F and BNP-Mengal. The ANP also has a chance to win a seat from the province with the support of other nationalist parties.

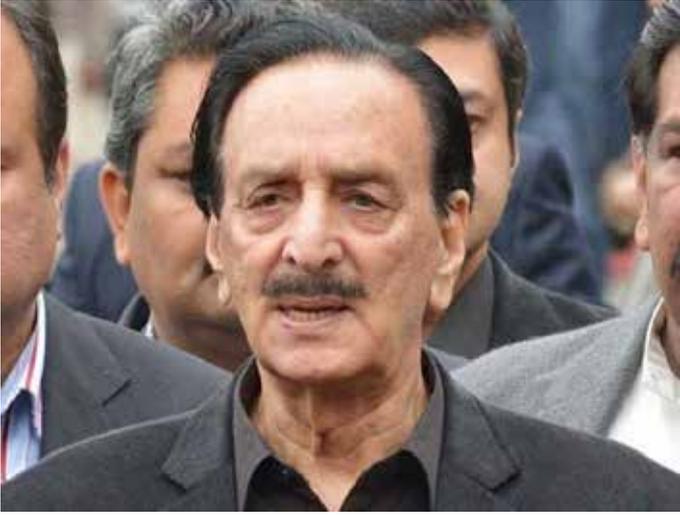


The Senate, which is also known as the House of Federation, comprises 104 members — 23 each from the four federating units, eight from the former FATA, and four from Islamabad. The 23 seats allocated to a province comprise 14 general seats, four reserved for women, four for technocrats and one for minority member. The next Senate will comprise of 100 seats as 4 FATA seats will be abolished.

The term of a senator is six years but 50 per cent of the total number retires after every three years and election is held for new senators.

Over 65 per cent of the senators who are set to retire on 11 March after completing their six-year constitutional term belong to the opposition parties with PML-N being the biggest loser as 59 percent of its members — the largest number belonging to a single party — are set to retire.

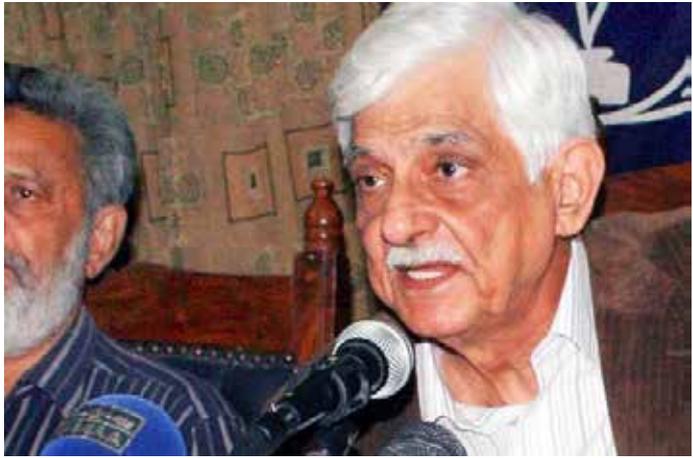
Out of 28 present PML-N senators, 16 are set to retire in March. Mushahidullah Khan, who died on Feb 18 in Islamabad after a protracted illness, was also among those who would be retiring on 11 March and his party had once again approved a ticket for him to contest on a general seat from Punjab. Former finance minister of the PML-N Ishaq Dar has not taken oath as senator since he has been living in self-exile in London along with former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.



Leader of the Opposition Raja Zafar-ul-Haq and former information minister Pervaiz Rasheed are prominent among the retiring PML-N senators. Mr Haq has already declared that he has no desire to contest the Senate election after enjoying the positions of the Leader of the House as well as the Opposition Leader.

Since the PML-N will no more be the largest opposition party in the Senate, therefore, there is a possibility that leadership of opposition in the new Senate will go to the PPP.

Deputy Chairman Senate Saleem Mandviwala, parliamentary leader Sherry Rehman, former interior minister Rehman Malik and former law minister Farooq Naek are among the eight PPP senators retiring. When the other three are set to return to the Senate, Rehman Malik has been denied a party ticket this time. The party has replaced him with veteran Taj Haider.



Out of 14 present PTI senators, seven are due to retire. The most prominent among those retiring from the PTI are federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shibli Faraz, Mohsin Aziz and Nauman Wazir Khattak. Both Mr Faraz and Mr Aziz have managed to get the party ticket again from KP, but Mr Khattak will not be there in the new Senate.



As many as 52 senators — 50 per cent of the 104-member house — are retiring on 11 March after completing their six-year term. However, this time there will be no polling for the four seats of the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) after its merger with the KP.

Therefore, polling will be held to elect 48 senators — 12 each from KP and Balochistan, 11 each from Punjab and Sindh and two from Islamabad. Polling will be held to elect seven members on general seats, two women and two technocrats in the four provinces. Besides this, the election on one minority seat each in KP and Balochistan will also be conducted.

In sum, the political temperature this time around is hotter, the field shiftier, and the stakes higher than ever before, making the March 2021 Senate election the most high-strung affair of its kind in recent memory – truly an election to behold.



# A Tale of Trading Horses

*Horse-trading has always been part and parcel of Senate elections – but who does this corrupt practice benefit and who pays the price?*

By Syed Fakhar KaKaKhel

The story of horse-trading is as old as the history of the flawed democratic process in this country. Establishment uses money and perks to manipulate the show clockwork of the show called democracy.

Unfortunately, for the past several decades, Senate elections have been seen as very lucrative for all those who are always known to invest heavily to win their seats, or for those who betray the confidence of their party or constituencies inside the power corridors.

The trend of horse-trading or investment in parliamentary politics is not new. It started immediately after the independence but the civil-military establishment during the 50's and 60's nurtured it. At that time, it was none other than the top brass of the civil and military establishment who helped the so-called political rulers who had consolidated their political position through horse-trading and huge investments and are still doing so.



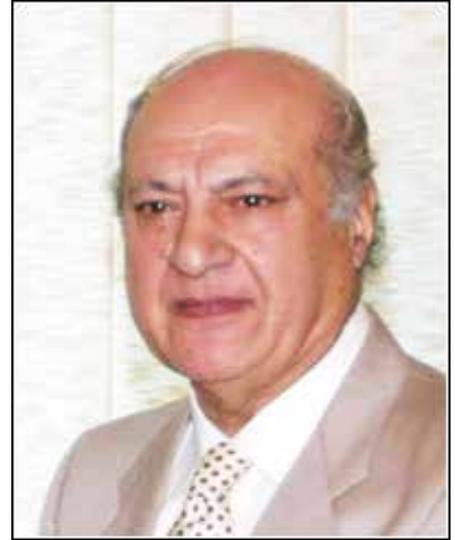
The first military ruler, Ayub Khan, was the one who offered politicians cash, perks and privileges. According to senior journalist and political analyst Shamim Shahid while quoting Akhtar Ayub Khan, son of the late

Ayub Khan, it was Arbab Saif-ur-Rehman Khan Khalil who refused to accept PKR 500,000 in return for supporting Ayub Khan in the 1960s.

Arbab Saif-ur-Rehman, who was an MNA and was twice elected Deputy Speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, was one of the most loyal and ideological members of Bacha Khan's Khudai Khidmatgar Movement. Later on, though, he himself deviated from the National Awami Party and the Awami National Party.

Similarly, several other members of this nationalist political movement rejected the attractive offers made by the then rulers.

Senior political commentator Haroon Rasheed recently alleged at a TV show that it was Pakistan Peoples Party, which started this buying and selling of tickets and members. "It was Gulzar Khan from Dera Ismail Khan who bought the party ticket when Benazir Bhutto arrived to contest



In the 1991 Senate elections, no one but the leaders of the religious political party were responsible for the formal introduction of horse trading when two MPAs of the same religious political party voted for a candidate retired from the Bahrain Navy in the 84-member House. He contested the Senate elections as an independent candidate. Later, as an independent candidate, Commander Khalil-ur-Rehman got a record 32 vote.

Apart from Commander Khalil-ur-Rehman, two brothers from Dera Ismail Khan (sons of Gulzar Khan) and several other members including the nominated leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party and the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-N, also won the Senate elections allegedly through huge investments.

At that time, the PPP had only six members in the assembly and the PML-N's nominee, an industrialist, candidate had paid PKR 500,000 each to some members of the assembly in the show boxes.

Besides Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan elected members from former FATA always played active role in horse-trading.



There were two reasons to that. One, most of them had no political roots and were often elected as independent candidates. Secondly, they were always loyal to their respective political administration under FCR, a law from British colonial era. If a candidate having the moneybag needs a slot in the senate, the candidate will need the support of 46 elected members from Punjab.

But if the candidate applies through KP, it will have to grab only 19 elected members. If the same candidate applies from Baluchistan, the demand drops to only eight elected members.

That is the reason for turning KP and Baluchistan into the epicenter of horse-trading during Senate Elections. It is easy to collect 8 or 19 votes than to go after 46 votes. This is the reason of the cost difference between even KP and Baluchistan for buying the votes from these two federating units.

After the recent video leak of the previous senate election where members of the ruling party were receiving cash bundles it was alleged that each member was receiving 30 million rupees for their vote in the elections. PTI insider told this scribe that it was because of the fear of vote slip by own party members. So it was decided to offer money to cement their party loyalties. It is now difficult to forecast the vote cast in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but in Baluchistan, members are reportedly receiving millions of rupees to offer their vote.

In the 2018 Senate elections, the biggest losers from horse-trading were the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Qaumi Watan Party, which was part of the coalition government at the time, while the PML-N and the PPP benefited.

The Senate was introduced as an essential component to ensure the protection of the interests of the four federal units on an equal footing. Since then its elections have been conducted on a proportional basis and

it has also been made mandatory that the members of the house elected from the respective Electoral College belong to the province from which they are contesting the election.

In addition to the tendencies of the civil-military establishment and the rulers who have always tried their best to damage its status, horse-trading plays a key part in eroding the prestige of this institution.

In 2003, it was the Jamaat-e-Islami that helped its candidate, the late Professor Khurshid Ahmed, from the MMA quota in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Professor Khurshid was from Karachi and his vote was registered in Peshawar to contest the Senate elections from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In 2015, the MQM elected Barrister Saif from Sindh at the behest of someone else. Saif hails from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and is considered a close and loyal ally of former military dictator Pervez Musharraf.



## Trouble in the Ranks of BAP, PTI Ahead of Senate Polls

*As the Senate elections draw near, PTI Balochistan is a divided house and BAP is biting for more than it can chew*

*From Shahzada Zulfiqar*

Balochistan attracts the attention of the whole country on the eve of Senate elections because of open horse-trading by the members particularly the mainstream political parties.

Balochistan assembly members having the strength of 65 have been involved in wheeling and dealing for long in electing senators. Prime Minister Imran Khan recently said a senate seat from Balochistan would cost PKR 600-700 million. His minister for planning and development Asad Umar while quoting intelligence agencies report in a TV talk show claimed that a seat of the upper house from this province costs PKR 450-500million.

In Balochistan, one needs minimum eight votes to become Senator on a general seats (7 seats) while needs the highest numbers on two each technocrats and women and one minority seats. Compare to other three provinces and federal capital, it is easy for the candidates in Balochistan to convince or buy a small number of voters.

PTI's intention to bring a change in senate election through show of hands by bringing the law through Presidential ordinance and under Supreme Court guidance may help the political parties in stopping their members from floor crossing but may hardly stop the members in Balochistan or KPK to sell their votes to their party nominees.

However there would be much difficulty for independent candidates to buy votes through show of hands against the wishes of political parties.

The game of wheeling-dealing of votes by assembly members continues since 1988. The amounts of money involved were paltry early on but have ballooned in several iterations over time. Today, a member who gets involved in the trade earns PKR 40-50 million.



Such members contend that they return to assemblies after spending huge amount in the elections, so their earnings in the Senate election season are justified. Normally the members of mainstream political parties like Muslim Leagues and People Party are involved in this practice while the MPAs of nationalist and religious parties follow their party's discipline.

However a bad example was set in the history of Balochistan when the whole 6-member parliamentary group of the Pakistan National Party allegedly sold out to Syed Ehsan Shah in 1991 elections for PKR 6 million. However Nawab Aslam Raisani, the former Chief Minister refused to accept the money and did not cast his vote.

It is also history, Balochistan made that even the business tycoon from outside of the province came and bought votes and headed to the Senate with the help of local political personalities.

Among such have been Akram Wali Mohammad (PML-Q, 2003 to 2006), a businessman from Karachi and Yousaf Baloch (PPP, 2006-2012), a builder, also from Karachi. Wali was the nominee of former Prime Minister late Zafarullah Jamali while Baloch was the candidate of former President and PPP cochairman Asif Ali Zardari.

After their election, these candidates were never seen visiting Balochistan or spending a single penny of their development funds in the province. Although they have been participating in the senate sessions, no one heard of them speaking ever over the issues of Balochistan and its people.

These Senators used to say, their close circle claim, they don't owe to Balochistan and their people as they have purchased the votes.



Other people from Karachi who tried their luck but could not make their way to the Parliament include Zarat Khan, Saddaruddin Hashwani, and Hussain Islam.

Interestingly, a Karachi based business tycoon filed his nomination papers for the 2018 senate elections on reserved seat for technocrat, but his papers were rejected on all fora. He allegedly had already paid the money to his voters who refused to refund.

To resolve the issue, the same candidate was appointed advisor to Chief Minister for fisheries, a very lucrative portfolio and was

elections while asking BNP(A) to support its candidates by withdrawing its nomination of Mir Israr Zahri, the party head.

In the given circumstances, BAP-ANP coalition may easily win three general seats, one each woman and technocrat and the only minority seat. If works really hard, it may bag total seven seats.

Saeed Ahmad Hashmi, a senior parliamentarian and Chief organizer of ruling the BAP is facing newcomer Naveed Kalmati, a businessman with links to both Gwader and Karachi. Samina Zahri, belonging

voting for Sadiq Sunjrani on the eve of the no-confidence motion against him has joined BAP and has been awarded a ticket to Senate from Balochistan.

The Jamiat Ulema Islam (Fazal) with its 11 assembly members has three candidates –

two on general seats and a technocrat. They include Maulana Ghafoor Haideri and a new face Khalil Buledi and a senior lawyer Kamran Murtaza.

Balochistan National Party with its 10 seats fielded Pashtoon (a first) Sajid Tareen and



asked to try his luck whether he earns less or more than he invested for buying assembly members. This time, he didn't file his nomination paper as was not allotted the party (Balochistan Awami Party) ticket.

The ruling BAP is also facing difficulties as more tickets were allotted than their members can elect. Out of 12 senate seats, ruling coalition claims to have 8 while 23 member opposition parties expect 6 seats.

The ruling coalition partners Awami National Party and Balochistan National Party (Awami) with 4 and 2 MPAs fielded their candidates.

The BAP has agreed to support ANP in return for its support in the previous Senate

from an affluent family was awarded party ticket and has clear chances to win. Denash Kumar, the owner of a brewery at industrial town of Hub, Balochistan and the sitting MPA has clear chance to win on minority's reserved seat.

An interesting contest is developing within BAP party on general seats. Sitara Ayaz, Sarfaraz Bugti, Abdul Qadir Hassan, Munzoor Kakar and Aurangzaib Jamaldini are among the influential ones. Sitra and Bugti have bright chances while one has to be chosen from the rest.

Hassan, having support of Chairman Senate Sadiq Sunjrani may win. Sitara who is going to complete her six year term on ANP's ticket had switched her loyalties by

Qasim Ronjo on general seats and retired educationist Tahira Ehsas Jattak on a reserved seat for women.

The independent member Nawab Aslam Raisani has already announced to support JUI-F while another member Nawab Sanaullah Zahri may vote for the ruling coalition.

Pashtoonkhawa Milli Awami Party with its only seat fielded its secretary General Usman Kakar in a hope to become joint candidate of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). Neither party is prepared to sacrifice its 5 or 6 votes for the other, the PkMAP having only one vote.



# The Tricky Mathematics of Senate Elections

*Crunching the numbers reveals a nail-biting contest likely to yield a House that may go either way – by a margin of one or two seats*

By Sarfraz Raja

Senate, the upper house of the bicameral Pakistani parliament, has equal representation from the four provinces. Its composition is simple but the electoral process for its members is somewhat tricky and requires a bit of mathematical flair to grasp.

Senate elections are held on the basis of single transferable vote (STV) system which was first introduced in the 19th century by Thomas Wright Hill, the father of Ronald Hill who invented the modern postal system. Later on, it was adapted to parliaments or houses of different countries like Ireland, Malta and Germany.

In the subcontinent, this system was adopted for elections to some municipal boards and upper houses in some provinces even before independence. It was also used in elections to the first Constituent assembly of Pakistan and is in vogue for elections to the Senate of Pakistan since 1973.

This electoral system is designed to ensure that the candidates elected represent accurately the opinion of the voters. In other words, the strength of each party in Senate would be in proportion to its support among voters.

Any of Pakistani citizen with 30 years or above age can participate in senate elections. He must have one proposer and one seconder who must be voters of his constituency, i.e., the relevant assembly.

First of all is the process of voting. Senators are elected for a term of six years. Elections are held every three years when half of the total members complete their six-year term. Presently the Senate of Pakistan consists of 104 members, of which 52 are due to retire on 11 March 2021.

The four seats representing the former FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), now merged with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, are to be discontinued, bringing the membership back to 100. Elections



therefore will be held to 48 seats for a six-year term.

Of the senators to be elected, 12 each will be from KP and Baluchistan (7 general seats, 2 ulema and technocrats, 2 women and 1 minority member); 11 each from Punjab and Sindh (sitting minority members set to continue till 2023); and 2 members will be elected from the federal capital.

Provincial Assemblies will elect senators from their province while members from federal capital will be elected by members of the National Assembly. For the general seats from provincial assemblies, names of candidates will be printed on ballot papers and voters will vote their candidates with priority numbers 1, 2, 3, etc.

There is a complicated formula to determine quota of votes for any candidate to be elected which is worked out by dividing the total value of the assembly votes. For example, in case of the KP assembly  $124 \times 100 = 12400$  by the number of seats (7) + 1 and in answer 1 will be again added answer will be 1551.

$$124 \times 100 / 7 + 1 = 1550$$

$$1550 + 1 = 1551$$

$$1551 / 100 = 15.51$$

Rounded to the nearest whole number, this yields 16. So 16 votes will be needed for a candidate to be elected a senator from KP.

With same formula 171 votes in National Assembly will be required for a senator to be elected from Islamabad, 46 from Punjab, 21 from Sindh and 8 from Baluchistan.

When a candidate gets the required priority votes, his remaining priority votes will be transferred to candidate given 2nd priority.

Likewise transferred will be the votes for candidates who remain below the table by number of their priority vote and have no chance of being elected. This process continues till all the required senators are elected.

In view the party position, the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is likely to secure about 28 of the 48 seats to which elections are being held, becoming the majority party in the Upper House for the first time. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is set to secure 19 or 20 seats, retaining its position at number two, while the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N), the current top party in the upper house, will slide down to the third position after securing 17 or 18 seats.

The contest is being billed as one of the closest in our parliamentary history with simple majority, yielding a nearly evenly split house with a razor-thin majority going to the government or the opposition.

Depending upon the result of 3 March Senate elections, the elections for the new chairman and deputy chairman, which will held after 12 March, will also be closely contested.



# Rigging from Dawn to Daska



*By Hammad Ghaznavi*

After about a dozen general and numerous by-elections in the last seven decades, let's admit that we have miserably failed to learn the art of holding free and fair elections. We have tried the election supervision of the army, judiciary, and civil administration but to no avail. We have tried all seasons, twelve according to Imran Khan, from the summer sunny days to the winter foggy nights, without success. We have experimented with different types of elections, from the presidential to parliamentary, from referendums to local bodies, from universal suffrage to electoral colleges, but all in vain.

Look at the mess created in Daska NA 75 elections on February 19th. The incidents of firing in the constituency started three days before the polling date, and gained momentum on the D-day. Violence on the election day took two lives and left many injured. The polling was stopped or slowed down at certain polling stations. After all this hullabaloo, around 2 am on the election night, a private channel announced the victory of PML(N) candidate Nosheen Iftikhar, late Zahray Shah's daughter. The last episode of NA 75 drama was yet to come, however. Twenty presiding officers along with the election results of their respective polling stations went missing, only to turn up at the RO's office after around 12 hours. The reason for the delay was 'a visible aerosol consisting of tiny water droplets or ice crystals suspended in the air at or near the Earth's surface, that can be considered a type of low lying cloud usually resembling stratus, and is heavily influenced by nearby bodies of water, topography, and wind conditions.' Simply put, fog.

Such frauds are not unknown to our election history, but there is one change this time that has made the incident unique. The election commission issued a statement pointing out the missing presiding officers, and the lukewarm response of the Punjab IG and Chief Secretary, who literally slept over the issue. The polling station result that the presiding officers brought with them in the morning was rather different from the one they had earlier shared with the polling agents of the political parties at the end of the counting.

How can we have a free and fair elections, under whose supervision, in which weather? The answer appears foggier than ever .

After Daska, there is another election approaching, that of Senate. The government apparently seems quite keen on having a free and fair Senate elections, seeking guidance from the parliament, consulting the supreme court, and issuing presidential ordinance. The Senate elections, however, has all the potential to turn into yet another messy affair, as was the last senate elections or the Chairman senate elections, which means more videos of the legislators counting money, though their release may take a couple of years as has been the case with the earlier video. Open ballot can allow the establishment State' to exploit lawmakers, says Raza Rabbani. The question remains the same -- how can we have a free and fair election? Shall we go back to the basics or hire an alchemist?

Senator Pervez Rashid's nomination papers were rejected because he was a defaulter of the Punjab House, revealed an audit conducted by the PH after a decade. The Senate election Returning Officer asked him to deposit the amount. His appeal against his disqualification was rejected by the ECP. Pervez decided not to challenge ECP decision. While Faisal (Absolute) Vowda, who certainly was a dual national when he won the National Assembly seat, has been cleared by the ECP for the Senate polls. (Will we ever see a free and fair election in our beloved country?)

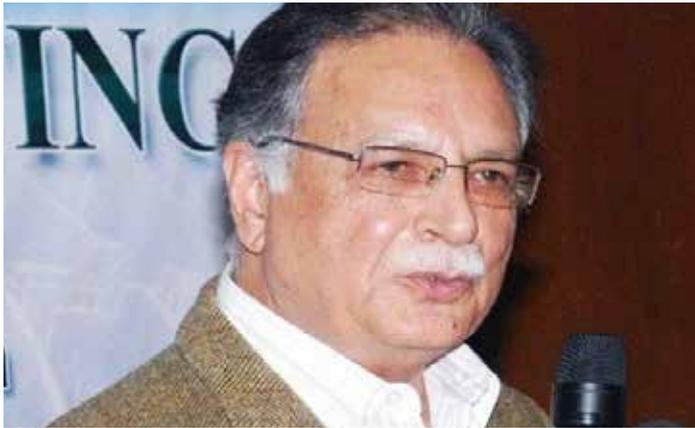
Interestingly, the PML (N) leadership has accused the government of the election fraud, not the Establishment. That seems a policy shift. Former PM Yusuf Raza Gillani, a PDM joint candidate for Senate from Islamabad, also thinks that 'the Establishment seems neutral in Senate polls.' The ISPR chief also said the other day that the Army was not interested in politics.

Where does the sun rise from? The west? Kay Khushi Sey Marr Na Jaatay Agar Aitabar Hota.



# Staying safe from traitorous hackers

*When a temple of justice comes under attack by the legal fraternity, what course can the law of the land take?*



By M A Niazi

The results of the by-elections all over the country should make the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) think hard. Not about the performance of Prime Minister Imran Khan. That is beyond criticism. But about the chief ministers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab.

Whatever might happen in general elections, the ruling party does not lose by-elections. But perhaps the worst performance of all came in KP, where the PTI lost a provincial seat which the PTI had won in the general election. The seat had been vacated by the death of the MPA, and even though the PTI had put up the late member's child, it still lost. Obviously, the CM had gone to the wrong constituency and gone to sleep.

Even if Imran had got his wish, and ended the secrecy of the ballot, the incompetence of the CMs might have stopped the ruling party from the inevitable victory. He has shown, in his latest pronouncement, how the opposition will prevent the PTI from getting its fair share of Senate seats by selling their votes.

The Senate elections are growing increasingly mysterious, with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) nominee Pervaiz Rashid having a strange tale to tell. He has been disqualified because of an unpaid bill at Punjab House of Rs7.05 million. When the objection was made, he said that he has not incurred the bill. He

tried to clear the bill, presumably having the money conveniently close by, but found that the Punjab House officials were not on their seats. Whether or not they were in a meeting, the end result was the same: Rashid got disqualified.

Faisal Vawda, on the other hand, got through, though it was objected that he had had foreign nationality at the time he fought the National Assembly (NA) election. In fact, it was because the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has not decided that case, that he was allowed to contest the Senate.

Still, he is better off than Rashid. And then Mushahidullah Khan, who just passed away. He too had won his reputation in the Senate. Luckier than both was probably former United States president Donald Trump, who was acquitted by the US Senate in his second impeachment trial.

Apparently, a lot of Republican Senators felt that he was an ex-president, so he should not be convicted. That leaves the criminal courts to bring Trump to account for the January 6 attack on the US Capitol.

That means Trump is in the market for a good lawyer. Maybe he should get in touch with Nawaz Sharif. And maybe he should account himself lucky that the US does not have a NAB. Well, it could not, could it?

Not with unpatriotic armed forces like the ones it has.

The Myanmar armed forces are true patriots, and those who are protesting against them are traitors, just like anybody will be, if they protest against anything similar over here. But the government is making arrangements. The IT Ministry has called on all ministries to switch to the National Telecommunication Corporation for hosting of their websites. That means a simplification of the task of any traitors who try to resist a burst of patriotic exuberance by the armed forces. Look at Myanmar, where traitors are trying to hack government websites. So, takeovers will have to be e-takeovers, and in addition to PTV and Parliament House, a debt will have to be sent to the National Telecom Corporation. Or will it be OK to introduce a bot?

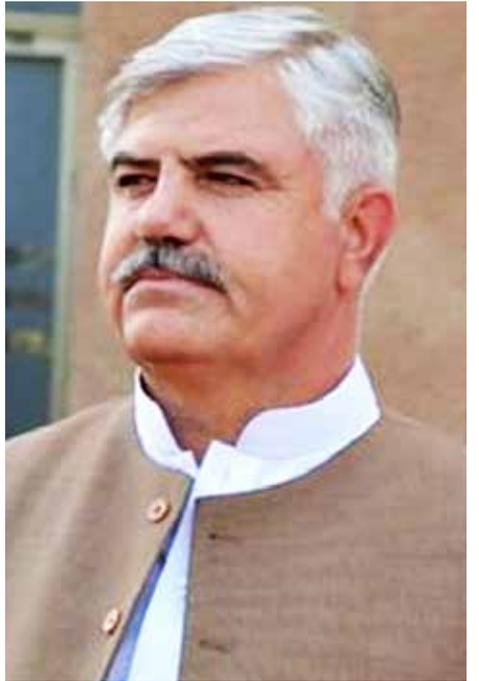
It is not just hackers that you need to worry about. Facebook has taken down all news content and links in Australia, to avoid having to pay a royalty to news organisations. Well, they have been taking down some government websites too. And one of

the advantages of the Internet has been the possibility of reaching the whole world. You cannot imagine the satisfaction of the Livestock and Dairy Development Department of Baluchistan at knowing that its advice on goat breeding can reach even Greenland. Of course, goat breeders in Greenland (who have landed on that site) have the satisfaction of knowing they can hastily visit another site.



# Half the time is up

*A mid-term review of the tall claims and catchy promises that were Imran Khan's political platform*



*By Khalid Wasim*

A furious opposition threatening to hold a long march, surrender before the government employees protesting for a pay raise, Nawaz Sharif's departure to London, Kashmir debacle, handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, the egg in the face over a botched reference against Justice Faez Isa, the army chief's extension, increase in power tariffs and medicine prices, a rowdy parliament, FATF legislation and sugar, wheat and petrol scams are some of the salient features and events that took place under the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government, which completed half of its five-year term on February 17.

Terming the PTI's rule as "disastrous" for the country and after holding a series of public meetings as part of their anti-government campaign from the platform of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), the opposition parties are now flexing their muscle, poised to begin a "decisive" long march next month, alleging that the government has failed at almost all the fronts.

On their part, the government ministers continue to blame the past rulers for every-

thing that ails Pakistan including the economic mess, claiming the difficult time for the nation is about to be over as the country has been put on the right track.

Before the general elections in July 2018, Imran Khan as chairman of the PTI had announced his party's ambitious "agenda" which included bifurcation of the Punjab province, austerity measures at the national level, a development package for Karachi, a programme for alleviation of poverty, creation of 10 million jobs, revival of manufacturing, growth of small and medium enterprises sector, construction of five million houses, reforms in tax administration and transformation of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

While the government has made some progress in fulfilling some of its promises through its Ehsaas Programme, launching of free Sehat cards and announcing some relief measures for the industries, particularly the construction industry, others like the creation of a new South Punjab province and revival of the SOEs seem too hot to handle for the government.

The government ministers also blame the Covid-19 pandemic for the lack of progress in some of the sectors, saying for the past one year, all focus of the government remained only on handling the pandemic and saving the people from its economic impact. They claim the government has successfully handled the Covid-19 situation which is acknowledged by many countries and international organisations.

The parliament's performance under the PTI government, however, has remained below average. The members consumed most time in debating petty matters, continuing their corruption tirade against each other, causing uproars and even indulging in scuffles. The official data shows that during the past 30 months, the government mostly relied on ordinances for legislation and promulgated 46 ordinances.

The prime minister's poor attendance of the parliament also remained under criticism from the opposition. Since assuming the office, the prime minister had attended only 26 sittings of the National Assembly which is in the third parliamentary year, despite



the fact that he had declared he would personally respond to the questions of the members every week. Although the government moved an amendment to the assembly rules for introducing the “PM’s Question Hour”, but the assembly is yet to approve it.

There has been no parliamentary input at all in handling of the pandemic which is totally being taken care of by the National Coordination Committee and the National Command and Operation Centre. The parliamentary meetings on the issue remained confined to the briefings and PowerPoint presentations. The special committee of the parliament constituted by the speaker on Covid-19 could not play any role after the opposition’s boycott over the alleged biased conduct of the speaker.

In September last year, despite having a majority, the opposition faced a defeat in the no confidence motion against Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani. The opposition leadership announced that it would take action against those who had ditched it, but no party dared take action except the Awami National Party.

The government also had to face the challenge of handling the protests by the religious-political group Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, first in the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s verdict in Asia Bibi case and then after the republication of inappropriate caricatures in France.

Amid opposition’s allegations of one-sided accountability, many opposition members remained either under NAB’s custody or in jail on judicial remand. Opposition Leader Shahbaz Sharif, his son Hamza Shahbaz and PPP stalwart Syed Khurhsid Shah have been under detention for quite some time now with the prime minister constantly vowing not to pardon those who had plundered national exchequer.

The government has also been avowedly making efforts to get Nawaz Sharif extradited from the UK, but so far it has failed in this regard.

A member of the federal cabinet said that despite facing difficulties, the government had made tremendous achievements in almost all the sectors, particularly in economy and foreign policy.

“Our three achievements are improvement in economy, foreign policy and quality of democracy,” he said, maintaining putting Pakistan on the track of industrialization was the government’s biggest achievement.

Despite all odds, for the first time, he said, the industry had been revived with the increase in largescale manufacturing and export of textiles. According to him, the country’s ease of doing business ranking has also improved from 130 to 72 points which is second highest in South Asia.

He admits the government is facing some difficulties in checking the price-hike but says although the prices of sugar and wheat have seen some increase, the farmers have got best prices for wheat and sugarcane in the country after a very long time.



The second biggest achievement, he said, was “improvement in the country’s foreign policy”, maintaining the government had succeeded in reviving ties with the US and at the same time they had warm relations with China.

The minister claimed that the law and order situation had also improved, saying the terrorism was at its lowest ebb in the country during the past two decades and cricket had been revived.

According to him, the year 2020 was the first year in the past 15 years when not even a single incident was reported against the Hazara community in the country.

Unfortunately, he said, an incident took place in the beginning of this year.

About the much-hyped austerity measures which the government had announced soon after coming into power, the minister claimed that the campaign was still going on and the expenditures of Prime Minister and governor houses had been cut drastically. He said the Governor House in Punjab was still open for the general public and even a restaurant had been established there.

Moreover, he said, a bill seeking to convert the PM House into a university had already been introduced in the National Assembly and a huge amount of PKR 32 billion had been allocated for the project this year.

The minister admits that the government had to rely heavily upon ordinances for legislation because of the opposition’s

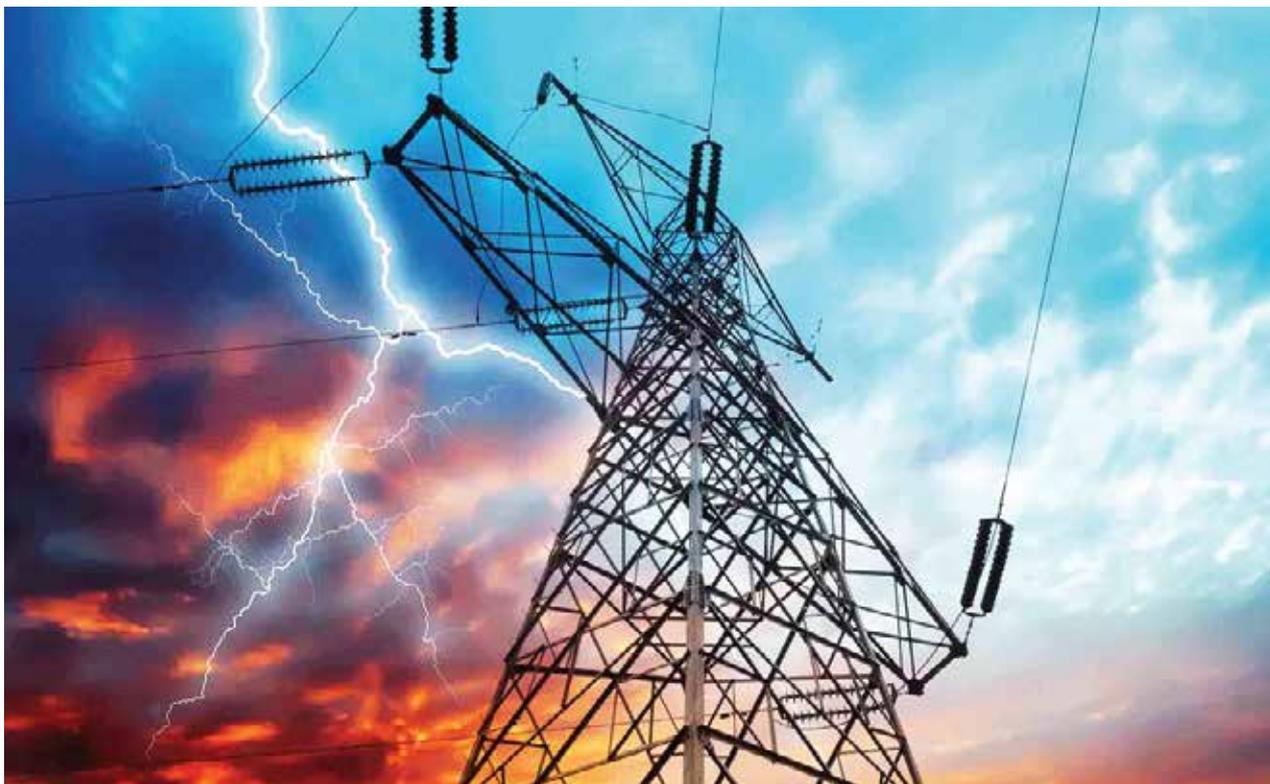
behaviour and not having majority in the Senate. He accused the opposition for making the parliament dysfunctional, saying the opposition only wanted concessions in corruption cases.

The government which has already faced a long march and a sit-in by the JUI-F in October 2019, is now ready to tackle another one – this time from the combined opposition. Handling of the long march will definitely be a test case for Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, who had been in the cabinets for the past more than three decades and holds a key ministry.

*The writer is senior journalist.*

# The Inexplicably Dithering Over the Deal with the IPPs

*With the officialdom making haste slowly, the process looks more and more like much ado about peanuts*



*By Khalique Ahmad*

In March last year, an investigation committee led by former chairman of SECP Muhammad Ali concluded that independent power producers (IPPs) had secured over PKR 5.837 trillion of excess payments from Pakistan government including PKR 1.022 trillion excess payments estimated to be paid to the IPPs in future. The committee comprised senior representations from regulators like SECP and NEPRA, stakeholders like power division, CPPA, PPIB, NPCC and investigation and intelligence agencies like FIA and ISI.

The committee had, for example, noted that only shifting the payments to IPPs under the existing dollar-based arrangement to rupee based internal rate of return at USD-PKR parity of first year after CoD for all plants except 1994 Policy (13,154 MW), could lead to savings in excess of PKR 4.7 trillion over the project life of these IPPs. "On an annual basis, this can lead to a

saving of at least PKR 150 billion which will reduce power tariff in the country by PKR 1 per unit".

Based on findings of this committee, the government had a series of negotiations and implementation committees to engage with IPPs for tariff reductions besides the committees of the cabinet like those on energy (CCOE) and economic coordination (ECC). Almost a year down the road, the Federal Cabinet on 9 February formally approved the renegotiated agreements with a total of 46 IPPs. The government claimed a saving of about PKR 770 billion to have secured from these IPPs over the remaining 20-year average life of these projects.

The negotiations with IPPs were concluded by end-July and formal memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were signed around 9-10 August. Interestingly, however, it took almost six months to convert those MOUs into

formal agreements. While the above savings claimed by the government appear peanuts when compared with original allegations of PKR 5.837 trillion, it was surprising that the implementation committee wasted about three and half months after the MOUs were signed to begin engagements with IPPs for payment schedule and conversion of MOUs into agreements. This delayed benefit of savings at the rate of PKR 10 billion per month.

Some insiders claim that changes made in the agreements were cosmetic when examined on the basis of investigation report and applicable for future only, having no impact on accumulated circular debt or existing power tariff. When the wrongdoing is established, for example on account of PKR 75-80 per dollar based equity and 17-18 percent return based on latest exchange rate parity of PKR 160-168, indexation at PKR 148 per dollar was illogical even for 2002 policy based local

investors who have already recovered investments and loans years ago.

Ironically, however, the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) and the IPPs have so far not been able almost two weeks after the cabinet approval to file tariff petitions before the regulator they were jointly required to do based on revised terms of agreements.

Minutes of the cabinet meeting held on 9 February 2021 noted that finalizing the agreements, all clauses of MoUs were converted into agreements in letter and spirit in favour of the Government of Pakistan (GoP). The CPPA, AEDB and PPIB Boards approved signing revised agreements.

Besides the PKR 770 billion saving from IPPs of about 8000mw, the government also claims a downward adjustment of PKR 2.053 trillion on account of reduction in rate of return on equity for about 8,000 mw of public sector plants, assuming an average 10-year remaining life of GENCOS and WAPDA each and 30-year average life of LNG-based and nuclear power plants.

However, this is adjustment would impact government's revenue on account of return on equity, cash development loans to public sector companies and allocation of funds required for major hydropower projects out of budget. The bigger elephant in the room – about 16,000 mw of power plants under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) – remain untouched.

The cabinet was informed that agreements with 1994 Policy IPPs, HUBCO and KAPCO (of about 4,046 mw) include 11 percent reduction in capacity payments and variable O&M costs, 50 percent of reduced capacity payments based on rupee instead of dollar, interest-on-interest waived against payment of present and future invoices.

Likewise, the agreements with 2002 Policy IPPs of about 2,355mw were rupee-based return instead of dollar based for local investor at the rate of 17 percent per annum in rupee fixed at PKR 148 per dollar without any future dollar indexation while return reduced to 12 percent on dollar instead of 15 percent on dollar for foreign investors. The GoP to share in all future savings of fuel and O&M costs and,

efficiency audit through Heat Rates Tests of IPPs to be conducted and interest rate on payments reduced from KIBOR + 4.5 percent to KIBOR + 2 percent for first 60 days.

The cabinet was also informed that agreements with 2006 policy wind and Solar IPPs of about 815mw included return reduced to 13 percent on dollar instead of 17 percent in dollar and O&M costs reduced by 20- 25 percent for Wind and 15 percent for Solar and insurance costs reduced to actual with a ceiling of 0.7 percent for Wind and 0.5 percent for Solar. It included a waiver of interest on interest & interest rate on payments reduced from KIBOR + 4.5 percent to KIBOR + 2 percent for first 60 days.



The agreements with Bagasse-based IPPs of 204mw entailed return reduced to 12 percent on dollar instead of 17 percent in dollar for next 5 years. Thereafter, the return would be fixed rupee at 17 percent of rupee at the rate of PKR 168 per dollar without any dollar indexation for remaining 20 years. Here too, the O&M cost is reduced by 10 percent and insurance costs reduced to 0.7 percent and waiver of interest on interest & Interest rate on payments reduced from KIBOR + 4.5 percent to KIBOR + 2 percent for first 60 days.

Moreover, the power division claimed that the matter of past excess payments to the

2002 Policy IPPs had been resolved in a sense that originally NEPRA was to determine the issue with a risk of international arbitration and local litigation. The final agreement with IPPs now entails the issue to be decided through a 3-member local arbitration panel. Two members will be retired Supreme Court judges to be nominated one by each side who will jointly decide the third member. The decision of arbitration panel will be final and cannot be challenged.

The payment mechanism entailed that the GoP has to clear outstanding payables of PKR 403 billion to 46 IPPs in two instalments. The first instalment of PKR 161 billion, or 40 percent would consist of one-third cash, one-third in 5-year Sukuk

and one-third through 10-years PIBs. The payment to the 2002 policy IPPs would be after determination of revised tariff by NEPRA. The payment to the 1994 policy IPPs would be 30 business days after signing of agreements.

After 6 months of first instalment, second instalment of PKR 242 billion or 60 percent to consist of one-third in cash, one-third in 10-years Sukuk and one-third in 10-years PIBs while the IPPs would settle undisputed outstanding claims of about PKR 70 billion to state-owned fuel suppliers.

*The writer is an Islamabad based journalist.*

## Is the Run on Cotton Inexorable?

*Why long-time cotton growers are switching to sugarcane, rice, sunflower, maize, and chilly crops – and why it is bad news*



*By Azeem Waqas*

**H**aji Muhammad Abdullah Talpur, a progressive cotton grower of South Punjab, is planning to stop growing cotton this year due to the government policies. Busy harvesting wheat, he has decided to grow sunflower and chilies instead of cotton.

Talpur has been growing cotton, white gold for him once, since the 90s. But now it has lost its charm, having become unprofitable.

It is alarming to see that hundreds of thousands cotton growers like Talpur have either switched or are switching to other crops – initially to sugarcane and later on to maize, chilies and sunflower in Punjab and Sindh.

Cotton has been a lucrative cash crop for many years between 1990 and 2010. Cotton production has been sufficient for the country needs. Being a major cash crop of Pakistan, cotton is considered the backbone of the economy. It contributes about 0.8 percent to GDP and 4.1 percent of total value addition in agriculture.

Senator Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah, former Chief Minister Sindh, used to grow cotton over about a thousand acres every year but due to unfavourable conditions he is considering to reduce cotton cultivation to diversify and eventually switch over to other crops like maize, chilies and rice in District Umerkot Sindh.

Talking with The Truth International, the former chairman Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association Dr Jassumal said: “Some 5.6 million bales have arrived in the market till now and it is expected that there will be no more arrivals. The country will face a shortfall of 9 to 10 million bales and it will cost the national exchequer about USD 3 to 4 billion”.

Due to the government policies, cotton production is at 30 years low this year. According to Ministry of National Food Security and Research, cotton production is estimated at 6 million bales and the industrial demand is about 14 million bales.

Dr Jassumal says some 800 ginning factories have been closed in the country due to government policies. During the last one decade or so, the number of ginning factories has shrunk from 1200 to 400 in Pakistan.

In 2004-5 cotton production was 14.2 million bales and it has been floating around 10 to 12 million bales a year till 2017. The country has recorded a sharp dwindle in cotton production during the last three years which is a bad omen for the economy of Pakistan.

Cotton cultivation area has decreased from 2.86 million hectares in 2011 to 2.48 million hectares in 2020. The area devoted to cotton is projected to lessen by 12 percent in the current fiscal year 2020-21.

During the last one decade, powerful sugar and textile lobbies have formulated policies in a way which lead to suppressing the cotton cultivation and production in the country. Last year, the lobbies succeeded in abolishing the government-fixed minimum support price for cotton.

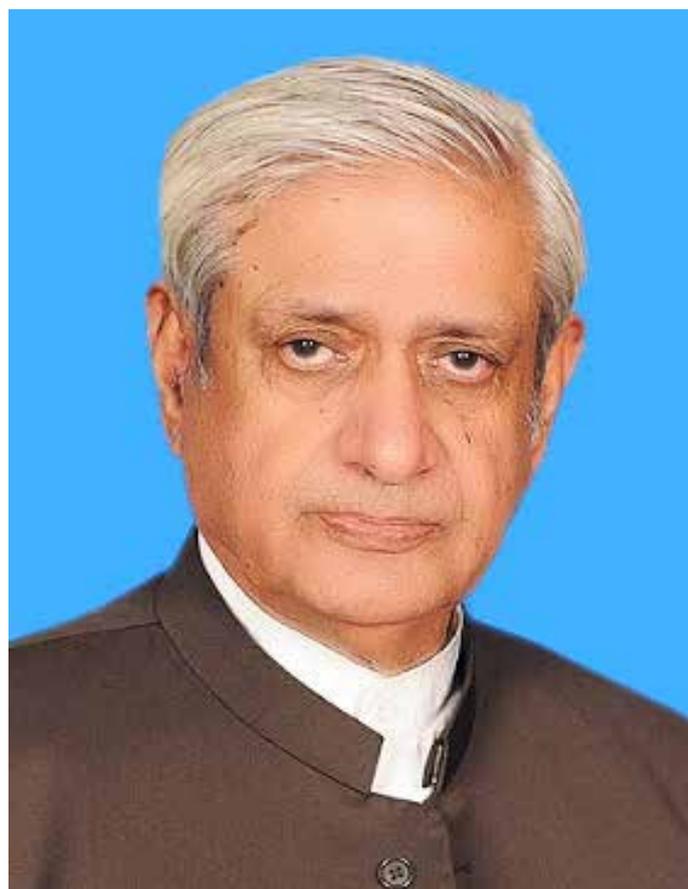
Federal Minister Syed Fakhar Imam tried to agitate the matter at the Cabinet level but the powerful textile industry lobbies staunchly opposed the move.

While talking to The Truth International Magazine (TTI), Senator Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah said that “Government has not fixed the minimum support price for cotton which has led to a fall in production of cotton at historic low.

“The government should intervene to revive the cotton industry. Fair assessment for cost of production should be done to fix minimum support price of cotton, at least they should be given an assurance that their cost will be recovered”, he added.

Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah says that cropping pattern is changing in Punjab and Sindh. Due to the lack of minimum support price farmers are shifting towards maize and sugarcane.

Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah says Textile mills have a strong lobby in the power corridors which is formulating the policies.



Cotton production sharply decreased this year because of unfavourable weather conditions and pest attacks. Other reasons of the decline in cotton production include drought, seed degradation, and reduction of planting area.

Sugarcane is encroaching over cotton area is yet another reason for fall of cotton production.

Former Advisor to the Finance Ministry, Dr Khaqan Najeem said the area under cultivation of cotton in FY21 dropped to just a little over 2.2 million hectares, which was the lowest on record since FY82. To some extent the decline in area was taken over by rice & sugarcane.

Dr Khaqan says area under cotton has seen a steady decline over the past decade, bringing the annual average over the decade down to 2.7 million hectares compared to 3 million hectares in the previous decade.

The seed regulatory body is ineffective to the extent that last year it allowed marketing of seeds to the farmers with high germination levels of 55 percent. These defective seeds played a role in reducing the plant population by half.

The government has failed to collect Cotton Cess from the textile mill owner. As a result, no funds are available for research and development. Levy of Cotton Cess stands at PKR 50 per bale of raw cotton exported or consumed by the domestic textile industry.

Due to a lack of funds for research and development, no new seed varieties, pest control, or crop management technologies have been developed during the last two decades after introduction of BT cotton, an insect-resistant transgenic crop designed to combat the bollworm, in 2001, but now the seed has lost its genetic superiority.

Dr Khaqan says falling yields have resulted in the third yearly decline of cotton production in FY21. Cotton is losing its competitive edge to other crops especially sugarcane. A revival of cotton production based on productivity revival is essential, he adds.

He is of the opinion that the introduction and enforcement of the amended Seed Act and the Plant Breeder's Rights Act 2015 is essential to fully modernizing the sector by providing necessary intellectual property protection and effectively curbing the supply and usage of adulterated cotton seed.

# Is Lawyers' Lawlessness Justiciable?

*When a temple of justice comes under attack by the legal fraternity, what course can the law of the land take?*



*By Asif Malik*

The recent attack on the Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) was only the tip of the iceberg of the deteriorating relations between bar and the bench. Besides so many other things, a core issue behind strained relations between lawyers and judges is the matter of inadequate oversight of the regulators i.e., the Bar Councils.

On 8 February 2021, about 150 lawyers stormed the Islamabad High Court (IHC), ransacked the Chief Justice Block, and detained the IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah and other judges for a couple of hours.

The judiciary got registered FIRs against the 'rowdy' lawyers under the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA). Besides, the court has also started disciplinary proceeding against the delinquent lawyers to send their references to the Islamabad Bar Council (IBC) and Pakistan Bar Council (PBC).

The lawyers manhandled, detained, abused and even beaten up the judges of the lower courts on several occasions in the past. However, neither the High Courts nor the Bar Councils took notice of the rowdy behaviour of the black-coat holders.

Recently, a lady Additional District and Sessions Judge Dr Sajida Ahmed wrote to the Chief Justice of Pakistan and Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice, highlighting the uncalled for behaviour of the lawyers and said she would never have joined the profession had she known about the lawyers' behaviour.

The prime responsibility to maintain order among lawyers is on the Bar Councils which grant them licences for legal practice. The role of Bar Councils has finally come under the judiciary's scrutiny after the Chief Justice Block of the IHC came under attack.

Ironically, the Bar Councils responsible

to ensure discipline among the lawyers take lenient view for various reasons including the political considerations and their internal groupings.

The Legal Practitioners and Bar Councils Act, 1973 was promulgated, its objective declared in its preamble being "to regulate the profession of legal practitioners and the Bar Councils". The constitution and incorporation of the Bar Councils has been dealt with under Chapters II and III of the Act while the composition of Pakistan Bar Council has been described in section 11.

Section 13(d) explicitly empowers the Pakistan Bar Council to lay down and prescribe standards of professional conduct and etiquette for advocates. Section 21 divides the profession into four distinct categories. Section 22 provides that no person shall be entitled to practice the profession of law unless duly enrolled as an advocate.

Chapter-VII is in relation to the conduct of advocates and describes the mechanism regarding conduct of proceedings in case of professional misconduct and prescribes the punishments. Section 55 empowers the Bar Council to make rules. The scheme of the regulatory framework is based on the foundational principle of self-regulation.

The requirements and procedure for enrolment of an Advocate of the Supreme Court is laid down by the Pakistan Legal Practitioners and Bar Councils Rules, 1976.

Chapter-XII has prescribed the canons of professional conduct and etiquette required to be observed by the Advocates. The conduct has been divided into three distinct categories i.e. in relation to the other advocates, clients and the general public, respectively.

The honour of the profession is advanced when an Advocate renders professional services or gives advice 'undertaking exact compliance with the strictest principles of moral law'. It is an integral part of the prescribed code of conduct that an Advocate himself has to observe and advise the client to obey and respect the statute law.

However, despite having ample powers, the Bar Councils seldom take punitive action against the delinquent lawyers.

According to senior lawyer Hamid Khan, this is because the elections of the Bar Councils and the Bar Association have been changed and instead of professionalism, the decisive factors are grouping, politics and money driven.

He said that at present so called lawyers leaders not only use money but apply all the techniques including taking help from the district administration and police to secure vote and support of their opponent lawyers.

This is the reason for the erosion of professionalism, he said.

As far as the case of Islamabad's lawyers is concerned, the issue of lawyers' chambers has a decade old history. In the Islamabad's Master Plan, there was no place allocated for the District Court.

The District judiciary was established as makeshift arrangement in 1980. The chambers crisis started to emerge in 2011 when the federal capital got an exclusive high

court - the IHC. In subsequent years the size of the lower judiciary also increased manifold as the sanctioned posts of the sessions courts judges rose from 14 to 100.

It may be mentioned that before the establishment of the IHC, Islamabad was under the territorial jurisdiction of the Lahore High Court (LHC) while the judicial officers from Punjab Judicial Service were posted in Islamabad as lower courts judges.

However, after the local judiciary emerged, the number of practicing lawyers also increased from about 1,200 to 6,500. However, neither the district judiciary was given the proper space nor there was enough room allocated for lawyers to establish their chambers.



At present, the district judiciary is working in six commercial buildings owned by Saeed Anwar, Anwar Sanwal, Dr Haroon Rashid, Raja Shafqat and Mrs Anjum since 1980 when the sessions courts were established in Islamabad. Initially, the rent for the courts was Rs14 per square foot, however, currently, the rent has increased to Rs84 per square foot.

In 2005, the government planned to shift the lower courts to newly-constructed district courts complex, but the devastating

October earthquake forced the government to defer the move.

In 2007, former President retired General Pervez Musharraf established the Islamabad High Court in the district courts complex. In the absence of a proper building for the high court it was allowed to use the district courts complex.

In 2013, the lawyers encroached upon the Football grounds but faced tough resistance from the local traders. Former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar took a suo motu action on lawyers' encroachments. However, despite authoring the judgments on almost every subject, he could not conclude the proceedings in this case till the time of his retirement.

The lawyers also started construction of chambers within the premises of the district

courts even outside the courtrooms, parking areas etc.

The Bar Councils could have avoided crackdown against the lawyers by taking action against them on its own in accordance with the Legal Practitioners Act. However, the ball is in the judiciary's court now and the lawyers' bodies are again demanding clean chit for the lawyers responsible for attacking the IHC and detaining the judges – an unlikely outcome this time around.

## Using Electricity to Print Money, Bahria Style

*Residents up in arms against the wayward ways of the Bahria Enclave exclusive housing development, a poster child of property tycoon Malik Riaz's Bahria Town*



*By Nadia Aleem Ud Din*

Residents of an upscale residential development in Islamabad staged a protest demonstration a few days ago against what they called “unjust and illegal” hike in electricity bills. Another grievance they voiced was the alleged ouster of more than 200 security guards by the Bahria Enclave gated community in Pakistan’s Capital.

Hundreds of families including women and children gathered in front of the Bahria Enclave’s head office and demanded the management “revoke the excessive increase in electricity bills” and improve security of the society by restoring the security guards.

The demonstration was led by the Society of Bahria Enclave Residents (SOBER), which is a representative body of the residents. Protesters held banners and placards and chanted slogans against the “unjust and illegal” increase in electricity tariff by the management of Bahria Enclave.

The Truth International tried to contact the officials of Bahria Town for their point of view in this regard but they flatly declined to comment on the matter, maintaining no such protest demonstration had been staged.

This is not the first time that Bahria Town

has been accused of wrongdoing although it is rare for such accusations to trigger a law and order situation.

Residents of Bahria Enclave at the demonstration said they would not pay the electricity bills unless “the excessive increase” in the bills is reversed.

The bills have neither been approved by NEPRA nor IESCO. Protesters said they constituted a violation to NEPRA and IESCO rates per unit.

Some residents said that management of Bahria Enclave was sending inflated bills to collect cash only to pay the fine against encroachment of government land across Pakistan.

In March 2019, the Supreme Court had accepted Bahria Town Karachi’s PKR 460 billion offer for the lands it occupies in the Malir district of Karachi and restrained the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from filing references against it.

According to the landmark verdict, Bahria Town Karachi will have to pay the entire amount over seven years. In its ruling, the top court ordered Bahria Town Karachi to pay PKR 25 billion by August 2019.

From September onward, it will have to pay monthly installments of PKR 2.25bn for the next three years. If the company fails to deposit two installments, Bahria Town Karachi will be considered a defaulter.

After three years, it will have to pay a four per cent markup in case of late installments.

The company will also be required to give a 99-year lease to everyone who purchased a plot in Bahria Town Karachi housing project and will mortgage parks, cinemas and other assets owned by it.

Bahria Town has been considered the most influential, an ideal housing society with gated community proving the basic amenities of life. Residents of these societies not only include well-heeled people but most of them belong to the business and elite class.

Bahria Town first developed society in Islamabad and later moved projects to other big cities of country like Lahore and Karachi. Bahria Town started another housing scheme in the Heart of Islamabad by the name of Bahria Enclave.

Bahria Enclave was developed as per the European standard in 2011 on the basis of demarcation carried out by patwaris and senior officials of CDA.

# Implications, Complications, and Explications of Afghan Peace for Pakistan

*Knotty and elusive as ever, Afghan peace calls for a shifting of gears by all concerned – including Pakistan*



*By Umer Farooq*

In the wake of the US-Taliban peace deal a complex political situation has emerged in Kabul—Taliban's position is that control of the government should be handed over to them and their Islamic Emirate should be restored. All the elements now part of the Kabul regime should become part of their Emirate.

On the other hand Afghan government's position is that their government is a legitimate and constitutional government and all political elements should become part of their government. Obviously neither the Afghan government nor Taliban would agree to each other's position. So it doesn't seem likely that there would be an understanding on future political setup in the coming month.

Reports doing the rounds in Islamabad say that Americans are floating the idea of a coalition government consisting of the Taliban and all other political

elements based in Kabul. They are not talking about it openly, but a message is being sent to all and sundry to pave the way for such an interim government based on a coalition of all Afghan factions.

In Afghanistan, all those groups which are not part of the government are supportive of the idea. Prominent backers of the approach include former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Abdullah Abdullah, and Gulbadin Hekmatyar. But Afghan president Ashraf Ghani is dead set against the idea, so much so that he refused to meet Zalmay Khalidzad during his last visit to Kabul.

Americans are also pressurizing Pakistan to convince the Taliban to agree on a ceasefire and to support such an interim government consisting of all Afghan factions. On the other hand Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has requested the Pakistan government to

convince the Taliban to agree on a ceasefire and to become part of his government in Kabul.

Pakistani officials say that the solution of Afghan problem will not be a simple one. Recently the representative of the groups from the North of Afghanistan visited Islamabad and told Pakistani officials that any peace deal between Taliban and Afghan government will not be the end of conflict in Afghanistan. There are other groups in Afghanistan which will not be represented in this peace agreement.

The real armed conflict in Afghanistan before the arrival of American forces was between Taliban and Northern Alliance forces—and this conflict will remain in place even after the signing of a peace deal between the Kabul regime and the Afghan Taliban. These are the reasons why experts believe the Afghan conflict is unlikely to evaporate in thin air on the signing of the peace deal.

*Continue on page 28*



# KEPT BY K2

Last seen making his way up the final access to the summit along with his two companions, Ali Sadpara will forever be remembered as a prodigal son of Pakistan and a hero who remained unsung while he lived.

**ALI SADPARA** is where he most loved to be: Up in the world's highest mountains. And he will remain there for now; this prodigal son of Pakistan's Sadpara village is presumed dead along with Icelandic John Snorri and Chilean Juan Pablo Mohr. An official announcement to this effect—fronted by his son Sajid Sadpara—came on 18 February 2021.

On a mission to attempt a winter summit of the treacherous K2, the three mountaineers left Camp 4 on the evening of 4 February 2021. They were last seen on 5 February by Sajid, who saw them off at the notorious Bottleneck.

The Bottleneck is a narrow couloir a mere 400 m (1,300 ft) short of the summit. Climbers have to traverse a stretch of about 100 m (330 ft) perilously overhung by seracs from the ice field east of the summit. Combined with its extreme elevation 8,200 m (26,900 ft) and gradient (50 to 60 degrees), the hazard of falling seracs makes the path the most dangerous part of the ascent.

According to Wikipedia, 13 out of the last 14 fatalities on K2 have occurred at or near the Bottleneck. The younger Sadpara had to abandon his quest after his oxygen mask broke down.

The second highest peak of the world, K2 is considered as the most dangerous mountain to climb in the world. Only 367 people have successfully conquered this imperious peak, whereas 4000 people have climbed the Mount Everest, the world's highest peak.

A rescue operation began despite harsh weather conditions with the help of army helicopters, later joined by the military's C130 aircraft, in the end to no avail.

#### **Achievements:**

1. Gasherbrum II (Pakistan) in 2006
2. Spantik Peak (Pakistan) in 2006
3. Nanga Parbat (Pakistan) in 2008
4. Muztagh Ata (China) in 2008
5. Nanga Parbat (Pakistan) in 2009
6. Gasherbrum I (Pakistan) in 2010
7. Nanga Parbat First Winter Ascent (Pakistan) in 2016
8. Broad Peak (Pakistan) in 2017
9. Nanga Parbat First Autumn Ascent (Pakistan) in 2017
10. Pumori Peak First Winter Ascent (Nepal) in 2017
11. K2 (Pakistan) in 2018
12. Lhotse (Nepal) in 2019
13. Makalu (Nepal) in 2019
14. Manaslu (Nepal) in 2019

Muhammad Ali Sadpara was born in 1977. Ali a mountaineer and high altitude porter from Sadpara village, Skardu, Pakistan. As of February 2016, he has made six ascents of four 8000m peaks and is best known for first winter ascent of Nanga Parbat. Sadpara is first and the only Pakistani to

climb an eight thousander in winter. He also holds the distinction of record three ascents of Nanga Parbat.

Ali Sadpara began his mountaineering career as a low altitude porter in 2000. Although, started as a mean to earn a living, he soon discovered his love for mountains and climbing. "I always feel happy in the mountains. Since the day when I got to know about them for the first time and worked as a porter, it has always been my desire to climb them. Now I could make money easily in Sadpara hometown or in Skardu main village in the area, or even in Islamabad, but I feel happy here (in the mountains)." He told during an interview 2015.

July 10, 2006 as part of a German team. He went on to climb Nanga Parbat twice in 2008 and 2009, and Gasherbrum I in 2010. He climbed Broad Peak reaching Foresummit in 2012.

### **Winter Expeditions:**

Muhammad Ali, however, has also been a major force of multiple winter expeditions. He was part of International Broad Peak expedition. In last week of February 2017 Don and Ali were in C3, ready for summit-push, but continuous bad weather forced them to retreat.

In 2010/11, Artur Hajzer returned to the mountain with a larger Polish team. Ali Sadpara was again hired as a HAP. The weather remained challenging throughout the season and summit window arrived only at around mid-March. Despite poor visibility and high wind, Ali Sadpara and Robert Szymczak launched summit push on March 16. They were at around 7830m when a huge impassable crevasse blocked the ascent.

Ali Sadpara was also part of Polish Gasherbrum I expedition in winter 2011/12. He played a pivotal role in establishing three camps, but unfortunately sustained serious frostbite to his toes while setting up C3 and had to abandon the expedition. The team later bagged the first winter ascent of the mountain.

On February 26, 2016, Ali Sadpara, Alex Txikon and Simone Moro reached the summit of Nanga Parbat. It was first winter ascent and Ali Sadpara's record third ascent of the mountain.

Muhammad Ali Sadpara was known for his jolly personality. There are a bunch of videos of him singing, dancing and joking around with his fellows on social media. Ali always had a smile on his face.

Sadpara loved climbing and he lost his life doing what he loved the most. He wanted to climb all the world's eight-thousanders. Unfortunately he lost his life midway.

While Ali sleeps entombed in snow on the rooftop of the world after what may be called nature's way of giving him a befitting burial, some soul searching is in order for the authorities in Pakistan. His family must receive all the support they need to rise above this devastating loss.

But another matter worthy of their attention is why Ali was not better celebrated for his achievements while he lived.



## Impact on Pakistani Society

Nevertheless the peace deal could significantly influence Pakistan's domestic political situation and external security environment in the coming months and years. And in spite of this fact there is hardly any debate as part of the public and media discourse on the possible impact of an impending deal on the strategic environment Pakistan and its government find themselves in.

There would be serious consequences for Pakistan's domestic political and security conditions. If the Taliban become part of political dispensation in Afghanistan, would that mean a Pakistan-friendly government in Kabul? This could lead to the curtailment of Indian influence in Afghanistan.

In the past, Taliban have shown an ambivalent attitude towards India. On the one hand they have shown a willingness to deal with India at the diplomatic level in the context of the unstable security environment of Afghanistan, while on the other hand some Taliban groups have launched attacks on Indian interests in Afghanistan.

The question can be answered in part by considering if the Taliban would completely shun violence in the post-peace deal situation – which may indicate their attitude towards Indian interests in the region. Taliban are primarily an armed militia and it would be almost impossible to expect that they would completely abandon violence within the violent security context of Afghanistan.

However, there is the possibility of the Taliban militia integrating into Afghanistan's security forces and directing their energies against another military threat emerging in the region – the threat of ISIS in Afghanistan. This is what different regional players including Russia and Central Asian states expect of the Taliban.

The Taliban becoming part of a new political dispensation has serious implications for Pakistan. There is a big possibility that there might start a move to initiate similar efforts in Pakistan to bring about a peace deal between Pakistani Taliban and Pakistani security forces.

Pakistan security forces, however, don't see this as a possibility to extend any kind of olive branch to Pakistani Taliban. Firstly, the Pakistani Taliban have been defeated on the battlefield and secondly they have shown no tendency to abandon violence within the Pakistani society or to get themselves integrated into the society.

Nevertheless, after the US-Taliban peace deal, the continued fighting between Pakistani Taliban and Pakistani security forces will be seen as an anomaly, the demand to remove which will generate its own pressure.

There is a serious and strong body of opinion within Pakistan, which sees the fighting between militant groups and security forces in Pakistan as an extension of the problem of presence of US forces in the region. With the complete withdrawal of foreign forces, the fighting between Pakistani security forces and Taliban will lose any meaning, this body of opinion argues, putting the pressure on Pakistani security forces to abandon the fight.



The emerging security situation in the wake of the peace deal will have serious implications for Pakistan's domestic politics. The pressure of the right wingers on Pakistani security forces to reconcile with Taliban and other militant groups will increase manifold.

On the other hand, security experts are in a quandary to predict what kind of reaction to expect from Pakistan militant groups once their mother organisation – the Afghan Taliban – enter into a peace

deal with their worst enemy, the US Administration.

Will Pakistani militants continue to attack US and Indian installations in Afghanistan after Afghan Taliban have signed a peace deal with the US administration? Will this peace deal degrade the determination or capacity of Pakistan groups to continue to attack Pakistani security forces? Nobody knows just yet.

In fact we don't know what kind of impact this peace deal will have on Pakistani groups. Pakistani Taliban and Afghan Taliban don't have any formal organisational linkages. But they do interact at some level. Only time will tell how they will react to this deal.

One thing is for sure that non-violent and non-Taliban Pashtun groups like Pakhtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) will come under increased pressure because of this peace deal. Pakistani establishment's grip on power will further increase as their international stature will increase once they

help cement the deal. After staging this diplomatic victory, Pakistani establishment will see PTM as an obstacle in the way of achieving strategic objectives in the region.

What, however, is completely inexplicable is why the talks between Afghan Taliban and US administration failed to generate enough interest among Pakistan's political elite and media circles, despite the fact that there is so much at stake as far as Pakistani interests are concerned.

Plausibly, foreign policy issues never generate such a heat as to take the media by storm in Pakistan. First, because Pakistani media is not foreign policy oriented and secondly, there is a little understanding how much this peace deal will change the strategic environment of the country as well as the attitude of Pakistan's military establishment towards the external and internal problems they are facing.

## Role of Taliban in Afghan Security Structure

There are voices coming from powerful regional capitals that want to see Taliban becoming part of the regional security architecture in order to ward off the threat of rise of other Sunni extremist groups in Afghan society. These regional players see the present Afghan government and its security forces, in the absence of US and NATO forces, as too weak to effectively check the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS in Afghan society.

The past few months have seen dramatic reduction in the activities of ISIS in Afghanistan and Pakistan's border areas. However, the regional players especially Russia and Iran see the presence of Sunni extremist groups as a major threat to their security.

Russia is said to have started directly hobnobbing with Taliban. Iran's cooperation with Taliban is also on the rise—Iranian Special Forces are said to have conducted joint operations with Taliban against ISIS supporters in Central Afghanistan.

There are reports that regional countries including Iran, Russia and Turkey have developed a mechanism to exchange intelligence on the presence of ISIS groups in Afghanistan. There is a desire to make Pakistan part of this type of intelligence mechanism.

What does all this mean for Pakistan? Will Pakistan see an increase in its influence in Afghanistan, now that pressure to co-opt Taliban in the regional security architecture is on the rise? Does it mean that we will see the revival of the old concept of strategic depth among Pakistan's military establishment?

Strategic depth is not an alien concept in military studies – there are a large number

of countries aspiring for strategic depth in their decision-making processes to meet the military threats from numerically or militarily stronger foes. Israeli military considers strategic depth in military/physical terms as necessary for the effective defence of their country, which is physically a narrow strip of land. Some countries like Turkey want to practice the concept of strategic depth in political or diplomatic terms to increase their political influence in their neighbourhood.

There has to be a plausible reason as to why every time there is a military conflict in Afghanistan, the idea and concept of strategic depth is revived in Pakistan. This happened in 1988 – as the Soviet pull-out from Afghanistan was about to start as a result of an international accord – when the then COAS, General Aslam Beg talked about this concept for the first time and later in the wake of US invasion of Afghanistan as the things started to stabilize in the region, the then COAS, General Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani voiced his support for the said military concept.

However, the differences between the nature and content of the military and physical strategic depth, as propounded by General Aslam Beg, and political and diplomatic nature of the strategic depth, as propounded by General Kiyani, was noticeable to many observers. General Aslam Beg was more interested in militaristic strategic depth that viewed Afghanistan as Pakistan's fifth province, whereas General Kiyani talked about extending Pakistan's political and diplomatic influence in Afghan society.

The military version of the strategic depth may be an outdated concept even within the power corridors of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, but the political and diplomatic version of strategic depth may see a revival in Islamabad as the Taliban's position in the security architecture of the region becomes well entrenched.

What are Pakistan's chances of success if it does make an attempt to seek political and diplomatic strategic depth beyond its western borders? There are facts that will militate against the notion of Pakistan achieving political and diplomatic strategic depth in the foreseeable future.

Firstly, Afghanistan will remain a fractured

society with Taliban emerging as one of the players, maybe the strongest one. But nevertheless, there will be other players in the fray – a fact which will not allow Taliban to fully dominate the power structure of Afghanistan.

Secondly, western influence will continue to exist in the country—with large western security and intelligence presence in Kabul, the presence of Western non-governmental sectors will also be strong.

In other words, the international and cosmopolitan character of Afghanistan's capital and its security structure will remain the basic feature of Afghan state, making things difficult for Afghan Taliban. Thirdly, India might continue to have an economic role in Afghanistan.



On the other hand, there are facts that presage increased influence of Pakistani military in Afghanistan: Firstly, the requirements of major regional players will increase the role of Taliban as partners of regional powers to act as a counterweight to the rise of ISIS in Eastern, Northern and Western Afghanistan.

Secondly, Pakistan's security apparatus is seen as the only regional players with the required amount of political influence to stabilize Afghanistan militarily. This will allow some semblance of influence to Pakistan in the affairs of Afghanistan.

But Pakistan's establishment will be well advised not to consider or call this influence strategic depth as the term has outlived its utility in both domestic and regional contexts. Diplomatic, economic and cultural influence is too important today to hazard a mix-up with military strategy.

*The writer is an analyst based in Islamabad.*

# Polish Universities Eager to Welcome Pakistan Students, says Envoy

*Avenues for Pakistan-Poland cooperation are wide open – starting with trade, education, and filmmaking*

By Zarghon Shah

Pakistan needs trade not aid, says the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, Piotr A. Opalinski, who recently sat down for an exclusive Q&A with The Truth International.

All praise for Pakistan's successful war on terrorism, Ambassador Opalinski sees plenty of room for enhanced cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the areas of trade, education, and filmmaking.

Given below for your reading pleasure is an abridged transcript of the interview.

**TTI: Your Excellency please tell us about your experience as Poland envoy to Pakistan.**

**Amb. Opalinski:** I started my first diplomatic mission as deputy head of mission in 1999 for six years in Pakistan; and from 2015, I have the pleasure and honour of representing Poland in Pakistan. Pakistan is a wonderful country of great people sharing lots of values like hospitality. When Polish diplomats come to Pakistan, they feel surrounded by friends and family.

**TTI: Which areas of cooperation are Pakistan and Poland presently focused on?**

**Amb. Opalinski:** Today our two countries have much more to offer to each other. We are working on exchange and enhancement of all our relations including economy and trade. A Polish company was employed by Pakistan for research on the telephonic flow of data, and for the future 5G internet, Poland was also providing passport chips to Pakistan under a contract a few years back.

On the traditional side we are country of centuries-old mining industry. We can provide green coal technology to Pakistan and also help in oil and gas exploration. A Polish oil and gas company is already working in the Sindh province for the last one year and they are very successful in exploring and providing gas to the local



networks. Another area is the food processing industry in which Poland has a vast experience as well. When I see fruits and vegetables in Pakistan I believe we can cooperate in this area also.

**TTI: What is the volume of trade between Pakistan and Poland at the moment and to what extent has COVID-19 affected it?**

**Amb. Opalinski:** We had achieved half-a-billion euro turnover, more than 538 million euro annually by 2018-19. Right now, due to Covid-19 some of the contracts have been suspended but I do believe when this pandemic is over, we would see increased trade opportunities. Being part of the EU, we are also advocating and supporting the GSP+ status for Pakistan which is very important for Pakistani exports to Europe, and like Pakistan we also believe that Pakistan needs trade, not aid.

**TTI: What kind of defence cooperation do Pakistan and Poland have?**

**Amb. Opalinski:** Yes, there is great scope for defence cooperation between Poland and Pakistan. Poland can provide Pakistan with equipment and technology both from

modernised former Soviet Russian types and NATO as well. Some initial projects, in this area, have already been started. Poland and Pakistan have a shared defence history. Immediately after independence, the Pakistan Air Force was trained and developed by the Polish pilots. Poland also contributed to Pakistan Navy and Civil Aviation. So we have Polish heroes who are also heroes of Pakistan. Out of 72 pilots, aviation engineers and technicians who came to Pakistan in 1948-49, the most important was Air Commodore [Władysław Józef Marian] Turowicz who was appointed as the first executive director of SUPARCO Pakistan on 19 April 1967.

**TTI: Please tell us about Poland's visa policy for Pakistani visitors, specifically the students?**

**Amb. Opalinski:** As we belong to Schengen group, we are providing visas to the visitors under the Schengen Visa policy, but within the Schengen group we would like to be the most friendly country towards tourists and students. COVID-19 pandemic has badly affected all the Schengen countries. But once this situation is over, we hope to revive

normal working relationship with other countries. The universities in Poland which are among the best in Europe are ready to receive great and bright Pakistani students. There is a standard visa processing which differs from embassy to embassy but in our case it takes about two weeks.

**TTI: An ordinary Pakistani would also like to know if Poland is a cheap destination or otherwise.**

**Amb. Opalinski:** Poland is much more attractive for tourists because it's less expensive and it can offer beautiful landscapes – from sea to mountains, etc. And it's very convenient for the airlines coming through the Middle East – and the travel is very short, an 8-hour flight. I know Pakistanis know a lot about Western Europe, about the UK but I am sure they will be delighted to see the Polish landscapes as well as its historical heritage. Poland also offers a considerable range of shopping and film-shooting. I remember a Pakistani film “zindagi na milegi dobara” was shot in Spain and [the settings were so much like places in Poland that] it could be in Poland. We are very lively and hospitable folks. Polish-Pakistani marriages are another testimony to our special connection – many Polish-Pakistani couples are running restaurants in my city Warsaw, offering Pakistani cuisine, and now we would love to have our first Halal restaurant from Pakistan.

**TTI: Tell us about your own experience of Pakistani cuisine and travelling.**

**Amb. Opalinski:** I love it and I wish I could travel more, though our work keeps us as diplomat to capital but I am not ambassador to Islamabad, but to Pakistan so I wish to see each and every part of this country. Pakistani mountains are also legendary in Poland so our Alpine climbers are always eager to come to Pakistan, they want to excel in winters. I have been to Pakistan's north and in Karimabad, Hunza I was shown the sword of Polish traveller Cap Gramchisky which he gave to the Amir of Hunza during the early nineteenth century.

**TTI: Some of your climbers are still in Pakistan to scale Laila Peak in Hushe Valley near Gondogoro Glacier in the Karakoram Range in Gilgit-Baltistan.**

**Amb. Opalinski:** Yes, we do have regular Polish expeditions in Pakistan, also recently for K-2 which was not quite successful,

but in Karakoram Range many peaks were already scaled by the Polish climbers. I wish these climbers a success and it's also a very good message about Pakistan that goes to Poland - beautiful country of wonderful, hospitable and friendly people with beautiful mountains and landscapes and historical sites thousands of years old.

**TTI: Talking about great climbers, we recently lost our great climber, Muhammad Ali Sadpara. Was he known in Poland for his expeditions?**

**Amb. Opalinski:** Yes he was a great friend of Poland. As we climb together with our Pakistani friends and Ali Sadpara was helping a lot of our best climbers in the Himalayas. The mourning and compassion messages came from Poland after this tragedy. Polish climbers also contribute in the wellbeing of the local population. Some Polish climbers who have been to this area started school projects. One of them is in the vicinity of Nanga Parbat and another would be at K-2, and it's all because our climbers were given a warm friendship by the local people so they felt like family.



**TTI: How do you see Pakistan's exertions to combat terrorism?**

**Amb. Opalinski:** Yes as I said I came here first in 1999 so I have been in and around for all these years. And I have been witnessing the great successful work which has been done and also the efforts to eliminate terrorism from Pakistan are commendable and something exemplary for all those nations who are fighting terrorism. Pakistan is located at a significant position in the entire region. The role of Pakistan is tremendous in keeping peace and stability in the whole region.

**TTI: As a friend of Pakistan and a member of the EU, can Polish good offices be used for the resolution of the Kashmir issue between Pakistan and India?**

**Amb. Opalinski:** I think it's every body's concern to preserve peace and cooperation. The European Union has very solid standing on the human rights issues. There have been meetings in the European Parliament and European Commission on the issue of human rights. Peacekeeping is also part of our traditions, our history is a testimony to the victory of truth and fighting oppression by the foreign occupants. Poland was partitioned for 130 years within Europe but was reborn due to the cultural, moral unity and struggle of our forefathers for freedom, independence and self-determination.

**TTI: What was the rationale behind creating the Vinegar Group or V4, comprising Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovak Republic?**

**Amb. Opalinski:** I think within the EU, we as a group can promote our geopolitical interests, though all European issues are resolved through a negotiated process. And

we can see our cooperation helps a lot specifically pointing out economic and political matters in our area of Europe. It's very significant that we are undergoing this development in our part of Europe which was cut off by the Iron Curtain for nearly five decades and also in terms of connectivity. Poland has changed a lot from the last thirty years, the progress we have made during all these year is unmatched in our history. Our EU membership was a significant decision we took for our generations.

# Are Biden's Wisconsin comments on China a Trump 2.0?

By Hamzah Rifaat Hussain

In a CNN town hall meeting in Milwaukee Wisconsin on Tuesday, President Joe Biden said that Beijing will have to pay a heavy price for human rights violations committed within its sovereign territory. He was being queried at a televised event where questions dealt with China's handling of the Uighur population in the Xinjiang province. While unsurprising, Biden's statement punctures the notion that his approach towards China will be constructive and reinforces how the Trump policy of maximum pressure is continuing unabated. Based on his comments alone, it is definitely Trump 2.0.

Any chances of a breakthrough in bilateral ties hinge on communicating concerns bilaterally, either through a state visit or delegation level talks. Instead of taking such initiatives, it seems as if the Biden administration is propping up subjects such as Xinjiang less on merit and more on part of American defiance which resulted in nationalistic stances adopted and jingoistic statements issued by both countries. When repeatedly asked about the issue at the town hall event televised on CNN, Biden directly referred to his counterpart President Xi Jinping and said that there will be repercussions for Beijing and 'he' or President Xi should know it. In contrast, President Xi Jinping as the Chinese head of state has refrained from passing comments on his contemporaries including Presidents of other sovereign countries let alone the United States. If the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or various diplomats have issued rebukes on Washington D.C. they were on the merits of the arguments presented by Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump which were laced with conspiracy theories and provocative tirades rather than anything constructive. Biden's overt references to state presidents could risk similar trends materializing which would be of the administration's own doing.

While substituting unilateralism with multilateralism alongside constructive efforts to diffuse simmering humanitarian conflicts such as Yemen has been an integral aspect



of the Biden doctrine so far, the President hinted at lobbying international partners, allies and alliances towards taking punitive measures against China. By emphasizing on the need for America to reassert its role as a global spokesperson for human rights abuses and working with the international community, Biden could potentially alienate allies which have balanced foreign policy priorities regarding both states. This may not emanate from Europe alone, given that previous attempts at rallying countries in South East Asia to adopt a more assertive role towards China has backfired. Nations in the Asia Pacific such as Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and even New Zealand understand the dynamics of their bilateral and multilateral relationships with China as exemplified by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership signed in November last year which accounts for 30% of global GDP. The Trump policy was reprimanded then, it could be reprimanded now.

President Biden's admission on Tuesday also revealed what actual American intentions have been and or could sadly be. He said that China is pushing hard to become a global leader and in order for it to assume global leadership it would need the confidence of other nations. This statement is subject to an array of different interpretations given that China's meteoric economic rise or rising international profile either poses a threat to this administration or acts

as justification to take punitive measures. On the subject of leadership alone, the four year Trump era demonstrated that China's economic connectivity push both regionally and globally and Beijing's constructive diplomacy allowed for greater engagement in the international community at the expense of blatant unilateralism on part of Washington .D.C. Furthermore, China's role in multilateral institutions garnered considerable support from sovereign states marking a sharp detraction from Trump era policies which threatened to defund institutions and issued threats akin to dictation for even some of America's staunchest allies. If an attempt is made to discredit China on the international front under Biden, then based on evidence alone, it would be criminally futile.

After voicing concerns with President Xi Jinping on Beijing's 'coercive and unfair practices' alongside subjects such as Hong Kong crackdowns, Xinjiang reeducation camps and perceived hyper nationalism in the South China Sea, Biden has once again parroted his predecessors mantra that China is an existential threat and must be dealt with. The difference between the two where the former adopted unilateral approaches as part of his maximum pressure strategy while the latter seeks multilateral support should not detract from the fact that the doctrines have not changed and Biden's Wisconsin comments is a testament to this fact.

# Germany troop withdrawal: Can Biden put the brakes?

By Hannan R. Hussain

In one of his first tasks in office, 46th U.S. President Joe Biden signed a slate of executive orders on issues of domestic and national security importance. Ensuring collaborative U.S. military presence in Germany, beyond executive power, is another he must follow through with.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump's determination to ramp-up U.S. unilateralism in a globalized world received impetus last year, when the U.S. military announced its plans to withdraw some 12,000 troops from Germany, confirming President Trump's decision to chop a 36,000-strong U.S. military concentration in Germany. According to the plans, more than half of the withdrawn troops would return to the U.S., while 5,600 troops will be redistributed across Europe. Major pivots of Washington's military command in the region – including the U.S. European Command and Special Operations Command Europe – would also move from Germany to Belgium. In Mr. Trump's eyes, the move would worry Berlin, hearten U.S. allies, and lay the groundwork for a celebrated military homecoming. When measured against the reality on ground, none of the three stood a chance.

First, Mr. Trump's claim that Germany was an underperforming U.S. ally carries zero endorsement from fellow NATO partners. As early as June last year, French President Emmanuel Macron promoted a united military front within Europe, in a bid to offset costs of future unilateral actions. President Trump's Germany offensive, before leaving office, is hard proof of that unilateralism in full flux, demanding Europe to think of security as a shared prerogative, as opposed to a financial tit-for-tat as touted by Washington. Both London and Rome appear to have also gone against any form of public endorsement, even rhetorical, during the same period.

Meanwhile, Peter Beyer, a central figure in Germany's transatlantic cooperation, called it a "bitter day" for select regions in Germany's southern belt, whose security stood blatantly undermined by Trump's nationalist fervor. Taken together, the Trump administration's insistence that the U.S. was actually favoring other NATO countries by undermining one of their own, is a classic lesson in leadership failure that Biden must set right.

Contrary to Mr. Trump's claims, there were also no "bills" for Germany to pay in return for U.S. security assistance. "We don't want to be the suckers any more," stated the President during a widely quoted press briefing. "We're reducing the force because they're not paying their bills; it's very simple."

Two separate reports by Foreign Policy and the Financial Times last year called the bluff on that assumption. Berlin is up to pace with all payments beyond the ambit of defense spending, including headquarters fees, contributed by member states. Financial Times' defense correspondent Katrina Manson also underlined Germany's commitment to meeting a two percent defense spending threshold by 2024. This raises serious questions about Washington's unilateral probe into Germany's fulfillment of those commitments several years in advance – an approach to diplomatic scrutiny ill-suited to Biden's transatlantic pivot.

On rational grounds, Biden must prove to Germany – a longtime U.S. ally – that his predecessor's logic of zeroing in on Germany, without

due emphasis on Baltic states (which depend on reinforcements in Germany for their defense guarantees), has indeed set a dangerous and fruitless precedent for Europe's future. Can countries use questionable statistics to leverage troop withdrawals upon will, as Mr. Trump did? Current trendlines indicate Europe is keen to evolve out of any such transactional worldview of security. Trump's reckless Germany offensive helps accelerate that thinking, and Biden's first 100-days in office are an opportune time to put the brakes on it.

Recent remarks from former U.S. Defense Chief Mark Esper offer another glimpse into the ruthless politics of Washington's Germany pullout. The ex-Pentagon chief touted "deterrence" of Russia as one of the strategic purposes of redistributing U.S. troops across Europe – an incorrect claim with no basis in fact. Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General John Hyten was quick to arrive at Esper's defense, arguing that the move sends an "unmistakable message to our competitors." His implicit reference took aim at Moscow and Beijing, claiming that Washington's renewed military posturing will "deter aggression and counter their malign influence."

Even a cursory glance at the politics of Europe would suggest that Beijing and Moscow are two widely respected stakeholders with no history of introducing disruption within transatlantic ties. It serves the interests of the new administration in Washington to end the practice of leveraging the Germany troop withdrawal to launch more flagrant attacks against foreign leaderships, many of which have their own sovereign ties with Berlin.

As a result, by putting the spotlight on China and Russia, the former Trump administration showed no signs of ending its unilateral military leverage vis-à-vis Europe's stated security commitments, and the embrace of coercive diplomacy as an instrument of American leadership.

On factual grounds, Trump's tedious troop withdrawal was also grounded in a calculus that was never destined to yield any broad-based domestic dividends. Contrary to expectations, initial estimates reveal that the Germany withdrawal would cost "single-digit billions" of U.S. taxpayer money, and take years to actualize. Further evidence from Pew Research Center shows that 85% of Americans support U.S. military bases in Germany, and three-in-ten Germans endorse close cooperation with both Moscow and Washington.

Both statistics underline the extent to which the Trump administration's Germany troop stunt is at odds with the sentiments of the American people, sentiment which Biden has vowed to put first. It also lays bare the toxic assumptions used by select U.S. military personnel during America's most turbulent four years, to malign Moscow's reputation in Europe and give Beijing the isolation treatment.

Ultimately, to consider the U.S. move as a benefit to NATO's security, or as a reason to target Beijing and Moscow, is to miss the point completely. What Biden's predecessor really wanted was to leverage the German example into cementing the Trump administration's "shots-caller" reputation. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of the international world order would understand there is no future for hegemony in Europe – most of all, Biden himself.

# No Closure for Victims of Samjhauta Atrocity?

*Will the perpetrators of the heinous Samjhauta terror attack – with fingerprints of the Modi-aligned Sangh Parivar all over it – ever be brought to book?*

By Oroba Tasnim Siddiqui

Most of the seventy who died in the terrorist attack were Pakistani civilians. They died in a blaze following blasts that tore apart a train just after the midnight of 18 February 2007. Fourteen years later, the families of the victims of the 2007 Samjhauta Express attack are yet to find closure for the tragedy.

Investigations by India's own law enforcement revealed a Hindutva nexus to the attack.

"The Samjhauta Express attack was engineered and executed by RAW on the same pattern only to blame Pakistan for it before the international community", Senator Rehman Malik late wrote. "DIG Hemant Karkare of India had exposed RAW and RSS in the Samjhauta Express episode before the Supreme Court of India but he was later assassinated by RAW agents during the Mumbai episode".

Samjhauta Express is a twice-weekly train service between Delhi and Lahore. On the night of the tragedy, bombs were set off in two carriages full of passengers after they passed Diwana near the city of Panipat, 80 kilometres north of Delhi.

Investigators found plenty of evidence of explosives and flammable material including three undetonated bombs. Inside one of the suitcases was a digital timer along with bottles containing fuel oils and chemicals.

The attack aimed to sabotage the peace dealings between the two neighbouring countries, this incident became exhibit A of unseen hands scuttling every peace initiative between the two nuclear rivals.

Small wonder, then, that an Indian court in 2019 acquitted all the accused in the case on account of a prosecution failure to secure adequate evidence. Among those who were acquitted was also Swami Asseemanand, the self-confessed mastermind of the attack.

And surprise, surprise! This is exactly how all cases of Hindutva attacks against Indian Muslims inevitably turn out. Especially under the fascist Modi regime, India has consistently embarked on an Islamophobic policy aiming at marginalisation of Indian Muslims.

The Indian courts have consistently failed to show an even hand between Muslims and their attackers from the Babri Masjid to the Makka Masjid to the Malegaon Blast. The very edifice of Indian justice system seems to have been skewed against Muslims by rampant, institutionalised Islamophobia.

While the acquittal of Samjhauta perpetrators was met with strong reaction from the Pakistani government, there is little anybody outside India can do to offset the deep-seated systemic bias against Pakistan and Muslims, even if they are Indian Muslims.

This systemic imbalance is visible in a long series of adversities that have befallen India's Muslim community – ranging from mob lynching to state-sponsored mass murder – going unpunished.



It is important to remember that while RSS gained a stranglehold of political power in India comparatively recently, its influence in the Indian society has been pervasive for decades. Nor are the Nazi and Fascist connections of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP party any secret anymore.

Says Indian author Palash Ghosh: "The current BJP is the successor of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) party, which itself was the political arm of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a group that espoused openly militant Hindu activism and the suppression of minorities in India.

"The RSS was founded in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, a doctor from the central Indian town of Nagpur in Maharashtra, who agitated for both independence from the British crown and the strict segregation of Hindus and Muslims.

"What may surprise many in the West is that some of the most prominent figures of RSS deeply admired Fascism and Nazism, the two totalitarian movements that swept through Europe at the time."

Modi's genocidal policies and his Fascistic tendencies, therefore, do not really come as a surprise. It is just that the world is content to appease India for now. But this cannot last – and when the tide turns, India's pretensions to championship of democracy will be left without any legs to stand on.

The Indian civil society has some evidence of an awakening to the dangers of fascism but it may be too little too late. Also, the Modi regime is working overtime to snuff out any organised effort to challenge it. The outcome of this tussle will determine the future of the Indian republic.

If it goes the way of the Fuhrer's Third Reich, the world may become a very dark place to live. But humanity will fight back – humanity always does.

The promise of reckoning for the families of the Samjhauta blast is therefore hinged on the success of the Indian civil society in reclaiming their republic – or, failing that, the success of humanity in coming to terms with a fascist India.

For those who have been grieving their loss for fourteen years and counting, it has to be the one or the other. There has to be reckoning for the lost souls.

# Why is Pakistan the Last Holdout of Poliovirus?

*Time for original research into why we have failed to end polio like the rest of the world*

*By Maheen Dhanani*

The dream of a polio-free drew a little closer to realization last August when WHO and UNICEF felicitated Nigeria on being certified free from wild poliovirus. Only two countries remained to which wild poliovirus is still endemic: Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In 2018, a total of 12 poliovirus cases were reported in Pakistan. There was a spike in 2019 resulting in 147 reported polio cases although the disease burden decreased again in 2020 with 84 reported cases.

Tellingly, two of the three Pakistani regions still harbouring wild poliovirus border with Afghanistan: Quetta block and Khyber-Peshawar block. The third problematic area – Karachi – most likely gets the infection from the former two.

The success of Nigeria is particularly relevant because, as well as being a low-middle income country like Pakistan, it suffers from many of the same debilitating problems that have kept Pakistan from getting rid of poliovirus: Conflict, low literacy, religious obscurantism, and vaccine hesitancy.

There is a need for research to ascertain the exact issue or issues that keep Pakistan from achieving polio-free status. Past scholarship has pointed out poor management and operational deficits, negative propaganda against vaccination and vaccine hesitancy, conflict and militancy preventing vaccine coverage as key areas of concern.

The National Emergency Action Plan for Polio Eradication (NEAP) reported that owing to deficits in the quality and coverage of the polio eradication campaign led to a large number of children remained unvaccinated in 2014.

The deficits identified included suboptimal surveillance of AFP (acute flaccid paralysis), delayed payments to staff, poor accountability and management practices and the widespread disruption of Supplementary Immunisation Activities in polio-endemic regions due to attacks on vaccination teams and their security escorts.

In the past, a concerted propaganda campaign by militants operating from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region greatly undermined Pakistan's polio eradication effort. Supported by some religious elements, the campaign spun a narrative linking vaccination to a Western plot to sterilise Muslims and painted vaccinators as foreign spies.

This kind of propaganda peaked in the immediate aftermath of the revelations that the CIA had run a fake vaccination campaign in Abbottabad to trace Osama bin Laden. Its impact was felt most sharply in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and then then FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas, since merged with the KP) – already the area of the highest vaccine refusal rates in the country and turning up the most poliomyelitis cases.

The irresponsible move exposed vaccinators operating in conflict-affected parts of the country to heightened hostility, partly because they were perceived to be following a Western agenda. The militants operating in those areas announced a ban on polio vaccination and field teams administering the OPV were targeted with terrorist attacks, leading to many vaccinators and polio team members being killed and injured.

The United States deservedly attracted flak from far and near following the revelation. Pakistan's polio vaccination programme already had enough problems to contend with and this new variable only made the task harder by that much. Experts say the distrust sowed by that irresponsible move will continue to exact a price in terms of vaccination refusals for a long time to come.

As of now, the problem has been further complicated by the raging COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns to check its progress. In 2020, when the polio drive was suspended for four months because of a COVID-19 lockdown, 40 million children missed out on crucial poliovirus vaccination.

But challenges cannot be allowed to be justifications for failure or inaction. Pakistan has to walk the walk come hail or thunder. During a recent Senate session, Senator Quratulain Marri grilled the federal government and stated that "We should call polio victims to the parliament to tell how badly we have failed them".

In Feb 2020, the Islamic Development Bank signed a Supplemental Agreement amending the Master Murabaha Agreement with the Government of Pakistan offering financial assistance worth UDD 60 million in order to provide support to contain the contagious and critical poliovirus endemic.

"Pakistan has benefitted from a long-standing understanding and cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank", says Dr Rana Muhammad Safdar, Director General Health and Coordinator of the National Emergency Operations Centre, Polio Eradication Initiative.

In spite of everything, Pakistan has to slog on and get there sooner rather than later – and original research into the origin and nature of the problem will be the first step of the journey. We must realise that our situation is unique with a large population carrying wild poliovirus living astride the Pak-Afghan border.

Could it be that none of the coverage techniques perfected by the global polio eradication initiative works adequately for a population living astride an international border? Could it be that the deep-seated, decades old conflict in Afghanistan is the culprit? We have to take a hard look and know for certain.

Only then can we realise the dream of a polio-free Pakistan and a polio-free world.

# No Mocha for Yemen

*With 20 million Yemenis in the jaws of hunger, the world is content to do little beyond moralising*

By Symrun Razaque

For those among us whose experience of life's ups and downs does not extend beyond a transition from sippy cups of lukewarm milk to double shots of mocha, it is a given that everybody finds a steaming cup of tea or coffee along with a fair bite of something wholesome and delicious waiting when rising every morning, groggy and bleary-eyed. Sadly, however, the lot of the people with whom café mocha originated is far removed from this illusion.

Mocha gets its name from the Yemeni Red Sea port of Mocha (also known as al-Makha), the first to export this coffee with Yemenis being the first to harvest and consume the beverage on a wide scale.

Nowadays, chocolate flavoured delicacies seem to be a phantasm of the past as Yemen struggles with other things. Some 20 million Yemenis wake up hungry every morning and carry starvation on their backs to premature death.

Yemenis have seen war up-close, yet it is the red demarcation on the measuring tape wrapped around a child's upper arm that hits them harder than hostile firepower.

Severe acute malnutrition is a veritable death knell for most children under 5 years of age, with moderate acute malnutrition being a beacon of hope that can keep death at bay for a little while aided by the fortified peanut butter paste provided by the World Food Programme.

Yemen has long battled with some of the highest malnutrition rates in the world. Humanitarian interventions to provide emergency food assistance and treat and prevent malnutrition have prevented an even more severe deterioration. But in 2020, these hard-won gains were lost. Together, the escalating conflict and economic decline and the overwhelming impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic have pushed an already exhausted population to the brink.

Many aid projects including emergency food assistance and WASH services have been disrupted by funding shortfalls. Malnutrition treatment programmes are also at risk if additional funds are not received soon.

A rebel movement known as the Houthis captured the nation's capital in 2014 and ousted its government. A coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) intervened, ostensibly to restore the deposed government. Their bombing campaigns degraded Yemen's fragile economy and destroyed much of its infrastructure. The country's currency collapsed, public employees stopped receiving their pay, and food prices skyrocketed.

The Saudi-Emirati coalition effectively shut down the Red Sea port at Hodeida which is the main entry point for food imports and other humanitarian supplies. By the end of 2018, Yemen was heavily dependent on humanitarian food aid and facing starvation.



It has been downhill ever since, developing into what has been called the worst human-made disaster in the history of the world.

The UN Security Council just passed a resolution in 2018 to condemn the use of food insecurity and starvation as a tactic of war. This is the first time the Council has addressed the issue, acknowledging a threat to the lives of tens of millions of people.

Today, half of all Yemeni children are stunted. Malnutrition impairs growth and cognitive development. The circumstances that have led to a whole generation of Yemenis with severe physical and mental deformities are not only inhumane but monstrous.

The fact that it was completely acceptable for some to starve out a country or people within a country in case of civil war is extremely disturbing. This is exactly the kind of temperament that has allowed genocides, holocausts and fascism to not only prevail but flourish under the veneer of sophisticated global politics.

The National Geographic accused the world of leaving Yemen to die, and while the accusation may be well founded, it is no solution. If finger-pointing could solve issues the sovereign charismatic of the Land of the Pure would have singlehandedly stabilized the economy and achieved world peace in time for his morning jog, without which he is reportedly putting on weight.

The consequentialism here suggests that creating a hue and cry and thumping our chests or desks within the assemblies locally or globally must lead to the necessary change.

If a country on the brink of famine can trigger moralization from every bully pulpit in the world but is not enough to precipitate coordinated global action to right the situation, then that in itself is more alarming than the ongoing pandemic.

# The Flight of Sputnik V

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



*By Shahzad Kazmi*

President Vladimir Putin himself broke the news about COVID 19 vaccine, invented by Russian scientist, which was heard with surprise across the world. Russia had become the first country in the world that succeeded to develop the most awaited vaccine against the coronavirus. It was, of course, rated with great achievement of Russian scientific research and development.

There is no doubt that the development of the vaccine was not an easy task. Russia has made available the complete scientific data of its vaccine Sputnik V to the world.

Indeed, it was a great achievement of Russia, which developed a vaccine building on a SARS vaccine developed previously.

It is commonly known that SARS vaccine was effective and proved to be safe. The vaccine was developed by the Gamaleya Institute, which had previously developed

and voluntarily provided a successful vaccine against the Ebola virus that has helped save millions of lives in Africa. The World Health Organization has also acknowledged it.

No adverse effects were observed in individuals from the first stage to the last stage of Russian vaccine preparation. Remember that there are five basic trials for the development of any vaccine, called clinical trials. According to the Russian Institute, this vaccine has passed through all five, which confirms this vaccine is very safe and effective.

In the first phase of clinical trials, the vaccine is tested on rodents including rats, rabbits, and guinea pigs. In fact, rodents are genetically very similar to the human body. This was because many of the genes of humans and rodents, related to any disease are the same.

In addition, gnawers' inbred lines provide a powerful tool for identifying the genetic basis of both early development and disease characteristics. The immune system of rodents and its basic elements are similar to the human system, allowing the effectiveness of immunotherapy to be tested. This helps scientists to draw conclusions about a vaccine or drug tested on rodents.

Rats have had an important role to play in the development of both the coronavirus vaccine and the drug. Ordinary mice do not suffer from the disease, so scientists are developing a new breed of genetically modified mice to be vaccinated against them by infecting them with the coronavirus.

In the second phase, the vaccine was tested on mammals, which is used to fully test the results of trials on mammals and also help scientists to achieve their targets.

In the third stage, the vaccine was again tested on animals that are compatible with human metabolism, including macaque monkeys or chimpanzees, in which the monkeys were injected with the virus. The infected monkeys were given a dose of the vaccine, and for eight weeks, scientists carefully examined the results to see if there were any reactions or side effects.

In the fourth phase, a group of one hundred patients were vaccinated, during which both positive and negative effects were carefully evaluated. At this stage, Russian Army volunteers took part, and thousands of male and female Russian soldiers were vaccinated under the supervision of the Russian Ministry of Defense. This phase was also successful.

In the fifth and final phase, the vaccine was subjected to rigorous testing – both on men and women of different age groups and physical conditions to determine its rare effects. In this phase, in addition to Russian soldiers, volunteers from the general public, including young and old people of different ages, were tested. The Sputnik V vaccine successfully passed all stages.

How Russia beat the world to the first vaccine against coronavirus is a question often asked by Western countries since. The answer is, Russia was the first country in the world to receive samples of the novel

Coronavirus SARS Code-19, which exploded in Wuhan, China in December last year. On 18 March, scientists at the Vector Institute in Novosibirsk released the first microscopic picture of the new coronavirus. Russian scientists discovered the structure of the coronavirus in March and released images of it.

Then there is the fact that Russia has had a great history of making vaccines since the last 250 years. The first vaccination in the history of Russia was given on 23 October 1768. And the vaccine that was given was none other than the most important and powerful patient of the Russian Empire at that time, Queen Catherine the Great of Russia – who was suffering from smallpox. The vaccine was developed to help the Russian queen to recover from this deadly disease.

This, then, is the context and background for the successful development of the Sputnik V vaccine that the hawks in the West are conveniently ignoring. The journey of Sputnik V, nevertheless continues. After passing all phases of clinical trials, the vaccine is now being administered to members of the Russian military as well as the general public on a mass scale.

Internationally, orders from twenty countries in Asia, the Middle East and Latin America have stacked up to 1 billion

vials of the vaccine and many more countries continue to get in touch with Russia to acquire the protection it offers against the deadly novel coronavirus.

Pakistan, on the other hand, is yet to make its move, because of – you guessed it, backdoor pressure from Western powers. This inaction is inexplicable given Pakistan's precarious situation vis-à-vis the COVID-19 pandemic. Let us hope our leaders can grow the spine it takes to take a decision in the nation's interest.

Jockeying for credit and a war-hawk mentality are both integral to the way the Western civilization works and as such, there is little that can be done to dissuade those who target a lifesaving vaccine in the erroneous belief they are manning the West's duty stations in the information war.

On the other hand, it may be useful to note the Russian authorities have named the vaccine after the famed Soviet spacecraft that was the first to take animals into orbit and safely back to Earth. Just as the signal victory of that early artificial satellite belonged to all humanity for keeps and not to a nation or government, the success of Sputnik V vaccine likewise belongs to all humanity for all times to come.



# Relentless rise in climate refugees

By Eric Shahzar

The COVID-19 crisis disrupted lifestyle of people from all walks of life – but even before the pandemic hit us – the poor and most marginalized were already victims of climate trauma and global warming. There is no doubt that people suffer disproportionately from the adverse effects of climate change and with droughts intensifying, heatwaves becoming more prominent and glaciers shrinking at an alarming rate – we are witnessing a relentless rise in climate refugees.

The Hindu Kush Assessment report states that Pakistan's glaciers will shrink by 36% by the end of this century – putting the lives of millions at stake in the country. While we have faced several disastrous floods throughout our history, with climate crisis accelerating, environment experts now predict that Pakistan will soon be hit by 'super floods', causing unprecedented damage. With super floods in action – people will be left with no option but to migrate to different locations.

Pakistan will witness Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) that occur when the ice walls containing the reservoir fail, sending entire lakes down to populated regions with full momentum. During such a calamity, there is severe loss of lives and physical assets. Millions will have to evacuate in order to save their lives at the expense of losses worth billions. Pakistani climate-induced migration is mainly caused by floods and heat stress, which force people to migrate temporarily or even permanently. In the last decade, the people of Gilgit Baltistan – who have contributed little to accelerated climate change - faced unpredictable extreme weather conditions, resulting in severe flash floods and constant landslides.

People will have to migrate due to sea intrusion in the coastal areas of the country. A prominent environmentalist, Dawar Butt, has stated that the areas of Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and Clifton in Karachi – will be permanently submerged in the coming decades due to a rise in sea levels. Many coastal cities across the globe and small islands are already under water due to a rise in sea levels. Kiribati, a small island in the Pacific, witnessed one of its coastal villages disappear as rising sea levels inundated a seawall. The United Nations Secretary General has raised his voice regarding this issue on numerous occasions. In 2018, an uninhabited islet off the coast of Japan could no longer be found presumably because it had sunk beneath the water's surface. The million dollar question which arises here is that what will happen when seawater inundates our heavily populated coastal cities?

With the climate crisis unleashing its disruptive potential – we are already witnessing a surge in cloud bursts, torrential rains and flash floods. Let's not forget how, last year, the torrential rains in Karachi, caused damage of unprecedented scale and nature. The Met Department said that Karachi received 223.5 mm of rain in just 12 hours – the highest amount of rain ever recorded in a single day. The poor and marginalized with vulnerable shelters had to migrate to new locations.



Let's not forget how the fast shrinking of deltas have caused people to migrate to different locations. According to the US-Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Water at the Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro, the Indus delta has shrunk by 92% from 13,000 square km in 1833 to only 1,000 sq km now. The rise of sea levels as a result of global warming is drowning river deltas. History has shown us how the depletion of deltas have been linked to the disappearance of towns and villages

Climate included migration is not limited to Pakistan but is really a global phenomenon. The World Bank states that three regions; Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia will generate 143 million more climate migrants by 2050. This will inevitably exacerbate many humanitarian crises all around the world and may lead to more people being on the move.

Climate refugees will inevitably cause more stress on Pakistan's already vulnerable economy, where food inflation is on the rise, per capita income has diminished and national debt is skyrocketing to unprecedented levels. More than 60% of Pakistanis are food insecure while the COVID-19 pandemic has only added fuel to fire.

Climate trauma is a planetary issue which one country cannot solve on its own. South Asian countries must collaborate in coordinated forums such as the South Asian Association Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to mitigate the climate crisis. As of now, South Asia is the world's least integrated region – where important issues have been sidelined due to political rifts.

Accelerated climate change is intensifying events such as desertification, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, fast melting of glaciers, rain pattern shifts and loss of biodiversity – which will give rise to climate refugees. This global challenge will continue to create a multitude of critical issues that we are not ready for. Mitigating the effects of this planetary issue have now become the urgent need of the hour before it is too late.

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

# 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 1 of 2)

Turkey, a bridge between the Middle East and Europe, for centuries was part of the two continents. Turkey's head was in Europe and its heart was in the Holy Land. Regent mothers of European and Caucasian descent played a significant role in the House of Ottomans. No wonder then that the collapse of the Ottomans pushed the political elite to look up to a resurgent Europe.

The Young Turks movement, Committee for Union and Progress, Turkish nationalism ideals and the urge to reassert as a proud nation culminated into Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and his party's famed six arrows concept of modern Turkey, a synthesis of Western ideals, which are;

**1. Republicanism:** Firmly established that sovereignty lay with the people, there would be no more Sultans. But this did not automatically lead to Western-style democracy. Under the shadow of Great Depression and World War I, capitalism appeared to many as a failing system, while parliamentary democracy seemed an unending squabble between competing parties. Kemalism favoured a strong state and repressed many opponents and alternative parties. This leads to the second principle.

**2. Nationalism:** Nations have the right to self-determination and no nation has the right to expand through colonial or imperial hegemony. People of Turkey regardless of religion and race are Turks as regards to citizenship.

**3. Populism:** A hundred years back the term was more neutral. It is the taking over of the government by the people. Hence populism meant that sovereignty lay with the people within the national borders. Populism for them also meant unity of the people over class and religious ethnicity. This led to the fourth principle.

**4. Etatism:** This was the belief in the power of the state to get involved in areas of economy that private industry was incapable of or proved inept at managing. Inspired by Soviet Union and Communism, Etatism was primarily a socialist principle.

**5. Secularism:** Kemalist secularism had more in common with French laicism, than the American understanding. Laicism didn't mean separation of religion and state but the control of religion by the state, to keep an eye on the public sphere which meant controlling 80,000 mosques in the country. Since Laicism meant that state should have control over the direction of the country and Islam is a conservative force and needed to be kept under check by the state.

**6. Reform:** The ability to adjust the political movement in the new circumstances was critical to the success of all previous principles.



Except for republicanism, all these had actually firm Ottoman roots, not as doctrines or principles but as characteristics of the modernization process, and as a part of the Ottoman polity. That is to say, Mustafa Kemal was not the creator of these principles. Instead, he was the political leader who systemized them as a political program to be implemented for the transformation of Turkey into a modern state.

Cutting all relations with the Ottoman past and arguing that the new Turkey has no relation with Old (Ottoman) Turkey; that "the Ottoman government has gone into history" and "now a new Turkey has been born", a very characteristic of the Kemalist discourse, found its expression in transformationism. This principle, defined as a commitment to ongoing change and support for the Kemalist program, was the spirit lying behind reforms in early Turkish Republic.

The revisionist approach viewed this Turkish Revolution not as the instrument of a discontented bourgeoisie, it did not ride on a wave of peasant dissatisfaction with the social order, and it did not have as target the sweeping away of feudal privileges, but it did take as a target the values of the Ottoman ancient regime.

Based on these six guidelines new institutions were formed and a new political culture was created. But most of the population comprised of peasantry living in religious conservatism. They knew little about these reforms. To make this program successful, material and economic gains reaching the masses were critical.

The state invested in and monopolized many industries like shipping and manufacturing during the 1930s with great success. After the death of Ataturk in 1938, many in the ruling party differed with the interpretation of the six arrows.

Economic growth and industrialization funded by wealthy western provinces resulted in newly developed eastern provinces creating a new demographic balance in Anatolia as

compared to the Caliphate era. Recruitment in Army and bureaucracy from these areas also increased, as did population mobility from eastern provinces to Western Turkey.

Kemalist political reforms included closure of the office of Sheikh Ul Islam, religious schools and Sufi Orders. All Waqf (religious trust) endowments were nationalized. European hats replaced Fez Caps. Secularism replaced Islam in the new constitution. Use of religion was banned in state politics. Education was completely overhauled on secular lines.

Gregorian calendar replaced Hijri calendar. Arabic numerals and Latin alphabet were introduced on 1 December 1928 and by 1 June 1929 written text material throughout Turkey was completely replaced by State authority.

According to Ismet Inonu, the second president of the Turkish republic, "For us, the big impact and the benefit of alphabet reform was that it eased the way to cultural reform. We inevitably lost our connection with Arabic culture."

Turk national identity was promoted against Muslim identity while aligning the nation with the modern civilization of Western Europe, which embraced the Latin alphabet.

During early 1930s, Azan (Call to prayers) in Arabic was replaced by Turkish Azan and later it became an offence (punishable by three months of imprisonment) to recite Azan in Arabic. Performing prayers (Namaz) in Turkish was also introduced.

Change in demographic balance between conservative Eastern and Liberal Western Turkey, greater participation of Eastern Anatolian population in state affairs, and harsh implementation of anti-religious rules created two competing groups in the single ruling Republican Peoples Party: The Marmara faction promoting secular codes and the Anatolian faction influenced by Islamic values.

Ismet Inonu, once the right hand man of Kemal Ataturk, ruled Turkey (1938-1950) on Kemalist lines but was defeated in the first free multiparty election of 1950 by Adnan Menderes of the newly formed Democratic Party (DP). He was an MP from 1931 till 1945, when he was expelled from RPP. Menderes represented the Anatolian conservative faction.

After his landslide victory, Azan in Arabic was legalized, some masjid-mekteb schools were permitted, and Menderes relaxed much of the official antipathy of Ataturk and RPP towards the more conservative manifestations of Islamic religious feeling. He also granted Ottoman family females in Exile, right to return home.

The DP encouraged private enterprises as opposed to a planned economy, but it eventually brought the country to insolvency by the policy of heedless importation of foreign goods and technology. While the lot of the average villager did improve it was done at the price of national economic integrity.

In spite of Turkey's crushing economic problems, Menderes maintained his popularity with the peasantry, and in 1954 elections the DP won again. During his second term in power he became intolerant of criticism, instituted press censorship and jailed journalists.

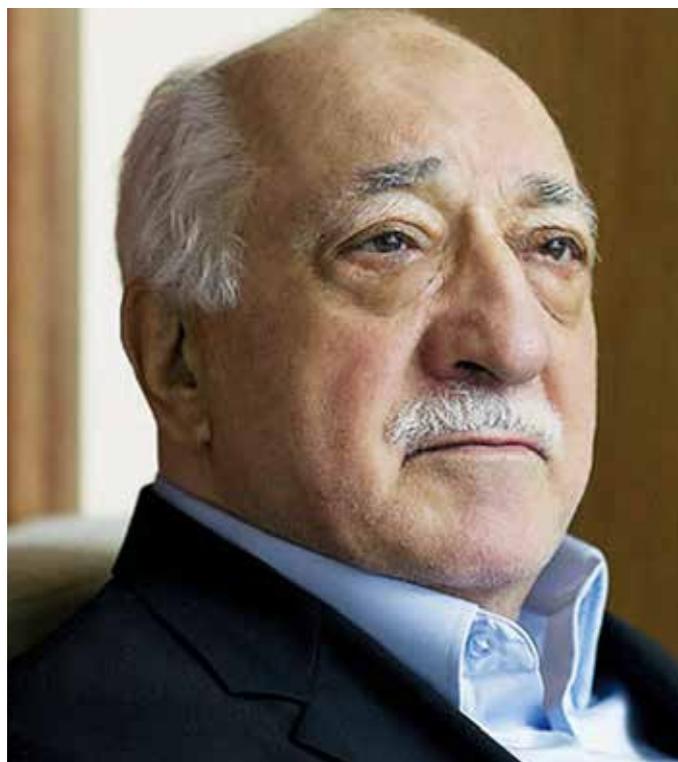
The Turkish military as guardians of Kemalist ideas felt country was going into turmoil. Yet in 1957, Menderes won the elections again. Opposition protests intensified and in May 1960, General Cemal Gursul overthrew the government in a military coup.

Menderes was accused of embezzling state funds, extravagance, and corruption among other charges. He was sentenced to death and hanged along with several other ministers.

In 1990, on the 29th anniversary of Menderes' execution, he was posthumously pardoned by the Turkish Parliament and his grave was moved to a mausoleum named after him in Istanbul.

After the 1960 coup, left leaning factions of RPP promoted Kemalism as anti-imperialist socialist revolution and masses from the working class sided with the left. The right leaning pro-American faction was alarmed and used Islam as a counter-balance, attracting support from Anatolian middle class.

In essence Turkish politics of the sixties was a reflection of global cold war, but this radical clash of the sixties weakened the RPP's grip of power. After the 1971 military coup, Turkey changed prime ministers 11 times, economy further stagnated, and left and right wing groups continued their clashes, resulting in thousands of assassinations.



The seventies witnessed the emergence of Islamic groups favoured by pro-American state as anti-communist elements. Two groups in particular gained significance. One was Fatehullah Gullen's Islamic movement which was ostensibly progressive in outlook and promoted education, science and commerce among Muslim activists. The other was Necmettin Erbakan's Islamic party which served in government as junior coalition partners.

[To be concluded]

# One on One with Zara Naeem Dar, ACCA Topper

*“Success isn’t about what you accomplish in your life, it’s about what you inspire others to do.”*

By Palwasha Khattak



Zara Naeem Dar made a world record by achieving the first position among 527,000 ACCA students of 179 countries. Now she intends to serve the nation by starting her own consultancy firm.

In an exclusive interview with the Truth International, she talks about her motivation to pursue ACCA, her studying style, and future goals – and just about everything from gaining overnight fame to inspiring young high achievers to hold onto their dreams. Given below is an abridged transcript of the conversation with the new young face of the world of Accountancy.

**TTI: First of all, what was your motivation behind opting for ACCA?**

**ZND:** There were two main inspirations that made me opt for ACCA. The first was obviously my interest in the subject Accountancy and the second one was the global mobility that ACCA has to offer. In terms of working, the movement is quite flexible and you are not bound to restrict yourself to one geography and that is what made me go for this field.

**TTI: How do you feel about the overwhelming response from all across Pakistan on your achievement?**

**ZND:** I feel truly blessed and extremely happy because of the positive response I am getting from across Pakistan and from other parts of the world too. I have become a source of inspiration for people and I feel that it is one of my greatest achievements.

**TTI: During preparation for exams, what studying techniques do you usually opt for?**

**ZND:** When I am preparing for my exams, what I usually do is I always go over the text first. I go over the syllabus thoroughly and then I move to the practice questions and

then come back to any question I get stuck onto. I usually go over that topic and work on those questions again. I keep switching back and forth between questions and texts so I can cover everything and leave nothing out.

**TTI: People dream of becoming known in their field. Did you ever have any such dream?**

**ZND:** Even before choosing Accountancy, I always had a dream that whichever field I choose for myself, I wanted to excel in it and wanted to be known for it, not only in Pakistan but internationally too. I think it’s a huge achievement for me that I have gotten that recognition now.

**TTI: What is that one subject that you like and one subject that you hate the most?**

**ZND:** One subject that I like would be definitely Finance, which includes Financial Reporting and Financial Accounting since I love to play with these numbers. I would not say that I hate any subject because I have a trick to not hate subjects and I find it slightly weird. Whenever I find a subject that is difficult to understand, I spend more time on it, so I start hating it a bit less. So there is no subject that I really hate.

**TTI: What are the common problems ACCA students come across while passing all thirteen exams?**

**ZND:** From what I have seen, the most common problem that ACCA students come across is that they lack motivation. Some of them feel demotivated if they fail once, which should not be the case. They need to have a positive attitude about their mistakes and learn from them for better decision-making in the future to pass the exam.

**TTI: In our country, people tend to choose Medical or engineering subjects over everything else. Why did you choose ACCA?**

**ZND:** I have never been fond of becoming a doctor, even though it’s a great profession. I could never picture myself as an engineer or a doctor since I have always seen myself as a businesswoman or someone working in business industry, which is the reason I chose Accounting.

**TTI: Your Instagram tells us that you love experimenting with makeup. Is it a hobby or just time pass?**

**ZND:** Makeup is definitely a hobby and a side profession for me. I get really inspired by many international makeup artists and also hope to reach their level one day if Allah permits. For now, it’s just a hobby for me but I do take clients whenever I find the time.

**TTI: How do you balance your life as an excelled student and a makeup artist?**

**ZND:** I believe that whatever you do in life, you need to create some sort of balance. Whether your interest is in makeup, games, sports, or anything else, you should always

prioritize creating balance. For me, I try to balance my life in a way that when it's time for studying, I focus on my studies solely for 2 to 3 hours straight. Then if I have to do makeup, I'll focus solely on makeup for whatever time it requires and that's how I divide my time and balance my work.

**TTI: How has been your experience as a social media user with a public account?**

**ZND:** So far, my experience with social media has been really great. I have received so much love and prayers from all the people in Pakistan and outside. I feel that there are very few fortunate people who don't get a lot of hate on social media and I consider myself lucky enough to be amongst those few people.

**TTI: Do you feel social media is working as a deterrent for the young generation?**

**ZND:** Social media has its own pros and cons. No one can live without social media because the entire world is there. So one needs to be active on social media to know what's going on around the world. I also believe that excess of everything is bad and this goes for the students too. If you are using social media excessively, it can't be good for you.

**TTI: What is your message for all those going in the Accountancy field?**

**ZND:** To all the people going into the Accountancy field, I want to say that this field is not going to be easy and it's definitely not a



piece of cake, so one should be mentally prepared for the hardship it will throw at you. If one is motivated and hardworking enough, then they are going to love it and also love the process of studying hard for it. One should only enter the field of accountancy if one is determined, well-motivated, and has an interest in the subject.

**TTI: Would you like to tell us about your future plans?**

**ZND:** After I complete my ACCA and Articleship, I will Insha Allah start my own consultancy firm here in Pakistan where I would want to implement international best practices and take the firm to the international standards, so that it can really benefit my country.

## Wood is Wax to this Exceptional Human

*An imperfect vessel can hinder the indomitable human spirit but it cannot entirely thwart it*

By Azka Gouher

**R**ahmat Wali Zarsun is an exceptional human being from Pakistan's Kalash Valley who attained the mastery of wood carving despite being physically challenged. Although the lower half of his body is paralysed, this indomitable spirit sculpts wood with unmatched skill to create truly exceptional artefacts.

Wali lives in Kalash Valley, Chitral where he makes his art pieces and sells them for a living. The Truth International sat down with Wali to talk about his experience of life and his creativity.

**TTI: Tell us about yourself, your place of birth and where you grew up.**

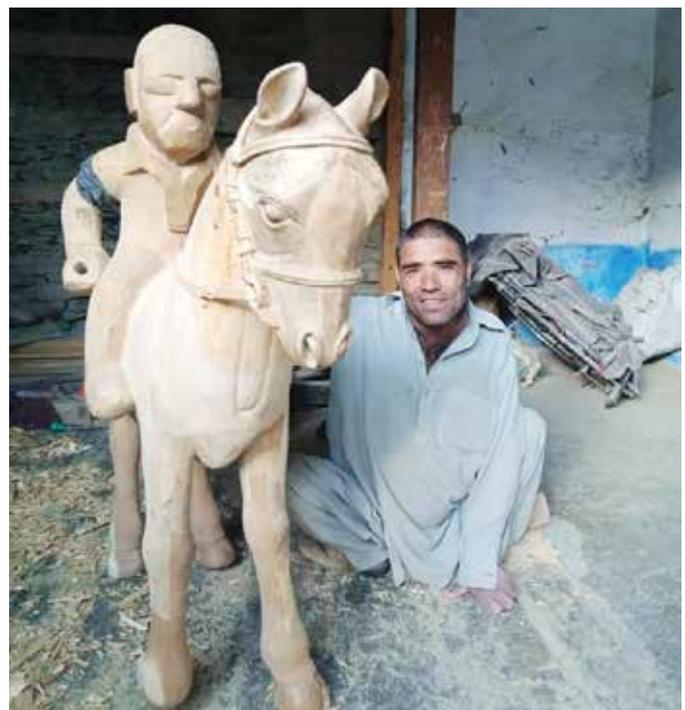
**Wali:** My name is Rahmat Wali Zarsun. I am 45 years old. I was born in Rumbor in Kalash Valley, Chitral. I grew up here and still living here with my family.

**TTI: Tell us about your family and studies**

**Wali:** I have never been to school and never studied. I live in a joint-family. I have three brothers, my parents and grandmother living under the same roof.

**TTI: Why did you start this work?**

**Wali:** Since half of my body is paralysed from childhood, I have



been dependent on my father and brothers who brought home food and fed me. After I grew up I started to wonder what would happen to me if my parents died. Who will feed me? How will I survive? This thought kept me restless.

I started to think about how I could stop being dependent and make a living of my own. In my neighbourhood, wood sculpturing was common. People would make everything with wood. I thought of making different things of wood since I could still use my hands. I learnt the skill and started my own business.

**TTI: How do you sell these pieces – what is your channel of selling?**

**Wali:** I have a contract with Hindukush Heights [a tourist resort in Chitral] where my work is displayed. People, including foreigners, buy my pieces that are displayed and I receive orders to make pieces for people. I make human sculptures, religious figures and others.

**TTI: How much time does it take to make one piece?**

**Wali:** It depends on the type and size of the piece being made. If I am making a human sculpture, it takes about 23 days to a month. If the piece is smaller, it would take a couple of weeks.

**TTI: How much revenue does this business generate for you?**

**Wali:** I sell human sculpture for PKR 85,000. Other pieces are also more or less the same price. It depends on how much work the sculpture requires and the price is determined accordingly.

**TTI: How much to you make on a monthly basis?**

**Wali:** I get to sell one or two pieces in the time of 3 months or longer. It takes a month to make one piece but it takes months sell them. As I receive an order I start working on it. Once it is ready, its full payment is received on delivery. I get more orders when Chitral is visited by foreigners.

**TTI: Have you received any recognition for your work?**

**Wali:** I have been called by Lok Virsa in Islamabad, where my work is also displayed and sold. My work was once sold in yearly exhibition. I was interviewed by a newspaper at Islamabad while I was visiting there for the exhibition. I also received a huge order from the exhibition. I looked for the wood there to start work but could not find the kind I was looking for so I went back to Chitral to find the wood and work on the order. I have received recognition on social media, including Facebook.



# Bite into Luxury!



PREMIUM CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

# A Very Special T20I Series Win for Greenshirts

*The Proteas taste their first ever defeat in a T20I series as Pakistan complete a ton of T20I wins*

By Ali Abdullah

A couple of sixes by Hasan Ali in the penultimate over off Andile Phehlukwayo got Pakistan over the line in a run chase that did wobble a couple of times. The 2-1 series win is significant in more than one ways, for South Africa has never been beaten in a T20 series in the sub-continent before. Also, the home side has become the first country to register one hundred T20I wins.

The dew factor in Lahore at this time of the year and 6pm local time start made Babar Azam put South Africa in to bat in the third and deciding game at the Gaddafi Stadium. Pakistan had taken the field with three changes: Asif Ali, Hasan Ali and newcomer Zahid Mahmood coming in for a do-or-die contest. One had a feeling the home side will need to rely on its natural aggression to be at their best.

South Africa didn't get off to a rapid start on a pitch that offered grip for spinners from which Mohammad Nawaz benefited to claim two wickets. He tallied with 41-3 in six overs of powerplay with Hasan Ali, after being hit for three fours in a row, and clean bowling Pite van Blijon with a slower off-cutter.

Wrist spinner Zahid in his very first over had Heinrich Klaasen caught and the very next ball trapped Janneman Malan leg before to leave South Africa tottering at 46-5. The absence of Shadab Khan created room for the 32-year from Dadu in Sindh.

In the last few weeks, the selection of Nauman Ali in Tests and now of Zahid in T20, should provide a great boost for Hyderabad Cricket Association, the side the two slow bowlers had represented in Pakistan domestic cricket.

It was all down to the big-hitting David Miller but he saw Usman Qadir become the fourth Pakistan bowler tonight to claim a wicket in their first over. South African batsmen had not shown enough skills against slow bowling and the sixth wicket was down with only 48 to their credit.

The Proteas have complete disaster and a number of soft dismissals to blame against the ball turning for both wrist spinners. The score after 10 overs was 61-6 and at this stage the super sopper and rope arrived to absorb much of the dew from the outfield.

Bowling four overs on a trot Zahid finished with 3-40, his figures dented by two huge sixes by Miller in his last over, one of the most in-demand T20 franchise player in the world. He was asked to carry his team once again after arriving in the seventh over and the opposition on top.

The left-handed flat batted a four off Faheem to take South Africa past the 100 mark in 14.2 overs, still looking for at least another 50 runs to make it competitive.

He needed 30 balls for his fifty as he worked hard to keep the strike until he was bowled by Faheem in the final over. By



that time, he had clubbed four sixes and posted a competitive total of 164-8. His innings of 85 off 45 balls, featuring five fours and seven sixes, was a good example of one man stealing the show.

A question mark arose of Babar not using a slow bowler instead of Faheem, who conceded 25 runs in the final. The in-form Mohammad Rizwan had a new partner in Haider Ali and the two gave their side a perfect platform with 51-0 in the six overs of powerplay.

The stand was broken by Tabraiz Shamsi off his very first ball with a chinaman bowling over the wicket. An eye-catching delivery. He also trapped Rizwan leg before with 42 off 30 balls to his name, which was a key wicket.

Pakistan's run-rate was fine and it was all about keeping faith in themselves. At the end of 10 overs, the score was 80-2 and requiring 85 off 60 balls didn't call for panic at all. The fielding side needed to be cautious of their moves on a wet outfield.

Shamsi struck in his third over and Hussain Talat's swipe will not go well with the team management. Pakistan's hundred came in 13 overs with Babar finding the boundary more frequently than South Africa would have liked.

Having been hit for a boundary twice by the Pakistan captain on the off side, Shamsi cleaned him up with a nippy off cutter to stop him on 44 off 30 balls with five fours and a six.

Klaasen's move to bring back Shamsi to bowl his last over earned him another wicket when big-hitting Asif Ali holed out to long off. It was a poor shot and Shamsi ended with 4-25 and it was a very special spell.

Pakistan now needed 47 off last 5 overs and it was all down to their all-rounders. After Faheem's departure to an ill-advised lofted attempt, Nawaz with two fours and a six cut the target to 16 off the last two overs.

It was a high full-toss (no-ball) from Andile Phehlukwayo hit over square leg for a six by Hasan Ali that sunk South Africa. The comeback kid would repeat the stroke a few balls later to bring joy to the Pakistan camp.

# Multitalented trendsetter Yasir Akhtar on his new film *Rung Dorangi*

*Household name Yasir Akhtar, an iconic filmmaker, actor, producer and singer, is all set to star in his forthcoming romantic-comedy movie Rung Dorangi scheduled to release this month on LTN Family. Following the success of his film Azaad last year, Yasir brings us his new passion project that will surely entertain the audience.*

*Revisit his past achievements and uncover his vision as a storyteller in an exclusive interview with Haider Rifaat of The Truth International.*



*By Haider Rifaat*

**Yasir, your new project film *Rung Dorangi* is slated for a release this month. Tell us more about the project.**

Rung Dorangi is an amalgamation of humor and emotions. The light moments will suddenly take you to a tragic scene with a lot of twists and turns. It is not a “saas bahu” story. You will experience a fresh environment with attractive characters. We have filmed Rung Dorangi on a beautiful farmhouse, surrounding areas of Malir and even the posh areas of Karachi. Some scenes will give you glimpses of my earlier works – Jayen Kahan Armaan, Sard Aag, Tapal Cinema, Mera Ghar Aik Whirlpool and my songs like Milan, Chandni, My Love, Aey Sanam and recent musical work – Sansani and Saiyaan.

I mostly work on concepts that involve human emotions. Rung Dorangi will take you back to a time when things were simple yet equally modern and satisfying for your soul. Hamza (my character) and Omer (Shees Sajjad Gul) are living in a farmhouse away from the city. Hamza is a single parent whose wife passed away in an accident. The plot takes an interesting turn when Ayesha (Namra Shahid) flees her wedding because her mother Sakina (Humera Bano) forces

her to marry the son of her landlord’s brother (Faizan Shaikh). Ayesha escapes on the day of her marriage. Her best friend Sadia (Palwasha Yahya) takes her to the farmhouse where Hamza and Omer live. A series of incidents occur when Ayesha starts living in the farmhouse with Hamza, Omer and their helper Makkhan (Irfan Motiwala). The film then brings surprising elements when characters of Safdar (Hasham Khan) and Jibran (Tabrez Ali) enter.

**Give our readers a few reasons why they should watch *Rung Dorangi*.**

Rung Dorangi will surely take you to a different, simpler world. It is a very gripping script shot in beautiful locations. Wonderful acting by each and every actor! One can easily watch and enjoy the film with all the age groups. My new OST for Rung Dorangi is simple yet deep.

**What other aspects of *Rang Dorangi* would grab our attention?**

Rung Dorangi is close to life with great production value and colors of joy. Above all, it is packed with human feelings.



**Tell us about the script of Rung Dorangi. What themes have you grappled in the film?**

I discussed the initial plot with Dureen Anwer in London. We developed the basic screenplay. I was looking for a writer to pen down a script with a basic screenplay. Veteran actress Parveen Akbar introduced me to the extremely talented actor and writer Saqib Sameer. We both sat down for more than a month for hours to work on the script. Saqib has vast experience in film, television and stage. I was lucky to have him on board as a writer. While explaining the screenplay to Saqib, he added many stronger situations. Rung Dorangi has humor, romance, tragedy, adventure and even mystery. The characters have a bonding with one another. The roles are very strong and everyone has acted brilliantly.

**Why did you decide to go ahead with a rom-com film venture as opposed to a more serious, dramatic genre?**

Since my last film Azaad was a serious drama, I wanted to select a subject that had humor and some light moments. Rung Dorangi has many ingredients. It is fun-filled with many serious scenes. I try to balance my stories with both rom-com and drama. The actress Namra Shahid in Rung Dorangi has a totally different character as compared to that of Momal Sheikh's in Azaad. I like a variety of characters. Besides, there is so much seriousness in the world right now. We all need to relax and go back to the basics. Also, after travelling the world and living in the UK for so long, I have realized that people love to watch rom-coms.

**How would you contrast your experience filming Azaad in the UK with Rung Dorangi in Pakistan?**

For me, producing something in the UK is as easy as working in Pakistan. I did so many productions, concerts and events in England that I feel the same vibe there as I do here in my home country. Azaad was a challenging project. We had to cover many locations of London. It had new talent with many experienced actors. After Rung Dorangi, my next gig will be Mujh Ko Pata Hai based in London.

Moving on, as a director and a producer, you have launched many trendsetting productions in Pakistan; Music Channel Charts, Tapal Cinema, French Toast, Mera Ghar Aik Whirpool, Jayen Kahan Armaan, Sard Aag and Azaad among others. Would you like to pull off a sequel to your earlier works?

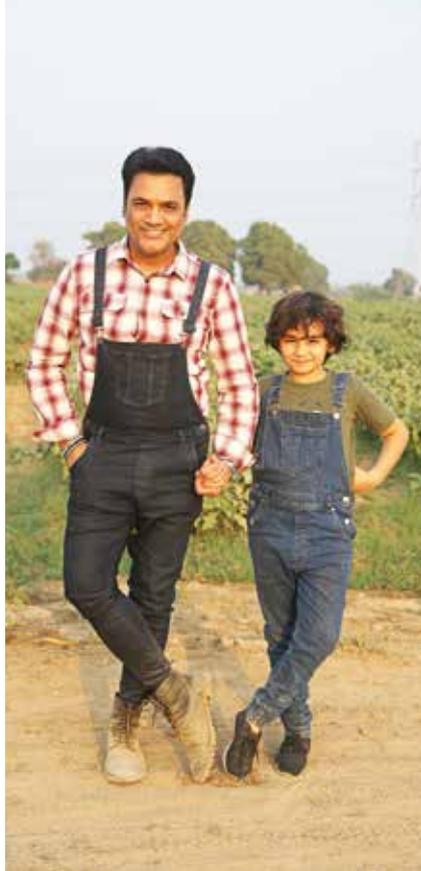
I would love to do a sequel of my drama serial Sard Aag, which I did for HUM Television in 2006. It was filmed in Manchester with some new actors. I auditioned talent from acting schools in Birmingham, Manchester and London. Brilliant actors like Nauman Ijaz and the late Abid Ali were invited from Pakistan. It had 24 episodes in total. Sard Aag is the first British-Pakistani drama serial. Those who watched were impressed with its script and quality of production. The drama was way ahead of its time.

**What is your vision as a director?**

To bring positivity and hope through my productions and songs. Also, subjects that the audience can relate to. I understand a script, the situations and improvise through my personal experiences. Travelling to so many countries has made me quite balanced. Big or small, I believe every character is important in a story.

I observe people, their mannerisms and choose artists according to these requirements. For me, it is not essential to cast big stars in a production. One should cast an actor who is suitable for the character. There must be realism in the story and acting. The locations in any of the productions are just like the characters.

I have been in the entertainment industry since childhood and got to learn a lot from my uncle Javed Jabbar, who was a pioneer of a modern advertising agency in Pakistan. Mehreen Jabbar is my first cousin and we have spent our childhood together. I have worked with numerous veterans of the PTV family including Shehzad Khalil, Sahira Kazmi, Shahid Iqbal Pasha, Sultana Siddiqui, Kazim Pasha, Haroon Rind and more. I learnt a lot from them while working with them.



**Which celebrities received their big breaks as artists through your productions?**

There is a long list of artists who got big breaks and launched their careers through my productions; Shehzad Roy, Najam Sheraz, Humayun Saeed, Fakhar-e-Alam, Shamoan Abbasi, Armeena Khan, Zara Shaikh, Nadeem Jafri, Komal Rizvi, Tooba Siddiqui, Javeria Abbasi, Nida Yasir, Najaf Bilgrami, Azfar Ali and many others.

**Finally, how would you compare your singing of earlier songs like Kabhi to Hoga Mera Milan, Chandni, My Love, Aey Sanam Teray Naal to your recent ones, Sansani, Take it Easy and Saiyaan from the film Azaad?**

I have progressed. My vocals and sense of composition are better now. I definitely know what kind of sound I need for a song. After producing so many songs here in Pakistan and in the UK, I am comfortable working with other genres of music that can easily gel in with artists from other backgrounds.

## Flicks After Netflix

*As Netflix tucks into the Pakistani entertainment market, it has also demonstrated its huge potential to disrupt key aspects of storytelling*

By Zainab Umer

As it landed in Pakistan back in 2016, Netflix proved to be quite the game changer, dislodging the age-old storyline of audiovisual entertainment. Several Pakistanis promptly jumped ship from the conventional narrative to a much radical one where neither a love triangle nor a broken marriage were part of the central idea.

For years Pakistanis have grown accustomed to sitting in front of a screen for two to three hours with a bag of popcorn in hand watching the same lovers' quarrel that eventually turned into eternal companionship or the idea that love prevailed against all odds. Films like Devdas and Dilwale

dhulhanian le jayenge in particular helped cement the genre's mystique, promising to keep the audiences glued to the television and cinema screens.

However, over the past decade, the quality of Hindi movies has drastically improved. Films like Kapoor and Sons, Gully Boy and Simba integrated a good love story with social issues, shedding light on the years old rape culture. These films spoke about the LGBTQ+ community as well. Although it has been a means of entertainment for as long as one can remember, the media is now also being used to spread social awareness amongst the audience.

Pakistan and India have been quarrelsome since olden days but Pakistanis still manage to keep their love for Bollywood movies alive. So much so that after the ban implemented by the Supreme Court on Indian films in 2019, the black market for pirated films had its sales skyrocketing. Every film banned could now be bought with some extra money.

The landing of Netflix in Pakistan however brought about a serious decrease in these black market sales. Bollywood film lovers could now watch all kinds of banned movies legally. Thousands of movies and shows were just a click away, not to forget



# NETFLIX

that Netflix provided clear copies and an option to pay far less than the cable companies charged. All the while Netflix also raised awareness on the matter of intellectual property rights and artist royalties.

“As they've proved time and time again through their social media and branding, Netflix knows what their audience wants”, a recent article by Social Media Today said.

The USD 1.2 billion company changed the meaning of entertainment when it brought a variety of ideas to the table. People could now watch seasons, short films, and documentaries according to their preferred genres. Pakistanis who only had a preference for comedy, romance and action were now exploring genres like anime, crime, reality, fantasy and foreign dramas. Netflix also targeted its young audience, introducing a kid's account with all kinds of shows having child-friendly content.

In 2020 most Pakistanis were going bananas over the famous Netflix show Money Heist. The craze reached such a peak that Mangobaaz reported a Money Heist themed wedding, stating: “Money Heist has to be the most-awaited and most talked about show these days. Since the fourth season dropped on 3rd April, fans have been going absolutely gaga over it. So a couple took this Money heist craze to the next level and had a themed wedding”.

The Pakistani middle class was seen obsessed with the trends introduced by these shows. Netflix became the only option present especially in the times of quarantine when the nation stood at a standstill with nothing much to do. Shows like Ertugrul, Stranger things and Peaky Blinders experienced fast popularity, all based in different times and painting different cultures and storylines.

Netflix also released a show in July called “A suitable boy” with a story most young adults could relate to. Based in 1951 and newly

independent India, a girl named Lata Mehra is torn between the promise of a happily ever after and duty to her family. Fighting against societal norms and class differences, Lata tries to find love only to be disappointed.

As consumer demands change Netflix brings new things to the table, going against the standard storyline and evolving shows according to the modern narrative of entertainment.

However, as beneficial as Netflix may be for some individuals, a large fraction of the population has yet to feel the same way about the content platform. Several Pakistanis say due to the Netflix feature of regional selection the variety becomes quite limited and paying USD 7.99 a month for it does not seem like a sensible move.

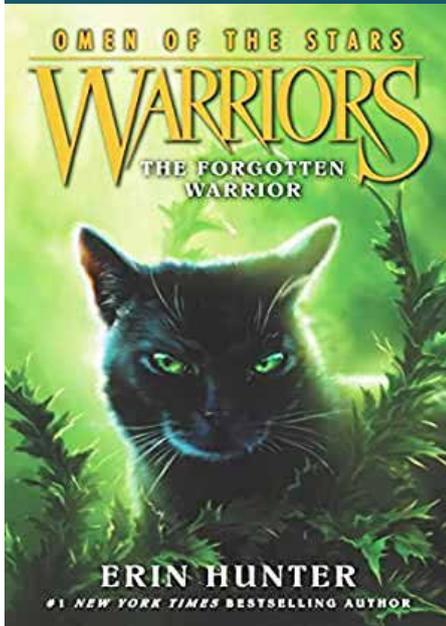
Another thing that keeps Netflix in the bad books is its outdated library. “These days, only Netflix originals can really be considered timely and trendy”, an article by MUO recently stated. Due to convoluted licensing deals, most shows arrive on Netflix months after they are released – and people hate to wait.

Netflix has still not experienced the wrath of the Pakistani moral brigade. Even though Netflix has gained popularity in virtually no time, there are still aspects that the society has yet to comment on. Netflix with its diverse shows entertains but a lot of the content it curates remains outside the moral and cultural norms that this nation has clutched on to for so long. Most content is rated 18+ due to lewd language, nudity, sex and violence.

All in all, while Netflix may satisfy the entertainment needs of the Pakistani urban middle class, it has a long way to go in order to win the hearts of the vast majority of the population that still find pirated copies and torrenting to be the better option.

## Omen of The Stars Warriors: The Forgotten Warrior

Author: Erin Hunter  
Reviewed by: Alizay Ashraf  
ISBN: 978-0-06-155526-8  
Publisher: HarperCollins  
Pages: 314



After countless moons of treachery, Tigerstar's Dark Forest apprentices are ready to lay siege upon the warrior Clans. As the Clan cats seek out their allies and enemies, Jayfeather, Lionblaze & Dovewing search desperately for the fourth cat who is prophesied to lead the Clans to victory - and who may be their only hope for survival.

Amazing book especially for people who love cats. It is suspenseful, dramatic and also surprisingly sad sometimes. You will get incredibly attached to the characters. It has feeling like Harry Potter with the clans instead of houses you will want to know what you are loyal to which is hard to decide as all the clans have differences. If you're looking for a new series, this is one to try.

This book brings focus and perspective to some of the main characters from the New Prophecy, who were basically kicked to the curb at the end of the Power of Three series. In this book, Firestar, as well, is revisited as a real person again, instead of

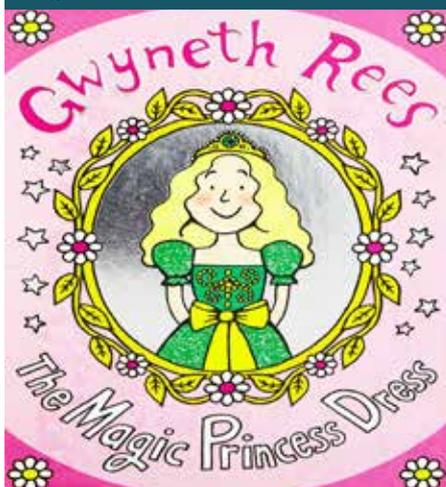
a distant, infallible figurehead, as he has increasingly been portrayed.

What truly makes the book great is that the events happen in sequence, have reason and work with the natural flow of the story. That element was sorely missed since the first arc where every action led directly into another tale. Ever since *The New Prophecy*, the multiple perspectives were clumsy. I think by now the Erin's have found their proper pacing and execute the narratives of Jayfeather, Lionblaze and Dove paw +1 much more brilliantly. This is the 'return to greatness' fans have come to expect yet were sorely disappointed by the broken paths and dead ends before. It breathes life into the series once more and is an excellent addition for any Warriors fan old or new to start their enthusiasm for the series once again.

I really enjoyed this book and would recommend this book for children above the age of 9 to read.

## Gwyneth Rees: The Magic Princess Dress

Reviewed by: Alizay Ashraf  
ISBN: 978-0-330-46113-9  
Publisher: PanMacmillan  
Pages: 282



When Ava enters Marietta's dress shop on the hunt for her missing cat, she has no idea how magical it will be - but before she knows it, she's trying on a beautiful Princess Bridesmaid dress, only to be whisked away to Fairytale Land - where Cinderella is about to get married, and her Fairy Godmother is about to turn Ava's cat into something a lot less cute and fluffy.

Really funny and enjoyable book to read, it was jolly, dramatic and really fun to read. It was super adventurous. I really liked Ava, she tells it how it is and feels very normal in what is very definitely not a normal situation. I also liked the way there were parallels between her life and Cinderella's story and the stories of other characters all blended well and drew out

different threads from the story we all know so well. There was a good balance in the issues faced by Ava in both her real life and the magical world. There is plenty of humor too and plenty to keep you turning the pages.

Any girl who has loved princesses and fairy tales will enjoy the twists and turns of this well-crafted story. The story is left open for sequels but I haven't discovered any. I hope there are more as this was a highly entertaining and clever read.

I would definitely recommend this book to my friends and it is the perfect book if you are looking for something light to read. This book is suitable for children above the age of 9.

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