

The Truth International

15th - 30th November 2021

TLP Agreement

Secret deal restores peace on the streets

Establishment - Government Relationship

Repeated events raise questions that the link is broken

World - US Cold Shoulder for Afghans

In Winter No food or aid for Afghans only Diplomacy

Handling the TLP



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CELEBRATING A DECADE OF SECURE AND RELIABLE CLOUD SERVICES



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Publisher: Muhammad Fahad Thaheem

Editor: Zaheer ud Din Babar Thaheem

Advisor to Editor: Ashraf Malkham

Printer: Masha ALLAH Printers Basement # 9,
Ratta Mansion, Fazal e Haq Road, Blue Area, Islamabad

Violence Wins?

By Hammad Ghaznavi



It seems the government (or is it the state?) has capitulated before two proscribed outfits Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan. The forces of extremism have emerged victorious, yet again, undermining not only the credibility of the government but that of the state. 'Violence can ensure success' seems to be the moral of the sordid story of the TLP protest march leading to the government-TLP negotiations and inking of an agreement that is declared a 'secret document' by the two sides. And on the other hand, surrendering before the TTP, an outfit dubbed the killers of our children since December 16, 2014 APS attack.

The policy of the state towards these two militant outfits over the years, to put it mildly, can only be described as inconsistent and chaotic. Diametrically opposite positions have been taken on these outfits by our state over the years. One day they are true Muslims and Ashiq-e-Rusool, and the next they are terrorists. Pakistan military has conducted various operations spread over a decade against the TTP terrorists responsible for countless terrorists' activities in the country. Likewise, the TLP status has been changing from 'darling' to 'villain' in the last few years. This is unstable and anarchic decision making.

First, look at the government-TLP 'secret agreement. Why the secrecy? It is unimaginable in a democratic dispensation to conclude an agreement with a proscribed militant outfit and to keep it secret without explaining the reasons for

the odd decision. Is it a little too embarrassing for the government to publicly accept what it has conceded to TLP? The developments of the last 15 days, however, have revealed, at least partly, the contours of the secret agreement. The government has lifted the ban on the TLP 'in the larger national interest', the accounts and assets of the outfit are unfrozen, and most of the jailed TLP workers have been released. Reportedly, according to the agreement, TLP chief Saad Rizvi is expected to be released soon.

The TLP had been placed in the First Schedule as a proscribed organization by the federal government on April 15 this year. A few simple questions here need to be answered: Why was the ban imposed? Why is it lifted now? How has the TLP changed during the last 7 months and what are the conditions it met to justify the lifting of the ban? Apparently, the TLP underwent no change during the last seven months.

In fact, it resorted to a higher degree of violence, killed more policemen, and behaved more ferociously this time around. Just a couple of days before the agreement, the government, actually, added a new allegation to the charge-sheet against the TLP – it was being supported by India. Federal ministers sounded committed to the supremacy of constitution and law and passionately talked about the 'writ of the state', vowing not to kneel down before militancy. But then came the great surrender!

In the wake of the government-TLP secret agreement and negotiations with TTP, other proscribed organizations in the country, around 70, began demanding a similar treatment. These banned outfits have an argument as there is a fresh precedent supporting their cause. These banned outfits are predicted to raise their demand more vociferously in the days to come. These militant outfits have one major weapon – militancy. If the TLP and TTP can achieve the desired result through this weapon, why can't we? That is the question.

The TLP protest march is over but at what cost? TLP has done this kind of exercise six times and every time came out of it more powerful. This time it is no different.

Sources insist there are points included in the agreement about the future political role of the TLP. The President of Punjab PTI has indicated at the possibility of a political alliance or seat adjustment with TLP in the next elections. Details apart, there is a history of creating or coopting outfits to counter popular political parties.

It is time to take some basic decisions. The only way to come out of this multiplying mess is to follow the constitutional path of decision making. Empower the parliament and debate the policy, instead of conducting secret negotiations with proscribed outfits. Otherwise, militancy will only grow, and the state will be further weakened.

Total Surrender

Nobody knows the terms of the deal signed by the government with TLP after its murky protest campaign.



By **Khalid Wasim**

Almost ten days after the signing of a secret agreement with the government, the formerly proscribed Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) is still basking in the glory of the resounding victory it scored against the Pakistani state.

On 9 November, TLP men briefly occupied the mausoleum of Pakistan's national poet Allama Iqbal and chanted slogans – just to show everybody who is the boss.

Almost ten days after the deal was signed, the people of Pakistan have no idea what the provisions of the deals are – and why it took TLP until 8 November to wind down its protest camp at Wazirabad in Punjab's Gujranwala district after the deal was signed on 31 October.

This is a befitting culmination to a protest drive that was shrouded in mystery from start to finish.

Firstly, nobody had an inkling TLP was planning to mount a protest campaign until the announcement to this effect came in the middle of a function dedicated to the celebration of the birth anniversary of the Holy Prophet (SAW) in Lahore.

Secondly, nobody is quite sure what the demands of the group were. Initial reports said they wanted the French envoy expelled from Pakistan but as the second round of talks with TLP got underway, their chief interlocutor Mufti Munib vociferously denied this was the case. He, however, stopped short of saying what the group's actual demands were.

And finally, there has still been no word as to the contents of the deal signed with the extremist group.

In any case, apparent end of the march brings much-awaited respite to the common people, particularly those residing in Lahore, Rawalpindi and the towns and cities along strategic Grand Trunk (GT) Road.

This respite, however, comes after what many in Pakistan see as the state's disgraceful surrender to the extremist group. Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is also under fire for this abdication as it came after badly mishandling the entire crisis in its initial stages.

There is no telling what price the nation will have to pay for this appalling episode in future. Anger, however, was

palpable among political and intellectual circles over the development.

Questioning the logic behind keeping the deal secret, PPP stalwart and Senator Raza Rabbani said it was a matter of concern that the government or the state required individuals to act as guarantors of such an agreement.

“When an individual acts as a guarantor between the government and citizens, it depicts that the government has lost the moral high grounds and the confidence of the people,” said Mr Rabbani.

The violent protesters and activists of the TLP announced their decision to call off their protest after implementation of half of the demands put forward by their leadership and agreed to by the government in a secret agreement that included the lifting of a ban on the party which the PTI government had imposed only seven months ago.

The ban had been imposed by the government in April this year after similar violent protests by the TLP over the arrest of its chief Hafiz Saad Rizvi, the son of the TLP's founding president late Khadim Hussain Rizvi, ahead of their planned long march to the capital



to press for their demand for the expulsion of the ambassador of France from the country over the issue of publication of blasphemous caricatures in a French magazine earlier this year.

Despite signing a settlement deal with the government, the activists of the far-right religious-political party had refused to end their protest until the implementation of the provisions of the agreement signed on 31 October, and they only agreed to shift their sit-in to an adjacent ground after keeping the GT Road blocked for three days.

While announcing the decision to call off the protest, a TLP spokesman reportedly stated that they were doing so as the ban on the party had already been lifted, the names of the party members had been removed from the Fourth Schedule – a statutorily mandated list on which suspects of terrorism and sectarianism are placed under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 – and a procedure for the formation of a committee for the French envoy's expulsion had been started.

To press home its victory, TLP is now reportedly planning another major activity at Rehmatul Lil Alameen Mosque, the party's headquarters in Lahore, from 19 November to commemorate the first death anniversary of Khadim Rizvi.

The then proscribed group launched the latest round of protests in Lahore on 20 October after converting its Eid

Milad-un-Nabi function into a rally and giving a call for a long march on Islamabad, mainly to put pressure on the government for the release of Hafiz Saad Rizvi.

After three days of clashes with the police in Lahore, the TLP set out towards Islamabad on 22 October. At least five police officials were martyred and scores of others from both sides received injuries in clashes in Lahore and Gujranwala as the marchers moved on the GT Road.

Under a strict gag order, the national media, particularly the TV channels, completely blacked out the event. However, pictures and video clips showing the violent TLP protesters beating and chasing policemen and damaging private and public property went viral on social media and were instantly picked up by the international media.

In particular, these pictures and videos were picked up by the Indian media, which never misses any opportunity to malign Pakistan as a country of rabid extremists. And all this happened at a time when Pakistan was still in the grey list of the FATF (Financial Action Task Force) against terrorism.

The government has reportedly already assured the TLP leadership that it would unfreeze the accounts and assets of the proscribed outfit while lifting the ban on it.

The TLP leadership on 30 October asked the protesters to wait at Wazirabad for

further instructions when the government and the group started the second round of negotiations with a new government team comprising Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan.

It was Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed who led the government side in the first round of talks with the TLP leadership and succeeded in gaining some time as Prime Minister Imran Khan was on a three-day official visit of Saudi Arabia to seek some financial relief after failure of the government's talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

It was on 31 October that the members of the negotiating team from the government side claimed that they had reached an agreement with the proscribed group but refused to divulge any details. Soon after the announcement, reports about the release of hundreds of the TLP workers rounded up during the clashes with the police started pouring in from various parts of the Punjab province.

No did this happen not for the first time. It was seventh such occasion since the formation of the TLP in 2015 that the organization succeeded in getting all its unruly workers freed after violent protests which even resulted in the martyrdom of many police officials.





In their private conversations, senior Punjab Police officials admit the release of TLP men who attacked police has a demoralizing effect on the police force. It was perhaps because of this reason as well, that the government had decided to deploy the Rangers at the Chenab and Jhelum bridges with the powers to open fire in order to prevent the marchers.

On 7 November, the federal government formally lifted the ban on the TLP “in the larger national interest”. The notification to this effect was issued by the Ministry of Interior, only a day before a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security. The interior ministry said the notification had been issued at Punjab government’s request.

“Whereas, the provincial cabinet has considered the request of the organisation and in view of the assurance and commitment by the organisation, is of the opinion that said organisation shall abide by the Constitution and laws of the country and, therefore, keeping in view the larger national interest and long-term perspective to ensure that such incidents do not recur in future, the government of Punjab has proposed to the federal government to consider revoking of proscription of the TLP,” says the interior ministry’s notification.

According to the reports, besides Mufti Munib, Maulana Adil, and Saylani Welfare Trust head Bashir Farooq Qadri, leading businessmen Aqeel Karim Dhedi, and Haji Rafique Pardesi had been named as “guarantors” in the agreement.

When the TLP had held similar protests and staged a 20-day sit-in at Faizabad during the PML-N government time, the army had become a guarantor in the agreement that had been reached by the government with the TLP at that time. A senior army official was seen distributing cash among the TLP workers after their leadership called off the protest.

This time too, there are reports that the issue was finally resolved after the intervention of the military leadership and a picture of Mufti Mnib-ur-Rehman, who facilitated the talks along with some other religious leaders in their individual capacity, and Aqeel Karim Dhedi with Army Chief Gen

Qamar Javed Bajwa became viral on social media only a day before the final settlement. There was no official word from the Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) about the picture.

Refusing to share contents of the deal, Mufti Munib had said its details would be made public at an ‘appropriate time’. He, however, said its ‘positive results’ would be visible to the nation within the next week or 10 days.



Some analysts suggest that one of the reasons for the government not making public the agreement is criticism and pressure it can draw internationally. But they are forgetting the fact that the government is now drawing more severe and harsh criticism for entering into a “secret deal” with those seen as the extremists and militants by the Western world.

There is a general feeling in the world, as well as among the liberal sections of the society in the country, that militancy is thriving in Pakistani society and the ruling elite has no desire to tackle the issue as it wants to continue to use such elements to counter civilian rule in future.

There were reports in the media that the incarcerated TLP chief also participated in the talks and that besides Saad Rizvi, three senior members of the TLP Shura – Maulana Shafiq Amini, Engineer Hafeezullah, and Pir Inayatul Haq – were brought from Lahore to Islamabad for holding direct talks with the government.

It was after a meeting of the National Security Committee under Prime Minister Imran Khan after his return from Saudi

Arabia which gave a go ahead to the government to hold talks with the TLP.

The talks came after Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, who was initially deferential to the TLP, and Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry had already declared the TLP a “militant organization” and alleged that the banned outfit had Indian backing.

Neither of the two ministers was seen

nowhere since the beginning of the second round of talks with the TLP with a new government team and Mufti Munib openly lashed out at the two ministers and called them spoilers. The reports suggest that the two ministers were side-lined and stopped from issuing statements on the demand of the TLP before signing of the deal.

When the TLP held its first demonstration in 2017 to protest against an amendment to the election laws, it had managed to get the then law minister removed from the office before entering a written agreement.

The PTI, which had previously supported the TLP’s protests owing to its political enmity with the then PML-N government, received the first blow from the far-right religious-political party in 2018 when protests erupted across the country against the Supreme Court’s acquittal of a Christian woman Asia Bibi in a blasphemy case.

At that time too, the PTI government had reached a five-point agreement with the protesters and promised to challenge Asia’s acquittal and to put her name on the exit control list.



Prime Minister Appears Before Supreme Court



By **Ahmed Mukhtar Naqshbandi**

Imran Khan's pursuit of neutral empires in his cricket carrier was quite well known. Is his search still on in his political carrier? His campaign against corruption remained to achieve its goal with various impediments on the way. Though his governance also could not satisfy people's demands and basic needs. In this all half achiever case, the captain of the PTI's political team seems to be facing the judiciary now.

He was asked to appear before the Supreme Court in Army Public School (APS) massacre case. He was most probably the fifth prime minister of Pakistan appearing before Supreme Court but not as culprit but in response to governance issue.

After a huge pile of questions, Mr Khan responded before the Supreme Court, "There are no holy cows in Pakistan, I believe in rule of law." While court should be saying this, not the Premier.

The bench asked many questions, prompting Prime Minister Khan to rush into the answers hastily and to color his part of the picture of the seen.

Prime Minister Imran Khan appeared before the Supreme Court on Wednesday November 10, 2021, after he was summoned same day by the apex court to respond to queries of the bench on the Army Public School (APS) massacre case.

When the prime minister appeared at the rostrum, Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan said the parents of the martyred children are demanding action against the rulers of the time, when the APS massacre took place.

In reply, the prime minister said when the massacre took place, PTI was in power in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said government officials had met the bereaved parents in hospitals but since they were struck by tragedy, it wasn't possible to speak with them properly.

The chief justice told the prime minister that a National Action Plan was helmed after the APS massacre. He then told the court that there is "no holy cow" in Pakistan, adding that he believed in rule of law.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed is hearing the case.

At tricky turn of events, on December 16, 2014, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants stormed the Army Public School in Peshawar and martyred over 140 people, mostly students.

When reached at court, the prime minister took to the rostrum and told the bench that he believed in rule of law himself. "Give us an order, and we will take action," he said.

The hearing of the case started Wednesday during which the apex court summoned the prime minister to appear before the bench at 11:30am, in his personal capacity.

In the previous hearings of the case, parents of the children martyred in the 2014 terrorist attack had complained to the court that they had lost their children in the incident hence the top civil and military leadership of the country should be summoned by the Supreme Court and cases registered against them.

The victim students' parents had also demanded of the apex court to hold a transparent inquiry into the incident. The court had asked Attorney General Khalid



Jawed Khan to review the situation and take necessary steps--whether it be an investigation or filing cases against those responsible-- and inform the court.

When the hearing started, the court asked the attorney general for an update, who responded by saying that FIRs cannot be registered against the top leadership.

To this, the bench angrily told the government's lawyer that the incident had taken place as a result of a "security lapse" which the government should accept, adding that the top civil and military leaders of the time should have known about the attack.

The chief justice then remarked that Pakistan's agencies and institutions have access to all sorts of information but when it comes to the security of the people "our security agencies fail".

The CJP also inquired about the registration of the case against the former army chief and other officials. To this, the AGP told the court that the fact-finding report did not hold them responsible.

"We have such a huge intelligence network, billions of rupees are spent on it. We also claim to be the best intelligence agency in the world", Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan said the APS massacre had taken place in response to Operation Zarb-e-Azb, adding that state institutions should have taken effective steps against it.

During the hearing, the attorney general sought time from the court to seek directives from the prime minister and other officials so he can respond to the court.

However, the bench said this was a very serious case and that it would summon the prime minister and seek answers from him.

The attorney general had sought further time for the prime minister to appear before the court. However, the bench expressed anger at his request and said the parents of the victims of the APS massacre are also in court.

During the hearing, the issue of the government holding talks with the banned TTP was also mentioned.

Moreover, Justice Qazi Amin remarked that there are reports that the government is holding negotiations with a group and added, "Is it not the responsibility of the state to identify the real culprits [behind the APS tragedy] and nab them."

Meanwhile, CJP Gulzar Ahmed intervened and said, "We cannot leave the children alone to die".

He observed that action should have been taken against those at the top but low-level personnel were punished while people at the top enjoyed benefits.

Justice Aijaz, another member of the

bench, remarked that it was not possible that the terrorists didn't get inside support.

After the arguments, the Supreme Court adjourned the hearing till 11:30 and summoned the prime minister.

Imran Khan will fulfil five-year term, says Sheikh Rasheed.

Just before the Prime Minister coming to SC, Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed appeared outside the Supreme Court before the prime minister arrived, speaking to media. The minister said that "no game is being played, the game belongs to Imran Khan."

"There is no danger, Imran Khan will fulfil his five-year term," he said.

Responding to a question, the minister said he had arrived at the apex court "to accompany the prime minister if he appears", adding that he did not know whether PM Imran Khan will show up or not.

He refused to comment on the hearing, saying that the law minister or the attorney general were better qualified to speak on the matter.

"The Ministry of Interior does not have the solution to every problem," he said.





Did They Kiss & Make Up?

It did go through a rough patch for a while, but the civ-mil relationship is back on track.



By Naveed Miraj

In a surprising turn of events for those who declared lasting damage had been done to “the excellent relationship” between PTI government and the establishment, the two sides have been reconciled.

There is no denying the relations between the government and the military leadership remained under immense strain for a few weeks over serious differences over the appointment of a new DG ISI. But those who claimed the two sides would never be on the same page again have been proven wrong.

There are signs galore the ice is melting and both the sides are gravitating closer together again, setting aside the bitterness caused by the tiff over the appointment of the new spymaster.

According to independent experts keeping a close eye on the government-military relationship, the peaceful outcome of Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) is an unmistakable sign the matters are not patchy between the two sides anymore but are heading in the right direction.

They pointed out that the government and the military worked jointly to defuse the tension and successfully mastered a fraught

situation that could otherwise have spiralled out of control.

The chairman of Saylani Welfare Trust is on record saying it is because of the Army Chief's blessings that everything got done. “The Army Chief has one thousand percent role in settling the issue”.

The sources said the military leadership is also backing government's talks with Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP). They were of the view that the ceasefire with the banned outfit, the announcement of which was made by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhary Fawad Hussain, and even talks were not possible without the military being on board.

The detailed briefing the military brass gave to the Parliamentary Committee on National Security is yet another indication things are hunky-dory once more. The briefing concerned matters pertaining to national security, foreign affairs as well as internal and external challenges faced by the country with particular focus on the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

According to sources, the military leadership put their weight behind the government's policies especially vis-à-vis Afghanistan during the briefing.

The sources said that there was confusion in government ranks about the new Army rules under which a lieutenant general has to serve at least one year tenure instead of six months as the corps commander to become eligible for the coveted seat of the Army Chief.

They said the purpose behind making incumbent DG ISI Faiz Hameed the corps commander Peshawar was also to help him qualify for the seat. They said the notification of new DG ISI itself indicates that the confusion about the new rules has been removed.

The sources said although the government is facing the serious issue of price hike and there is a strong resentment amongst the public about it, Prime Minister Imran Khan is all set to complete his remaining two years in power.

They, however, said the PM may face a challenge from the opposition parties in the form of tabling of no-confidence motion in the National Assembly, something the PPP is adamant on.

Whether the no-trust motion succeeds or faces defeat will be yet another test of PTI government- establishment relationship.



PDM Protest, Reloaded?

The calculus this time is simple: Rise or face the people's wrath.



By Ahmad Waleed

If rhetoric is to be believed, the opposition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) is finally ready to embark on a serious protest campaign against Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led government.

It is well known that former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) party has been unwilling to rock the boat of the government despite its myriad failures – up until now.

Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif confirmed in a very recent informal chat with a group of senior journalists his party was not interested in a no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister or the Punjab Chief Minister.

“Right after the Elections 2018, we had evolved the party strategy to let the ‘bubble’ of Imran Khan's tall claims burst itself instead of doing traditional politics on key issues,” Shahbaz Sharif told a group of senior journalists when asked why the opposition was not as active as it should be to safeguard the interests of the masses.

The opposition's reluctance to play opposition has many explanations. PML-N

insiders say the elder Sharif has set an ironclad policy of not playing into the hands of the establishment, which may be looking for an excuse to send Imran Khan packing.

The opposition leaders know no agitation against a sitting government has succeeded in the political history of Pakistan without the establishment's support. How the recent Senate Chairman election and earlier a no-confidence motion against the Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani went only confirmed that notion.

Equally, no political party seems willing to take reins of the power at a time when the country is in the worst economic mess of its history. The opposition's seriousness to dethrone the regime, therefore, remains doubtful.

Others say the opposition parties have been rendered immobile by a visceral fear of a tough response from the backers of the ‘hybrid’ regime. Still others maintain the opposition is complacent in the knowledge that the PTI government would eventually implode after not being able to bring about any improvement in the economic outlook of the country.

Another variation of this argument is that the opposition, especially the PML-N, does

not want to provide any chance or excuse to the government to blame the opposition for creating obstacles in their ‘good governance’.

But all that may be about to change. Being a political party reliant on popular support, PML-N cannot remain aloof to the widespread anger of the masses over extreme economic hardship caused by what many say is the government's inept handling of the economy – especially when that anger threatens to boil over and turn on the opposition for its inaction.

Right now, while the government is under fire from all sides for bad governance and unprecedented price-hike, part of the people's anger is turning on the opposition for standing by and watching the masses suffer.

The opposition is being held responsible for remaining silent on the issues that matter. On occasions, the opposition is alleged to have colluded with the government i.e., Chief of Army Staff extension issue and Senate chairman vote, etc.

The two major parties – PPP and PML-N – are deeply divided on the issue of bringing a no-confidence motion in Punjab. PML-N is opposed to the idea of bringing a no



confidence move in the Punjab Assembly as they think let Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar expose himself with a poor performance.

“We are not interested in sending the Buzdar government packing as ultimately we will be the beneficiary of the situation arising out of a messy PTI governance in Punjab,” a senior leader of PML-N said recently.

Another point of contention was that while PML-N wanted PPP to support the PDM demand of en masse resignations from assemblies, the PPP would not have any of it. The option of en masse resignations did not suit the PPP in Sindh as it never wanted to provide the PTI with an open field to install its rule in Sindh – a bastion of PPP for decades.

Anyway, as petroleum and sugar prices touch new heights and people feel the worst kind of economic crunch, the PDM is apparently scrambling to put together a campaign to take full advantage of the situation.

PML-N President Shahbaz Sharif has called the estranged opposition partner, Bilawal Bhutto, to reach an agreement on a united campaign against the government.

On his part, Jamiat Ulema Islam (Fazl) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman rushed to



call an urgent multi-party virtual meeting to reach a decision about staging protests across the country as well as a long march towards Islamabad against the ‘anti-people’ steps and rising inflation.

Giving details of the decisions made by the PDM leadership, former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said in a statement that a series of protests will be held starting from Karachi on 13 November followed by one in Quetta on 17 November and in Peshawar on 20 November.

“The last rally will be taken out in Lahore from where protesters would march towards the federal capital and this movement will end only after sending Imran Khan home,” the statement said.

The PTI government has opened multiple fronts against the opposition from launching dozens of cases against its leaders to bringing ordinance after ordinance without bothering to take the opposition onboard while the worst governance and skyrocketing prices of daily-use items have made the lives of people miserable.

This has provided the opportunity to the opposition in slumber to wake up and take the political mileage of the situation.

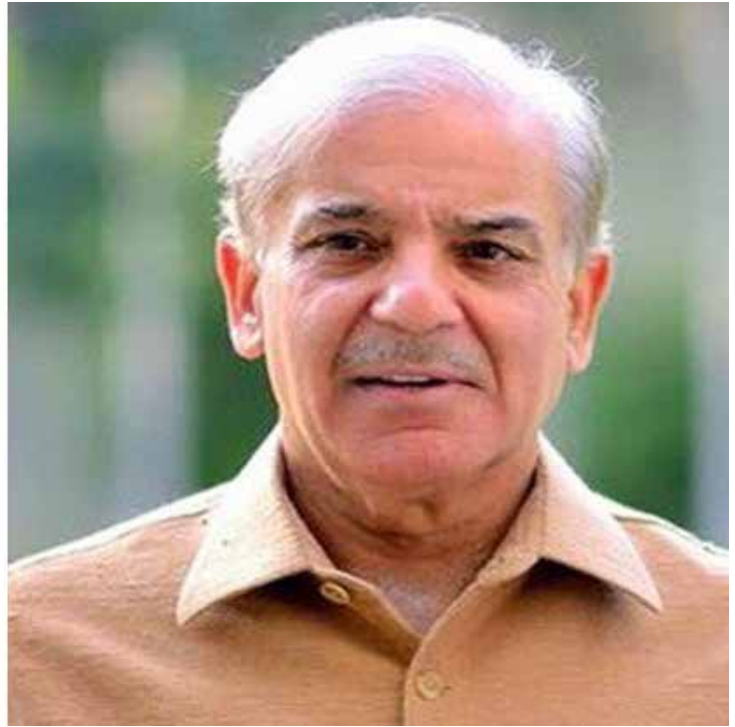
On the other hand, the people of Pakistan have seen PDM beat the war drums on more than one occasion in recent times. Each time, however, their campaign fizzled out. Time alone will tell if PDM is serious this time around or just crying wolf as before.





There's Many a Slip Twixt the Cup and the Lip

Will PDM's new plan of action be the same as PDM's old plan of action?



By Sarfraz Raja

To march or not to march, to resign from the assemblies or not to resign from the assemblies, to bring a no-confidence motion in Punjab or not.... The list of dilemmas of PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement) is endless.

And while the mammoth opposition coalition has announced a roadmap of protest rallies culminating in a long march on Islamabad, there is every reason to believe this round of their protest will be no different from previous rounds: A lot of verbal fire and fury but no concrete measure to destabilise Prime Minister Imran Khan's government.

It was 20 September 2020 when 10 opposition parties agreed on a 26-point agenda with removal of Imran Khan from power being the ultimate goal. And truth be told, this was the point that melded all these parties of different ideologies and thoughts together for a countrywide movement.

In fact and time proved that these initial agreements and promises were all in haste without alternative plans just to kick off a campaign and few important matters were

just brushed under the carpet without reaching any conclusion.

Removal of Imran Khan from power was the main objective, but how? Ostensibly through public pressure, but history bears witness no government has ever been toppled in Pakistan through public pressure.

This point was raised in that September 20th meeting by some participants but every party was keen on starting a movement on one platform. Also, what happens after removal of Imran Khan remained an unaddressed matter, which clearly indicates lack of seriousness and homework.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was in favour of in-house change in the centre and Punjab which is still their stance but Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was not much interested in any such move.

Another latent difference was that PML-N and the other major party of alliance Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) were gunning for fresh elections, which did not suit PPP, the ruling party in Sindh. All other parties have

very little or no presence in parliament and were comfortable to go either way.

PDM's Anti-government movement took off with a good power show at Gujranwala in October last year and maintained its tempo in many other cities and these power shows actually raised political temperature and created some concerns in the ruling party's ranks as well.

All was going well till the month of March, which starts with a big blow which jolts Prime Minister's office when ruling party candidate Hafeez Sheikh suffers surprising and unexpected defeat by PDM candidate Yusuf Raza Gillani in senate elections.

The win, on a seat from Islamabad, came as Gilani grabbed a majority vote in the National Assembly, which was tantamount to a moral no-confidence against leader of house Imran Khan. Khan has to go for a fresh vote of confidence from lower house of parliament.

PDM had won majority of bye elections of national and provincial assembly vacant seats but proving their majority in National



Assembly in senate election contest where government has to maintain at least a simple majority was their biggest success.

But real issue and point of contention remain resignations from assemblies and that was the matter kept unattended because of divided opinions.

Insiders of alliance reveal that in the 20 September meeting, proposal of resignations from assemblies was not agreed upon as PPP takes a different view of the matter and there was no satisfactory answer to PPP's question if PDM would boycott or contest if the government announced bye-polls on the vacated seats.

Boycotting would mean leaving the field open to the adversary, but contesting would take you back into the assemblies, so what is the point in resigning in the first place?

PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif at that time came up with a suggestion of elaborating this point in joint declaration as resignations card could be used at some appropriate time.

JUI-F was biggest supporter of resignations as they were repeatedly calling present parliament fake and the Maulana was actually not in favour of taking oath from assemblies after general elections.

In PML-N ranks there was a divide, with many of their members of parliament sold on the PPP position although nobody differed on this point publicly.

When the matter comes to the decisive party heads meeting earlier this year, PPP did not agree with resignations linked to long march. Although they asked for some time to discuss issue in their central executive committee, their intentions were clear: They did not want to leave the field until you they had a clear alternative plan.

When PPP nominated Yusuf Raza Gillani as leader of the opposition in senate with the support of members of government allies Baluchistan Awami Party without taking other opposition partners into confidence.

That was the when PDM splintered although the formalities took some time: PPP and ANP disassociated themselves from this alliance after they were served a controversial show cause notice by Secretary General PDM, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

In the current economic situation of the country with rupee at an all-time low against the dollar, petroleum fuel prices sky-high, and widespread public anger against the government, it seems PDM is making the right noises to win favour with the populace.

Their plan entails taking out rallies in provincial capitals before staging a long march on Islamabad. After PDM heads meeting, the dates and venues for the first three rallies were announced: 13 November in Karachi, 17 November in Quetta, and 20 November in Peshawar.

The last provincial rally will be at Lahore, on which occasion the date for the long march on Islamabad will be announced. On the face of it, everything is cut and dried. However, as the old saw goes, there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.

PDM insiders say there are still a lot of ifs and buts before the final shape of the campaign emerges. One source said PDM head Fazl-ur-Rehman wanted the date of the long march on Islamabad announced, and he was annoyed when PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif took the opposite position and prevailed.

In fact, PML-N sources say their party will be on streets against inflation assessing public pulse but they are still not interested in any move to topple the Imran Khan government.

With its sights set on the next general election, the party thinks this is a good juncture to fan popular anger against Imran Khan. Equally, PML-N is extremely cautious not to do anything to upset the government's apperance and benefit Imran Khan by making him a political martyr, says a PML-N source.

Although PDM is taking to the streets again, knowing their track record, statements and off the record views it seems that new movement will aim to tease but not topple the government. In the final reckoning, these parties are preparing for the coming general election and this new campaign is part of their preparations.





A matter of manners

The calculus this time is simple: Rise or face the people's wrath.



By Kamila Hyat

Small things make big differences. This is true for our daily life. We appreciate when we are greeted politely when we enter a bank or even when being pulled over by a policeman and when a government official or a stranger on the street, at a shop or at school talks to us in a polite manner. Unfortunately, the Pakistani nation is fast losing its manners, and the people rarely speak to each other in a voice that others would like to hear. There are many examples of this unfortunate loss of grace and the disappearance of 'tameez' and 'tehzeeb' (social etiquette and manners) that were once an integral part of our society.

Recently, prominent journalist Asma Shirazi experienced unparalleled vitriol when she was strongly criticised for her vague references to some of Pakistan's cultural traditions. And even though no names were taken or no details were mentioned, she was attacked in the most vicious manner. Some sexist slurs that were made against her came from members of the PTI.

This is not the first time that this has happened, and other women journalists have faced precisely the same treatment.

The kind of language that sitting ministers and government representatives use on Twitter sets the tone for a country that appears to have lost its direction and has become a more rude and violent place than ever.

Recently, a shocking incident happened on the streets of Lahore. A group of boys verbally abused an elderly woman going about her daily work and passed comments on her perfectly appropriate appearance and remarked on the way she walked and the way she wore her dupatta. To the surprise of the boys, the woman, old enough to be their grandmother, hit back – and hit back hard. The exchange ended there. But there are multiple such exchanges that happen in parts of Lahore and elsewhere, highlighting the fact that the very nature of society seems to be changing.

On government websites and from government emails, there is no answer to queries or questions sent in by citizens. In today's Pakistan, citizens have little standing and apparently no right to basic respect or dignity. People who write or post their opinions on the internet are particularly at risk.

Recent comments made by Maryam Nawaz could have been answered in a polite manner. But she became a target of condemnable virulent attacks. Such attacks have also occurred in the past, but the kind of language used against people and the lack of respect shown for the people, even for the elderly, is shocking.

In schools, at least in some high-tier schools, we no longer see children stand up out of respect to greet teachers when they enter the classroom. We no longer see them address even their principals with courtesy or to carry books for teachers, especially elderly teachers who, at times, are clearly struggling.

We need to find out what has caused this change in attitude and whether the fault lies within just social media – or goes well beyond that. The point is that in other nations, where teenagers and young people are also exposed to the internet in equal measures, or perhaps to an even greater degree, good manners are still present. These young people answer politely and respond to queries, and there is none of the hidden rage that we see so often in the people of our country.



One of the examples of this growing rage is that which occurred recently in an urban area of Lahore. A man had accidentally walked across a patch of cauliflower. The owner of the mini vegetable garden attacked the man with a spade. The attack was completely uncalled for. Fortunately, the victim survived and suffered injuries that were treated in a timely manner. But we know that the worst has happened, and minor squabbles have led to terrible attacks – even deaths.

The Noor Mukaddam murder case is an example of extreme violence that has crept into our society. Perhaps the unchecked abuse of drugs is one of the factors for this growing violence, although there is no certainty of that. But certainly, we have lost a great deal of our culture and we differ now from many countries including developing ones where culture is prized, politeness is a way of life and children are taught these manners from a young age.

The reasons for this rage are easy to understand. Today, people can simply not pay their electricity bills; they cannot afford petrol for their vehicles, and they, even middle-income or salaried families, can barely put food on the table for their

children. In all sections of society, frustration and a sense of helplessness is building up. People don't have an outlet to express or be freed from them. Under the present circumstances, a leader who could convince people to come out on the streets against unrelenting price hikes and the apparent indifferent attitude of the government would succeed. Unfortunately, we have no such leaders.

In the meanwhile, we hear stories from houses where brothers shoot their sisters merely for talking to a male friend over the phone. We have heard of fathers who attack their daughters for wearing clothes which they deem 'inappropriate'. All this is a part of the rage which exists deep inside.

We see this rage at sporting events at education institutions where richer parents attack those who are less privileged including small boys who compete on the basis of merit and undermine their confidence as far as they can by insisting that their children, who study in elite schools, should be given the trophy or the medal even if they do not deserve it. This is also an example of class division and the lack of respect for each other that has entered our society and eroded its values like a virus.

In many ways, this virus is even worse than the Covid-19 pandemic that we are currently experiencing. There is no denying that there are exceptions to the rule. For example, Motorway police personnel generally speak with respect, although recently there have been some exceptions. The same is true for the staff of the excellent 1122 rescue service in Punjab; officials act in a courteous manner and with excellent levels of competency.

But there are too many examples, everywhere, of extremely poor manners and disrespect. In order to build a society that can stand unified and support each other in difficult times as it moves along an uncertain path into a future that is difficult to imagine, we should respect each other. It can be said without any doubt that 'religiosity' itself cannot instil manners in a person. We still remember the colourful language of a late cleric who also had a short stint as political leader. It is said that his son is keeping the legacy of his father alive.

The writer is a freelance columnist and former newspaper editor.

India's Fiddles as Epic Human Tragedy Looms Over Afghanistan

On the one hand scrambling for relevance in Afghanistan, India insists on being prim and proper on the other.



By Syed Fakhar KaKaKhel

India's holier-than-thou attitude over Afghanistan continues to complicate the situation rather than helping find solutions as a human tragedy of epic proportions looms over the war-ravaged country.

In the latest episode of its self-righteous, self-serving diplomatic gimmickry, New Delhi is holding a regional conclave on Afghanistan – but with the Taliban rulers of the country absent. Pakistan was among the invitees and had initially welcomed the initiative in good faith, but has since pulled out in view of India's one-upmanship.

Observers say a conference on Afghanistan loses its utility without the participation of the de facto rulers of that country. India's initiative seems rooted in New Delhi's desire for relevance in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, however, the Modi regime is intent on looking at Afghanistan through the lens of its visceral hostility towards Pakistan, which can only prove counterproductive.

Foreign policy conferences are held to understand the situation on hand and the emerging issues in a particular region. Cherry-picking participants is not a luxury that goes along with such pragmatic matters.

That is why Pakistan also considers it a waste of time to moot Afghanistan with the de facto ruler of the country absent from the table. Analysts say if India continues to pursue the Afghan issue in this way, China too may be forced to reconsider its level of involvement.

Pakistan's National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf said he will not be a part of the talks in India. "A spoiler can't become a peacemaker," he said at a press briefing.

He blamed India for stalling the regional peace process. "Unfortunately [because of] the government's behavior and ideology there, I don't see how this [peace] process will move forward – not just for Pakistan but the region," he said.

"The world has unfortunately kept its eyes closed and is not talking to India

as it should," Moeed Yusuf said, adding that Pakistan could not detach itself from Afghanistan. "It may be a luxury for the Western world sitting 10,000 miles away but we do not have any option to disengage from Afghanistan," he said.

Afghanistan is currently facing severe financial difficulties due to international sanctions.

Due to currency shortages, banks are not providing more than a certain amount of money, a constraint due to which business has come to a standstill. As money is not circulating, the supply of goods to the shops is disrupted. The stalemate has led to a slump in markets and food shortages.

More than half the population of Afghanistan – about 22.8 million people – face acute food insecurity, while 3.2 million children under five could suffer acute malnutrition, the World Food Program (WFP) has said.

"Afghanistan is now among the world's worst humanitarian crises, if

not the worst,” said David Beasley, the executive director of the WFP. “We are on a countdown to catastrophe,” he added.

At present, only two neighboring countries are playing a very serious and active frontline role in dealing with the current crises in Afghanistan and supporting peace efforts there.

China and Pakistan are moving forward based on humanitarian grounds, with China offering aid and Pakistan opening the border to allow the Afghan economy and society breathing space.

death of the Afghan president in Kabul at the hands of the Mujahidin. Indian diplomats have since admitted that India betrayed Dr. Najib for the safety of its citizens and the relationship with the then Mujahidin rulers of Afghanistan.

Even this time India provoked former Afghan President Dr. Ashraf Ghani against Pakistan and the Taliban. India announced full support to Dr. Ashraf Ghani against the Taliban. Throughout the war, India supported the Afghan government while providing military training and assistance against the Taliban.



The new Taliban regime has termed China its ‘most important partner’ and a ‘dependable friend’ for aid, investments, and infrastructure projects. These developments are significant because the Taliban currently have not hopes of foreign aid from other sources, such as the World Bank or the IMF, to stave off an economic catastrophe.

Notably, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s address to the 2021 G20 foreign ministers’ meeting called for the lifting of unilateral sanctions against Afghanistan.

This is not the first time India has squandered opportunities and hindered progress in Afghanistan through its ham-handed approach. In the 1990s, India offered asylum to the then Afghan President Dr. Najibullah on the grounds of opposition to Pakistan.

However, by the time a UN plane arrived in Kabul to transport the said dignitary to India, New Delhi had gone back on its promise.

The fiasco ultimately ended in the tragic

India strongly opposed the Taliban at every platform but as soon as the Taliban succeeded, India had no scruples opening contacts with the Taliban.

The Taliban return to power in Afghanistan this August after the US and international forces pulled out the last of their remaining troops and the militants swept across the country with lightning speed. The attendant flight of Kabul’s US-backed government gave rise to largescale exodus of population and wealth, wrecking the economy heavily dependent on foreign aid.

The situation further worsened as Western powers suspended aid and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund also halted payments.

A nation is considered aid-dependent when 10 percent or more of its gross domestic product comes from foreign aid. In Afghanistan’s case, about 40 percent of the country’s GDP comes from international aid, according to a World Bank report.

Kabul has seen a proliferation of street hawkers in recent times as poverty and unemployment have spread, pushing people to desperate measures to make a living. People are selling off their households goods to meet the dire need for money to put food on the table.

Reports say attendance at government agencies is declining over time as many departments remain unable to pay salaries. Hundreds of teachers in Kandahar protested over salaries unpaid for the fourth consecutive month.

In addition, there is a lack of trust between the government and the people due to the hardline policies of some elements within the Taliban. There have been reports from several areas that the Taliban have harassed former government officials and their families by raiding homes, although the Taliban have denied this. Target killing of former government employees is on the rise throughout the country.

To run the current system, the Afghan Taliban urgently need technocrats, but most of those highly educated people have fled Afghanistan. There is rising frustration among Taliban leaders, as different factions are trying different things to cope with the situation.

The Afghan Taliban are currently fighting on three fronts. One is the fight for international diplomatic recognition and the consequent revival of aid, the second is the war to run the system inside Afghanistan, and the third is to defeat the Islamic State - Khorasan Province (ISKP).

In the field of diplomacy, they succeed from time to time, but in terms of governance, they are facing new challenges on daily basis.

The war against ISKP had already begun before the Taliban came to power, but is now slowly gaining momentum. They have hundreds of sleeper cells throughout the country. ISKP sources claim that they have members even within the ranks of Taliban forces.

Although the Afghan Taliban do not see this as a major problem and can be trusted on this given their experience, if the other two fronts are not controlled and if the economy is not improved as a result, the ISKP footprint may increase in the coming months.

The Islamabad-Kabul-Delhi Love Triangle is Hotting Up

Afghanistan is the focus of a new round of diplomatic-intelligence rivalry between Pakistan and India.



By Umer Farooq

While the security situation in Afghanistan is likely to remain a major factor of regional instability in the foreseeable future, a fresh round of intense Pakistan-India wrangling over Afghanistan is getting underway that threatens to overshadow any debate on the Afghan situation.

During the past 20 years, this regional tussle has been the source of many spy games, diplomatic confrontations, and political tug-of-war in and over Afghanistan.

India has traditionally cultivated Afghan elements hostile to Pakistan – the most recent example being a rabidly anti-Pakistan faction within the erstwhile Ashraf Ghani administration. This is precisely why the recent rise of the Pakistan-backed Taliban led to a complete exodus of Indian diplomats, engineers, and experts from Afghanistan.

Americans have in the past worked closely to convince Pakistan's successive governments to maintain a working relationship with India in the interest of Afghanistan's development and reconstruction, but that is now history.

It has been Pakistan's traditional position that since India has no common border with Afghanistan, it has no legitimate interest in Afghanistan. India, on the other hand, has always been hell bent on having toehold in Afghanistan to outflank arch-rival Pakistan.

In pursuance of that longstanding objective in the emerging situation, India held a conference on Afghanistan in New Delhi in the second week of November 2021. Chaired by India's National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval, the conference was attended by his counterparts from Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, and a high level delegation from Russian.

India's list of invitees also included Pakistan and China, but both these influential neighbours of Afghanistan decided to stay away from the conclave. Inexplicably – or perhaps predictably given the mind-set at the helm of affairs in New Delhi – Afghanistan was not allowed a seat at the meet.

The Indian conference comes at the quick heels of a regional conclave of intelligence chiefs, and includes representation from the same set of countries. Hosted by Pakistani intelligence chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, the Islamabad conference focused on the regional implications of Taliban takeover of Kabul.

It was agreed at the Pakistani conclave that the security agencies of these seven regional countries would share intelligence with the Taliban regime to enable it to secure the country as proliferation of violence in Afghanistan posed the risk of spill over into neighbouring countries.

The underlying assumption was that Taliban could act as a bulwark against the more radical Sunni militant groups that were gaining a toehold in Afghanistan's northern and eastern parts. Obviously the source of this assumption was the Pakistani security establishment which had clear inclinations in support of the Taliban regime.

The message coming out of the New Delhi conference is that these regional countries either do not share the Pakistani assumption or they do not want to put all their eggs in one basket.

In particular, India is doubling down on the message that the Taliban are an adversary not an ally and therefore not to be trusted to stand guard against the threat of the more radical Sunni groups.

Indian officials held in-depth meetings with officials from the Central Asian states on the side-lines of the conference. The Indian media

later reported that there was significant convergence among the participants about the threat perception concerning Afghanistan.

India's ploy to drum up support for its point of view has two prongs, both of which are sure to resonate with Afghanistan's neighbours. The first of these consists in playing on the regional countries' fear of violence spill over from Afghanistan while the second involves paying copious lip service to the possibility of extending humanitarian assistance to people of Afghanistan.

A report by Washington-based CSIS, titled "Taliban takeover: Humanitarian implications and recommendations for the United States," paints a dismal picture of the impending humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan for which the Taliban appear ill-prepared.

Forced displacement, refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran, spread of Covid-19, and drought-like conditions could all add up to a multilayer humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

The report also describes government structures that are in complete disarray with hardly any government presence on the ground to take care of Afghan people, raising concerns in neighbouring countries including Pakistan about large-scale influx of refugees.

In the run up to the pull-out of US and international forces, Pakistanis were wary Washington's might assign India a disproportionate role in post-withdrawal Afghanistan. Now, with the foreign forces gone and the Taliban in-charge of the country, Indians are aghast to see their hard-won influence in the country go up in smoke overnight.

Another aspect of the matter is that Al-Qaeda and ISIS in Afghanistan are harbouring Islamist elements that originated in Central Asian societies and that have been engaged in military conflicts with the Central Asian governments.

The Chinese are no less concerned about the developments in Afghanistan. They know that the Chinese separatist elements are embedded with ISIS, the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Some of these Chinese separatist elements are also in alliance with the Pakistani Taliban and were being hosted by the latter until recently. This lends gravity to the fears of spoiler's violence reaching Chinese territory.

Moscow and its Central Asian allies are as averse to Sunni militancy as America is – a fact that further squeezes Pakistan's space for supporting one group in the larger Sunni militancy phenomenon in Afghanistan.

Pakistan believes a central authority in Afghanistan is essential to eliminating these threats as well as to address the humanitarian situation. But for the Taliban to become that authority, regional players and superpowers must refrain from launching their proxies to engage in a power struggle in Afghanistan.

In the Cold War era, India had deep and strong strategic relations with the Soviet Union. Although India has since gravitated towards the Western bloc, there are no visible signs that New Delhi's strategic ties with Moscow have dwindled.

In recent years, there has been some chatter about Islamabad-Moscow strategic ties. If the push comes to the shove over Afghanistan,

this newfound love will be sorely tested.

The Pakistani foreign policy establishment should not underestimate India's influence in Central Asian states and Russia. In particular, there is a clandestine component to this relationship that Pakistanis ignore at their own peril.

For instance, it is now well known that Tajikistan served as a conduit for Indian military supplies to Ahmed Shah Masood back when his Northern Alliance stood in the way of the first iteration of the Taliban uniting the country under a unified government.

Indian Air Force is no stranger to Afghan conflict. It had in the past provided technical as well as training assistance to Northern Alliance forces.

In early 1996, as many as 30 Indian Air Force technicians were reportedly embedded with the Northern Alliance, helping maintain Massoud's MiG and Sukhoi fighter aircraft and transport helicopters while a separate cadre of military advisers assisted the Alliance forces by providing tactical advice on operations against the Taliban.

In addition, India reportedly provided Massoud with cash and military hardware including ground radar units, spare parts for aircraft, and high-altitude warfare equipment.

Indian newspapers are now routinely churning out stories about the "heroic operations" of Indian intelligence in Northern Afghanistan that involved the transfer of equipment, training, and hard cash from Indian Air Force, Army, and other arms of government to the Northern Alliance.

This clandestine cooperation started in 1996 when Kabul fell to Taliban forces – a military development that was perceived in New Delhi to be highly favourable to Pakistan's strategic and military aims in the region and therefore inimical to its own.

In September 2019, India's most credible Newspaper, The Hindu published a report under the title "How India secretly armed Afghanistan's Northern Alliance" in which the author recounted the experience of Bharat Raj Muthu Kumar's – Indian Ambassador to Tajikistan – in acting as a bridge between Indian military and intelligence services and Ahmed Shah Masood and his forces

"For four years, between 1996 and 2000, till he left the Tajik capital Dushanbe to take up his new posting, Ambassador Bharath Raj Muthu Kumar coordinated military and medical assistance that India was secretly giving to Massoud and his forces" the report states.

The New Delhi conference brings to the fore Pakistan's diplomatic difficulties over Afghanistan: Afghanistan's many neighbours are unlikely to embrace any single policy option. They have to hedge their bets and cover all bases because the stakes are so high and there is no margin for error.

If India digs its heels and orchestrates a diplomatic initiative to corner Pakistan by isolating the Taliban – as seems likely – the de facto rulers of Afghanistan will be hard pressed to contain violence and maintain order on the Afghan soil.

Saving the World, COP26 Style

Methane and coal pledges are steps in the right direction but activists say it is too little too late.



By Dr Khalid Bajwa

Humanity has waged war against the planet that is about the only known place hospitable to it in the vast universe. This is a story in self-destruction. Life on Earth is on the verge of extinction if nothing is done soon.

The process has been slow and imperceptible for the vast majority of human beings. The industrial revolution unleashed a genie that is eating away at the thin sheet enveloping the planet in which we live and breathe.

The insatiable hunger for fossil fuels to meet the energy needs for economic development is resulting in global warming which is destroying the fine balance of various ecosystems essential for sustaining life in various forms.

The main culprit for global warming is the colossal emission of greenhouse gases mainly carbon dioxide and methane through the use of hydrocarbons to meet the energy needs for churning the wheel of economic activity and development and the resultant waste.

With the rise of standards of living, the demand for energy is ever-increasing. At the same time, the rainforests of the world are shrinking due to rapid deforestation because of never-ending demand of a growing population and rising standards of living.

Currently, more and more carbon dioxide is produced with ever-diminishing capacity to remove it from the atmosphere with the help of trees and carbon dioxide capturing technologies. The result is that the planet is heating up, which is in turn throwing into disequilibrium the various systems that regulate and sustain life.

The ice sheets in the polar regions are getting thinner and thinner with the disastrous consequences of rising sea levels and changing weather patterns around the world. Many coastal areas are likely to submerge in the sea forcing people to migrate to other areas.

This is not fear mongering. It is already happening in various parts of the world. An example is Sunder Buns islands of India in the Bay of Bengal where people are migrating to safer places and not in a distant future more than a million people will be forced to migrate to the mainland.

Similarly, some areas of the world, including areas in the Middle East and Pakistan, will become uninhabitable due to extreme heat forcing people to migrate to other areas. Largescale climate-migration all over the globe will soon be threatening the very fabric of the societies.

The changing patterns of the weather can play havoc in every part of the world. There could be long droughts or deluges of rains

in a short time resulting in crop failures, floods, and destruction of infrastructure and properties. Again, this is not a project of fear in the future but a stark reality unfolding in front of our eyes in several parts of the world.

The scientific community has been aware of the gathering storms for a long time, but the world has continued to ignore it. However, a treaty called United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was signed in 1994, which formed the basis of subsequent talks on climate change. COP26 (Conference of the Parties 26) is being hosted by the UK in Glasgow on the 26th anniversary of the treaty.

The theme of the COP26 is 'keep 1.5 alive', a pledge made in Paris Accord to keep the temperature rise to 1.5° Celsius by the end of 21st century from pre-industrial revolution level. This is important if humanity wants to avoid 'the tipping point' after which reversing the change may become impossible.

Achieving this target does not mean that we will entirely avoid the consequences of climate change but hopefully it will be manageable if proper policies are in place and intent matches the action.

Just to illustrate the point, achieving the 1.5° Celsius target is likely result in saving

30 percent of the world's coral reefs, although 70 percent of them would still be wiped out, whereas a 2° Celsius rise in temperature will destroy them completely and no coral reefs will be left which act as nurseries for the fish.

The rise in the sea levels, frequent forest fires, more intense and frequent cyclones, longer and more frequent droughts, heavy destructive rains, smog, crop failures, and disappearance of thousands of species are all part of the package.

Another objective of the COP26 is to encourage the countries' leaders to come up with short term plans to achieve their long-term goals and promises. Without doing so is like just a statement of intent with practically doing nothing or too little to achieve the stated intent or promise.

Another requisite is to put in place some sort of mechanism to monitor the progress of different countries to achieve the goals set by them. One of the changes could be reporting activities and results yearly or two yearly instead of every five years as agreed in Paris accord. This is proving a contentious issue as many countries do not want to share the data about their efforts to achieve the goals.

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg has declared COP26 a failure and so have many other renowned critics. They have accused the world leaders of more talk than action and for their lack of comprehension and intent to act fast to stem the climate change before it is too late.

However, COP26 has made some significant progress to date that will help achieve the target of net zero carbon dioxide emissions by the middle of the century.

The agreement on net zero deforestation by 2030 is a huge success in the face of massive deforestation (one estimate puts it as 30 football pitches a minute) that is going on at the moment.

This is important as trees absorb carbon dioxide and are described as the 'lungs of the planet'. The agreement by 100 leaders of the world is covers around 80 percent of the total forest cover of the planet.

It is being said that an agreement reached in 2014 failed to stem the deforestation. However, the present agreement is backed

by USD 19.2 billion fund which is likely to ensure that things remain on track.

At last India, a major polluter, has set the target of net zero emissions by 2070. Though it is 20 years later than the 2050 target, it is still good news for the climate. Many pundits believe that the target is ambitious, and India would not be able to achieve it as India's trajectory of emissions is upward and peak of pollution lies some decades away. That is understandable but with the advancement of technologies, the Indian curve may get flatter.

The agreement by 90 countries to cut the methane emission by 30 percent from the current levels by 2030 is a welcome step in the right direction. This will help to reduce the global warming in the near-term and keep the '1.5°C alive' as methane absorbs and keeps much more heat than carbon dioxide but dissolves much earlier than carbon dioxide.



The coal pledge signed by 46 countries including the major users of coal like Chile, Poland, and Vietnam is the good news for the climate. The signatories have pledged to stop all new investment in domestic and international coal power production.

The agreement envisages phasing out of coal power for the major economies in the 2030s and for the developing nations in 2040s. The US, Australia, India, and China are notable exceptions and have been criticised for not joining the agreement.

An Important and thorny issue discussed in COP26 is 'Climate Justice' for all the nations. The major culprits for damaging

the climate are the developed nations that rapidly grew at the cost of damaging the planet.

To ask developing nations to bear the cost of rectifying the faults of the developed nations is unjust. The developed nations must compensate developing nations for their efforts to adapt climate saving policies which are likely to hit their economic development unless helped with funds and new climate friendly technologies. This should be a global, unified effort.

In 'Copenhagen Accord' of 2009, the developed nations pledged to raise USD 100 billion a year by 2020 to compensate the developing nations for the adverse effect of climate change which was not their making. So far, the target has not been achieved and it may adversely affect the efforts to stem climate change.

The absence of Russian President Vladimir

Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping put a damper on the COP26 and attracted criticism by President Biden.

The absence of Prime Minister Imran Khan is strange as he put lots of emphasis on climate change and takes pride in his 'billion-tree tsunami'. It was a good opportunity for him to showcase Pakistan's achievements and plans and emphasise the danger posed to Pakistan due to unchecked climate change.

The bubble of life is under serious existential threat. This is the time to act to save it. Humanity has no other abode in the known universe.

9/11 and the Saudi Connection

In a world shaped by info ops, psyops, and plain old propaganda, can truth ever prevail?



Desk Report

The epic tragedy that made 9/11 a watershed moment in modern history continues to play out for the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks of that day. Their struggle to find satisfactory answers about the responsibility for the September 11 terrorist attacks remains as fruitless today as it was on day one.

Their final hopes, pinned on a classified collection of FBI documents released this month, have been dashed. It is now public that investigators found insufficient evidence to pin blame for complicity with the 9/11 hijackers on three Saudi nationals linked with the Saudi government and royal family.

Saudi authorities have always denied complicity in or foreknowledge of the devastating attacks.

FBI agents spent years investigating support given several of the hijackers upon their arrival in the US, focusing in particular on whether three Saudi nationals —

including a Saudi Embassy official in Washington — had advance knowledge of the attacks.

The three have been under the suspicion of illegally supporting the hijackers, but an FBI memo from May 2021 that closed out the probe and was among the more than 700 pages released said there was insufficient evidence to charge any of the three.

The FBI memo noted that al-Qaida compartmentalized the roles within its major attacks and “did not make the attack plans known in advance to others” for fear of word getting out. The documents nonetheless lay bare the scope of a strenuous but ultimately fruitless investigation into the matter.

Speculation about a Saudi connection gained fresh fuel after the 9/11 Commission kept 28 pages of its report classified. Activists and families of the victims of the attacks

In 2015, a federal commission revisited the 9/11 Commission’s recommendations and

findings, but on the question of complicity by the Saudis or anyone else, it arrived at the same place — even in light of potentially significant new material gathered by the FBI in its investigation.

“This new information is not sufficient to change the 9/11 Commission’s original findings regarding the presence of witting assistance to al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar,” the review concluded.

For years after the commission report, a team of FBI agents continued pursuing possible connections between the Saudis and the hijackers and built more evidence, but the Justice Department closed down the investigation without charges.

The suppressed 28 pages were finally released in July 2016 after years of political wrangling. Redacted in parts, the pages detailed circumstantial evidence of ties among Saudi government officials, intelligence agents, and several of the hijackers.

In a statement issued after the release of the

28 pages, the Saudi Embassy in the United States welcomed their release, saying they exonerated Riyadh of any direct role in the attacks.

"The question of Saudi involvement in 9/11 should be entirely put to rest," said Fran Townsend, a former Bush administration official, in a 28-pages-related video posted on social media this week.

The video was produced by Focus Washington, an interview series managed by Qorvis MSL, a lobbying firm retained by the Saudi government to influence American policymakers. The Saudi Embassy Twitter account distributed the video.



"While in the United States, some of the September 11th hijackers were in contact with or received assistance from, individuals who may be connected with the Saudi government," said the report, adding FBI sources believed at least two of those individuals were Saudi intelligence agents.

The report also mentions that numbers found in the phonebook of Abu Zubaydah, a detainee held in Guantánamo, could be traced to a company in Denver, Colorado, connected to former Saudi ambassador to the U.S. Prince Bandar bin Sultan.

One of the most notable figures mentioned is Omar al-Bayoumi, alleged by the report to have likely been a Saudi intelligence agent. Al-Bayoumi was in close contact with hijackers Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Midhar, providing them financial assistance during their time in the United States and even helping them find an apartment.

Bayoumi is in turn believed to have been on the payroll of the Saudi Ministry of Defense and was regularly in receipt of large lump sums of money from the Saudi Ministry of Finance and other undisclosed arms of the government.

Another figure highlighted in the documents is Osama Bassnan, a Saudi citizen who was an associate of al-Bayoumi and lived in an apartment nearby al-Hazmi and al-Midhar.

According to the report, Bassnan "made a comment to an FBI source after the attacks suggesting that he did more for the hijackers than al-Bayoumi did." Bassnan and his

wife received regular payments from the wife of Bandar bin Sultan. On one occasion, Bassnan is said to have received a check directly from Bandar's account.

Fahd al-Thumairy, a former Saudi consular officer in the United States who served as an imam at a mosque attended by al-Hazmi and al-Midhar, is also mentioned briefly, as is Saleh al-Hussayen, who is described in the report as a "Saudi Interior Ministry employee/official."

Al-Hussayen stayed at the same hotel as one of the hijackers in the days before the attack. While being interviewed by FBI agents after the attacks, al-Hussayen "either passed out or feigned a seizure," causing the interview to be terminated. He later managed to successfully flee the country.

In short, nothing contained in the 28 pages came any closer to pinning blame on Saudi Arabia and their publication did not precipitate major changes in the relationship

between the United States and the Saudi government.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America have a longstanding relationship dating back to the 1930s, when American businessmen first traveled to the Kingdom to help develop the country's natural resources.

"Today, the Saudi-U.S. relationship is stronger than ever", says the website of the Saudi embassy in Washington. "On issues of national security and economic opportunity, the Saudi-U.S. relationship is vital. The Kingdom remains one of America's closest allies and strongest economic partners in the Middle East".

"As history has shown, the Saudi-U.S. friendship has not only continued but has weathered many storms, including numerous regional and global conflicts and crises and as the relationship of these two nations matured, it has reflected the ideals of independence, justice and peace that are cornerstones of the United Nations Charter."

The website also talks about how international terrorism threatens the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its allies and the global community, and defeating the terrorist enemy requires sound policies, concerted government efforts and international cooperation.

In February 2005, Saudi Arabia hosted the first International Counter-Terrorism Conference in Riyadh at which the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz called upon the international community to establish an international centre to combat terrorism out of his firm belief that terrorism can be most effectively fought when nations work closely together in all areas, including the sharing of information.

In 2008, the Kingdom pledged USD 10 million to the United Nations to establish the Centre and, in 2011, Saudi Arabia signed an agreement with the U.N. to launch the UNCCT.

In 2014, Saudi Arabia provided the Centre with a donation of USD 100 million to enhance its capabilities and effectiveness in helping countries combat terrorism.



America's Terrible Aversion to a Third Force

America's entrenched bipartisan system denies space to independent voices to the detriment of the polity.

By Haider Rifaat

The United States' longstanding political history comprises of two parties: Republicans and Democrats. Although competition between these parties remained cutthroat over the years, the American political system overall failed to recognize the political interests of registered independents.

By definition, an independent voter is someone whose political beliefs are not defined by a rigid two-party system. Independents are free thinkers. They do not have to vote Republican or Democrat unless their personal beliefs align with the running candidate.

According to Pew Research Center, 38 percent of Americans describe themselves as independents, 31 percent are left leaning (Democrats), while 26 percent are right leaning (Republicans).

Data from last year's Ballot Access News found that independents constituted 29.09 percent of voters in 31 states, outweighing Republicans, who stood at 28.87 percent. Since 2008, the country has witnessed an increase in independent voters despite the political system abandoning them.

The key question is, do independents even have a say in US elections? The answer is tricky, partly on account of a rigid two-party system. For the longest time, independents have cast their votes for either Democratic or Republican candidates because there is no neutral party to vote for.

Participation is key in American politics. If independents have no party of their own to vote a candidate into power, they would

inevitably choose between the two existing parties.

Pew Research Center found that 17 percent of independents are left leaning while 13 percent are right leaning. The discrepancy in terms of percentage between independent republicans and independent democrats is not huge.

What casted a shadow of despair amongst independents was political toxicity that dug deep into US politics more than five years ago. Before Donald Trump's campaign, America had a contentious but healthy two-party system. At least discourse among opposing candidates was civil.

During Trump's campaign and presidency, voters expressed concerns and disdain for both Democratic and Republican parties. A whopping 93 percent of US voters expressed frustration owing to uncivil and rude behavior of political candidates, according to Lake Research Partners and The Tarrance Group for Georgetown University's Institute of Politics and Public Service.

On the other hand, 82 percent of them agreed that the country's racial, political and class disparities were only increasing.

The Trump era mainstreamed bigotry, racism, and white supremacy in American politics, and pitted Americans against each other. Registered independents already felt isolated enough, torn between Republican and Democratic political candidates. They now had to put up with this ugly side of politics, thanks to Trump.

Perhaps the most significant example to cite is the insurrection at the Capitol Hill on 6 November 2020. Following the tragic events, thousands of GOP supporters registered as independents or as unaffiliated. On the downside, it is incidents like these that make Americans withdraw from US politics. Many changed their political affiliations or were simply too scared to share their political beliefs with others.

Republicans and Democrats made things worse for independents. They made relentless efforts in the past to ensure that independent candidates never wined up on the ballot, according to NBC News. This fact is very telling of how exploitative US politics can be.

Since independents vote based on issues without blindly supporting a party affiliate, it is important to recognize their place in a broader political landscape. The United States comprises of two polar opposite political parties. The space in between is where the political system has failed Americans.

It seems unfair that moderates in American politics are helplessly pinioned. They cannot cast vote for candidates they resonate with. Most of them end up canceling their campaigns or feel defeated early in the political race.

Independent candidates do not stand a chance of winning, considering the stranglehold of the two dominant political parties that are diametrically opposed on every issue but united against independents.

Caliphates and sultanates of non Arab world

Part I



By Azmat M Saqib

Under the Umayyad Caliphs Al-Malik and Al-Walid Iberian peninsula, western India (present Pakistan), Afghanistan and central Asia were conquered by able Muslim generals. Muslim presence in Central Asia eventually resulted into conversions of Mongols and Turkomans to Islam. In later centuries, Turk descendants invaded India resulting in Muslim rule lasting till 1857 AD and in Anatolia into Ottoman Caliphate which lasted till 1924.

In 711 AD, the dispossessed sons of the recently deceased Visigoth king of Spain, Witiza, appealed to the Muslim governor of Africa Musa bin Nusayr for help in the civil war. Guided by Spanish nobleman Julian, Tariq bin Zeyad with an army of 7000 men, mostly Berbers, Syrians and Yemenis landed on Gibraltar (named after him Jabal-at-Tariq). Helped later on by governor Musa's reinforcements, swiftly conquered most of the peninsula within seven years. Local population accepted the new ruler, since they treated their subjects well and their taxes were also lesser than the Spanish rulers of Iberia.

Greeks named Iberian Peninsula as Hispania and Muslims called it Al-Andalusia (meaning the easy way). Dynastic history of Muslim Spain had the following major chronological phases: i) Caliphate and Emirate of Cordoba under Umayyad influence (711-1031), ii) The two taifa periods of city states (66 years), iii) The Al Moravid rule (1091-1145), iv) the Al Mohad rule (1151-1212) and lastly v) The Kingdom of Granada. For its time, Al Andalusia was one of the greatest

civilizations on the Globe, reaching its summit with the Umayyad Caliphate in the 10th century. After the collapse of this independent Caliphate (from Bagdad Caliphate), the Muslim rule in Spain got fragmented into regional city states. Weakened by infighting, Spanish Christians launched a Reconquista (reconquest), a process by which the Catholic kingdoms of northern Spain eventually managed to succeed in defeating and conquering the Muslim states of the Iberian Peninsula after four centuries, in 1492. After the reconquest of Toledo in 1085, the Al Moravid dynasty centered in Marrakesh defeated the Christians and re-established the united Muslim rule on the Peninsula. They accepted the Abbasid caliphate at Baghdad as their sovereign. But in 1147, Al Moravid's were replaced by Al Mohad Caliphate at Marrakesh in Morocco. Within five years, Al Mohads also took control of Iberian Peninsula.

The pluralist society of tenth century Umayyad rule flourished where Christians, Jews and Muslims contributed to make the Golden triangle region (Cordoba, Toledo and Seville) as the most advanced civilization of its age. Leading scholars of the world, both in spiritual and material realm excelled in scholarship. But this intellectual freedom and pluralism were restricted under conservative West African Al Moravid and Al Mohad dynasties, though progress continued but not to the extent of Umayyad era. Al Moravid rule extended from Iberia to Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania and Ghana.

With the Reconquista in full swing after the conquest of Cordoba in 1236, Mohammad Ibn-Nassir aligned the kingdom of Grenada with Ferdinand III of Castile, thereby making it a tributary state for the next 250 years, with emirs paying tribute to Castilian kings mostly in the form of gold. On January 2, 1492, the last Muslim leader, Muhammad XII, gave up complete control of Grenada to Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic monarchs. For Jews as well, a period of religious tolerance under Muslim rule in Spain, came to an end with their expulsion by Christian monarchy in 1492.

From pre Islamic times influx of nomadic Turk people from the Central Asian steppes had been common place following the Mongol raids; that were never able to conquer Indian subcontinent. As Muslim Caliphate started fragmenting in the Middle East in 10th century, Muslim rulers in rival states began enslaving non Muslim nomadic Turks from the Central Asian steppes and raising many of them to become military slaves called Mamluks; soon Turks were migrating to Muslim lands and becoming Islamized. Many of the Turkish slaves eventually rose up to become generals and rulers, and conquered large parts of the Muslim world. At one time, Mamluk sultanates prevailed in Egypt, Afghanistan and India.

When Persia was conquered under Caliph Umar, Makran region of Persian Empire came under the Caliphate. During Umayyad era, Neighboring ruler Raja Dahir of Daibal was hostile towards expanding Muslim Caliphate, abducted a naval Muslim ship coming from Serendip (Sri Lanka) along with the Muslim families. Muhammad bin Qasim was sent in 711 AD, defeated Raja Dahir and took control of southern region upto Multan. Since then, territories West of Indus River remained under Muslim Caliphates.

In 962 AD, Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms in South Asia faced a series of raids from Muslim armies of Central Asia. Among them was Mahmud of Ghazni, the son of a Turkish Mamluk, who became the ruler of Ghaznavi dynasty after his father's death. Ghaznavi dynasty ruled large parts of Iran, Afghanistan, much of

Transoxiana and the Eastern half of Indian subcontinent from 977 to 1187.

Raja Jaipal of Greater Punjab's rule extended, till Afghanistan. He invaded Ghazni twice during Mahmud and his father's time. But in the battle of Peshawar, Mahmud defeated and captured him, although freed him against an indemnity of 50 elephants. But he abdicated in favor of his son Anandpal and committed suicide by burning in a pyre.

Raja Anandpal fought nine times with Mahmud Ghazni to avenge his father's debacle, several times loosing territories. Other Hindu rajas also stood up against Mahmud Ghazni. Their financial and religious center was Temple of Somnath, which housed a pagan Arab temple(Prophet Muhammad's time). So destruction of the temple war base was a priority, which Mahmud of Ghazni achieved after 17 battles with the Hindu rajas.

In 1187, Ghazni was conquered by Shahab -ud-din Ghori and Indian subcontinent also came under Ghori dynasty. After the assassination of Muhammad Ghori by his enemies in Punjab, his Turkish slave general Qutub-ud-Din Aibak took over Delhi. This slave dynasty ruled India from 1192 till 1290 AD. Hence began the Delhi Sultanate (1206) which lasted till 1526.

In 1241, Mongols destroyed Lahore and same year after the death of Ghias-ud-din Balban, Khilji dynasty; a Turkish tribe from Ghur, Afghanistan took control of Delhi. In 1303, Mongols besieged Delhi for two month, unsuccessful, they left Delhi. Ala-ud-din khilji's army went on offensive against the retreating Mongols and their threat was eliminated for the future. In 1320, power shifted to sultans from different Turkish ethnic group and Tughluq dynasty ruled from 1320 to 1414. But in 1398, half Mongol from mother's side Timur(Tamerlane), a Muslim, seized Delhi, sacked the city and massacred thousands, since the city dwellers rebelled while he was still in Delhi.



Continued at page 30

Pharma Magnate Lauds PM's Approach to Pharma Sector

Pharmaceuticals sector has huge export potential, says Arshad Mehmood.

The head of Pakistan's fastest growing pharmaceutical group has voiced his satisfaction over how Prime Minister Imran Khan has made it a priority to promote the exports of locally manufactured pharmaceuticals.

Mr Arshad Mehmood is the Group Managing Director of W Group of Industries, a conglomerate of a dozen pharmaceuticals manufacturing units in the Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces of Pakistan.

The Group received the "Fastest Growing Pharmaceutical Group" award from Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar in September. Earlier, it was awarded an Export Trophy by Federal Minister for Commerce Mr Abdul Razak Dawood.

Here is a question and answer session with Mr Mehmood on how Pakistan's pharma sector is doing, and how it could do better.

Q: What is pharmaceutical industry and how is the pharmaceutical business going on in Pakistan?

A: Pharmaceuticals is a 5 billion dollar industry of Pakistan while the international market size of the industry is 1,800 billion dollars, so the sector has huge export potential.

Currently, Pakistan's pharmaceuticals exports are only 250 million dollars. India's current pharmaceuticals exports are around 22 billion dollars. This is due to the attractive, excellent, and supportive vision and policies of the Indian government for this sector. International pharmaceuticals market annually growing at the rate of 9 percent.

Pharmaceutical business in Pakistan is the only business that has extreme controls implemented by the government. Strict government regulations control the business from licensing to manufacturing to import and export. Even the prices of the drugs are controlled by the government. Unfortunately, the inputs remain outside government control, which leaves the business gasping for breath to survive.

Q: What are some of the challenges facing this sector?

A: As I just explained, the pharmaceutical sector is Pakistan's most heavily regulated. The biggest challenge facing the industry are the discretionary powers of the officials in the implementation of those regulations. Another challenge stems from the fact that almost no active material is produced in Pakistan.

Unfortunately, successive governments have paid no attention to fostering a favourable policy regime that would help our industry compete with India and China. The upshot is that we resort to imports to meet 98 percent of our active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) needs.

A related problem is that our unstable relations with India often prevent us from accessing one of the world's cheapest API markets. Together, all these factors have a huge impact on the supply chain of our local pharmaceutical industry.



Q: The government claims to give many incentives to this sector. Are you satisfied with these incentives?

A: Well, a number of meetings have been held between industry and the government and the industry has put forward the issues it is facing and the government has promised to provide all possible support in resolving those issues. We are highly satisfied that Prime Minister Imran Khan realises the importance of the pharmaceutical industry and he has made it a priority to promote the exports of locally manufactured pharmaceuticals.

Q: It is said that prices of medicines are very high in Pakistan. How do you respond to this?

A: This perception is completely mistaken. Apart from Pakistan, there are very few countries around the world that control drug prices. Among those countries are Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. Now not all drugs are price controlled in India and Bangladesh.

But in Pakistan, every drug is price controlled including many non-drugs that were somehow registered as drugs and are still not allowed to be shifted to the Health and OTC division. Such products include Ginseng, Vicks balm, etc.

Q: What is role of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP)?

A: DRAP was established to regulate the therapeutic goods (medicines, medical devices & alternate medicines) in the areas of quality, safety, and efficacy. The role of DRAP as mandated by the statute is very positive in development of local pharmaceutical industry in Pakistan.

However, we feel DRAP has a tendency to interfere with the industry beyond its mandate. Some of their actions are tantamount

to control of business that include contract manufacturing between two license holders.

In medical devices, DRAP has put restrictions on indenting, which amounts to control of business. They even assert control over business margins, exports, etc., which is way out of line.

In our view, the role of DRAP needs be limited to its mandate. It should not try to control the business side of our operations.

Q: Spurious medicines are an issue in Pakistan. How can this be handled?

A: Spurious medicines are a problem across the globe. Many countries are facing this issue. The biggest hubs of spurious drug production are India and China, whereas Pakistan has very few reports of spurious drug manufacturers. The proportion of all spurious drugs detected by government labs comes to a mere 0.4 percent. So the impression that spurious drugs are commonplace in Pakistan is incorrect.

Q: In some countries, physicians write prescriptions for generic medicine instead of writing out name brand medicine manufactured by particular companies. Should Pakistan embrace that model?

A: This is a practice across the world. Doctors prescribe medicines according to the disease of the patient. Choosing the brand is the prerogative of the doctor that is based on his or her experience and trust. Nothing unusual is being practiced in Pakistan and it should remain as such.

Q: From where are pharmaceutical companies importing salts for use in medicine manufacturing?

A: Salts or API are manufactured in different countries but the cost of API is high if imported from EU or the US. The Pakistani industry sources most of its inputs from the economical markets of China and India.

Q: Should the government allow import salts from India?

A: The best thing would be to manufacture API in Pakistan, and we call upon the government to give incentives for local production of API. However, until that happens, import of critical inputs from India should be allowed.

Q: What is role of a drug inspector? Is it effective? What do you say about this?

A: The role of drug inspectors is important in assuring quality of drugs in the market. However, currently some drug inspectors tend to assume the role of police and not that of a facilitator for the industry. This needs to change to facilitate the industry and guide them in improving the manufacturing instead of treating the industry as criminals.

W Group of Companies' Units

1. Weather Folds Pharmaceuticals, Hattar, Pakistan
2. Welwrd Pharmaceuticals, Hattar, Pakistan
3. WnsFeild Pharmaceuticals, Hattar, Pakistan
4. Winbrains Research Labs, Hattar, Pakistan
5. Winbrains Research Labs (Semi basic manufacturing), Hattar, Pakistan
6. Welmark Pharmaceuticals, Hattar, Pakistan
7. Weather Folds Nutraceutical, Hattar, Pakistan
8. Wenovo Pharmaceuticals Plant, Taxila, Punjab, Pakistan
9. Wezen Pharmaceutical, Islamabad, Pakistan
10. Welwink Pharmaceuticals, Gujranwala, Pakistan
11. Wallace Pharma Evolution, Lahore, Pakistan
12. Wallesely Pharmaceuticals Plant, Taxila, Punjab, Pakistan



Khizr khan, Sayyid dynasty founder, was a governor of Lahore who rebelled and occupied Delhi; he considered himself a viceroy of Timur's son. During the dynasty's weak rule, disintegration continued and the provincial kingdoms developed. Sayyid dynasty ruled Delhi from 1414 till 1451 AD. From 1451 to 1526, several strong rulers of Lodhi Sultans sought to rebuild the sultanate, but history was against them.

In 1526, Ibrahim Lodhi (the king) got embroiled in disputes with Afghan nobles. Daulat Khan Lodhi, governor of Punjab and king's uncle, invited Babur, ruler of Kabul, to invade and take over the throne in Delhi. Babur's forces met Ibrahim Lodhi's forces at Panipat, and were victorious; Babur captured Delhi and Agra, and ended the Delhi Sultanate era.



Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, descended from both Genghis Khan and Timur, established the Mughal dynasty at Delhi. After his death in 1530, Hamayun his son inherited the throne; but he mishandled Sher Shah Suri's seizure of Bengal and Bihar. Sher Shah Suri (1540-1545) defeated Hamayun, and the latter wandered in Afghanistan and Iran. Sher Shah was a brilliant ruler and administrator. Developed several institutions and road networks with caravan sarais, and fast postal service. After the death of Sher Shah (1545), Humayun finally fought his way back from a base in Kabul, but his early death brought his 14 year old son Jalal-ud-din Akbar to the throne. Bairam Khan became his regent. Bairam Khan defeated forces of Suri's son and installed Akbar on the throne. Akbar consolidated his empire by defeating most of his opponents in the Indian subcontinent. In 1564, Akbar abolished Jizya for non Muslims. Akbar, aided by scholars Abul Fazal and his brother Faizi, introduced a new religion Din-e-Illahi for the new millennium of Muslim calendar, claiming, that period of religion brought by Prophet of Islam ends after first millennium. It was an amalgam of Hinduism and Islam. Fundamentalist Muslims as well as Hindus opposed it.

After his death, Akbar's son Jahangir (1605-1627) sat on the throne. He married previously widowed Nur Jahan; she and her father became major powers at the court. In 1617, British received permission to establish a trading warehouse at Surat.

In 1628, Shahab-ud-din Shah Jahan (1628-1658) became the King after the death of his father. Shah Jahan built the walled city, now called "old Delhi". Mumtaz Mahal's death in childbirth inspired Shah Jahan to build the Taj Mahal. In his last years, his younger son Aurangzeb confined him to his palace, defeated and executed his elder brother Dara Shikoh and took the throne in 1658.

His was the most powerful rule with maximum territories of Indian sub-continent. He reinstated jizya and implemented Sharia law in letter and spirit.

He crushed the rebellion of Marhattas and also the emerging power of Britishers in Bengal. During his rule, Indian subcontinent became the richest region of the world. But after his death in 1707, chaos ensued, until 1713, when Farrakhsiyar managed to take power.

From 1719 till 1748, Muhammad Shah (alias Rangeela Shah) reigned, but the empire gradually disintegrated. In 1739, Nadir Shah of Afghanistan sacked Delhi, massacred thousands, plundered all the wealth of Mughal Palaces and claimed all territories West of Indus.



In 1757, Lord Clive defeated Nawab Suraj-ud-daula through treachery of his Grand vizier and captured Bengal. In 1757, Ahmed Shah Abdali invaded Delhi and became Emperor of Delhi. In 1761, at Panipat, Afghan rulers combined their forces and defeated the Marhattas. In 1799, Sultan Tipu of Mysore was martyred by the British in the fourth and final battle aided by the treachery of court viziers. British East India Company's influence and rule kept expanding in India. English displaced Persian as the official language in India in 1837, rendering all Persian conversant Muslims as officially illiterate.

In 1857, last war of national liberation was crushed by British troupes; East India Company was dissolved and British Parliament took direct control of India.

Steward of the Last Resort

The sorry plight of Islamabad National Park is yet another example of the fence itself eating the crop.

TTI Report

The conduct of Islamabad High Court has yet again shown the sound reasoning behind the famous English anecdote from the WWII: With the German Luftwaffe carrying out bombing runs of London, Prime Minister Winston Churchill is reputed to have asked after being briefed about the devastation wreaked on the city: “Are the courts functioning?”

When he was told the judges were dispensing justice as normal, Churchill said, “Thank God. If the courts are working, nothing can go wrong.”

Islamabad High Court has earned a reputation as a steward of last resort through its tireless work upholding the law and constitution. This time, it has risen to address environmental stewardship in Islamabad Capital Territory.

In a ruling passed in the second week of November, Chief Justice Athar Minallah took the federal government, the Capital Development Authority (CDA), and the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) to task for being complacent over the destruction of Margalla Hills National Park and wildlife sanctuary.

The ruling came in a case filed by academician Prof Zahid Baig Mirza through Advocate Mohammad Aslam Khaki and Afzal Siddiqui.

Margalla Hills National Park is located near the northern edge of Islamabad Capital Territory, bordering on the Haripur District of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It includes the Margalla Hills, a spur of the mighty Himalayas, along with Shakarparian Park and Rawal Lake.

The third-largest national park in the world with an area of 17,386 hectares (42,960 acres), it was established in 1980.

Margalla Hills are a tourist attraction. Popular destinations and picnic hotspots in the area include Daman-e-Koh, Pir Sohawa, Lake View Park, and Shakarparian, also home to a Cultural Complex.

The park is rich in biodiversity, especially rich in Sino-Himalayan fauna, most notably gray goral, barking deer, and the Leopard. Combined MHNP is home to around 600 plant species, 402 bird varieties, 38 mammals, and 27 reptile species.

Dr. Zahid Baig Mirza is a prominent zoologist and field expert who has served as on the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board as a Biodiversity Specialist and chair of the Scientific Committee. He has been involved in drawing plans and policies for carrying out the research and scientific studies in the MHNP.

The court was informed that the National Park area has been illegally encroached by various private persons and government entities, including Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy.

The Chief Justice regretted in his ten-page order that those charged with protection and preservation the designated area of the national park appeared to have been responsible for its destruction.

The court observed that governance within the ICT over the last six decades seemed geared towards benefitting the privileged and the elite.

“Acts and decisions of the policy makers and those entrusted with the responsibility of governance appear to have facilitated environmental degradation adversely affecting the fundamental rights of the people of Pakistan,” the judge said in his ruling.

The chief justice ordered Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam, the secretary climate change, the CDA chairman and the IWMB chairperson to jointly survey the notified areas of the national park and the wildlife sanctuary and furnish a joint report highlighting the damage done.

They were also asked to take immediate measures to save the notified area from further harm, and to ensure no construction took place nor any illegal activity was carried out within the designated area, and to identify the officials and authorities responsible for destruction of the park and suggest how they could be made accountable.

The court ordered all illegal construction or other activities to be stopped, and directed the AGP to examine the purported grant of more than 8,000 acres in the park to the Remount, Veterinary and Farms Directorate of the General Headquarters (GHQ) and assist the high court regarding its legality since it appeared to be in violation of the laws.

The CDA was asked to submit a report justifying leasing out of land in the park to m/s Monal Group of Companies and allowing the latter to execute a purported lease agreement with the Remount.

The director general of Pakistan Environment Protection Agency was ordered to conduct an independent survey of the designated areas of the wildlife sanctuary and park and submit a report highlighting the extent of environmental degradation and suggesting measures to protect it from further destruction.

The case is a classic example of the fence itself eating the crop, as the institutions responsible for environmental stewardship appear to be facilitating environmental degradation. The court ruling in turn is yet another instance of the IHC standing up as the steward of the last resort for rule of law and constitutionalism.

The question, however, is, for how long will we rely on the steward of the last resort to cure all ills of governance? Will our officials ever learn to straighten up and fly right?

At Peace with Extremists of Every Stripe?

Will Pakistan's truce with extremist outfits have consequences for the country's case at FATF?



By Azeem Waqas

Citizens and observers in Pakistan are worried the country's recent conciliatory overtures towards Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Tehrik-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) may add to our difficulties with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

FATF has thrice placed the country on its grey list since 2008. Islamabad-based think tank Tabadlab estimates Pakistan's economic losses from this designation at around USD 38 billion.

In the current scenario, Pakistan's heavily battered economy in the wake of the ravages of the Covid-19 global pandemic is showing signs of a fragile recovery, but the FATF grey listing continues to hamper the country's economic recovery and growth.

On 31 October 2021, Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led government signed a secret deal to unban TLP. According to the deal TLP chief, Saad Rizwi, will be released from custody along with several hundred workers. About 2,000 TLP workers have since been released from jail.

On 8 November, reports came in of a month-long ceasefire agreement signed with the TTP. Both the outfits had earlier been proscribed by National Counter Terror Authority (NACTA). Afghanistan's Taliban rulers are said to be facilitating negotiations between TTP and the federal government.

In a related development, Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamat (ASWJ) Ex-SSP and number of other banned outfit are demanding to be unbanned after TLP was let off the hook.

The Ministry of Interior had put TLP on its proscribed organizations list in April 2020 while TTP has been on the list since 2005.

Pakistan has witnessed an increase in terrorist attacks during recent months. After 2018, it has recorded the highest number of attacks at 571, resulting in the killing of 226 people including 182 civilians and 178 security personnel.

Both these peace overtures are likely to have serious implications for Pakistan's relations with the world and its economy.

"TLP is not problematic on international

level but talks with the TTP would [lead to] objections by the international community", says security analyst Dr Ayesha Siddiqi. "Pakistan has to strengthen its prosecution and investigation system to convict UN designated terrorist like Moulana Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed, Zaki ur Rehman and other to be whitelisted by the FATF".

In its last performance review, FATF let Pakistan languish on its grey list till February 2022 and gave the country another three point action plan. It asked Pakistan to provide evidence that it actively seeks to enhance the impact of sanctions beyond its jurisdiction by nominating additional individuals and entities for designation at the UN.

As well, it expects Islamabad to increase money laundering investigations and prosecutions and to demonstrate that proceeds of crime continue to be restrained and confiscated in line with Pakistan's risk profile, including by working with foreign counterparts to trace, freeze and confiscated assets.

"FATF is looking at technical deficiencies of Pakistan. Pakistan has to plug its

financial and political management loopholes. FATF is just one element for Pakistan's economic difficulties", Siddiqua said, adding, "Pakistan needs both domestic political will and technical expertise to get off the grey list".

Former Finance Minister Dr Salman Shah concurs: "TLP is not an international terrorist organization. United Nation has not designated TLP or put it on any list. Unbanning the TLP would therefore not impact FATF action plan".

"Pakistan should work on international terrorist organization and UN designation list to get out of FATF grey list", says Shah, adding FATF decision means Pakistan will continue to face difficulties in its efforts to access finances as international investors will remain wary while the country is on the grey list.

Financial expert Ashfaq Tola said: "TLP was not proscribed by the court nor by the Election Commission of Pakistan, TLP has given an assurance to be non-violent and play its role in national politics which nobody should object to".

He added that Pakistan is trying to bring peace in the country while India is continuously sponsoring terror organizations in its country. FATF should take notice against India's state sponsored terrorism.

There are 79 entities on NACTA's list of organizations proscribed by the Ministry of Interior. Four of these are enlisted under UN Security Council Resolution No. 1267, including Al-Akhtar Trust and Al-Rashid Trust.

A National Committee is established for overseeing implementation of sanctions against individuals and entities designated by UN Security Council 1267 & 1989/2253/2368 (Al-Qaida/Da'esh Sanctions regime) and Security Council 1988/2254 (Taliban Sanctions regime).

The next FATF review of Pakistan's performance is due in February 2022 and there is a strong possibility India will again lobby for Pakistan to be put on the blacklist for unbanning the proscribed organizations and failing to comply with recommendations for over two years.

Presently, Pakistan's economy is in awful shape and being on the grey list puts the

country at a further disadvantage. Pakistan's trade deficit is widening and has increased more than 100 percent during the four months of current year as compared to last year.

Pakistan is also struggling under the burden of foreign debt. Its currency is continuously losing value against the US Dollar. To provide some help, Saudi Arabia has announced to deposit USD 3 billion in State Bank of Pakistan.

Financial Management Unit (FMU) says that it has analysed the transaction patterns, demographic and professional profile of the individuals proscribed under Schedule-IV of ATA 1997, the law that deals with domestic listing under UNSCR 1373 in Pakistan.



Analysis shows that some of the individuals listed on Schedule -IV of ATA, 1997 have performed repeated over-the-counter remittance transactions through commercial banks. They had also conducted transactions in the branches of other cities i.e. other than their home city provided on CNIC.

Some of the individuals are holding more than one bank account. Through some bank accounts it has also been reflected that individuals listed on Schedule IV of ATA, 1997 are maintaining joint accounts with other individuals and/ or holding mandate in it.

During analysis of the reported transactions it has been noticed that these individuals were also using credit card, demand

finance, car finance, and demand draft and microfinance facilities of the banks. The financial institutions have taken action in accordance with the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 against all such persons.

FMU says that Pakistan has achieved the rating of "largely compliant/compliant" in all big six recommendations of the FATF which include R.3 (money laundering offence), R.5 (terrorist financing offence), R.6 (targeted financial sanctions related to terrorism & terrorist financing), R.10 (customer due diligence), R.11 (record keeping) and R.20 (reporting of suspicious transactions).

FATF recognises Pakistan's continued political commitment since June 2018 has led to significant progress across a

comprehensive CFT action plan. June 2018 was when Pakistan made a high-level political commitment to work with the FATF and APG to strengthen its AML/CFT regime and to address its strategic counter-terrorist financing-related deficiencies,

"Pakistan has completed 26 of the 27 action items in its 2018 action plan", a FATF statement said. "While Pakistan has reported some steps, the FATF encourages Pakistan to continue to make progress to address as soon as possible, the one remaining CFT-related item by continuing to demonstrate that TF investigations and prosecutions target senior leaders and commanders of UN designated terrorist groups".

The Supreme Court's Blinkered Demolition Squad

A crisis of credibility is brewing over the lopsided implementation of the anti-encroachment drive.



By Azfar Ashfaq

The high-profile anti-encroachment drive in progress under the auspices of the Supreme Court has set tongues wagging in Pakistan's seaside megacity of Karachi.

Citing the sanctity of the word of the apex court, the authorities razed to the ground several low-income settlements in the city in no time. However, the same august court's orders concerning the lucrative cantonment properties continue to languish. Why the double standard?

Why is it that the authorities think nothing of rendering thousands of poor families homeless, but show infinite consideration to commercial properties owned by the high and mighty?

Pakistan seaside megacity Karachi is home to around 30 million humans. Over the years, it has become a concrete jungle that comprises of formal and informal settlements from impoverished neighbourhoods on Orangi Hills to the precious land reclaimed by the Defence Housing Authority from the sea.

There are multi-storeyed buildings owned by the government and private sector constructed along the banks of, and in some cases on top of, major storm water drains decades ago in total violation of rules and building regulations.

The megacity has been facing a plethora of problems since late '70s because of the influx of the people, including of millions of Afghan refugees, and unplanned expansion. Organised occupations of private properties and encroachment on public spaces, parks, roads, pavements in Karachi have become a common sight.

The act of slowly covering more and more of an area is the definition of 'encroachment' provided in Oxford Dictionary. Setting up a makeshift stall on a pavement to sell goods is encroachment and so does grabbing acres of land to establish housing societies, plazas, or occupying footpaths and service lanes for security and parking purposes, which of course can never be possible without the patronage of law enforcers, politicians, civic organisations and the government of the day.

The arterial Shara-e-Faisal is often dubbed as the heart of Karachi. From president and prime minister to army chief and judges of superior judiciary, all use this thoroughfare when they arrive in the city. But despite this, a foreign bank has blocked a major portion of the service lane outside its head office for parking purposes and an intelligence agency has swallowed up footpaths and amenity land outside its office over the years in the name of security and nobody even bother to take notice.

Only recently, footpaths along Karachi's two famous hotels on Club Road as well as headquarters of Pakistan Rangers Sindh on Dr Ziauddin Road were opened for pedestrians after remaining closed for a long time as part of so-called security measures.

Recently, it came to public knowledge that a grid station of K-Electric was set up on a greenbelt in PECHS. There are dozens of police stations and scores of kiosks set up on greenbelts, footpaths, or other public spaces. Rangers have occupied playgrounds, government schools, and stadiums in Karachi to house its various wings.

It is naive to think that Karachi can ever be encroachment free without evolving a mechanism to hold powerful quarters accountable. After all charity begins at home! Even as you read this, someone somewhere in the port city is busy encroaching upon a piece of land. There are too many stakes in the highly lucrative business and everyone protects everyone because of shared interests.

Successive governments have carried out countless anti-encroachment drives, which many think only target weaker segments of the society and always spare the influential.

But implementation on the cases of various encroached establishments owned by powerful quarters and the infamous Nasla Tower, situated along Shara-a-Faisal in the Sindh Muslim Cooperative Housing Society, as well as holding the officials who granted permissions or turned a blind eye accountable has the potential to turn the public opinion about sparing the influential.

It was on 16 June this year when a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court ordered demolition of the 15-storey Nasla Tower for encroaching upon a service lane. On the same day, the same court also ordered demolition of a decades-old settlement as well as the Aladdin Park and Pavilion End Club on main Rashid Minhas Road for occupying land meant for amenity purposes.

However, the authorities took no time in implementing the apex court's directives as they demolished the park, the club and the locality without giving the owners, shopkeepers and residents an opportunity to file a review petition. But this was not the case with Nasla Tower as the influential builder was allowed to move SC with a review petition.

The review petition took three months to decide and in September the SC bench dismissed it on the ground that the building had not only encroached a portion of the service road but had also been constructed on an area in excess of the 780 square yards allotted in its 1956 lease deed.

Around 400 square yards of land meant for the service road was also used for constructing the high-rise and the court ruled that it could not be legalised. With this, the court ordered the demolition of the entire

building rejecting the builder's plea to not raze the entire tower since a major portion of the plot was leased. The court was of the opinion that the building could not be sustained after partial demolition.

"After examining the entire record and scrutinising the reports submitted by all agencies and departments, we are in no manner of doubt that the tower in question (Nasla Tower) has indeed been constructed on encroached land which amongst other things has also blocked a service road", the apex court ruling in September said.

"Being illegal construction and there being no provision for compounding such illegality especially where a service road has been blocked, the same is liable to be demolished".



Yet no action was taken until 26 October when the apex court ordered the Karachi commissioner to demolish the building via controlled blast. The first week of November has already gone but the administration is still in the process of finalising the method to demolish the vacant building.

On the other hand, the drive against encroachments along major storm water drains of Karachi is in full swing as authorities are demolishing houses of poor on a daily basis after the Supreme Court lifted all stay orders granted by the high court on the ground that many of the localities had proper leased documents.

The SC ruled that no government organisation had the right to grant lease on drains, playgrounds, parks, etc.

While government is clearly instructed to ensure recovery of the payment by Nasla Tower sublease holders to the builder or sell the land to ensure payment, thousands of poor families have been rendered homeless and their resettlement plan requires two years and PKR 10 billion.

Last year, an under-construction apartment complex, Royal Park, on Rashid Minhas Road was also razed to ground on the orders of the apex court because it encroached upon state land.

Those who had booked units in the mixed-use building have since been running from pillar to post to get their money refunded for the past one year - to no avail.

Last month, the SC summoned Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah for not addressing

the issue of encroachments on public spaces, illegal constructions, and unauthorised allotments as well as little progress regarding rehabilitation of affectees after demolition drive around three nullahs of the city.

In a stern rebuke, the court order states: "We have pointed out to Chief Minister, Sindh that there is a complete systematic failure insofar as all institutions including KDA, KMC & SBCA, etc., which are charged with the responsibility of administering the city in an organised, orderly and lawful manner have become ineffective and redundant."

Yet no action has so far been taken against a single current or former minister or any official of the Sindh Building Control Authority, Karachi Development

Authority or Karachi Metropolitan Corporation or any cantonment boards for allowing these encroachments.

“We will definitely take action against responsible persons if the honourable court gives us specific instructions,” says Sindh Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Shah. “We are fully complying with the Supreme Court’s order and removing encroachments in the city. It’s an ongoing process.”

Political parties, especially those in the opposition, have been protesting against what they called a ‘selective’ anti-encroachment drive in the name of Supreme Court’s order.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, Jamaat-i-Islami, Pak Sarzameen Party and to some extent Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf have been demanding action against “corrupt officials of the Sindh government” if the authorities really want an encroachment-free Karachi.

They also question the double standards comparing regularisation of Banigala residence of Prime Minister Imran Khan with the demolition order of Nasla Tower.

One thing is, however, clear that the days of agony for Karachiites are far from over with

hundreds of thousands of people living on leased land or in katchi abadis facing the threat of displacement. The anti-encroachment drive will only gain more speed in the wake of the last month’s directive of the Supreme Court to Karachi Administrator Murtaza Wahab that has already set alarm bells ringing across all the quarters concerned.

“The report filed by Murtaza Wahab has been unsatisfactory”, The SC directives to Wahab reads. “We have directed him to submit a complete list of amenity plots within the jurisdiction of KMC and the present status of each such plot together with its dimensions and a note to the effect whether these are being used for the purpose spelt out in the Master Plan.

“He has also been directed to ensure that all playgrounds for children must be restored, encroachments removed immediately and steps be taken to ensure that said areas are not encroached again.”

But the issue of encroachment is by no means limited to the jurisdiction of the KMC. More than two years ago, Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed had ordered cantonment boards to end all commercial activities on military lands in Karachi. Yet, the powerful quarters are still

running cinemas and wedding halls and no action has so far been taken against them.

Similarly, the SC had also ordered demolition of wedding hall constructed at Askari Park in Gulshan-i-Iqbal two years ago but as of November 2021, it is still up and running and the park is still under the control of the army’s V Corps.

Such instances give credence to the people’s thinking that the whole exercise is aimed at targeting the poor. They question what their crime is if they acquired a house or booked a flat after reviewing all documents, but the SC declared years later that the authorities which had issued those documents did not have the right to do so.

“The Supreme Court has ordered the Karachi administrator to restore all playgrounds for children,” said a senior KMC official, asking not to be named. “I don’t think Murtaza Wahab is able to implement the SC directive by asking Rangers to vacate the playgrounds it has been occupying in Karachi since long.

“We need a SC monitored proper system rather than having strong directives from the apex court. Otherwise, making Karachi encroachment-free will remain a distant dream.”



Should Pakistan Move Karachi's Twin Seaports Away from the Megacity?

Megacities and ports look like a match made in heaven – until you look at the environmental toll and functional trade-offs.

TTI Desk Report

Considering that eight out of the world's ten mega-cities grew hand in hand with seaports, the combination must have a lot going for it. Germinal cities usually spring forth around areas of industry, which have a tendency to gravitate towards seaports.

Ports are the engines of productivity that fuel commerce, industry, and life in general. On the other hand, shipping traffic attracted by ports and its attendant oil are a bane for the habitat in the vicinity.

Megacities, in turn, produce their own share of waste, and their massive populations often mean pollution rising to un-manageable levels.

Karachi is Pakistan's most populous city as well its largest industrial and commercial hub. Together with its two seaports, the city generates the lion's share of revenue for the country.

Given the demonstrated relationship between sea economy, maritime transport, logistic services, and the development of coastal urban systems, Karachi's two seaports are central to its character and identity.

However, in recent times, port activities have become progressively incompatible – both functionally and environmentally – with the life of urban residents. Increasingly, larger ships and technologies employed to move good have required extensive docks, deep-water harbours, large stocking areas, and functional interconnection infrastructure.

This is why seaports in several parts of the world have been decoupled from their traditional urban population centers in recent decades. This decoupling – seen both in Europe and Asia – has resulted in seaports moving further from their formerly conjoined cities along the coastline, to nearby islands (even artificial ones), or along rivers and estuary canals.

Where undertaken, this port-city decoupling has allowed the progressive enlargement and adaptation of harbour areas. For example, Rotterdam has moved along the Rhine, Hamburg along the Elbe, and Antwerp along the Scheldt. This has created space for water-front re-development in each of these cities through the reconversion of brown-field sites into urban areas.

Should Pakistan take the path and relocate Karachi's two seaports further away from the city? The question has percolated, although sub-critically, in the Pakistani policy circles for several years now.

A new World Bank report – titled “Karachi Ports Supply and Demand Assessment” – moots the question afresh and at some length, considering various scenarios.



The Karachi port has 11.5-kilometer-long channel with 30 berths and three oil piers. With a staff of over 5,700, Karachi Port handles about 50 million tons of cargo per year including over two million TEU [twenty-foot equivalent unit] containers.

Approximately 95 percent of this cargo is trucked up-country right through the city, causing severe traffic congestion. Over the next twenty years, the port demand is expected to increase by 129 percent at 4.2 percent per year.

What is more, says the World Bank report: “By 2030, access to land would have been exhausted for new berths and existing berths will not be able to cater to the projected cargo volumes”.

The report explores three alternative approaches to the problem: to develop both Karachi and Qasim ports simultaneously; focus on one at a time; or develop a third new port sometime in the mid-2030s when Port Qasim reaches capacity.

The report also explores the option of only developing Port Qasim, with an improved maritime access involving a cost of USD 550 million, but this action alone would not be able to address Karachi's traffic snarls.

Historically, Karachi has handled the lion's share of shipping cargo but the last five years have seen its share dwindle from 60 percent to 45 percent as a larger percentage of cargo has moved to Port Qasim.

This change was brought on by concern for environment and coal traffic was moved to new specialized terminals at Port Qasim under the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The report also explores the option of only developing Port Qasim, with an improved maritime access at an estimated a cost of USD 550 million. But the report says this alone would not be adequate to address Karachi's traffic snarls.

The report also moots increasing efficiency of the current port, including the construction of an elevated expressway linking northern highways to Karachi Port. “This would be a major contribution to increase capacity efficiency of Karachi Port”.

This would involve spending to the tune of around USD 300 million, far less than the investment required for the construction of a new port.

There is no denying that the economic dynamism of Karachi is linked to its port, which has traditionally been a source of employment and commercial interactions with the global market.

Still, the proximity between port and urban activities, the very source of this dynamism, is also a source of conflict. Land and water use along the waterfront, which is a valuable interface zone, requires cooperation between the port and the city to mitigate social and environmental externalities.

These are precisely the reasons behind the prevailing worldwide trend of a growing level of divergence between ports and their host cities. Among the drivers of this trend are use of larger ships requiring more berthing space and containerisation of cargo and employment of technology to turn cargo handling into a capital intensive rather than labour intensive activity.

Another dynamic feeding the trend is that ports and industrial waterfronts face complex problems associated with environmental contamination and habitat loss that affect the ability of local governments to plan and carry out dredging and waterfront development projects.

In many parts of the world, separate regulatory programs exist to address pollution source control, the clean-up of contaminated sediments, navigational dredging projects, habitat restoration, and shoreline development projects, each with its own set of agencies, permits, and regulatory requirements.

In some areas, these overlapping and often conflicting requirements and interests have led to difficulties in completing waterfront redevelopment and clean-up projects, even when these projects could have substantial environmental benefits.

Greenway projects are a key component of any waterfront redevelopment scheme because they attract people to the shoreline and give them first-hand experience. Such first-hand experience is essential in building support for further pollution source control efforts, brownfield redevelopment, contaminated sediment remediation, pollution prevention, and habitat rehabilitation and conservation.

While relocating Karachi's port is a policy decision, to be taken by those responsible for the affairs of the nation after due consideration of the costs and benefits of either choice, there is no denying that Pakistan needs to pay more attention to how Karachi's port and city work together for a better tomorrow.

Karachi's 135 km coastline is bearing the brunt of severe pollution due to a combination of factors, and port activity is one of them. The coastline is being overwhelmed with waterborne pollution being discharged in the shipping process into the marine environment.

According to a recent study, the marine life in Karachi's coastal waters is contaminated with lead, which if consumed by humans through seafood. Lead poisoning through food has been linked to anaemia, kidney failure, and brain damage. The study also discovered that the mangrove forests protecting the feeder creeks from sea erosion as well as a source of sustenance for fishermen are threatened by this pollution.

In the Korangi Industrial Area, some 2,500 industrial units including 170 tanneries dispose untreated waste into the Arabian Sea. The great majority of these industries were located here because of the proximity to the port in the first place.

Sustainability is probably the most important driver of the dynamics shaping the future relations between cities and ports. In fact, the International Association of Cities and Ports (AIVP) has developed a 2030 Agenda based on the United Nation's SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

Founded in 1988 by port and city stakeholders looking to promote dialogue on the transformation of city-port interfaces, AIVP has since earned a reputation as the world's leading organisation supporting sustainable city-port development strategies.

In 1993, just a few months after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the AIVP network adopted a formal commitment to the environment and sustainable development. The ten goals of the AIVP Agenda 2030 specifically focus on port-city relations and are closely aligned with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals presented in 2015.

The Agenda thus translates the global governance SDGs into the context of port cities with a view to helping port and urban stakeholders to prepare projects and plans that contribute to sustainable development and port-city relationships.

Unsurprisingly, the first of these goals concerns climate change adaptation. It consists in anticipating the consequences of climate change for river or maritime city ports. The second goal concerns making our city port territories central to the energy transition and circular economy, in real symbiosis with the different local stakeholders.

The third goal is concerned with finding new mobility connecting city and port, the fourth with using innovative governance for sustainable port cities, the fifth with investing in human capital for port and social development, the sixth with local identity as a key asset for sustainable relationship.

The eight through tenth goals are concerned respectively with quality food for all as city ports are crucial for sustainable food distribution; consideration of the port-city interface as a resource to mix different programs; ensuring quality living conditions for the city port as a priority; and the obligation to preserve and protect city port biodiversity.

The drift is that while there is no boilerplate solution for how to develop a port city for the future, there is no denying Karachi needs to get its act together. Also, walking the walk will ultimately be up to the powers that be in Pakistan, but there is no dearth of signposts and pointers towards the destination of a sustainable port megacity.

Whose Interests Does the IMF Programme Serve Anyway?

Pakistani officials say all contentious issues have been settled, but IMF sources say talks are on.



By Ashraf Malkham

Pakistan has met all IMF demands as part of the latest review of an EFF (Extended Fund Facility) programme, but an IMF announcement to this effect is still awaited, official say. Sources close to the IMF, however, say negotiations are still on.

Islamabad and the Fund staff have been locked in threadbare negotiations for more than two weeks now to finalise the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) for the completion of the sixth Review under the USD 6 billion EFF programme. An agreement, however, has been elusive.

But officials now say agreement has been achieved over all contentious issues.

To a question, Finance Ministry Spokesperson Muzamil Aslam asserted agreement had been achieved with IMF (International Monetary Fund)

over all major issues and an announcement to this effect was expected shortly. He dispelled the impression that dialogue with IMF had failed.

The government is hopeful that after successful completion of negotiations IMF will announce release of next tranche of USD 500 million, which is important for Pakistan due to many reasons.

If we look at Pakistan's history of relationship with IMF since 1950, when Pakistan became a member of IMF, Pakistan has always approached the Fund to meet contingencies that characterise its unpredictable economy, heavily dependent on imports.

Prime Minister Imran Khan's government inherited large balance of payment deficit and foreign reserves that were barely enough for two months' imports. Although the PTI was able to secure financing from

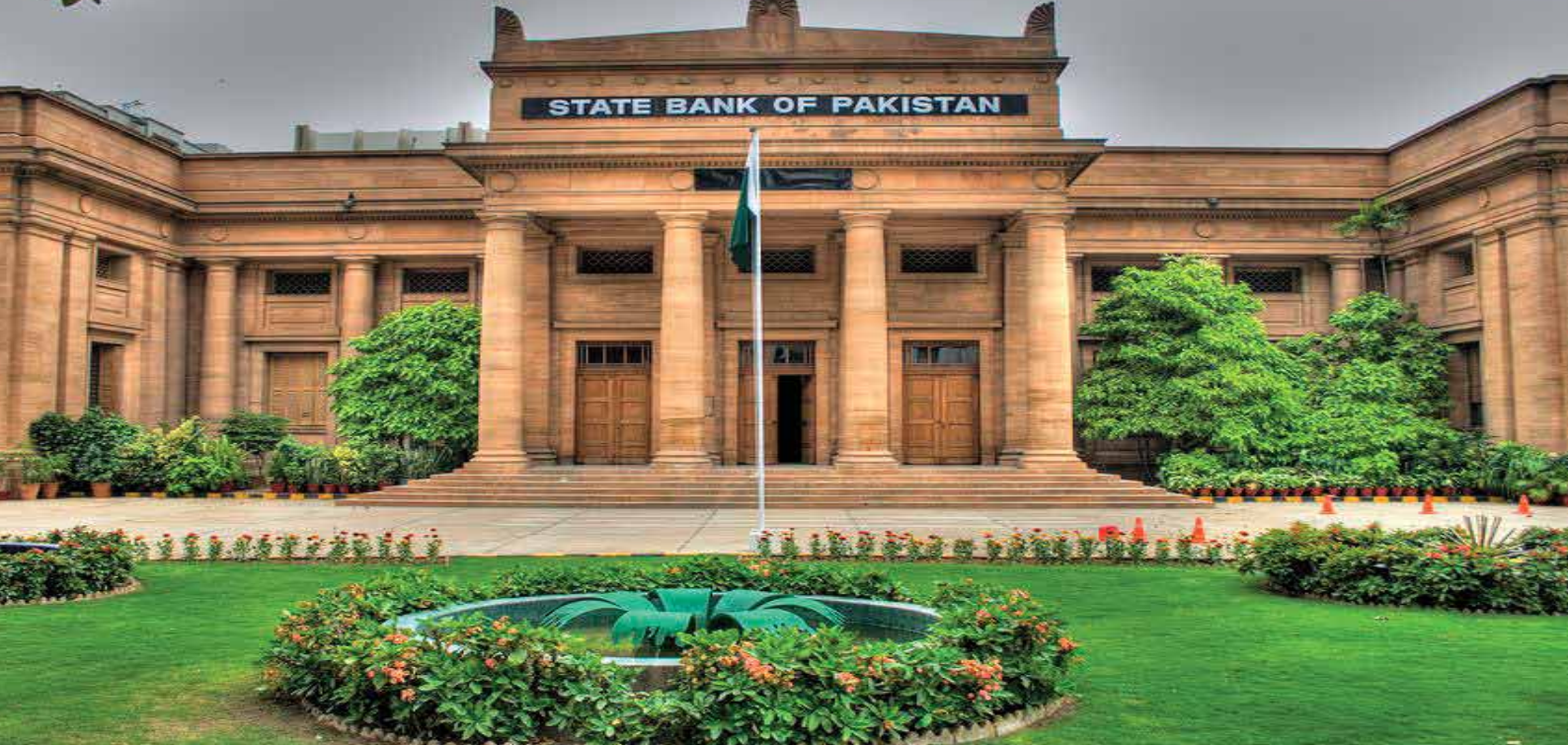
friendly countries including KSA, UAE, and China, it had nevertheless approach IMF for assistance given the condition of the economy.

This was Pakistan's 22nd IMF programme – an EFF totalling to USD 6 billion, of which USD 1 billion was immediately released.

This programme had conditions like energy tariffs increase, discontinuation of subsidies, increase in taxation, privatisation of public entities, and fiscal adjustments to the budget.

Now the sixth review of Pakistan's performance under the programme economy has been concluded and Pakistan is expecting an IMF announcement to this effect soon. But IMF says negotiations are ongoing.

On the other hand, there is a controversy brewing over whether the programme is really helpful to



Pakistan. Almost all politicians sitting in government are of the view that IMF programme is against interests of Pakistan and should be presented before parliament.

A senior official in Finance Ministry talking on condition of anonymity said apparently, all demands of IMF had been accepted but IMF was still reviewing these actions. He further stated that this programme of total 6 billion USD actually cost Pakistan more than USD 40 billion in just two policy areas – increase in discount rate and devaluation of rupee.

Most of the Economists serving in Planning Commission are saying that SBP under pressure of IMF has increased the discount rate to control inflation on the premise that there is an inverse relationship between discount rate and inflation.

For Pakistan's economy, however, the relationship is direct so that a one percent increase in policy rate causes CPI-based inflation to rise by 1.3 percent.

A senior official of Commerce Ministry talking on condition of anonymity said that devaluation would improve the competitiveness of our industry abroad and hence would help increase exports.

However, based on over 100 months of exports and exchange rate numbers, it is clear that our exports have moved in a narrow monthly range of USD 1.7 billion to USD 2.3 billion, irrespective of exchange rate, whether it is PKR 106 or PKR 160 per USD.

Many eminent Pakistani economists concur,

maintaining Pakistan cannot increase its exports by adjusting its exchange rate. This is because rupee devaluation raises input cost of export-oriented industries and makes them non-competitive.

Dr. Ishrat Hussain, former Governor State Bank and former advisor to Prime Minister is of the view that close to 60 percent of the inputs to export-oriented industries are imported.

In other words, rupee devaluation inflates the cost of 60 percent of our inputs, rendering our industries non-competitive in the international market.

While devaluation failed to increase exports, it certainly added PKR 4666 billion to public debt without borrowing a single dollar during July 2018 to March 2020.

Thus, the twin policies of policy rate increase and rupee devaluation have cost Pakistan PKR 6,353 billion or approximately USD 40 billion for a USD 6 billion IMF Program. This colossal burden may well be the reason why Pakistan's economy is in a tailspin.

A look at history shows that Pakistan has been thrown a bailed-out package by IMF on 13 occasions, the largest of them being the current EFF programme.

Pakistan joined IMF in 1950, three years after her birth as newly established country was facing fiscal problems. In 1958, Pakistan sued IMF for bailout package for the first time, seeking a USD 25,000 stand-by arrangement.

Almost seven years later, Pakistan again went to IMF in 1965 for a loan of USD 37,500. The third time Pakistan knocked IMF for balance of payment help, on which occasion IMF approved and released USD 75,000.

Pakistan again sought USD 84,000 in 1972, USD 75,000 in 1973 and another of USD 75,000 in 1974 to meet its growing financial needs. Another standby arrangement worth USD 80,000 was made in 1977 on urgent basis. An extended facility of USD 349,000 was reached in 1980. Pakistan withdrew another USD 730,000 being a part of US cold war against then Soviet Union.

Eight years later democracy came back to Pakistan after death of General Ziaul Haq in a plane crash. The PPP government was able to tap USD 194,480 as standby arrangement and USD 382,410 in the shape of structural adjustment facility commitment in 1988.

PPP again formed government in 1993, and contacted IMF and secured a standby arrangement of USD 88,000. The next year, it received a USD 123,200 EFF and another USD 172,200 on 22 February 1994. Again, an amount of USD 294,690 was advanced to Pakistan on 13 December 1995.

In 1997, the Nawaz Sharif government went to IMF on urgent basis for the first time and reached an agreement to get two amounts of USD 265,370 and USD 113,740. After eight years of martial law PPP government came in power and received a USD 7.6 billion in 2008.

Why there is No Running Away from Inflation

Exports star in recovery and imports bolster productivity, inflation besets Pakistan's economy for now.

By Javed Mahmood

The government and the people of Pakistan are struggling under a heavy burden of inflation, each in its own way, and hoping for a respite soon – but the dog days of inflation may still be ahead of us, not behind us: As economies worldwide roar back to high levels of productivity following the Covid-19 doldrums, there are signs a global commodities' supercycle may be in the offing.

Rapidly growing prices of major commodities in the international markets and widening trade and current account deficits of Pakistan pose a challenge for the government to keep inflation within the sustainable limits, maintain economic stability, and keep the rupee stable against the dollar.

Recent hike in domestic prices of petroleum products, cooking oil and ghee, sugar, LPG and many other consumer items against the backdrop of their high prices in the international markets have indicated the beginning of commodities' supercycle.

A few days ago, the government increased prices of petrol and diesel by eight rupees/litre while domestic prices of some essential consumer items such as cooking oil and ghee, sugar, chicken, and fruits and vegetables too surged significantly.

Apart from increase in essential consumer items, the government also increased electricity and gas prices, adding to the difficulties of the consumers already struggling under the burden of sky-high prices.

The PTI government leaders are trying to justify the price hike by linking it with spike in international prices while consumers are angry over frequent shocks of increase in the prices of essential items mainly driven by global phenomenon, devaluation of rupee and bad governance that lacked a mechanism to monitor stocks and prices of important items.

At present, the OPEC crude oil prices per barrel are around USD 82, up from below USD 60 a couple of months ago. The Bank of America has predicted further hike in crude oil prices to USD 120/barrel in coming months, which will push the prices of consumer items higher globally.

Also, the PTI government has purchased two LNG ships on emergency basis in November at very expensive prices after the suspension of LNG supply from previous suppliers. The impact of the most expensive gas will also be passed on to the consumers in November-December. Resultantly, the

people will experience more hike in value of consumer items connected to gas.

On 8 November, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhary said that prices of commodities are expected to stay high for next six to eight months because of ongoing spike in global markets. Thus, he made it clear that people must not expect any immediate relief on inflation and they should wait for decline in international prices.

Importantly, Bloomberg has pointed out last week that many countries in the world were experiencing the beginning of a super-cycle of price-hike of commodities' demand, especially oil and gas which drive inflation globally.

The prices of several commodities are already near record high, which will benefit exporting countries, but create financial strains for importing countries and consumers globally.

Importantly, the Bloomberg Commodity Spot Index, which monitors 23 energy, metal, and crop future contracts, surged to a new high in October, exceeding its earlier peak recorded in 2011.

Meanwhile, the S&P GSCI index this



month reached its highest point since 2014. This index is a benchmark for commodity markets and measure of commodity performance.

Importantly, the commodity index (the S&P GSCI), has inflated by over 86 percent since March 2021. While most markets have roared back since the depths of the Covid-19 market scare, commodities have been the frontrunner in the recovery. Talk of a commodity supercycle is already heating up.

According to analysts, some commodities are notorious for fleeting booms and busts and typically need fundamental shifts in demand or supply to elevate prices for an extended period.

While commodities tend to move together on growth surprises, they are not a monolithic crew. Metals, energy, and agriculture are all part of the broad index but their individual dynamics can be nuanced and idiosyncratic.

Keeping commodity prices elevated for a long period usually involves some supply constraints, either natural or reluctance to make investments. For example, for capital intensive exploration, producers often hold back on bringing new resources online until they are confident that demand spikes are durable.

Inflation in Pakistan

In urban areas, food inflation remained high in October and it surged to 9.4 percent on year-to-year basis while rural areas experienced 7.2 percent food inflation. Inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased to its highest level in four months — the period when global oil prices kept rising steadily, undermining earlier gains. At the same time, prices of fresh vegetables, fruits and meat have also posted a persistent increase in major urban centres.

The average inflation increased to 8.74 percent during the Jul-Oct on a yearly basis. In April 2021, the inflation started descending after hitting 11.1 percent level, nonetheless, the trend reversed in the last couple of months on the back of a consistent increase in prices of petroleum products and gas.

Long-lasting trends of supercycles

Since the mid-19th century, there have been four supercycles, based on research from Bilge Erten and Jose Antonio Ocampo. They defined a supercycle as a decades long, above-trend movements in a wide range of base material prices. All four were underscored by major historical shifts.

The first significant commodities cycle began in the late 1890s as the US entered a rapid industrialization and urbanization phase. This accelerated as armament for the World War I commenced. While the cycle peaked in 1917, it continued until the early 1930s.



The next supercycle soon kicked in as Europe and eventually its allies were engulfed in the World War II. The resources and materials needed for the war effort were huge and the aftermath led to extensive reconstruction for both Europe and Japan. While the cycle peaked in 1951, it didn't fade for another decade as post-war growth continued at a decent pace.

The early 1970s brought the third supercycle. It was preceded by strong economic growth which led to a surge in prices for energy and materials which continued until the early 1980s. While demand was running high, supply was disrupted as countries nationalized extraction industries and foreign investors withdrew. Eventually producers started to shore up their supply and prices stabilized.

Finally, the most recent cycle started in 2000 as China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) and started to modernize its economy. Its rapid

industrialization and the mass migration of workers to cities resulted in a building boom. Spending on infrastructure led China to become the top global consumer of most commodities.

This supercycle was interrupted by the 2008 financial crisis, but China's response with a massive stimulus program restored demand. The cycle continued to 2014 when oil oversupply finally kicked in.

Now, as world economies emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, investors are trying to make sense of early supercycle indicators like price increases. Part of the current price surge has been driven by interruptions in supply as workers get waylaid by the pandemic.

Weather has also played a role: Stints of drought in South America for instance affected agricultural output as grain production dropped. Additionally, as economies reopen, activity keeps improving and at some point that will stabilize.

Trade & current account deficits

Trade deficit in first four months of the ongoing financial year, nonetheless, surged beyond USD 15 billion (USD 15.5 billion) as imports expanded to USD 25 billion while exports stood at only USD 9.46 billion during Jul-Oct period of 2021-22. Hence, on an average Pakistan sustained around USD 3.8 billion trade deficit just because of alarming increase in imports.

Despite several measures taken by the government this September to stem imports, the import bill in October 2021 remained above USD 6 billion. The way the trade deficit has expanded in four



months of FY22, analysts believe that at the end of 2021-22, Pakistan could face more or less USD 40 billion trade deficit.

Furthermore, Pakistan has narrowly missed the exports target set for the first four months of this financial year. During Jul-Oct period of FY22, exports amounted to USD 9.49 billion against the quarterly target of USD 9.6 billion. On an average, Pakistan earned USD 2.36 billion through exports which was below the expectations.

Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce and Trade Razzak Dawood himself has reported that the exports remained below the target in first four months of FY22. In October 2021, the target of exports was also missed as exports increased to USD 2.47 billion, but missed the target of USD 2.6 billion.

However, in first four months of the current fiscal, exports grew by 25 percent, mounting to USD 9.468 billion as compared to USD 7.57 billion during Jul-Oct 2020. Pakistan's exports in October 2021 grew by 17.5 percent to USD 2.471 billion — the highest ever export recorded in any October.

An alarming issue is that the national imports expanded by 64 percent during

Jul-Oct 2021 and increased to USD 25 billion as against to USD 15.2 billion during Jul-Oct 2020. Thus, in US dollars the imports surged by USD 10 billion.

About 40 percent of this increase was investment-driven (capital goods, raw material and intermediates), which indicates expansion and enhanced activity by industry. The remaining 60 percent of imports comprised petroleum, coal and gas 34 percent; vaccines 11 percent; food 8 percent; consumer goods 2 percent; and all others 5 percent. Most of this was inelastic in nature.

In absolute terms, the net increase in imports over this period was USD 9.801 billion. Of this, consumer goods were worth USD 239 million; food USD 823 million; capital goods USD 1,620 million; raw material and intermediates USD 2,209 million; petroleum, coal and gas USD 3,364 million; vaccines USD 1,068 million; and all others USD 478 million.

Current account deficit

The current account deficit of Pakistan in the first quarter (Jul-Sep 2021) period of this fiscal showed a further increase in CAD, to USD 3.4 billion. During the corresponding period of last fiscal year,

Pakistan's current account balance was surplus with USD 865 million.

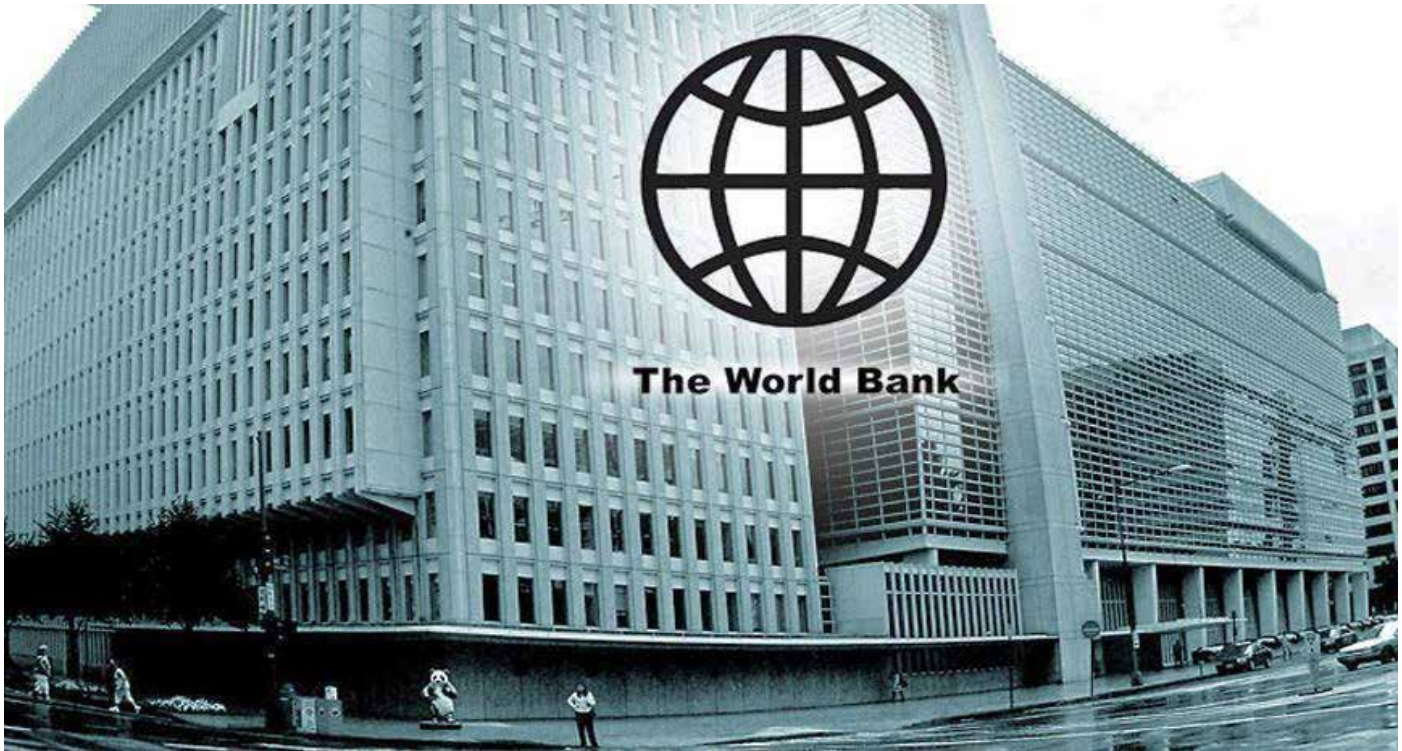
During July-August period of this fiscal, the current account deficit stood at USD 2.2 billion compared to USD 865 million surplus in the same months a year ago. However, in September 2021, the current account deficit slightly declined, USD 1.2 billion as against USD 1.47 billion in August 2021 because of different measures, which were put in place by the government to slow down non-essential imports to avoid unwanted gap in the current account deficit.

In the month of September 2021, the country recorded USD 1.11 billion deficit against the surplus of USD 27 million in September 2020. However, on a sequential basis, the current account balance recorded an improvement, with deficit down by 24.4 percent when compared to a deficit of USD 1.47 billion in August 2021.

Analysts say the deficit in September 2021 remained below expectation, dipping from 1.5 billion to 1.2 billion, which was a good sign. If this trend prevails further in FY22, it would further squeeze current account deficit in the coming months.

Here's Why Curbs on Imports Will Not Help Improve Pakistan's Trade Balance

Stagnating exports and not rising imports are to blame for Pakistan's yawning trade deficit, says a new World Bank report.



TTI Report

Pakistan's ballooning trade deficit stems not from unruly imports but from a systemic shift away from exports, at work in the country's economy since around the turn of the century, a new World Bank Pakistan report reveals.

Published last month, The World Bank Pakistan Development Update (PDU) provides a highbrow look at Pakistan's economy and economic outlook. As well, it takes stock of the specific development challenges facing the country and the structural reforms Islamabad should consider.

Pakistan ran up a trade deficit to the tune of a whopping USD 7.4 billion in the first two months of FY22, bringing back a fresh round of the perennial debate about how best to address the problem.

The State Bank of Pakistan deemed it fit to impose a 100 percent cash margin on 114 import items – acting as a non-tariff barrier

to imports by increasing importers' financial costs. The Ministry of Finance on its part jacked up regulatory duties on “non-essential, luxury” imports, raising tariff barriers in the hope of curbing imports to curtail the trade deficit.

But the World Bank report says these measures are unlikely to curb the deficit for three reasons. “First, the share of imports of non-essential or luxury goods is too small to have an impact. Second, these items are already facing very high import duties and further increases will not curb their consumption substantially, as demand is relatively inelastic.

“Third, the import content of domestically produced substitutes is high, and therefore any substitution away from imported and into domestic luxury goods will likely lead to an increase in imports of parts and components to produce the domestic versions.

“Thus, instead of achieving the intended goal, these measures exacerbate the already pronounced anti-export bias of Pakistan's trade policy and add uncertainty by increasing the likelihood of sudden policy changes that affect firms' cost structures.”

The report notes that Pakistan's import bill is not particularly large when benchmarked against other comparable economies, nor is it weighted toward luxury or consumer goods.

“As a percentage of GDP, imports of goods and services stood at 17 percent in 2020, below Bangladesh's 19 percent, Egypt's 21 percent, or Vietnam's 103 percent, all Pakistan's peers in the size of economy “, says the report.

“In terms of composition, Pakistan's merchandise imports are mainly for industrial or commercial use. In FY21, imports of intermediate inputs accounted for 53 percent of the total, fuels for 24 percent, and capital goods for 11 percent.

“Consumer goods accounted for only 7 percent of imports, while mobile phones accounted for 4 percent. On the services front, imports have been similarly tilted towards production use: transport (mainly sea-freight) and business services typically account for approximately 69 percent of services imports.”

The solution, says the report, lies in boosting exports. Because: “Pakistan exported USD 188 per working-age person in 2020, approximately half of Bangladesh’s amount, and more than 20 times less than Vietnam’s. As previously mentioned, Pakistan’s exports are low because they have been stagnant for an extended period.

“In 2020, exports were only 47 percent greater than they had been in 2005, in current prices, whereas Vietnam’s were 700 percent greater.”

The report notes that Pakistan’s economy has turned inward since the turn of the century. “As a share of GDP, Pakistan’s exports fell from 16 percent in 1999 to 10 percent in 2020 (Figure 3.5). Increased inward orientation poses a problem because greater integration into the global marketplace is closely linked with faster productivity growth.”

The authors acknowledge that Pakistan’s increasingly inward orientation is not the consequence of a structural lack of export potential. Based on the size, level of development, location, and factor endowments of its economy, Pakistan pocketing around USD 88.1 billion in exports, almost four times its current level.

“While there are several challenges that Pakistani firms face related to the business environment, there are export-specific challenges that prevent the realization of this potential”, says the report, as it devotes a special section to the detailed examination of the challenges facing Pakistan’s export competitiveness, its drivers, and potential policy levers to boost it.

Titled “Special Focus – Reviving Exports”, the section begins by laying bare how Pakistan has been losing ground in export markets since the turn of the century, and how merchandise export diversification has remained elusive.

Perhaps the only bright spot is a shift toward knowledge-based exports in services. “... knowledge-intensive sectors such as computer and professional business services have grown relatively fast, at rates above 10 percent annually.”

Overall, the share of knowledge-intensive services in services exports grew from 10 percent in 2010 to 50 percent in 2020.

The report says this is owing to the global trend of internationalization of business services, as Pakistani freelancers and SMEs embraced it. The trend has been amplified by an increase in remote working, fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, knowledge-intensive exports are likely to be underestimated in the available data as roughly half of services exports go unreported for various reasons.

The report identifies several reasons for the

stagnation of Pakistan’s exports. “High import duties imply high effective rates of protection of domestic industries, making profits of selling domestically artificially large by deterring import-competition. Import duties, intended to incentivize import substitution, instead incentivize export substitution”.

Thus, Pakistan’s tariff policy creates a high and increasing anti-export bias.

Another reason for stagnating exports is that Pakistan’s inability to access preferential trade regimes. The country has few preferential trade agreements and struggles to implement those it has.

Yet another reason identified by the report is that incentive schemes for existing exporters tend to focus on the well-established sectors and within those sectors, favours less dynamic and less sophisticated status quo players, preserving the current export structure rather than transforming it.

The report says revitalizing Pakistan’s export sector will require a long-term and coordinated policy strategy. “This will require coordination across government agencies at federal and provincial levels to harmonize policy decisions, institutional strengthening to ensure effective implementation, and active public-private sector dialogue to secure the broadest support to reforms.”

The report concludes by presenting an array of long- and short-term recommendations, identifying the main agencies responsible for the implementation of each item.



Tabdeeli becomes a Nightmare

Heralded as a magical cure for all ills of Pakistan, Imran Khan's tabdeeli has become a nightmare.

By Ahmed Mukhtar Naqshbandi

It was the panacea the nation needed to right all wrongs in every sphere of life. It would bring good governance, transparency, rule of law and merit – and above all, it would lead to prosperity. Or so many of us believed. Then the dream turned into a nightmare.

The upward spiral of inflation alone is crushing the common citizen and the government is in denial. International financial institutions including IMF, World Bank, and watchdog FATF seem to be holding the nation hostage to their whims.

Then comes a relief package for the struggling masses – but the plight of the common citizen remains the same. We have seen this happen at least thrice now, and the situation has doggedly refused to get better on every single occasion.

The Covid-19 global pandemic has no doubt taken its toll on the economy but people say the toll of Prime Minister Imran Khan's Tabdeeli has been even bigger.

Package Based Response

The crisis of economy deepened on three main factors, Covid, currency devaluation and then energy price hike. In addition, poor governance, misaligned policy actions, poor responses in assessing future shortages of food, energy and other consumer and household products saw a feeble response from the PTI government.

The third package by PTI government led by Khan who came with charisma and slogan to end corruption and grow economy. He failed on both counts, letting down his voters and all those who wished to see him in power.

Global Response to Covid

BBC reports that global Covid packages were large, when the world opened the gates of official kitty for the public sitting at home waiting the weaves of pandemic to pass.

It reported that Coronavirus shutdowns around the world have pushed countries into crisis-mode, prompting a massive rescue spending in an effort to soften the blow from what is expected to be the worst economic contraction since the 1930s.

As of April 2020, countries around the world had approved more than USD 4.5 trillion worth of emergency measures, according to the IMF. That figure has only grown in the months since.

Columbia economics professor Ceyhun Elgin has been working with colleagues around the world to track the responses in 166 countries.

By his calculations, Japan's response has been among the most aggressive, with a spending package estimated at roughly 20 percent of the country's economy. (It is topped only by Malta, which benefits from European Union funds.) That compares to



rescue spending estimated at roughly 14 percent of GDP in the US, 11 percent in Australia, 8.4 percent in Canada, 5 percent in the UK, 1.5 percent in Colombia and 0.6 percent in Gambia.

The first package

The authorities of Pakistan in March 2020 unveiled a multi-billion rupee economic package to provide relief to citizens, particularly low-income groups whose livelihood has been badly affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The package worth PKR 900 billion (USD 5.66 billion) was approved in a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran.

After the package came a countrywide lockdown forcing all to stay home, and left hundreds of thousands of laborers and daily waged workers bereft of income. It included PKR 200 billion (USD 1.25 billion) for low-income groups, particularly laborers; PKR 280 billion (USD 1.76 billion) for wheat procurement; and a significant reduction in petroleum prices.

Prime Minister was quoted as saying that over 5 million people would be provided a monthly stipend of 3,000 rupees (USD 20) for the next four months. People were allowed to pay electricity and gas bills below a certain amount in installments.

Also, loan interest payments for exporters were deferred temporarily, while a package of PKR 100 billion (USD 63 million) was provided to support small industries and the agriculture sector.

The 2nd package

Then came the budget of 2021-22, which included an array of measures for low-income groups. Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) was increased from PKR 630 billion to PKR 900 billion to counter the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a massive increase of around 40 percent.

The State Bank of Pakistan provided a monetary stimulus of more than PKR 2 trillion, approximately 5 percent of the GDP, through interest rate cuts, principal deferment and loan restructuring.

The Rozgar payroll finance scheme was introduced to prevent layoffs and concessional finance was granted for investment in industries as well as the health facilities.

Pro-poor initiatives and the expansion of the social safety net through the vertical and horizontal expansion of the Ehsaas program. To support vulnerable segments of the society, the continuation of the special initiatives including Kamyab Jawan, Sehat Card, and finally, providing targeted subsidies to the deserving and needy segments of the society.

The 3rd and largest Package

In early November 2021, Prime Minister Khan announced a PKR 120 billion relief package providing subsidy on essential food items.

Announcing what he called the country's biggest-ever subsidy package, Mr Khan said: "This 120 billion rupee package, jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments, will provide 30 percent discount on ghee, flour and pulses to 130 million people for the next six months."

Expressing gratitude to Ehsaas Program for completing a fresh national database that helps in assessing the financial status of people, the PM said the subsidy package was apart from several ongoing programs under the Ehsaas initiative worth PKR 260 billion.

He recalled that the government had already announced the PKR 1,400 billion Kamyab Pakistan Program aimed at providing interest-free business loans to four million families. "The package includes interest-free loans for house construction, PKR 0.5 million each for farmers and businesses, besides skill training to one member of the entitled family".

The PM added that under the Kamyab Jawan Program, the government had so far advanced PKR 30 billion in loans to 22,000 businesses and would also give six million scholarships and stipends to students.

Prime Minister Khan said giving 100 percent health coverage to the masses was his dream and it had come true in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "Health Insurance Card is also being extended to Punjab, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the federal capital by March next year," he said, urging the Sindh government to replicate the programme in the province.

Under the relief package, a subsidy of PKR 1,000 a month would be given to each of the 20 million families with a poverty score of less than 39 and an income of PKR 31,500 per month.

In his speech, the PM warned people of another increase in petroleum prices in the near future. He said a sharp increase in global petroleum prices within four to five months from USD 45 to USD 85 badly affected countries like Pakistan that relied heavily on import of petrol.

Reports of fuel shortages started to pour in immediately after the PM's address to the nation – and continued until fuel prices were jacked up less than 48 hours of the announcement of the package. Any relief the package was intended to provide the poor evaporated overnight.

Meanwhile, dollar value jumped from PKR 160 to 170 from July to November. Any further rise in oil prices could stop many wheels to move and earn.

Regional price Comparisons

Quoting the Bloomberg Commodity Price Index, the prime minister said commodities' prices grew by 50 percent in a year against just 9 percent in Pakistan.

He said the price of petrol in Pakistan was still less than that in India and Bangladesh until recently. "But now we have to increase oil prices to control the increasing deficit. We are already under huge burden of debt and paying interest on it," he added.



"Among all oil-importing countries, Pakistan is the cheapest one in terms of oil prices. Oil prices have increased 100 percent internationally, but 33 percent in Pakistan," he added. Similarly, he said, the price of gas had not been increased in Pakistan, while it was going high all over the world. "Gas prices have gone up by 116 percent in the US and 300 percent in Europe," he added.

The prime minister said oil prices surged to PKR 250 per liter in India and PKR 200 in Bangladesh, but it was PKR 138 in Pakistan.

He said the government avoided shifting the burden to the masses which otherwise could bring in additional PKR 450 billion revenue to the government. He said that overall prices had gone up 50 percent in the world, but only 9 percent in Pakistan.

No one is buying Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent regional price comparisons. The price hike is so severe that none can easily absorb it. People are pointing out how the PM and his social media cohorts are citing fuel and commodity prices from developed nations without regard to income levels in those countries.

This strategy of denialism and gaslighting is in particular adding insult to injury for the struggling masses – so much so that some of the most ardent advocates of Naya Pakistan are now nostalgic for Purana Pakistan.

Pakistan Team's Performance in T20 World Cup Reinstated the Cancelled Tours

Career of New PCB Chief Rameez Raja was at stake when NZ and England cancelled tours.



TTI Report

Both England and Australia are quicker to swallow what they had spitted earlier. It was Indian IPL cash worthy pressure or their own risk analysts' advice but in both cases, it fired back for them when Pakistan team beat India in a very lethal and an unforgettable manner with record 10 wickets win and routed other teams too in T20 World Cup.

The new game destination of cricket, UAE, has always been filled with Pakistani and Indian fans for cricket matches. The sponsors and fans, after Covid-19 pandemic economic pressures, stadium filled with spectators also decide the resumption of life back to normal.

Pakistan performed both on ground and off-ground inside stadium fans performance. After, both England and Australia came back to reaffirm their commitment for series, Kiwis might still consider their tour to Pakistan too in future.

As, England would play seven T20Is in Pakistan, ECB reaffirm commitment to 2022 tour. Tom Harrison meets Ramiz Raja on bridge-building visit to Pakistan after October pull-outs. England's men will play two additional T20Is on their tour of Pakistan in September and October 2022, in compensation for the late cancellation of last month's planned visit, following a meeting between ECB and PCB officials in Lahore on November 09, 2021.

ECB Delegation Visits PCB Lahore

Tom Harrison, the ECB chief executive, flew to Pakistan this week with his deputy Martin Darlow, to hold talks with

Ramiz Raja, the chairman of the PCB, who had hit out at what he termed cricket's "western bloc" in the wake of England's eleventh-hour cancellation of what would have been their first visit since 2005.

In another move, the Australian cricket authorities came with a sudden announcement of tour to Pakistan in March and April 2022 to play three Tests, three One Day Internationals (ODIs) and one Twenty20 International (T20I) match.

Australia will play three Tests in Pakistan in 2022 in the first tour to the Asian nation since 1998. After more than 20 years, the Australian cricket team is finally going back to Pakistan in 2022.

The Australian cricket team is going back to Pakistan for the first time since 1998 after Cricket Australia confirmed a seven-match tour in 2022. As the countdown begins to the two nations' sudden-death T20 World Cup semi-final, CA announced on Monday that Australia would play three Tests, three one-day internationals and a T20I in March and April of next year.

The Tests will be played as part of the ICC World Test Championship, while the ODIs will be connected to the Cricket World Cup Super League.

It will be Australia's first visit to Pakistan since the 1998-99 series, which featured Mark Taylor's epic innings of 334 not out in the second Test at Peshawar. Australia won the Test series 1-0 and the ODI series 3-0.



Australian Team Announcement

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ramiz Raja called the upcoming three-Test series a "connoisseurs delight".

"It pleases me that we'll be engaged in a three-Test match series, connoisseurs delight," Raja said in a statement.

"Australia are one of the high-performing sides and their play in our backyard for the first time after a gap of 24 years will be a special treat for the fans".

"Likewise, it will be a great opportunity for the Australia cricketers to not only play at our iconic venues but also feel and enjoy the respect, love and hospitality that this great country offers, something which most of their previous generation of cricketers missed out by playing offshore."

Current Test captain Tim Paine and national selection chair George Bailey both featured in a World XI that played three T20s in the country in mid-2017 as Pakistan began opening up to world cricket again.

Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley said the organization would "continue to work closely over the coming months to finalize the necessary operations, logistics, security and Covid-19 protocols".

"The safety and welfare of our players and staff remains our number one priority, and we will continue to work with the PCB and relevant agencies to ensure that appropriate and sufficient arrangements are put in place for the tour," he said.

Confirmation of Australia's tour comes after both England and New Zealand abandoned trips to Pakistan this year, citing security concerns, including an alert of a possible attack outside Rawalpindi Stadium.

Australia's tour dates of Pakistan are:

First Test	— March 3-7, Karachi
Second Test	— March 12-16, Rawalpindi
Third Test	— March 21-25, Lahore
First ODI	— March 29, Lahore
Second ODI	— March 31, Lahore
Third ODI	— April 2, Lahore
T20I	— April 5, Lahore

The Cancellation Episode

Earlier, the ECB were roundly condemned for their withdrawal, citing concerns about the bubble fatigue among the England players, even though the tour had been planned as a four-day detour en route to the T20 World Cup in the UAE.

The decision followed swiftly from New Zealand's cancellation on the morning of their first ODI in Rawalpindi due to a security threat. That led Ramiz to warn that the PCB would be making contingency plans in the event of England cancelling their multi-format tour in 2022-23, which is also due to feature a three-Test series in November and December, in the aftermath of the T20 World Cup in Australia.

Now, however, Harrison has pledged not only that those matches will go ahead as planned, but that the T20I leg will be extended from five matches to seven, in a gesture to thank Pakistan for their support of English cricket during the 2020 season, when they had agreed to a full tour in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Myself and ECB's Senior Director Martin Darlow visited Lahore to talk face-to-face with the PCB around some of the things that have happened over the past few weeks, leading to the cancellation of our tour in October," Harrison said in a statement.

"We also wanted to discuss the future as the two boards have a historic relationship and want to move the agenda towards a forward-looking one as opposed to one looking back.

"This is just to reaffirm our commitment to Pakistan cricket to getting England teams, men's and women's teams, eventually playing in Pakistan at home.

"I don't think there's a cricketer in England who doesn't want to test their abilities against the huge talent this country has and in the conditions they know best."

Ramiz added that the ECB had shown "large-heartedness" to make the trip, and welcomed England's commitment to the tour, which follows Australia's confirmation of their own tour in March, which will be their first visit since 1998.

"We put in lot of efforts to make sure that all visiting teams are comfortable in Pakistan," Ramiz said. "As such, it is a matter of pride for the Pakistan fans, who look forward to welcoming Australia and England in 2022.

"England have got a great team and it's mind-boggling how they've produced so many match-winners in a span of about five to seven years. They play very engaging and attractive cricket, which is fantastic for the fans and a big advertisement of the game."

England's women had originally been scheduled to join last month's tour for a pair of double-headers in Rawalpindi ahead of their own ODI series. Those fixtures have not yet been reallocated, although Ramiz added that proposals surrounding "pathway engagement" and the women's game had also been discussed with the ECB.

Blockbuster Khel Khel Mein is All Set to Hit the Circuit

Sajal Aly and Bilal Abbas starrer puts a human perspective on the events surrounding the fall of East Pakistan in 1971.

By **Kaukab Jahan**

Okay folks, the wait is over with the blockbuster political thriller *Khel Khel Mein* set to hit theatres on 19 November 2021 as movie theatres reopen after a hiatus of two years because of the Covid-19 global pandemic.

This virtuous political thriller from the now celebrated director-producer duo Nabeel Qureshi and Fizza Ali Meerza, starring Sajal Aly and Bilal Abbas, promises to herald a new era of Pakistani cinema.

Sajal and Bilal have starred together before in famous drama serial *O Rangreza* (2018). The other cast of the film features the veteran Samina Ahmed, Manzar Sehbai, Marina Khan, along with Sheheryar Munawar, Javed Sheikh, Nazar Hussain, Naveed Raza, Irfan Motiwala, and Zehra Nawab.

The film set to be released nationwide on 19 November is made in the scenario of events surrounding the fall of Dhaka, which completes its 50 years this December. The trailer shows a special appearance of the international star Ali Zafar.

The first official trailer of the film launched in the second week of November looks entertaining thus promising to open wide the gates of cinema houses which were closed tightly for the last couple of years.

In an indication of the kind of reception the movie is going to get, the YouTube channel of the movie has already racked up 1.66 million subscribers.

Sajal Aly, the next superstar of Pakistan, also won fame outside the country by doing films in Bollywood and UK, and has just received her Filmfare Achievers Awards in Dubai, was excited about her return after a long pause of five years at this crucial juncture when a good film can make a lot of difference to the future of the Pakistani cinema.

Aly says she is chuffed about doing a film with director Nabeel Qureshi. "I always wanted to work with Nabeel Qureshi and it was a dream come true when I was offered *Khel Khel Mein*. My acting in the film is just what was directed by Qureshi."

The actor says that she has become wiser in choosing scripts after her first Pakistani film.

The male lead of the movie, Bilal Abbas Khan is a new sensation in the Pakistan entertainment industry. He has shown his acting skills in dramas like *Balaa*, *Cheekh*, and *Pyar Ke Sadqay* and won Lux Style Awards for best actor this year.

Khan, whose first film *Thora Jee Le* was released almost five years back, says he did not sign more films as he wanted to wait for the right role at the right time and finally got it in *Khel Khel Mein*.



“Actually I came into the field to act, not just do films”, says the plucky Khan. “So in those five years I have groomed myself as an actor by working in dramas.”

Fizza Ali Meerza, the producer of *Khel Khel Mein* and the CEO of Filmwala Productions said that as a filmmaker and a producer, she could not wait to take her film to the cinemas. She urged and expected audiences to return to the cinemas with her film.

Talking about the theme of the film, Meerza explained, “KKM is not actually the account of the history of the 1971 war but inspired by the incidents that happened around the incident.”

The director of KKM, Nabeel Qureshi, is regarded as one of the pioneers of independent films in Pakistan and has several prestigious awards under his belt. He is enthusiastic about the film to say the least.

“*Khel Khel Mein* is very different compared to all my other films”, says Qureshi. “We shot it during the Covid times and it’s a product

of a lot of thought, hard work, and love. I hope people will come watch the film with the same love we made it with”.

Qureshi further explained that he wanted the release of this film to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the fall of East Pakistan this December, the month when East Pakistan broke away from West Pakistan to become Bangladesh.

With Producer Fizza Ali Meerza and director Nabeel Qureshi as its core team, Filmwala Pictures is Pakistan’s first independent production house. It has gained a formidable reputation in a short span of time by fusing entertainment with engaging social issues.

The company is known for stellar productions like *Na Maloom Afraad* (2014), *Actor in Law* (2016), *Na Maloom Afraad 2* (2017), and *Load Wedding* (2018). It has won numerous accolades at home and abroad.

The duo teased that they will probably release their next film ‘*Quaid e Azam Zindabad*’ starring Mahira Khan and Fahad Mustafa on 25th of December this year.



The Truth International

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Ilma Jaffery - a rising showbiz star

Ilma is a famous Karachi-based actress. She has performed in many famous TV dramas and commercials.



By Muttahir A. Khan

Talking about her career, the actress and model Ilma Jaffery said that she had signed new projects. “I want to be a leading actress in the country, I like to play challenging roles. After excellent performance in various drama serials including Sitam, Tana Bana, Ajnabi Hum Safar and other TV serials, I have learnt a lot.” She said. Ilma Jaffery is based in Karachi.

She further said, she would appear in a new style with unique roles. She said, “I am working to create my unique identity in the drama industry. I like to play challenging roles. I introduced myself in this field by modeling and acting, I want to know more about the mysteries of performing arts in performing arts institutions for which I want to join NAPA (National Academy of Performing Arts).

I have worked in cosmetics and lawn commercials. I am getting lucrative offers from many advertising agencies for TV. Commercials but my first priority is acting.

I want to perform both serious and comic roles in dramas. The graph of the drama industry is increasing day by day as compared to the past. After the closure of foreign content, the Pakistani people are watching locally prepared soaps and love to watch Pakistani content. Our plays are also being shown in other countries, which is also giving international recognition to the artists.”

Regarding her work in films, she said, “I will soon work in films. I am currently polishing my acting skills in TV dramas and want to create my unique identity as a perfect actress and model. New serial with Yasir Hussain is being completed. The ‘Parizad’ serial has become a source of my identity. I learned a lot from Ahmed Ali by working with him and other senior artists. I worked in the play ‘Tanabana’ with actress Aliza Shah who became my best friend.”

Actress and model, Ilma Jaffery further said that she has signed new TV serials. After giving excellent performances in drama

serials Sitam, Tana Bana, Ajnabi Hum Safar and other dramas, she is appearing in a new style and in unique roles in new TV dramas.

“I want to be a leading actress in country,” she expressed these views while talking to The Truth International. Ilma said that she was working to create her unique identity in drama industry in Pakistan. I like to play challenging roles. I introduced myself in this field by modeling and acting in a short span of time, I want to know more about mysteries of performing arts in performing arts institutions for which I want to join National Academy of Performing Arts. I have worked in cosmetics and lawn commercials. I am getting lucrative offers from many advertising agencies for TV commercials but my first priority is acting. I get fame by modeling but not recognition. I want to perform a serious and comedic role in dramas. By performing tragic roles in plays, an artist feels calm after learning art of decorating smiles on sad faces.

Malala Yousafzai gets married to Asser Malik

Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize winner, got married to Asser Malik in a simple ceremony at her home in Birmingham, United Kingdom.



Desk Report

A couple of months ago, Malala created a controversy by saying that life can be led with partnership and marriage was not necessary.

"Today marks a precious day in my life," the 24-year-old wrote. "Asser and I tied the knot to be partners for life."

"We celebrated a small nikkah ceremony at home in Birmingham with our families. Please send us your prayers. We are excited to walk together for the journey ahead."

Yousafzai, who was shot in the head by the Pakistani Taliban when she was just 15, announced the news on Twitter, sharing photos of the Islamic marriage ceremony known as the nikkah.

Thousands responded with good wishes and congratulations, with the tweet attracting more than 227,000 'likes'.

Yousafzai gave no other information about her husband. Social media users identified him as Asser Malik, general manager of the Pakistan Cricket Board's High Performance Centre.

Yousafzai spent months in treatment after she was shot in 2012, and went on to write a best-selling memoir titled "I am Malala" and graduate from Oxford University with a degree in philosophy, politics and economics.

She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize when she was 17 for her work on girls' education, sharing the award with Kailash Satyarthi, a children's rights activist from India.

Her non-profit Malala Fund has now invested \$2m in Afghanistan. She has also signed a deal with Apple TV+ that will see her produce dramas and documentaries that focus on women and children.

As recently as July this year, the activist told British Vogue magazine that she was not sure if she would ever marry.

"I still don't understand why people have to get married. If you want to have a person in your life, why do you have to sign marriage papers, why can't it just be a partnership?" she was quoted as saying in a lengthy profile.

The education activist and her husband, Asser Malik, looked cheerful in the photos that the Nobel laureate shared on her official Twitter handle. Malik is the general manager high performance at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). He joined the organisation in May 2020, according to his LinkedIn profile.

Malik has previously worked with the Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise Multan Sultans as an operational manager and he also ran a player management agency. He received his bachelor's degree in economics and political science in 2012 from Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). Following the Nikkah ceremony, the couple took to social media and posted pictures of the ceremony.

Taking to the microblogging website, the education activist wrote: "Today marks a precious day in my life. Asser and I tied the knot to be partners for life. We celebrated a small Nikkah ceremony at home in Birmingham with our families. Please send us your prayers. We are excited to walk together for the journey ahead".

Malala also posted four photos from the Nikkah ceremony in which she could be seen posing alongside her newlywed husband, Asser, as well as her parents, Ziauddin Yousafzai and Toor Pekai Yousafzai. For her big day, Malala wore a melon-pink outfit adorned with gold embroidery. Her Nikkah pictures were captured by her friend, Malin Fezehai, who is a photographer and visual journalist.

Meanwhile, PPP leader Aseefa Bhutto Zardari felicitated Malala and hoped that the newly-wed couple finds every joy together. "May your journey be blessed at every turn. Sending you love & duas," she said.

Relief only for the time being?

By M.A. Niazi



The end of the Tehrik e Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) march on Islamabad may have ended for now, but the very fact that both the government and the TLP were unwilling to reveal the details of the agreement, indicates that one, or more likely both, sides had made commitments that they did not want to disclose details to their supporters.

The origin of the TLP is in doubt, with some claiming the PML(N) encouraged it, as a means to breaking off Barelvi support from Tahirul Qadri's Tehrik e Minhajul Quran around the time of the Model town

shootings, but the TLP then staged a sit-in at Faizabad, which only ended when a member of the Nawaz Cabinet was forced to resign. The TLP accused him of being a member of the Qadiani minority, posing as a Muslim.

The TLP then shifted focus, to blasphemy, taking up the case of the French President supporting the blasphemous cartoons of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and demanding the expulsion of his representative in Pakistan, the French Ambassador. The Ambassador having left Pakistan, the TLP demands the closing down of the French Embassy.

Did the government agree to do so? Even if it did, it realized that it could not fulfill this demand, not with the clout France has within the European Union, and the fact that Pakistani textile exports go to the EU. The government committed to bring the subject up in Parliament, which it did not.

This led to the TLP launching a movement, which not just led to a grinding to a halt of normal life, but clashes of protesters and police. Policemen were killed, and the

protests ended with a new deadline. Meanwhile, new TLP chief Hafiz Saad Rizvi was not just arrested, but detained. His detention was not extended, because the state had failed to prepare any sort of case against him.

This led to the present protests, with the demands being not just for the closing of the Embassy but also the release of Saad Rizvi. Along with Saad, the release of those arrested the last time was also demanded.

There is going to be a limit to how much the police will stolidly take casualties, especially when they feel that the crowd's cause is just. If that ever happens, the government may find that even the military can no longer be relied on.

This march saw an escalation, as the Rangers were called out. The Rangers are better armed, but they are not generally trained for crowd control. During their deployment in Sindh, at least one person ended up getting killed. However, there was luckily no clash and the Rangers suffered no blemishes on their reputation.



The TLP has made demands from which it cannot resile, while the government cannot concede any of them. The TLP may be under the influence of extraneous powers, but they have clearly touched a nerve. Islam may well be a religion of tolerance, but the honour of the Prophet (PBUH) is a red line, as much a red line as the freedom of speech which the blasphemous cartoons rest on.

This is perhaps the only issue on which liberals do offer pushback. There may be rejections of hudood punishments as excessive, but there is no denying that the Prophet (PBUH) must be defended. There may be debate about how it is to be defended, such as the argument that it does not attract the death penalty. At the same time, the TLP has entered uncharted territory by suggesting breaking diplomatic relations.

When Sultan Abdul Hameed II of Turkey was faced with a similar situation, of blasphemy in France, he threatened war. However, he did not even threaten the breaking of diplomatic relations. Actually, the punishment is to be applied to the blasphemer, not an entire nation. True, if his nation chooses to defend him, that defence is to be combatted. However, refusing to talk to that country might not cut it theologically.

It is interesting that an economic argument is being made. That France leads the EU and the EU takes our exports is not supposed to matter. The law is supposed to be blind, and whether or not blasphemy is a legal fact, not an economic one. To take an extreme example, would exports justify the French state killing any Pakistani citizens?

One problem with banning the TLP, which the government claims it has done, but which it has apparently not told the Election Commission about, which is probably why its candidates still contest elections is to let the TLP join the political mainstream.

Is there an effort to harness the religious vote? The TLP has shown that religious issues are touch-button issues. At the same time, economic issues loom large. Indeed, the economic argument of exporting to the EU has so far trumped the religious one of blasphemy. However, the TLP, or any other religious party, will have to argue that it had a solution for the country's economic

problems, and that it had the competence to deliver.

The problems that Imran Khan is facing are not just about law-and-order, or even how top-level appointments, such as of the DG ISI, are made, but about the economy. Whatever the reasons, whatever the excuses, the economy has tanked, jobs are being lost, and those who manage to remain in employment, are being badly hit by inflation.

It seems that the natural instincts of the masses, to turn back to their belief system, Islam, is only stymied by doubts about whether such a party would be able to solve their economic problems. This wish has been encouraged by the inability of any type of rule, of whichever party, or of the military, to solve those problems.



Another issue that needs to be considered in the context of religious forces agitating is the effect on the police. It should not be forgotten that the steel framework of the Empire, whether in India or West Africa, was the police, not the military. The military was only meant to 'act in aid of the civil power' when the forces opposing the police had too much force, in being too many, or too well-armed.

It might seem an extreme example, but in the Partition, when so many were massacred, the vaunted Punjab Police collapsed, and it was two Boundary Security Forces, drawn from the Army, which performed policing functions, like bringing refugees to safety. The troops were Indian, and were commanded by Indian officers.

The TLP protests have been testing the Punjab police, which has so far been true to

its salt. However, that cannot be guaranteed forever. It should be noted that while most continue on the line of duty, religious belief may be greater than loyalty.

While the police force may hold, individuals may break. Most recently, a Punjab Police sub-inspector broke, Mumtaz Qadri, when he assassinated Punjab Governor Salman Taseer, whom he had been assigned to guard, but Satwant Singh and Beant Singh of the Delhi Armed Police, assigned as bodyguards to Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, assassinated her in October 1984, in response to Operation Blue Star, which was the attack on the Akal Takht and the slaughter of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale and his followers.

As a matter of fact, Partition too divided

people on religious lines. A policeman no longer was a cop, but a Muslim or Hindu or Sikh.

The British had no answer to that. They had all along run their empire on the basis of recruiting natives for both police forces and armies, but with a final layer of British troops behind them. After World War II, when the British government realized that it could not provide sufficient troops to serve as the stiffening force, and that its armies and police forces were infected by communal feeling, it decided to withdraw.

There is going to be a limit to how much the police will stolidly take casualties, especially when they feel that the crowd's cause is just. If that ever happens, the government may find that even the military can no longer be relied on.



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