

Fortnightly

The Truth International

Islamabad

1st - 15th September 2022

ABC Certified

Heaviest Monsoon

Floods of biblical proportions have worsened life in Pakistan

IMF Approves \$1.1 Billion Tranche for Pakistan

Resumption of IMF Programme averts default of Pakistan

Federal Govt versus Provincial Govts

Mounting tension between Federation and Provinces lead to nowhere

Floods Ravage Pakistan



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The New Rebel

By Hammad Ghaznavi

Politicians out of favor with the all-powerful Pakistani Establishment, entering hugely crowded courtrooms to seek bail, are a familiar spectacle. This time it is not usual suspects, 'chor' or 'daku' like Nawaz Sharif or Asif Ali Zardari though, it is the former Mr. Clean, ex-ladla, former PM Imran Khan. Last week, he got two bails in one day, one of which was from an anti-terrorist court. It seems the wheel of fortune has come full circle, with the chasm between Khan and the Establishment visibly growing with every passing day.

In the last couple of months numerous cases have been registered against Imran Khan, many of which can lead to his disqualification under the article 62 of the constitution. Particularly, the misdeclaration of assets and the Speaker National Assembly's Tosha Khana reference, are the cases that can be dubbed the proverbial damocle's sword hanging on Khan's head. Khan seems to know what's coming his way, but his political posturing is still aggressive, perhaps that's the only way known to him as a politician. There are reports though of the backchannels working overtime for a rapprochement between Khan and the Mighty of the land. The trust deficit seems to be the bane of these negotiations. Efforts, however, are afoot. "The arrow has not left the bow yet. Imran's disqualification is likely if he refuses to be flexible," reveals a powerful source privy to it all.

The courts so far appear lenient towards Khan and Co. The system doesn't seem

loaded against the 'new rebel', as it appeared in the case of Nawaz Sharif. Examples are many: Shehbaz Gill's physical remand was refused, and the FIA has been barred by the court from initiating investigations against various PTI leaders. The outcome of the above-mentioned parleys can change this situation. At the moment, however, it seems the visuals showing Imran Khan appearing before different courts are going to be in abundant supply. In one word, 'aggression' is Khan's style of politics and he seems convinced that it has paid off. Political pundits insist that perpetual aggression is not a successful recipe in politics. Both aggression and compromise are needed in different situations to realize your political ambitions. Before it's too late, Imran Khan has to learn the right formula for political survival.

Imran Khan so far has proven a tough cookie both for his political and apolitical opponents. He simply refuses to budge, attacks more ferociously after every move aimed at cornering him. His biggest strength at present appears to be his multiplying popular support, evident in the 17th July Punjab by-elections, and a recent victory in a Karachi constituency. Emboldened by the recent by-polls' results, he has decided to contest himself on nine NA seats where elections are being held on September 29th. Khan has announced a series of public gatherings in the weeks to come, to keep the momentum going. If he wins all or most of these seats, his bargaining position

viz a viz the powers that be will certainly improve. The key question, however, remains: will he be 'qualified' to contest when the polls arrive?

The coalition government, at the moment at least, seems to have no answer to Khan's political narrative, and is solely dependent over the Khan-Establishment rift and the subsequent weakening of Khan and his party. PML-N, the arch rival of Khan in Punjab, looks like a divided house, with Nawaz Sharif reportedly unhappy over the economic policies of the Shehbaz government. Undoubtedly, it is the recent price hike that has left many PML-N supporters disgruntled. In the past, the PML-N has been facing the electorate with lots of developmental work under its belt, like road networks and power plants while this time around the party has a face smudged with the soaring prices of electricity, petrol and essential food items. Little wonder then that the PML-N candidates in by-elections are critical of their own government's policies, as during the election campaign they can feel the anger of the masses over inflation. Now the PML-N has pinned all its hope on the return of party supremo Nawaz Sharif before the next general election to revive the party's electoral chances.

Will Imran Khan be disqualified like Nawaz Sharif? Or will Nawaz Sharif be allowed to reenter the political arena? Lots of political fog is going to clear in September.



Pakistan receives Heaviest Rains in Decades

New Monsoon spell lashing Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

By Mahnur Mehfuz

Different parts of Pakistan are facing a stronger-than-usual monsoon in 2022. Floods are a normal occurrence in Pakistan, but locals claim that these recent downpours are exceptional in comparison to anything else that has ever been witnessed. They were described as having "floods of biblical proportions" by one local official.

Thousands of homes made of mud have been submerged in the water close to the city of Larkana. Treetops are the only thing that can be seen for kilometers in either direction. Thatched roofs can be seen poking their heads out from underneath the water in areas where the water level is slightly lower. The government of Pakistan has declared disastrous floods a "national emergency. Balochistan, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Punjab, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) have all been hit by monsoon-caused floods since the middle of June 2022. It rained, gusted, and thundered in Gilgit-Baltistan, upper Punjab, the upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Karachi. In other regions of the country, the weather was hot and humid. The huge floods have killed at least 1,061 persons and injured 1,575, according to official statistics (NDMA, rep No.076). A total of 30 million people may have been impacted, and an estimated 1 million homes have been either completely or partially destroyed, leaving millions without immediate access to safe housing. In Upper Kohistan, at both Zaid Khar and Uchar Nullah, KKH has been swept away. Blockage in numerous locations because of debris and slips. 3.6 million acres of crop areas have been affected, 719 livestock perished, and 1033 deaths.

As per the report of OCHA, due to heavy rain in Upper Chitral 150 houses, and 26 partially schools are damaged, partially 50 dwellings, and fully 145 dwellings. These damages were sustained during the recent heavy torrential rains/flood/GLOF from the



20th to the 27th of Aug 2022. Forty-eight people have been injured and 28 have died in 24 hours, with most of the casualties occurring in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Kabalgram Bridge, which connects Torgar and District Shangla, is currently closed due to the high-water levels on the River Indus. In Swat, the road from Bahrain to Kalam is blocked and the District Administration has sent out heavy equipment to fix the roads. Since the start of the monsoon season, more than 33 million people in Gilgit-Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh have been affected by flooding and landslides. A total of 1,061 people have died as a result of the storms, including nearly 360 children. In Balochistan, 360K population is affected, in Sindh 5.8 million, in Punjab 428K, and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5000 people are affected.

In Jafferabad, Balochistan, TRCS, and PRCS are teaming up to provide monetary aid (16,000 PKR, or 73.5 CHF) and nonfood items (NFI; 300 hygiene kits, 600 jerrycans, and 1,500 mosquito nets)

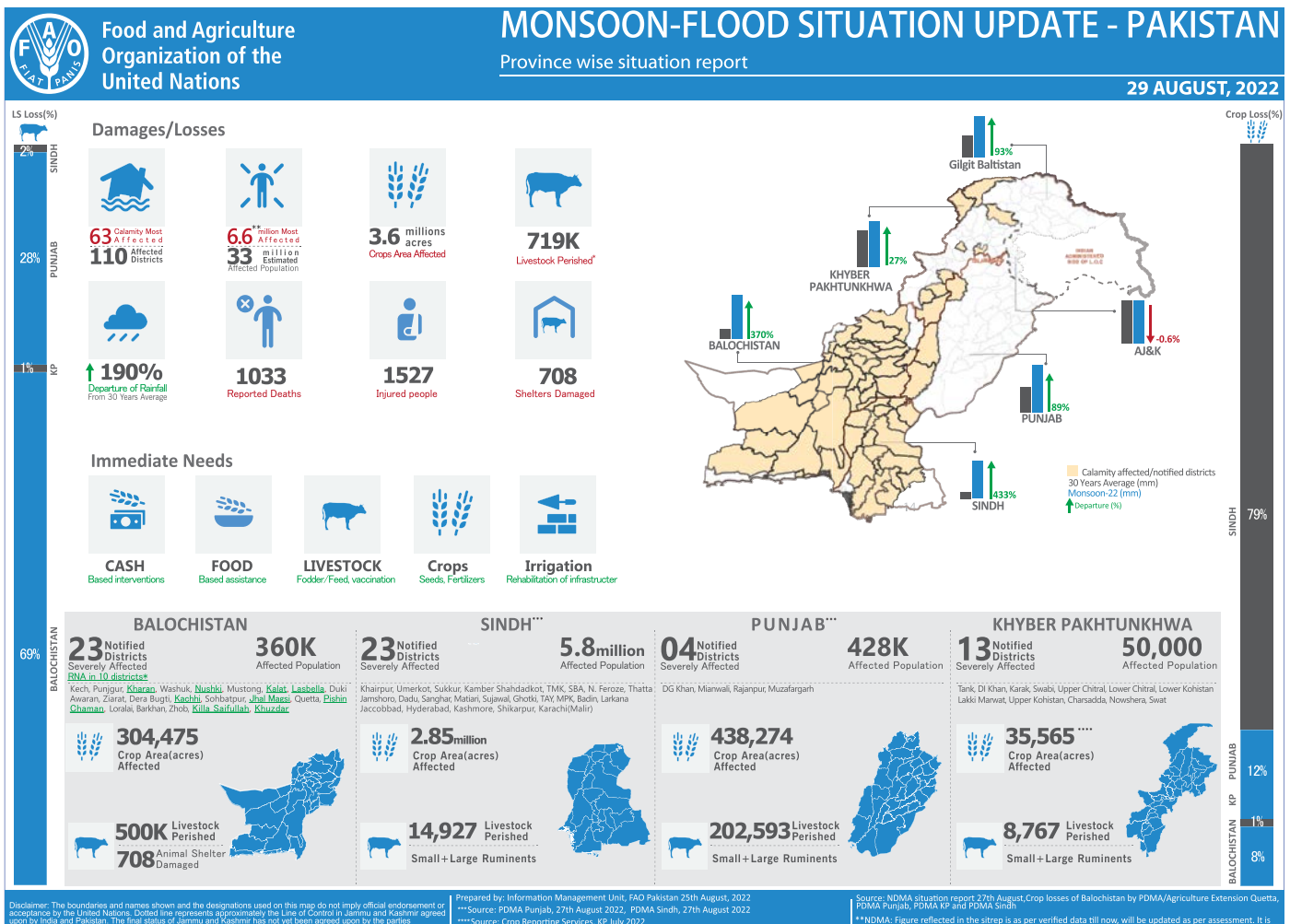
to 300 families. In addition, our North-east Anatolia Regional Disaster Management Center is sending 200 tents (16m2), 2,000 blankets, 335 mattresses, 150 pairs of rubber boots, 20 pieces of raincoat, and 140 paddles

to Balochistan via road. In addition to these supplies, the Turkish Ministry of Interior, Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency will send an "aid train" containing 100 tents (16m2), 1,000 blankets, and 38,510 articles of clothing. In addition, around 6,000 people will have access to free medical camps for diagnosis and treatment. There is an immediate need for food, cash, and shelter. Following Pakistan's request for assistance on August 29th, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was put into action. Building materials, medical supplies, food, pet supplies, and heavy equipment are all on the list of necessities. Authorities at the national level and its humanitarian allies are working to aid those in most need throughout the hardest hit regions. Families in the worst-affected areas of Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are receiving EUR 2.15 million in humanitarian relief from the European Union.

With funding from DREF, PRCS has been helping those affected by the recent flooding in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. One thousand and one hundred families in Balochistan, four hundred in Sindh, four hundred in Punjab, and one thousand and one hundred in KPK will get NFI (hygiene kit, and mosquito net), as well as cash aid (16,000 PKR, or 73.5 CHF). In addition, on August 28, 2022, the International Federation for Red Cross issued an urgent appeal for



25,000,000 CHF. Despite the fact that a large relief operation is currently underway, individuals all around the country have been forced to flee their homes in search of higher ground as the flood levels rise around them. According to the authorities of the province, this is a "climate change catastrophe," and the people of Pakistan, particularly those living in the more impoverished districts, have been hit the worst by its effects. On Tuesday, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan needs more than \$10 billion to repair and rebuild infrastructure damaged by monsoon rains that have caused devastating floods. The problems won't be solved overnight since acres of land remain submerged in water, and the water isn't receding quickly enough for any kind of reconstruction to take place in this area. There is not much that can be done to help the people other than wait. They can wait for the rain to stop, they can wait for the water level to go down, and they can wait for additional resources to be made available to towns like this.



Floods Wreak Havoc Across KP

In addition to the loss of precious lives, more than three and a half billion rupees worth of crops and vegetables were destroyed

By Muhammad Owais



In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the floods have caused loss of life and property worth billions of rupees. Till the filing of this report, 189 people have been killed. Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman, while releasing the official data, has confirmed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, like the rest of the country, has been badly affected, where since June 14, 50 men, 33 women, and 86 children were killed by rain and flood while fourteen thousand houses were affected.

In several districts, infrastructure and bridges were severely damaged and many areas were cut off from nearby communities. In the report prepared by NDMA at the national level it was mentioned that 33 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were severely affected by stormy rains and floods.

The series of rains and floods have been going on for the past two months, but in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on August 24 and August 19, the floods inflicted heavy damage. On August 24, due to heavy rainfall in Upper Dir, five young students were swept away while a girl died in Swat.

Five young students belonged to Marwari Kasai Primary School in Kasai, Union

Council Shahi Kot of Upper Dir tehsil, and included eight-year-old Nauman and four female students: ten-year-old Zubaydah, six-year-old Varisha, seven-year-old Tajla, and five-year-old Hina Bibi. They were returning from school when they reached the middle of a dry channel where they were swept away by the flood. The bodies of three children were recovered by the local police and Rescue 1122 and handed

over to their heirs, while Noman and Hanna Bibi were still missing and the search for them was ongoing.

According to Rescue 1122 officials, the house of these children is located in a hilly area and they cross this dry river every day on their way to school. He said that on normal days there is no water in this canal or river, but on the day of the accident, a sudden flash flood in it swept the children. After this incident, the Deputy Commissioner of Upper Dir imposed Section 144 in the district under which no person will be allowed to go near the river bank.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PDMA, the provincial agency for dealing with natural disasters, had predicted heavy rains in the province on August 23, which continued till August 26, during which severe flooding occurred in the drains of many districts.

On August 24, a flood in the center of Swat district, Mingora, caused large-scale destruction. According to Mehboob Ali, a senior journalist in the district, there was a flood situation in many rivers of Swat district, especially Mingora, Marghazar, and some other channels, but surprisingly, there was no flood situation in Swat, Kabul, and Khawazakhela among others.



Mehboob Ali said that we were told that the water that has come in the city of Mingora has come from the canals of Marghazar and Kokari and there is so much water there due to cloudburst. One of the main reasons for today's floods is that the occupying groups have occupied the lands on both sides of this channel and built residential and other buildings in such places from where the water has to flow. Encroachers have also illegally occupied the area around the Mingora canal, which is the main reason for this loss. Even in the disastrous flood of 2010, this canal did not cause as much damage as it has today.

area with great difficulty and brought to their homes. The main reason was that the provincial government had issued the usual advisory for the entire province but not about this flood because it came completely unexpectedly.

The water also came to Makan Bagh and the road in Landi Kis, which caused a lot of damage to people's property. Two days before this, in the districts of Dera Ismail Khan and Tank, one woman died in the floods caused by the rain, while 28 men, two women, and five children were injured.

While on August 21, one child each died in

A week later, a woman and a child died due to floods in the Tank district, where more than 20 villages were wiped out, and all educational institutions had to be closed across the district, while electricity, internet services, and mobile signals remained unavailable. A joint operation by Pakistan Army and rescue teams was launched to bring the situation back to normal.

In Dera Ismail Khan, scenes of destruction were also seen in many places, people had to relocate due to the flood in the Chandna area of Tehsil Paroa, and the people of the



Mehboob Ali said that six children, including a girl from Swat and five children from Upper Dir, have drowned in flood, while more than 20 animals and eight vehicles have been washed away in the water, goods in around three hundred houses have been destroyed and unfortunately, the new furniture worth sixty to seventy lakhs that was just brought to the Swat Press Club has also been destroyed along with the press club.

The adjacent hockey ground has been severely damaged. During this time, the most difficult thing happened to the school children who were taken out of the flood

Khyber district and Dera Ismail Khan while two children died in the flood in Bajaur, similarly one woman died in DI Khan and one man died in South Waziristan. On August 20, a man and a woman died in South Waziristan after the roofs of their houses collapsed due to heavy rain.

For people of Lower Chitral and Dera Ismail Khan, August 19 was a difficult day. Seven men and one woman were killed and seventeen people were seriously injured due to floods and roof collapses. 4717 houses were completely damaged and 2533 houses were partially damaged due to rains.

village were trapped due to the water coming around Badh from all sides.

In several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), due to the recent monsoon rains and floods, 12 types of crops spanning over 14394 acres of land were destroyed and 1261 cattle were killed. According to the officials of the Department of Agriculture, people lost more than three and a half billion rupees due to the inundation of crops and vegetables. According to DG Livestock, livestock suffered the most in South Waziristan, DI Khan, Tank, and Karak.



Monsoon brings misery to Millions

It is a common perception in Sindh that the government seems to be waiting for the damage to happen

By Hamzah Qureshi

The post-rain situation has aggravated since the monsoon season, which started in mid-July. A vast area of Balochistan and Sindh was severely hit. Mismanagement, lack of care, and a careless attitude on the part of government officials have all made things worse for the victims.

The flood situation gradually started to worsen after days of heavy and moderate rain. The RCD highway that connects Karachi and Quetta got damaged and was closed for traffic. It left thousands of passengers stranded on roadsides.

DC Mastung asked all transporters not to go anywhere while the RCD highway is closed because flood water is moving through.

Several bridges in the Lasbela district along the RCD highway were also closed to traffic by the civil administration. Due to stormwater, the Landa River bridge collapsed. The road near the Kaanta River bridge was severely damaged. The National Highway Authority (NHA) made a temporary road through a causeway at the Kaanta River. However, succeeding rainwater also washed it away. Displaced people in Uthal told TTI that hundreds of villages have been wiped off. Remote areas such as Liari and Lakshra have scattered populations. Villagers who were unable to reach the highways are still trapped in the highlands near their villages. Evacuation is near impossible!

The rescue workers were also not able to reach them. Most rescue services are working near highways. A few attempts were made by the Offroad Club of Pakistan and Al-Khidmat, who transported goods to far-flung villages. Other organisations involved in relief operations include Edhi, Al-Mustufa, etc.

Urban flooding is rare in Baluchistan. This is the first time in 25 years that flooding has happened of this magnitude. 3–4 feet of urban flooding wreaked havoc in cities like Uthal and Bela. Cemented houses were also greatly affected. In particular, women



and children are particularly facing issues due to the non-availability of washrooms. Due to floods, the flush system of toilets is not working. Underground water tanks are polluted with flood water. People in the area want the government to help them right away and pay them for their losses.

Uthal is the district headquarters of Lasbela. The traffic flow on Uthal Bypass is also severely affected due to continuous rain. Floods have greatly damaged the roads. The Uthal Bypass is the only route through which the locals get their necessary foodstuffs and basic necessities. Locals demand that the bypass be repaired as soon as possible.

It was also during this rescue operation that the helicopter of Corps Commander Quetta crashed in a remote area near Sassi Pannu Mizar. All on board were killed in this unfortunate incident.

Lasbela is known for its cotton crops in Baluchistan. More than 40,000 people from Lower Sindh and parts of Balochistan come to Lasbela to work in the season. They work on farms. Due to floods, the crops were severely damaged. We saw a woman walking back to her hometown, Mir Pur Khas, about 400 km away. She came with her family but lost them during the floods.

These workers live in the open sky on farms. It was too late when they realised the water level was increasing. Her son, grandson, and daughter-in-law are all missing. Language is another barrier that makes it difficult to find her missing family.

34 districts and more than 0.3 million people are directly affected by floods in Balochistan. According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)'s Monsoon Situation Report on August 07, 1,571 people died and 922 were injured in the country. Around 49,991 houses were damaged (including 39,481 fully and 10,510 partially damaged). In addition to this, many shops have been destroyed, 600 schools were damaged, and 23,013 livestock perished in the province. PDMA also reported that around 500,000 acres of crops were damaged in the province.

Jafirabad District was also severely hit due to the last spell of rain. Some of the most rain fell in Naseerabad and Jafirabad districts in the last 30 years.

Why do bridges get damaged?

The flood saw the destruction of several bridges. As of August 20, a total of 18

bridges have collapsed and more than 690 km of roads have been damaged amid the rains. Muhammad Siddiq Channa, a local zamindaar, told us that the responsibility lies with the construction companies and those who granted them contracts. He explained that NHA and other contractors do not consult the locals in engineering design. They are not aware of normal and high flood levels. He added that these educated people might have the survey reports and bookish knowledge but don't know the ground realities of the area.

The same was reiterated by ex-CM Baluchistan Jamal, who was on a two-day visit to the area. The TTI team also observed that at various points, the river bed is more than 200 ft while the length of the bridge built is less than 80 ft. Flood water damages the bridge's foundations and river bedsides. Drainages are also not properly designed for roads. Because the drainage pattern is narrow, the water moves quickly and can damage infrastructure.

Lack of Coordination

NGOs and even government organisations are missing local coordination. Due to such difficulties, the distribution of relief aid is not uniform for all victims. People who are stuck in their villages cannot get aid. While people along the highways have an excess of food and other items.

Coverage on national media

The coverage in the national media wasn't able to justify the required amount of news significance of the catastrophe that occurred in remote areas of Sindh and Baluchistan. However, social media played its role in getting the attention of NGOs and related governmental institutions.

Sindh's Situation

The situation was not good after a powerful spell of rainfall which targeted different areas of Sindh. With cities like Sukkur, Nawabshah, and Badin being flooded due to heavy rain, the cost of damage is yet to be estimated. 23 districts in Sindh have been calamity-hit. According to the NDMA, the situation is worse in 17 districts, with approximately 1.9 million people directly affected.

Areas of Dadu, Tehsil Johi of Dadu, Badin, and Sangar were also affected. The PDMA figures for Sindh are horrifying. With 154,600 acres of land flooded and crops being destroyed, the situation is worsening. Food shortages have occurred. In many areas, the price of daily-use vegetables has increased by up to 300%.

An emergency has been declared, and the military has been called in. Nawabshah

Airport will remain closed till August 26th due to airfields being flooded. Multan Airport is being alternately used.

35 women and 120 children are included in the 263 deaths recorded at the time of the writing of this article. NDMA figures say that 2135 km of roads have been washed away while 45 bridges are greatly damaged.

The CM of Sindh visited Larkana city with PPP Chairman and Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. However, at some places, the politicians from the ruling party of Sindh were not welcomed. People surrounded CM Sindh Murad Ali Shah and raised slogans in protest.

It is a common perception in Sindh that the government seems to be waiting for the damage to happen. No arrangements are ever made in advance to control the expected situation. Many allege that this is a planned move, which leaves a gap for corrupt officials and politicians. Funds are delegated and utilised in an unchecked manner. Billions of rupees are spent without any checks and balances during an emergency situation.

The Election Commission of Pakistan has also postponed local body elections for the second phase in Sindh. The postponement has been made for the second time. Opposition parties such as PTI and JJ see it as a political tactic of the ruling party of Sindh.





Pakistan Caught Unprepared for Natural Disasters

A government's response to a natural disaster consists of three stages: relief, rehabilitation, and reform

By Zainab Umer



Pakistanis are not new to natural disasters hitting the country with the utmost force one could imagine possible, however, the intensity of these disasters seems to increase every time they pay a visit. Historically, Pakistan has been hit by several natural disasters in the past. The tropical cyclone struck former East Pakistan on November 1, 1970. It was the deadliest cyclone ever recorded that left around 5 lac people dead. Similarly in the year 2000, the people of Balochistan were affected by a drought that left a hundred people dead and 1.2 million people suffering from dehydration and famine. In another instance, the super cyclonic storm 'kyarr' rapidly intensified in the Arabian sea and wreaked havoc in Karachi as well as its coastal belt which caused minor flooding in parts of Karachi. Since 2005, according to statistical reports, \$18 billion of damages and losses were faced from natural and man-made disasters.

The year 2022 brought extreme misfortune to people in Karachi and several communities in Balochistan. With water on the streets, at least 310 people were killed and hundreds seriously injured. The southern city of Karachi, home to 16 million people has witnessed neighborhoods and vehicles submerged in knee-deep muddy water,

public services suspended, and businesses closed. The NDMA notified that infrastructure, road networks, and 5,600 homes were damaged due to the flash floods. As many as 30 villages submerged in Sindh province in Pakistan after flash floods from Balochistan entered the province, taking the total number of drowned villages in the hilly region to 50, local media reported. "An elderly woman of 70 years, in a flood-hit village, died of a health condition while failing to get medical help," reported

NDTV world news. The monsoon rains destroyed two dams, Jana and Tabina in the Toba Kakar range. The water from the floods wiped out most of the crops and farmland leaving almost all cattle destroyed. Moreover, land connectivity to Toba Achakzai was lost from other parts of the country for four days.

Developing countries like Pakistan have very little contribution to the cumulative global carbon emissions however are still amongst the most vulnerable to impacts. Pakistan, which suffered an extreme heatwave earlier this year, ranks among the most vulnerable countries on the Global Climate Risk Index. Pakistan is estimated to have lost 10,000 lives due to environmental disasters, with \$4bn in financial losses from 2008-2018. "Climate is playing its part," said Afia Salam, a climate activist. "We have shifting monsoon, we have heavier rainfalls, we have rain falling within a very short period of time which used to be spread-over, so these changing weather patterns are there. Karachi facing urban flooding is a sign of the times of unpredictable weather. We have not adapted to these changes, and we have to safeguard the people through proper planning," she said.

The question amid all this havoc is, if Pakistan is not entirely isolated from



natural disasters, then why are we as a nation still not prepared to deal with them? There is no doubt that Pakistan's disaster management system is facing several challenges and gaps.

To begin with, a government's response to a disaster can be arranged under three heads: relief, rehabilitation, and reform. When it comes to relief, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) does not possess the capacity to serve the entire stretch of the country. When it comes to rehabilitation, the NDMA lacks a direction for rehabilitation works such as constructing homes post-earthquake or repairing dykes post a devastating flood. The third segment of disaster response known as reform involves taking measures to ensure that subsequent disasters of a similar nature do not cause as much damage. Towards this end too, the NDMA fares as good as it does on the first two. This is mainly because the NDMA is not an independent body. It has no cadre of its own. So much so that even the decision about whether to go for a lockdown amidst the COVID-19 pandemic does not rest with the body.

Another obstacle when providing relief to the victims of these disasters is the financial constraints the country is facing. "While each district has formulated a District Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Plan, putting the plan into action is hampered by a lack of resources. Direct allocation of budget from the federal level to PDMA and DDMA is not in alignment with the



requirements that need to carry out their activities," as mentioned in an article featured in the Daily Times addressing the recent flash floods. "Government mismanagement is obvious: in Balochistan, we always have flash floods and yet we have deaths, and in 2022 even infrastructural losses are unacceptable. There is a lack of coordination between the department and warnings issued, but disaster management is doing nothing," said Salam.

A million dollar question remains: Has all been lost, or can Pakistan still equip itself to provide relief and reform whenever natural disasters hit the country in the future?

Fortunately, all has not been lost yet, the very first thing that should be done is for the NDMA to create a risk assessment model by using the latest GIS (Geographic Information System) technology that can simulate disaster scenarios. This would enable the authorities to reduce vulnerability by budding a comprehensive regulatory mechanism. NDMA should also ensure a standardized methodology of risk assessment and feed the data into a national database, and early warning systems should be upgraded for timely information. Another thing that needs to be taken into consideration is that a realignment of budgetary allocation needs to be made so that an institutional framework can be ensured. For this purpose, there should be an amendment in the rules of business in the constitution of 1973 that the subject of disaster management is now under climate change division so that the funds are allocated to the relevant authorities.

Finally, the DMAs should make sure that advanced rescue machinery and equipment are available at places from where they could be shifted to the disaster-hit points. Wheel dozers, trolley blades, excavators, rock drills, hydraulic cranes, air compressors, and all such equipment should be procured on an immediate basis and a meticulous plan for ensuring their maintenance should also be devised. Along with this, proper training of personnel should be done through training programs so that we are well equipped for the next monsoon season.



IMF loan to save Pakistan from default but political tension can wipe out the economic gain

IMF said that close oversight of the banking system and decisive action to address undercapitalized financial institutions would help to support financial stability

By Javed Mahmood

Finally, the International Monetary Fund approved \$1.1 billion for Pakistan on Monday. The executive board of the IMF gave approval for the resumption of the loan to Pakistan six after the fund suspended the loan when the PTI government breached the agreement in Feb 2022. After the board's approval, Pakistan will receive the seventh and eighth tranches of \$1.1 billion within this week. This much-needed IMF loan will support Pakistan to put its economy back on track by getting required loans from friendly countries and offering international bonds. In 2022-23, the government has estimated \$35 billion in foreign exchange requirements _ \$21 billion for repayment of foreign loans/markup, and the remaining to cover up the current account deficit. In July 2022, the first month of this financial year, Pakistan has already recorded a \$1.2 billion current account deficit as against \$900 million CAD in the corresponding month of last year. The quantum of the CAD in the first month of this fiscal year indicates the problems ahead for the government and economy in case efforts are not made to reign in the deficit by curbing non-essential imports.

As the IMF resumed its loan facility for Pakistan on August 29, many international economic think-tanks believe that Pakistan will evade short-term default after obtaining a loan from the International Monetary Fund. The famous economic think-tanks _ Columbia Threadneedle Investments, Tellimer Limited, and Natixis SA believe that Pakistan will get the approval for a \$1.1 billion loan approval from the IMF board on Monday.

The leadership expects the Washington-based lender to resume the six months-long stalled \$6 billion bailout programme; however, a rally in the nation's assets may fizzle out amid escalating political tensions.



"I do think the market rally is already in the price," said Eng Tat Low, an analyst at Columbia Threadneedle in Singapore.

"I expect the next 12 months to be challenging for Pakistan with the general elections looming while the risk of worsening political backdrop is definitely still considerable and elevated."

IMF ignores PTI's conspiracy, two demands of Govt

The International Monetary Fund has overlooked completely the conspiracy of the PTI to block the loan programme at the eleventh hour. PTI finance ministers in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wrote separate letters to the IMF with a clear-cut message that the provincial governments would not fulfill their agreements with the fund signed before the floods. The executive board of the fund ignored it and approved \$1.1 billion for Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the fund had also set aside two key demands of the coalition government. The government demanded an extension in the IMF programme for two years _ till June 2024, but the board of the fund extended the duration of the loan to June 2023 only. In other words, after June 2023, Pakistan will,

once again, be facing a default-like situation. Similarly, the government demanded an increase in the amount of IMF to \$8 billion, but the board incorporated a paltry increase of \$500 million and enhanced the size of the loan to \$6.5 billion.

IMF board's recommendation for Pakistan

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed today the combined seventh and eighth reviews of the Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) for Pakistan. The Board's decision allows for an immediate disbursement of SDR 894 million (about US\$1.1 billion), bringing total purchases for budget support under the arrangement to about US\$3.9 billion. The EFF was approved by the Executive Board on July 3, 2019, for SDR 4,268 million (about US\$6 billion at the time of approval, or 210 percent of the quota). In order to support program implementation and meet the higher financing needs in FY23, as well as catalyze additional financing, the IMF Board approved an extension of the EFF until end-June 2023, rephasing and augmentation of access by SDR 720 million that will bring the total access under the EFF to about US\$6.5 billion.

Pakistan is at a challenging economic juncture. A difficult external environment combined with procyclical domestic policies fueled domestic demand to unsustainable levels. The resultant economic overheating led to large fiscal and external deficits in FY22, contributing to rising inflation; and eroded reserve buffers. The programme seeks to address domestic and external imbalances and ensure fiscal discipline and debt sustainability while protecting social spending, safeguarding monetary and financial stability, maintaining a market-determined exchange rate and rebuilding external buffers.

The Executive Board also approved today the authorities' request for waivers of nonobservance of performance criteria.

Following the Executive Board's discussion on Pakistan, Ms. Antoinette Sayeh, Deputy Managing Director and Acting Chair, issued the following statement:

"Pakistan's economy has been buffeted by adverse external conditions, due to spillovers from the war in Ukraine, and domestic challenges, including from accommodative policies that resulted in uneven and unbalanced growth. Steadfast implementation of corrective reforms remains essential to regain macroeconomic stability, address imbalances, and lay the foundation for inclusive and sustainable growth.

"The authorities' plan to achieve a small primary surplus in FY2023 is a welcome step to reduce fiscal and external pressures and build confidence. Containing current spending and mobilizing tax revenues are critical to creating space for much-needed social protection and strengthening public debt sustainability. Efforts to strengthen the viability of the energy sector and reduce unsustainable losses, including by adhering to the scheduled increases in fuel levies and energy tariffs, are also essential. Further efforts to reduce poverty and protect the most vulnerable by enhancing targeted transfers are important, especially in the current high-inflation environment.

"The tightening of monetary conditions through higher policy rates was a necessary step to contain inflation. Going forward, continued tight monetary policy would help to reduce inflation and help address external imbalances. Maintaining

a proactive and data-driven monetary policy would support these objectives. At the same time, close oversight of the banking system and decisive action to address undercapitalized financial institutions would help to support financial stability. Preserving a market-determined exchange rate remains crucial to absorb external shocks, maintain competitiveness and rebuild international reserves.

"Accelerating structural reforms to strengthen governance, including of state-owned enterprises, and improve the business environment would support sustainable growth. Reforms that create a fair-and-level playing field for business, investment, and trade necessary for job creation and the development of a strong private sector are essential."



Floods devastation and impact on the economy

Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said that the rains and floods have caused \$10 billion worth of losses. Till August 29, 2022, about 1033 people have lost their lives in rains, and floods swept away standing crops in the affected areas in Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Southern Punjab. Sherry Rehman, federal minister for climate change said the floods and rains could affect more or less 33 million across the country.

Meanwhile, in a statement the chief of army staff Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa also

said that it will take years to rehabilitate and revive the areas devastated by floods and heavy rains. Thus, the rehabilitation of the flood-ravaged areas will be the toughest task for the federal and provincial governments and the ongoing situation of floods and rains may affect the pace of exports, manufacturing, and tax revenue collection at least from August to Oct 2022. In other words, the government may not be able to achieve the tax revenue collection target set with the IMF for the first quarter of 2022-23 (July-Sept) because of unprecedented floods and rains which have paralyzed social and economic activities in most parts of the country.

Short-Term Default Protection

According to international financial analysts and think tanks, the resumption of the IMF loan to Pakistan will only be a short-term evasion of default and the threat will haunt the country once again due to the critical economic and political situation. The IMF loan programme will end in June 2023 and after the expiry of this deadline, once again Pakistan will be in dire need of foreign exchange to strengthen the economy.

Foreign Investment in Pakistan

Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia have announced a \$6 billion investment in Pakistan. Qatar has announced a \$3 billion investment, UAE said it would invest \$2 billion while Saudi King said that Saudi Arabia will be investing \$1 billion in Pakistan immediately to support the economy of the brotherly country. It seems a good development that friendly countries are standing with Pakistan in this critical time and planning investment in different sectors in the country. For example, according to Finance Minister Miftah Ismail, Qatar wants to take all airports and sea-ports of Pakistan on a lease, which is in addition to Qatar's plan to make investments in the energy sector especially solar power. Similarly, the UAE and Saudi Arabia said they would identify the areas of mutual interest for investment including the energy sector in Pakistan.

Fiscal Performance in 2021-22

By Waqar Masood Khan

The results of fiscal operations for 2021-22 have been released. It is a spectacle of one of the worst fiscal outcomes in the country's history. A great deal about it was already speculated based on Revised Estimates at the time of the budget, yet the final picture is still a grim reading.

We would examine the budget outcomes primarily with respect to the budget estimates, IMF programme targets and reflect on their continuing implications for the economy.

The budget had estimated a federal fiscal deficit of Rs 3,990 billion and, with an estimate of Rs 575 billion for provincial surplus, the overall fiscal deficit was Rs.3415 billion. Against these targets, the actual federal deficit was of Rs 5,611 billion while the overall deficit stood at Rs 5,259 billion, indicating an increase of 41% and 54% respectively, in federal and overall deficits relative to budget estimates. Remarkably, the year saw the highest ever increase in nominal GDP due to rebasing of national accounts with respect to the change in base year and inclusion of hitherto unaccounted for new economic activities. The GDP was estimated at Rs 48 trillion in 2020-21 and projected to grow to Rs.54 trillion in 2021-22 but the rebased GDP (announced in January 2022) has worked it out at Rs.67 trillion, an increase of 40% relative to last year and 24% relative to the estimate at the time of the budget. This is a phenomenal increase in GDP, which has moderated the otherwise unenviable fiscal outcomes.

Based on budget estimate of GDP, federal deficit was budgeted at 7.1% of GDP. On this GDP, the actual deficit comes out at 10.4%, which is one of the highest in the country's history. However, on the new GDP, the deficit is 8.4%, which is still very high. Against an estimated provincial surplus of Rs 575 billion, the actual surplus was Rs 351 billion. With this, overall deficit comes out at 7.9%.

The primary deficit (excluding interest payments) was budgeted at Rs 360 billion (0.5% of GDP) while the actual deficit has come out at Rs.2077 billion (3.1% of GDP),

which is 5.8 times the budgeted level. This is the third consecutive year when against the IMF target of building a primary surplus, the government has missed the target by a significant margin. Apparently, it was such failures that have led the IMF to impose the harsh conditionality upfront.

It would be useful to examine what factors have contributed to such a high deficit. The Revised FBR target (after mini-budget of January 2022) was Rs 6,100 billion (as against Rs 5,827 billion at the time of budget) which was comfortably achieved as the actual was Rs 6,142 billion. The net revenue after provincial transfers was estimated at Rs 4,497 billion, which was revised to 4613 billion after mini-budget. The actual net revenue, however, was Rs 3,739 billion. The single largest revenue loss was nearly Rs.500 billion in petroleum levy, which does not form part of the divisible pool. The net revenue shortfall is therefore Rs.874 billion.

On the expenditure side, the budget had estimated total expenditure at Rs 8,487 billion. As against this, actual expenditure came out at Rs 9,350 billion, which is an overrun of Rs 863 billion. Adding the revenue shortfall of Rs 874 billion to excess expenditure of Rs 863 billion, we have a federal deficit of Rs 1,737 billion over and above the planned deficit of Rs 3,990 billion. The federal deficit is therefore Rs 5,727 billion as opposed to Rs 5,611 billion. The difference is Rs116 billion, which is the same as pointed out in the last paragraph on account of higher net revenues that should have accrued after the mini-budget.

We now review what expenditures have led to overruns. The interest expense was budgeted at Rs 3,060 billion whereas the actual expenditure stands at Rs 3,182 billion, which is an overrun of Rs122 billion. The defence expenditure was budgeted at Rs 1,370 billion whereas the actual expenditure is Rs 1,412 billion, which is an overrun of Rs 42 billion. Running of civil government was budgeted at Rs 479 billion while actual expenditure is Rs 546 billion, with an overrun of Rs 67 billion. Pensions were budgeted at Rs 480 billion while the actual expenditure is Rs 542 billion, with an

overrun of Rs 62 billion. Grants to provinces and others were budgeted at Rs 1,168 billion while the actual is Rs 1,239 billion, with an overrun of Rs 71 billion. These overruns add up to Rs 364 billion. Interestingly, a greater part of this overrun has been covered by the savings in the development spending which was reduced from its budgeted level of Rs 900 billion to Rs 558 billion, a reduction of Rs 342 billion. However, net lending to provinces increased from Rs 64 billion to Rs 143 billion, which is an overrun of Rs 79. Therefore, the net savings in PSDP (Public Sector Development Programme) and net lending is Rs 263 billion, which if subtracted from Rs 364 billion, leaves an overrun of Rs 101 billion.

The real culprit of overruns is the head of subsidies which is the perennial bane of the country's fiscal finances. Against a budgeted level of Rs 682 billion the actual subsidies were a staggering amount of Rs 1,529 billion, an overrun of Rs 847 billion. Adding Rs 101 billion, the expenditure overrun is Rs 948 billion. We had earlier noted an overrun expenditure of Rs 863 billion. The difference of Rs 85 billion is part of a statistical discrepancy of Rs 197 billion.

With such massive over-spending, it should not be surprising that the country is facing unprecedented inflationary pressures, so much so that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has projected its inflation between 18-20% during the year. If we look at the money supply we notice a high growth of 13.5% which was contained only because of a massive decline in net foreign assets. We do not have the liberty of spending another year with similar profligacy. Full brakes will have to be applied to ensure that we prevent a major collapse of the economy. The new fiscal year had an auspicious start (BR issue of 10-8-22) which is heartening but we have to stay the course. We have a very fragile economy; it doesn't take too many missteps to derail it from the steady path. The sacrifices people have made to improve fiscal finances by stoically facing huge price increases should be converted into a stable macroeconomic framework and should form the foundations of an economy capable to stand on its own feet.

Financial Inclusion for the Common Man



By Dr. Huma Baqai

High-tech innovations and digitalization are changing the functioning and structure of our societies. It is what 'Knowledge Economy' hinges on: it is about valuing knowledge, promoting ideas and innovation and a societal consensus to respect prosperity and diversity. Knowledge economy is intrinsically linked to information technology. Six technologies are critical, which include artificial intelligence, micro-electronics, Internet of Things, telecommunications, biotechnology, and robotics. These technologies will revolutionize businesses throughout the world and have implications for labour market and political participation.

Digital technologies impact the way firms do business and interact with their customers and suppliers. Insights into digital transformation and the channels through which it influences the economy is increasingly relevant for monetary governance.

It is even more critical for developing economies. Digital transformation can enhance trade, financial inclusion, market competitiveness, and documentation of economy. Zeroing in on Pakistan, the google-commissioned report titled "Unlocking Pakistan's Digital Potential"

says that digital transformation can help Pakistan unlock up to Rs 9.7 trillion (\$59.7 billion) in annual economic value by 2030, equivalent to about 19% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020.

In developing economies, majority of the people do not have access to bank accounts, which creates an inequitable society. Around 80 percent of Pakistan's total population is unbanked and financially marginalized. The digital divide and gender biases also contribute to this further.

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) along with concerned ministries, regulatory bodies, ad hoc committees, and task forces are playing a vital role in increasing access to high-quality connectivity and digital services, as well as cultivating inclusion, e-commerce, and entrepreneurial spirit. The government is focused on digital inclusion and building a knowledge economy. The initiative formally started in 2015, with the unveiling of National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS).

The NFIS is focused on four key areas: Promoting digital transaction accounts and reaching scale through bulk payments, expanding and diversifying access points,

improving capacity of financial service providers, and lastly increasing levels of financial awareness and capability.

With increased financial inclusion, availability, and equality of opportunities, all Pakistanis will be able to access affordable financial services and products such as digital transactions, payments, savings certificates, instant credit, and insurance that meet their needs. This will particularly help uplift the disadvantaged, underserved, and low-income segments of our society.

In fact, Pakistan had adopted financial inclusion as a national priority well before many other countries did. Support of the microfinance sector dates to the 1990s, and in 2001 the government began to allow the creation of microfinance banks.

We were one of the first countries to adopt branchless banking regulations in 2008, which paved the way for introducing digital financial services in the country. Through the Benazir Income Support Programme in 2010, the government began to digitize safety net support to 6 million poor households through women.

As per the most recent Financial Inclusion Insights (FII) Survey 2020, top-line financial inclusion in Pakistan is estimated

at 21 percent, expanding 7 percentage points since the last wave was conducted in 2017. Financial inclusion in Pakistan is still significantly low when compared to countries with similar socioeconomic profiles such as India (78 percent) and Bangladesh (47 percent).

With a population exceeding 220 million, Pakistan is an emerging mobile economy and boasts a high mobile phone penetration of 85%. By 2023, the economic contribution of the mobile industry in Pakistan is estimated to reach nearly \$24 billion, accounting for 6.6 percent of GDP. Thus, there is a consensus amongst policymakers to increase financial access through financially inclusive mobile banking practices.

On 14th December 2021, with the aim of bringing unbanked population into formal banking services, the Asaan Mobile Account (AMA) scheme was formally launched through joint efforts of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Asaan Account is focused on the 'common people'. It is available to all low income unbanked/under-banked people who face difficulties in account opening due to complicated account opening requirements or lesser means of access.

AMA can play an important role towards increasing financial inclusion, where users will be able to conduct financial transactions through their mobile phone providers, allowing them to convert their mobile phone into a financial access channel.

With the help of the AMA Scheme, any Pakistani national above the age of 18 with a valid CNIC and biometric verified SIM, can open their account from any participating bank. The goal here is to achieve universal financial access, with a headline NFIS target of expanding formal financial access to at least 50 percent of adults, including women and youth.

As efforts are being made to speed up digitalization, regulatory concerns have become ever more pressing, including regulations around cloud computing, data protection, and cyber security. Balancing protective regulation with an environment that encourages innovation and digitization, will enable Pakistan to make the most of new technologies that have a very

pro-people and pro-poor thrust.

The discussion on financial inclusion efforts in Pakistan remains incomplete without mentioning Ikram Sehgal and his family who have worked tirelessly for this initiative. For a decade, his family invested in an enterprise to harness the human and economic potential of financial inclusion, through the 'Financial Services and Technology Division' which includes the flagship company: Virtual Remittance Gateway (VRG).



During the last 7 years, VRG worked diligently to create the crucial interface connectivity link between financial institutions and mobile telecom operators. The challenge was to create Third-Party Service Providers (TPSPs). This happened in 2017 through the facilitation and encouragement from World Bank, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA). Thus, a truly extraordinary Scheme that interconnected all mobile services operators with financial institutions happened. This democratized the industry and became a catalyst for greater financial inclusion.

VRG was all set to be launched in August 2020, but then the usual red tape kicked in and it landed in the court of law in a frivolous suit inspired by vested interests. The concerned High Court took 18 months to reject the absurd plea. All was not lost: the pilot phase launch achieved over a

million customers in December 2021 without any public projection whatsoever.

Ambassador Munir Akram presented the scheme in New York to the UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner along with the UNDP Chief Digital Officer. The words used by them for the unique many-to-many platform were 'Amazing', 'Great', and 'Fantastic'. But what is even more amazing, great, and fantastic is the fact that it is for the poor, disenfranchised, faceless, and voiceless 80% adult population in Pakistan

who lack access to bank accounts and thus a basic means of livelihood.

Even without a formal advertising campaign, nearly 4.3 million AMA bank accounts have been registered till date with 13 banks having branchless banking licenses. It has presently processed 40 million transactions worth over Rs 42 bn. What is even more noteworthy, 32 percent of AMA accounts created have been made by women, compared with 18 percent of standard bank accounts in Pakistan. The same was presented at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in May 2022.

When Ikram Sehgal used the term "poor men's debit card" for the mobile wallet during the "EDISON ALLIANCE" Session of the WEF in May 2022, he was politely asked to call it deprived person's "debit card". In fact, it should be aptly titled 'Aam Admi ka mobile wallet'.

The writer is Rector MiTE

Pakistan: A security state without a viable economy

Pakistan's ruling class has become rent-seeking elites, totally dependent on foreign aid for their economic survival. Crises in Afghanistan kept them afloat but in the process, they turned Pakistan's economy into useless junk.

By Umer Farooq

Pakistan's military twice acted as a frontline organization for meeting American interests in Afghanistan. First, when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and continued the occupation till 1989—the American CIA used Pakistani territory as a conduit to aid Afghan resistance. The second time was when Islamic terror organization Al-Qaida launched a terror attack on American cities and in turn, the US invaded Afghanistan in 2001, which led to an occupation that lasted for two decades. All these strategic upheavals on Pakistan's western border had magical impacts on Pakistan's economy and led to the coining of a new term in international academic and media circles, “Afghan Miracle.” This was a situation that greatly benefited Pakistan state, its military and intelligence structures, economy, and the state apparatus generally.

Quite coincidentally every time Americans needed Pakistani state apparatus, and military/intelligence structures to help extend its strategic interests in Afghanistan, Islamabad had a military government in place to facilitate the Americans. And as if Pakistani history was following a scripted pattern, every time Americans have completed their job or nearing completion of their job in Afghanistan, the military government in Islamabad was pushed aside to be replaced by a civilian setup—a quasi-democratic government replaced the military governments, which, both in post-Zia and post-Musharraf periods were in a state of war with rival political forces. In the post-Zia period, the political tensions between Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto reached monumental heights. Whereas in the post-Musharraf period, the tussle between PMLN and PTI became exemplary.

Both in Post-Zia and Post-Musharraf periods economic situations took a nosedive under the weak and inapt political governments. This provided the opportunity for pro-military intellectuals in Pakistani society to criticize the civilian



governments for their lack of experience and lack of efforts to run the economy at the optimal level. Corruption of political elites became the buzzword for anti-democracy slogan mongers. In short, all the blame for the ruined economy was put on the doors of civilian governments. The follies committed by military governments in economic policy-making were simply ignored. Military governments — we can certainly claim this with the help of hindsight — were living in some kind of a bubble; they simply ignored the fact that the kind of military adventurism they were engaging in required the financial and other resources that could become the envy of even vast global empires. But they had access to the right kind of levers then; the American empire with its vast military and financial resources was backing them and Arabs Sheikhs were matching every dollar spent by Americans with a dollar of their own. Americans were providing state-of-the-art weapons systems—the toys for the boys of the Pakistani military. One staffer of an Arab Intelligence chief, in an interview with some Arab broadcasters, recently stated that they used to give dollars in huge sacks to Pakistanis during the Afghan war. Policymakers with this kind of supply of cash didn't have to worry about the economy.

What was the level of manufacturing capacity of the society and what would be the manufacturing capacity of let's say 20 years from then? What kind of human capital our educational institutions were producing and what would be our human capital in the future? Our ruling classes and elites were made accustomed to imported luxury items and this had a trickle-down effect. Now our middle classes are also addicted to foreign luxury items. Life without an imported air conditioning system and an imported luxury vehicle is impossible not only for the elite, but it is also impossible for a middle-class family in our society. Objectives to enhance the manufacturing capacity of our society or to increase the capacity of our educational institutions to add human capital to our economy can go straight to hell.

All this came to us as a package deal: The military dictators and later obviously the civilian rulers as well— as they failed to break free from this security and adventurist paradigm of the state—needed the support of dominant classes and groups for their adventurous security policies, which they were pursuing in partnership with Washington and the western world. So they appeased them with comfort and luxury. These policies on the one hand gave birth to

a monster in the shape of religious militancy and on the other hand, consolidated the hold of parasitical groups and classes, which were addicted to luxury, rent-seeking, crony capitalists, and crony feudal status within the economy—a great and real obstacle in the way of economic expansion and growth.

Our existing political leaders coming out of PMLN and PTI—the state cronies (yes I label them with this name), don't seem to offer any solution or any vision for the enormity of our problems. Urban developmental goals of PMLN and anti-corruption and now independent foreign policy slogans of PTI, define our problems too narrow-mindedly. Both of them are suffering from strategic oblivion or this is how the informed observers in Islamabad describe their policies and attitudes.

Right from its very inception, the Pakistani state's finances were never in order and many experts even opined that given the extravagances and regional adventures of the Pakistani state, it was never a financially viable state. During the Cold War and War against Terror, the country's financial viability depended on the US and western generosity. Pakistan's new sponsors have so far failed to be as generous. Even American generosity lasted till the military governments of Zia and Musharraf continued to serve their strategic interests in Afghanistan.

A Pakistani commentator, Murad Ali while writing in the 2009 issue of Pakistan Journal of Social Science under the title, "US Foreign Aid to Pakistan and Democracy: An Overview" clearly showed that US economic and military assistance to Pakistan gradually dwindled as civilian government replaced military governments in Post-Zia and Post-Musharraf period. "{The above commentary indicates that military dictators} have received far more aid from the US than democratic governments in Pakistan. According to Haqqani (2005), US aid to Pakistan amounted to \$382.9 million for each year of military dictatorship in comparison to only \$178.9 million per annum for each year under civilian democratic leadership. This is borne out evidently by an analysis of the aid data from USAID"

"Over the last more than 50 years, the US

has given Pakistan a total of \$33.606 billion in economic and \$8.932 billion in military assistance. During the military regimes, comprising 32 years in all, the US has given Pakistan an aggregate of \$24.993 billion in economic assistance and \$6.646 billion in military aid. During the democratic regimes, aid under these categories amounted to \$8.612 billion and \$2.286 billion respectively" reads Murad Ali's paper.

"Similarly, based on per capita, the US has provided Pakistan \$15.71 per capita per year during military rule compared with \$6.83 during civilian rule...In terms of annual averages, during military regimes, the US has provided Pakistan \$781.02 million per year in economic aid and \$207.69 million per year in military aid. In comparison, democratic regimes have been provided."



Pakistan was receiving a huge amount of economic aid from the United States besides sufficient military assistance during Ayub Khan's military government period. Not only did the US provide ample aid to Pakistan during Ayub's era but there were also about 8,000 American experts working in different fields in the country. Pakistan continued to receive substantial economic and military assistance during Yahya Khan's short-lived regime. However, in the following civilian rule of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, economic aid from the US declined and military assistance remained almost negligible. "After the 1977 general elections in the country, however, there were countrywide protests against Bhutto's alleged rigging of the poll. The situation culminated in a military coup, led by General Zia ul Haq, in July 1977. American aid to Pakistan had already started

declining due to Bhutto's secret pursuit of nuclear technology during the concluding year of his regime."

"General Zia not only continued the pursuit of nuclear arms, but he also trampled over democracy besides it was widely thought that the coup was endorsed by the US to win the support of the pro-West military in the Cold War (Aziz, 2008). Experts assert that general elections in the country were a few months away and it was perceived that the newly elected government would alter its policy of Cold War involvement. The US support for the military ruler not only prolonged his illegitimate regime but also played a vital role in further strengthening his grip on power. It is evident that Pakistan was receiving a huge amount of economic aid from the United States besides sufficient military assistance during most of this period".

After Zia was killed in a plane crash and his military government was replaced by a civilian setup under Benazir Bhutto, American assistance again dwindled to almost nothing, "International Development (USAID) offices in the world, employing more than 1,000 staff around the country, shrank to almost nothing virtually overnight". Indeed, US-Pakistan bilateral relations went to the level of indifference and covert hostility in the post-Cold War period. After the end of the Cold War, during democratic regimes in Pakistan between 1988 and 1999, the US provided negligible economic aid to Pakistan and almost no military assistance. US economic aid fell from well above \$500 million a year to less than \$100 million a year".

Another crisis in Afghanistan and another military government in Islamabad was followed by the resumption of US military and economic assistance to Pakistan, "The US needed the support of General Musharraf to invade Afghanistan and dismantle the Taliban regime, which was harboring Al Qaeda, the alleged perpetrator of the 9/11 attacks. The Chief of the Army Staff and President of Pakistan assured America of the full support of the Pakistani government and army, and thus Pakistan joined the US-led 'war on terror'. Once again, the US ignored the lack of democracy and human rights issues in Pakistan: all sanctions were lifted and enhanced official aid resumed".

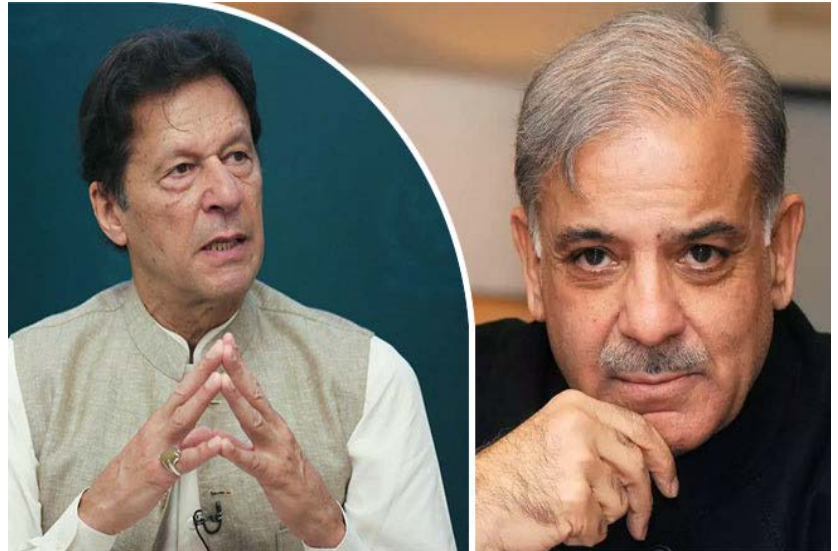
Centre-provinces row to draw more troubles

Tit-for-tat exchange of threats between PDM and PTI leaders reflects increased disquiet and polarization among bureaucracy

By Dr. Syed Rifaat Hussain

Ever since PTI's ouster from power through a 'no confidence move' last April and its replacement by PDM at the Centre, tensions have been mounting between these sworn political rivals. PTI has been harping on the theme of its removal from power through an alleged American-backed conspiracy--realized by bringing PDM to power. On its part, PDM argues its mission is to rescue the country from a disastrous economic situation inherited from PTI; and that is why the unity government has taken unpopular decisions like increase in petroleum prices and imposing ban on import of luxury items.

Headed by Shehbaz Sharif who is accused of corruption worth billions of dollars during his last stints as chief minister of the Punjab province, the PDM government so far has failed to take significant economic steps for the relief of the people. Inflation is rising in the country while prices of different food items like edible oil, wheat, rice, lintels and sugar have risen sharply during the last five months of the current government.



Poor economic situation has gone worst due to devastating monsoon rains and flash floods, impacting large parts of Sindh, KPK, Balochistan and South Punjab. According to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) data released in mid-August, large chunks of agricultural lands, orchards, infrastructure and water reservoirs have been badly damaged. The calamity engulfed over-one

thousand people while hundreds have gone missing. Atop this dismal backdrop, prevailing tension between centre and provinces is alarming.

In Punjab, PTI and its ally PML (Q) have regained control after a brief interlude when Hamza Shahbaz of the PML (N) became the chief minister during last week of May, this year. Pervez Elahi, the PML (Q) leader, replaced Hamza on July 27, following a ruling by a special bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Umar Atta Bandial.

The court in its ruling said the Punjab Assembly's deputy speaker's understanding and implementation of the court's judgment and provisions of Article 63A(1)(b), was "patently incorrect and erroneous thus could not be sustained;" and that the "governance of Punjab in accordance with the constitution was subverted whereby the fundamental rights of the people have been seriously infringed."

The court declared deputy speaker's ruling as "void, without lawful authority and of no legal effect". It also ordered chief secretary Punjab to immediately issue notification declaring Pervez Elahi as duly elected chief minister of the province. The apex court ordered that all advisers and





assistants appointed by Hamzah Shehbaz would immediately cease to hold office.

In the wake of court's judgement, PTI and Q League stalwarts, workers and supporters took to streets across Pakistan in jubilation, hailing the SC decision as "big win" for Imran Khan and Pervez Elahi. Following his induction as CM Punjab, Pervez Elahi announced his full support to Imran Khan in addition to withdrawing all cases registered against PTI provincial leaders by Hamza Shahbaz. While assuming his office, Pervez Elahi also ordered large scale transfers and posting of police officers and bureaucrats in the province, thus consolidating PTI's hold over power corridors of the province.

Media reports suggested the PML-N Punjab leaders wouldn't dare enter their province for fear of arrest and victimization in the current political situation. The same was the feeling of the PTI leaders, who wanted to visit Islamabad. Pervez Elahi extended important portfolios like interior and IT to known PTI sympathizers. His Interior Minister Hashim Raza offered Imran Khan protection by Punjab police, at his Bani Gala residence, in Islamabad.

The centre-Punjab row took an alarming turn when Shahbaz Gill, Imran Khan's chief of staff, was arrested by Islamabad police following his alleged anti-military remarks in a live television show. Gill had stated that "PTI enjoyed overwhelming support among junior army ranks." Charges framed against Gill included sedition and provoking the masses against state institutions.

Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi where Gill was kept as prisoner is controlled by Punjab and PTI wanted him to be transferred to a local hospital in the city for medical care, while the capital police wanted his custodial control. This led to a stand off between the Punjab and Islamabad police and dispatch of Rangers and FC forces to Adiala by the centre. The situation came to normal only when jail authorities finally handed over Gill to the capital police.

Shahbaz Gill's remarks were found consistent with PTI's stance that "neutrals lacked respect among ranks and files of the military as an institution." Imran Khan has

been openly accusing Pakistan Army's top brass of deliberately imposing "an imported regime of corrupt politicians" on the country. Treatment meted out to Shahbaz Gill is a lesson for those willing to become pawns in power struggle between PTI and PDM.

Coupled with a tit-for-tat exchange of threats, the rising tug-of-war between PDM and PTI is causing alarming sense of disquiet among the country's bureaucracy and portends nothing but more troubles. Imran Khan's latest threats against the IG, DIG

elections. To pursue this objective, Imran Khan is using his party's control over KPK, Azad Kashmir and GB in addition to his pertinent hold in Punjab. Hemmed in by legal and administrative actions by the centre with looming prospect of disqualification in foreign prohibited funding case, PTI can create turmoil to the extent that centre would have no choice to deal with, except going for early elections. PTI's Fawad Chaudhary has already given PDM September 10 as deadline either to opt for elections or face public protests and reprisals.



and deputy session judge have led to registration of contempt of court case against him.

Renowned columnist Dr. Maleeha Lodhi says: "confrontation between the coalition government and Imran Khan has assumed an ominous shape after PTI secured control of Punjab. The centre and the provincial government are now locked in a standoff and tit-for-tat actions that are creating more political disarray. Tussle between the two over custody of Shahbaz Gill is a case in point. As are the arrest orders issued by the Punjab government and police raids on the homes of PML-N leaders, who then fled the province."

Another aspect of the current political scenario is PTI's earnest demand for early general

elections. It is logical to believe that having won all by-elections including 245 in Karachi, PTI sees its political graph in an upwards trajectory. It hopes early elections could give it an ideal victory by obtaining absolute majority. It is a risky strategy as it rests on the dubious assumption of "neutrals" remaining truly "neutral".

Of course, Pakistan military will step-in if country falls into political chaos and turmoil. To avoid such a situation, a reasonable discourse for all political stakeholders would be to agree on a 'grand bargain'. For this bargain to happen, current politics of confrontation and mind set of zero-sum game has to give way to that of acceptance and accommodation.



Playing with Fire

Though Imran Khan is gaining popularity day by day, at the same time, he is also heading towards a situation that could ruin his political future

By Noor Aftab



Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan is moving ahead with his narrative and showing no flexibility towards a coalition government that is still fragile and trying to strengthen its position by adopting desperate measures. He has again reiterated his words in a public meeting in Haripur that when he makes a call, people from all provinces will come to Islamabad and make an end to the 'imported regime.' Though Imran Khan is gaining popularity day by day, at the same time, he is also heading towards a situation that could ruin his political future. The sword of arrest and disqualification is constantly hanging over his head, and if cases are treated the same way as in the case of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, then, according to legal experts, he will find no way to avoid disqualification from the courts.

The coalition government is publicly committed to the completion of its term in office next summer. However, it can quickly collapse if any one of the parties in the coalition opts to withdraw its support. The government officials are repeating their statements time and again, stating that the

government will complete its tenure. They say it is difficult to clean up the mess created by three and a half years of the Imran Khan-led government in one year and that the election will be conducted as per schedule. In the five years thereafter, we will clean up the entire mess created by PTI and will defeat its false narrative. The coalition government fell apart after a shocking loss in by-elections in the Punjab province, but it still says it has the right to finish its term.

At first, political analysts thought that the government led by Shehbaz didn't have the time or money to end the long-lasting economic crisis and help the people in any meaningful way.

Many people are asking what the point was of removing Imran Khan from power instead of letting him fall under the weight of his own economic problems, which were mostly his fault.

Khurram Dastgir Khan once said that former Prime Minister Imran Khan was getting ready to use the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the courts to get senior opposition politicians banned from

politics for life. This was part of a biggest plan to stay in power for the next fifteen years.

The PML-N is in charge of the federal government, but it has never been in charge of any of the provinces. It relies heavily on coalition partners to keep its three-seat majority in the national assembly.

The coalition government faced a major setback in July when its candidates lost by-polls in 20 constituencies in the country's heartland province of Punjab. The PML-N coalition tried to keep control of the provincial government by making moves in the provincial assembly. But on July 26, the Supreme Court overturned a previous decision and said that Chaudhry Pervaiz Ellahi should be elected as the new chief minister.

After losing 16 of Punjab's 20 seats in by-elections and finally the position of Punjab's Chief Minister, the coalition government decided to accept the resignations of PTI lawmakers that had been waiting since April 11.

Between the PTI's call for early elections and the government's plan to finish the rest of the constitutional term until August 2023, elections for the vacant seats will not only be a battle between the ruling alliance and the PTI, but also a vote on how popular they are with the general public.

The coalition government has a thin majority in the national assembly and it fears that when any of the small coalition parties decides to part ways with the ruling coalition, it will collapse immediately. So the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) has formed a strategy to phase-wise accept resignations of the PTI lawmakers and hold by-polls to win as many seats as possible, which will increase the numerical strength of the ruling alliance in the national assembly. In other words, PDM wants to lower its dependence on the small parties and strengthen its position to bring political stability to the country.



But some quarters are raising questions about whether the ruling alliance will be able to grab seats in the upcoming by-polls because the PTI chairman is contesting in almost all the constituencies. Rising prices, out-of-control inflation, and more political unpredictability could help the PTI, which could win these by-elections by a huge margin.

The nine constituencies where by-elections will be held on Sept 25 are NA-22 Mardan, NA-24 Charsadda, NA-31 Peshawar, NA-45 Kurram, NA-108 Faisalabad, NA-118 Nankana Sahib, NA-237 Malir, NA-239 Korangi Karachi, and NA-246 Karachi South.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) report on the foreign funding case did not seem to hurt Imran Khan's popularity, but he is still at risk of being disqualified on technical grounds.

Many analysts believe that the powerful are dissatisfied with the prospect of his return to power. They maintain that the European Union (EU) is Pakistan's largest trading partner and a source of much-needed assistance for a faltering economy, particularly through the provision of GSP+ status. Imran Khan's dislike of the EU came at a time when the military high command was trying to ease tensions with EU institutions, including through a visit by the Army Chief to Brussels in mid-February. This was because the EU and Pakistan had different ideas about how to deal with Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

The differences between Imran Khan and the establishment grew wider when he said the high command had at the 31st March National Security Council meeting backed his claims that the opposition was conniving with the United States to remove him. In reality, all that came out of the meeting was a letter from the foreign ministry to the top U.S. diplomat in Islamabad. The letter was critical of Washington's "blatant interference" in Pakistan's internal affairs, but it did not agree with Khan's claim that the U.S. was trying to get rid of his government.

Now many "sympathizers" of Imran Khan—both from his party and outside—are trying to restore fractured relations between him and the establish-

ment. But insiders claim that Imran Khan is not ready to backtrack from his demand for fresh elections because he thinks that he has the best chance to sweep general elections due to his rising popularity among the masses. Imran Khan believes that the government and establishment want to use delay tactics just to let his popularity graph die down with the passage of time.

But it begs the question: if Imran Khan is so certain of victory in general elections, why isn't the PTI dissolving assemblies in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtoonkhawa? In this way, the PTI can win a huge majority and establish its firm grip even in the biggest province of Pakistan. So the strong government in the Punjab province can also give extra benefits to the PTI in the next general elections.



Given the looming political crisis, the Shehbaz-led coalition government needs to act with realism, sagacity, and unity of purpose to have any chance of success in resolving the serious problems confronting the country. The fall of Imran Khan's government carries important lessons for his successors. The main factors which caused his ouster from power were his arrogance and his refusal to seek sane advice on the handling of national affairs. His policies didn't work to improve the economy, there was a lot of inflation, unemployment, and poverty, and he was mean to his political opponents. All of these

things made it hard for the country to agree on important issues.

Interestingly, Imran Khan is shifting the burden of his failures to powerful quarters and repeatedly saying that he was not able to fully exercise his executive powers due to the 'undue' intervention of certain forces. Shahryar Afridi, a vocal PTI leader who strongly defended the arrest of Rana Sanaullah in the drugs case, is also now blaming someone else for registering a case against him. He is now saying that he had no knowledge about the details of this case and was also not involved in his arrest.

The coalition government should reach out to the opposition with an olive branch to start a healing and reconciliation process. They should also try hard to have a deep

conversation with the PTI about important national issues.

However, it appears that Imran Khan will never be willing to engage in any political dialogue unless he is assured of early elections. His party members are also openly stating that the PTI chairman is ready for any kind of situation. According to them, if the government gives a date for fresh elections, then the political process will move forward smoothly; otherwise, the PTI workers from Punjab, KP, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan will march towards Islamabad and topple the coalition government.



The policy of Offensive Defence

"I would be ousted if dangerous," Khan kept on saying

By Sarfraz Raja



"Attack is the best defense." That's what he used to tell his players as captain of the team in his cricketing era, and later in his political career, he kept on following the same strategy. Soon after his party emerged as a street power in an unexpectedly successful show at Minar e Pakistan Ground, Lahore, in October 2011, Imran Khan played aggressively in the political arena, taking advantage of his enthusiastic and diehard public support.

With only a few dozens of seats in the National Assembly, he became the sole challenger to the Nawaz Sharif government formed following the May 2013 elections. His three-month sit-in in D.C., the capital city, was not a success against his demands, but he captured media screens and public minds and emerged as the biggest pressure group of recent times with popular street support.

After a victory in the 2018 elections, he formed his government in the centre and all other provinces except Sindh but his strategy to be aggressive remains the same. In his first speech in parliament after being elected as leader of the house in the National Assembly, he challenged his political rivals and kept on challenging them in almost every speech and address later in his three and a half years of rule; despite an unsatisfactory performance in government and

losing popularity, he didn't let his opponents challenge him, keeping all of them on their toes with his aggressive stance against them.

The danger of being dangerous

I would be dangerous if ousted. That's what he claimed or threatened when his power seat was sinking. To whom he was conveying this message was a question, but his message was loud and clear and to all power circles that he would not surrender if removed, and later he proved it. After three

and a half years in power, he was at the bottom of his popularity due to inflation, increases in petroleum prices, the dollar rate, and other public issues.

He was not ready to accept that he could be removed from power, but a successful no-confidence motion in parliament forced him to swallow that bitter pill. Imran Khan immediately decided and announced countrywide gatherings, which no doubt proved a successful move.

He successfully made the impression that the people of Pakistan were buying his narrative, which he built after his removal, about a foreign conspiracy against his government, and everyone began sympathising with him, forgetting his performance as a government. Public participation in his jalsas put the new allied government on the defensive. But in a rather overconfident move, he announced a long march on the 25th of May, which proved a disappointing show and caused a big blow to the political pressure he had built in the previous few weeks.

In an off-the-record conversation, PTI leaders still call this a hasty decision made without much preparation or homework, which was a setback for their movement. But in an upset and surprise victory in by-elections of 20 provincial assembly seats





in Punjab, their morale again rocketed sky high and, with the establishment of government in the largest province of Punjab, they grabbed a much more confident position by governing two thirds of the country. But still, Imran Khan kept on building pressure on political opponents in power, not letting them breathe easily.

sources say that his ally and chief minister of Punjab, Ch Pervez Elahi, and some of his senior party leaders convinced him to keep things moving after having power in most parts of the country, and that's how they could give a tough time to their political opponents ruling in the centre. Despite softening his stance on immediate

As it looks like PTI is confused about whether they should participate in bye elections for these seats or not, this decision was a surprise and he put all his opponents on the defensive again. But aggression does not always work. Aggressive policies can put you on the back foot sometimes, too. You could hit a sixer and then lose your wicket the next ball. Something similar to that happened with Imran Khan. It seems he opened many fronts at the same time with his policy of attack, encouraged after success. He enjoyed adopting this policy.

After a telephone conversation on a private TV channel, Imran Khan's chief of staff, Shehbaz Gill, was booked for incitement and instigating institutional ranks. A reaction from Imran Khan provided a loss ball to the government in the centre they were waiting for to hit a required boundary. The Federal government filed a case against him under the anti-terrorism act for threatening top officials of Islamabad police and a lady session judge who gave remand to Shehbaz Gill.

Even the Islamabad high court also took a suo motu against his speech during a rally in Islamabad to show solidarity with his chief of staff. Independent experts think that the PTI leader is in trouble this time, and that his aggressive policy, which has helped him in the past by putting his opponents on the defensive, has now started to cause him problems.



Softness is in demand

His early demand was for immediate, fair, and free elections.

He was putting all his efforts to pressurise the government to call immediate elections, but there was some confusion among his demands, as he also announced not to participate in elections under the current election commission of Pakistan. At the same time, his party demanded the demarcation of constituencies according to the new census, and all these demands couldn't be met simultaneously. But after establishing a government in Punjab, although his demand for new elections remains, it is not as strong as it was earlier. In response to his demand for new elections, the PMLN and other of his opponents question how they can ask for the dissolution of the national assembly when they have power in two major provinces.

If they are serious about their demand, they should first dissolve the assemblies that they control in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It also seemed that Imran Khan accepted the reality that immediate elections couldn't be possible, and some

elections, he is still putting pressure on the Shehbaz-led allied government, which has now become his most powerful weapon.

What he achieved and what he lost

No doubt, with his aggressive attitude against the current allied government and a narrative of foreign conspiracy for regime change, he got his popularity back on track, which was touching its lowest when he was in power. He won an unexpected victory in by-elections for 15 Punjab Assembly seats that were actually vacant due to the disqualification of his dissidents, and he also regained the National Assembly seat from Karachi vacated by the death of PTI MNA and renowned TV personality Amir Liaqat Hussain.

He gave a tough time to government allies by announcing he would participate in 9 National Assembly seats in different parts of the country called vacant by the ECP after the approval of 11 PTI MNAs' resignations, who were among 131 members of the party who resigned after the success of the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan in the national assembly.



These problems are serious, as Imran Khan is also under pressure because of an election commission decision on the PTI foreign funding case and a false statement he made about the party to the election commission.

Historical and Cultural Heritage sites in Pakistan

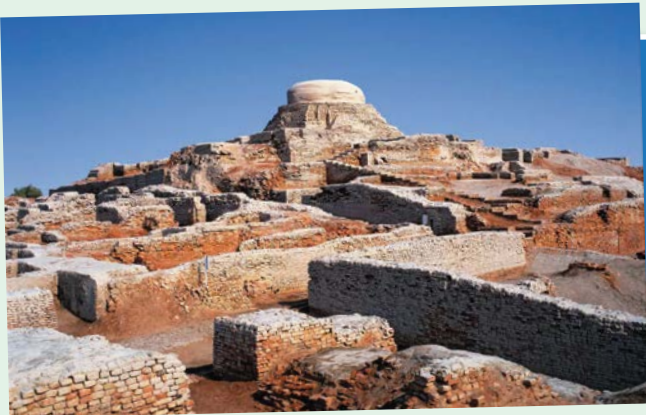
Pakistan is an area with a rich history and a diversity of cultures. In Pakistan, there are many historical sites that should be visited by everyone.

Pakistan has incredible cultural, natural, and archaeological assets.

Despite the fact that there are many cultural sites to visit. The most well-known ones are:

Rohtas Fort

Beautiful Muslim architecture in the form of the well-known Rohtas Fort may be found close to the city of Jhelum in the Pakistani province of Punjab. This magnificent castle was constructed between the years 1541 and 1548 by Farid Khan, a great Afghan Pashtun known as Sher Shah Suri. The fort was built using a Muslim architectural design with elements of Persian and Turkish design. Yet the fort continues to attract millions of tourists. The Rohtas Fort was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1997 and declared to be the "Best Example of Muslim Military Architecture in South and Central Asia." Additionally, this fort is among the biggest in the world and is reportedly the biggest in Pakistan.



Mohenjo-Daro

A list of historical sites in Pakistan wouldn't be complete without Mohenjo-Daro, one of the largest cities of the Indus Valley Civilization. According to historians, Mohenjo-Daro's size (over 300 hectares) and the existence of public buildings seem to represent a high level of social organisation.

Ganesh is an ancient historical Silk Route settlement

The Hunza Valley, which extends over Pakistan's northern regions, has a lot to offer tourists. Ganesh is a historic village in Pakistan's Gilgit Baltistan's Hunza valley, close to Karimabad. The village was the first historical settlement along the ancient Silk Road. Ganesh Village is an approximately 1,000-year-old town where many people still live. The Silk Road settlement's ancient streets can be visited. Also, witness the Ganesh culture in Pakistan's Hunza valley as well.



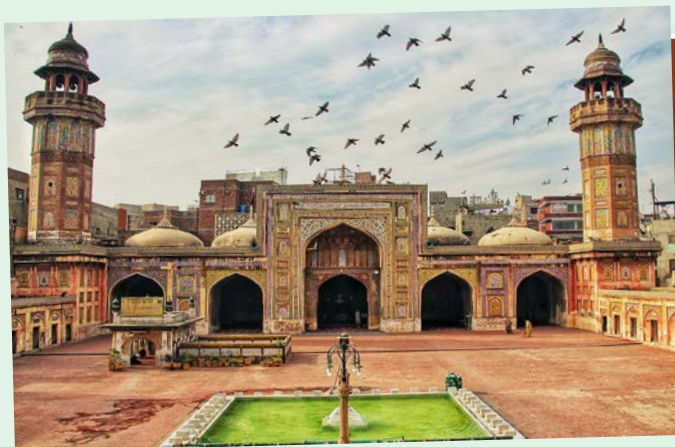


Katasraj Temples

The Katasraj Temples, which are close to the Punjabi village of Dulmial, are estimated to date to the early seventh century CE. A lake that is even said to have magical powers is surrounded by temples. They are also featured in the well-known Hindu epic Mahabharata, and it is well-known that Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, frequently visited the site in more recent centuries. The temples are located in Katas, which is about 2 hours from Islamabad and 3 hours from Lahore.

Lahore Fort

The Lahore Fort is located in the Walled City of famous historical Lahore. The beautiful and well-known Shalimar Gardens are situated next to the Lahore Fort. These gardens were built during the time of King Shah Jahan. These gardens, which covered an area of around 16 hectares, are a well-known example of Mughal gardens and are based on designs from the Islamic and Persian styles.



Wazir Khan Mosque

Lahore has so many amazing historical tidbits that it could easily have its own list. But when it comes to this one, the stunning Wazir Khan Mosque must be mentioned. Although there are obvious similarities between the Wazir Khan mosque's design and that of the Begum Shahi, the Wazir Khan is noticeably bigger and more colorful. You could really spend hours admiring it all.

Kot Diji

Forts are widespread in Pakistan, as you may have noticed by now! But everyone has a distinctive history and beauty of their own, which brings us to the town of Kot Diji. While the Kot Diji Fort is not particularly old, what lies beneath it is, and it is situated on a hill in Kot Diji, Sindh. Kot Diji is a little more obscure than some of the other forts on this list, so fewer people visit it. Both the fort and the remains can be found about 24 kilometres south of the city of Khairpur.



Additionally, there is a lot more to discover and admire about cultural sites here. These are a few of the most notable historical and cultural sites in Pakistan. Some of the above are found in Pakistan's northern regions, surrounded by breath-taking scenery. Therefore, don't waste time and arrange a trip to see these places in person and capture them in your memories.



PTI-PML-Q conundrum

There are reports that Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi has diverted huge funds to his constituencies in and around Punjab

By Ahmad Waleed

During an informal chat with reporters, a senior official of the Punjab Police categorically stated that no action – suspension or removal from service – will be taken against the police personnel deputed to the May 25 protest march of the PTI in Lahore, as opposed to what Imran Khan has directed the provincial government to take punitive action against all those bureaucrats and policemen who were responsible for launching a crackdown on PTI leaders during the Azadi March. Imran Khan had warned the police officials that he would avenge the use of force.

The top cop of the Punjab police, however, says his officials just performed their duties on May 25 to stop the protesters from violating Section 144 imposed by the government. The police officers have either been moved or told to stay at the police lines until they are told otherwise.

Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi is under tremendous pressure from Imran Khan to replace the chief secretary immediately. But the CM is reluctant to fall in line, saying he has good relations with the top officer.

There are reports that Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi has diverted huge funds to his constituencies in and around Punjab, where he enjoys the strength of his vote bank in these respective areas. He has granted the status of division to Gujrat, besides making Wazirabad tehsil a district to win the favour of his voters. These very actions have irked the PTI leaders, who believe they are not being taken into confidence regarding decisions being made by the chief minister.

The Islamabad police registered a case against Imran Khan on terror charges, which prompted Imran Khan to press Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi to go for a tit-for-tat action against the PML-N leaders. This time, the Punjab CM did what the PTI leader told him to do, and Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah was charged with terrorism in Gujrat, which is where the Chaudhrys are from. In the meantime, police have already issued arrest warrants for 12 top PML-N leaders in a case related to a commotion in the Punjab Assembly during the election of the chief minister in April.

The PTI would now like to see the Punjab and KP governments take an aggressive line drawn by Imran Khan as things get flared up after the cases against the PTI chief. It would want both governments to respond fiercely to the actions being taken by the federal government, which has been a bit flexible for a few months. To keep Imran Khan from being arrested, both provincial governments have been told to file cases of terrorism and sedition against their biggest rivals, the PML-N.

Moonis Elahi has given his full support to Imran Khan, the leader of the PTI. He hasn't been shy about saying that Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah will be arrested "very soon." It is also expected that dozens of cases in different districts of Punjab will be registered against all the major leaders of the PML-N if the federal government tries to arrest Imran Khan.



While the partners in the Punjab government – PTI and PML-Q – have a bittersweet relationship in the largest province of Pakistan, the new political scenario in the country suggests that Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi has no choice but to stand by PTI chief Imran Khan, at least for now. It has led the Punjab chief minister to ensure foolproof security for Imran Khan in case an attempt is made to arrest him. On the other hand, the Punjab government has withdrawn security from the Sharif family, except Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who will continue to enjoy the security entitled to his declared residences. The Punjab government has also promised to keep going with projects and ideas started by the government of former CM Usman Buzdar, such as Sehat Card.

As the political confrontation flares up in Islamabad after the federal government decides to go hard on the PTI leadership, the governments of KP and Punjab have resolved to do whatever they can to counter the federal government's moves. While the country faces the worst economic meltdown and the federal government is nearing an agreement with the IMF to strike a deal to save Pakistan from going bankrupt, the KP government has written a letter that it may not be able to meet the conditions of the IMF as agreed upon earlier. Moreover, Chaudhry Fawad has warned that the federal government will fail to reach an agreement with the IMF if the KP and Punjab governments withdraw their support. "Our only condition is to hold elections immediately," Fawad Chaudhry told a private news channel.

Political hostilities are at their peak as Pakistan faces one of history's worst floods that devastated most parts of Balochistan besides causing severe damage to other three provinces of the country. Trying to get all the political parties to focus on the floods could help stop these political fights so that the politicians can work on more important problems facing the country.

Defence Day: The chronicles of courage

On September 6th, India's attack against Lahore was held and beaten back with heavy losses to the attackers

By Ali Basit

Each year, September 6th is celebrated to pay homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives while defending the country during the 1965-war. On this memorable day, the people of Pakistan stood united as one solid edifice to meet the onslaught of an enemy that chose the cover of darkness to achieve its heinous ends of occupying our motherland. It is important to talk about the accomplishments so that the current generation is also aware of what happened in the past and doesn't believe the lies of people who don't like Pakistan. The coordinated action of the Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force from Lahore, Karachi, Runn of Kutch to Chamb Jorian, had made all sectors the graveyard of ruined dreams of Indian leadership and army commanders who had dreamt of celebrating victory in Lahore. Pakistan, which has a small army and not a lot of money, was able to fight back against the enemy on all fronts, including the air, land, and sea.

On September 6th, India's attack against Lahore was held and beaten back with heavy losses to the attackers. The Pakistan Army units defending on the ground, supported by the Pakistan Air Force, were able to blunt the Indian offensive and roll it back. Two days later, on September 8th, India launched its main attack against Sialkot using its armoured division and other strike formations. What ensued has been described as the largest tank battle since the Second World War. It was a hard and bitter struggle fought over many days and nights, resulting in casualties on both sides. In the end, the main Indian attack was held and severely mauled. Its armoured division was forced to withdraw owing to very high losses in men and materials. Pakistan launched its own counter-attack and captured the Indian areas of Khem Karan and beyond. This posed a serious threat to the rear of Indian troops facing Lahore. On September 6th and 7th, the Pakistan Air Force showed how strong it was by attacking continuously from the air from Pathankot to Agra. For the loss of



only six planes, the PAF had destroyed 50 enemy planes on the ground and in the air and damaged eight more, not including the planes that were crippled by the PAF night bombing.

On the naval front, despite having fewer ships than the Indian Navy, the Pakistan Navy (PN) conducted a number of operations aimed at creating strategic deterrence and responding appropriately to the Indian Navy. PN's skills made sure that Pakistani waters and sea lanes stayed open so that ships could continue to come to Pakistani ports. The Pakistan Navy had played a role by successfully launching "Operation Dwarka," destroying the Indian radar system that was guiding the Indian Air Force to launch attacks against Pakistan. The core objective of Dwarka was multi-fold in effect as it was not only aimed at the destruction of the radar but to provoke Indian warships stationed at erstwhile Bombay (now Mumbai) port to come to the Arabian Sea where Pakistani submarine "Ghazi" was prowling and waiting to engage enemy ships, namely INS Vikrant and INS Mysore, to dock out and get destroyed. This manoeuvre had adversely affected the Indian Navy's operational plans. On September 8, Operation Dwarka was started, and it only took four minutes to bombard the targets that had been chosen.

Having transcendence in operational preparedness, the Pakistan Navy is no less adept at meeting domestic obligations. The recent historic monsoon rains and flooding in Pakistan have

affected more than 30 million people and killed more than 900 people, according to the Minister for Climate Change, Sherry Rehman. In this time of need, the Pakistan Navy has started a large-scale humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operation in the remote rural areas of Sindh that have been hit hard by recent flooding.

Pakistan Navy rescue teams have rescued locals stranded inside flooded homes and shifted them to safer locations. The Pakistan Navy is stepping up rescue operations in different areas while establishing free medical camps to provide first aid to the locals. Dedicated teams of doctors and paramedical staff are also providing treatment and free medicine to the aggrieved populace in these areas. Also, Pakistan Navy troops have given people in the affected areas ration bags, fresh drinking water, and household items.

This commitment reaffirms Pakistan's Navy's resolve to defend the country from any traditional or non-traditional threats that it faces. To sum up, this Defence Day is a day to pledge that the Pakistani nation will always remember the sacrifices of its Armed Forces by honouring the martyrs while acknowledging their courage and fighting spirit. This day also reminds us that we should not forget the flood-affected people and must stand in solidarity with them. The whole country should pray for Pakistan's safety and for God to give us the strength, courage, and resolve to protect and defend at all costs our motherland's freedom and honor.

Future's Past: Wheat and Prosperity in Pakistan

By Kazim Saeed

Pakistan's path to wheat glory is simple: the black market needs to give way to the open market and also let good seed, machinery, and industry in. And it does not require the government to lead from the front this time — just to get out of the way, and lead from behind. But this quantum of change requires real policy courage. Political rhetoric and criminal investigations do not kill economic mafias. Competition kills economic mafias.

The myriad Pakistani breads — roti, naan, paratha, and the rest — all come from wheat. And wheat tells the story of Pakistan's economy over the decades: from flight to injury to stagnation — and prospect.

Wheat is Pakistan's staple food. So, whether wheat is a suitably profitable crop or not, Pakistan's farmers cannot quite resist growing it; and it is grown on 80 per cent of the country's farms in the winter. Pakistan's next biggest crop barely produces a third of the volume of wheat. The irony is that, on the 75th anniversary of its independence, Pakistan is short of wheat — with farmers dealt a tough hand each season, and consumers often victim to bald-faced 'black marketing'. This is the illegal economy selling products at higher price, often by creating a false shortage by hoarding, which creates a heightened demand, and then selling it at a higher price in violation of all established regulations.

Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah was quick to grasp the practice of 'black marketing'. His speech of 11 August 1947 is celebrated more for his staunch endorsement of the freedom of religion. But the speech is equally important for his views on another feature of the Pakistani society about to be born: black marketing. He called black-marketing a curse, a colossal crime against society 'when we constantly face shortage of food', a crime fit to be very severely punished.

The constant shortage of food was defeated by science and brave policy decisions early in Pakistan's life. The 1960s saw the advent of modern wheat seed adapted to Pakistani conditions, the introduction of chemical



fertilizers, the spread of tractors, and the development of massive water infrastructure for agriculture. The international experts who worked in Pakistan tipped their hats to the ingenuity of that era's Pakistani experts and engineers. This was pulled off almost entirely under the government's umbrella.

Across the developing world, it was the era of government purchases of commodities from farmers. To get farmers to grow more and make Pakistan self-sufficient in wheat, a system of government purchases was also set up in the 1960s. The government started buying wheat from farmers at a pre-announced support price. And farmers responded with vigour. But you cannot eat wheat! Like oil, it is only useful after it is processed. So, a new breed of flour millers was spawned for whom the government allocation of wheat quotas became a ticket to assured revenues. All these elements came together perfectly to make wheat rise in Pakistan.

Between 1960 and 1980, Pakistan doubled its wheat output and reached self-sufficiency soon after. Wheat is grown in a hundred countries and Pakistan became a fixture in the top ten by sheer volume of production. It all worked — for a time — until politics caught up with it. The

surprise nationalisation of small-scale industries in July 1976 brought flour mills into government hands; with this, the wheat chain was dealt an injury it has not really recovered from — despite 'de-nationalisation' later on.

Wheat had lost its primacy on Pakistan's economic agenda, and became a 'political crop'. If politics is 'who gets what, when, and how', Pakistan's wheat chain is Exhibit A material.

This is where black marketing re-enters the story because the structure built to gain self-sufficiency never evolved. Wheat can disappear from stores today despite the heavy participation of government in purchasing wheat and selling it to flour-millers. The government groans under monumental borrowing from banks for their wheat purchases. The import and export of wheat is also by government fiat only. So, wheat players face no direct competition from the global market. They just smuggle wheat out of the country when the global price is higher than the domestic support price set by the government.

Even the jute bags issued by government to be given free to farmers, in which it ostensibly intends to procure wheat, are scarcely available to farmers without some favour



they have to promise to local grandees and middlemen. With no national goal to meet, the wheat 'support price' has largely become a tool of political patronage. Today, Pakistan has flour mills which barely run a shift but their wheat allocation from government is acquired, stored, and sold by the mill owners when prices are higher—a tidy profit purely based on the economics of rent.

Farmers are at the end of their wits by this practice. Governmental dysfunctionality means that support prices are often announced after farmers have made their sowing decisions for the winter crop. Even so, farmers typically get a much lower price than what the government announces. A whole culture thwarting fair play has set in with its own anti-hero: the *aarhti* or middleman.

For the middleman, the logic of commodity is usually even more powerful than the logic of money. A 'super *aarhti*' of the wheat trade in Lahore's Akbari Mandi (wholesale market) tells me that access to commodity is the reason he gives credit to those he supplies as well as to those he buys from. On days when the commodity is in short supply, he calls their credit in. And, in a cash-poor market, they quickly cough up the commodity. He believes that if he has a shop in the mandi and does not have commodity on any given day, he is a nobody. This is how a predominantly agricultural country with nearly 40 per cent of its population earning from agriculture has more than half its GDP coming from services. The middlemen are the service sector.

The national wheat yield per acre, after early flight followed by injury, rose by only 60 per cent between 1980 and 2000. It has been stagnant in the two decades since. Farmers do not have access to quality wheat seed. And the administrative structures of old weigh so heavily that farmers do not have reason to invest in the wheat crop anymore. There is little prospect of reducing rural poverty under this arrangement as the vast majority of Pakistanis earning from agriculture are doing menial tasks which are performed by machines in other developing countries. Pakistan's respected industrial houses want to remain miles away from wheat for fear of scandal associated with simply storing wheat.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's population has grown at a dizzying 2.4 per cent every year, and demand for wheat is now outstripping

domestic production. With Pakistan's population projected to rise fifty per cent by mid-century, the wheat output has nowhere to go but upward. But the government is forced to import wheat today. Decision-makers need to realise that wheat (literally) does not grow on trees. Tragically, as a leading wheat producer, Pakistan has cowered on the wrong side of two historic commodity booms in 2008 and 2021.

As the poet Rumi (paradoxically) says, the cure is in the ailment. The fastest avenues to economic growth for Pakistan today are in agriculture. But this growth will not be realised without jettisoning the wreckage of policies from half a century ago. Wheat yields have the potential to double. This can make Pakistan a major player on the global commodity market. And there is more: making *roti* and *naan* from Pakistan's breed of wheat is wasteful. Cookies can fetch six times more value from it if investment in the right industries is made.

Pakistan's path to wheat glory is simple: the black market needs to give way to the open market and also let good seed, machinery, and industry in. And it does not require the government to lead from the front this time — just to get out of the way, and lead from behind. But this quantum of change requires real policy courage. Political rhetoric and criminal investigations do not kill economic mafias. Competition kills economic mafias. The will of Pakistanis to compete — both within Pakistan and globally — shall deliver them prosperity. Happy 75th!



Pakistan foreign policy establishment turning into a pro-America factor?

Pakistani strategic elite views dependence on US as viable option for survival; Imran Khan's foolhardy campaign to end in a whimper Foreign policy implications of Gen. Bajwa's phone call to Wendy Sherman are clear; Pakistan's military and strategic elite does not support anti-Americanism

By Umer Farooq

Islamabad is often buzzed with the perception that it's the military establishment that sets the country's foreign policy direction; and that the process of setting foreign policy framework takes place behind closed doors in the Pakistani capital.

However, in April this year, some of these rules were changed when Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa made a policy statement at a public forum. Speaking at the Islamabad Security Dialogue, a forum organized by National Security Division, Gen. Bajwa spoke in-depth about Pakistan's foreign policy contours.

A day prior to Gen. Bajwa's speech, the then Prime Minister Imran Khan had accused Washington of 'conspiring' to remove him from office through a 'no confidence motion.' But Khan's accusations, in fact, had no bearing on Gen. Bajwa's speech, as the latter had dubbed the United States as a longstanding strategic partner.

By the time Gen. Bajwa spoke, it had become evident across Pakistan that Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan had lost majority in the National Assembly; and that he would be ousted from his office sooner than later, in order to be replaced by PML-N President Shahbaz Sharif.

Gen. Bajwa in his speech welcomed the idea of peace talks with India, hinting that Pakistan would never again become part of camp politics in the new emerging cold war like rivalry at the world level. This was the time when Imran Khan had begun his full-scale diatribe against alleged American interference in Pakistani politics.

So was Gen. Bajwa, through his speech, setting foreign policy agenda for the new government which ever one knew would be assuming power within a week?



Successive governments in Pakistan have mostly acted pliant towards military preferences vis-à-vis foreign policy during post-Musharraf era. Not a single government, during this period, has differed with military dictates on the foreign policy issue.

Apparently, in the last few days of the PTI government, differences between Gen. Bajwa and Imran Khan on foreign policy had become visible, especially when Gen. Bajwa contradicted Khan on relations with Washington in his April 1st speech.

Analysts believe Gen. Bajwa's April 1st speech had implications for Pakistan's domestic political scene. He termed Washington as a 'strategic partner' that was not well-received in the otherwise docile environment of our foreign policy making circles. "Look how cold are our relations with Washington and then note Gen. Bajwa describing Washington as our strategic partner," commented a retired Pakistani diplomat.

In such a situation, someone who hints at annoying the West, especially Washington and by default wants to land into a tight embrace with Russia and China, could find himself on the

wrong side of Pakistan's military establishment.

The outcome of Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa's phone call to US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman might not be clear at this stage but foreign policy implications of this 'diplomatic intervention' are rather clear. Pakistan's military and strategic elite does not support anti-Americanism or for that matter tilt toward Russia and China that is increasingly evident in Pakistan these days. That a new Cold War is emerging on the horizon is beyond doubt.

Pakistan's recent defense acquisitions from China and Russia to enhance its strategic reach in Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, where Pakistan and China recently held joint military exercises, reflects our country's tilt towards these two countries. The perception that Pakistan is about to join hands with the new anti-American block was further reinforced when Russia, China and Iran converged to strengthen the new Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Public perceptions were also fuelled by the Taliban's dramatic victory and collapse of the pro-US Ashraf Ghani government in Afghanistan in August 2021.

Therefore, Gen. Bajwa's phone call to Wendy Sherman late last month indicates two things: a) Gen. Bajwa's rapport with the US diplomats. Possibly Sherman and Bajwa have been discussing strategic issues of mutual interest for long; b) Pakistani military still depends on the US as a viable option in this time of extreme financial hardship.

Indication of this moderation on foreign policy front started to emerge sometime back with Gen. Bajwa in a speech attempting to project Pakistan as a 'regional connectivity hub' through which intraregional trade could take place. As Pakistan's foreign policy making processes are not transparent, it is not easy to tell what exactly caused Pakistani military and strategic elite to dispel the impression that it was joining the anti-US camp in the region — possibly an ill-advised anti-US campaign launched by former Prime Minister Imran Khan in the wake of his ouster from power? Or, maybe not, because whatever happened in his campaign hardly impacted foreign policy or its determinants in Pakistan.

A more plausible explanation could be that Pakistan's financial affairs are increasingly becoming doubtful. Military acquisitions from China and Russia and their political support on Afghanistan (even CPEC) have not done anything to make Pakistan a financially viable state. During the Cold



War and war against terror, the country's financial viability depended on the US and western generosity. Pakistan's new sponsors have so far failed to be as generous.

Gen. Bajwa's phone call made one thing clear: that fortunately, Pakistani strategic elite doesn't see the country's persistent financial crisis as an opportunity to double down on their anti-US streak, thus is likely to desist from adopting extremist positions on the foreign policy front. The Pakistani

strategic elite sees dependence on the US as a viable option for survival and don't see creation of some mythical anti-US block in the region as a solution to its problems.

Imran Khan's foolhardy campaign will end in a whimper. Financial crisis will not lead to prevalence of extremist views on foreign policy among the strategic elite. We can dream of normal relations with Beijing and Moscow on one hand and Washington on the other.



Are the government and TTP talks dead?

Although the Taliban are doubting their demands will be met, they want the negotiations to continue nevertheless

By Mahmood Jan Babar



In Afghanistan, there have been several rounds of talks and jirgas between the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and many important governmental and non-governmental Pakistani figures and groups, but despite the passage of several months, it seems that instead of moving forward, the matter has come to a standstill. But people who have a close eye on the issue say that both sides can't meet the demands placed in front of each other, so it would not be appropriate to expect any big and immediate breakthrough from these negotiations.

The news of talks between the TTP and the state of Pakistan came to the fore a few months ago, which gave rise to expectations that after the establishment of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, the problems between the TTP and the government could be resolved in Pakistan. There were several rounds of negotiations with the Tehreek-e-Taliban in Khost and later in Kabul, in which groups of military, political, tribal, and religious figures, including friends and relatives of the leadership of the Tehreek-e-Taliban in Afghanistan, went to negotiate with them from Pakistan. For the first time in these talks, the relatives and friends of Tehreek-e-Taliban were also included so that the leadership of TTP could somehow be convinced

to abandon the path of war, return to Pakistan, get ready to live their lives as unarmed people, and don't even use the name of their organization Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan anymore.

For the success of these negotiations, the news of Pakistan releasing many Taliban fighters also came to the fore and some demands were implemented from both sides, but there was one demand from TTP on which the matter came to a standstill. About the demand, the leadership of TTP itself and the important figures who went

from Pakistan to negotiate with them told this correspondent that this demand was related to merging the tribal areas of Pakistan back to FATA. The most discussed among the demands from the TTP side was to restore the old status of FATA, about which people who know now say that the Taliban have worried about two things the most, one is the areas where they want to live after returning from Afghanistan, and practice Sharia law, and the second is to restore the previous system of FATA in these areas so that the Taliban leadership can live there with complete security and freedom. However, these are the demands that have not yet been accepted.

Rasul Dawar, a senior journalist who closely monitored the talks from the beginning, says that there was no problem in these talks, the first round of which was held in the Afghan province of Khost, then the process was shifted to Kabul. After the first round, negotiators proceeded as Jirgas to Kabul to participate in talks with the leadership of the Taliban, and the points on which there was disagreement between the parties and those on which they agreed also came to light later, but these talks were still going on when the famous Taliban leader Umar Khalid Khorasani was targeted in Paktika. On this, some Taliban leaders suspected Pakistan's hand in his killing. The



other important point on which they are adamant is that they will in any case have 100% implementation of Sharia law in the areas where they will stay in Pakistan. Not agreeing to anything less. Therefore, I think that there is a possibility that as a result of these negotiations, some people will be released and some other demands of the parties will also be fulfilled, but no final result is expected. Along with this, operations of the forces are also going on in different areas, in which some people of TTP have been killed, on which they have issued a statement and warned the government to stop these operations. Therefore, it seems that the negotiations are not over, but there is a coldness in them and there is a fear that they will remain fruitless.



Former Secretary FATA Brigadier Mehmood Shah does not understand the rationale behind negotiations and says that this process of our talks with the Taliban is unconstitutional since those who have committed crimes on this land cannot be negotiated with. Therefore, the government should review these negotiations. It is the responsibility of the Afghan government and they will not allow their land to be used against anyone, but some groups of the Taliban are creating problems for us. He said that some time ago GHQ asked me for advice on whether these negotiations should be held with TTP or not, so I said not to negotiate with them. They want a place here where their system is established, so they can't come here and be accepted by the affected people whose children have been killed by them. Therefore, these Jirga and discussions are all unconstitutional and unnecessary.

From time to time, separate lists of the demands of the parties involved in the talks have been published by the Taliban and Pakistan, according to which the government has demanded the Taliban dissolve their organization Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and treat its members like ordinary Pakistani citizens. They will remain and keep weapons but they will have to get a license for that, TTP will not have links with organizations like ISIS, and a ceasefire will be in the whole of Pakistan and the Taliban will recognize the constitution of Pakistan.

While the participants of these talks have said that TTP wants the release of all their prisoners, reparation of damages, and withdrawal of the army from certain areas, they do not agree with the presence of FC in these areas. TTP has also demanded that the outfit be removed from the blacklist, its members are

allowed to travel across Pakistan.

Apart from these demands, where the killing of Taliban leader Umar Khalid Khorasani in Paktika has cast a cloud over the future of negotiations, the attack on the army in Waziristan and the presence of the Taliban in Swat also poured dew on the sentiments of the people involved in this process.

However, even in such a situation where the Taliban are doubting that their demands will be met and their allies are being targeted, they have stated in favor of continuing the negotiations and have also proved wrong the predictions of those who thought the negotiations were dead. They have warned those who are interested in ending the talks and said that they are also patriotic and want peace in the country like other Pakistanis.

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Onus On Washington to Revive JCPOA Deal

The JCPOA deal is critical for Middle Eastern stability. Ignoring it will be catastrophic and the sooner Washington realizes this, the better.

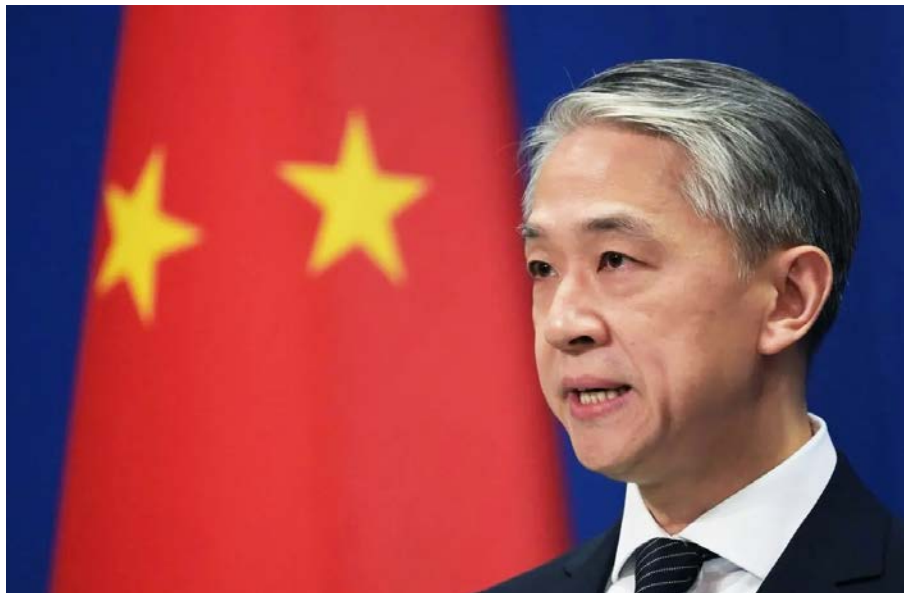
By Hamzah Rifaat Hussain

On the future of the JCPOA agreement with Iran, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said that the United States must respond positively to Iran's reasonable concerns over the deal. Given the critical juncture at which the JCPOA deal of 2015 is at in 2022, the onus lies squarely on the Biden administration to change its course on negotiations and dialogues which have been held in Vienna for the deal to be salvaged.

The window of opportunity on denuclearization prospects in the Middle East is shutting down. While the latest round of talks in Vienna resulted in the issuance of a revised text aimed at saving the deal and multilateral diplomacy, Washington's lack of sincerity in salvaging the deal and addressing Iran's concerns is acting as an impediment to the finalization of the agreement. Such an approach has devastating long-term implications for Middle Eastern stability which require immediate attention.

Such indifference is precisely what Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin flagged at a press conference in Beijing as the United States is considered partly responsible for the nuclear crisis and needs to set its priorities straight on where it is heading. The truth is that since the Biden administration assumed office, no effort has been made towards rapprochement with Tehran or upending pernicious sanctions from the Trump era, despite showing initial readiness to return to the agreement. Efforts in Doha in July 2022 for example, did not yield any breakthrough as indirect negotiations with a different format failed to produce any meaningful results due to excessive demands of compliance from Iran outside of the framework of the JCPOA. As collective efforts have remained afoot by the remaining parties towards creating a favorable atmosphere for the deal to be finalized, American defiance is acting as a roadblock.

The impact of such American indifference can be felt in 2022 as the Iranian Foreign Ministry expressed its reservations over the



draft text of the agreement despite European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell claiming that it has been finalized. Such reservations coming after Iran and countries of the P4+1 such as France, China, Russia, Germany, and the United Kingdom initiated repeated dialogues to salvage the agreement and lift sanctions last year, demonstrates how American unilateral considerations, and not collective wisdom, are stymieing a swift closure. Hence, calls for all parties to stay committed to diplomacy as mentioned by Wang Wenbin are based on merit, especially as progress during multiple rounds of talks in Vienna has been repeatedly stalled due to American indecisiveness.

Additionally, Middle Eastern strategic stability is tied with a stable and peaceful neighborhood that is devoid of offensive posturing. By sidestepping Iran's genuine concerns and efforts by remaining partners, the United States is indirectly provoking Tehran into adopting regional deterrence measures which can increase the risk of miscalculations. This does not bode well for American foreign policy which has been controversial in the Middle East overall as the Biden administration failed to resolve outstanding issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian crisis or Saudi Arabia Iran

relations. This also undermines strategic stability in the pandemic and Ukraine war era. Hence, the only sensible recourse for the United States is to eschew politics of division and uphold multilateralism which Washington has been selectively championing across the world.

Employing double standards on Iran and the JCPOA however, will be counterproductive. Note how Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian while commenting on the final text of the agreement, claimed that Tehran expects all sides to show determination and resolve towards reaching the final text of the agreement. Outlets close to the Supreme National Security Council have also dismissed the finalization of the agreement with counterclaims of American pressure being exerted on the Iranian negotiating team to cave into Washington's demands. This policy of dictation or coercing other states to comply with the agreement on American terms hints at American exceptionalism which has not worked in the Middle East or anywhere across the globe.

As a result, the future of the multilateral spirit guiding the JCPOA deal of 2015 with Iran depends on the United States changing course. Better sense should prevail which

has been missing in the US Congress and House of Representatives for decades. If viewed from a peaceful conflict resolution prism, there is not much to salvage if the JCPOA deal collapses. Iranian proxy warfare and command over the regime in Baghdad will embolden Israel to carry out hot pursuit attacks against countries such as Syria given that the rationale presented by the Naftali Bennett administration is that Iranian influence must be curbed entirely. Similarly, Iran will be less receptive to multilateral agreements and distrust can permeate into organizations such as the United Nations, the Human Rights Council, and the UNGA which are heavily influenced by American prerogatives. Undermining international multilateralism has been a key feature of the United States under Donald Trump and this trend can be mirrored if, the Ebrahim Raisi administration looks in the other direction.

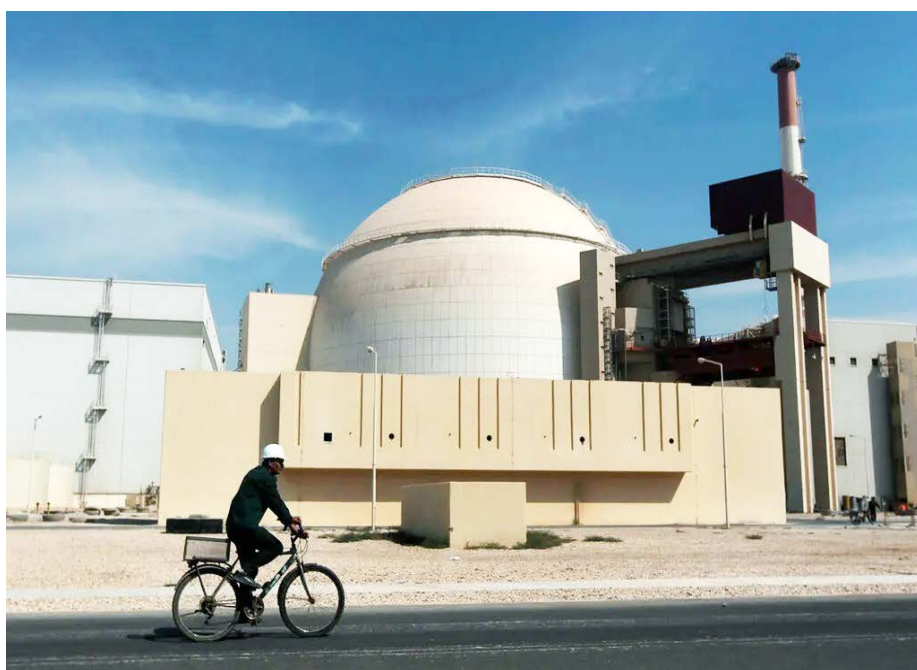
Then comes the question of Israel. Israel's entire strategic orientation is geared to regional arrangements akin to the Abraham Accords where Arab states and Turkey normalize relations, give de facto recognition to state-sponsored apartheid in Palestine and counter regional powers such as Iran. Israel's bombardment of Gaza, denunciation of Hezbollah, and airstrikes in Syria are symptomatic of its opposition to Iran and rapprochement. Since the deal was signed in 2015, Israel has denounced Tehran as a terrorist regime with successive



US administrations and reprimanded the Obama administration for caving into Iranian ambitions. Conversely, Israel was highly receptive to the Trump administration who scrapped the deal, termed Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and turned a blind eye to the persistent suffering of an occupied population. In 2022, any efforts to resuscitate the deal will be watched closely by the Naftali Bennet administration, and America's deliberate lethargy, apathy, and indifference play into Israel's playbook.

Would such apathy translate into peace in the Middle East? Ironically some would argue it might. By offering Gazans financial assistance and promoting bilateral relations between Arab states, Turkey, and Israel, sidestepping the Iran deal can be used as a trump card for all stakeholders. Conversely, it could even endanger regional peace, and Iran could lobby Shia political groups to rebel against the status quo and promote chaos and instability in Sunni-dominated Arab states. Scrapping of the JCPOA deal entails a sense of betrayal for the Iranian leadership and widening trust deficits is an incentive for states to increase military investments and pursue arms races. What the Biden administration is endorsing by not reviving the JCPOA deal is committing to an arms race in the region which acts as a justification for countries such as Saudi Arabia to seek a credible minimum deterrence. Arab states known for their policies of neutrality and historical coziness with Western ideals of peace can suddenly invest in military modernization which heightens the risk of miscalculations.

The JCPOA deal is a critical cog for Middle Eastern stability. Ignoring it will be catastrophic and the sooner Washington realizes this, the better.



Turkey's Balancing Act Between Russia and NATO

The war in Ukraine has bolstered Turkey's diplomatic prestige while also placing it at the forefront of peace negotiations in Eurasia



By Shahmir Niazi

Ever since the Russia-Ukraine war began, there has been only one country that has been able to play a meaningful balancing act between the two adversaries. While the U.S. and the rest of its NATO allies adopted a stick approach, it was the occasional Turkish carrots that delivered tangible results in the face of unprecedented levels of global inflation, food insecurity, and the energy crisis.

Even though Turkey risked the wrath of its Western allies when the ties between the two sides were already at a low over various issues – the S400 deal with Russia, disagreement over Sweden and Finland's membership of NATO, and Turkey's allegations against the US for orchestrating the 2016 military coup – it forged an alliance of mutual convenience with Russia. Ankara sits at a strategically important position – on the intercontinental crossroads between Europe and Asia – making it a vital transit corridor for energy and food supplies that have been greatly impacted by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The Russo-Ukraine grain export deal brokered by Turkey in July is a product of the mediating role Turkey assumed at the

height of the war. The United Nations and Turkey served as guarantors, allowing commercial ships safe passage out of Odessa port and two other Ukrainian ports. The deal paved the way for the 20 million tons of grain stuck in Ukraine's Black Sea ports to be released into the market. Last year, Ukraine accounted for 10 percent of global wheat exports, according to the United Nations. "It will bring relief for developing countries on the edge of bankruptcy and the most vulnerable people on the edge of famine," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

Although Turkey enjoys a good relationship with both Russia and Ukraine, the extent of animosity between the two warring sides has rendered mediation a daunting task. The grain deal experienced a hiccup within 24 hours of its signing when Russia struck some targets in the port of Odessa, with both sides trading accusations against each other. Eventually, sanity prevailed as both the United Nations and Turkey stuck the adversaries to the terms of the agreement through round-the-clock monitoring by a grain coordination center set up in Istanbul.

Earlier, just a month into the war, Turkey mediated a series of diplomatic negotiations between Russia and Ukraine in Istanbul. The talks ended in a deadlock after the massacre in Bucha made it even more difficult to find a compromise. Nevertheless, Turkey remained engaged with both sides, eventually negotiating "Ukraine's biggest exchange of prisoners of war since Russia invaded, securing the release of 144 of its soldiers," Ukraine's military intelligence agency said.

These breakthroughs were not achieved overnight. Turkey has good working relations with both Russia and Ukraine which it has masterfully leveraged. It diverged with NATO to help Russia evade Western sanctions since it sees eye-to-eye with Moscow on a range of issues and has overlapping interests in the Black Sea, Eastern Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern regions – while at the same time denounced Russian invasion and supplied Ukraine with modern weapons.

The relations between Russia and Turkey have improved significantly since the 2015 downing of a Russian fighter jet by Turkey near the Syria-Turkey border. President



Erdogan met with his Russian counterpart twice in a month. At their last meeting earlier this month, Putin noted that Russian-Turkish trade doubled in the first five months of the year compared with the same period last year.

President Erdogan, who is facing intense pressure domestically over an economy in bad shape with record inflation numbers and the tumbling lira which has lost 25 per cent of its value this year – is banking on Russian nuclear power and energy supplies to avoid a crushing defeat in the upcoming elections less than a year away. Turkey needs hard currency while Russia a way about avoiding sanctions, making this an alliance of mutual convenience. In essence, Turkey is serving as a trade bridge for Moscow to the rest of the world.

Kerim Has, a Moscow-based freelance political analyst on Russian and Eurasian relations, has pointed out that Russian companies have already been seeking to resume business with Europe via Turkey to bypass the sanctions. "I believe the memorandum signed in Sochi is an agreement which aims to facilitate that mechanism," he said.

Even as it engages with Russia during a war that has brought NATO face to face with Moscow, Turkey is treading a fine line to retain its ability to mediate between the two sides. It has supplied Ukraine with the

lethal Bayraktar TB2 drones, which have been responsible for inflicting considerable damage on the Russian side in the early days of the war. "A single armed drone equipped with a couple of bombs may destroy a whole air defense battery or a very expensive electronic warfare system or take out some armed vehicles etc.," Turkish defense analyst Arda Mevlutoglu said.

Turkey is being pro-Ukrainian without being Anti-Russian, which has occasionally

landed the country in troubled waters vis-à-vis its relationships with the two adversaries: NATO and Russia. The Turkish Industry and Business Association received a letter from US Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo, on August 23, cautioning that Turkish companies risked consequences if they did business with Russians or Russian institutions that were under US sanctions. Even as Turkey plays down concerns over possible US sanctions, the risks of growing coziness with Russia taking a toll on its relationship with the West are significantly high. Turkey is not a full European Union member, so it is not obliged to follow EU decisions, which explains its expanding trade with Russia.

The war in Ukraine has not only bolstered Turkey's diplomatic prestige but has also placed it at the forefront of peace negotiations in Eurasia. Its ability to make decisions solely based on its national interests has made it a reliable partner to work with. In contrast, the West's hardline zero-sum approach toward Russia has thus far resulted in skyrocketing global inflation, energy crisis, and food insecurity. It's time for a revaluation of this stick approach so that the impending energy crisis in Winter can be avoided, and some relief can be extended to the developing countries on the edge of bankruptcy and the most vulnerable people on the edge of famine.



IT vs. Textile Export Growth

The IT sector has made a case that the textile industry is getting huge subsidies in terms of taxes and energy tariffs



By Azeem Waqas

Pakistan's information technology (IT) sector has claimed that the growth pattern in the IT industry is greater than that of the textile industry. IT exports in 2021 reached USD 2.1 billion and are projected to reach USD 2.6 billion in 2022. IT exports are increasing at a fast pace as compared to the textile sector.

The IT sector has made a case that the textile industry is getting huge subsidies in terms of taxes and energy tariffs while its growth in exports is much lower than IT.

According to the WITS database and a World Bank Group report, textile sector exports increased by 19% from 2016 to 2021, while IT sector exports increased by 143%.

In its report, P@sha said that a set of policies is helping the textile sector, including a drawback for local taxes and levies based on export increments. Under the Export Refinance Scheme, its mark-up was reduced from 9.4% to 7.5% in 2014. The cost of electricity and gas is subsidising it. The government has introduced a Technology Upgradation Fund Support Scheme, where the government provides up to 20% of the cost of new plants and machinery. It has a Long Term Finan-

ing Facility (LTFF) at 5% till 2025. The textile sector has an enhancement of LTFF funds by PKR 100 million per annum. It has an Export Financing Scheme (EFS) rate of 3% till 2025.

On the other hand, IT support policies are not even regionally competitive. P@sha said that the tax exemption programme has been replaced by a controversial tax credit program.

No duty-free imports or other concessions for the IT sector, like the textile sector. The government has announced a cash reward but has not yet distributed it. The IT sector has no grants or subsidies for tech startups; it has no curriculum revision in line with industry needs. HEC and IGNITE IT sector funding is oriented towards academia, but there is little to no support for industry at large. Primitive intellectual property rights with little to no enforcement.

Pakistan's YoY growth in ICT exports was the highest in the region since 2017.

Since 2015, there has been a significant and consistent increase. There are external factors contributing to exports' increase since 2014. In 2014, the end of the war on terror and an improvement in the law and order situation. In 2017,

Digital Policy 2017 laid the roadmap for the industry. In 2020, IT and telecom were declared essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. A cash reward was announced for export growth in 2021.

In 2022, the PM IT Package was announced (not yet implemented).

To increase Pakistan's ICT exports, the IT sector has recommended that the government improve access-to-finance. With the Special Export Refinance Scheme for IT/ITeS Exporters with no collateral and interest rates lower than the market (2-3%), Introduce dedicated financing windows (e.g., the SME Financing Facility) to ensure access to non-collateralized loans and ensure administration of existing schemes is streamlined for IT/BPO business eligibility; Startup Bangladesh has established a BDT 500 crore fund for startups. The India BPO scheme offers 5% financial assistance for new businesses.

The IT sector has suggested that we incentivize activities that encourage R&D. Malaysia offers a 100% grant for firms undertaking new feasibility studies. The Philippines offers financial support to early-stage startups for R&D and market studies.

The Eradication of the Polio-Dream

Pakistan traversed half the distance to get to the destination of achieving polio-free status

By Zahiruddin



The dreams of eradicating the infectious disease of polio from the country and getting Pakistan declared polio-free shattered on April 22nd this year when a 15-month-old boy was confirmed with wild polio with the onset of paralysis on April 9 in the Mir Ali area of North Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It didn't stop there. On July 24, the media reported the 14th case of polio. This put the country in the embarrassing company of countries that had failed miserably to get rid of polio and put it in the same group as war-torn Afghanistan as a place where the crippling virus was still present. After nearly 15 months of no reports of polio cases, health officials began to claim that the disease was on its way out of the country, leaving Afghanistan as the only polio-infected country in the world.

Pakistan had traversed half the distance to get to the destination of achieving polio-free status when it had to re-start the journey. As per procedure, a country is declared polio-free on a regional basis and a certificate to this effect is issued when it reports no polio cases for three years consecutively and meets the global standards for surveillance and routine immunization. Now it is all clear that we have to wait for yet another three years, starting right now, if no polio case is reported here. But

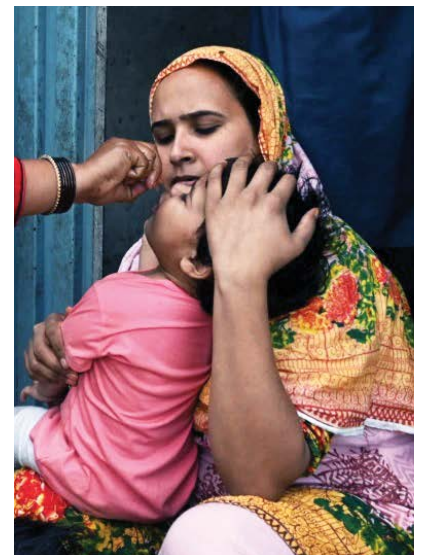
this is hoping against hope as two positive environmental samples were reported from Bannu and about a dozen from Northern Waziristan, which has become the hub of poliovirus. Of the six southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including South Waziristan, DI Khan, Bannu, Tank, and Lakki Marwat, the district of North Waziristan has become the most fertile land for the nourishment and promotion of poliovirus. Out of the 14 cases, thirteen were reported from here.

The data on the number of polio cases in the country for the last four years is really baffling, which decreased steeply for three years but registered an upsurge during the fourth year. During the year 2019, 147 cases were reported in 43 districts. It was 84 in 84 districts and dropped to only one in 2021 in the Qilla Abdullah district of Baluchistan. In the first eight months of this year, there have been 14 strange cases in two districts. These cases can't be explained.

The resurgence of polio cases in the province of KP has synchronised with the resurgence of TTP during the last one-and-a-half years when the militants started coming back to southern districts while strengthening their positions and footholds in Northern Waziristan, whose political and physical environment favoured them. The

gunning down of polio workers or the policemen guarding them is showing an upward trend, especially in KP, while misinformation about polio vaccines is yet another formidable barrier to achieving the goal of 100 percent vaccination. The strengthening of the bastion of TTP in the southern districts has made the polio vaccination's success an uphill task. Although the merger of the erstwhile FATA into merged districts had beamed as a ray of hope for strengthening the writ of law, all of it evaporated with the come-back of TTP. Since the very inception of TTP, polio vaccination has been its major target. They termed it a Western conspiracy that convinced the common man that the polio drops were made up of pig fat. It's easy to see that the position of TTP is very important to the future success of the polio campaign.

When the deputy coordinator of the Provincial Operation Centre of Polio Eradication, Zeeshan Khan, was contacted to know about the special measures taken in the southern districts, he told this scribe that three additional campaigns were carried out to immunise the children. He said that measures were also taken to reach the maximum number of children in the southern districts, where the target is 1.7 million. He complained about the non-cooperative attitude of the parents during the polio campaigns.



Governance System of Caliph Umar - Part VI

By Azmat M. Saqib



Department of Education

Among Arab society in the seventh century, very few people could read and write. Most of the dealings and learning were based on memory. The Arabs of those days were famous for their memorization abilities. Yet, during the reign of Caliph Umar (RAA), matters of state became very complex. Many new Muslims were to be trained in basic education. Caliph Umar (RAA) took the following steps, especially in conquered lands:

1. In all conquered countries, basic educational units were established.
2. At these schools, Al Qur'an, morals-based poetry, and the lives of model Arab personalities were taught.
3. Many great scholars were appointed by the Caliph to teach Hadith and Fiqh.
4. The pay of instructors was fixed.

Department of Religious Affairs

It is to be noted that among tribal Arabs, matters regarding public dealing and public affairs were taught by tribal elders. After the advent of Islam, both individual and collective matters of living were to be governed by the Commandments of Allah. The primary goal of the Caliph of an Islamic state was to train and develop people along ideological lines. Spiritual aspects of Islam could not be taught in schools (Maktab), but only through personal examples of society's notables. To facilitate the development of motivated individuals, an enabling religious environment was provided by the highest office of the state, i.e., the Caliphate. The Caliphate system of governance implements laws, both at an individual

as well as collective level, that ensure the proliferation of a God-loving society. Measures taken by the Caliph (RAA) follow:

Preservation of the Quran

1. Teach Al-Quran to the population on a massive scale.
2. To prepare thousands of Hafiz-e-Quran in order to deter any changes in the Quran.
3. to preserve the phonetics and words of the Qur'an.
4. It was possible to reproduce a large number of copies, which could be sent throughout the Caliphate.

The Quranic Teaching

Teachers and recitationists (qurra) were sent throughout the conquered territories to teach the Quran. Good pay was fixed for the teaching staff. Young children were also taught by these teachers.

Compulsory teaching for the Bedouin Arabs

It was made compulsory for Bedouin Arabs to learn Arabic.

Sending expert recitationists to conquered lands

Five top Sahabas who knew Quran were sent by Caliph Umar (RAA) to go to different Syrian cities and teach Quran.

Abu Darda (RAA), a famous companion of the Prophet (PBUH), would sit in the masjid after Fajr. The class would gather around him. He would distribute them in groups of ten, appointing a Qari (recitationist) in each, who would take the test. Sometimes the class would be as large as 1600 pupils.

Other steps to encourage the spread of the Quran

1. Umar told Muslims to learn Suras Baqarah, Al-Nisa, Al-Maida, Al-Hajj, and Al-Nur because they have orders and things that are required.
2. Army personnel were also instructed to learn Arabic. As a result, just in the army of Saad Ibn Abi Waqas (RAA), Commander of the armies fighting the Persian Empire, there were 300 people who had learnt the Quran by heart.
3. Administrators were told to attach special stipends for those who learned Arabic.
4. The Caliph told people to pay close attention to how words sound and how they should be said.
5. He also instructed that Arab literature should be taught for a better understanding of the Quran.
6. He also instructed that only scholars of Lughat (linguistics) should be allowed to teach the Quran.

Fiqh (Jurisprudence)

- Fiqh deals with day-to-day legal issues pertaining to an individual and what is permitted by the Quran and Sunnah but not directly mentioned in them. Caliph Umar (RAA), being a scholar himself, used to give edicts and, especially in Friday sermons, he would talk about jurisprudence-based issues. He would also write to regional administrators regarding Fiqh and related issues. He would try to get the leading scholars and Sahabas (people who were close to the Prophet (PBUH)) to agree on things that were controversial.
- He appointed regional administrators who were also scholars of Fiqh.
- He appointed scholars of Fiqh as teachers for public awareness.
- Fiqh teachers' salaries were fixed by the Caliph (RAA).
- Top Fiqh scholars like Muad Bin Jabal, Abu Darda, Ubaidah bin Saamit, etc. were given high regard in society.

Rights of Zimmi Subjects of the Caliphate

In his book, Zimmis included all non-Muslims living under Caliphate rule. A zimmi subject had the right to life, liberty, and property ownership, and was allowed to exercise his religion so long as he did nothing to harm the believers of Islam and the Muslim State.

The rights given to the Zimmis under Caliph Umar were far more than those given to them by their previous Roman and Persian rulers. Those regions which came under Muslim rule without fighting were treated according to the peace pacts. The Region of Palestine is an example, where churches, synagogues, and other places of worship were kept as per the previous arrangements. Under the Romans, Syrians were deprived of their land ownership rights. Rather, they were treated as property and were sold along with cattle and land. Jews were treated badly under the Romans and Christians under the Persians. The Patriarch of Egypt, who was in hiding under the Romans, was granted peace and brought back as Patriarch.

The life and property of a zimmi were declared equal to that of a Muslim. If a zimmi was murdered by a Muslim without discrimination, that Muslim was killed if the zimmi family didn't forgive him.

Umar (RAA) kept strict vigilance on the tax collectors dealing with zimmis. They were to deal with them with courtesy, otherwise they faced punishment if reported for bad dealing.

The non-Muslim elites of Iraq and Egypt were consulted by the Caliph before levying land and trade-related taxes. Personal prestige among the zimmis was highly valued. A very religious governor of Hims quit his job because he had said something bad about a zimmi.

The Zimmis were free to hold their processions and religious traditional functions. Under Islamic Sharia, it was against the law to force a non-Muslim to become a Muslim, and it was also against the law to meddle in the religious lives of non-Muslims.

Epilogue

1. Caliph Umar al Khattab (RAA) set up a way of running the country that was based on the Quran and Sunnah. The Caliph had to account for everything he did, whether in court or in public. His way of running the country made piety (taqwa) the measure of success, which tied actions in this world to success in the next.
2. In financial matters, his personal life standard was that of an average citizen. As a custodian of Bait ul Maal (public treasury), he was strict with his appointed officials as well as with many notable fellow Sahabas (companions). He was so careful about keeping track of how much his armies spent and how much booty they got that the legendary commander of the Northern Front, Khalid Bin Waleed (RAA), was fired for not keeping the books right.



3. He established various instructions and departments with thoroughness. Any new and good idea was taken into account, no matter if it came from a common subject, a Muslim, a non-Muslim, a man, or a woman. He even incorporated systems from neighbouring empires, especially revenue collection on agricultural products. His work in the public works and social welfare departments brought the regions to a whole new level of prosperity. Besides adults, even new-born children were provided with a subsistence allowance.
4. Hence, justice and prosperity prevailed under the governance of Caliph Umar in settled areas, whereas in the war zones of Syria, Persia, and Egypt, the exemplary characteristics of Muslim armies and appointed administrators provided justice to non-Muslims as well. So, a lot of people became Muslims, not because they were forced to, but because of the good things about Islam.

In this six-part series, some aspects of the governance system of Caliph Umar were discussed briefly. For a more comprehensive study, there are so many books available. One of them is ALFA-ROOQ by Allama Shibli Naumani.

India Edge Pakistan in Asia Cup Thriller

The last time the two sides came head-to-head, it ended with Pakistan winning by 10 wickets in their T20 World Cup clash

By Ali Abdullah



Hardik Pandya's all-round performance sealed the victory for India by five wickets and 2 balls to spare. Chasing 148 for victory, Pakistan kept chipping away with wickets but eventually, it was the fifth-wicket stand of 52 between Ravindra Jadeja and Pandya that flipped the game in India's favor.

The Asian Cricket Council's Asia Cup comprises Men's One Day International and Twenty20 International competitions. It was established when the Asian Cricket Council was launched in 1983 as a way to foster goodwill among Asian nations. The event takes place every two years.

Asia Cup is the sole cricket continental championship, and the victorious team is crowned Asia's champions. Every two years, ODI and T20I formats are switched.

Until 1995, the Asian Cricket Council's offices were located in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, where the first Asia Cup was contested in 1984. India stayed away from the competition in 1986 because of its tense cricketing relations with Sri Lanka. Similarly, due to tense political ties with India, Pakistan boycotted the 1990–1991 tournament, and the 1993 tournament was called off for the same reason. The ACC declared that beginning in 2009, the tournament would take place every two years. All of the Asia Cup matches have been declared official ODIs by the ICC.

Following the Asian Cricket Council's downsizing in 2015, the ICC declared that starting in 2016, Asia Cup matches would alternate between One Day International and Twenty20 International formats. Hence, the 2016 event was the first to be contested in the T20I format and served as a warm-up for the 2016 ICC World Twenty20.

The most successful team in the competition is India, which has won seven titles (six ODI and one T20I). With five wins, Sri Lanka is the second-best team. Sri Lanka has participated in 14 Asia Cups, followed by 13 each for India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

The inaugural 1984 Rothmans Asia Cup was played in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. It was a round-robin competition

between Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India. The inaugural game featured Sri Lanka, a brand-new ICC member, against Pakistan. India won the tournament with two victories, Sri Lanka finished in second place with one victory over Pakistan, and Pakistan was eliminated after losing both of its games.

The second edition was held in Sri Lanka in 1986. After a contentious series in Sri Lanka the year before, India withdrew due to strained cricketing ties with Sri Lanka. Bangladesh was included in the tournament for the very first time. Sri Lanka won the title after beating Pakistan in the finals. Pakistan has won the title only twice; in 2000 and 2012.



On October 29, 2015, following the Asian Cricket Council meeting in Singapore, BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur stated that the 2018 edition of the tournament would be held in India and will follow the ODI format. However, in April 2018, the tournament was moved to the United Arab Emirates due to political tensions between India and Pakistan. India was the defending champions and retained their title after beating Bangladesh by three wickets in the final. India did not suffer a single defeat in the tournament, with 2 wins each against Pakistan and Bangladesh, one against Hong Kong, and a tie with Afghanistan. Shikhar Dhawan was the top run-getter with 342 runs in 5 matches and was awarded Man of the Series.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Asia Cup was first postponed to 2021 with Sri Lanka set to host the event but was later pushed back to 2023 owing to the packed international schedule and the rising Covid cases in Sri Lanka.

In 2022, Sri Lanka was supposed to host the tournament but due to the economic and political crisis, Sri Lanka requested to move the tournament to the United Arab Emirates. The tournament will now begin on August 27 in UAE. The opening match between Sri Lanka and Afghanistan was won by the latter by 8 wickets. It was followed by the high voltage contest between Pakistan and India which as per the expectations of the fans, proved to be a nail-biter, with India finishing off with a last-over victory with 5 wickets and 2 balls to spare.

Azra Farooq - A Pakistani Female Athlete

The Truth International interviews Azra Farooq about her achievements and future plans

By Pavan Manzoor



For Azra Farooq, a Pakistani female athlete, her first sports scholarship opened a new world of opportunities for her. She said, “When I was 16 years old, I took part in volleyball matches.” She moved to Punjab University, Lahore, where she played volleyball, baseball, and football at the inter-university level every year. Later, she was selected for the national football team and travelled to Bahrain to be a part of friendly matches with the national team. In 2016, she represented Pakistan's volleyball team in the South Asian Games held in India. Along with that, she was continuing her inter-university games. In 2017, as the acting captain of the Pakistan Rugby team, Azra travelled to Laos to play in the Asian Championship as well as she was fortunate enough to represent Pakistan as a baseball player in the Asian Championship that was held in Hong Kong. In 2017 she became the captain of the Pakistan Volley Ball Team and she is still holding this prestigious position.

Azra stated: I am looking forward to representing the Pakistan volleyball team on an international level and showcasing the talent that the female Pakistani athletes have, but because of a lack of opportunities, it has not reached its full potential. My most recent visit to the United States to impart training to athletes in different universities, including Stanford University, made me realise what kind of facilities can be helpful for our female athletes to get groomed even more. One of my goals is to be able to create a safe space for Pakistani women to play and hone their athletic skills in order to reach their full potential and bring Pakistani international sports to a level where we are fully capable of it and do not have to face the same challenges that I did when I first started as a female athlete.

TTI: Describe your major highlights and achievements in sports in the past.

I represented the Pakistan football team as a goalkeeper in the SAFF Cup 2014 and in three friendly matches with the Bahrain football team in Bahrain. I also participated in the following important events.

12th South Asian Games, India 2016—Represented Pakistan volleyball team and now I am serving as Team Captain for Pakistan volleyball team.

Lao Rugby Festival 2017—Represented the Pakistan Rugby Team as the Captain.

Women's Baseball Asian Cup 2017—Represented Pakistan baseball team.

All of these events are my international participation for Pakistan. I have served in Pakistan's army for five years, leading the army's two teams, including volleyball and rugby, as a team captain, and we are winning national championships every year. For the last two years, I have been a part of Pakistan's WAPDA volleyball and rugby teams as captain and have won the national championships.

It brings me immense pleasure to share that I have had the opportunity to represent my country internationally in four different games, which was unheard of before.

TTI: How did you feel after winning the gold medal? What made you realise that you could become a sports girl?

Winning the gold medal became my dream as soon as I stepped

into sports, and when it happened, it was a euphoric and humbling experience at the same time.

Playing for the Islamabad national team served as a great motivator towards the realisation that this is something that I can be good at, and I was also fortunate enough to be surrounded by incredible coaches and team members.



TTI: Have you ever served as a team captain?

I have had the opportunity to serve the Pakistan Rugby team, Pakistan volleyball team, Pakistan Army volleyball team, and Pakistan WAPDA Volleyball team as captain.

TTI: What's your technique for memorising and teaching yourself new plays before an upcoming game?

I take inspiration from some of my favourite players. I watch their games through online platforms, which help me learn and memorise new plays.

TTI: What's the best piece of advice you've gained from your coaches?

That potential, mixed with hard work and consistency, opens many doors.

TTI: What clubs, teams, or other extracurricular activities were you involved in during high school?

I still have the same group of friends that I had in high school, and we go for ng, swimming, and cycling. In addition to that, when we have free time, we visit the northern areas of Pakistan, which I love to do.

TTI: How do you manage your athletic responsibilities and other extracurricular recreational and nonrecreational activities?

It was very difficult for me to manage sports and other activities, but now with time, I have learned how to manage everything well because sports have taught me time management rather well.

TTI: Tell us your current personal bests in various events?

Answer number 1

TTI: What would you have been if you were not an athlete?

Most probably an entrepreneur.

TTI: Which sport is your favourite to play and why?

Volleyball is the sport that I love to play because it's not only a game for me, it's a part of my life that I love the most.

TTI: Why are you so passionate about playing sports?

When I was a teenager and started playing sports in my school, the only person in my family who supported me was my father. He left me when I was 18. From that day, I put myself totally into sports because my father supported me in this field.

TTI: Is there a coach or an athlete that you look up to as a role model and why?

Earvin N'gapeth from the French volleyball team and Cristiano Ronaldo because they show real emotions on the pitch and you can tell that they want to win. They are not just good on the pitch, they are also a great role model for young players like me. They are dedicated to training and making sure that they are fit and healthy, which adds to their game.

TTI: What is your diet and nutrition plan? Who inspired you to become a sports girl?

I just follow the simple diet plans given by my coaches. My inspiration has been and will always be my father.

TTI: Two words you want to say to your inspiration.

The only one who can say that you can't win is you, and you don't have to listen to it.

TTI: What are your next goals to achieve?

I am committed to bringing more Pakistani women to the forefront of sports.

TTI: What do you see yourself accomplishing in five to 10 years?

I want to be able to provide facilities for women where they can play freely at any time and polish their athletic abilities to bring Pakistani sports to a level where they deserve to be.



Fahad Mustafa: “As An Actor, I Want To Be On The Big Screen”



By **Kaukab Jahan**

Fahad Mustafa is a household name in Pakistan. Whether it is his game show or his memorable lead roles in films, he is praised and admired for his work. Starting his acting career 19 years back, Mustafa was quickly recognized for his other talents such as hosting game shows. Today, Jeeto Pakistan has become the most successful game show in the country. After dramas, Fahad tried his luck in films with Nabeel Qureshi's Namaloon Afraad in 2014 and realized that his acting skills were more suitable for the big screen. Since then, the Load Wedding star prefers to do only films.

His recently released film, Quaid-e-Azam Zindabad (QAZ) is a success at the box office – both in Pakistan and overseas. The film is being considered a comeback of Pakistani cinemas, which remained closed for two years due to Covid 19.

The star talked to The Truth International about QAZ, his acting choices, and the overall situation of cinema in Pakistan.

Quaid-e-Azam Zindabad has been released almost four years after your last film. In this long gap, including two years of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, what changes do you see in the entertainment industry?

I think the world has changed in these

years but one thing remains the same: people still want to watch cinema. They waited for QAZ. We released the teaser of the film about one and half years ago and since then people kept asking for its release date.

This is the first time you and Mahira Khan are on screen together, how was the experience?

Actually, besides the film itself, people also waited to watch Mahira and me together on screen. With them, I was also excited as I had never worked with Mahira Khan before on any project. Yes, I wanted to do a film with Khan as she is one of the top superstars of the country. I feel lucky that she is my co-star in the film which I consider the biggest and most important film of my career. I think people liked our on-screen chemistry.

Moreover, Mahira Khan and I had not been on the big screen for the last three and four years respectively, so that too added to the eagerness of the people. I am sure it was a good surprise for their wait.

How different was your role in QAZ from your other films?

It is different as this is the first time; my character is a typical hero, doing many things. Earlier, in Na Maloom Afraad, I was a conman, in Actor In Law, I

was a jack of all trades and in Load Wedding, I was a helpless husband. I always try to do a changed character in every film. They are entirely different from each other in their get-ups, looks, and overall setups. I need to play something other than Fahad Mustafa in films as I present my actual self on television as a host every week. I guess, when watching me in films, viewers can't say that he is the same Fahad Mustafa of Jeeto Pakistan. Moreover, QAZ is different because this is the first time that a cop movie is made on such a big scale in Pakistan.

For the role of a cop in QAZ, did you just follow the script or took inspiration from any Bollywood, Hollywood, or even Lollywood film?

Actually, there were many inspirations for me as the premise of cop films is very similar in every project made on the subject. So, first, you have to maintain that standard benchmark for the role to keep it up to the mark. That benchmark is usually to achieve the grandness necessary for a successful cop film. But what makes every cop film different from others is the plot on which the particular character of policeman or policewoman is set up. For a successful film, the most important thing would always remain an interesting and gripping story. For instance, in QAZ, people considered

Mahira Khan and me in lead roles, and Nabeel Qureshi as director, the selling point of the film. To me, these things are only optical. What actually made the film grand is what we had inside the box; the story. I did QAZ not just because I wanted a cop role, but for the story as well. I had been offered many cop films before but I wanted to choose the right script and the right combination. I found both these things in QAZ, which also connected the audience to the cinema.

Your film has also been released internationally. How much did it help in promoting Pakistani cinema worldwide?

It did a lot. Our films had been released overseas before and got a positive response. This time it all started again after three years. I was in the USA just before the release of my film, and people knew about QAZ and asked when it would be in cinemas there. We tried our best to release the film on maximum screens overseas.

As far as your acting career is concerned, you have confined yourself to films only. In a country like Pakistan, where very few films are made every year, is it possible for an actor to work in only films?

I think it's not just about film or television. When I was doing TV dramas, I used to do one or two serials at a time. Actually, I don't have the capacity to do a lot of work at a time. Both drama and film need time



and it is up to you to choose where you want to see yourself and feel better and more comfortable. I feel so good to see myself on the big screen. I have seen the response of people to me in cinemas cheering and clapping. So once you get through this experience, which I think a television actor doesn't often, you don't want to go back to the small screen. I am not belittling television. I have done television dramas a lot. I am a product of TV but now I am not attracted much to work there as an actor.

Honestly speaking, I am not even fond of acting on web portals because, by the end, these portals exhibit your work on small screens, which become smaller when people watch it on their mobile screens. I believe, that if I have invested time and money in a project, people should experience it on a big screen. I think there is nothing wrong with it.

The Government of Pakistan has recently announced a film policy. What are your expectations from it?

I think it is the right time to announce this policy. Cinema all over the country has resumed its business and this year, many films have been released on Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha, while many more are waiting to come. So if these positive steps are implemented at this moment, it will encourage more filmmakers as the various tax exemptions mentioned in the policy would help a lot in lifting a big burden in the whole process of production.

I actually believe these measures should have been taken some five years back, like in 2017, when our industry was thriving upwards, but it is not too late even today. I believe this new policy can be beneficial to getting our film industry out of the current dicey position, shaped by the closures of cinemas for two years because of Covid-19.



Oscars Apologises To Native American Activist Booed Off Stage 50 Years Ago

Sacheen Littlefeather, a native American activist who was booed off stage back in the 1973 Academy Awards promised Marlon Brando that she would not touch the statuette

By Amna Shoaib



Ms. Littlefeather, 26 years old at the time, went on stage when Marlon Brando refused to accept his award because of the then-on-going Native American Rights protests. The Oscar-winning actor, Marlon Brando, on his performance as Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*, did not attend the Oscars to show his support of Native American rights inspired by the two-month occupation of the site of the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre by the American Indian Movement (AIM).

Instead, Littlefeather declined to accept the statuette from presenters Roger Moore and Liv Ullmann, and made a short speech in which she said that Brando's stance was due to "the treatment of American Indians today by the film industry...and on television, in movie reruns, and also with recent happenings at Wounded Knee." Her speech was heckled and later it was reported that backstage the actor John Wayne had to be pulled back by the security guards from assaulting her, while other individuals present backstage continued offending her verbally.

The reconciliation letter signed by former president David Rubin said: "The abuse you endured because of this statement was unwarranted and unjustified. The emotional burden you have lived through and the

cost to your own career in our industry are irreparable. For too long the courage you showed has been unacknowledged. For this, we offer both our deepest apologies and our sincere admiration." The organization has also planned an evening of "conversation, reflection, healing, and celebration", including an appearance by Littlefeather with Bird Runningwater, co-chair of the Academy's Indigenous Alliance. The letter furthermore issued a statement describing Littlefeather's presence as a powerful and symbolic reminder of human dignity and respect.

Littlefeather, now 75, responded by saying: "Regarding the Academy's apology to me, we Indians are very patient people – it's

only been 50 years! We need to keep our sense of humor about this at all times. It's our method of survival."

"I never thought I'd live to see the day," she added. This is a dream come true. It is profoundly heartening to see how much has changed since I did not accept the Academy Award 50 years ago."

The Wounded Knee occupation started in February 1973, and was a highly publicized protest by a 200-strong group of Oglala Lakota and members of AIM on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation – the same site where some 290 Lakota were killed by the US army in 1890. The Oscars took place in March, and the occupation ended in May after an agreement with federal authorities to disarm.

In 2021, Littlefeather said that she arrived at the ceremony only a few minutes before Brando's award was announced, and had been given an eight-page speech by Brando to read if he won. However, the show's director Howard Koch told her she could only have 60 seconds and so she improvised a speech instead. Littlefeather claimed that she had promised Brando that she would not touch the statuette. "I went up there like a warrior woman. I went up there with the grace and the beauty and the courage and the humility of my people. I spoke from my heart."



The Legacy of Nayyara Noor

Nayyara sang Faiz like another genre in her body of work

By **Kaukab Jahan**

When one writes about the history of music in Pakistan, the name of Nayyara Noor is near the top of the list.

This soft and beautiful voice was silenced forever on August 20, 2022 in Karachi but left a legacy of memorable songs for its millions of fans all over the world. Nayyara Noor had a long singing career that lasted almost 50 years. During that time, she sang ghazals, geet, nazm, and national songs.

Nayyara, for her melodious and soothing voice, was titled *Bulbul e Pakistan*. Very few singers have the quality to sing in every genre with perfection, and Nayyara had that excellence in her voice. She could sing film songs (solo and duet), semi-classical (ghazals), patriotic songs, and even hamd and naat with the same perfection.

People say that whatever she sang, it fit so well with the lyrics of Kalaam that people thought it was Nayyara singing and not the poet.

Born on November 3, 1950 in the city of Guwahati, in the state of Assam, India, to a family of traders, Nayyara had no formal training in music in her childhood except the bhajans (religious singing) of Kamla and Kanan Devi, which she used to listen to in Assam. Her later inspirations were the ghazals and thumris of Begum Akhtar.

Nayyara's father was an active member of the All-India Muslim League and hosted Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, when he came to Assam before the country was split in 1947. This shows that Nayyara had the genes of an activist.

In 1958, Noor, with her mother and siblings, migrated from India to Pakistan and settled in Karachi, while her father stayed back in Assam until 1993 to look after the family's immovable properties.

She later moved to Lahore to study fine arts at the famous National Arts College (NCA). For her love and fondness for music, she used to sing occasionally at college functions. This precious voice was finally discovered by Professor Asrar Ahmad of Islamia College, Lahore, at the annual dinner of NCA in 1968. Soon thereafter, she was asked to sing for the



university's Radio Pakistan programs. After her graduation, in 1971, Nayyara started to sing for Pakistan Television with the children's programme *Taal Matool*, produced by Shoaib Hashmi. In the same year, she also sang for television series, ghazals, and geet (Urdu terms for different genres of poetry). After a couple of years, she started to sing in films with Gharana and Tansen (1973).

According to Sanaullah Khan Ahsan, in her early years of television, Nayyara used to be a shy, extrovert, and skinny girl who only came on screen wearing a big chaddar (shawl) and sat in the same position during the whole song.

He later stated that for a long time, people speculated about many interesting things about Nayyara, including whether the girl could only sing while sitting and that she used to get faint after finishing the song. But all this speculation came to an end when, one day, Nayyara was singing, standing tall on a TV program.

She sang poetry by Asadullah Khan Ghalib, Nasir Kazmi, Ibne Insha, and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, but the song that made her famous was "Ae Jazba-e-Dil Gar Main Chahoon," which was written by the

famous Urdu poet Behzad Lucknavi (1900–1974) and played on the PTV programme *Sukhanwar* in 1972. Nayyara Noor later won many awards for this ghazal.

Some of her other songs include *Woh Jo Hum Mein Tum Mein Qamar Tha Tumhein Yaad Ho Keh Na Yaad Ho* (Momin Khan Momin), *Phir Sawan Ruth Ki Pawan Chali Tum Yaad Aaei* (Nasir Kazmi), *Aye Ishq Hamay Barbaad Na Kar* (Akhtar Sheerani), and *Jalay Tau Jalao Gori* (Ibn-e-Ins).

Nayyara sang Faiz like another genre in her body of work. The unique combination of Faiz's poetry, Nayyara's voice, and Arshad Mahmood's music made wonders, and these versions are considered a valuable set of collections.

The most well-known of Faiz poems sung by Nayyara include *Hum Ke Thehre Ajnabi* (written against the backdrop of Dhaka's fall), *Aaj Bazaar Mein Pa Ba Jaula Chalo*, *Chalo Phir Se Muskarayen*, and *Tum Mre Paas Raho*.

Noor gave a unique voice to the Pakistan film industry, which before this was known for its high-pitched and thick female voices. Besides solos, she also sang numerous

famous duets with legends like Mehdi Hassan, Ahmed Rushdi, and Ikhlāq Ahmed. Her duet 'Raat Bhat Jiya Moora' with Ikhlāq Ahmed, filmed on Shabnam and Nadeem for the film Umang (1975), still resonates with its powerful voices.

Her other memorable film songs were: Tera Saaya Jahan Bhi Ho Sajana (Gharana, 1973), Roothay Ho Tum, Tumko Kaisay Manauun Piya (Aina, 1977), Mujhay Dil Sey Na Bhulana (Aina, 1977), Iss Parcham Kay Saaey Talay Hum Eik Hain (Farz Aur Mamtam, 1975), Bol Ree Gurrya Bol (Aas, 1973), Too Hee Bata, Pagli Pawan (Phool Mere Gulshan Ka, 1974) and many more.

In playback singing, Nayyara mostly gave her voice to Shabnam, which actually suited the soft accent and innocent face of the actress.

After the downfall of the film industry in early 1980s, Nayyara also detached herself from there, but kept on singing for television.

The nazm, "Kabhi Hum Khoobsoorat Thay", which was written by Ahmed Shamim for the drama series Teesra Kinara and sung by Nayyara's OST Kabhi Hum Khoobsoorat Thay, brought Nayyara a lot of new fame.

That made the nazm an all-time favourite of girls and made Nayyara a household name.

Nayyara's rendition of the national song, "Watan Ki Mitti Gawah Rehna," is widely listened from Karachi to Khyber,



Pakistan, and is considered among the most popular national songs.

Besides television and film, she also performed at mehfilis and mushairas and gathered a huge following among ghazal lovers in Pakistan and India. She also recorded a number of studio albums for her fans all over the world.

Nayyara Noor was bestowed with the Pride of Performance Award by the President of Pakistan in 2006 for her services to the country. She also won a Nigar Award

for best playback female singer in the film Gharana (1973). At the annual All Pakistan Music Conference concerts, Noor received three Gold Medal Awards.

Nayyara was married to television actor Shehryar Zaidi. They both started their careers with the children's programme Taal Matool. The couple have two sons. The elder one, Naad-e-Ali, is a solo singer, while the younger son, Jaffer Zaidi, is the lead vocalist of the Kaavish music band. Her two sons are married to showbiz and media personalities. Ali is married to former television anchor Sana Tariq, and Zaidi has tied the knot with the niece of famous actor Usman Pirzada.

After marriage, she maintained that her primary roles were those of a wife and a mother. In an interview, she said that music was her passion but never a top priority.

Nayyara had been shifted to Karachi for a long time with her family. This versatile singer with a God-gifted voice took her last breath in the same city after a prolonged illness.

On her death, celebrities from the showbiz industry and renowned personalities from political and social spheres mourned her death and condoled with her family. She was buried in Karachi in the presence of her family, friends and colleagues.



The Hands Deserve Books

A captivating tale of a child whose life changed for the better after breaking a glass

By Zeenat Iqbal Hussain

Child Labour is a crime against humanity. I am reminded of a very moving story about one of the world's greatest humanitarians Abraham Lincoln. At the time this episode took place, Lincoln was a candidate for a congress seat. And on that day, he had an important election speech to deliver. But he also had an even greater task to perform. A noble cause to fight for.

He canceled his election speech and entered the jam-packed court, which was already in session. Unnoticed, he sat down in the last row. The case being ended, the District Attorney rose and moved the trial of John Wilson for murder. There was a stir through the courtroom. In the doorway appeared the Sheriff, leading a childish figure, a boy of ten, dressed in poor home-made clothes. He was pale and desperately frightened. The judge faced the criminal, paused pityingly, and steadied himself. "Have you a lawyer?" He asked. The lad shook his unkempt yellow head. "No, I dunno anybody. I ain't got money to pay".

The boy was in tears, his widowed mother was sobbing near him. "Do you wish the court to assign you a counsel?" In the stillness, a boot scraped the floor. The man in the back seat rose, "May it please your honor" he said. "I am a lawyer. I should be glad to act as a Counsel for the Defense". The Judge looked for a moment at the loose-hung, towering figure. "What is your name?" He asked. The man answered quietly "Abraham Lincoln". Lincoln, who gave his life to abolish slavery, had come that day to repay a debt.

Years back, when he was a struggling non-entity, the family of the then well-to-do little boy, then a baby, had given Lincoln solace and succor. Subsequently, the boy's father died and the family was in a miserable state of abject poverty. The boy, John had to work due to force of circumstances, on a farm of one heartless man named Shaughnessy. He was a cruel tormentor. One day, he started beating the boy so mercilessly that the desperate defenseless boy struck his tormentor's head with a

pitchfork. The man died after some time. The boy was charged with murder. This was the story. It was commonly said that the boy was doomed; no lawyer, even a smart one could get him off after some seemingly convincing evidence. But in the courtroom that day was no ordinary man. It was the great Lincoln, the unique humanist, who had come, jeopardizing his future career by canceling his election speech, for a great cause, even greater than his own magnificence.

"Gentlemen of the jury," began Abraham Lincoln. I am going to try this case in a manner not customary in courts. I shall not call witnesses; the little prisoner over there is all the witness I want. I shall not argue. You know that at an age when this boy's hands should have held schoolbooks or a fishing rod, they held the man's tool that was his undoing; you know how a grown man goaded the child till in desperation he used the tool at hand. All I ask is that you deal with the little fellow, as you would have other men deal in such a case with little fellows of your own at home. Before the verdict, for a second, perhaps, no one breathed in that packed mass. 'Not guilty' was the verdict.

It was a momentous victory for a great cause. The cause of tormented and exploited 'Johns' of America.

My story is an inspiration from the former. It is about the 'Asims' of Pakistan. A familiar figure in the homes of Pakistan. The not-so-lucky ones in the houses. I differentiate because cold callous concrete houses consist of ruthlessness.

For one such house, Asim worked. His mother was a widow and she washed dishes and clothes for her 'Begum Sahiba' who had suggested this couple for Asim's employment. Asim had formerly tried his hand as a motor mechanic, but as circumstances would have it, his boss had closed his workshop because of a lack of funds.

After getting the job, Asim worked for Amina and Aslam where he was required

to do all the dirty and hard jobs. To clean the bathrooms, to sweep outdoors in the harsh summer sun of Karachi. On the face of it, everything seemed fine. His masters bullied him sometimes. They would feed him with leftovers and not give him new clothes to wear, although he tore his own clothes doing the dirty work. Maybe, it was because poor Asim had not experienced the luxury of life. He could not tell that he was being dealt with severely.

Amina was a frustrated woman. Aslam had two wives and she hated sharing him with his other wife. Maybe this was the reason for her being so cruel.

One ill-fated day, Amina entered the house and heard a noise in the kitchen. A glass had slipped from Asim's hands and was in splinters.

In a rage, she ignited a matchstick and placed it on Asim's hands. He ran out, followed by Amina who seemed in a frenzy. Luckily, for him, she was heavy and could not move as fast as he.

In his mother's embrace, he told his story to his mother's mistress who listened patiently. She could not even think that Amina could do this to Asim. She was determined to amend the wrong done to him.

She went to Amina's house, but Amina completely denied that she had been cruel. She knew Amina was scared of being blamed publicly. So Asim's mother's mistress threatened Amina to compensate Asim for her ill-doings or she would go to the Police.

Amina was asked to pay a handsome amount to Asim for a lifetime owing to her attempt to burn Asim's hand, which escaped several burns because of him not losing his senses and wrapping up his hand tightly so that no air was left to blow the flame.

Asim's mother won the money and with that money Asim joined school with zeal to accomplish something and look after his mother.

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