

Fortnightly

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ABC Certified

Return of Taliban in KP

Dir, Swat residents' fear is not without reason

PTI Long March

Indecision on IK Part seems quite evident

Reviving Battered Economy

Govt faces the tough task of reviving the economy

Swat & Dir Deserve Peace



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All roads lead to Parliament

By Hammad Ghaznavi



Last week at a passing out parade at PMA Kakul, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa emphasized but one point – Pakistan's economy is in bad shape, and it needs to be fixed first, if we realistically want to realize our national goals. He emphatically warned: "The armed forces will never allow any country, group or force to politically or economically destabilize Pakistan." No prize for guessing who he was talking to.

It is for the first time that the chief has publically, though still without naming, dissuaded PTI chief Imran Khan from carrying out his Long March. It is said that the Chief was not happy with the PTI role during the floods, discouraging international donor agencies and the world at large from supporting Pakistan. He was annoyed, but kept his mum. The idea of a possibly violent Long March, however, seems unacceptable to the chief, a man who has worked hard to mitigate the country's economic woes, and played a key role in the revival of the IMF program. Reportedly, he tried to discourage Imran Khan from the Long March idea during their recent meetings at the presidency but to no avail.

That's where the army stands viz a viz the Long March. Earlier, there has been a debate whether the army will be available or not if the Long March goes violent. Unequivocally, the chief has answered the question. The contact between the two sides reportedly is not broken yet, but it seems the efforts so far for the Establishment-Imran Khan rapprochement have

been unfruitful. In fact, the chasm is visibly widening.

A million dollar question is: What is the aim of the Long March? (a specific date for the March is yet to be announced) According to Imran Khan the March is aimed at snap elections, as early as maybe. The PDM government's stance is that next general elections will be held on time, which means mid-2023. If analyzed closely, it's basically a difference of a couple of months between the two positions. The country is heading towards general elections anyway, between March and August 2023. Then why such a huge fuss? Apparently, it is difficult to fathom why are a couple of months here and there so crucial to Imran Khan? Not oft mentioned by Mr Khan, but there is another reason for the timing of the long march. It is the appointment of the next army chief due towards the November end. Imran Khan thinks his advice shall be sought in this regard though according to the constitution the appointment of the chief is the PM's prerogative. President Arif Alvi, making an effort recently to appear neutral, is trying to be the bridge between the establishment and Imran Khan. Recent meetings in the presidency between the big B and Imran are reportedly a product of his efforts. It is being realized on all sides that negotiations are the only way forward, and not the Long March. In a recent interview, Arif Alvi, deviating from Imran Khan's stance, made two important assertions: one, he was not fully convinced of the 'cypher story' and

(two) he indicated that he didn't support the PTI decision to resign from the assemblies. After all, as a facilitator of talks among the stakeholders, he has to sound neutral.

Imran Khan is being offered a fair election – a dream of a politician out of favour with the establishment. He has a fair chance of victory in the upcoming polls whenever they are held in 2023. On the other hand, the Dar phenomenon is at work, successfully controlling the dollar rate in the country, and readying to arrange some relief for the masses in the months to come. Imran fears, his popularity wave may plunge if economy begins to show signs of recovery; another reason why Imran wants an early election. But to create a level playing field some time is needed. Maryam Nawaz, Shehbaz Sharif and Hamza Shahbaz have been acquitted in different cases. Nawaz Sharif is expecting a similar treatment from the courts soon. His disqualification by the Supreme Court, however, can only be reversed by the same court; or the parliament.

In fact, parliament can solve many a problem. Long March or audio leaks are not the solution, it's the floor of the House. The chief justices of the Supreme Court and Islamabad High Court have recently advised Imran Khan to go back to the parliament. The president, like the Establishment, has endorsed the parliament route. Obviously with some face saving, it is time for PTI to return to Parliament to put in place a caretaker set up and pave the way for the next general elections.

A DG FIA in every john?

By M A Niazi

Shan Masood is a reasonable player, but surely he's not in the class of Sachin Tendulkar. Tendulkar went there in 1992, bringing an end to its prejudice against players not born in Yorkshire.

It's not always been so. Lord Hawke, the 19th century Yorkshire captain who made it Yorkshire, and with eight Championships still remains the captain with the most County Championships, was born in Lincolnshire, of all places, and only played for Yorkshire because of a residential qualification. It was a far cry from the time when a Yorkshire captain insisted on his wife being rushed to Yorkshire when she was about to give birth, because if it was a boy, the father wanted him qualified to play for Yorkshire.

One wonders if Shan is some sort of token. I mean, you've got lads of Pakistani origin with impeccable Yorkshire birth qualifications, from Bradford, who've played for Yorkshire, and who have complained how they've experienced racism in the dressing-room, including from Mark Vaughan, who was also England captain at the time.

And Shan has also got the captain's job after a stint as an ordinary overseas player. I don't know if anyone has noticed, but Shan doesn't captain his country. That's quite apart from Lord Hawke spinning in his grave, of course.

I wonder if Shan is some sort of revenge for Lord Harris. Lord Harris was another 19th/20th century cricketer, and he skippered Kent for many years. He was also Governor of Bombay in later life, and got decidedly bad reviews, being called quite simply the worst governor ever sent out to India. Now if Shan can destroy Yorkshire.

Yorkshire is trying to recoup, and has signed an agreement of sorts with the Lahore Qalandars. That's why theory had Haris Rauf as their overseas player. Of course, getting over the



racism charge will involve more than just a Pakistani captain, especially one who doesn't even captain his domestic T20 team (Multan Sultans, which he led until he was sacked, because Rizwan joined the side.) It will take at least 10 to 15 years before some Bradford kid, born to Pakistani parents, joins Yorkshire, plays for a decade, and then becomes captain.

Ranjitsinhji created the myth of the magical Indian batsman, but it should reassure Yorkshire fans of the old school that Pakistan produced Mudasar Nazar, who broke the record for the slowest century in Test cricket back in 1977-8. The tradition of dour openers, who refuse to score, and are perfectly happy to let the overs go by, was a peculiarly Yorkshire thing, exemplified by Sir Len Hutton before and after the Second World War, and then Geoff Boycott, in the 1960s through 1980s. Shan doesn't have that particular quality. But it is to be presumed that the Yorkshire Committee knows what it's about.

Cricket is not as dangerous as football, it seems, with a stampede in an Indonesian football stadium in Indonesia, Persebaya Surabaya lost 3-2 to Arema Football Club in a league match, and its supporters invaded the pitch. Then there was a stampede and 123 people were killed. It didn't help that the police used teargas. You don't have

stadium stampedes in cricket, do you?

We should hope that there are no such disasters in cricket. Two major factors seem to have been behind the disaster. First, the stadium was overcrowded, with 42,000 tickets sold against a capacity of 38,000. Second, everyone tried to get out at the same time, to avoid the teargas. It's perhaps lucky that we didn't need any audio recording of the stampede.

Imran has said that the last leaks (released on Friday) were doctored. But then there's confirmation from Bashir Memon, the former DG FIA, who admits having been in PM's Principal Secretary Azam Khan's bathroom. The hacker had threatened to leak clips involving him and a john. Memon admitted that there was an episode involving the PM, Azam Khan, him and a john.

Whatever happened, one thing is sure. There's been a lot of worry expressed about foreign visitors and their willingness to speak freely. But what about the PM's closest confidants, and perhaps the PM himself?

Everybody with a smartphone has got to worry about being hacked, but now it is clear that not even face-to-face conversations are safe. And all this has been achieved without putting a DG FIA in every john.

Swat Resists the Taliban Resurgence

The protesters' fears were about a resurgence of terrorism

By Syed Fakhar KaKaKhel

Panic spread across the entire Malakand division due to the firing on a school van in Gulli Bagh, an urban area of Swat. The incident took place when the driver, Mohammad Hussain, was picking up the children from their homes as usual. Meanwhile, an unidentified individual in a vehicle took his hand from inside the vehicle and began firing at the school van. The driver, Muhammad Hussain, died on the spot, while a student in the front seat was injured. The injured student was taken to a nearby hospital where his condition is said to be out of danger. The news of this incident spread like wildfire on local social media accounts. Dozens of people left their homes to stage protests against the killing.

The relatives of Muhammad Hussain refused to bury the body as the local police mishandled the issue. The police tried to call it personal enmity, but the family members clarified that they have no personal enmity with anyone and that the incident was purely an act of terrorism. There are already reservations among the public about the Swat sitting District Police Officer (DPO). People believe that the presence of the Taliban in the area is not being taken seriously. The local people kept the body of the deceased in Nishat Chowk and started shouting slogans. All the city's traffic was halted. After that, people from all over the district turned towards Nishat Chowk. The protest against the incident turned into a sit-in in which thousands of people participated. The protesters' fears were about a resurgence of terrorism.

Among the slogans, "We want peace" and other such slogans of disapproval of terrorism were prominent. Local political leaders also participated in the sit-in. However, when PTI MPs tried, they were prevented from addressing the sit-in. It should be noted that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, many provincial ministers of the PTI, and former federal minister Murad Saeed are also from



Swat. The people of Swat, on the other hand, held them in high regard for their cosy relationship with militants. As the number of participants in the sit-in increased, Jamaat-e-Islami senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan and ANP leaders Amil Wali Khan and Sardar Hussain Babak, along with the head of the Pakhtun Tahafuz Movement, Manzoor Pashtun, also addressed the sit-in. In their addresses to the sit-in, these leaders spoke openly about the arrival of terrorism in the region and the targeted killing of Pakhtuns. They said that law enforcers are responsible for this situation. They demanded that strict action be taken against the terrorists. This demonstration was attended by teachers, lawyers, and citizens from all walks of life. During the sit-in, private schools were closed in protest. After political leaders and local elders stepped in, the family of the driver who was killed agreed to bury him, and the protest ended peacefully.

Such incidents have taken place in Swat in the past, but this kind of reaction to the targeted killing of a person is the first in history that the region has witnessed.

After the arrival of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the activities of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan fighters in

Afghanistan gained momentum in Pakistan's bordering region. Target killing has become the norm, especially in the Bajaur district adjacent to Afghanistan. Not long ago, in an incident between Bajaur and Swat, militants targeted a member of parliament of the Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in Dir district, in which several people were killed, but the parliamentarian survived. The Pakistani Taliban arrived late through Bajaur and, after a while, they entered Swat. Then headlines were made, after which a statement was issued by the Pakistan Army that the Pakistani Taliban had gone back. Meanwhile, there were also reports that the Pakistani Taliban had reached Shangla and Kohistan after crossing the Swat valley. However, this issue was suppressed at the local level in Kohistan. The militancy in Malakand Division started with the end of Afghan Jihad. Maulana Sufi Muhammad, who belongs to the Maidan area of Dir, founded Tehreek Nifaz Sharia Muhammadi(TNSM) in 1992 after parting ways with Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). He was ideologically influenced by the "Punch Peeri" beliefs. Every year, they would block the roads connecting Malakand Division with other parts of the country, demanding the implementa-

tion of Sharia law. Many times, their movement turned violent, and the state also had to act harshly. When Mullah Fazlullah graduated from Maulana Sufi Muhammad's seminary in Dir, Sufi Muhammad made him his son-in-law by giving him the hand of his daughter.

After 9/11, when the coalition forces entered Afghanistan, Maulana Sufi Muhammad took thousands of youths from Bajaur, Dir, Swat, and other districts of Malakand to Afghanistan for Jihad. Maulana Sufi Muhammad himself and his son-in-law Mullah Fazlullah returned, but thousands of youths of the Malakand division are still missing. Here, Maulana Sufi Muhammad and Mullah Fazlullah had to spend some time in jail. After his release from prison, Mullah Fazlullah established a centre called "Mam Dheri" outside the city of Mingora, where he also started leading a mosque. At one time, in the same area, he was a minor operator of the chairlift crossing the river at Fiza Ghat. However, due to his relationship and association with Maulana Sufi Muhammad, he became a local religious leader.

In 2007, when the Red Mosque operation took place, he announced suicide attacks while addressing a gathering of thousands. He used to do his preaching through FM radio. That's why he got the name "Mullah Radio." After some time, a group of armed men gathered around him. Later on, he started threatening the Swat administration. He demanded that Sharia law be implemented in Swat. He also had the support of the residents of Swat. He targeted the policemen. His men killed dozens of policemen. Women were banned from going out. Gradually, control of Swat came into his hands. He established check posts in Swat. He joined the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). He silenced the voices of his opponents in the area with targeted killings. Most of the victims were Awami National Party leaders and workers. Then came a time when the police completely disappeared from Mingora city, the capital of District Swat. Police officers, civilians, and even women were slaughtered. Their dead bodies were displayed in the very centre of the city.

In 2009, there was an operation against them. Maulana Sufi Muhammad was

arrested, while Mullah Fazlullah fled to Afghanistan. From there, he targeted Malala Yousafzai and became the head of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, while also claiming responsibility for the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar. After that, he was killed in a drone strike. Mufti Noor Wali, the current head of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, assumed the leadership of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan after his death. Last year, when the Taliban took over the government in Afghanistan, the Pakistani government also adopted the path of negotiations with the Pakistani Taliban. During the negotiations, the Pakistani Taliban announced an indefinite



ceasefire. Reports of clashes were received during this time too. There was also a clause in the proposed agreement that the Pakistani Taliban would return to their respective areas to live peacefully. However, when the Taliban started arriving in Swat before any agreement could be reached, people started protesting in Malakand.

There are three main reasons for such a reaction. One is that the people still remember the atrocities of the Taliban in the past. They go into trauma with the name of the Taliban. In any case, the people of Malakand do not want the Pakistani Taliban to return. Another important aspect is the "badal", or revenge, in it. Pakhtuns have a culture and history of revenge for murder. As long as they do not forgive their enemy, the revenge for the

murder continues for generations. No matter how many massacres the Taliban have committed, it is necessary to take revenge for the killing of relatives of the slain members. That is why they want the Taliban from their areas to stay away.

Another important reason is the Pakhtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM). Due to this movement, there is intense hatred against the Taliban and militancy in Pakhtunkhwa, especially in the areas affected by terrorism. The demand of this movement has been peace, and in this regard, they put all the responsibility of establishing peace on the state.

The third and most important reason is the integration of tribal areas into Pakhtunkhwa. After this merger, the support and sympathies for extremists and jihadists in FATA have decreased significantly. Extremism feels threatened after the arrival of the police and judicial system in these areas. In addition, internet access has become legal in these areas. This is the reason that there has been a lot of awareness among the people, especially among the youth. For this reason, the youth avoid going towards extremism.

This is the background against which the people of Swat and Malakand show a strong reaction to the presence of the Taliban and even to an individual incident, which was natural in the given context.

Talks with Taliban are suspended

PTI critics in the province say that the party's loneliness is because of its rude and inflexible political behaviour towards its opponents during the last decade of government in the province

By Mehmood Jan Babar



All of the political groups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the ruling PTI, have different ideas about how to deal with the growing threat of terrorism. The Taliban claim that they are getting more and more involved in society. In one of their official statements, they said that they killed a man in Lahore, Punjab, as well as in Swat, Waziristan, Bannu, and the suburbs of Peshawar (HassanKhel in FR Peshawar).

Both sides, the State of Pakistan and the Tehreek-e-Taliban, have been fighting on several fronts for the last few weeks, but still, they are reluctant to declare that they are again in a full-fledged war. Even the TTP, which had announced a very public truce to honour the Pakistani tribal elders who were visiting Kabul in a traditional way, is sticking to its claims that it is not attacking and is only using its right to defend itself and get revenge.

The third and most advantageous stakeholder in all these phenomena is the ruling PTI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which has clearly distanced itself from the burden of the new situation. For the first time, a ruling party is making hue-and-cry before the opposition groups in a difficult situation. The party has linked the re-emergence of the Taliban in the Swat Valley to an effort to malign and weaken its provincial government and the party's goodwill in the province. But, despite all the PTI's strong voices, the rest of the political forces in the province show no sympathy for them.

For the first time in the history of the province, the current KP government has failed to create harmony amongst the political forces against terrorism, which is completely in the negation of what their predecessors did in the past. A clearer example of this arose during the same situation back in the MMA government in 2002-08, when all the political forces were on the same page and united.

The disagreements between PTI Chairman Imran Khan and the establishment about changing the government in Islamabad have also helped the party's leadership in hilly Swat come up with a very strong story.

"We, through exemplary governance, have developed this city and the surrounding heavenly beautiful towns for the bright future and

peaceful life of our children. That is why we are being forced to burn in the same fire. "We don't want to hear a freshly fabricated story to believe in; we want answers to our questions," said Murad Saeed, a PTI MNA and former federal minister in Imran Khan's cabinet, at a press conference.

PTI critics in the province say that the party's loneliness is because of its rude and inflexible political behaviour towards its opponents during the last decade of government in the province. They also blame the KP government for making tall false claims rather than utilising the available force (Police, FC, etc.) on hand to counter the threat.

The charged anti-Taliban crowds at the popular Nishat Chowk in Mingora, the main city of Swat, have become a permanent feature after the emergence of the Taliban on the highest peaks of the adjacent hills of Matta, Chaprial, etc. The political parties, except the ruling PTI, have rarely missed any opportunity to denounce the spread of terrorism again in the highly affected area. Participants in these crowds blame the state and the KP government of PTI for the new situation. Almost every speaker in all the processions so far has pledged to fight the terrorists if the governments are not fulfilling their duties. We, the speakers of these protest gatherings, will not spend another night outside of our houses as IDPs, nor will we accept any excuse for the presence of the Taliban in Swat.

Barrister Saif, the Chief Minister's advisor and the man who led several long negotiations sessions with the TTP in Kabul, had also officially confirmed the presence of 300 Taliban and their sympathisers in Swat before they were apprehended. He, while talking to this scribe, confirmed that the talks with the TTP in Kabul are at present rather suspended after three different happenings in Afghanistan and Pakistan. "Some attacks on TTP leadership in Afghanistan, a drone attack on Aiman al-Zawahiri, and the Taliban attacks in Pakistan have shaken the trust level on both sides," he added. But we are still hopeful for the outcome of the talks sessions in Kabul, Barrister Saif said.

As soon as word got out that the Taliban were there, the army and local police were seen patrolling the peaks to keep the area safe.

The last terrorist attack on a school van in Guli Bagh has fueled the already fragile situation, which has invited the wrath of the locals. The driver of the vehicle was dead, while two kids were injured. Still, no one knows why this happened, and local police haven't been able to find a solid reason or justification for the attack through better investigation.

But this incident has alarmed the locals and citizens of the rest of the province. Almost every political party's leadership rushed to the Nishat Chowk to protest the brutal attack. Except for the leaders of the ruling PTI, everyone from Swat and other parts of the province was honoured on stage. Participants were angry enough and chanted anti-PTI slogans when the stage was given to the party representatives.

Understanding Pakistan's Taliban

Some of the demands raised by the TTP, including the reversal of the FATA-KP and permission for TTP to carry arms in ex-FATA, were too much of an ask for the state and predictably prevented a breakthrough

By Dr Raza Khan Qazi

Of late, there have been some key developments in Pakistan's indigenous war on terror. The largest of the militant-terrorist outfits, the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has announced an end to an indefinite ceasefire with state forces that had been in place for several months. For its part, the government has declared that it has not renounced its truce with the TTP. A top commander of the group has been killed in Afghanistan. The Taliban-ruled Kabul is seen actively supporting the re-emergence of the Pakistani Taliban in Swat-Malakand and Waziristan regions of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. Mass protests have taken place in Swat against the regrouping of the TTP. The government strategists have apparently decided to start launch new offensives against the militants-terrorists in the Malakand division and Tirah valley of Khyber district. All these developments are very important. What are the bigwigs of the TTP thinking? Why have they opted to regroup now?

Incidents involving Pakistani Taliban using bases in Afghanistan to launch attacks in Pakistan have been on the rise since the US-backed Afghan government was overthrown by the Afghan Taliban in August 2021. The Taliban regime is seen extending support to the TTP and has advised Pakistan to negotiate with its leaders. Several rounds of talks were held between May and July between a Pakistan-sponsored jirga including tribal chieftains, top Pakistani clerics, government officials and an adviser to the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa chief minister. The inclusion of independent clerics was apparently meant to imply that Pakistan was a Muslim state and jihad could not be waged against it. Whether convinced or not, the TTP did initially announce an 'indefinite' ceasefire. It also promised a permanent one once a broad agreement was reached between the two sides.

However, some of the demands raised by the TTP, including the reversal of the



merger of what used to be Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with the KP under the 25th Constitutional Amendment, the withdrawal of security forces and permission for the returning TTP fighters to carry arms were too much of an ask for the state and predictably prevented a breakthrough. In the meantime, the killing of a top TTP commander, Omar Khalid Khorasani along with three others in an IED blast in Afghanistan soon after a round of talks made progress difficult. While the TTP has announced an end to the ceasefire, so far, they have not issued a detailed statement scrapping the idea of negotiations.

Irrespective of the outcome of the talks and a possible truce between the two sides, what leaders of the militant-terrorist group have on their minds is important. This may be analysed in the context of the evolution of the group, its tactics and its narrative.

Pakistani Taliban leaders have time and again claimed that their struggle is mainly aimed at establishing an 'Islamic' state, a euphemism for an ultra-radical clerical state in the country.

It is important to note that after the December 2014 APS massacre in Peshawar in which more than 150 school children and staff members were gunned down by terrorists, Pakistan launched sweeping military

offensives against the group. By 2016, the group had been largely uprooted in most parts of their home turf in the tribal areas. Cracks had also started appearing in the TTP and its head Fazlullah had perished in a drone strike in Afghanistan. Significant losses in Swat-Malakand and tribal regions, described as tactical retreat by militant commanders, had resulted in a transition and change in leadership. The bits of reliable information coming out of TTP ranks suggest that important deliberations are going on within the movement. However, the focus is not on a re-evaluation of objective(s), rather a reassessment of tactics and strategy is under way. The reports, analysed in the historical perspective, suggest the groups are considering strengthening their links with non-Taliban Islamist militant outfits and some religious parties to enlist broader public support. The somewhat new strategy is aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the insurgency and garnering greater public-political support.

The so-called Taliban groups had started emerging in 2004 as disparate violent elements in the country's borderlands, widely believed to have helped the Afghan Taliban regime fight the ISAF and the NATO forces and enabled the latter to recapture power by August 2022. These groups have gradually organised themselves into a clerical-terrorist move-

ment, setting its sights on establishing a puritanical state.

The Afghan and Pakistani Taliban have a common Pashtun ethnicity. The predominantly Pashtun Afghan Taliban Movement had a clear aim of re-establishing its dislodged (what they perceived) Islamic Emirate (1996-2001) in a Pashtun-majority Afghanistan. Its leaders had justified their resistance to US-NATO forces as an Islamist and nationalist liberation struggle. Pashtuns are the second largest ethnic group in Pakistan. The Pakistani Taliban's activities against the Pakistani security forces in Pakistan, can't be described as a Pakistani or Pashtun nationalist struggle. Having said that, the TTP does associate itself with the Afghan Taliban on the basis of their common ethnicity and some Pakistani Taliban have tended to regard Afghanistan and Pashtun-dominated regions of Pakistan a single geographical entity.

Pakistani Taliban leaders have time and again claimed that their struggle is mainly aimed at establishing an 'Islamic' state, a euphemism for an ultra-radical clerical state in the country. Muslim Khan, an important spokesman of the Taliban, had on one occasion even said that his organisation aimed to establish the governance of Taliban not only in Pakistan but also over the whole world starting with the Indian subcontinent.



The Pakistani Taliban not only have political objectives but for years enjoyed control over vast areas. Baitullah Mehsud (2007-2009) had established a so-called Islamic Emirate of Waziristan. His group and successors have wanted to impose their conception of an Islamic caliphate on Pakistan. Before being crushed by state forces in 2016 they had established crude and ruthless governance structures including so-called Islamic courts and prisons in the areas under their control in North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Orakzai, Bajaur, Khyber and Swat. Noticeably, the Pakistani Taliban's success in controlling and governing small territories has not been a part of their ultimate agenda. They have had a wider political agenda of establishing an Islamic Emirate (state) a la

Afghan Taliban's emirate (1996-2001) in Pakistan. The formation of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan was meant to attain this political end.

The TTP had unleashed a wave of terrorist attacks in Pakistan seemingly to incapacitate the Pakistani state with the aim of creating space. To translate this strategy into action it believed it necessary to attack state institutions and security personnel including the soldiers, civilian administrations, the police and the parliament. There were clear attempts to intimidate traditional political and societal elites. In the process it killed more than 70,000 Pakistanis including security forces personnel.

Courtesy THE NEWS



Merged Tribal Districts and the Need for Inclusion

The existing strategies devoid of any comprehensive and elaborate policy to develop the MTDs have failed

For the last several years, one of the main concerns for Pakistan has been how to mainstream and develop the Merged Tribal Districts (MTDs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, formerly known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Because the region, comprising the districts, has been the mainspring of unprecedented militancy and terrorism in Pakistan, causing large-scale insecurity and instability in the country. Developing logically resulting in mainstreaming the ultra-remote MTDs has been a gigantic task for the state, and even after the passage of more than four years, this has not been satisfactorily achieved. This has led to the return of militant and terrorist groups, especially the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which was almost defeated by Pakistani security forces in sweeping operations in 2016. It has also made most people in MTD and those who have moved within the country (called IDPs) more unhappy.

In our previous article on the situation in the MTDs, the objective on-the-ground situation in the region was analysed. This article is about the most appropriate and viable policies with doable strategies to bring about development in the MTDs, keeping in view the specific socio-economic and political-psychological context of the region. When discussing the concept of development, we generally think of an improvement in our standard of living. While improving the life standard is ultimately the end product of development, the concept itself is very complex. Development is a complex phenomenon because it is multifaceted or has various dimensions. By development, we mean the improvement in the infrastructure, including buildings, highways, roads, bridges, railway tracks, etc.

Development also equally means socio-economic development, like opportunities for upward social mobility and economic mobility, including moving from rural to urban areas, taking up any business, or setting up any enterprise. Development, more importantly, means personality and psychological development. Moreover, all



these above-mentioned forms of development, i.e., infrastructure, socio-economic, and personality development, are not possible without political development in the form of democratic institutionalisation and democratic consolidation. In terms of MTDs or the development of the former FATA, it should be in all of these ways.

So far, Pakistani strategists dealing with the MTDs have failed to comprehend that development in the region is ought to be in a blanket form and uplift in bits and pieces or in certain specific geographic or conceptual areas won't work. So, it hasn't worked, even though billions of dollars from taxpayers and foreign donors have been spent on MTDs.

The Way Forward

Now the question arises that the existing strategies devoid of any comprehensive and elaborate policy to develop the MTDs have failed, so what to do next? In this way, the following strategies are suggested for the development of ex-FATA, taking into account the fact that development has many different aspects and that the region is what it is.

The foremost strand of development policy in the MTDs must be based on the fact that development without security is not

possible and security without development is not achievable. Although physical security in the MTDs was somewhat restored after successful military operations against groups like the TTP and Al Qaeda, the situation is far from ideal. If one talks to a resident of the tribal region, he is highly apprehensive about his personal and family security while living there.

On the other hand, IDPs from the MTDs have mostly refused to return because, in their opinion, there is a large-scale threat to their lives; therefore, they refuse to return despite the loss of their unmovable property. IDPs, in particular, are profoundly fearful of the militants' and terrorists' threats and the state's perceived inability to provide protection. According to different surveys of IDPs in the MTDs done by the Social Welfare and Women's Development Department, KP, and some NGOs, more than 60% of IDPs in the MTDs don't want to go back to their homes, mostly because they don't feel safe there and don't have the basic amenities and facilities, they need to live a good life.

What must the state have done in this situation? An ideal security environment may not be created in the MTDs at once and, rationally speaking, could not be for years to come through successful military offensives. So, the best thing to do is to have

large-scale development, which would give most people, if not all, the security they need.

Security in the MTDs or any region on the globe is directly related to and dependent upon the writ of the state there. Again, there may have been successful military operations against the militants and terrorists in the MTDs, but the state writ leaves a lot to be desired. However, there is a very important reason for the absence of the state writ in the MTDs. This is the inability of the government to set up a local government system in the tribal region. Local governments (LGs) or municipal authorities are the building blocks of state or governmental writ anywhere, and they are especially important in MTDs.

Despite that and even the draught LG system for the former FATA region, a separate and specific LG system was not devised for the region. In some of the tribal districts, local government elections were held in the first and second phases in December 2021 and April 2022, respectively.

But these elections are merely ceremonial. The MTDs needed a specific local government system based upon the objective realities and the extensively tribal social structure there in order to provide service delivery to the local residents and look after their developmental needs. In fact, the merger of the former FATA with the KP was very controversial. Many political and civil society groups, including the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), which is one of the most important parties in the area, opposed it and called for it to be undone. There was and is a lot of logic behind the argument for making the former FATA a separate province, keeping in view the very peculiar sociocultural environment over there.

However, that argument was rejected and the region was merged into the KP province through the 25th Constitutional Amendment in 2018. However, since then, while the MTDs have not achieved any significant development, the alarming conditions have spread to the rest of the KP, resulting in stagnating its process of development and also affecting the law-and-order situation in the rest of the country. So, for the growth of the region, it must be possible

to undo the merger of MTDs.

Any policy should have taken into account the region's tribal social structure changing. This social structure is ultra-conservative and profoundly reactionary. Bringing about change and development within the umbrella of such a social structure is next to impossible. A close examination of the ex-FATA social structure reveals that it has been the cause of many issues there. Therefore, policymakers have to look for ways and means to transform this ultra-reactionary social structure. Again, it becomes very important to know how to effect change in this structure.



The first way to transform social structures in the MTDs is to impart modern education on a war footing to the residents of the region. In this connection, the government should not wait for years to construct more and more schools in order to admit out-of-school children. The government should make use of all the government buildings, including secretariats and administrative offices, in the evening and night to impart education to left-out children. Providing education to the children of MTDs alone would not be sufficient for the region's express development. There is a great need to educate the adult population, whose majority, particularly women, are illiterate. This adult education should be imparted by making use of all the government and community infrastructure and resources. The curricula for adult education in the MTDs must be very carefully designed and shall include topics like the

importance of development, democracy, participation, the rule of law, economic entrepreneurship, industrialization, human rights, science, and logical reasoning. This would go a long way toward transforming their worldviews and would be instrumental in broadening their mental horizons. This would in turn help them to understand that life is not a burden to be shifted to others or gotten rid of but to live it decently.

The second way to transform the ultra-conservative social structure of MTDs would be to establish a few sizable cities there. The government has been working on some plans to develop townships in and around

the existing tribal district headquarters, but that has been and would be a futile exercise. For the all-round socio-economic development of the region, some big, totally new cities need to be established. Not only would these cities provide a much-needed setting for a modern economy based on possible industries and service sectors, especially in education, transportation, and information and communication technology, but they would also be a great place to live.

If the above-mentioned policy steps aren't taken and the current policy, if there is one, about MTDs isn't changed, the development of the region will remain a pipe dream. This will cause more suffering for the people who live there and will have serious effects on the development of KP and the stability of Pakistan.

By Dr Raza Khan Qazi

New Units

Is it necessary to have more small units with more financial, administrative, and legislative powers?

By Ahmad Waleed

The devolution of power, more autonomy to provinces, and the need for new administrative units are the topics that have been in discussion since the inception of Pakistan. The provinces have been asking for more freedom to use their resources for the good of their people, but the federal government hasn't given it much thought.

In 2010, the Parliament of Pakistan passed the 18th Amendment with the full support of the political parties in the country. The long-standing demand of the people of Pakistan for provincial autonomy has come to execution, and the provinces have at the same time been provided legitimate constitutional rights in governance and in managing and utilisation of their natural resources.'

It was a giant step towards the development of the provinces and the utilisation of their resources. But the question is whether that step was sufficient to grant more rights to people living in different units of the country, or if they were given complete control over the fate of their regions. There are varied opinions about how to establish more administrative units in the country. Many believe that the main objective of creating new districts/units in Pakistan has been primarily political and linguistic in order to strengthen the political clout, which has only helped the powerful political families, not the common folks. One recent example is the Chaudhrys of Gujrat in Punjab, who gave the district the status of a division only for political reasons and to gain political power.

It's been decades since the debate about creating a new province – South Punjab – has continued without concrete results. All the major parties have been promising the people of the Siraiki belt that they will get the status of a province soon. Several resolutions have been passed in the National and Provincial Assemblies. Lately, the Punjab government under PTI rule tried to create a separate secretariat in the southern part of the province, but it has failed to resolve problems faced by the people living in those areas. For several decades, the powerful political families in Punjab have



been exploiting their respective voters in the name of creating a South Punjab province. The basic purpose behind their narrative was not, seemingly, beyond gathering the support of their voters to win elections. There is a need to create awareness among the masses to vote differently too. If not, giving tribal and political leaders with a lot of power in their own areas full control could make it easier for the strong political elite who have ruled those areas for centuries to take advantage of the common people.

There are two major reasons that are considered crucial: ethnic and administrative. On administrative grounds, some experts think that the grievances of the population in remote areas of traveling long distances to get their routine jobs done can be removed by introducing e-governance facilities for service delivery in different departments, as is being done in many developed countries. They think that, unlike India, Pakistan does not have many ethnic groups. With a few exceptions, it doesn't make sense to add more units based on ethnicity.

Others believe there is a dire need to divide the country into 20 or more units to provide administrative, financial, and legislative powers to the people of those areas to lessen reliance on the federal government in their internal affairs. For this reason, they also stress how important it is to set up a strong,

financially stable system of local government.

Unfortunately, the biggest hurdles in the devolution of power to the stage of collecting taxes at the local level and resolving people's problems at the council level are none other than powerful politicians. These politicians do not want even minor issues to be handled by a local government representative. They want total control over all petty issues so that the residents turn to them for the resolution of these small problems. That is the reason that all the major political parties in the country have always been reluctant to hold local body elections.

Moreover, the state institutions have always been interfering in different regions of the country in the name of security concerns, which shows that they also don't want the creation of more administrative units that are more independent in their decision-making. Even though the 18th Amendment only needs minor changes, the powers that be are now openly against it and want it repealed, reversed, changed, or made toothless.

In the larger national interest, is it necessary to have more small units with more financial, administrative, and legislative powers? This will not only help create competition among the units in terms of delivery, but they can also play their role in the progress of the country.

All Eyes on Imran Khan as he prepares to March on the Capital

Security high alert in Islamabad as preparations for PTI's long march enter the final stage



By Tahir Niaz

Imran Khan seems to be in a situation of 'To be, or not to be'. Indecision on his part is quite evident. He couldn't decide on the right time to hold his anti-government long march even as months passed. His supporters, political observers, and even the ruling alliance, PDM appears to be confused over what Imran Khan would opt for in the coming days. He has been asking his supporters to prepare for the anti-government campaign for months with no specific date and strategy in this regard. At every public rally, Imran Khan gives a new venue for announcing the date and strategy for his anti-government movement but it couldn't happen so far. Still, all eyes are on Imran Khan as the country's politics revolves around his much-awaited announcement for the long march.

Imran Khan's announcement is set to trigger major political events in the country. He is quite desperate to send the incumbent government home yet reluctant to start his anti-government long march. Indecision on his part is

quite obvious. According to the sources in the PTI, the party is waiting for 'good news' and holding the announcement pertaining to the long march for the time being. They didn't rule out some behind-the-scenes negotiations on the timeframe for the next elections. On the other hand, Imran Khan is using 'lack of 'preparations as an excuse for the delay in the announcement. In the meantime, the PTI is pressurizing the government to leave its seat and also successfully engaging its supporters to prepare for the movement. The party also seems confused over the issue of resignations from the national assembly. Islamabad High Court is hearing the case of resignations of 10 PTI members.

Imran Khan is not letting a day go by without criticizing the government for settling their cases in the courts "through amendments in the NAB laws" and inefficiency that, he believes, led to price-hike and rising utility bills. The PTI Chairman is not going to budge against the political odds, it

seems. He is rather challenging the government with full force to leave the seat of power and announce a date for snap polls.

On the other hand, the government — instead of preferring table talks — is preparing to stop the PTI's 'onslaught' with force. As Imran Khan continues to build momentum for the party's upcoming march, the ruling coalition has decided to bar the PTI chief from storming the federal capital, warning that no one would be allowed to break the law. Bani Gala to be made a 'sub-jail' if Imran Khan announces a sit-in from there, sources within the government claim.

As part of the preparations to stop Khan, the authorities have sealed routes leading to the Red Zone. The Islamabad Capital Police has gathered more than 1,100 containers, with hundreds delivered to the federal capital police already. The government thinks that such preparations would prevent the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's



'Haqeeqi Azadi March' from entering the federal capital. According to government sources, the capital will be completely sealed for a week following PTI chief Imran Khan's announcement of a confirmed date for the march. Schools and colleges will be shut down for this duration and all exams will be postponed. Sources claimed that 25,000 additional personnel will be brought to the capital to complement the ranks of the capital police. The government will also provide around 50,000 rubber bullets and more than 60,000 tear gas shells to security forces in addition to 10 drones. Security agencies have reportedly prepared lists for the arrest of PTI workers and leaders in advance.

At the same time, the PML-N has toughened its line against the long march. The party leadership has condemned the plan of assault on Islamabad by the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and decided that the miscreants would be dealt with an iron hand. The party described the long march plan as an atrocious conspiracy. This conspiracy will be crushed with the full force of law, party leadership stated, giving the party president and the prime minister of Pakistan the authority to take all decisions.

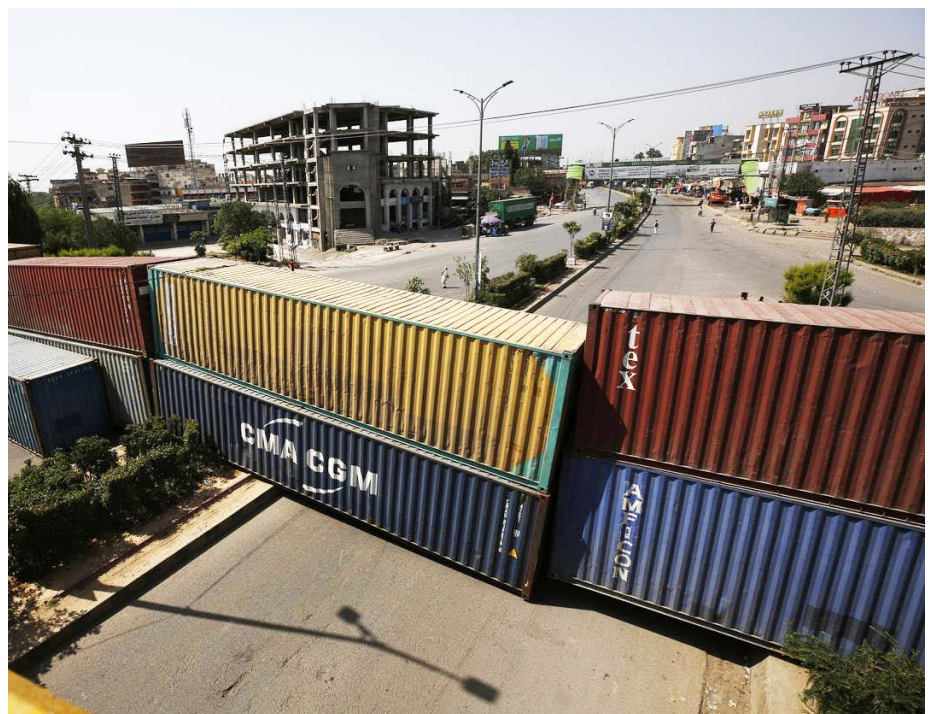
On Monday, October 10, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) approved an initial budget of over Rs410 million to deal with the participants of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf long march with an iron hand. The ECC took up two separate summaries moved by the Interior Ministry to seek a budget for dealing with the PTI's long march. According to the finance ministry, the ECC approved a supplementary grant of Rs410.2 million in favor of the Ministry of Interior for expenses relating to law and order. The Rs410.2 million was the estimated cost of preparations to deal with the protestors, including the deployment of a 30,000-strong force, their meal, transportation, anti-riot gear, and surveillance of the protestors. The ECC was informed that to maintain the law and order situation and ensure effective security measures, 30,000 out-district law-enforcement agency personnel had been requisitioned for performing special security duties in Islamabad Capital Territory. The ECC approved Rs259 million for hiring vehicles and containers, Rs35 million for food, Rs31.2

million for fuel cost, and Rs18 million for anti-riot gear. Rs2.5 million has been sanctioned for arranging the residence of this personnel for five days and another Rs64.4 million for the purchase and installation of security cameras and other related equipment.

The PTI's much-awaited long march to the federal capital might finally be happening in October end or at the start of November. The former prime minister has recently held meetings with his party's office-bearers in different provinces wherein he issued them instructions to prepare for the upcoming march. The Islamabad High Court on

stirs the 'political storm' in the country. If things have to be decided on the streets, a head-on coalition seems imminent and the situation may go out of control. Unfortunately, the leadership of the country seems oblivious to the looming threat over the country in the shape of unrest, anarchy, and economic meltdown.

The political tussle seems to have entered into a phase of the psychological battle with both sides coming up with more and more threats and warnings to each other. Both sides believe that this one may be the final round of the bout. Resultantly, both sides are aggressive and put full energies and



Monday dismissed a PTI application against the imposition of section 144 of the Cr.Pc in Islamabad's capital territory as the party takes it as a hurdle in its long march.

Security is on high alert in Islamabad as the government is on move to deal with the PTI long march. Tensions are running high between the PML-N-led government and its rival PTI which is striving for early elections. Meanwhile, the federal government has asked the provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa to abstain from becoming a 'tool' in paving the way for chaos in the country.

Things are moving swiftly ahead of the PTI's long march. Hardly anyone can guess how things would unfold once Imran Khan

resources to achieve the respective objectives but at the same time, both are cautious. Both the ruling alliance and the PTI believe that there would be no space and time for the loser to reorganize things.

As both the warring sides are moving at a faster speed to achieve their respective goals, no one from the saner elements is coming up to defuse the situation. A country with a crumbling economy cannot afford the scenes that one can easily predict to be happening in the coming days if things continue to move the same way. The situation demands that saner elements prevail before anarchy and unrest engulf the country and the nation continues suffering from inflation and unemployment.



Which way is the pendulum swinging?

Sharif's return to the country has always remained a question since his departure

By Sarfraz Raja

The weather is changing in the capital, as so is the politics here. Winter has started knocking at the doors while the weather is becoming clear for some political skies. Those who were facing trials in prisons are now getting acquittals and clean chits. Those who were facing exile are coming back to business. Some sudden and surprise happenings are hitting the political arena of the country like an unpredicted storm.

Relief by the courts

Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, Hamza Shehbaz, Khawaja Asif, Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Sanaullah, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Miftah Ismail, Saad Rafiq, and literally no one from the first and second tiers of leadership who did not face the music. All of them remained behind the bar for months or years. These cases are alleged to be moves of political victimisation against PMLN by Imran Khan's government using the National Accountability Bureau to serve political purposes, and in fact, in some cases, the courts remarked almost the same. But in recent months, PMLN leaders have started to get some relief from the courts.

Ahsan Iqbal, who was facing a reference filed by NAB accusing him of misusing authority by funding a provincial government project in Naroval Sports City, was arrested by NAB in December 2019 and remained in custody for two months. The two-member bench of the Islamabad high court accepted the acquittal plea filed by the federal minister and secretary general of PMLN.

PMLN's economic wizard Ishaq Dar's return to the country is also a major development in the current political scenario for the party and for the allied government too, which is tackling severe challenges on the economic front. Dar was in self-exile for five years as he was declared absconder in a case of assets beyond means after his arrest warrant, which was issued in December 2017 and he couldn't even take the oath of his senatorship for about four



years. The Accountability court had suspended outstanding arrest warrants against him, paving the way for his return from London. He is now appearing before the court in his case and also looking after the affairs of the finance ministry, replacing his party colleague Miftah Ismail as the minister.

The most important relief PMLN got was for Maryam Nawaz, in which the Islamabad high court set aside the conviction of the daughter of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and her spouse, Capt. Safdar, handed down by the accountability court in the Avenfield apartments reference four years back. In 2018, the accountability court sentenced Maryam to seven years in prison and a two-million-pound fine. She and her husband were released on bail while their appeal was heard in court.

Maryam Nawaz's acquittal is also important in reference to her father Nawaz Sharif's case, who was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment in the same case. The top leadership of the PMLN is hopeful that Maryam Nawaz's acquittal will pave the way for the termination of Nawaz Sharif's sentence, as nothing has been proven against Maryam by the NAB, and the same will be true in Nawaz Sharif's case.

Nawaz Sharif is expected to return

He would come back not only to Pakistan but in politics too. That's what the PMLN leadership claims. Nawaz Sharif, the party leader and three-time prime minister of the country, has been in London for about three years after a severe deterioration of his health in Lahore prison. He was allowed to go for treatment in London on the removal of his name from the exit control list by the PTI government.

His return to the country has always remained a question since his departure, but now there are some indicators showing signs of his return. PMLN sources say that they were waiting for the decision on the appeal of Maryam Nawaz against her sentence, as her appeal had been accepted and she had gotten a decision in her favor. Nawaz Sharif had also been charged in the same case, so strong chances are that Nawaz Sharif could also get relief, but for that the court has already put a condition that first Nawaz Sharif has to surrender before the court. So he may now return, appear in court, and possibly get a clean chit; a strategy is being devised in this regard, according to party sources.



Eligibility to return to politics

Ishaq Dar, after five years of self-exile, has now become fully active in politics and government affairs. Maryam Nawaz, after termination of her sentence, also becomes eligible to contest elections and would certainly be a candidate for PMLN in the coming elections. PMLN sources say that the party is working on legal options for the return and participation of Nawaz Sharif in politics. In its orders in July 2017, the Supreme Court declared Nawaz Sharif disqualified for life under article 62/1/f of the constitution of Pakistan. This article determines that any person couldn't be a member of parliament unless he is sagacious, righteous, non-profligate, honest, and amenable, and there being no declaration contrary to the court of law.

There is no specific time period for that disqualification mentioned in this article, so the apex court in Nawaz Sharif's case has interpreted it as a disqualification for life. There is a proposal under discussion that, through subordinate legislation under this article of the constitution, an act could be passed by parliament through a simple majority to determine a maximum limit of disqualification. However, there are some differences; some legal experts believe that it could only be done through a constitutional amendment that required a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament and that any legislation other than this could become controversial and be challenged in court. Another option is to



get this clarification through a new order of the court. What might happen on this matter is under serious discussion, and besides Nawaz Sharif, Jahangir Khan Tareen is another important political player who could rejoin parliamentary politics if this could happen.

The leaks affected

The country has been under the storm of some audio leaks for the last few weeks, keeping everyone on their toes as nobody knows what is coming next. Initially, there were some leaks of conversations between prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and his core cabinet team regarding the acceptance of PTI MNA's resignations and a meeting between Shehbaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz. Then comes the turn of PTI, who were earlier celebrating PMLN audio leaks, which actually were much more serious and were released in phases by some unknown

hackers. In this audio, Imran Khan could be heard discussing the issue of cyphers with his important ministers, telling them how to play with that matter without naming the United States as part of an alleged conspiracy. The government has announced an inquiry into the matter of how these audios were recorded and who is behind all these leaks, calling it a security breach of all important offices of the prime minister and also against what they called PTI's alleged conspiracy to use the cypher card for their own benefit and damaging the country on the diplomatic front. The leaks series continues and not only the cypher but some alleged conversions of Imran Khan show his involvement in alleged horse trading to save his seat. Government parties are using the audio leaks as a trump card against Imran Khan and his team in order to demolish all of the narratives he built following his removal from the Prime Ministership.

Changing political scenarios

Although Imran Khan is enjoying the peak of his popularity in recent times after his removal as prime minister, the office is successfully using the narrative of an alleged regime change conspiracy. But independent experts believe that the political scenario is changing as a series of audio leaks could damage Imran Khan's image and popularity, but on the other hand, the return of PMLN's top leadership in politics, including Maryam Nawaz and Ishaq Dar, could swing the political pendulum, especially in coming months. If PMLN could be able to bring back Quaid-Nawaz Sharif to the country and politics before the general elections, it could definitely be a game changer.





The Next Chief of Pakistan

Of the ten army chiefs the country has had since 1972, five were appointed by PML-N supremo Mian Nawaz Sharif in separate tenures as prime minister



By Noor Aftab

Now it is time for the coalition government to make what is likely to be one of the toughest calls of its tenure: whom to appoint as the next Chief of Army Staff. Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa has made it clear that he would leave after the completion of his second three-year term in two months. He also stated that the armed forces have distanced themselves from politics and would play their role within the ambit of the constitution.

According to Article 243(3) of the Constitution, the president appoints the services chiefs on the recommendation of the prime minister. Four of the six top Lt-Gens at the time of Gen Bajwa's retirement will be from the same batch, while a fifth is senior to almost the entire lot.

The Schedule V-A of the Rules of Business, which elaborates on the cases to be presented to the prime minister for his approval, states that: "[... the appointment of, and

above the rank of, lieutenant-general in the army and equivalent ranks in the other Defence Services will be made by the prime minister in consultation with the president."

The manner in which this process plays out, however, is less clearly defined in the rule books. There are also no clear criteria for promotion, other than the vague requirement that the general chosen to lead the army should have been in charge of a corps.

The tradition is that General Headquarters (GHQ) sends a list of the four to five senior-most lieutenant-generals, along with their personnel files, to the Ministry of Defence, which then forwards them to the prime minister to pick the officer he finds best suited to the role.

The defence ministry can vet the names before presenting them to the prime minister, but that does not usually happen, and the ministry acts merely as a post office.

The credentials of the generals are then deliberated upon either at the Prime Minister's Office or in the cabinet. The matter comes down to the prime minister's informal consultation with the outgoing army chief, his own perceptions, and his discussions with his closest advisors.

Of the ten army chiefs the country has had since 1972, five were appointed by PML-N supremo Mian Nawaz Sharif in separate tenures as prime minister. Bajwa, still 61, could therefore be eligible for another term. This technicality has led to speculation that the incumbent may be seeking or interested in another extension. In a dramatic somersault, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan said the process of appointing the next army chief should be deferred till after the next general elections. He said Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa should be given an extension until the new government is elected because, according to him, the coalition government



should not be allowed to appoint a new Army Chief.

He alleged that they wanted to bring their own army chief as they were afraid that if a strong and patriotic army chief was appointed, then he would ask them about the looted wealth.

The PTI chief drew a strong reaction from the army when he accused both the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of seeking the appointment of army chief of their choice in a bid to save their skin from corruption cases.

His proposal showed that Imran Khan had realised that he needed more time to oust the government, so, therefore, he never wanted the new army chief to be appointed by the ruling coalition. He understood that general elections could not be held before November. That was why he demanded a short extension in Bajwa's tenure till April to appoint a new army chief of his choice.

General Qamar's six-year tenure ends in late November, and the chief military spokesperson had already clarified that the current army chief had no intention of seeking a further extension.

Four of the six senior lieutenant-generals at the time of Gen. Bajwa's retirement are from the same batch. The list of senior army generals includes the names of Lt-Gen Asim Munir, Lt-Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Lt-Gen Azhar Abbas, Lt-Gen Nauman Mehmood, Lt-Gen Faiz Hamid, and Lt-Gen Mohammad Amir.

Before choosing the next army chief, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif talked to PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif and his close friends.

The army chief is not the only four-star position that will fall vacant in November. Gen. Nadeem Raza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), will also retire at the same time.

Imran Khan is still pursuing his aggressive agenda against the establishment despite the fact that this kind of strategy miserably failed when he tried to save his government after the submission of a no-trust motion against him in the national assembly. It is quite clear that there are some reasons that

prompted Imran Khan to dig in his heels and rub the military establishment the wrong way over what ostensibly appeared to be a momentary lapse of reason, which quickly snowballed into a full-blown civil-military crisis, as there was a method behind the madness of provoking the only prop on which his "selected" regime stood. There are some half a dozen other reasons, most of them overlapping, and elements of all of them coming into play to explain what prompted this self-inflicted wound.



It is no secret that Imran Khan wanted a specific person to stay on as DG ISI. Ostensibly, it was because he thought that a man was needed in the job until things settled down in Afghanistan. His desperation to keep him was on display in his proposal to elevate ISI to the status of a corps, allowing him to succeed Gen Bajwa when his second term as Army Chief expired in November 2022. The reason for wanting him so desperately probably has less to do with any national interest and more to do with Imran Khan's personal political interests.

As far as the political scenario is concerned, Imran Khan is not ready to accept some ground realities and still thinks that he can create a chance for him to appoint the next Army Chief of his own choice. He thinks that he can mount political pressure through a long march with the help of mainly two provincial governments and topple the federal government in the coming weeks. Then he will have a better chance to win general elections and appoint

the next Army Chief before the retirement of his "favorite" person.

The information coming out from the ranks of PTI revealed that Imran Khan has directed the Punjab government to ensure that the administration of all districts of the province should arrange 100 buses to bring at least 7,000 people to Faizabad (Rawalpindi) for a decisive long march against the federal government.

There is also a plan to send a few thousand

hard-core workers to Islamabad before the arrival of the participants of the long march from different parts of the country. These workers can gather at any place around the Red Zone and hold a sit-in to create panic in the ranks of the coalition government. It is yet not clear whether Imran Khan will stay in his Banigala residence or go to the Punjab or Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa to avoid arrest and come to Islamabad to lead the long march.

But on the other hand, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said that the government would not allow participants of the PTI's long march to enter Islamabad under any circumstances. The top security huddle decided to engage the Sindh Police, Rangers, and FC to ensure law and order in the federal capital during the long march. Article 245 of the Pakistan Constitution says that the Pakistan Army will protect public buildings and the Diplomatic Enclave in the Red Zone.



Is army facing a crisis?

By Umer Farooq



Pakistan's political history has all along been vacillated between absolutist military autocratic governments and party dominated quasi-democracies—we never had a fully functional democracy where government comes and goes through ballot. When party dominated civilian regimes are holding power in Islamabad, the space for military generals to influence the decision-making processes are secured. In the post-Zia period, the military always had a structural presence in the institutional framework of Pakistani power structures. During the civilian interregnums in the past 70 years the military generals continued to exercise power over the longevity of any government in power in Islamabad. However, the machinations through which civilian governments were brought into power or were sent home remain hidden from public eyes. The media never debated the role of military command and its affiliated intelligence services in the making or breaking of the government. Or at least a major portion of the media was reluctant to debate their role in the processes of regime change or continuation of military backed governments in power. Governments used to come and go with a small fragment of the media mentioning the military's role in this process like a flicker.

In the wake of August 2014 soft military intervention through which the process to

remove Nawaz Sharif from power was initiated, all this changed forever. August 2014 was the time when PTI chairman Imran Khan brought his followers to Islamabad to stage a sit-in, in front of parliament house in Islamabad. Attacks on parliament precincts and PTV headquarter were the high marks of this protest. All this brought irreversible changes in Pakistani politics when Nawaz Sharif—after his removal from the office of Prime Minister and after he was jailed as a result of dubious court proceedings—openly accused the military high command and its affiliated intelligence services for their involvement in regime change. Afterward there was no stopping as he went into exile in London and from there, he started broadcasting his speech through social media applications after he was banned from appearing on screens of local channels. He accused army generals of conspiring against his government. All this generated a crisis image for the military. However, this was not the end of the story: In April 2022 Nawaz Sharif successor, Imran Khan also accused the military generals of becoming part of a foreign conspiracy against his government after opposition parties removed him from office through a no confidence motion. The only difference between Nawaz Sharif's and Imran Khan's diatribes against the generals was that the latter was more aggressive and more scathing in his

criticism of the role military generals played in his removal.

The situation all this created was unprecedented for the military as its dominance and ever assertive role in the political system was seldom challenged by the mainstream parties. Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto launched a campaign against the military's involvement in politics in 1996 when she was removed from power through a presidential order. But Benazir's campaign then didn't attract public support. To the contrary both Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan were attracting sizable crowds to their rallies in which they criticized the role of military generals. This meant a crisis at hands for GHQ. Do these campaigns based on scathing criticism of the military's role in politics indicate the end of the military's dominance of the system? Are they really under pressure as the mainstream political leaders take aim at them? Or is it nothing more than a public relations problem that could be dealt with by the media managers and spymasters—both of which collectively manage the image of the Pakistani military.

Apparently two former prime minister's speeches and criticism of the military's role in politics seems a bit more than simply an image problem. This time the political leaders are openly interfering in the internal affairs of the military—something which the military high commands in the past have jealously guarded against at different points of time in our history. A little review of the past history will help understand the point better.

Sometimes in the last weeks of September 1999 the then Corps commander Quetta, Lt General Tariq Pervez had a one-on-one meeting with the then Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House in Islamabad. Reportedly the former prime minister had close association with Lt-Gen Tariq Pervez, who was first cousin of one of Sharif's federal ministers. Tariq Pervez was allegedly sharing the proceedings of Corps Commanders' meetings with Nawaz Sharif. General Tariq later denied sharing Corps commanders' meeting minutes with Prime Minister Sharif. However, the Army high



commander was presiding over a vast intelligence network. The meeting was immediately reported to the GHQ, and the then COAS was quick to fire Corps commander Quetta, Lt General Tariq Pervez.

Later political commentators and military officials accused the civilian government of Prime Minister Sharif of interference in the internal affairs of the military. Serious political commentators describe civilian interference in the internal affairs of the military as the prime cause of military intervention on October 12, 1999. For instance, Hassan Askari, eminent historian of civil-military relations dubs this as a prime cause of military intervention led by General Musharraf and his close associates. Nawaz Sharif was then hobnobbing with senior military commanders behind the back of COAS, General Pervez Musharraf. Some of these senior military commanders were later arrested from the prime minister's house by military led intelligence agencies on the night of October 1999 coup.

Many experts believe that institutionally the Army had a very strong monitoring mechanism against any type of political activity within the army hierarchy then. Corps commander Quetta's meeting with the Prime Minister was immediately reported to the GHQ and there was a sense prevailing then that the COAS should jealously guard his dominance of the Army system, even if the interference is coming from the chief executive of the country himself. Political commentators are now again talking about interference in the internal affairs of the army—especially its postings and transfers—by the political elite of the country, but this time the response is different from what it was in October 1999. Some of the military experts say that the monitoring mechanism has considerably weakened within the organization of the Army, "This monitoring mechanism is not very strong now and the will to implement it very weakened. This army chief is dependent on the political elite" said Saeed Shafaqat, an eminent political commentator.

Political commentators point out two recent instances of possible perceived interference in the internal affairs of the army. Firstly, Imran Khan's comment that he has an objection to one name included in the list of five top generals presented to

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif for appointment of new COAS could be perceived as an interference. Secondly, some of the commentators are of the opinion that Shahbaz Sharif's decision to consult his elder brother, Nawaz Sharif—an outsider who is not formally part of the government—in the consultations for COAS's appointment, could be perceived as another type of interference.

PMLN spokesman out rightly reject this criticism directed against Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif for consulting his elder brother in London over the appointment process, "Prime Minister has the authority to consult even civilian in the process of appointment of COAS, if civilian knows about the institution and if he can contribute positively" said Zubair Umar.



While this was taking place in power corridors in Islamabad and London, COAS was visiting Washington where he met top defense officials of the United States's Defense Establishment. Political observers claim that this time the response to political interference was different as indicated by General Bajwa's speech in Washington in which he announced that the Army has made a decision not to interfere in politics and it would stick with this decision.

Saeed Shafaqat says the army command now is too dependent on the political elite for remaining in office. Hassan Askari says social media has made politicians campaigning against military generals possible, "Politicians make a statement and sit down idle for a while. That doesn't make an impact. Impact is made by government decisions. Remember institutional

response came when civilian leaders made an attempt to remove the then COAS," said Hassan Askari.

In October 1999 Nawaz Sharif and General Pervez Musharraf developed tense relations in the wake of the Kargil debacle to the extent that media commentaries started speculating who would fire the first shot. The mutual tensions reached such a height that when General Musharraf embarked on a visit to Sri Lanka the government made an attempt to remove him from office. All this was taking place in the background Nawaz Sharif and his close associates making an attempt to make inroads into Army hierarchy, bypassing the then army leadership. There are conflicting versions of the events that were taking place immediately before the coup, "Prime

Minister was meeting the corps commander Quetta behind the back of the then COAS and the officer was immediately fired by the then Army chief.....but there was no reaction against the civilian government till In October 1999 a government plan to change the command of the army went underway and that attracted institutional response on the night of October 12, 1999" said Hassan Askari, an eminent expert on Civil-military relations in Pakistan. PMLN has a slightly different version of the events. PMLN spokesman Zubair Umar told this scribe that Nawaz Sharif didn't interfere in the internal affairs of the army and this was not the reason behind the coup. He, however, admitted that General Tariq corps commander Quetta had a meeting with the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and he was fired Musharraf" said Zubair Umar. He opined that things were not normal in the



wake of the Kargil debacle and Nawaz Sharif was not discussing normal situation with General Tariq, the then corps commander Quetta, "Tensions over Kargil reached such heights that people started speculating who would fire the first shot" he said.

Hassan Askari, however, is certain in his views that Army perceived undue interference in the internal affairs of Army by the civilian rulers in the days immediately before the coup on October 12, 1999, "The point to note here is that in 1999 there was no institutional response until there was an actual plan to dislodge the COAS," said Hassan Askari. All this was taking place in the background of a highly tense political environment where both military leadership and civilian rulers were making their own moves to damage each other's position both within and outside the country. The present Prime Minister, Shabbaz Sharif who was then Chief Minister Punjab was sent to Washington—accompanied by the then DG ISI, Lt General Zia-ud-din, the officer who was appointed COAS by Sharif on the night of October 12—where he lobbied at the US State Department and extracted a statement in support of Sharif government in the context of ongoing tensions in Islamabad, "Shabbaz Sharif made US State Department issue a statement in favor of civilian government. There was no response then. The response came when the actual plan to change the command structure got underway," said Hassan Askari.

Saeed Shafaqat, another eminent expert of

civil-military relations in Pakistan has a slightly different and a unique analysis of the days immediately preceding the October coup. He lists three key points, civilian interference in military affairs included, as the prime reasons behind October 1999 military coup, "Firstly there was difference of opinion and policies on approach toward Afghanistan and Taliban policy with PMLN government inclined towards supporting Taliban and elements within ruling party supporting sectarian-extremist's organizations like Anjuman-e-Sapa-Shaba. And the army is not mentally ready for full-fledged support. Then there was on how to tackle relations with India. And lastly interference in the internal affairs of army" said Saeed Shafaqat.

It might be outlandish to compare the present situation with the situation in October 1999 but no one can deny that there are striking similarities and some of the commentators are too eager to point out these similarities. In October 1999 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sent his younger brother, Shabbaz Sharif to Washington immediately before taking the decision to appoint a new COAS to replace General Musharraf, whose prime task was to lobby among the top officials of Washington's foreign policy and defense establishments. This Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif must have cleared COAS 'visit to Washington as he clearly has an authority to authorize or not to authorize such a visit, "Shabbaz went to Washington in 1999 and a coup happened. This time the army chief himself went to Washington to

work things out," said Saeed Shafaqat.

Meanwhile, things back home are not normal. Imran Khan is making his moves and has announced his decision to march on Islamabad with a large number of his followers with the stated aim to influence the decision to appoint new COAS. Political commentators are predicting a possible situation of bloodshed. But the PMLN government indicates that it is completely immune from this kind of threats as far as decision to appoint of new COAS is concerned, "We are not taking Imran Khan's rubbish as seriously.... if he is coming, he will be treated with an iron hand of law, we will not be deceived by his claims that he wants to influence the decision to appoint new COAS" said Zubair Umar.

There is nothing happening in the country at the moment to suggest that the military's hold on power will weaken as the result of Nawaz Sharif's and Imran Khan's diatribes. Apparently, what they have done poses an image problem for the military high command. But remember here we have a military which is in love with its image. Its image is its political power. Besides, the two former Prime Minister's separate campaigns can pose a political problem for the military high command only if it leads to public demonstration of popular anger. Remember, if Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan can galvanize middle class sentiments in their favor, the military too has considerable resources in its possession to galvanize popular sentiments in its support.



The Curious Case of Kamran Tessori

Mr. Tessori's appointment is seen as an attempt to merge all rival factions of the MQM to contain the PTI in the urban parts of Sindh

By Azfar Ashfaq

While an overwhelming majority of political activists belonging to different factions of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement have nothing good to say about jeweler-turned-politician Kamran Tessori, the senior leadership of the MQM-Pakistan is, however, hopeful that the newly-appointed governor of Sindh province will use his "good offices" to resolve long-standing issues of Karachi and Hyderabad and also bring back those who had gone missing for years only because of their political affiliations.

On Oct 9, the day when the country was celebrating Eid-i-Miladun Nabi, President Arif Alvi issued a notification to appoint Mr. Tessori as the Sindh governor. The office fell vacant following the resignation of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's Imran Ismail in April this year.

The MQM-P was promised by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz the post of Sindh governor in exchange for its support for the no-confidence motion filed by the then-opposition alliance, Pakistan Democratic Movement, against former prime minister Imran Khan. Soon after the formation of the new government in Islamabad, the MQM-P had sent the names of Nasreen Jalil, Amir Khan, former Karachi mayor Wasim Akhtar, business tycoon Amir Chishti and MNA Kishwar Zehra for the post.

In the second week of September, Mr. Tessori made his way into the MQM-P's coordination committee in a manner that even left the party cadre shocked. He was one of the deputy conveners of the MQM-P's coordination committee when he was suspended over a violation of party discipline in 2018. The party was divided into Bahadurabad and PIB groups over the issue of giving a Senate ticket to him. However, he was restored to the same position he held four years ago.

Meanwhile, there was no progress on the five names sent by the party for the Sindh



governor's office. In the last week of September, the MQM-P was informally suggested by the quarters concerned to forward two more names to the Prime Minister's Office and one of which must be of Mr. Tessori. The party, which had no other option but to comply with the "suggestion", sent the names of Mr. Tessori and senior leader Abdul Wasim. On Oct 10, Mr. Tessori took the oath of his office in a ceremony attended by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, MQM leaders, and others.

"We did not expect his summary to be approved in such a short time," commented an MQM leader while referring to the one-month period in which Mr. Tessori rejoined the party and became the governor. "This clearly shows his connections with powerful circles."

The news of Mr. Tessori's governorship was not received well even in the journalist fraternity which saw it as an establishment-influenced appointment that was not at all the choice of the MQM-P. They see it as an attempt to merge all rival factions of the MQM to contain the PTI in the urban parts of Sindh.

Journalist Mubashir Zaidi tweeted: "So the

plan is to reunite all factions of MQM minus London to prevent PTI getting seats in #Karachi I doubt if it will work."

Senior journalist Kamran Khan tagged the director general of the Inter-Services Public Relations and tweeted: "In the last 24 hours, fifteen notable business, media, police, stock market personalities of Karachi told him that a key figure of an institution also active in political affairs is responsible for the nomination of Kamran Tessori as governor of Sindh."

However, leaders of almost every MQM faction as well as other politicians thought to be close to the establishment welcomed the appointment of Mr. Tessori. But, off the record, almost all of them expressed their apprehension over the "deterioration of the political system and weakness of political parties" that led to the appointment of people like Mr. Tessori in important positions.

"We are not alone," said a senior MQM-P leader asking not to be named. "If you look around, every party, be it PTI, PPP or PML-N, had made similar compromises and gave important positions to certain outsiders."



The oath-taking of Governor Tessori coincides with the release of former MQM lawmaker and Altaf Hussain loyalist, Nisar Panhwar, who went missing from his Karachi residence over six weeks ago after filing a petition in the Sindh High Court to lift a media ban on the London-based party founder. He was released hours after Mr. Tessori took the oath.

The new governor himself told the media that he would play his role in reviving the MQM. "You will see a strengthened MQM [in days to come]," he told media after the oath-taking ceremony. On Oct 11, he visited the headquarters of the MQM-P and told reporters that it was his priority to get opened the sealed offices of the MQM besides recovering missing persons.

"I don't know yet whether there's a plan to reunite all MQM groups...but Tessori's return to the MQM and his appointment as governor is certainly part of an establishment's larger scheme that we are unaware of," says another MQM-P leader. "He has very good relations with both Dr. Farooq Sattar and Mustafa Kamal. If with the backing of the establishment, he invites them to Governor House in our presence they will certainly come," he said.

Profile

Mr. Tessori was not a well-known political player until the 2018 split of the MQM-P. His family is in the gold business for decades. Besides, they are also engaged in forex and property business. In 2003-04, Tessori was considered a very close aide to



then-chief minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim. Many bureaucrats had approached him so that he could use his connection with the then-CM to get them lucrative postings. He had very good connections with the military leadership of the time as well.

When PPP came to power in 2008, it started a vendetta against Arbab Ghulam Rahim and his close circles. Tessori and his family also paid the price as they were caught in the crosshairs of then-home minister Dr. Zulfiqar Mirza. He was booked and arrested for his alleged involvement in a real estate land scam and was accused of escaping from the custody of police when they were taking him to Badin in connection with another case.

Later, he joined the late Pir Pagara-led Pakistan Muslim League-Functional

ostensibly for protection. In 2017, Dr. Farooq Sattar asked Tessori to join the MQM-P, which was at that time facing a financial crunch and looking for wealthy people who can finance its activities. As soon as he joined the MQM-P, Dr. Sattar awarded him a party ticket to contest a by-election on a provincial assembly seat despite strong reservations of other leaders. He contested the election but lost to PPP's Saeed Ghani.

Tessori was known in MQM circles as an "investor" who came to the party fold just to get a national or provincial assembly seat. He had become the center of a controversy after Dr. Sattar nominated him for a Senate seat in 2018. It was then believed that he was so loyal to Dr. Sattar that he would never betray him.

The MQM-P party is always known for awarding government positions to its long-time workers and office-bearers and not to newcomers. Dr. Ishratul Ebad was the convener of the MQM coordination committee when Altaf Hussain nominated him as Sindh governor in 2002. No one had ever thought Tessori would become the governor from the platform of the MQM-P.

In the words of former MQM convener and Washington-based Voice of Karachi chief Nadeem Nusrat: "I believe Mr. Tessori's appointment will only widen the gulf between those who govern and those who are governed."



Economic Revival a Real Challenge for the Govt

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar told the media that Pakistan is seeking a bilateral debt rollover, involving \$27 billion to get a major relief in debt repayment

By Javed Mahmood

With the appointment of Ishaq Dar as Finance Minister, two key economic indicators have shown an unexpected improvement, indicating a gradual economic recovery in the country. First, the value of the rupee has appreciated by at least 22 rupees till Oct 11 while the KSE-100 benchmark of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has surged above the 42K levels, gaining more than 1300 points. Before the entry of Ishaq Dar as Finance Minister, the dollar-rupee exchange rate has expanded to 250 in the open market and 239 rupees in the inter-bank operations amid speculations that the exchange rate could hit the 300-rupee level.

However, the government's decision to pitch Ishaq Dar as the finance minister ended the unbridled flight of the US dollar along with the phobia of dollarization in Pakistan. On Oct 11, the value of the dollar dropped to 217 rupees in the inter-bank and 220 in the open market trading. Ishaq Dar, nonetheless, has pledged to throw the value of the dollar to below 200 rupees level soon and the way the greenback is losing its value and worth daily against the rupee, in the coming few days the dollar-rupee parity will be fluctuating close to 200 rupees.

Thus, at this stage, Ishaq Dar has succeeded in reversing the financial bleeding of Pakistan and it was evident from 22 rupees decline in the value of the dollar in the interbank and 30 rupees decrease in the open market. Recently, the Finance Minister told the media that the quantum of Pakistan's debt has declined by 2600 billion rupees just because of the appreciation of the Pakistani currency. Furthermore, the Pakistan Stock Exchange has also demonstrated a significant gain, showing confidence in the economic policies of finance minister Ishaq Dar. By Oct 11 (Tuesday) morning, the KSE-100 benchmark index has edged



up to 42,250 points _ gaining more than 1300 points from the day Ishaq Dar became finance minister.

Pakistan Seeks \$27 Billion Foreign Loans Rescheduling

As the United Nations has supported Pakistan to get a rescheduling foreign loans, the country will get relief of more or less \$27 billion _ and this will also stop erosion in the foreign exchange reserves, discourage dollarization, and enable the government to improve the troubled national economy. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar told the media on Monday (Oct 10) that Pakistan is seeking a bilateral debt rollover, involving \$27 billion to get a major relief in debt repayment.

"Rescheduling of bilateral debt is fine," Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said. He, however, ruled out the rollover of international debt under Paris Club, the multilateral and international sovereign bonds. Dar told the media that there was no point in Paris Club rescheduling debt; because the overall debt to these creditors was no more than 11pc of the total foreign debt. Pakistan owes Paris Club countries a combined sum of around \$10.7 billion, he added. He said that the repayments involve \$22 billion worth of foreign

debt servicing and another \$10-12 billion are required for the current account deficit.

Meanwhile, by September 30, the reserves with the State Bank of Pakistan fell to \$7.89 billion while the national reserves are around \$13.6 billion, including \$5.69 billion of the commercial banks.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Pakistan's total non-Paris Club bilateral debt currently stands at about \$27 billion, which includes \$23 billion in Chinese debt. The US and IMF have been insisting on the renegotiation of power purchase agreements with China to secure fiscal space in foreign payments. Non-Paris Club members include China, Saudi Arabia, and other Middle Eastern states. Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to complete the IMF programme with its conditions in an honorable manner and meet all repayment obligations to multilateral, bondholders and Paris Club creditors. He said the ninth IMF review was scheduled for October 25 and Dar ruled out any consideration for renegotiating the IMF facility as it was in the final stage of its completion.

Now a question arises in our minds, why did this not happen when Miftah Ismail was the Finance Minister? The fact is that Ishaq Dar is very powerful and highly connected in the country and abroad in comparison with Miftah Ismail. Being a close and trusted family member of Nawaz Sharif, Dar is in a position to make critical decisions that Miftah could not even think of. This can be imagined well from the case of Dar who had been imported from London in a special plane carrying Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other VVIPs. The plane landed directly at Noor Khan Airbase in Rawalpindi because it was a special plane and for the special VVIPs, hence, the landing place was the safest and special one as well.

deficit, current account deficit, fiscal deficit, a consistent decline in the foreign exchange reserves, rehabilitation of floods-ravaged crops and infrastructure, rising inflation, relief to the masses from the price-hike and availability of food items at affordable rates. Since the appointment of Ishaq Dar as Finance Minister, the US dollar has lost a significant value against the rupee, but the masses are still looking towards the government to get relief in the rates of essential consumer items and cost of energy _ record high electricity bills, gas and petroleum products. In 2021-22, Pakistan has sustained a record \$50 billion trade deficit which devoured the impact of the inflows of remittances and foreign aid and also caused the current account deficit.

recommended the rescheduling of Pakistan's foreign loans in the wake of the devastating floods. On Oct 11, the United Nations demanded immediate debt relief for at least 54 poor nations in the world, saying the cascading global crises have left 54 countries – having half of the world's poorest people – in urgent need of debt relief. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) warned on Oct 11 that dozens of developing nations were facing a debt crisis and that “the risks of inaction are dire”. Without immediate relief, UNDA warned, at least 54 countries would see an increase in poverty level, and much-needed investments in climate mitigation will not materialize which would be worrisome since the affected countries were “among the most climate-vulnerable in the world”.



Also, Ishaq Dar enjoys better support than Miftah and Dar is capable of taking decisions that Miftah was unable to think of. For example, soon after taking oath as Senator, Dar warned the filthy circles involved in dollarization and artificial hike in the value of the dollar. When the coalition government was formed in April this year, the dollar-rupee exchange rate was fluctuating around 175 rupees. Nonetheless, on the midnight of no-confidence, the dollar-rupee parity climax expanded to 196 rupees, but when Shehbaz Sharif took oath as Prime Minister, the dollar fell to 175 rupees once again. However, this blow to the dollar was a short-lived development and gradually the exchange rate mounted 248 rupees in the open market twice _ before the approval of the IMF loan and after the disbursement of the IMF tranche.

If the government succeeds in curtailing the trade deficit by 40 percent in 2022-23, this will not only further stabilize the value of the rupee but also improve the foreign exchange reserves gradually. At this stage, the revival of the economy seems to be a major challenge for the government in the backdrop of the catastrophic floods _ \$27 billion in debt relief and foreign aid for the support of the flood-hit people will certainly empower the government to put the economy back on the track in coming months. Loans rollover appears the one-time facility and it should be utilized in a manner which steers the economy out of the crisis.

UN's demand for Swift Debt Relief for Poor Nations

The United Nations' new stance on debt relief for 54 poor nations will support the much-needed foreign debt relief for Pakistan and it will pace up the process of rollover of loans. The UNDP had already

The UNDP's report published ahead of meetings of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and also of G20 finance ministers in Washington, recommended swift action for debt relief. UNDP chief Achim Steiner told reporters in Geneva today that despite repeated warnings and requests, “little has happened, and the risks have been growing.”

According to the UNDP, “Market conditions are shifting rapidly as a synchronized fiscal and monetary contraction and low growth are fuelling volatility around the globe.” The UNDP said debt troubles had been developing in the affected countries before the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world.

The UNDP report said, “The rapid build-up in debt has been consistently underestimated.” The freeze on debt repayment during the Covid crisis has expired and negotiations under the G20 Common Framework to help heavily-indebted countries find a path to restructure their obligations have been moving at a snail's pace. According to data, 46 of the 54 countries had amassed public debt totaling \$782 billion in 2020, the report said, adding Argentina, Ukraine, and Venezuela alone account for more than a third of that amount. The situation is deteriorating rapidly, with 19 of the developing countries now effectively shut out of the lending market – 10 more than at the start of the year.

The Way Forward

In the next stage, the priority of the government should be to concentrate on other key economic indicators such as the trade

Money market and debt management

By Waqar Masood Khan

Money market has been behaving quite unusually. The standard theory suggests the yield curve on the bills and bonds (showing relationship between return and term of investment) should be upward sloping, as the investors would require higher returns on longer investments.

In normal circumstances, upward yield curve signals expansive outlook for economy and therefore the investors are confident that higher returns will accrue on longer maturities. Conversely, an inverted yield curve shows pessimism about the future and investor shy away from investing in long-term securities.

In the T-Bills auction held on 21-9-2022, the cut-off yields on all three maturities of 3m, 6m, and 12m, were the same at 15.99%. Subsequently, in the auction held on 5-10-22, the yields dropped by nearly 25 bps across the three tenors except for a difference of 1bps among them. So we have almost a flat curve for shorter maturities.

Clearly, it seems there is no premium for holding longer duration bills. What is more striking is the yields on long dated securities. The 3y, 5y and 10y securities were priced at 13.65%, 13.00% and 12.85%. This is the situation which shows an inverted yields for longer maturities.

These trends, therefore, reflect investors' assessment of impending recession. The finance literature uses the differences in yields across different maturities as a leading indicator for recession.

In particular, the negative difference between 10y bond and 3m T-Bill is considered as the predictor of recession. In our case, the difference is negative 2.88% — a level that would carry a very high probability of recession within the next four quarters. More interestingly, this inversion process started in the month of March as the difference between these two (10y and 3m) yields became negative.

But the difference at that time was negligible. This has entrenched itself gradually and presently it stands at a high of negative 2.88%. It would be recalled that this was the time when the Russia-Ukraine war had started and it was visible that global economy is facing a recessionary phase of business cycle.

Are there some other indications which may support the recession hypothesis for Pakistan economy? At the outset, we must recognize that we had started this year with an overheated economy which required cooling-off or a significant reduction in aggregate demand to achieve stability. Therefore, an inherent element of economic policy is to slow down the economy.

Furthermore, the country has suffered floods on an unprecedented scale. This has led to loss of lives, output (standing crops), productivity (water levels are not receding as expected), infrastructure (roads, schools and hospitals) and property (loss of livestock and housing units). There are many initial estimates of losses going as high as \$40 billion. That is almost 10% in terms of GDP.

The combined effect of these developments is to reduce the potential growth. In its latest monetary policy statement, the monetary policy committee of SBP has noted that floods and reduced aggregate demand would indeed reduce growth to 2%. The World Bank and ADB have also lowered their forecast for similar reasons.

Technically speaking, though there are many definitions of recession, the common characteristic is two or three quarterly decline in GDP. We don't compile quarterly GDP numbers and therefore cannot be sure what is happening to GDP on that basis. But in our case we should await for revised GDP estimates in April-May. Only a negative growth as in the case of COVID days in FY20 will establish presence of recession.

There is also another significant development which is related to rising outstanding amount of Open Market Operations (OMOs). On 10-10-2022, the OMO (injections) stood at a staggering amount of 5,269 billion. In fact in recent months the basic structure of auctioning has undergone a major shift. This was only Rs.1674 billion as on 4-1-2022. For greater part of its history, OMO operations were conducted only for few days, hardly exceeding 10 days. But of late OMOs for as much as high of 70s days have become a routine.

The high level of OMOs is reflective of large borrowing needs of the Government. The nominal federal government deficit had amounted to Rs 2,225 billion in FY18 and

has sharply risen to Rs 5,611 billion in FY22, an increase of more than 250%. To sustain such massive borrowings the banking system with Deposits of Rs 22 trillion and Advances of Rs 11 trillion doesn't have adequate liquidity to support high borrowing needs, particularly after the central bank has been prohibited to lend to the Government under recent amendments in the SBP Act. Inevitably, the SBP injects liquidity into the market for banks to lend to the government.

Not surprisingly, the debt risks indicators for FY22 have also shown some deterioration. The first indicator measures the currency risk in the public debt composition. The share of foreign debt in total public debt was recorded at 37% which is increased from 34% in FY21.

The medium term strategy (MTDS) envisages benchmark of a maximum limit of 40%. The risk of refinancing is measured by three indicators, of which the first indicator is average time to maturity (ATM) for domestic debt which is indicative of longer term of the debt. MTDS has set the benchmark of 3.5 years. In FY22 it was recorded at 3.6 year, just as in FY21, barely on target. Second indicator is ATM for external debt, which was benchmarked at 6.5 year. In FY22, it was recorded at 6.2 below the benchmark.

Third indicator is the gross financing needs (GFN) which measures the speed with which refinancing is needed. The longer the duration of ATMs, the lower GFN would be needed. GFN as a percentage of GDP has been set at a maximum of 35%. The actual in FY22 was 26%, which is quite satisfactory. Finally, the interest risk is judged by the share of fixed debt in overall debt. The indicative benchmark specified in MTDS is at a minimum of 25%. The actual outcome was 26%, which is a borderline performance.

The behaviour of debt indicators is likely would have worsened during the first quarter of FY23. For reasons explained above, the relative share of short-term financing has been very high and foreign funding has been limited. Since July, Rs.10 trillion has been raised in T-Bills compared with less than one trillion in the three auctions since July. The government has to improve overall debt profile of the country. Better signaling for the future policies would go a long way to achieve this objective.

Courtesy Business Recorder

ART AID

ART FOR LIFE & SERVING HUMANITY

— A project of 'The Artists Guild' —



ARTAID 2022 is an Art Auction and Exhibition in aid to the
FLOOD AFFECTED PAKISTANIS

ARTAID

Art for Life and Serving Humanity

ARTAID is an initiative of Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Art with the belief that Art is for life and always in service of humanity hence responding to the current destruction caused by the catastrophic floods affecting millions of Pakistanis.

Similar to our ARTAID 2005, Hunerkada with the support of Likeminded platforms have announced Art Aid 2022 as a mega fund-raising Art auction and exhibition to help our people in need.

Supported by local as well as international artists, ARTAID is an international auction/exhibition and also transcends its physical boundaries for being live streamed while taking place physically in Islamabad enabling bidders to take part in it from anywhere in the world.

Here are images of a few artists' paintings along with their prices.



OIL & Canvas
Anwar Maqsood

24"x48" PRICE: RS. 600,000
15% of the auctioned price & over & above will go to ARTAID

Work On Paper
Akram Dost

10" x 14" PRICE: RS. 100,000
100% of the auctioned price will go to ARTAID

Bronze Sculpture
Amin Gulgee

PRICE: RS. 20,00,000
50% of the auctioned price will go to ARTAID

Oil On Canvas
Elahe Mawaz

30" x 30" PRICE: RS. 20,000
100% of the auctioned price will go to ARTAID

Metal Sculpture
Abdul Jabbar Gull

32.5"x32.5" PRICE: RS. 400,000
100% of the auctioned price will go to ARTAID

Oil On Board
Abdur Rahman Baba

12" x 12" PRICE: RS. 70,000
Above base Price of the auctioned price will go to ARTAID

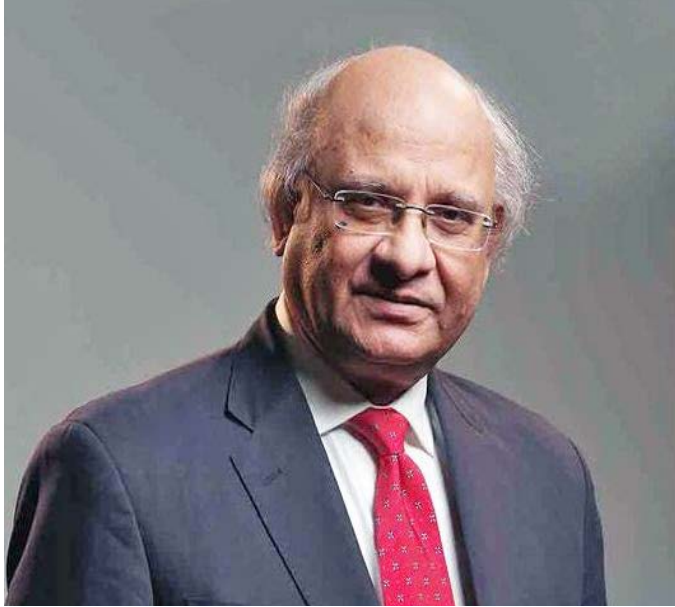
Water Color
Akbar Ali

34" x 30" PRICE: RS. 75,000
100% of the auctioned price will go to ARTAID

Dr. Ashfaq Hasan Terms Rupee's Flight Unnatural

Prominent economist, Dr. Ashfaq Hasan, in an interview with a news channel, discussed the recent appreciation of the Pakistani rupee against the US Dollar

By Dr. Ashfaq Hasan



Dr. Ashfaq Hasan believes that when something happens suddenly, it has nothing to do with the economy but some developments are happening behind closed doors. Ishaq Dar's return is linked to the same behind-the-scenes talks. According to him, things were deliberately made worse during former finance minister Miftah Ismail's tenure. The same people who were asked to make things worse were then again asked to improve the exchange rate. "Similarly, when fuel prices were decreasing internationally, Miftah wasn't permitted to bring them down," he said while adding that "the forces which took the dollar from 180 to 242, were asked to bring it back down as soon as Dar returned."

While proving that the flight of PKR is artificial, Mr. Hasan posed a question to the host, "At a time when the US \$ is the strongest because America increased its interest rates to record figures, and pound, euro, yuan, Indian rupee – all are under pressure, how can Pakistani rupee increase against the dollar?" He admitted that Miftah Ismail does not have much experience of managing country's finances but called the present scenario "a strategy to make Dar a savior."

"IMF program is a political program. From somewhere a message is given about how tough the conditions should be on the recipient country. United Nations Secretary-General and the U.S. President mentioned Pakistan's devastating floods in the UN. There is world attention on the issue. So, IMF has been asked to soften the conditions," he said while adding that the ongoing IMF program is the most brutal in the country's history.

Mr. Hasan dismissed the notion of attaching inflation solely to the interest rate. "Interest rate has nothing to do with Pakistan's inflation," he said. "Today, the SBP can bring it down to a single

digit. The textbook definition is that if there's inflation, there should be tight monetary policy." He cited America's efforts to stimulate its economy and compared it with Pakistan's response to its challenges. "America injected 5 trillion dollars into its economy, creating demand. However, in Pakistan's case where surprise inflation struck; natural disaster caused supply-side issues – such a policy cannot be pursued." Pakistan's government is raising electricity and gas prices, in turn increasing inflation, he believes.

"If the interest rate is brought to a single digit, it will have a very positive impact on the budget," he said. For every 1 percent decrease in interest rate, 250 bn rupees interest payment will decrease per year. The savings can be used for development schemes or paying off loans," he said while adding that "it will boost the industry, increasing economic activity."



Mr. Hasan advised the government to keep an eye on the imports, especially the non-essential ones to keep the foreign exchange reserves intact. "Last year, we had \$32 bn worth of exports. The entire amount was spent on mobiles and energy imports only." He proposed one day work from home as well as gas rationing to save fuel. Similarly, international flight tickets should be made expensive to curb the outflow of foreign exchange. "During the pandemic, our expenditure on tourism decreased from \$150mn to \$10 mn," he said.

Even though Mr. Hasan was skeptical about the economic condition of the country, asking the host "do you think in such a political environment, will anyone think of expanding their business?", he prayed that Ishaq Dar becomes successful.

There can be no Economic Miracle in Pakistan!

Pakistan is totally oblivious of ground realities pertaining to serious political and economic crisis

By Dr Moonis Ahmar

When Ishaq Dar took oath as federal finance and revenue minister more than a week ago, there was an instant depreciation in the rate of the dollar versus the rupee; rise in the stock exchange index; and reduction in the prices of petroleum products. Does it mean that one person, who has twice earlier served as federal finance minister and escaped from Pakistan five years ago because of corruption charges, can cause an economic miracle? Is there any rational basis of Dar's claim to fix the economy by stabilising the exchange rate; lower the interest rate and mitigate inflation?

Moreover, the meager \$8 billion forex reserves, just enough to pay for only three weeks of imports, is another cause for concern. It will be nothing short of a miracle if Dar is able to have a paradigm shift in the economy because of harsh realities that will not allow the country to escape from the inevitable. In the ongoing fiscal year, Pakistan has to arrange \$40 billion external financing. This is besides the \$20 billion worth of losses the recent floods have inflicted. Artificial appreciation of the rupee against major currencies will not work because of high demand of the dollar for imports and for other purposes. In today's Pakistan, miracles to salvage the economy are certainly not going to happen because of ground realities which are highly unfavorable.

Neither the IMF nor the World Bank or the friendly countries will come for the rescue of Pakistan because the country is constantly requesting donors to waive loans and provide more financial resources in order for it to avoid a financial default. Even in recent devastating floods, the country has not received substantial amount of financial assistance unlike in the case of the 2005 earthquake. Trust deficit and rampant corruption tend to discourage donors from providing cash assistance. Images of floods and the forceful appeal of the UN Secretary General to help Pakistan in this moment of crisis failed to bring positive results. Under the circumstances, Dar's taking up the



economy is a major test case for the PML-N led coalition government.

Things were also difficult when Dar took over as finance minister in 2013 because of the PTI-PAT sit-in in Islamabad in 2014, but he managed to deal with that crisis. This time the situation is different because Pakistan's economy is in dire straits and a country of 222 million people with a conglomeration of internal and external threats along with the devastation caused by the floods cannot have a smooth sailing for Dar despite his so-called magical skills. In 2013, the PML-N enjoyed a two-thirds mandate; but in 2022, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is heading a coalition of around a dozen parties — and that too with a razor thin majority.

The existential threat to the coalition government in the shape of Imran Khan is real, and it will be difficult for the PML-N “financial wizard” to lead a paradigm shift in the economy. The threat of famine following massive floods looms large and the government has meager resources to import food items in order to prevent a crisis situation. With all economic indicators predicting a hopeless situation, what magic wand is Dar going to wave to fix the

issues which tend to aggravate the country's political and economic situation!

One needs to analyse three major realities which will continue to undermine Dar's “mystic” skills for an economic turnaround. First, the reality of corruption, nepotism, bad governance, absence of rule of law and lack of accountability needs to be taken seriously. Miracles never happen when the country is unable to deal with issues which seriously shatter work ethics. Nations are not built by mere words or rhetoric but must eradicate the culture of corruption and nepotism. How can a country be pulled from the brink of an economic disaster when it lacks the motivation, integrity and planning on the part of those who matter?

Dar cannot let miracles happen because his hands are not clean, as well as of many others who happen to be his coalition partners and frontrunners of his own party. Constant begging from donors and friendly countries will not help because the elitist culture of Pakistan is totally oblivious of ground realities pertaining to serious political and economic crisis. Artificially reducing prices and appreciation of rupees versus the dollar would be counter-productive and generate further crisis.



Second, no economic miracle is going to happen unless our leadership has eight qualities in theory and in practice: hard work, integrity, brilliance, vision, commitment, dedication, planning, and wisdom. Looking at the other models of success, particularly in developing world, one can learn from former Singaporean PM Lee Kuan Yu, former Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohammad, former Chairman of Chinese

Communist Party Mao Zedong and Nelson Mandela, the founding president of post-apartheid South Africa. Other models of success are found in the UAE, Qatar, Muscat and Oman. Since the inception of Pakistan, leadership vacuum and the lack of qualities essential to successfully run a country is a bitter reality.

Whether in civilian or in military control, Pakistan failed to emerge as a role model in

good governance, rule of law and sound work ethics. Laziness, incompetence, dishonesty, fraud and cheating became acceptable norms which mitigated Pakistan's rating in human development index, corruption perception Index and human security index. Deterioration of quality of life of people in terms of absence of clean and safe drinking water for all, quality and compulsory education, housing, public transport and hygienic food are major challenges. When people at the helm of affairs are hated because of their corruption and nepotism, how can Pakistan put its own house in order? Third, miracles will not happen unless there is culture of merit in Pakistan.

When decisions are made on the basis of vested interests and likes and dislikes, the country can never emerge as a successful state. Erosion of merit has a long history in Pakistan which eroded the trust of capable and qualified people in the system responsible to run the country and led to an enormous brain drain. When public sector institutions like the Steel Mills, PIA, Pakistan Post, Railways, WAPDA, PTV and Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation are running in huge losses, it has to do with incompetent and dishonest people running them.

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Amplifying the conflict, Putin's annexation of Ukrainian territories is war 2.0

The solution lies in diplomatic engagement, a proposal reiterated time and time again by China but has not been paid heed to

By Hamzah Rifaat Hussain

Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to initiate a partial mobilisation of reservists and hold referendums in Russian separatist territories has marked a massive escalation in the Ukraine war. The decision to enlist men of a certain age to carry out offensive operations against Ukrainian advances resulted in massive dissent in Russia, prompting Putin to clamp down on street protests. The referendums, which were carried out hastily, were condemned by the international community as complete shams, with the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, condemning Russian aggression as crimes against humanity. Still, the impact of these new measures could have disastrous consequences for the worst conflict since World War Two.

Firstly, the referendums mirror Russia's pretext for the complete annexation of Crimea, which was declared by the international community as contrary to international law. The referendums were also conducted under duress, with many Ukrainian voters claiming that the results were preordained. Others believed that unless a call for Russian annexation was made, their lives would be in severe danger. On a larger scale, referendum campaigns in Zaporizhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk were quickly ruled illegal by the UN Secretary General. This is because any expression of popular sovereignty taken with the use of force or coercion is against democratic principles.

Instigation aside, what the referendums clearly demonstrate is that the overriding sentiment in each of the occupied territories is in favour of Moscow. Figures close to ninety percent plus in each of the territories and a pulse of public sentiment reflect the fact that Russia's tactics were successful. By brandishing the public sentiment card, Vladimir Putin can easily claim that an



annexation towards Russia is the will of the people, not a product of the Kremlin's aggression. This view has been endorsed by spokesperson Dmitry Peskov and commander-in-chief Sergey Shoigu.

The annexation of the territories also puts into perspective the battlefield dynamics of the conflict. According to the Institute for the Study of War in Washington, D.C., Ukraine's ground advances have continued unabated despite Russian pressure, with major battlefield successes in Kharkiv demonstrating that the Russian line of defence is definitely penetrable. The Kremlin's setbacks have resulted in fierce criticism of Russia's top army brass, which considers Ukrainian gains to be a travesty for special operations. The equation, however, is simple. The more territory that Ukraine takes back from Russia, the more important Russia's annexation spree becomes.

Putin has long maintained that the large-scale discrimination against Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens by the Kiev regime, alongside a lack of security guarantees from NATO and its allies, justified the launch of the special security operation. Both he and his advisers have claimed that the Russians living in Ukraine have sympathies for Russia and are being forcibly asked to comply with Western designs to encircle the country. This is

controversial in the Russian government, and the fact that this "red line" kept getting crossed is exactly why they invaded.

As Ukraine's territorial advances during the annexation intensify, so will these justifications. Putin's card, while not benefiting from international traction and the cause of Russia's isolation, is used as a bulwark against domestic dissent and has polarised and divided opinion in Russia. This explains why throngs of Russians left the country and migrated to European states such as Belarus, Moldova, Bulgaria, and elsewhere. Countries partaking in the NATO alliance refused entry to fleeing Russian citizens, citing security threats and further pressure on Putin as justifications. Fast forward to 2022: the world has now encountered another refugee crisis.

The impact of these dynamics is severe and comes with enormous costs, particularly for the Global South as well as the developing world. As a result of the annexations, sanctions on Russia have been beefed up to the point where calamitous leaks on Nord Stream 1 pipelines and sabotage witnessed in German rail stations are becoming routine. While Russia cannot be assigned sole blame for these harsh measures, the intensification of the campaign as a result of unrelenting sanctions is haunting prospects for

peace in Europe. This is happening at a time when far-right, nationalist movements on the continent are making big gains in places like Spain and Sweden, and the Brothers of Italy political party in Rome is growing, with Giorgia Meloni set to become the next Prime Minister.

Nativist ideologies may have a soft tone on Russia, with even some populist leaders admiring Putin's persona, but the majority of leaders, including Meloni in Italy, have denounced Putin's invasion of Ukraine and called for intensifying sanctions on Moscow. The bipartisan consensus on Russia spells trouble for the national economy and will have a negative impact on energy prices. The OPEC+1 decision to raise international oil prices in light of the US Federal Reserve's increasing interest rates will only compound problems for energy buyers, many of whom are located in both the developed and developing world.

Greater disruption in the energy market and the global supply chain has catastrophic implications for the international community. The global South is already reeling from the cost of soaring wheat prices as both Ukraine and Russia are the world's breadbasket. Conversely, however, sanctions on Russia also have a positive effect on countries that have chosen neutrality as the bedrock of their foreign policy. Countries not wishing to partake in Cold War binaries have chosen to purchase Russian oil, and that too, at discounted prices, to fuel their domestic economies. In retrospect, that was the right thing to do in a world that was very divided and polarized.



In general, the annexation spells trouble for Vladimir Putin as Russia continues to become a pariah in the international community. Given Russia's enormous natural resources and permanent veto power in the United Nations Security Council, any Ukraine-specific resolution or proposal is likely to be struck down unless and until Russian demands are met. Annexation is considered a mockery of democracy, but for authoritarian states it is simply the legitimate right to exercise sovereign prerogatives in the absence of dictation. This is precisely why countries such as Iran and North Korea, which are regarded as despotic by Western countries, have simply been apathetic to the plight of Ukrainians or efforts to punish Russia. In fact, Iranian-made drones have been employed with impunity while attacking Ukrainian cities as a counteroffensive. What this entails is that the world is bound to become

further polarised with the divide between the West and countries such as the DPRK, Russia, and Iran increasing at an alarming rate.

To sum up, Russia's invasion of Ukraine 2.0, which involves annexation of occupied territories and the holding of sham referendums, spells trouble for both Moscow and the international community. There are no signs of the war relenting, and there is a chance that the conflict could spiral out of control. The impact on the markets is severe, with Russia's oil and gas exports being deprived of much needed sustenance in European markets. Rising prices and widespread damage to domestic economies are a burden, especially since economic forecasts show that an international recession that crosses borders is almost certain to happen.



The solution lies in diplomatic engagement, a proposal reiterated time and time again by China but has not been paid heed to. Punishing Russia by operationalizing punitive and pernicious sanctions will only embolden Moscow to undertake further adventurism. The world can learn from Turkey's model of engagement with both sides by taking them as stakeholders, which eventually resulted in the smooth release of grain exports from the Odessa port down to Istanbul. Addressing trust deficits requires greater strategic wisdom and diplomatic maturity, and the absence thereof will ensure that the status quo remains intact. That is a damning and telling indictment for world peace.

Pakistanis will feel the heat of the Ukrainian conflict

The war is creating one of the worst disruptions to the supply of wheat since the First World War

By Zahiruddin

"The Ukrainian War has caused the acute shortage of printing paper, thereby leading to delays in the printing of the textbooks," explains a bookseller in a remote village of the country to his customer, who was anxious over the non-availability of textbooks for his children in a school. Like-wise was the answer of the owner of a general store when the customer bemoaned the exorbitant price of cooking oil, who elucidated that most of the oilseeds were imported from Ukraine.

The February 24, 2022, Russian attack on Ukraine on the flimsy ground of the persecution of Russian-speaking people of Donbas by the Kyiv regime—that incidentally coincided with the visit of former Premier Imran Khan to Moscow—has affected the people here at such a grass-root level. A number of economic sectors in our country are adversely affected by the war, and the situation of food insecurity is looming large, triggered by the factors mentioned directly or indirectly. The pricing of 120 grammes of tandoori (wheat bread) at Rs. 25 in the federal capital and other major cities is directly related to the wheat shortage.

The recent issue of The Economist reported that the war is creating one of the worst disruptions to the supply of wheat since the First World War. Pakistan is one of the major importers of Ukraine, whose volume has increased steeply during the last 24 years, starting at 18.1 million USD in 1996 and rising to 573 million USD in 2020. In 2021, it imported oilseeds worth 205.48 USD from Ukraine, while iron and steel, wood and wooden materials, charcoal, wood pulp for the paper industry, raw materials for the pharmaceutical industry, carpets, and machinery are the main items of imports in which Pakistan depended heavily.

The degree of our dependency on Ukrainian grain can be gauged from the fact that in 2020, we imported 1.2 million tonnes of wheat from the country now ravaged by war. Given the yearly consumption of a huge amount of wheat in Pakistan,



the situation of the short supply of the commodity is heading towards a horrendous position with each passing day. The halt in the supply of food items, including wheat, has led to a wide difference in demand and supply, and it is the point where disaster-like situations start to rise.

The war has also given birth to a number of quagmires and predicaments, forcing it to land in hot water where it is in the position of being "between the devil and the deep sea". With each passing moment, pressure is mounting on Russia from the US and its allies. Recently, the UN has alleged that Russia has committed war crimes in Ukraine, including the bombing of civilian areas, numerous executions, torture, and horrific sexual violence. The US has shown its preparedness to impose economic costs on Russia if it moves forward with Ukraine annexation.

Even the Chinese foreign minister has recently said that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be respected. Pakistan is drifting towards a difficult position as Russia intensifies and prolongs the war. The West may ask it (Pakistan) to review its stance. Camp politics and cold war-like situations are going to manifest themselves when it will be 'with us or against us'.

Although Pakistan's Imran Khan government successfully avoided the shock of

pressure following its abstention from voting in the United Nations General Assembly, the next brunt of the US and its allies will be too formidable for the new regime to bear. The atmosphere of political instability prevailing in the country is a negative factor to cope with in a situation like this, where national harmony is the first and foremost condition. Any small degree of error in approach towards the situation and any weak stance can make things worse, unleashing a series of catastrophic results.

At the time of Russia's invasion in February, approximately 3,500 students were enrolled in various universities in Ukraine in the fields of engineering, medicine, and emerging sciences. This is yet another impact of the war on Pakistan, which has rendered the future of a large number of our youth bleak on one hand and settling them in our educational institutions in the relevant fields is yet another challenge. Add to this the issue of Afghan refugees, which was on the verge of a solution before the Russian onslaught on Ukraine.

After the Taliban Revolution in Kabul, a good number of countries, including the US, were inclined to give visas to the Afghans fleeing the country, but now the Ukrainian refugees are being preferred over them, leaving them with no choice but to Pakistan, and this has created an additional burden for the country.

China's Communist Party Congress: A really simple guide

By David Brown

China's ruling Communist Party is expected to hand a third five-year term to Xi Jinping, arguably the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong in the 1970s.

The decision - which comes after a two-term limit was abolished in 2018 - would further tighten his grip on China.

It is possible that Mr Xi, 69, will remain in power for the rest of his life.

The historic move is due at a Communist Party Congress in Beijing beginning on 16 October - one of the most important meetings in the party's history.

Xi Jinping currently holds three top positions

- As General Secretary he is the chief of China's Communist Party.
- As president he is China's head of state.
- As Chairman of China's Central Military Commission he commands the country's armed forces.

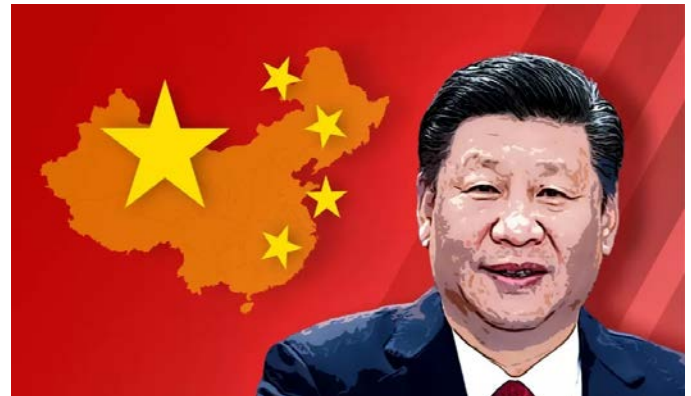
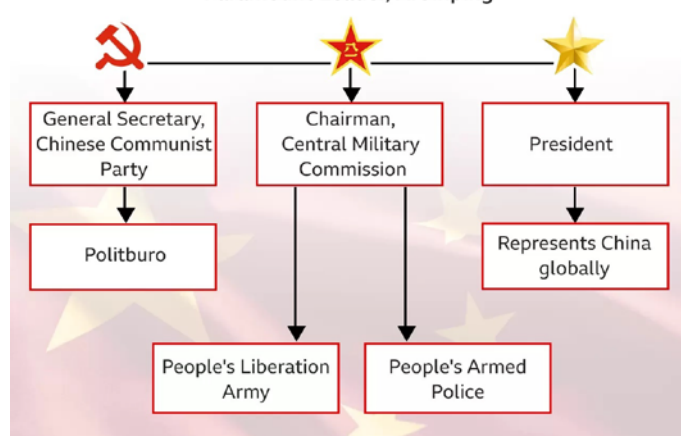
He is also referred to as Paramount or Supreme leader.

Mr Xi is likely to retain the first two titles, party General Secretary and Central Military Commission chairman at the party congress - which takes place every five years - and the presidency at the annual National People's Congress in Spring 2023.

China's leadership



Paramount Leader, Xi Jinping



What happens at the Congress?

Some 2,300 delegates will gather in Tiananmen Square's Great Hall of the People for about a week.

About 200 of them will be selected to join the party's central committee, plus around 170 alternate members.

The central committee will elect 25 people to the party's Politburo.

And the Politburo will appoint the members of the Politburo standing committee.

These are the elite of the elite.

There are currently seven members, including the party's General Secretary Xi Jinping.

They are all men.

Not all of the action takes place at the congress itself.

The central committee is expected to meet the day after the main congress ends.

Why is it important?

Mr Xi will lead the world's second-largest economy and one of its biggest military forces.

Some analysts say he is likely to push China towards a more authoritarian political stance in a third five-year term.

"China under Xi is moving in a totalitarian direction," says Professor Steve Tsang of London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

"China under Mao was a totalitarian system. We're not there yet, but we're moving in that direction."

Professor Tsang says the Congress could see changes to the party's constitution, with "Xi Jinping thought" being further enshrined as the party's guiding philosophy.

"Xi Jinping thought" is Mr Xi's brand of Chinese socialism, an assertively nationalist philosophy which is highly sceptical of private business.

Under his leadership the Chinese authorities have cracked down on powerful companies in several sectors of the economy.

"If that happens, they'll effectively make him a dictator," Prof Tsang says.

China's top leadership team, to be unveiled at the congress, will set a huge range of policies.

Any hint of China's future direction will be followed closely around the world, particularly on the key challenges: economic, political, diplomatic and environmental.

China's economic challenge

China's economy has boomed in recent decades.

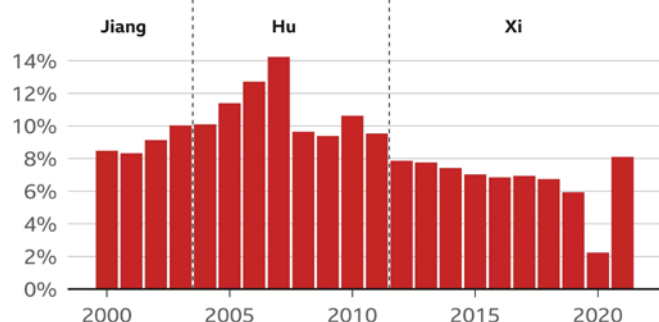
But it now faces serious economic disruption from Covid lockdowns, rising prices and a major property crisis.

Growing fears of a global recession triggered by the war in Ukraine have also damaged confidence.

Economic growth under Mr Xi's leadership is lower than under previous presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao.

China's economic growth has slowed under Xi Jinping

GDP growth under Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping



Some analysts say the legitimacy of the communist government rests heavily on its ability to deliver higher incomes and good jobs for Chinese workers.

So bad economic performance in the next five years could spell serious political trouble for Mr Xi.

The congress will set the stage for a shake up of key economic roles including central bank governor and premier.

Zero Covid

China's zero Covid approach to the pandemic is one of Xi's landmark policies.

While much of the world has been returning to normal, China's authorities have intensified their efforts to contain outbreaks, with strict lockdowns, mass testing and lengthy quarantines.

Reports say that more than 70 cities including Shenzhen and Chengdu have been under full or partial lockdown measures in recent weeks, with tens of millions of residents affected, huge numbers of businesses disrupted and reports of public discontent.

Mr Xi has vowed to "resolutely fight against any words and acts that distort, doubt or deny" his Covid policy.

A major outbreak in the run-up to the Congress, or during the meeting itself, risks damaging Mr Xi's image of competence.

Some observers say the party may use the Congress to declare victory over the pandemic and end the zero Covid policy.

Alternatively, the party may argue that China - unlike other countries - values people's lives more than the economy, in which case the policy will continue.

Taiwan and the West

Mr Xi has also favoured a hardline approach to relations with the West, particularly over Taiwan.

A visit to Taiwan by the Speaker of the US House of Representatives in August prompted China to launch military exercises, including live missile firing, around the island.

China sees Taiwan as a breakaway province that will eventually be under Beijing's control. Taiwan sees itself as distinct from the mainland.

Mr Xi has said "reunification" with Taiwan "must be fulfilled" by 2049, the centenary of the People's Republic - and has not ruled out the possible use of force to achieve this.

Security experts say that a Chinese takeover of Taiwan would shatter US power in the western Pacific Ocean and beyond.

Taiwan is of huge strategic importance to the West, part of the so-called "first island chain", which includes a list of territories which have been allied to the US for decades.



Courtesy BBC News

Elon Musk denies he spoke to Putin about Ukraine war



By George Wright

Elon Musk has denied reports he spoke to Vladimir Putin before posting a Twitter poll with his suggestions for ending Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ian Bremmer, head of the Eurasia Group political risk consultancy, alleged that Mr Musk had personally told him about the conversation with Mr Putin.

But Mr Musk has now refuted this.

"I have spoken to Putin only once and that was about 18 months ago. The subject matter was space," Mr Musk tweeted.

Last week, the Tesla CEO asked his 107.7 million followers to vote on ways to resolve the Ukraine war.

The suggestions included a proposal to hold votes in parts of Ukraine occupied by Russia that the Kremlin says it has annexed. His comments were welcomed by Moscow.

The multi-billionaire said: "Russia leaves if that is will of the people."

President Putin has already declared four Ukrainian regions to be part of Russia,

following so-called referendums denounced as fraudulent by Kyiv and its Western allies. Russia does not fully control any of the four regions.

Mr Musk also suggested the world should "formally" recognise Crimea - illegally annexed by Moscow in 2014 - as part of Russia.

In a newsletter, Mr Bremmer wrote that Mr Musk told him the Russian president was "prepared to negotiate", but only if Crimea remained under Russian control, if Ukraine accepted a form of permanent neutrality, and if Kyiv recognised Russia's annexation of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

Mr Bremmer said the SpaceX boss told him that Mr Putin said these goals would be accomplished "no matter what" and that there was the potential of a nuclear strike if Ukraine invaded Crimea.

But Mr Musk has since denied the reports.

Mr Musk's initial poll caused widespread controversy.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said people proposing Ukraine give up on its people and land "must stop using word 'peace' as an euphemism to 'let Russians murder and rape thousands more innocent Ukrainians, and grab more land'".

Russian chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov called Mr Musk's tweet "moral idiocy, repetition of Kremlin propaganda, a betrayal of Ukrainian courage & sacrifice".

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov welcomed Mr Musk's suggestions, stating: "It is very positive that somebody like Elon Musk is looking for a peaceful way out of this situation."

Early in the war, the billionaire gained widespread popularity in Ukraine after sending a number of his Starlink internet terminals to the country. He was subsequently invited to visit by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

But his recent tweets have seen that relationship sour, with Mr Zelensky last week hitting out at his Twitter polls.

Courtesy BBC News

Flood Losses and Poverty

Floods have devastated the agriculture sector of the country

By Azeem Waqas

Sana-ul-Allah Baloch of District Rajanpur has drowned his 40-acre cotton crop and more than two dozen animals in the recent floods. He has lost wheat seeds stored for the upcoming crop as well as water. His family spent a month on the Indus Highway when their house and surroundings were submerged in water.

I have lost everything and am unable to plan for the next crop. I don't have money to buy seeds, pesticides, fertilizer, and prepare land for wheat sowing. Livestock and agriculture are my livelihood, but I have no idea how to restore it, Sanaullah said, while talking to The Truth International (TTI).

According to Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Member of the National Assembly, Dr. Nafisa Shah, more than 80% of the district of Khairpur is still under water. They are helpless; no government came to rescue them. The federal government has no plan for their revival. The State Bank of Pakistan should say that they will write off their loan, and the government should help them get back on their feet by giving them free farm supplies.

Floods have devastated the agriculture sector of the country. People are feeling the heat of inflation as the prices of tomatoes, onions, and vegetables have skyrocketed. Traders are expecting that this year they will be importing more tomatoes, rice, wheat, cotton, and other food items.

Sindh and Punjab's provincial governments haven't finished figuring out how much damage floods and heat waves did to cotton crops, but the textile industry has said that domestic production is expected to drop by 3.24 million bales to 5.8 million, which would be the second lowest level in nearly 40 years.

Pakistan is expected to use 13 million bales of cotton in 2022-23. This is because the crop will be smaller and demand will be lower.

Smaller mills depend more on domestic



supplies because they can't fully replace imports. Imports are now projected at their second highest level at 5.0 million bales.

Falling consumption is also attributed to nationwide energy shortages and higher electricity prices. Higher costs lower mills' profit margins, particularly for denim manufacturers. A big part of Pakistan's exports are processed denim products, especially to the United States and Europe, which buy the most cotton clothing in the world.

Cotton crop production assessment, which is estimated to be 5.79 million bales after flooding and strong rains, is 36% less than our earlier prediction of 9.03 million bales.

Ayesha Ghous Pasha said that after the flood havoc, Pakistan's GDP is expected to grow at a rate of 2 percent, as against the target of 6%.

According to estimates from Atlantic Counsel South Asia, floods have cost Pakistan's economy \$22.5 billion so far.

An initial report says the total damage from the 2022 floods is estimated at \$9.5 billion, with an additional \$12.5 billion required for reconstruction efforts. This brings the total financial damage and reconstruction cost estimate to \$22.2bn.

The financial damage to homes that have been destroyed stands at \$3.22

billion. Out of this, \$2.84bn of housing damage is in Sindh alone. Total crop damage amounts to \$3.18bn, out of which \$1.63bn is in Sindh and \$1.04bn in Balochistan. Finally, livestock losses stand at \$291 million, out of which \$125 million is in Balochistan and another \$109 million in Sindh, the report says.

Economic expert Ammar Khan says that the human, economic, and financial costs necessitate a real conversation about climate reparations. The floods in Pakistan have a gigantic human, economic, and financial cost, the recovery from which may take years and has dealt a severe blow to an already precarious economic situation. The floods have largely affected the most underdeveloped parts of the country, where poverty and malnutrition are the highest. The floods have affected more than thirty million people, destroying their livelihoods, their property, and any sources of income that they had. It is a massive negative shock to the wealth of people in the area, most of whom were already surviving either below or close to the poverty line.

He said that the total economic cost of the floods is estimated to be greater than \$20 billion, of which roughly half can be attributed to private capital. Effectively, the poorest districts and households in the country have had a negative wealth shock of at least \$10

billion, recovery from which may take years. Climate change is real, and it is disproportionately affecting those who have the lowest levels of carbon emissions. It is time to have a serious discussion about climate reparations; otherwise, any reconstruction that does not take climate resilience into account may lead to even more catastrophic disasters in the future.

Food insecurity is a growing risk for Pakistan in the flood aftermath. Initial estimates indicate that 4.6 million acres of cropland have been affected. Losses in agriculture are worth more than PKR 81 million, and losses in livestock are worth PKR 23 billion.

The JS Global report said that because 23% of Pakistan's GDP comes directly from agriculture, the country could be in danger after these floods.

"It's too early to say for sure, but our first guess is that the effects could include more than \$4 billion in higher-than-expected imports in FY23 and a possible slowdown in exports because cotton and rice won't be available."

The World Bank, in its recent report, said that the devastating floods will have an adverse impact on poverty. The immediate impact on household welfare will come through at least four channels: (i) loss of household income as a result of destroyed



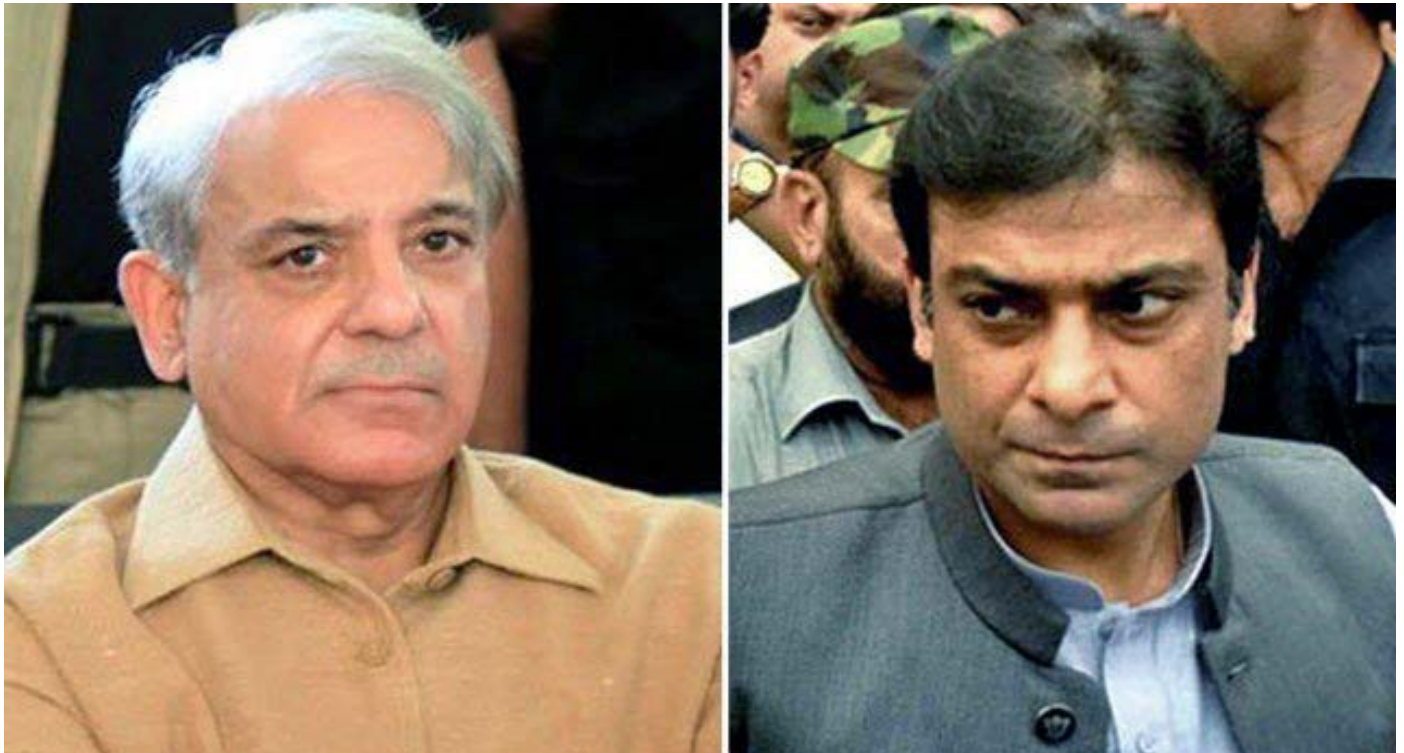
harvests, livestock slaughter, or business inactivity; (ii) loss of assets such as homes, livestock, productive equipment, and household durables; (iii) food shortages as a result of lost food stocks, poor harvests, and rising food prices; and (iv) loss of human capital as a result of disease outbreaks and food shortages, as well as prolonged school closures with attendant learning losses. Preliminary estimates suggest that as a direct consequence of the floods, the national poverty rate could increase by 2.5 to 4.0 percentage points, pushing between

5.8 and 9.0 million people into poverty. The size and duration of shocks will vary across locations and households depending on the intensity of the flooding as well as the quality of relief and reconstruction efforts. Even in the best case, reversing these negative shocks to household welfare will take a long time, and some of the losses, like the loss of human capital and the loss of land productivity, could set off longer-term declines in welfare that will require special policy attention.



In a money laundering case, Shehbaz and Hamza go Scot-free, Dar next in the line of acquittal

Mr. Dar is requesting a permanent exemption from the requirement of personal appearance on each and every hearing date



By Asadullah Malik

As expected soon after the toppling of regime of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) the case against Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shahbaz for allegedly laundering Rs16 billion in the sugar scam case dropped.

The development happened days after the Lahore High Court (LHC) cleared Moonis Elahi, son of current Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, in a similar case.

The legal experts and political analysts are expecting the same fate of the reference against Finance Minister Ishaq Dar which is pending adjudication before the Accountability Court of Islamabad.

The investigation team against Sharifs has detected 28 benami accounts of the Shehbaz family through which money laundering of Rs16.3bn was committed during 2008–18. An FIA report says that the FIA looked at the money trails of 17,000 credit transactions.

The amount was kept in "hidden accounts" and given to Shehbaz in a personal capacity, the report added.

This amount (Rs 16bn) has nothing to do with the sugar business (of the Shehbaz family). The FIA said that Shehbaz took money from the accounts of low-wage workers and sent it outside of Pakistan through hundi and hawala networks. The money was then used to help his family members.

Sharif and his son Hamza, the former chief minister of Punjab province, were charged during the administration of former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Suleman Shahbaz, another son of the Prime Minister has not been tried since moving to London after the charges were filed.

They contended in their defence that the case was lodged against them with mala

fide intentions and ulterior motives. The registration of a series of cases in quick succession and repeated arrest of the petitioners were classic examples of misuse of the legal process at the behest of the former federal government.

There was no allegation of any loss to the public exchequer or any bank or other financial institution or even to a private person, no worthwhile evidence on the record as to the funds being the proceeds of crime, which was an essential condition to attract the mischief of an offence under the Anti Money Laundering Act, 2010, PM and his son adopted this stance before the court.

The prosecution on the other hand failed to substantiate allegations from the case record and sought more time from the court, stating that the investigating officer had not brought the complete record of the case to court.

A lawyer who knows about the case said that since the case is similar to the FIR filed against Moonis and others, Shehbaz and his son could have been given the clean chit.

The FIR was filed against Moonis, Muhammad Khan Bhatti, Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti, Muhammad Ali, Mazhar Abbas, Makhdoom Omar Shehryar, Tarik Jawaid, and Wajid Khan Bhatti under Sections 34 (acts done by multiple people to further a common goal), 109 (punishment for aiding), 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), and 468 (forgery to cheat).



Moonis's attorney pleaded before the court that there was a ban in 2007 and 2008 on establishing sugar mills, but even then, an allegation of establishing a sugar mill in Rahim Yar Khan was levelled.

He further argued that the then chief minister issued a NOC which was twice testified to by the Lahore High Court. In 2007, the allegation of money laundering was levelled in the name of employees with fewer salaries. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) looked into this case for a long time and in great detail, but nothing was found to prove the case, the lawyer said.

Ishaq Dar's Case

Senator Ishaq Dar, who is the current finance minister, has gone back to Pakistan after being told he won't be arrested and will be given free rein to fix the economy.

Last month, an accountability court cancelled an arrest warrant for PML-N

member Ishaq Dar. This made it possible for him to come back from London, where he has been living in "self-exile" for about five years.

His perpetual warrant of arrest was issued on December 11, 2017, after Mr. Dar absconded from an assets-beyond-means case. The warrants were put on hold until October 7. This gave the senator-elect two weeks to turn himself into the police.

In a later case, the accountability court cancelled the warrant. In a few days, his properties will no longer belong to the provincial government, which at one point

was about to sell them at auction.

Furthermore, Mr. Dar is requesting a permanent exemption from the requirement of personal appearance on each and every hearing date. In criminal cases, the accused must be in the courtroom, but the judge can let them out in certain situations.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has not objected to any application of Mr. Dar's so far. Therefore, if the application seeking his exemption from personal appearance is not opposed, he would no longer be required to attend the lengthy court hearing. Hence, he could focus on the economy, on which he has been brought back.

The court's decision to suspend his warrant has enabled Mr. Dar to replace the beleaguered Miftah Ismail. The change of command will happen while the country is facing one of its worst economic crises, made worse by a devaluation of the

currency that has never happened before.

The legal experts believe that Mr. Dar may be acquitted in the assets beyond means case for more than one reason.

They say that recent changes to the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO) of 1999 have made it very hard to prove that an accused person has assets beyond their means. In the case of Mr. Dar, it is almost impossible for the prosecution to prove that he got his money illegally.

But there is a fear that the Supreme Court could rule against the NAB's changes, in which case Mr. Dar would have to go through his case according to the old accountability law.

Legal experts say that NAB's reference is weak because the Islamabad High Court (IHC), in a recent case against Maryam Nawaz, almost threw the report of the Joint Investigation Team (JIT), which was put together to look into Panamagate, in the trash.

On July 28, 2017, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court disqualified then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif for not telling the truth about an undrawn salary from his son's company. They also set up a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) led by the then-additional director general of the Federal Investigation Agency, Wajid Zia, to look into the assets of the Sharif family and Mr. Dar.

The JIT prepared four references—three against the Sharif family and one against Mr. Dar—and filed them in the accountability court the same year.

Mr. Wajid Zia, the star prosecution witness, testified before the accountability court in April 2019 that Mr. Dar's assets had grown manifold from 1982-83 to 2008. He said that the former finance minister had assets worth Rs9.1 million in 1982-1983, which grew quickly and reached Rs831.6 million in 2008.

The prosecution concluded that Mr. Dar possessed assets that were disproportionate to and beyond his known sources of income. Mr. Dar returned to the country on Monday from London to assume the portfolio of the federal finance minister. On September 23, the accountability court took away Mr. Dar's arrest warrants so that he could turn himself into the accountability court.

On Cyber Warfare and Pakistan

Cyber warfare is not in the future anymore – it is happening now!

By Hamza Qureshi

Given the information technology revolution, and the subsequent complaints of Pakistan lagging far behind the world, a new arena has emerged that policymakers must now inevitably look into. Recently, concerns have been raised about the security of Pakistan's cyberspace.

The resonance of such concerns increased when Pakistan's social media got overwhelmed with discussions regarding audio leaks. On the eve of September 24th, three leaked audios spread like wildfire. The audios were supposedly related to the incumbent Prime Minister, Mr. Shehbaz Sharif. For more than two days, the hashtag #audioleaks was trending on Pakistan's Twitter.

What happened?

Just before midnight, the smartphones started buzzing with WhatsApp notifications. I tapped a community group to view messages, which were primarily screenshots and audio. The message describing the audio says that this conversation is between the current PM and a senior bureaucrat.

Soon, I started receiving messages from another group. There were three audios. PM Sharif could apparently be heard in all of them. The first which got the most fame was of 2 minutes and 6 seconds duration, in which a bureaucrat could be heard discussing some details regarding Maryam Nawaz's requests. The second audio clip lasts approximately 12 minutes and 40 seconds. A female can be heard who repeatedly mentions the PM as "Uncle". The discussion is about various issues, with references made to DG ISPR, Pervez Musharraf's return and election campaigns. The last audio clip's duration is 2 minutes and 2 seconds. Rana Sanullah, an unknown bureaucrat and Prime Minister, can be heard discussing some matters.

The initial response of cybersecurity professionals to these leaks was different. Many people believed the audio



was recorded using spyware installed on digital devices in the PM Office. They highlighted the possibility of Pegasus spyware being covertly installed on the smartphones of high officials. In the recent past, hackers were able to take over smart devices like air conditioners, smart watches, and other Internet of Things (IoT) devices from afar.

We talked to Jibran Ilyas, who is currently serving as Managing Director at Mandiant, a cybersecurity firm in Chicago. Jibran has been working in incident response and forensics investigations for more than a decade now. He shared that the physical security SOP at PMO does not allow digital devices such as phones or watches to sneak in. He added that all three leaks have different textures. The recording device is very close to one of them. The second one seems to be somewhere near a fan/AC due to the constant noise. The third audio seems to be recorded by a device near a clock.

Audio leaks, the Dark Web, and hackers

An unknown "hacker" has become a popular celebrity on Pakistani Twitter. This was taken appropriately by impersonators who launched several social media accounts, each propagating the news of their interest. With the dust settling down, it eventually became clear that all such accounts were either fake or made for mockery purposes.

The Dark Web is often explained as an underground "network" of criminals and delinquents who use the internet for their malign purposes. We have read news stories featuring cannibalism, child pornography, drug markets, etc., all functioning online via the dark web. These stories are true! But what do dark websites actually look like?

It was back in 2016 when I first got a chance to have a glimpse inside the dark web. With specialised tools and sets of VPNs, you can hide your identity and enter the notorious world. People often use non-persistent operating systems to access the Mariana Trench of the Internet. Contrary to popular belief, it is not illegal to access the dark web. The non-indexed links are hard to find, but then there are sophisticated surface and deep web links that help you to discover the marketplaces and forums of the Dark Web.

I would describe the dark web as a repository of websites whose front-end, or better said, web styling, was done in the 1990s. Most websites are simple HTML pages with simple design and no aesthetics involved. The aesthetics are obviously not needed.

There are different types of hackers. The illegal ones are known as "black-hat hackers. A significant number of the black hats see themselves as vigilantes who do what they feel is right in the public interest. Others are

hacktivists who might use their skills for their political agenda. There is also a hardcore criminal type for whom financial benefit stands at the top. There are numerous forums on the dark web that hackers could use to sell or leak data.

The audio leaks, which supposedly feature the voice of Pakistan's Prime Minister, were published by a user named "Indishell" on a forum known as Breachforum on August 20, 2022. The leaks were published with a post stating that 8GB of data could be sold to the highest bidder. The starting bid was kept at 180 bitcoins (about 343,000). The post said that the data includes audio recordings of conversations in Pakistan's Prime Minister's office about politics, the economy, and security.



The claims of "Indishell" made an appearance on media screens on September 25. A day later, an ID named "Indishell" posted on the same thread on September 25. A day later, an ID named "Indishell" posted on the same thread that all the data would be made public on the coming Friday (September 30). The post was quickly identified as an impersonation by the forum users. However, it has already made headlines on Pakistani TV screens. Later, the impersonator's post on the thread was also deleted by the thread initiator.

Audio Leaks and the Security of Pakistan's Cyber Space

With the leaks making their way to news channels as breaking news, questions were subsequently raised about the security of the PMO and the country's cyberspace. Experts pointed out that there are various SOPs and checks before entering the PMO. However, there are concerns about whether such checks apply to top-level ministers and senior bureaucrats.

The Prime Minister was quick to decide on the matter. A 12-member committee was immediately formed under Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah. The committee included directors general of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Moreover, technical representatives from the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the National Telecom and Information Security Board (NTISB) were also made part of the inquiry team. The PM also told the Ministry of Law to come up with a "legal framework" that includes cybersecurity in detail.

On October 7, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah announced that no agency or organisation had been found involved in the leaks. He claimed that no bugging

bugged when he was still PM. He showed intent to approach the court for an investigation into the culprits behind the audio-leaks fiasco. He termed it an "exposure of confidentiality" of Pakistan's national security. Ilyas, a member of the PTI Social Media team, told this reporter that it doesn't take a forensic expert to figure out that the latest audio leaks from Khan were edited.

Interestingly, the leadership of PTI and PMLN have not contradicted the truth of the conversations leaked on tape. Both parties are now using these audios as a political weapon to help them in their campaigns. These leaks somehow prove the sad truth that national interests are often put aside and sacrificed on the altar of personal interests and power politics.

An important note for policymakers

Although the audio leaks seem to be more of an information security incident rather than a complete failure at cybersecurity, this does not lessen the foul smell of the outcome. Ammar Jaffery, former DG at FIA and also the founder of the National Response Centre for Cyber Crime (NR3C) at FIA, says that it is high time for us to realise that Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) are essential for securing Pakistan's cyberspace. CERTs are composed of technical and governance experts who play their part in the case of any breach, hacking or compromise. They are trained to handle such situations.

Previously, it was thought an inch of air (dis-connectivity) was enough for maintaining cybersecurity. The latest technology introduced by Israeli Unit 8200 has even nullified this assumption. Pakistan needs to indigenously design and develop cybersecurity products for all levels of defence or finance. One cannot simply afford to remain off the grid. Generous research funds must be granted to academia in this regard. The import of IT hardware and software creates another threat to the already vulnerable cyber atmosphere. Therefore, industry-academia collaboration should be encouraged. Cyber warfare is not in the future anymore – it is happening now!

device could be placed inside the PMO. Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) claimed their first success in the investigation on October 11 when they arrested two suspects. One of them is said to be associated with an educational institution in the capital city.

PTI Leadership: Targeted by Leaks

The echo of audio leaks from the PMO could still be heard. The audio recordings of PTI Chairman and ex-PM, Imran Khan, surfaced soon after the leaks from the PMO. He could be heard talking about cyphers. These leaks added weight to the government's claims that the PTI Chairman has been playing the narrative of cypher leaks for his personal gains.

The PTI Chairman implicitly admitted the authenticity of the infamous call recording between Bushra Bibi and Dr Arsalan Khalid in which Bushra Bibi was heard ordering 'traitor trends'. Khan recalled that the secure line of Bani Gala was even

Cyberattacks Pose A Huge Threat to Pakistan

As multiple high-profile hacks in recent years have demonstrated, cybersecurity in Pakistan continues to be a serious issue. Serious data leaks have occurred at NADRA, FBR, and some banks

By Mahnur Mehfuz

The concept of "the art of war" refers to a method for choosing how, when, and where to engage the opponent. Globally, a more recent threat is developing that affects both nations and the private profit-driven world. Millions of dollars are transferred or stolen unlawfully, private information is revealed, state secrets are obtained, and vital public infrastructure is breached. The number of these attacks per day has reached thousands as the cyber domain becomes more sophisticated.

For many years, cyber security experts have been attempting to guard against unwanted access to, attacks on, changes to, or destruction of computers, databases, programs, systems, and networks. Additionally, in light of the current state of global security, it is a crucial topic in debates among government and security officials. The Pakistani government is putting into action defense strategies designed to prevent terrorists from entering the nation by keeping an eye on its borders. In the current security environment, the government must also pay attention to critical defense measures for crucial cyber services of the nation including NADRA (National Database and Registration Authority), E-Government services, and capital markets.

There are various ways in which terrorists might use the internet as a platform to attack, manipulate, and stop crucial ICT services. These services use firewalls and other technologies to secure systems. This essay examines the cyber problems in Pakistan's fragile security environment. A significant amount of private information is processed, stored, and transmitted through the internet for business reasons by e-government services, capital markets, enterprises, and other businesses. Iran and Lithuania are two countries that have recently been directly impacted by cyberattacks. Cyber security concerns are growing daily as the globe becomes more and more connected to the internet or digitalized by information technology. It also makes Pakistan vulnerable, since it's a nuclear

power with a significant geopolitical position. The business and private sector is also at risk since the country's digital economy has tremendously grown in size as a result of the improvements in the cyberspace sector.

As multiple high-profile hacks in recent years have demonstrated, cybersecurity in Pakistan continues to be a serious issue. Serious data leaks have occurred at NADRA, FBR, and some banks. According to reports, many of the vulnerabilities that the hackers exploited are still present. Globally, hacks have destroyed entire economic sectors in some cases.



What transpires when essential infrastructure is attacked was demonstrated by the Colonial Pipeline hack. Hackers shut down the US oil pipeline and were able to demand almost \$4 million in cryptocurrencies as ransom within hours, which caused fuel prices to soar and supply issues that persisted for several weeks. Ironically, the insurance company CNA, which offers cybersecurity protection, paid a \$40 million ransom following a hack last year. Hacks involving ransomware have also been made against hospitals, electrical grids, and other vital infrastructure, so the stakes go far beyond financial gain. Imagine the devastation if hospitals and vital security services went offline.

On September 24, several claimed discussion files that had purportedly been taped in Pakistan Prime Minister's Office surfaced

online. Sharif and some of his ministers could be heard discussing different matters. PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz Sharif was audible in at least one incident.

Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb downplayed the situation as soon as the data hit Pakistani social media, stating they included nothing unlawful or incriminating. However, Shehbaz Sharif referred to the leaks as a "very severe lapse" and declared the creation of a powerful committee to investigate the situation.

The prevalence of pirated software, which is frequently already "cracked" or "jailbroken" to remove security features and

makes it more vulnerable to attacks, poses an additional threat to Pakistan. Interestingly, the widespread use of unlicensed software was cited as the cause of the FBR breach. There is a lot of work to be done on the ground, and it is still uncertain how a cash-strapped government will manage when prosperous private enterprises appear unwilling to commit the money to accomplish it. When it comes to alerting citizens to the full dangers posed by cybercriminals both domestically and internationally, it is not entirely effective. It is the first significant action the government has taken to combat cybercrime and improve the country's overall cyber security by creating awareness among the masses. However, it needs to include more responsibilities that will safeguard Pakistan's population as well as the government.

Portals to Advancement

Not only Pakistan, but all similar countries must take a quick step for success in this field, because we never know when our limit will be reached. It is not necessary to build enormous telescopes costing billions of dollars, but smaller ones can also provide their input in meaningful ways, as the more the eyes, the more the detail spotted.

By Ahmed Mohiuddin

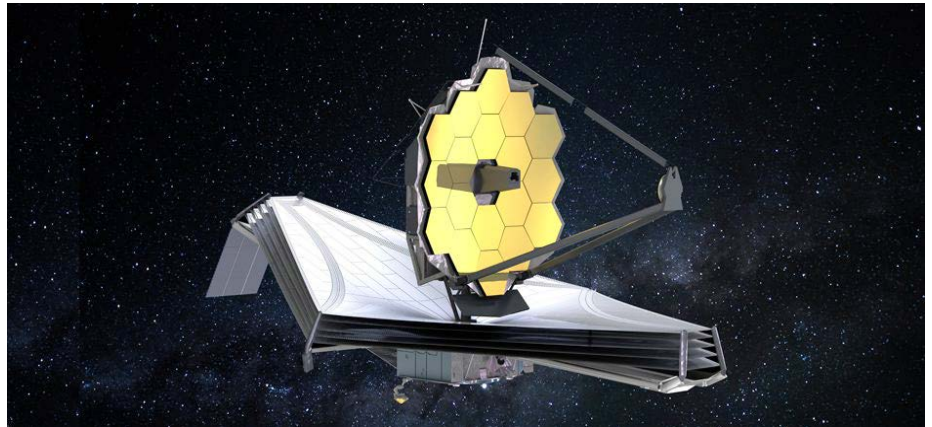
Mankind is very clever. Clever enough to have done things which were nothing short of a miracle, but stupid enough to believe that this is how far they can go. Before success lies the effort; the effort which is mainly crossing out all the possible hindrances obstructing the progress. One only gets what he strives for. So if mankind is striving for a tiny lump of rock, an asteroid cannot be the reward.

Long leaps have been made by scientists and explorers in history; many of which proved turning points in research related to physics. It is an undeniable fact that all there is, is governed by the laws of physics; may it be the precession of the microscopic electrons in an atom or a humongous cataclysm between galaxies in space. Let the research train derail into the latter. Many before have wondered into this topic and exhausted themselves to find an answer; the question being 'How deep a human can delve into space?'

Now let us discuss the events that led to this 'exhaustion'. In order to elicit an answer to the mystery, astronomers were aware that space was not something that could be measured by easy means. In fact, they didn't even know how colossal it was. So in order to detect and locate its boundaries, they needed an eye; a lens that would make things somewhat vivid than they were. Hence the creation of telescopes landed headlines in the newspapers.

Currently, space explorers claimed to have seen till the center of the universe, thanks to the notable operations of the James Webb Space Telescope and the Hubble Space Telescope. Pictures of black holes were taken by the recent observatory which proved to be a game-changer in the field of physics, considering the fact that black holes are shrouded in a blanket of enigma. These snaps became the entrance to a new doorway; a path that leads to the emphasis of where these dark lurking giants lead to.

Furthermore, never-before-seen clusters of



stars were pictured beautifully and their glimpses shared with the world. Some even had their heads scratching over whether the pictures were real or fictional drawings. This hard-to-believe sensation is what displays the majestic yet miraculous framework of the telescope. Recently, the telescope captured a stellar nursery in which millions of stars were observed nurturing peacefully. It is a mere reality of the cocoon of existence; the more we dive into something, the more the pressure there is. Simply speaking, the more we struggle to find an answer, the more questions await in the fruit basket.

Coming back to the space advancement, the telescopes aren't the only diamonds humans have mined out. Various probes and rovers; the Perseverance, Ingenuity and the Curiosity for example, are sent with different space missions into alien worlds, in order to study probabilities of life by examining rock samples, weather conditions and types of acids in the underground lakes. Missions to Europa (one of the four major moons of Jupiter) are already scheduled in the upcoming years in order to study the hospitability of its icy surface; below which is an ocean with depths unseen. Such artefacts already have the success wheel pedaling. However, out of the approximate 190 countries of the world, only a miniature percentage is contributing. The topic which reminds us how small we are, is largely ignored by the people.

Pakistan is also struggling to stabilize the economic crisis it is currently undergoing. Under these circumstances, it is hard for the country to summon the portal to advancement in the space sector. However, this does not mean that the country must wave the flag of goodbye to the industry. While other problems are eagerly solved, small bulbs can somewhat help illuminate this unique advancement, the colors of which are long faded away. Societies, like the NUST Rocket Team, are already spreading awareness in regard to space amongst the country's locals, in an attempt to pacify the invisible beast that has deteriorated this industry towards an ensnaring turmoil.

Not only Pakistan, but all similar countries must take a quick step for success in this field, because we never know when our limit will be reached. It is not necessary to build enormous telescopes costing billions of dollars, but smaller ones can also provide their input in meaningful ways, as the more the eyes, the more the detail spotted.

In order to have an insight of what's beyond our boundaries, we must seek the unique portals to advancement to elevate ourselves to a whole new dimension; which is clustered both with questions and answers. Reiterating once more; mankind thinks that the marvels of physics is its greatest achievement, its greatest fascination, forgetful enough to remember that they have a majestic brain inside their heads; little of which they know about.

TikTok profits from livestreams of families begging

Displaced families in Syrian camps are begging for donations on TikTok while the company takes up to 70% of the proceeds, a BBC investigation found

By Hannah Gelbart



Children are livestreaming on the social media app for hours, pleading for digital gifts with a cash value.

They are streams earning up to \$1,000 (£900) an hour, but found the people in the camps received only a tiny fraction of that.

TikTok said it would take prompt action against "exploitative begging".

The company said this type of content was not allowed on its platform, and it said its commission from digital gifts was significantly less than 70%. But it declined to confirm the exact amount.

The middlemen said they worked with agencies affiliated to TikTok in China and the Middle East, who gave the families access to TikTok accounts. These agencies are part of TikTok's global strategy to recruit livestreamers and encourage users to spend more time on the app.

Since the TikTok algorithm suggests content based on the geographic origin of a user's phone number, the middlemen said they prefer to use British SIM cards. They say people from the UK are the most generous gifters.

Mona Ali Al-Karim and her six daughters are among the families who go live on TikTok every day, sitting on the floor of their tent for hours, repeating the few English phrases they know: "Please like, please share, please gift."

Mona's husband was killed in an airstrike and she is using the livestreams to raise money for an operation for her daughter Sharifa, who is blind.

The gifts they're asking for are virtual, but they cost the viewers real money and can be withdrawn from the app as cash. Livestream viewers send the gifts - ranging from digital roses, costing a few cents, to virtual lions costing around \$500 - to reward or tip creators for content.

Families in the camps said they were receiving only a tiny fraction of these sums, however.

A reporter in Syria contacted one of the TikTok-affiliated agencies saying he was living in the camps. He obtained an account and went live, while BBC staff in London sent TikTok gifts worth \$106 from another account.

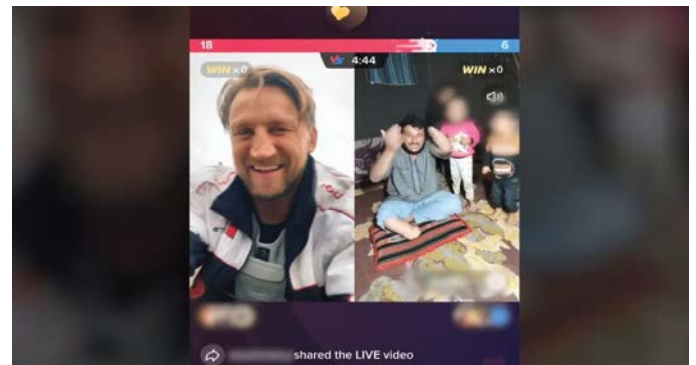
At the end of the livestream, the balance of the Syrian test account was \$33. TikTok had taken 69% of the value of the gifts.

The \$33 remaining from the BBC's \$106 gift was reduced by a further 10% when it was withdrawn from the local money transfer shop. TikTok middlemen would take 35% of the remainder, leaving a family with just \$19.

Like the other middlemen, Hamid said he was supported by "live agencies" in China, who work directly with TikTok.

The emphasis on duration means TikTokers, including children in the Syrian camps, go live for hours at a time.

Marwa Fatafta, from digital rights organisation Access Now, says these livestreams run contrary to TikTok's own policies to "prevent the harm, endangerment or exploitation" of minors on the platform.



TikTok Begging in Syria

BBC News investigates a new trend on TikTok - hundreds of families in camps for displaced people in Syria, begging for gifts on TikTok livestreams.

"TikTok clearly states that users are not allowed to explicitly solicit gifts, so this is a clear violation of their own terms of services, as well as the rights of these people," she said.

She acknowledges that people have the right to share their stories online "to try to seek support and sympathy", but she says these livestreams "lack dignity, and are humiliating".

TikTok's rules say you must have 1,000 followers before you can go live, you must not directly solicit for gifts and must "prevent the harm, endangerment or exploitation" of minors on the platform.

Courtesy BBC News

Adnan Syed and Serial: What you need to know

By Chelsea Bailey

Adnan Syed has been cleared of charges in the 1999 murder of his ex-girlfriend, Hae Min Lee, after new DNA evidence emerged in the case.

The Baltimore state's attorney's office said a yearlong investigation revealed Syed had been wrongfully convicted of strangling and killing Lee, and that new DNA tests showed he was not involved in Lee's death.

Syed maintained his innocence while in prison for nearly 25 years. But his case won a massive boost from an unlikely source - a podcast.

What is Serial and when did it come out?

More than a decade after Syed was sent to prison, Rabia Chaudry, a Baltimore-based lawyer and family friend of the Syeds, emailed a journalist named Sarah Koenig and asked her to re-investigate Lee's murder.

That email helped launch the first season of the podcast Serial. The show premiered in autumn 2014 and each episode tried to piece together a timeline of what happened the night Lee was killed.

Who killed Hae Min Lee?

That's the question at the heart of Serial.

"For the last year I've spent every working day trying to figure out where a high school kid was for an hour after school one day in 1999," Ms Koenig says in the first episode.

Only now, the "kids" she interviewed were adults and some of their stories had changed.

As each episode revealed new details - and potential new suspects - internet sleuths and armchair detectives sprang into action and argued their theories on social media.

Within months, the chatter around Syed's case would ultimately help him win a new trial.

Who are the other suspects?

In an episode of Serial released after Syed's conviction was overturned, Koenig lays out

why the case was thrown out. She says his lawyers argued new evidence had emerged showing that during the original trial prosecutors failed to investigate and rule out two potential suspects who were known to detectives at the time. Syed's lawyers also questioned the reliability of witness statements and mobile phone evidence originally used to convict him.

A judge agreed and overturned Syed's conviction. The state's attorney's office later cleared Syed of all charges on the basis of that new evidence, as well as multiple rounds of DNA testing that revealed Syed's DNA was not present on any of the victims' clothing. "As a representative of the institution, it is my responsibility to acknowledge and apologise to the family of Hae Min Lee and Adnan Syed," said Baltimore City State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby.

Why was the show so popular?

Serial helped ignite the popularity of podcasts. Ms Koenig's signature confessional style, as well as the true crime topic, kept listeners returning - and downloading - the show every week.

The first season of Serial has been downloaded more than 300m times and the show is widely cited as one of the most popular podcasts in the world.

Though subsequent seasons of the show were less popular, in many ways, Ms Koenig and her team helped create the formula for a "bingeable" podcast.

But did it really help Syed?

In 2015, Syed was granted a new trial based, in part, on new evidence uncovered while making Serial.

But a judge also denied his request for bail. He remained imprisoned for years as his legal team argued for a new trial and tried to appeal against his conviction all the way to the Supreme Court.

In 2019, HBO premiered a four-part documentary series produced by Ms Chaudry called The Case Against Adnan Syed.

The series argued that Syed, who is Muslim, was convicted, in part, because of racial bias.

It ultimately revealed that forensic analyses had found no trace of his DNA on Lee's body at the time of the murder.

What about Lee and her family?

The Lee family refused to participate in Serial, and has always maintained that they believe Syed was rightfully convicted and justice was served during the original trial.

In 2016, when Syed was granted a new trial, the family told reporters that the podcast had "reopened wounds few can imagine", according to the Baltimore Sun. They also said they believed people had been misinformed by the podcast and regretted that "so few [were] willing to speak up for Hae".

Before the judge ruled on Monday, Young Lee, the victim's brother, made an emotional plea before the court on behalf of the family.

"This is not a podcast for me. This is real life - a never-ending nightmare for 20-plus years."

What's next?

Now that charges against Syed have been dropped, his attorneys will begin the process to have him officially exonerated.

In Maryland, anyone who has been wrongfully convicted is also entitled to compensation for each year they were imprisoned.

Though Syed has been cleared of murder, questions still remain around who killed the Hae Min Lee.

Prosecutors have indicated they have possibly identified new suspects, however, no-one has been charged.

For the grieving Lee family, the decision to re-open her murder case could expose old wounds.

Courtesy BBC News

ٹائیفائیڈ بخار کیا ہے؟



ٹائیفائیڈ بخار انتڑیوں کی ایک بیماری ہے جو ایک خاص قسم کے بیکٹیریا کی وجہ سے لاحق ہوتی ہے۔ ٹائیفائیڈ کی علامت میں لمبے عرصے تک ہلکا بخار رہنا اور سر میں درد ہونا شامل ہے۔

کوئی شخص ٹائیفائیڈ سے متاثر ہے یا نہیں یہ معلوم کرنے کا واحد راستہ یہ ہے کہ اس شخص کے خون یا فضلات میں سالمونیلہ ٹائفی کی جانچ کی جائے، ٹائیفائیڈ بخار آنتوں کے خون اور پرفوریشن کا سبب بن سکتا ہے۔ جس کے نتیجے میں پیٹ میں شدید درد اور متلی ہو سکتی ہے۔



ٹائیفائیڈ سے بچاؤ کے طریقے



ہاضمہ درست رکھیں، قبض نہ ہونے دیں، اُبلا ہوا پانی استعمال کریں، مریض کو ہوادار کمرے میں رکھیں تاکہ تندرست لوگوں میں نہ پھیلے۔

ٹائیفائیڈ سے بچاؤ کے لیے عالمی ادارہ صحت دو ٹائیفائیڈ ویکسین کی سفارش کرتا ہے۔

ویکسینیشن پہلے دو سالوں کے اندر اندر، ویکسین بیماری کی روک تھام میں مناسب حد تک مؤثر ہوتا ہے۔



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T20 World Cup 2022: With Back-To-Back Series, Preparations in Full Swing for Pakistan

With the T20 World Cup approaching, Shaheens are testing their limits with back-to-back series. The team is currently in New Zealand for a Tri-series with Bangladesh and the Kiwis.



By Ali Abdullah

The England Cricket Team visited Pakistan after 17 long years to play 7 T20 Internationals. The matches were played at National Stadium Karachi and Gaddafi Stadium Lahore. The teams faced off in Karachi. The English team was captained by Moeen Ali after their captain was injured in one of the practice sessions.

England easily won the first match, as Pakistan performed abysmally when called on to bat. The match was one-sided. In the second match, Pakistan, the most unpredictable side, made a comeback, smashing many records.

Pakistani Skipper Babar Azam and Wicket Keeper Batter Mohammad Rizwan created history in T20I cricket as Pakistan defeated England by 10 wickets in the 2nd T20I played at National Stadium Karachi on September 22. The series leveled 1-1.

Batting first, England posted 199/5 on the board with Skipper Moeen Ali top-scoring 55(23) while Ben Duckett scored 43 (22). Pakistani pacer Haris Rauf took 2/30 while Shahnawaz Dahani grabbed 2/37. Skipper Babar Azam took his side home by scoring his 2nd T20I hundred, chasing the total with 3 balls to spare. He became the first Pakistani to score multiple centuries in T20Is. Babar ended with 110(66)* while Rizwan scored 88(51) *. This was the first occasion that a total of 200 or above was chased with 10 wickets to spare.

Babar Azam and Rizwan indeed delivered a special performance for Pakistan. With this hundred, Babar Azam became the Pakistani captain with the most international hundreds as captain. This was also Pakistan's highest partnership for any wicket in T20I Cricket. Moreover, this was the 5th highest partnership in the history of T20I Cricket.

In the 3rd T20I, England bounced back but Pakistan found a confident batter in the experienced Shan Masood. Though he is an opener, in this series he's playing as a middle-order batsman. The inclusion of Shan Masood strengthened the middle order. Shan Masood came at number 4 and stayed not out after a brilliant inning of 65.

Pakistan won the 4th T20I and leveled the series 2-2. World number 1 T20I batsman Muhammad Rizwan scored 88 runs from just 67 deliveries. Pakistan defended a target of 166 brilliantly. England was all out for 163 and lost the match by 3 runs. Haris Rauf bowled exceptionally well. He showcased his talent and took 2 wickets in the 18th over, shifting the momentum to Pakistan's side. He also received the Man of the Match award.

Pakistan finally took the lead in the 5th T20I after another nail-biting thriller. The hosts had to defend a low total of 145 on a batting track. Pakistan's bowling attack didn't disappoint, showing their class once again keeping England restricted to 139 in 20 overs.

The last two matches were one-sided in England's favor who eventually won the series 4-3. Pakistani fans were disappointed by their team's performance in home conditions. As soon as the series finished, the Pakistani team headed to New Zealand for a Tri-series between Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the hosts New Zealand. This series is a practice for all 3 teams for the T20 World Cup which will be played in Australia. Conditions are similar to the upcoming world cup.

Pakistan won their first match against Bangladesh. Mohammad Rizwan was Pakistan's star with the bat, scoring 78(50)* while Shan Masood scored 31(22). Bangladesh was looking good till the 13th over when they were 87/2 and Mohammad Nawaz took 2 wickets in 2 balls turning the tide in Pakistan's favor. Soon Dahani removed Afif Hossain, and Shadab Khan took the wicket of Bangladeshi skipper Nurul Hasan, ending their hopes of winning. Bangladesh fell short by 21 runs thanks to the 3 wickets by Mohammad Wasim Jnr and a couple of wickets by Mohammad Nawaz. The top scorers for Bangladesh were Yasir Ali with 42* and Litton Das with 35(26). Pakistan won the first T20I of the Tri-series by 21 runs to get 2 points as well as a healthy net run rate.

Pakistan played their second game against the Black Caps. It was predicted to be a tough match but Pakistan outclassed the hosts and won the second T20I. Babar Azam was awarded the Man of the Match Award. He scored a brilliant 79 off 53 deliveries with a strike rate of 150+.

It was an all-round team performance. Shadab batted up the order and scored a fiery 34 and finished his spell by giving 21 runs only. Haris Rauf took 3 wickets whereas Nawaz and Muhammad Wasim Jnr took 2 wickets each.

Star all-rounder Shadab Khan created history after the first T20I, becoming Pakistan's joint 2nd highest wicket-taker in the T20I format. He has now leveled Saeed Ajmal and Umar Gul in the list who have 85 wickets each in their T20I careers. Shadab is set to overtake them and even Shahid Afridi soon who is currently at the top of the list with 97 wickets.



How can Pakistan win the T20 World Cup?

Wasim Akram says Pakistan have chance at winning T20 World Cup if they control middle order

Legendary pacer Wasim Akram has said that Pakistan have a chance at winning the T20 World Cup 2022 if they control their fragile middle order.

Pakistan's middle order has been under fire recently after failing to perform in the T20 Asia Cup 2022 and the recently concluded series against England. The middle-order vows continued in the ongoing tri-nation series in New Zealand, but Pakistan have reached the finals of the series.

In an interaction with media on the sidelines of an event in Dubai, Wasim said: "India have a good batting line-up. But they still haven't named Bumrah's replacement. Pakistan, their middle-order is struggling. If the middle-order clicks, Pakistan have a very good bowling attack and one of the best opening pairs. So if they can control the middle-order, they have a chance."

"For the semifinals, what I would like to see is Australia, India and Pakistan. But South Africa could be a dark horse," he added. Pakistan will take on India in their T20 World Cup 2022 opener at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) on October 23.

Courtesy THENEWS



Sourav Ganguly 'forced out' as BCCI chief for allegedly refusing to join Modi's BJP

Sourav Ganguly is set to be replaced as president of Indian cricket, with the former captain's backers claiming he has been forced out for refusing to join the ruling political party.

Ganguly is widely regarded as one of India's greatest captains and has been in charge of the powerful Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for the past three years.

He had been widely tipped to earn a second term as president when the board holds its annual general meeting next Tuesday.

But Ganguly, 50, is said to have declined to join Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

This week the 1983 World Cup winner Roger Binny filed his nomination to replace Ganguly and will likely be elected unopposed next week, board vice-president Rajeev Shukla told reporters. Politicians from Ganguly's home state of West Bengal alleged that the former batsman was forced out. It was a "political vendetta" by the government, opposition lawmaker Santanu Sen said on Twitter.

"We are with you Dada!" he added, referring to Ganguly by his nickname. Ganguly's political allegiance has been a regular source of media speculation in recent months and the country's home minister Amit Shah visited him at home earlier this year. India's top court recently relaxed a rule that barred sporting officials from consecutive terms in office in the same position, opening the way



for Shah's son Jay — the BCCI secretary — and Ganguly to seek reappointment. The BJP has denied involvement in the board's looming vote and accused its opponents of politicising the issue.

"Sourav Ganguly is a cricketing legend. Some people are now shedding crocodile tears about the changes in BCCI," said the party's vice-president Dilip Ghosh. Current BCCI treasurer Arun Dhimal, younger brother of the country's sports minister Anurag Thakur, is expected to be elected chairman of the Indian Premier League.

Courtesy DAWN

My Work Is My Passion: Natasha Baig

The Truth International interviews Natasha Baig for her contributions to the entertainment industry



By Kaukab Jahan

Natasha Baig is a Pakistani singer-songwriter who rose to fame with her distinct voice and powerful stage performance. Hailing from the Hunza Valley, Baig did her graduation in Film and Television Production from Karachi University. She first became interested in music as a hobby and then gave musical performances at local events. Her major genre is Sufi rock.

Baig has no formal education in music. She grew up listening to Abida Parveen, Michael Jackson, and others.

She started her career in 2013 with a reality show, "Cornetto Music Icons," where she was selected as one of the six finalists. Later, Baig joined "Sounds of Kolachi," a Sufi ensemble, and then formed a band called "Kaya," before starting as a solo artist with her brother Sameer Baig on guitars.

The breakthrough for Baig came when she was nominated for Best Emerging Talent at the 2017 Lux Style Awards for her song "Jhoom Le" in the film Janaan. She has appeared in Coke Studio Season 11, singing Shikwa/Jawab-e-Shikawa, a poem by Allama Iqbal.

Her first album, 'Zarya', a fusion of Sufi and rock, was released in January 2020. Her second album, Khirad, has been released recently. Baig can be listened to on Spotify and other music streaming platforms, including her own YouTube channel, Natasha Baig. She has also produced videos of her songs.

The Truth International talked to this young and talented artist about her struggle to become a musician and her recent work.

You belong to a far-flung area of Hunza, so how did you come into music?

I had no ambition to go into music. It all happened accidentally. Although music was already in my family, my maternal uncle is a famous musician in Hunza. I used to see him sing, but never wanted to be one myself. For me to become a musician, it was the death of Michael Jackson. It left a real impact on my life. After the breaking news of his death in the media and the documentaries on his life running on television all over the world, I decided that I would also become a musician and perform like him on stage. Then I began to pursue my dream, though I am still not doing anything like him today.

How difficult was it to become a musician, particularly as a woman?

It was very difficult as it was unacceptable for people there if a girl would be performing on stage. But I believe that obstacles in life give you more power to prove yourself. So the opposition from my family made me struggle hard, and I showed them that I really could do it.

So, your family was against you performing on stage rather than just singing?

It was actually my stage performance. They were concerned as people associate many negative things with stage performances in Pakistan. Artists are called by too many derogatory terms here, but it doesn't mean that if people are humiliating an art or talent, one gets afraid and stops doing that. Rather, I decided to let the people say what they wanted to. I knew what music was to me. If I loved the stage and my



boundaries were where I was expressing myself, then why should I be ashamed of it? The stage is a sacred place for me.

So, did your immediate family support you in opting for music?

My immediate family, especially my father, who passed away a couple of years back, was actually against my music. My life completely changed when I had to choose between music and him. And I chose music. It was a very difficult and challenging phase of my life. I had a calling from inside that pushed me to do music for the masses. I believed that if God had given me a talent for singing, which was also appreciated by people, then I would be unthankful to Him if I had not opted for it as a profession. So, I took it and left the rest to Allah.

We have heard that you wanted to join Pakistan's women's cricket team.

Actually, before music, sports was my passion. In addition to my studies, I was very active in extracurricular activities at my high school and college. In the beginning, I joined athletics and later reached cricket trials and finally to the grounds to play under 17 and under 19 cricket. I was really enjoying that, but my father was not happy, even with my cricket. He was very submissive to the prevailing norms of society, where the children in his family and peers were going into the professions of medicine and engineering. So, in university, I left sports and tried to focus just on studies. But later, when I decided to do music, I didn't care about any support from the family and opted for it.

Then how was it when you finally came to music?

I think until you start doing something, it remains doubtful and questionable to others. So I decided to get into this with the belief that once I was into music and stage performance, people would realise that there was nothing wrong with it.

Your second album, Khirad, has also been released. What it is all about?

It is a tribute to the renowned poet of the Subcontinent, Allama Iqbal. As the name suggests, the album was Kalaam-e-Iqbal. It has nine tracks, and we have tried our best to choose the kalaam which has not ever been used before in any composition. That idea came into my mind after I did Shikwa Jawab-e-Shikwa in the Coke Studio. I was not sure if people would like it or not, as it had never been sung by any singer before, but the feedback was impressive, especially from youngsters.

Your native language is Burushaski. Then how do you sing in many other languages so well?

I am personally intrigued by different languages and enjoy exploring them. I think it is a gift from God to understand a language and present it with its correct accent. I also give this credit to my mother tongue, Burushaski, which is very difficult when it comes to pronouncing certain words. I am sure that helped me a lot in catching other languages a bit easier.

In how many languages have you sung up to now?

In the beginning, I sang mostly in English. Then it was in Marwari, Punjabi, Saraiki, Sindhi, Balochi, Persian, and, of course, Burushaski. On occasion, I also sang in Italian as well.

How do you see the future of your career?

I wish I could continue to release song after song and put so much content on the market that I myself would not be able to count it. This is how I see myself.



How should one promote it since there is too much content in the market these days?

It is actually very difficult. These days, people have free access to express themselves as they get technology in their hands. In a situation in which too much content comes from everywhere, it is difficult to shine out as an individual. But to survive and achieve, one has to adapt according to the set standards.

New artists often wonder how they should promote and support their music. I would suggest to them that they first invest their money in producing original music, and then the rest should be spent on good social media marketing. Then they can put their content on portals like Spotify, dedicated to streaming music, and also give royalties to artists. These are little things through which we can endorse our music.

The Parting Gift (1950)

By Zeenat Iqbal Hussain

Mark was born in London during the post war period, in the east end of London, which has been largely rebuilt since World War II when it suffered much damage from bombing. London at that time was crippled because of the depression which was an aftermath of the war. The birth of Mark brought relief to his parents – relief from a devastated world. You had to struggle to survive, as London was economically shattered also. It was hard to make ends meet. Even in those days Mark's house was full of guests. Their family was known for its hospitality. One instance Mark remembered of his childhood was of his Mom's spending the last of her savings to feed a less fortunate family. 'Give and you receive', she used to say. This image of his mother remained with Mark in his adult years.

She worked in a garments factory, which was a part of the textile industry that was established by France, an ally from the war. She brought home samples of dresses that fitted Mark's sister, Elizabeth. 'She's such a Doll', remarked a friend of Mom's and she'd go pink in the cheek.

His father accepted building contracts, which were part of a rebuild London project. This is how they slowly became rich. He, as a building contractor, before putting up a building, used to first look at the site, choose the people who were going to work for him and plan a schedule of work so that he knew which people should be on the site at the right time. The bricklayers and the plasterer's would often get in each other's way. 'I'll finish with the bricks in another couple of hours. 'Oh! So you will, the last time you said a couple, you took eight'. He went off, leaving the bricklayer to finish, who was envious of his long break. He complained, 'Boss, we both should get equal pay for the hours of work we put in. Mark's father would tackle the situation, and he planned shifts, so that no body would have any objection.

Then there was the time when Elizabeth contracted an infection after swimming in the pool. They gave her a Penicillin shot (which she was allergic to), but it was too



late before they found out that she was allergic. She developed a rash, as if the infection were not enough. But they were a close knit family and that saw them out of such situations. Mark held her hand and teased, 'your face looks like its full of Polka Dots'. 'You'd know what it feels like if you had them'. Elizabeth, on the verge of tears, told him.

About the same time, in Stalin's Russia, Susan was born – in a communist setting. Later, she would question Mark about the gap between the haves and the have-nots. 'Because they deserve to be so'. He'd reply. Many other questions came to her mind, especially about religion, but her differences were not confirmed. Originally she remained a Christian. A product of the west, although she cherished faint memories of the large farms set up as collective units which were usually worked by 100 to 500 families, who reaped what they sowed. She was impressed and affected by the equal opportunity. And this would reflect, in her life, later on as would the prosperity of Hampstead heath, which is a large tract of countryside of London. (The latter as told by Mark to her). Her childhood memories would reflect in her adult life.

Once during a shortage of wheat (in London – where they were to stay after marriage), she observed that those collective farmers never went hungry whereas England imported wheat every year – and it was expensive. Mark would tease her, 'the

average income of a Londoner affords him the necessities as well as the luxuries'. 'Capitalist thinking, that', she retorted. With her there would remain a distinction between a necessity and luxury. 'If it's not necessary, why do it', was an opinion of hers on many matters.

During his school days Mark enjoyed playing Cricket, and kept himself up to date with the score board of County Cricket. 'The night watchman just might level the score'. 'Not if the weather does not permit'. His friends enjoyed the game too. In 1882 Australia beat England at the Oval in London and after the match the 'Sporting Times' invented the term 'The Ashes'. The paper told its readers of the 'Death of English Cricket.' The Ashes (from a stump burnt during the England tour of Australia in 1883) are kept in an urn at the Museum at Lord's. Mark took pride in showing his guests this urn.

A fortune teller once told Mark that after his marriage he would be blissfully happy, but then he somehow did not want to reveal something to Mark – something terribly sad. He further added that Mark would have to part from someone he deeply loved. He said that an evil spirit would be the cause of his parting from someone he deeply loved. He further asked Mark to practice religion. Mark was not religious.

Who could tell that after so many years, life would be different.

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