

Fortnightly

# The Truth International

Islamabad

1<sup>st</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023

## IMF Delegation in Pakistan

Pakistan's options are limited. Have to swallow bitter pill

## Country under Clouds of Uncertainty

No date for election in KP and Punjab is bad omen

## Balochistan Situation

TTP, BLA alliance may threaten the region

# Pakistan IMF Parley: Pakistan's Sovereignty may be Compromised



## Editorial

Elections on Time? By Hammad Ghaznavi – **Page 04**

## Economy

Pakistan cannot avoid default without revival of IMF program by Mehtab Haider – **Page 05**



Mini-Budget to please IMF and annoy Pakistanis by Javed Mahmood – **Page 07**

What does IMF want? By Ashfaque Hasan Khan – **Page 09**

Davos 2023: Key takeaways from the World Economic Forum - Courtesy Reuters – **Page 11**

An eye on foreign direct investment in Pakistan by Abida Naurin & Amna Khan – **Page 13**

Russian Delegation Visits Pakistan by Zahra Sikandar – **Page 14**



Incoming Crises by Arsim Tariq – **Page 16**

## Politics

Resignations - PTI caught in own trap by Sarfraz Raja – **Page 18**



Fortnightly  
**The Truth International**  
Islamabad  
1<sup>st</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023

IMF Delegation in Pakistan  
Pakistan's options are limited. Have to swallow  
sour pill  
Country under Clouds of Uncertainty  
No date for election in KP and Punjab is not sure  
Balochistan Situation  
TTP, BLA alliance may threaten the region

### Pakistan IMF Parley: Pakistan's Sovereignty may be Compromised

**Editor:**  
Zaheer ud Din Babar Thaheem

**Advisor to Editor:**  
Ashraf Malkham

**Marketing / Advertisement:**  
Zamir A. Naushahi  
**Contact:** 0321-4006247  
**Email:** seniormanagermarketing@tti.org.pk

**Circulation:**  
Irfan Ali  
**Contact:** 0345-9908108  
**Email:** irfanawku@gmail.com

**Letter to Editor:**  
Feel free to mail us at: editor@tti.org.pk

**Postal Address:**  
Fortnightly "The Truth International"  
205-D, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Evacuee Trust Complex,  
Agha Khan Road, F-5/1, Islamabad, Pakistan.  
**Contact:** +92 51 2820180-1  
**Email:** info@tti.org.pk  
**Web:** www.thetruthinternational.com

**Price:** Rs. 435

**Publisher:**  
Muhammad Fahad Thaheem

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

**Design & Layout:**  
Abdul Qadir

**DISCLAIMER:** The articles published in this magazine collected from various writers, and sources are disseminated for information only. Therefore, the publisher shall not be responsible for any mistake/error.



Repulsing of a 'no confidence' master stroke by Noor Aftab – **Page 20**

IK's chances of securing fresh polls by Tahir Niaz – **Page 22**

Master of Punjab politics of electables by Umer Farooq – **Page 24**



## Foreign Affairs

Can Pakistan afford another military tension in region? By Umer Farooq – **Page 26**



TTP-Baloch separatists alliance: Consequences for South Asia, Greater ME by Dr Raza Khan – **Page 30**

Hopeless and Vulnerable by Sara Danial – **Page 33**

History of Kashmir: Part 3 by Azmat M Saqib – **Page 35**



## Investigation

Exports impediments by Azeem Waqas – **Page 38**

People in the KP region store natural gas in plastic balloons by Anum Akram – **Page 40**

Disgusting failure of FBR action against petroleum smuggling by Shahzad Paracha – **Page 42**

## National

Results of LB polls spark storm of criticism by Azfar Ashfaq – **Page 43**



Gwadar's Haq Do Tehreek chief's political rise, influence by Ayaz Khan – **Page 46**

Brain Drain: The Experience of Pakistani Youth on Leaving Pakistan by Mahnur Mehruz – **Page 48**

## Technology

Microsoft says services have recovered after widespread outage - Courtesy BBC – **Page 50**

## Sports

Afridi, Sethi and the New Chief by Ali Abdullah – **Page 51**



Babar Azam Caught in A Honey Trap? By Pavan Manzoor – **Page 52**

Pakistan versus New Zealand by Ali Abdullah – **Page 53**

## Entertainment

We should continue to make more films to revive cinema. Shaan Shahid by Kaukab Jahan – **Page 54**

# Elections on Time?

By Hammad Ghaznavi



A host of elections are approaching in the coming months, including those of Punjab and KPK assemblies, National Assembly seats that fell vacant due to the acceptance of PTI legislators' resignations, and then, of course, the general elections. Will these elections be held within the timeframe stipulated by the constitution? What are the impediments? Of the stakeholders, who wants elections on time? Waters are rather muddy, leaving the onlookers confused.

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan wanted snap polls since the day he was voted out in the National Assembly in April 2022. To achieve his goal, he led a procrastinated Long March, and put pressure on the previous COAS to wrap the PDM government, but to no avail. Finally, he played his trump card – the dissolution of two provincial assemblies – creating further political and economic instability to force an early general election. Has IK misfired? The government seems in no mood to oblige as there is no political threat in the streets to compel it to change its mind. After dissolving the two PTI assemblies, IK decided to return to the NA to put more pressure on the government from within the system but that was not to be. The PDM speaker accepted the PTI resignations, blunting the PTI maneuver. Now, IK is banking on the provincial assemblies' elections 'on time'. The Election Commission of Pakistan has yet not announced the election date of the provincial assemblies, raising suspicions.

According to the article 224 (2) of the constitution elections are to be held within 90 days of the dissolution of the assemblies. Insiders insist, the government and powerful quarters are toying with the idea of pending the provincial elections, and clubbing them with the general elections later this year. This, however, seems a violation of the constitution. If the government tries pending the provincial assembly elections, the matter, for sure, will end up in the courts. The argument for the delay is: the constitution says that voters' list, constituencies and delimitation have to base on a fresh census, and the census process has been delayed due to floods. Now, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics will formally handover the digital census to the ECP in April, and the ECP will take four months to complete the delimitation process. If the argument is accepted, all elections will be held somewhere in October.

If the provincial elections are held within 90 days, it suits IK. That's what he is aiming at. If the general elections are not clubbed with the provincial elections, held within 90 days, at least, IK hopes, the latter shall be held on time. The strategy is understandable; if the PTI wins in the provinces, the NA election results will become much easier to predict. Meanwhile, the ECP has announced the election date, 16 March, for the 33 NA seats that fell vacant when the first batch of PTI resignations was accepted. These elections are going to be a totally meaningless exercise, as literally

no party is interested in contesting for a seat in an assembly that is wrapping up anyway. PDM has already announced to abstain from the polls. Even PTI will not find any serious candidate interested in contesting these constituencies. After all, elections is an expensive business. On the one hand, it's a constitutional obligation and on the other it seems a pointless waste of billions of Rupees of taxpayers' money.

Imran Khan succeeds in his plans or not, one thing is evident: his decision to dissolve the assemblies has left him ungarded. The selection of an unfriendly caretaker setup in Punjab is proving worrisome for IK. Various commentators have criticized IK for this decision to leave his governments particularly in Punjab. PTI spokesperson Fawad Chaudhry's arrest is being cited as a development that could have been avoided had PTI stuck to its provincial governments.

The fact remains that IK's relations with his former benefactors have gone sour, and the situation on this front is worsening by the day. The system doesn't sound friendly to IK, a factor that is hurting Imran's politics. IK's disqualification will not surprise many, as history testifies, this has been the fate of popular leaders who fell out with the powerful military establishment. Against this backdrop, IK will be lucky if his party stays intact as such, he is allowed to lead his party, and he gets a free and fair election, whenever held.



# Pakistan cannot avoid default without revival of IMF program

*Fresh loans of \$10b needed to avert default; IMF to give prescription of more tightening of fiscal and monetary policies*

By Mehtab Haider

The visiting delegation of International Monetary Fund (IMF) led by mission chief Nathan Porter is in town for holding crucial parleys with Pakistani authorities for the completion of the much-awaited 9th review and release of the \$1 billion tranche under \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

Very tough negotiations with the IMF are underway as the policymakers will have to walk on a tightrope to steer the economy out of the crisis mode. The period of finding an easy solution is gone and the economic ills faced by the country cannot be fixed with a simple approach to the status quo. The window dressing will not be able to resolve perpetual structural problems of Pakistan's economy which could be attributed mainly to narrowed tax base and the inability of the over 206 million population to earn dollars through boosting exports.

Both sides are scheduled to hold negotiations from January 31 to February 9, 2023, to reach consensus on a broader staff-level agreement on the Memorandum of Financial and Economic Policies (MEFP) for fiscal, external and monetary fronts in order to pave the way for completion of pending review without further delay. Amid dwindling foreign exchange reserves that nosedived to \$3.6 billion as of January 20, 2022, Pakistan cannot avoid default without revival of the IMF program.

Pakistan's near-term challenges rose sharply as Islamabad would have to secure fresh loans of \$10 billion in the remaining five months (Feb-June) period for averting default.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) in its latest monetary policy conceded that near-term challenges for the external sector have risen sharply despite the policy-induced contraction in the current account deficit during the first half of FY23.



Pakistan requires fresh dollar inflows of \$10 billion in the shape of loans which is non committal so far and it cannot be managed without the blessings of the IMF program.

On repayment of total external debt servicing, Islamabad had to repay \$23 billion in the current fiscal year 2022-23 out of which it already paid back \$15 billion in shape of external debt servicing.

Out of \$15 billion debt repayments, Pakistan repaid \$9 billion and got a rollover of \$6 billion in first half (July-Dec) period of the current fiscal year.

Now the remaining repayment requirement stand at \$8 billion in the second half (Jan-June) period of the current fiscal year. The government so far obtained a commitment to get a rollover of \$3 billion from bilateral creditor in coming March 2023.

On external debt repayment, there is exposure of \$5 billion which has so far remained unfulfilled, increasing exposure and risk for the country.

Now there has been a projection of Current Account Deficit (CAD) ranging from \$8 billion to \$9 billion. So the government will have to manage another \$5 billion for remaining months in order to finance CAD. The

CAD stood at \$3.7 billion in the first half (July-Dec) period and it is projected to go up with another \$5 billion in the second half (Jan-June) of the ongoing fiscal year.

According to SBP's presentation: "The completion of 9th review will improve external sector outlook." It added that global economic prospects continue to be subdued amidst fears of global recession; however, this provide some respite in global commodity prices and allows room for central banks to taper down their aggressive tightening.

Without revival of the IMF program, this additional money of \$10 billion cannot be obtained at all. The government is making last ditch efforts to revive the stalled IMF program. The government had shared its contours of the upcoming negotiation and is awaiting the response of the IMF for holding next round of parleys.

On fiscal side, the fiscal slippages and reconciliation of figures will be the major part of the bone of contention during the upcoming talks between Pakistan and the IMF.

The government had envisaged budget deficit target of 4.9 percent of GDP and primary deficit to keep it at positive 0.2 percent of GDP on the eve of the budget for 2022-23.

Now there are listed areas where both sides possessed divergent views and will have to sort out differences to move towards striking a staff level agreement till February 9, 2023.

The IMF high-ups have taken decision that they will incorporate hike in circular debt of Pakistan's cash bleeding energy sector beyond agreed limit with the Fund as part of primary deficit for the current fiscal year 2022-23. It is pertinent to mention here that the primary deficit is calculated after exclusion of debt servicing requirements.

Meanwhile, Pakistan asks the IMF for granting a waiver of Rs 500 billion for flood expenditures for calculating the budget deficit especially the primary deficit for the current fiscal year 2022-23.

The IMF has assessed that the government did not recover fuel price adjustment of Rs 65 billion for the current fiscal year. The government doled out concessional electricity and gas to the export-oriented sectors which resulted into increased requirement of Rs 110 billion. There is no provision in the budget.

There are slippages in fiscal side on account of increased requirements of total debt servicing as the government envisaged Rs 3950 billion in the initial budgetary estimates that might now escalate to beyond Rs 5000 billion in the aftermath of increased policy rate by the State Bank of Pakistan. The debt servicing requirements will be ballooned by Rs 1000 billion.



On the revenue side, the IMF assessed that the FBR's tax collection is projected to hover around Rs 7000 billion against the FBR's envisaged target of Rs 7470 billion for the current fiscal year. The FBR had faced a shortfall of Rs 225 billion for achieving December 2022 tax collection target. However, it was argued that the monthly target of December 2022 was fixed wrongly on much higher side and due to lingering litigation in the courts so it could not be recovered. The FBR high-ups were hopeful that they would be able to recover the due taxes in coming months especially taxes on income tax.

The FBR has estimated internally that it could face a shortfall of Rs 170 billion for achieving the desired target of Rs 7470 billion owing to import compression.

On front of non tax revenue target, the collection of petroleum development levy will face a shortfall of Rs 300 billion for achieving the fixed target of Rs 855 billion.

By incorporating all these points, the IMF assessed the primary deficit might escalate to around Rs 1.1 trillion or 1.3 percent of GDP. If IMF provides waiver of Rs 500 billion on flood expenditures then the remaining Rs 600 to Rs 700 billion gap remains on fiscal front which IMF asks for bridging through additional taxation measures.

Another area which will come under discussion between the two sides will be projecting discount rates in coming months. The policy rate stood at 17 percent and the SBP's monetary policy recently hiked 100 basis points jacking it up from 16 to 17 percent.

In the wake of rising inflation, especially core inflation, it will be hard for the SBP to defend avoiding further increase in discount rates. To summarize, the IMF will give prescription of more tightening of fiscal and monetary policies which will result into further slowing down of the economy and rising unemployment and poverty amid increased political uncertainties and transition period.





# Mini-Budget to please IMF and annoy Pakistanis

By Javed Mahmood



The coalition government is all set to announce a mini-budget by accepting the conditions of the International Monetary Fund to secure the resumption of stalled loan program, setting aside their impact on the economy and the masses alike. The resumption of the loan program will lead to the disbursement of \$1.1 billion from the IMF after the completion of the ninth review. The IMF was supposed to disburse this tranche in September last year, but this did not happen because the fund linked the approval of the ninth review and disbursement of the next tranche with the fulfillment of its conditions.

During ongoing virtual and telephonic talks, the IMF has demanded immediate withdrawal of subsidies on electricity, hikes in gas tariffs to match the international market price, free-float of the dollar, and restrictions free opening of the letters of credit (LCs) for imports. Additionally, the Fund has also desired a cut in the non-essential expenditures and an increase in the tax receipts to fill the gap between the tax collection target and actual collection in the first half of the ongoing fiscal year. From July-Dec 2022, the FBR has reported more than 260 billion rupees shortfall in tax collection. Also, the IMF wants the government to comply with its condition of raising the petroleum levy to 50 rupees a liter forthwith.

## Gas/Electricity Tariffs Hike

A few days ago, OGRA had already notified up to a 75 percent hike in the natural gas tariffs for Sui Northern Gas

Pipelines Limited and Sui Southern Gas Company Limited. Both these companies manage the supply of natural gas to the consumers in their respective territories, covering all of Pakistan jointly. OGRA allowed SNGPL to raise its average gas tariff for 2022-23 by Rs406.28/mmBtu and Rs 499.28 for the SSGCL. Both companies had approached OGRA for a hike of Rs1,294./mmBtu and Rs667.44/mmBtu, respectively.

Importantly, OGRA also announced a uniform rate for all consumers – domestic, tandoors, commercial, general industries, and export-oriented industries. Nonetheless, the hike in gas tariff will hit domestic consumers the most. Hence, domestic consumers using more gas will see a three-fold increase in their gas bills once the revised tariff is incorporated. To enforce its decision, OGRA has sent it to the federal government and it is mandatory for the government makes a decision within 40 days.

Meanwhile, the government will have to raise around 30 percent cost of electricity to reduce circular debt and enhance revenues. According to Dr. Abdul Qayyum Sulehri of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), IMF's conditions also include a Rs 7.50 increase in electricity tariff/unit, monetization of gas price and system losses, and full forthwith recovery of Rs50 per liter levy on all petroleum products.

Dr. Sulehri said that without doing all this, neither Pakistan will receive the next

tranche from IMF nor friendly countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, and UAE will provide financial support. More so, the government will not be able to receive the \$10 billion pledged at the Geneva conference.

## Govt Ready to Complete IMF Programme

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the government was ready to take stringent IMF measures to resume the program in the best interest of Pakistan.

Speaking at the 'PM Youth Loan Scheme for Business and Agriculture', PM said, "The ruling PDM alliance was ready to sacrifice its political capital for the sake of the country".

PM said the government has clearly conveyed its intentions to complete the ninth review to the IMF. He shared that "I spoke to the IMF managing director two weeks ago and we have proactively approached them, so that the program moves forward."

PM Shehbaz added that "Pakistan has been given a clear message "from here and there" that it would not be abandoned. But it should revive the IMF programme. It's a reference to reports of friendly nations waiting for the revival of the programme to provide financial aid to Pakistan.

Lately, the government has been making hectic efforts in wake of the country's worsening economic situation to convince the IMF to complete the review impending since September 2022, nonetheless, the strings attached to the move ahead have been a sticking point between the global lender and Pakistan. The government wants IMF to soften some harsh conditions fearing that the coalition parties in the government especially PM-N will further lose their vote bank. Premier's statement that the government was ready to sacrifice its political capital (vote bank) is also a clear indication of masses possible reaction to mini-budget which will further trigger inflation to a record high level. Additionally, further hikes in gas, electricity, and

petrol prices would cost dearly to consumers across the country. The IMF, so far, did not show any flexibility on its conditions, leaving the government with no other option but to surrender to IMF terms and conditions as the foreign exchange reserves with the central bank have depleted to \$4.6 billion by mid-January 2023.

market will be managed by the supply and demand situation. In other words, the market forces will drive the dollar-rupee exchange rate now because the move is one of the conditions of the International Monetary Fund to qualify for the approval of the ninth review and release of the next tranche of \$1.1 billion.

the international financial think tanks, including the Citygroup and Bloomberg said that the revival of IMF programme will not end economic crisis in Pakistan. And their assessment has turned up true. The global think tanks believe that Pakistan would have to reform the system to overcome financial bleeding and minimise the non-essential expenditures of the ministers, advisors and government officials.

Consequently, the National Austerity Committee (NAC) has firmed up proposals involving the downsizing of ministers, advisors, and a cut in the pay and perks of government employees. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif constituted the committee to initiate austerity measures to reduce expenditures. The NAC is going to recommend to the government to reduce by 15 percent expenditures of ministries/divisions, and slash the number of federal ministers, ministers of state, and advisers to 30 from the existing 78.

On Wednesday (Jan 25), the committee was supposed to submit its recommendations to the Prime Minister. The recommendations of the NAC are part of the government's measures to secure IMF loan approval. From Jan 23, the government and IMF officials started virtual talks on the ninth review and its related measures.

Before resuming talks, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif clearly stated that the government was ready to sacrifice its political capital (vote bank) to obtain an IMF loan. The Premier has termed the resumption of IMF loans essential for the economic revival and stability in the country. The government believes that the resumption of IMF loans would open doors for financial lending by friendly countries and other multilateral donors.

Getting loans from the IMF and other trans-national institutions is an easy task to complete the term of the government ignoring the side-effects of loans on the economy, people, and the country. The coalition government's approach to lose its political capital to seek IMF loan is a short-term approach which will neither solve the problems nor give any benefit to masses, but the rulers will continue to enjoy power with all benefits, privileges, and protocol.



## Free-Float of the dollar in the open market

Bowing to another harsh condition of the IMF, the federal government has allowed the exchange companies to manage the "free float" of the US dollar in the open market. With this strategy, a flexible and market-driven exchange rate of the dollar will prevail in the open market. Consequently, from Jan 25, the dollar-rupee exchange rate is poised to surpass the 250 rupees mark gradually in the open market trading. On Jan 25, the first day of the free-float, dollar increased to 243 rupees, from 240 in the open market trading.

Also, in a recent speech at an event of PIAF, industrialists and businessmen alliance in Lahore, Dr Hafeez Pasha said that the dollar-rupee exchange rate could surge to 295 rupees at the end of this calendar year. It means there is no chance of improvement in the value of rupee at least in 2023 because of the critical economic condition prevailing in the country.

Moreover, the representatives of the foreign exchange companies in Karachi announced the decision on Jan 24 to start free-float in the open market. They said the unanimous decision to remove the cap on the dollar-rupee trading in the open market means that from Jan 25, the price of the dollar in the

Importantly, Malik Muhammad Bostan, President of the Forex Association of Pakistan said that FAP held a meeting with the Deputy Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Dr. Inayat Hussain in Karachi on Jan 25. He said, "During the meeting, an action plan was formulated on the situation arising from making the dollar market-based." The plan includes measures to ensure that dollar remittance will be managed through banking channels, the open market and illegal practice of Hundi Hawala will be discouraged. Malik Bostan said the exchange companies will implement the decision, while the central bank will monitor the situation to ensure a smooth transition in the open market. A drawback of the free-float dollar regime is that it is supporting a wide gap between inter-bank and open market trading. For instance, on Jan 25, the inter-bank dollar-rupee exchange remained around 231 rupees while in the open market trading, the rate stayed above 243 rupees. It shows a gap of 12 rupees and how the government and exchange companies will influence overseas Pakistanis to send remittances through banking channels.

## Austerity Plan of the Govt

When the IMF resumed the stalled loan programme for Pakistan in August 2022,



# What does IMF want?

*It appears that no political party in Pakistan has the willpower or resources to make this happen*



By Ashfaque Hasan Khan

In an Interview with Nadeem Hussain, Dr. Ashfaque Hasan Khan argued that the biggest crisis that Pakistan is facing is energy. Pakistan imports a large quantity of energy which is making the economy unstable on many accounts.

The economic crisis in Pakistan began months before the devastating rains of the summer. The country's foreign reserves have decreased to an alarmingly low \$4.3 billion, covering barely one month's imports and creating the spectre of default due to the country's crippling inflation and the rupee's steep decline in value.

Pakistan experiences periodic economic crises as a result of its overspending and underproduction, which forces the country to take on large amounts of debt from outside. As the debt grows and interest and principal payments become due, each new crisis is more severe than the last. This year's worsening is a result of the flood's calamity and political uncertainty within the country. Food and gasoline costs around the world have increased as a result of Russia's war in Ukraine, adding an additional external factor to the situation. All of these variables together have created

what could be Pakistan's greatest economic crisis.

Islamabad has resisted the terms set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the disbursement of a \$1.1 billion loan tranche has been delayed as a result of the government's wrangling. To combat this, the government has resorted to banning imports and closing shopping centres and wedding venues early, both of which are only band-aid solutions.

But it is unlikely that Pakistan would go into default in 2023. For starters, the current administration would use all available means to prevent this from happening, as doing so would have a significant impact on public opinion and the upcoming election.

A second reason why Pakistan's international allies would be unhappy with this scenario is the damage it could do to both the country's internal and external security.

Third, global and bilateral donors still prefer betting on Pakistan's economic recovery—even if it means waiting a few years for repayments—to the alternative of defaulting and losing money.

That being stated, neither can we be overconfident nor should we view this as a favourable position. Worrying for a patient in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) takes precedence over all other situations.

In recent years, some countries have defaulted on their sovereign obligations, which is a challenging position for any country and donors. However, default on sovereign debt is a normal and accepted element of the global economic system.

However, it has been politicised and debated to the point of sounding disastrous in Pakistan.

While some argue that a hypothetical default by Pakistan would lead to more fiscal discipline and more accountable economic governance, others paint a much more dire picture of the consequences.

When asked what can be done to avoid default, the simplest and most correct answer is to cease taking new loans and instead focus on increasing revenue to cover ongoing costs and upcoming external and internal debt repayments. The most challenging aspect of the government in



Pakistan is, unfortunately, something that has such a simple solution.

It's tough because we've been looking for quick fixes, including enlisting the help of the International Monetary Fund and other donors and friendly countries through bilateral aid. Successive governments' "brilliant" management of multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as the new kind of funding known as friendly deposits, is easy to follow and trace.

When will it end? It seems counterintuitive not to prioritise budgeting when we have so much at stake. May we ask for your permission to do this? In a word, yeah. How about now? Not at all, not in any way, shape, or form.

The fundamental issue is not the rounds of negotiations with the IMF but rather a tax-to-GDP ratio below 10%, with over 60% of revenue coming from indirect taxes and a GDP over \$300 billion. Rather than focusing on increasing the rates paid by present taxpayers, we should broaden the tax and revenue base.

Meanwhile, when was the last time we conducted a performance audit of government spending? Every year, in nearly every industry, financial audits reveal cases of massive theft totaling billions of rupees. A real performance audit, however, would reveal much more shocking revelations.

Our government spending seldom reflects any idea of efficiency. If we take any federal ministry as an example, we can compare the budget for wages to the budget for non-salary yet unproductive overhead expenditures, which typically go unreported.

He said that he has a hunch that in the top federal ministries, frivolous spending is almost four times as high as necessary or staff-related spending.

Spending on "public sector development" is entirely another scenario. When all of these costs and investments over the past half century are added up, we should have more than enough money to transform every city

in Pakistan into a Paris or London and every road into a German autobahn, and every school and healthcare system into a European model.

However, the answer to the most pressing question, "Why are we here?" is, regrettably, the fact.

The most typical response to this crucial question is—why are we here, and can we escape such a debt trap? —is that doing so appears impossible. Just putting it another way, there is no way to arrive at an optimistic conclusion based on the available data.

There is no reason to be optimistic about the future if the budget deficit, high levels of inflation, lack of medium to short-term economic planning, and the devaluation of the rupee are not mitigated via continuous, sustainable, and comprehensive measures.

Pakistan's sovereign debt default may be averted or postponed in the near future, in the year 2023, thanks to the aforementioned considerations; nevertheless, this delay will be temporary unless we focus on improving the country from the inside out.

Due to the International Monetary Fund's assistance and loans from friendly countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations, Pakistan may be able to escape default for the time being. However, these measures won't fix the economy's glaring underlying problem, and something much more basic will have to shift in terms of the ratio of the economy's output to its expenditures if a default is to be avoided in the future. However, it appears that no political party in Pakistan has the willpower or resources to make this happen.





# Davos 2023:

## Key takeaways from the World Economic Forum



DAVOS, Switzerland, Jan 20 (Reuters) - Global leaders and business executives departed a freezing World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting on Friday after a frank exchange of views over how the world will tackle its biggest issues in 2023.

Here's what we learned:

### ECONOMY

Gloom and doom heading into Davos turned into cautious optimism by the end with the global economic outlook for the year ahead looking better than feared.

But the WEF's annual meeting was filled with discussion of plenty of risks, including inflationary pressures from China's reopening and rising debt distress in the developing world. Not to mention that the hardest bit for Western nations is yet to come - getting inflation down to 2%.

"Things are not great, but they are much better than they could have been." - Daniel Pinto, JP Morgan's (JPM.N) president and chief operating officer.



### UKRAINE

For Ukraine's allies, Davos was all about doubling down on better weapons and financial support for Kyiv to defend itself against Russia. Outside the West though, fears of an economic downturn highlighted global divisions as some delegates encouraged a quick return to the negotiating table.

"This week listening to the politicians, I was surprised in a way because I got the feeling that no-one really knows exactly where we are heading and what the solutions can be." - Tanja Fajon Slovenia Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

"If we want a negotiated peaceful solution tomorrow, we need to provide more weapons today." - NATO Secret General Jens Stoltenberg.



### TRADE

Be careful of friendshoring, warned the WTO's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as the big three trading powers of the United States, Europe and China pushed their new industrial policies.

What was not clear was how the rest of the world fits in to new trade policies that protect workers and redefine supply chains.

"This becomes a rich-country game, right? We can subsidize this, you can subsidize that – what about the poor countries, who have limited fiscal room? They get left out in the cold." -Raghuram Rajan, former governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

### CLIMATE

The carbon crowd received a warm reception as the renewable industry rubbed shoulders with Big Oil executives. Awash with cash after a year of high oil prices, fossil fuel producers have the firepower to invest in green energy. But efforts on CEO green pledges and climate financing appeared sluggish.

On the outside, Greta Thunberg and activists called on the energy industry to stop hijacking the transition to clean power. On the inside, political leaders like Kier Starmer railed against new oil investments and Pakistani climate minister Sherry Rehman pushed for loss and damage funding.

"How do we get there? The lesson I have learned in the last years ... is money, money, money, money, money, money, money, money." - U.S. climate envoy John Kerry on meeting the Paris Agreement's global warming target.



## TECH

Davos juxtaposed the industry's potential and peril.

Just as Microsoft Corp's CEO and other Silicon Valley executives touted artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT to transform their businesses, they announced layoffs of tens of thousands of employees globally. Scrutiny of once high-flying cloud spending by businesses was at the forefront.

Businesses are "under enormous cost pressure. They need to find ways to do the same things cheaper." - Alex Karp, CEO of Palantir Technologies



## CHINA

China declared itself open for business in a speech by Vice-Premier Liu He that was broadly welcomed but also raised inflationary fears and left people waiting to see what this would mean for existing tensions with the United States.



"The growth forecasts now for China is 4.5%. I would not personally be surprised when that would be topped." - Credit Suisse Chairman Axel Lehmann.

## INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

Dubbed a gamechanger for climate change by IEA head Fatih Birol, the Europeans had plenty to gripe about when it came to America's Inflation Reduction Act.

The European Union said it would mobilize state aid and a sovereignty fund to keep firms from moving to the United States.

"The key question is not China First, US First, Europe First. The key question for all of us is Climate First." - French economy minister Bruno Le Maire.



## FINANCIAL SERVICES

Global financial institutions are grappling with how to right-size for a slowdown, while dealing with a host of other headwinds. With the threat of inflation still hanging over central banks, financiers are facing demands from regulators for higher capital levels to prepare for a downturn, making some businesses unprofitable.

Pressure is also increasing on them to finance the global transition to a greener future much faster than they have been doing so far. Other exogenous events such as geopolitics and cybersecurity risks are further complicating matters. Consensus is elusive.

"We shall stay the course until such a time when we have moved into restrictive territory for long enough so that we can return inflation to 2% in a timely manner." - Christine Lagarde.

Courtesy Reuters



# An eye on foreign direct investment in Pakistan

*Domestic and foreign direct investment growth helps maintain and improve an economy's macroeconomic stability*

By Abida Naurin & Amna Khan

**F**oreign Direct Investment (FDI) is a type of investment in which one person from one country invests in a business in another country in order to earn more interest or profit. FDI is to keep foreign securities from losing value. One distinguishing feature of FDI is that it transfers ownership of any business from one country to another.

Domestic and foreign direct investment growth helps maintain and improve an economy's macroeconomic stability. The decline in total investment reflects the unstable condition of investment in Pakistan that affects the economy's potential growth. In this way, the economy cannot match the development of other Asian economies. Pakistan's investment rate of 15 percent is also less than that of neighbouring countries like China, India, and Bangladesh, which have 43, 32, and 36 percent, respectively.

The impact of FDI on a country is that it usually raises employment opportunities, increases productivity increases exports, and facilitates the fast pace of the transfer of technology. Other advantages are that it develops a country's resources and raw materials and enhances its market potential. It also gives access to the new deficit, is used to finance the current account deficit, and increases the stock of human capital in the country.

Economic growth is a very fragile phenomenon. Several research studies by the Pakistan Institute of Economics have shown that FDI significantly impacts a country's economy. However, the degree of positive impact varies from country to country because there are several determinants of FDI that make it more effective: a highly skilled labour force, an integrated market, etc.

Foreign direct investment has numerous economic benefits. Firstly, it is one of the critical external financial resources to bail out the balance of payment of the host country by minimising the current account deficit. Secondly, it is an employment



accelerator. Moreover, FDI significantly increases the exports of the host countries.

In October 2022, FDI in Pakistan increased by around US\$92.94 million, compared with the previous month's increase of US\$110 million. Its all-time high was US\$1.3 billion in June 2008, and the all-time low was the unexpended figures of US\$390.9 million in October 2018. Pakistan's FDI increased in September due to Pakistani direct investment, which increased foreign investment by US\$97.0 million in September 2022; foreign portfolio investment fell by US\$30.0 billion in September 2022.

If you compare Pakistan's FDI to its neighbouring countries, Sri Lanka's FDI increased above US\$219 million in June 2022, a comparative increase of around US\$77 million from the previous quarter. Sri Lanka's high direct investment was above US\$960 million in December 2017, and the record low was less than US\$1 million in March 1977.

Bangladesh's FDI also increased to US\$1.2 million in June 2022. Its all-time FDI was around US\$1.6 billion in December 2018, and the record low was US\$119.0 million in December 2005. India's FDI figures were the highest in 2022–2021, at nearly US\$83.57 billion. China will also have one of the highest FDI figures in 2021, with approximately US\$179 billion in foreign investment.

Pakistan Foreign direct investment (FDI) is declining in Pakistan as a result of

macroeconomic uncertainty, resulting in low aggregate assets and volatile output levels. The factors affecting FDI are the lack of well-developed intellectual property rights and infrastructure. Foreign investors didn't want to invest in Pakistan due to its weak IPR system. High tax rates and political instability in Pakistan are also significant factors limiting FDI.

Pakistan must also make friends and sign free trade agreements with countries like China to increase its FDI. Pakistan needs to start giving more incentives to foreign investors to ensure consistency of the tax rates, reduce exchange rate volatility, and resolve political instability issues to create a better environment for foreign investors.

Additionally, technological advancement, investment in research and development, low energy tariffs, control of law and order situations, and a stable democratic government to raise investment in Pakistan are crucial for attracting foreign investment. Investment and entrepreneurial activity cannot happen in markets without the government's creating an enabling environment.

*Dr. Abida Naurin is a Research Fellow at Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad and can be reached via Twitter @abida\_15.*

*Amna Khan is a M. Phil Scholar, Department of Economics & Finance at Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad.*

# Russian Delegation Visits Pakistan

*The implications of a potential oil deal between Pakistan and Russia for Pakistan's foreign relations with other countries would depend on the specifics of the deal*

By Zahra Sikandar

## The Visit

The 80-member Russian delegation arrived in Islamabad for the three-day 8th session of the Pakistani-Russian Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) on January 18, 2023. While Russia offered its help in fulfilling Pakistan's energy needs, Pakistan termed the meeting as laying the groundwork for a "new relationship."

The major highlights of the session, aside from the mutually assured commitment to complete the Pak-Stream gas pipeline project in 2023, which is referred to as one of the pillars of the "Comprehensive Gas Infrastructure Plan for Energy Cooperation," formed the foundation for future work. Russia deferred debt service and announced plans to trade in friendly countries' currencies. The two sides agreed to form working groups to further the existing cooperation toward strengthening bilateral relations.

While both sides under the aegis of the IGC reviewed existing areas of cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, and technical cooperation, besides deliberating on exploring new opportunities for cooperation in the areas of energy, trade, technology, education, finance, transport, food security, and aviation, the Russian side noted that the delegation being led by Russia's energy minister indicates that the energy sector was the main emphasis.

## The Delegation

The Russian delegation was led by Nikolai Shulginov, Russia's energy minister, while Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq led the Pakistani side. Israfil Ali-Zade, Deputy Director of the Department of the Ministry of Economic Development, represented the Russian side, while Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary of Economic Affairs, represented the Pakistani side during the three days of the IGC meeting's technical sessions.



Dr. Kazim Niaz stressed enhancing trade and investment relations as a prime priority of Pakistan, citing the comparative advantage between Pakistan and Russia as a huge positive to bolster trade. Israfil Ali-Zade said Russia valued its relations with Pakistan and noted that a "good level of cooperation exists between Pakistan and Russia that may be enhanced further."

## Russian Delegation Engagements and the Deals Negotiated

On the opening day of the 8th IGC session, both sides reviewed the previous decisions made in different areas. The experts also discussed the prices of oil and gas imports from Russia, besides deliberating on a preparatory road map for oil and gas imports from Russia on a short-term and long-term basis.

Following the conclusion of the IGC session, Pakistan's Minister of State for Petroleum, Dr. Musadik Malik, shared that Russia agreed to supply crude oil and oil products to Pakistan and that Pakistan hopes to import about 30 to 35% of its total crude oil requirement from Russia. The technical details of the agreement must still be finalised by March of this year.

## Technical Consultations

On the second day of the 8th IGC, the two sides held technical consultations on finalising the "Draft Protocol" for the implementation of the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (PSGP) project as well as for the delivery of oil and petroleum products to Pakistan and the Russian-Pakistani financial cooperation. Prior to signing the final protocol of the 8th session, an agreement was reached on the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the 7th IGC meeting for cooperation in different sectors.

## Pakistan Stream gas pipeline

On the final day of talks, the two sides discussed the implementation of the "Pakistan Stream gas pipeline" project as well as oil and petroleum products delivery to Pakistan and logistical and financial issues such as payment mechanisms before the signing of the final protocol of the 8th meeting of the commission.

Pakistan and Russia signed two agreements in 2015 and 2021 for the construction of the \$2.5 billion pipeline to build a 1,100-km-long gas pipeline for the delivery of 16 billion cubic metres of natural gas annually. It was slated to begin in 2022, but



it could not be started due to global sanctions on Moscow. It remains to be seen if the project would materialize, given the continuing context of the Ukraine war.

For Pakistan to import Russian oil and LNG on a government-to-government basis, both countries must first negotiate an inter-governmental agreement (IGA). An IGA has been finalised and signed in the case of the PSGP, which was earlier called the North-South Gas Pipeline (NSGP) project.

## The discounted deal

During the technical session, the Russian side offered to supply oil and gas to Pakistan at discounted rates and assured that Russia could fulfil Pakistan's energy needs. The Pakistani side provided data pertaining to the country's oil and gas demand, while the Russian side offered prices and quantities of oil and gas for mutual agreement in devising a final working paper for the discount rate.

It is to be recalled that Pakistan had hoped to acquire the oil at a 30 percent discount, while Russia said the volume of its existing global exports would help it determine the decision. For the time being, Russia has announced that it will cease servicing Pakistan's debt.

Trading with friendly countries' Currencies

While Pakistan and Russia are expected to complete an oil and gas export process by the end of March, the Russian Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov said the delegates discussed financial and banking cooperation and agreed upon Islamabad paying in "currencies of friendly countries."

While the "friendly country currency" remains to be specified, trading in a currency other than the dollar may benefit Pakistan by providing an alternative currency for trade and investment and helping to mitigate the currency risk associated with fluctuations in the value of the dollar.

However, it's important to note that trading in currencies other than dollars, such as the Russian ruble or Chinese yuan, would also come with its own set of risks and challenges. For example, the ruble is subject to fluctuations in the value of oil (Russia's main export) and sanctions imposed by

other countries. Additionally, there may be limited liquidity and a lack of infrastructure for trading in rubles.

Similarly, trading in CNY can only allow access to the Chinese market, as many Chinese businesses may prefer to trade in their own currency. However, it can also expose companies to exchange rate risk if the value of the CNY fluctuates against the company's home currency. Furthermore, China's economy is heavily regulated, and there are restrictions on the flow of capital in and out of the country, which could affect trade.



However, trading in other currencies would reduce demand for dollars in Pakistan, which may offer a slight respite to the dollar-starved economy of Pakistan with a meagre impact on the value of the dollar in Pakistan.

## Impact of the Deals (C/B)

As Pakistan remains trapped in the vicious circle of a crippling power crisis, the agreements made at the 8th IGC session could have a very positive impact on Pakistan's energy security situation. For one, the natural gas in Pakistan is depleting at a rate of 9 percent annually. Second, the country's circular debt in the energy sector is growing at a rate of about Rs. 129 billion per year. Third, the country meets its energy needs by importing about 80 percent of its oil.

The 30 to 35 percent share of these imports,

if met by the discounted Russian oil and gas in a currency other than the dollar, would be a sufficient breather. Not only would it help in reducing the import bill for the ailing economy struggling against sovereign default, but it would also potentially reduce Pakistan's dependence on other countries for oil imports.

However, in the milieu of globalization, a bilateral deal with a country facing global backlash for aggression against Ukraine would may entail global political implications as well.

## International Implications of the Visit to Pakistan

The implications of a potential oil deal between Pakistan and Russia for Pakistan's foreign relations with other countries would depend on the specifics of the deal. The major global oil market leaders, the US and Saudi Arabia, instead have expressed supportive statements. While US State Department spokesman Ned Price reiterated seeing an economically sustainable Pakistan, the Saudi Foreign and Economic Ministers at the WEF pushed for diversifying means and finding innovative financial solutions to help Pakistan. Additionally, the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad is planning to organise a conference in Pakistan in March to discuss energy security issues.

Similarly, the UAE, Qatar, and China may see the Russian oil deal as part of Pakistan's efforts to diversify its energy sources. While major oil exporters may be concerned about shifting global preferences, particularly in the context of climate action in relation to carbon-intensive fossil fuels, global oil producers and exporters are more likely to collaborate with massively fuel-importing countries like Pakistan, which has limited infrastructure for renewable energy projects, in offsetting their carbon footprint and making better trade-offs for retaining access to their products in the future.

For now, any impact on foreign relations will depend on the specifics of the deal. As long as countries are pursuing their bilateral partnerships without aligning against the interests of other partners, deals can move forward without much resistance from anywhere.

# Incoming Crises

*The Global Risk Report 2023 highlights that for Pakistan, both the affordability and availability of basic requirements might spark social and political instability*

By Arsim Tariq

The World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Risks Report has issued its annual warning on interrelated global risks for the past 17 years. The Global Risks Report 2023 explains that a number of interrelated global risks have emerged as a result of war and geopolitical conflicts. For example, the price of electricity and food is expected to rise sharply over the next two years, as will the cost of debt service. While these crises are happening, efforts to deal with longer-term problems like climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and not investing enough in human capital risk being hampered.

For Pakistan, the Global Risk Report warns that a perfect storm of natural disasters and supply shortages could turn the current cost-of-living problem into a catastrophe that leaves millions of people hungry and in need of aid. This has the potential to exacerbate both the energy and humanitarian crises. When combined with seasonal harsh weather, power outages and deaths can result from energy shortages caused by provider shut-offs or natural, accidental, or intentional damage to pipelines and energy networks.

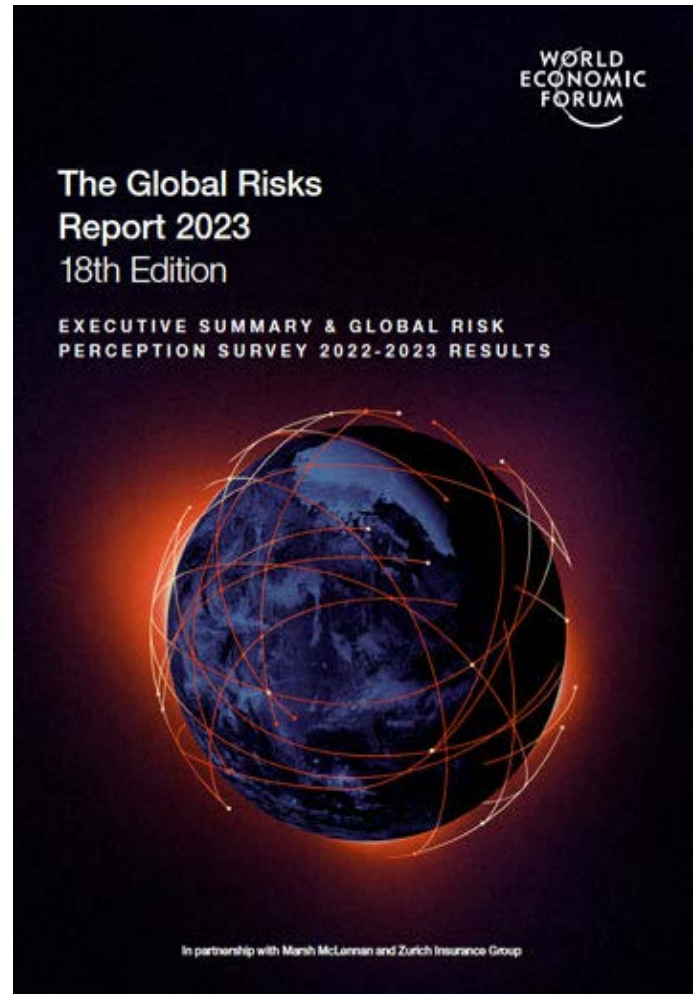
The following 10 hazards were selected by the Global Risk Report 2023 as the most pressing ones facing Pakistan during the next two years. 1) Monopolies and the centralization of digital power; 2) Defeat of cybersecurity attempts (including loss of privacy, data fraud or theft, and cyber espionage); 3) Unpredictable and/or persistent price increases; 4) Debt problems; 5) State breakdown; 6) Limited access to digital services and inequality in digital services; 7) Ten: a crisis in employment and subsistence caused by problems 7, 8, and 9 (loss of terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystem collapse);

The Global Risk Report 2023 highlights that for Pakistan, both the affordability and availability of basic requirements might spark social and political instability, according to Amir Jahangir, CEO of Mishal Pakistan, a Partners Institute for New Economy and Societies Platforms of the World Economic Forum. He went on to say, "Last year, the increase in fuel costs alone led to protests in an estimated 92 nations, some of which ended in political unrest and fatalities, accompanying strikes and industrial shutdowns."

He said, "Pakistan will continue to feel the effects of insecurity, which could get worse because of the country's simultaneous food and debt crises, which could lead to a more technocratic way of making decisions at the top."

According to the report, the failure to take action on climate change through reduction and adaptation poses the greatest long-term risk. Short-term and long-term risks will be made worse by geopolitical rivalries and policies that focus on the country's own interests. This, in turn, will put more pressure on the economy.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report, estimations predict that over 800,000 hectares of agriculture will be destroyed by floods in Pakistan in 2022, leading to a sharp increase in commodity prices in a country already struggling with record



inflation of 27%. Women and girls in Pakistan, who are tasked with water collection, have disproportionately high levels of water stress, which has negative effects on their health and access to school. Increased scarcity coupled with frozen international cooperation mechanisms has prompted some water nationalism, leading to protracted confrontations between neighbouring states and countries. Similar to the water disputes and terrorism that have occurred in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan in the past, water infrastructure could continue to be used as both a weapon and target in the face of expanding humanitarian crises and state instability.

The global pandemic and conflict in Europe have refocused attention on the world's energy, inflation, food, and security issues. Consequences such as recession, increasing debt hardship, a continuation of the cost of the living problem, polarised societies made possible by deception and misinformation, a halt in swift climate action, and zero-sum geo-economic warfare will dominate the next two years.



Energy, food, debt, and natural disasters are the most prominent near-term risks. Those at the bottom of society's food chain are feeling the effects, and the number of people worldwide who fall into that category due to various crises is growing at an alarming rate. A new shock event, such as a new armed conflict or a new virus, may easily overwhelm our ability to cope with the already poisonous mix of known and escalating global threats. According to Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director of the World Economic Forum (WEF), "climate and human development must be at the core of the concerns of global leaders to increase resilience against future shocks."



Over 1,200 global risk experts, policymakers, and industry executives contributed to the report, which was prepared in collaboration with Marsh & McLennan and Zurich Insurance Group. As the world continues to face numerous long-standing threats that appeared to be receding, this report paints a picture of the global hazard landscape across three time periods that are both new and disturbingly familiar.

Over the next decade, this will lead to sustained global warming and ecological breakdown unless the world begins to collaborate more effectively on climate mitigation and adaptation. The loss of biodiversity is viewed as one of the most rapidly worsening global dangers over the next decade, along with climate change, natural disasters, and environmental degradation, if nothing is done to mitigate or adapt to them. At the same time, the disappearance of investments in health, education, and economic development further erodes social cohesiveness as a result of leadership that is driven by crises and geopolitical rivalries.

This paper not only shows how the risk of geo-economic weaponization is growing, but it also shows how remilitarization could happen, especially with the help of new technologies and bad actors.

Governments will have to make difficult choices in the coming years as they try to balance competing priorities related to society, the environment, and national security. Already, net-zero promises are being put to the test by short-term geo-economic dangers, revealing a divide between what is scientifically required and what is politically acceptable. To lessen the effects of global warming, we need immediate and drastic collective action. There may be less economic wiggle room to absorb the blows of a protracted cost of living crisis due to security concerns and rising military spending. Vulnerable nations risk falling into a chronic state of crisis if their current course isn't altered, leaving them unable to finance growth, human development, and green technology in the years to come.

The paper urges policymakers to put short-term concerns in context while taking the long view. The report calls for quick and coordinated climate action as well as international and public-private cooperation to improve financial stability, technology governance, economic growth, and investment in fields like science, medicine, and education.



The Global Risks Report is at the centre of the Forum's Global Risks Initiative, which teaches people about being ready for risks and being resilient.

The research also analysed the ways in which potential future hazards may intersect with existing ones to create a "polycrisis," or a group of interconnected global dangers with additive effects and uncertain outcomes. Environmental, geopolitical, and socio-economic hazards associated with the availability and demand for natural resources like food, water, and energy were examined in the report dubbed "Resource Rivalry."

# Resignations - PTI caught in own trap

*In quest for early elections PTI lost power in two third of country, deprived 124 lawmakers of NA seats; handling impact of bye elections a test for Shehbaz Sharif*

By Sarfraz Raja

The Year 2023 is the election-year in Pakistan and its turning to be so after a series of surprises that began unfolding in the first month of the new year, suggesting the intensity of political upheaval ahead. Both PTI and PDM finally played their cards which they were reluctant to play earlier. This intense political row caused over half of the elected representatives in the center and provinces lose their seats, thus paving the way for fresh polls on more than half of the National and Provincial Assemblies' seats in the coming two-to-three months.

## Action in provinces, reaction in center

Just like a war-game where one side playing on its strength exploits the weaknesses of the other, Imran Khan played his 'trump card'--dissolution of two Provincial Assemblies. Though both in Punjab and the KPK, PTI was in power but it resorted to dissolution of the Provincial Assemblies as its demand for early elections was not heeded by PDM despite countywide protest rallies and long marches.

Punjab Assembly's dissolution witnessed complications as here the chief minister was not from Imran Khan's party. The CM was actually not in favor of dissolving the Provincial Assembly as he was not willing to lose power and privileges he enjoyed, but he had no choice except complying with Imran Khan's desire and decision, thus leaving 371 MPs lose their seats within 48 hours.

Subsequently, the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa comprising 124 seats was also dissolved where PTI had sole majority and had no such issue like Punjab. After the dissolution of two Provincial Assemblies, the PTI in its core group meeting decided to target Shehbaz Sharif's government in the center via presidential advice: to attain vote of confidence from the House, as well as PTI lawmakers' return to the National Assembly to secure important



positions of opposition leader and chairman Public Accounts Committee.

This PTI move was jeopardized by Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf who suddenly accepted pending resignations of the 35 opposition MNAs, including that of PTI ally, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed. Other than Sheikh, PTI resignations included those of top party stalwarts: Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Asad Umar, Fawad Chaudhary, Pervez Khatak, former speaker Asad Qaiser and Murad Saeed. And after a couple of days during the second phase, the speaker accepted 35 more resignations -- a sudden, swift and consecutive acceptance of 70 resignations that further diminished PTI's strength in the National Assembly.

Initially, PTI demanded of the speaker to accept their remaining resignations but on the very next day, it pleaded for the withdrawal of the same in order to remain in the game to secure position of the opposition leader. PTI also wanted to be a stakeholder vis-à-vis formation of the new caretaker set up prior to the elections. But instead it got the stunning news that the speaker had accepted its remaining 43 resignations. This brought PTI to near-zero representation in the National Assembly and shattered its dream of grabbing the seat of the opposition leader.

## How the decision bounced back?

Immediately after Imran Khan's ouster from premiership, PTI decided to resign from National Assembly in order to put pressure on the new government to announce fresh elections. On April 11, last year, PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi, on a point-of-order which later proved to be his last speech on the floor of the current National Assembly, announced resignations on behalf of all his party MNAs and at that time deputy speaker of PTI Qasim Khan Suri accepted all 131 resignations. Immediately when new Speaker from PDM Raja Pervez Ashraf assumed his office, he withheld these resignations. The speaker then called in all PTI lawmakers, who had purportedly resigned from their seats to verify if their resignations were genuine and voluntary. But PTI chief Imran Khan barred his party members from appearing before the NA speaker, terming it 'a trap.' The PTI lawmakers didn't show up and since then the matter remained pending before the speaker.

PTI leaders kept demanding of the speaker to accept their resignations but the later sought 'completion of the constitutional and legal process' for verification of resignations of every member, one-by-one. In July last year,





after more than three and a half months, the speaker accepted 11 resignations including some of the key MPs like former ministers, Shireen Mazari, Ijaz Ahmed Shah, Ali Muhammad Khan and Farrukh Habib. The National Assembly Secretariat officials on that occasion clarified that resignations are accepted after fulfilling the requirements under the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007.

Responding to this PDM move, Imran Khan announced he would himself contest bye elections on all vacated seven general seats of the National Assembly; and he had won six of them. Initially, PTI challenged the speaker's act of accepting resignations in phases in the Islamabad High Court but couldn't get anything in its favor. Actually, the decision of resignations which was considered 'hasty' and even President Arif Alvi who is also from PTI, admitted in an interview that it was an 'emotional decision' without detailed consultation.

Sources in PTI confirmed this was a one-man, Imran Khan, decision, who was 'utterly dejected' after his ouster from the Prime Minister's Office; and that party's top leadership opposed the move which left the field open for rivals and with the passage of time this wrong PTI move was now bouncing back.



## How it hurts PTI cause?

After the historic 18th Amendment, you can't keep out opposition from many key decisions. The leader of opposition has major role in appointments like chairman National Accountability Bureau, chief election commissioner and members of the Election Commission and more explicitly, the care taker set up that conducts new elections.

After PTI left the field empty by announcing their resignations in April last year, Raja Riaz, a dissident of PTI was named by the speaker National Assembly as leader of

opposition while another PTI dissident Noor Alam Khan as chairman of most important Parliamentary Committee -- the Public Accounts Committee. And now when new elections are around, PTI suddenly realized importance of its presence in the House as opposition but the PDM government has left hardly a room for them.

Majority of neutral political experts, from the beginning, were dubbing PTI resignations as 'not a good option' and stressing its return to the Assembly. Even the government too had invited it to be the part of the parliamentary process, but PTI kept defending its decision. Now, changing of its stance amply suggests the resignations was a completely wrong move.

Precisely, PTI in its hunt for early elections, lost power in two third of the country after dissolving Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies besides depriving its 124 MNAs of their seats and now it has no choice but to wait until new elections. It would also be a test for coalition government led by Shehbaz Sharif that how they handle the impact of early elections in two major provinces and nearly 100 bye elections on vacant general seats of National Assembly, some more surprises are still on cards in coming weeks and months.





# Repulsing of a 'no confidence' master stroke

*PTI's political strategy awaited; IK party to have no constitutional role in formation of interim set up; PDM mulling PAs election delay*



By Noor Aftab

Political situation for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) can go in any direction. The 'master strokes'—dissolution of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies and mass resignations from the National Assembly—are apparently not helping PTI Chairman Imran Khan in his perpetual efforts to pave the way for fresh general elections. The caretaker chief ministers in both Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have taken charge and vowed to hold free, fair and transparent elections in their respective provinces.

PTI has lost its provincial governments in these two provinces and Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf has also accepted a total of 121 resignations of Members of National Assembly (MNAs) belonging to PTI. Now its the other way round, political hawks of the coalition government say that actually they played the 'master strokes' by pushing PTI Chairman Imran Khan towards a blind alley.

A total of 123 PTI lawmakers had resigned en masse on April 11 last year—two days after their party chairman was ousted as the prime minister through a no-confidence motion. Former NA deputy speaker Qasim Suri had accepted their resignations. However, on April 17, the newly elected

NA Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf directed the Assembly Secretariat to deal with the resignations of the PTI lawmakers afresh and present them before him so that they could be treated as per law.

He later asked PTI lawmakers to tender hand-written resignations to him, saying that the purpose of calling these MPs in person was to ensure that they were willingly relinquishing their seats in the Lower House of the parliament.

Raja Pervez Ashraf on July 28, 2022, accepted the resignations of only 11 PTI lawmakers who had resigned after the vote of no confidence against the former PM. PTI had first challenged the move in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on first August, contesting that it was unsustainable. The IHC, however, had dismissed the petition on Sept 6, 2022. The party then approached the Supreme Court, praying it to set aside the IHC order, terming it "vague, cursory, and against the law". A decision on PTI's plea in the apex court is still pending.

Ashraf told a PTI delegation on Dec 29, 2022, that the party MPs would be summoned individually for verification of their resignations as PTI insisted accep-

tance of all of its resignations in one go.

In the recent past Imran Khan abruptly intensified consultations with party leaders to make a surprise: bring a vote of no-confidence against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the National Assembly.

Having witnessed ex-Punjab chief minister Pervaiz Ellahi submit a summary advising Governor Balighur Rehman to dissolve the Provincial Assembly and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan ready to follow suit, it appeared Imran Khan had spotted a different opportunity. PTI was hopeful to sway the disgruntled Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), hinting it would test Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with a confidence vote.

The president was entitled to a constitutional right to ask the prime minister to obtain a vote of confidence in the National Assembly in order to show that he commands the confidence of majority lawmakers in the Lower House of parliament.

Article 91(7) of the Constitution explains the prime minister shall hold office at the pleasure of the president, but the president shall not exercise his powers under this





clause unless he is satisfied that the prime minister does not command the confidence of the majority of the Members of the National Assembly, in which case he shall summon the National Assembly and require the prime minister to obtain a vote of confidence.

PTI also maintained that there was no concept of run-off elections after the PM's failure to take a vote of confidence. It held that the president was empowered to dissolve the National Assembly in such a scenario.

As per clause (2) of Article 48 of the Constitution, the president can dissolve National Assembly at his discretion where no other Member of the National Assembly can command confidence of the House majority in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, both in the situation of vote of no confidence succeeded under article 95 of the Constitution against the prime minister, or the prime minister fails to get the vote of trust as required by the president under article 91(7) of the Constitution.

But in a surprise move, NA Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf put off the Assembly session for a week. The move came after reports emerged that the PTI planned to send those Members to the Assembly, whose resignations have not been accepted so far.

The speaker, contrary to his earlier position that he could not act on the resignations submitted by PTI lawmakers without personally verifying them, now took a U-turn and accepted the remaining resignations of PTI lawmakers in a space of few days.

Raja Riaz leads the group of PTI MNAs who did not tender their resignations when the party decided to quit the Assembly in the aftermath of Imran's ouster. With PTI dissident Raja Riaz holding the parliamentary party leader's position in the National Assembly, PTI fears that he may decide to vote in favour of the prime minister if President Dr Arif Alvi asks Shehbaz Sharif to take the trust vote.

Headed by Pervaiz Khattak, PTI had formed a committee that would go to the NA speaker and ask for party members to be given the offices of leader of the opposition, parliamentary leader and chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

In a bid to bar the incumbent opposition leader in the National Assembly Raja Riaz from becoming part of negotiations on the appointment of a caretaker prime minister, in case of general elections, 44 PTI lawmakers also collectively withdrew their resignations from the National Assembly on the orders of party Chairman Imran Khan.

Now PTI's MNAs are saying that the NA speaker has accepted their resignations with ill intent because he found out that they intended to remove Raja Riaz as the NA Opposition Leader.



It is yet to be seen what kind of political strategy will be adopted by PTI because it will have no constitutional role in formation of interim set up at the Centre before next general elections. There are also reports that Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) is also mulling over the proposal to postpone elections in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhawa on the basis of some constitutional hurdles.

Imran Khan has rejected the appointment of Mohsin Naqvi as the Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister and alleged that Naqvi had a big role in the 'regime change conspiracy' against his government. He also expressed suspicions that Naqvi would approve deputations of anti-PTI officials during the upcoming elections.

He has announced that he would again return to streets and stage protest movement to press the government to announce general elections in the country.

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has clarified that the governor is bound to give the election date within 48 hours after the Assembly's dissolution but the governors of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhawa have not yet unveiled the schedule.

Given the ongoing political situation, many key members of the ruling coalition are now believed to be thinking that the no-trust move against Imran Khan proved to be a mistake, since it presented PTI as a 'victim' while leaving the coalition government land on the debris of the PTI government's economic, political and social ruins.

On the other hand, Imran Khan has the political power but he is not making an effort to reconcile with the institutions; and if it continued, there will not be an easy way for him to attain power. The noose of political annihilation appears to be tightening around the neck of PTI. Considering exposure of the party's foreign (prohibited) funding by the ECP, the Toshakhana story, Shahbaz Gill's statement encouraging mutiny within the armed forces and frequent harsh statements damaging for PTI as a whole and Imran Khan in person, this kind of an outcome looms large around the party. The dissolution of two Provincial Assemblies threatens to plunge Pakistan, already struggling with financial crisis, even deeper into political turmoil at a time when it can least afford it. PDM has indicated it would hold Provincial Assembly elections and not general elections. Therefore, Khan's move is not likely to force early general elections in the country.





# IK's chances of securing fresh polls

*63% of Pakistan unrepresented in legislatures; legally election for 5-year term of two PAs imminent; polls in current situation a suicide for PDM; political acrimony touching new heights*

By Tahir Niaz

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has succeeded in dissolving the Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa despite all odds. It was equally an expected and unexpected move. The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM); an alliance of around 13 political parties of the country now in power at the Centre, tried its best to avert the happening by doing everything possible ranging from moving a no-confidence motion asking the chief minister Punjab to show confidence of minimum 186 Members of the House, before sending advice to the governor for the dissolution. But it all went in vain. Dissolution of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly was then just a formality. The governor signed the summary sent by the chief minister KP for the dissolution of the Provincial Assembly, very next morning of its receipt.

In three subsequent moves, Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf accepted the resignations of 123 PTI MNAs. Resignations of 43 remaining PTI lawmakers were accepted on January 24. According to the Speaker's Office, the resignations of 123 PTI lawmakers have been accepted so far, whereas the resignations of two members were not accepted due to their requests for leave. The electoral watchdog subsequently de-notified the PTI parliamentarians. The development came a day after 45 PTI MNAs announced to withdraw their resignations. Apart from the dissenting members of the PTI, only two members of the former ruling party remain in the Lower House at present. The speaker also accepted the resignation of the head of Awami Muslim League, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed.

The resignations were pending with the speaker for months. The PTI had been demanding the speaker to accept resignations submitted by their legislatures for a long time. Though the speaker accepted the resignations while by-passing his own observations frequently made in the previous months to deny the same, yet it is



what the PTI wanted so that a way to the general elections could be carved out.

The speaker's move had a specific objective. It aimed at scuttling the possible PTI move asking the prime minister through the president to take a vote of confidence from the House. The speaker, by accepting the resignations, kicked the PTI out of the House and now it would not be in a position to succeed in a possible run-of-election if the prime minister even fails to show confidence of the required number (172) of legislatures.

With the two Provincial Assemblies dissolved and PTI out of the National Assembly, the question is whether it all took Imran Khan closer to the general elections or they are still as far as August 2023. The answer to the query lies in the latest moves by the two sides.

PTI wants immediate elections and the other side, in the meantime, is exploiting every possible option for the parliament to complete its term. The warring parties are out in the field with completely divergent goals. The PDM, especially the PML-N, wants to delay elections till the very last minute, in order to gain lost ground as a result of inflation and neutralize the impact of what Khan narrates as "muk muka" (settlement of corruption cases). Actually, the PDM needs time to counter both.

With every passing day, the options available with both sides are becoming limited. With the NA speaker accepting the PTI MNAs' resignations, chances of the prime minister sending home via a 'vote of confidence' seem diminished now. The PTI can, however, exert further pressure on the system by quitting the Sindh Assembly and Blochistan Assembly as street protest remains the last option.

On the other hand, there is nothing to compel the PML-N for fresh elections. However, the Nawaz-led party would have little to no choice for the Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies as far as holding general elections is concerned.

The elections for these two Provincial Assemblies for the next 5-year term are imminent as far as legal and constitutional positions are concerned. But, still there is fifty-fifty on the question of next general elections in the country given the determination of the PDM government to complete the term on one hand, and 'economic situation' and pending census on the other. It is to mention here that almost 63 percent of Pakistan has gone unrepresented in the legislatures after the dissolution of two Provincial Assemblies and resignation of the PTI lawmakers.

A closer look at the chessboard suggests that the PDM would be at loss in both the





scenarios. With the economy at its lowest in years, the masses are not ready to accept further price-hike. But the IMF seems hell bent to cause further inflation in Pakistan through implementing its condition against loaning.

With PTI out, the government has lost credibility to rule. The political observers believe that the PML-N-led government will not be able to avoid general elections for long as it has lost the “political and moral credibility” to govern the country, following the acceptance of the resignations of the PTI MNAs.

The analysts believe that the government wants to evade a political assault on it, but it will find it hard to pretend anymore that everything is running smoothly and elections will be held on time, particularly after the dissolution of two Provincial Assemblies and de-notification of PTI lawmakers. They believe that the system would ultimately become dysfunctional and the government would not be able to sustain for long. They argue that by-elections won't make any sense just ahead of the general elections.

Elections under the circumstances, as the PDM could also foresee, would be a suicide for the ruling alliance. This is what is hindering the PDM from calling general elections at the moment. On the other hand, there is no option for the government but to announce elections at least for the two Provincial Assemblies. Given the popularity of Imran Khan at the moment, PTI is likely to regain these two provinces. The worth noting fact is that these two



Houses would be elected for another 5 years term. Imagine the federal government calls election for the National Assembly and the remaining two provinces after they complete their 5 years terms in August 2023 and PTI has already strong governments in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, what will be the impact on the result of the elections for the National Assembly and the two provincial assemblies of Sindh and Balochistan.

General elections are scheduled to be held in Pakistan less than 60 days after the dissolution of the National Assembly, which is set to dissolve on 13 August 2023, unless dissolved earlier. In such a case, the election shall be held within 90 days after dissolution according to the constitution. This means that the election must be held no later than 12 October 2023.

Calculations suggest that elections are just a matter of time; certain to happen no later

than 12 October 2023. The remaining Assemblies will be dissolved a bit earlier meaning thereby it's just a matter of just over 6 months time.

Nonetheless, political acrimony is touching new heights amid economic breakdown. The arrest of PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry on January 25 under sedition charges is the latest of the episodes mentioning political acrimony in the country.

With no end in sight to the present political crisis, the temperature is likely to go up in the coming days. The PTI might opt for street protests. Things will move from bad to worse and the already weaker economy will not be in a position to suffer more strokes. For more than 75 years, politicians in Pakistan have been talking about what it means to be a politician. The time has come for the politicians to be politicians and pull the country out of the prevailing political and economic crisis.





# Master of Punjab politics of electables

*Chaudhrys of Gujrat learnt using coercive state machinery under military regemes; have no vote bank, to bank on other political parties; house of martial laws loyalists divided; Pervaiz stages coup against Shujaat, may not merge his party with PTI; London decision to demine course of Punjab politics*

By Umer Farooq

The Chaudhrys of Gujrat have always been a master of politics of the electables in Punjab, that revolves around the influence over state machinery—thana, kacheri and revenue department. And it's the influence over state machinery that determines the outcome when it comes to politics among electable, influential families and personalities in Pakistan's largest province.

The Chaudhrys were partners of two military governments in the past 45 years; and they played a crucial role in bringing these electable personalities and families on the side of last two military dictators, Zia and Musharraf, both of whom were confronted by popular oppositions in their respective eras and needed a political base to shore up their legitimacy.

Under the protection of military regimes, Chaudhrys of Gujrat learnt the art of using influence of coercive state machinery in managing loyalties of electable families and personalities. The networking of influential families which the Chaudhrys control or manage, only works when they are in total control of province. Though Chaudhrys don't have a vote bank as such, they have political connections with the families of electables in the province.

These electable families and personalities can get themselves elected to the Assemblies without the support of any well-established political party, but they do have a political need to side with any of the political groupings in Islamabad or in Lahore to increase their weightage there once they reach the Assemblies. Here Chaudhrys have a crucial role to play—they facilitate electables' entry and access to the power corridors in Islamabad and Lahore. These electables are spread all over Punjab, but are mostly concentrated in western and southern Punjab.

Thus, Chaudhrys were as useful for General Zia, General Musharraf as well as for Imran Khan when all three of them needed to rope in electables in droves. But Imran Khan's politics was striking at the very root of Chaudhry's style of politics. Khan is a popular leader who is in possession of a vast popular vote bank, therefore, he is hardly worried about securing another majority or near majority in the Punjab Assembly or in the National Assembly. Hence, Khan's impatience to get the Punjab Assembly dissolved in order to pave the way of general election was understandable.

But for the Chaudhrys, the dissolution of Provincial Assembly meant they had to worry about two things: a) how to secure even a small number of 10 seats in the provincial legislature. They have no vote bank of their own and will be completely reliant on PTI or any other popular political party to secure seats in the future Punjab Assembly, b) the dissolution meant Chaudhrys will have to part ways with the state machinery, which Ch Pervaiz Ellahi was supervising as chief



minister of the province; and now with the Assembly and his cabinet gone, he would be deprived of his only life line—the grip over coercive state machinery, meant to control the politics of electables in Punjab.

Chaudhrys of Gujrat, however, are now a divided house: prominent faces of the family, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussein and Chaudhry Pervaiz Ellahi seem to be on the loggerhead. It seems the scions of two branches of Chaudhry family are engaged in behind-the-scene tussle that has shattered the decade-long unity of the family. Chaudhry Monis Ellahi, son of Chaudhry Pervez Ellahi, is on one-on-one term with PTI Chairman Imran Khan, thus not ready to have any kind of political relations with Sharifs and PML-N. On the other hand, Chaudhry Shujaat's son Chaudhry Salik Hussein went especially to London to have a meeting with PMLN leader Nawaz Sharif.

Chaudhry Shujaat and Chaudhry Pervaiz Ellahi had enjoyed martial laws of Zia and Musharraf, working together as one team in performing the crucial role of 'roping in electable' families and personalities into the folds of military dictators. However, this unity faced major cracks as the family politics was about to be transferred to the second generation. How these cracks will affect Chaudhry's ability to influence the politics of electables in the province will become clear in the days to come.

Chaudhry Pervaiz Ellahi staged a kind of a coup when he removed Chaudhry Shujaat Hussein from the office of president of PMLQ last week. But Chaudhry Salik Hussein has challenged the proceedings of the general council as fake and said the real general council will meet soon under the real president of the party, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussein. Experts and observers believe the branch of the family which is close to the powers that be would carry the day in the future politics of Punjab.





Chaudhry Pervaiz Ellahi's connections with the military establishment are well known and Chaudhry Shujaat by no means lags behind. However, the fact that Chaudhry Pervaiz Ellahi is physically fit and active as opposed to Chaudhry Shujaat Hussein who is on wheels, will give a clear advantage to the former. On the other hand, Chaudhry Pervaiz Ellahi is an ally of PTI, a party which apparently stands on the opposite side of the military establishment, and this could go to the disadvantage of the ex-chief minister.

Chaudhry Pervaiz Ellahi's relations with PTI Punjab leadership has not been very smooth. He has, post-dissolution, openly criticized some of the provincial leaders of PTI for hurriedly forcing him to dissolve the Punjab Assemblies. There are strong indications Pervaiz Ellahi is not ready to merge his party with PTI, which according to him, could reduce his status within a much larger party and which unlike his own style of politics clearly depends on popular vote in electoral politics.

Pervaiz Ellahi wants to consolidate his party to retain whatever influence the Chaudhrys still have on the politics of electables in the province. This will put him on a different path with his son, who is all in favor of merger with PTI. Monis is apparently under some kind of Imran Khan's charm, else Khan might have shown him some greener pastures. Khan knows that in the absence of control over coercive state machinery, Chaudhry Pervaiz Ellahi's influence over electable politics will be negligible. He is, however, ready to offer some minor positions to the father and son in return for the loyalty they have shown towards him in the recent months. For this he requires them to merge their tanga party into his PTI.

Punjab's politics will, however, be determined by another decision in London from where PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif decided to field his daughter Maryam Nawaz Sharif vis-à-vis politics of provinces where elections for Provincial Assemblies will be held in three months. Decision to field Maryam also means Nawaz Sharif has no plans to return to Pakistan in near future. According to reports, Nawaz Sharif has vested the authority to reorganize his party in the province to Maryam and Rana Sanaullah. While Maryam herself is quite bold and outspoken in his tirades against opponents, inclusion of Rana Sanaullah in the team suggests the ruling party will be extremely aggressive in contesting elections and attacking Imran Khan.

Since PML-N assumed power in the Centre, it lost most of Punjab bye elections in. And though past experience of the PML-N clearly describes Maryam as a popular option, the alternative to Nawaz Sharif has certain limits. For whatever reasons Nawaz Sharif is not returning, his reluctance will have political cost for PML-N. A senior political observer is of the opinion that the brand name of PML-N popular vote bank in Punjab is Nawaz Sharif and not Maryam or Shehbaz Sharif. "The only way PML-N could reclaim its popular vote back is the return of Nawaz Sharif, who will narrate his own story and ordeal to the people of Punjab," said the observer adding "this doesn't seem likely."

Nawaz Sharif seems to be in a difficult situation; he has a story to tell as far his ordeal at the hands of coercive state machinery is concerned, and how he was deprived of power and was prosecuted,

will certainly have political and electoral worth in future electoral politics of the country. Yet Nawaz Sharif finds himself riding the same boat with the military establishment, which he believes are his 'tormentors.' Observers believe the only way Nawaz regains his vote bank is by telling his story and his hardships to the people. Yet his hands are tied because his party is the ruling party.

Political leaders should not be in a permanent state of friction with the state machinery in a highly unstable country like Pakistan, as they have to command state machinery after attaining power. Political leaders primarily represent popular interest and the interest of social and economic classes; they need to maintain their political identity, distinct from that of the state machinery. But Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan never had the courage to stand for victims of state machinery in any given difficult situation -- Azam Swati and Ali Wazir for instance. At present, the state machinery is increasingly indulging in curbing political and civil liberties; and a political leader who is himself dependent on the coercive machinery of the state would be of no use to people who are advocating or struggling for political and civil freedoms.

And lastly, Pakistan doesn't need a political leader who diagnoses the ailments of state and society in the light of the electoral requirements of his political party. If building bridges, underpasses, highways and motorways could help you win elections, it doesn't mean Pakistan's problems could be solved through this kind of uplift activity. Similarly if your voter is in some kind of overly hate-oriented relation with a political family, that doesn't make corruption the core issue the Pakistani society is facing. Pakistan is increasingly becoming an ungovernable society due to presence of extremely violent groups on its soil, who don't acknowledge the legitimacy of the state.

Recent events put a large question mark on the financial viability of the Pakistani state. In our region, the political and military developments that are taking place will reduce state power. Climate change may be a remote danger in public imagination, and yet scientific knowledge tells us that Pakistan will be the most vulnerable country in the region in the next 10 years. In such a situation, the Punjab-centric direction of political developments in our society is weakening our ability to deal with the challenges that we will be facing in the next 10 to 20 years.

Whatever may be the outcome of the PML-N-PTI fight, one should not expect any change in the power structure. We can expect further consolidation of the status quo primarily because both these parties are Punjab-centric. Time is running out for us; the type of political leaders that we have are good entertainment. Our chattering classes witness politics just as they watch a one-day cricket match, if they get bored with Pakistani batting or bowling, they switch to a news channel to watch Imran Khan's speech at prime time. After watching a speech for ten minutes, they shift to any other entertainment channel. A good dialogue in a TV drama and diatribes in Imran Khan's speech are equally entertaining for them. Yet Pakistan's political problems are multiplying with each passing day. In such a situation, Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif could become a good source of entertainment but for serious political leadership we need to look somewhere else.

# Can Pakistan afford another military tension in region?

*Clossal costs of military mobilization and shift in use of Pak nukes narrative; IS-K ranks swelling in Afghanistan; Pak security apparatus defending regional security alone*

By Umer Farooq

The first decade of this century came with its own financial difficulties for Pakistan when it came to national security and defense. In 2002, India's military mobilizations in the wake of terrorist attacks inside India and Pakistan's counter-mobilizations proved highly costly at the financial level--forget about new acquisitions, even to mobilize the military. Every time there was a military mobilization on the Indian side, it looked beyond the financial capacity of the Pakistani state. In such a situation, writes a former senior official of Pakistan's Strategic Plans Division Brig (retd) Feroz H Khan, "Pakistan would lack the resources to begin major mobilizations whenever terrorists attacked India and instead would be forced to rely even more on nuclear deterrent". In practical terms this would mean testing and inducting tactical nuclear weapons into Pakistan's war fighting capability. In April 2011, Pakistan flight-tested short range, surface-to-surface multi-tube ballistic missile Nasr which has a range of 60 kilometers. Soon afterwards, another missile called Abdali -- best suited for carrying small nuclear warheads swiftly to a short-range target and hitting that target accurately -- was test launched. Officials at the time of the launch said Abdali was part of a quick response system to strengthen the deterrence value of Pakistan's bigger nuclear weapons. Experts, however, see the developments of these missiles as indicating a complete departure from the country's nuclear policy which originally saw nuclear weapons as 'weapons of last resort.'

The financial difficulties the Pakistani government faced in 2002 during the military tensions with India resonated in the power corridors of Islamabad till 2013 when in September of that year the country's entire foreign policy establishment gathered under one roof in the Strategic Plans Division's office



in Rawalpindi. The whole military establishment was in attendance and Foreign Office was represented by Sartaj Aziz, the then advisor to prime minister on national security and foreign affairs, and Tariq Fatimi, special assistant to prime minister on foreign affairs. The photograph of the meeting released by the public relations department of Pakistan Army, showed the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif listening attentively to what the ex-DG Strategic Plans Division, Lt Gen (Retd) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai had to say on the latest development in the country's nuclear policy.

The development which Nawaz Sharif approved in the meeting had already taken place or was unveiled in the year 2011. Pakistani media, military and nuclear experts described the mention of the term "full spectrum deterrence" in the press release issued after the National Command Authority meeting as an oblique reference to the development and introduction of tactical nuclear weapons into Pakistan Army's war plans.

In April 2011, Pakistan flight-tested a short range surface-to-surface multi-tube ballistic missile, Nasr, which has a range of 60 kilometers. Officials at

the time said that nuclear warheads of appropriate yield with high accuracy and shoot and scoot attributes were developed as a quick response system to add deterrence value to Pakistan's strategic weapons development program. Nasr's flight testing was followed by the test launch of Abdali, which was described to have the same attributes. Pakistani experts say both these nuclear capable missiles could be employed against advancing Indian troops formation in the battlefield.

Experts described this development, which was taking place in response to equally threatening military moves on the other side of the border, as a complete transformation of country's nuclear policy which originally saw nuclear weapons as a weapon of last resort. "So (now) nuclear weapons are being seen by Pakistan as means of fighting a war with, not as weapons of last resort" says an expert. This statement was largely seen as a possible reference to India's large conventional ground forces and so-called 'cold start strategy.'

From May-July 2011, Indian military carried out a series of military exercises near Pakistan border to validate the 'cold start strategy' and to reduce the



time of mobilization of its troops. The main objective of the operation was to cut down the mobilization time of the military, which took 27 days to mobilize during the last military crisis between the two countries. Reports in the Indian media say the Indian Army confirmed that the exercises were successful, reducing mobilization time drastically to 48 hours. All these developments have already taken place in mid-2011 and the September 5, 2013, decision in the National Command Authority meeting was only to formalize what has already existed as a reality in the country's military's plans. But it seems that it was for the first time that the plan was put before the country's political leadership for approval. And not surprisingly, the political leadership and the foreign policy team of the present government approved the plan without any hesitation or without making any input into the decision-making process.

This in practical terms would mean that the country's poor financial health played a crucial role in forcing the country's military planners' hand in taking the highly destabilizing decision to induct nuclear weapons into the country's war plans. The Pakistani military was fully mobilized, in the period between December 2001 and October 2002, with its combat formations in attacking positions in response to massive troops buildup by India. No exact assessment of financial cost of Pakistani mobilization is available in the public realm, but it estimated that this proved highly destabilizing for the cash strapped Pakistani government which was otherwise heavily reliant on aid flows from Washington and steady flow of foreign remittance from Pakistani communities abroad, which were transferring their moveable assets to Pakistani banks in the wake of 911 attacks on US cities.

The repeated assertions from US diplomats in recent weeks indicated Washington was willing to help resolve Pakistan's problems with India. The US Administration has shown keen interests in helping Pakistan improve its border management with Afghanistan—a country which only a year back took a plunge into the world of international terrorism when a former militant organization that is Afghan Taliban assumed power in Kabul. Now Pakistan's geostrategic and geo-political situation has to be viewed in the light of the threatening existence of forces of interna-

tional terrorism on its western border. Some Pakistani officials and leaders have made cryptic assertions regarding the country's concerns about the existence of international terror groups in Afghanistan. What Pakistan should fear is the possibility of these international terror groups making foray into neighboring countries or may be these terror groups carrying out a mass casualty attack (MCA) attack in any neighboring especially India like the one they carried out in Mumbai in 2008 and this (God forbids) leading to a military tension in the region.

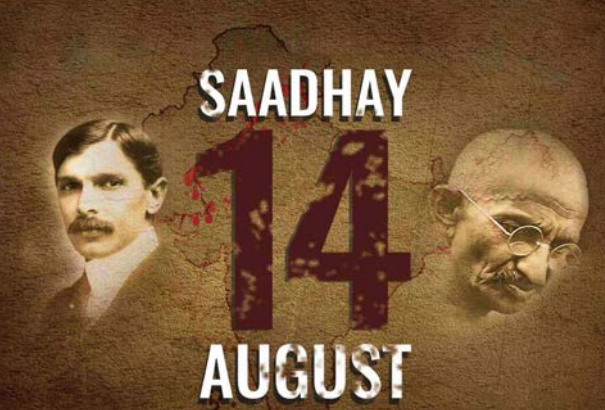


Since assuming power in Kabul in August 2021, the Afghan Taliban have faced an arch-rival in the form of IS-Khorasan (ISKP). Besides facing almost regular attacks on their leaders and commanders inside Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban have to deal with a situation where their more radicalized members and commanders are shifting loyalties to join the IS-K. International security experts have long predicted that the Taliban's willingness to interact with foreigners will offend their radicalized members. The IS-K ranks started swelling even before the Afghan Taliban seized Kabul. And these ranks swelled as a result of desertions in the ranks of the Afghan Taliban and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). After coming into power, the Afghan Taliban assigned themselves the task of weaning the TTP away from any kind of alliance with IS-K. Not only the TTP but a variety of Pakistani terror and militant groups have cooperated with IS-K

in the past vis-a-vis recruitment, training, propaganda and terror attacks. The Afghan Taliban leaders tried to convince the Pakistani government representatives about their 'soft treatment' towards the TTP, who have been hiding in the Afghan border towns and cities, as a necessity in their efforts to wean the TTP from IS-K. They told Pakistani officials that if they pushed the TTP too hard on the issue of not using Afghan soil in their attacks into Pakistani territory, it would make the TTP join hands with IS-K. There are every type of foreign terror groups in Afghanistan with their own

grievances against home countries. Now Pakistan's security apparatus has been put in the unenviable position of defending regional security alone against the forces of international terrorism. What will happen if these terror groups carry out another 'mass casualty attack' in any of the neighboring countries? The situation Afghanistan finds itself in is not the creation of Pakistan, nor it was created in a day. Massive foreign interference and spy games have turned Afghanistan into a hotbed of international terrorism. But It would only be Pakistan which would face the military heat if anything goes wrong in the region. Pakistan's economy is already in an utterly bad situation and any more military tensions with India as a result of future terror attack would be utterly devastating for Pakistan's economy. If anyone has any doubt he or she should read Pakistan's political and economic situations in the wake of 2002 military tensions with India.





## PLAY 'SAADHAY 14 AUGUST' KICKS OFF AT PNCA

The Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) began a one-month run of Anwar Maqsood's much-anticipated play "Saadhay 14 August," which will run till February 7. The play is produced by KopyKats Productions, which has a long history of producing unique and high-quality Urdu theatrical productions. The play has been written by the eminent Anwar Maqsood and It is directed by Dawer Mehmood. After successfully completing 100 performances in Karachi, "Saadhay 14 August" is delivering sarcasm and comedy to fun lovers in Islamabad. The drama features some of the most well-known national characters from the past and present. It is part of the trilogy that began with "Pawnay 14 August," which was originally performed ten years ago. "Saadhay 14 August," the series' last episode, commemorates its conclusion.









# TTP-Baloch separatists alliance: Consequences for South Asia, Greater ME

*Afghan Taliban fear TTP could join IS-K, seek outfit's relocation to Pakistan; TTP forsees advantages in alliance with Baloch separatist groups*

By Dr Raza Khan

After the acknowledgments from both the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch separatist outfits' leaders to have forged an alliance to compel the State of Pakistan to give in to their illogical demands, the entire South Asian and Greater Middle Eastern regions would extensively be affected from this union of Pakistani militant and terrorist groups-keeping in view their grand wishes and objectives.

TTP's current chief Noor Wali Mehsud and Baloch separatist commander, Dr Allah Nizar Baloch, have separately acknowledged that both sides have formed a sort of alliance to help each other launch terror attacks against the State of Pakistan. Signs and symptoms of alliance between the TTP and Baloch separatists have been more than obvious and could be testified by following incidents.

On April 27, 2022, a female suicide bomber attacked a vehicle carrying Chinese language tutors of Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi, killing four people including three Chinese teachers. The banned BLA-linked Majeed Brigade had claimed responsibility for the attack on the teachers that took place near China-built Confucius Institute. A spokesperson of the BLA, the separatist outfit which is banned in Pakistan, the UK and the US, then divulged that the attack was carried out by one, Shari Baloch alias Bramsh - the "first female suicide bomber of the brigade". The attack marked "a new chapter in the history of Baloch resistance," the spokesman had added.

True, because suicide attacks by Baloch separatists have been rare and never carried out by a female.

Whereas, such self-destroying attacks have always been the trademark of the TTP, mastered by its now slain South Waziristan based Ustad-e-Fidayeen (Master trainer of suicide attackers), Qari Hussain. Thus the

deeply radicalizing influence of the TTP on Baloch separatist armed groups became quite obvious. Apart from this influence of the TTP over Baloch separatists, the expansion of Baloch militant-terrorist groups' theater of activities also manifested strongly last year.



On January 20, a little-known Baloch separatist group, the Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA), claimed responsibility for the IED blast at Lahore's downtown Anarkali market, claiming three lives and wounding 28 others. In July 2022, Pakistani Taliban had announced a Baloch militant group led by Aslam Baloch from the Noshki district in the Southern Balochistan province merged with the TTP. This is the second Baloch militant group, the 18th in total which reportedly have joined TTP since July 2020.

The Aslam Baloch group is said to be formerly affiliated with the Afghan Taliban and fought under its command in Afghanistan. The TTP statement then

said the group had joined the terror outfit in order to what it said "liberate" Balochistan. Then on December 25, 2022, at least six security men were killed including a

captain, in Kohlu's district of Balochistan, the bloodiest incident of the district, in an IED blast, BLA claimed responsibility.

Balochistan in TTP calculation: The sparsely populated Balochistan province is area-wise the biggest province of Pakistan

comprising 42 percent of the country. Moreover, Balochistan along with KP province apart from making Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, contains entire Pakistan's border with Iran. It is also home to Pakistan's strategic Gwadar Port situated at a stone's throw from Iran and juxtaposed to latter's own strategic Chahbahar Seaport on the Gulf of Oman and mouth of Strait of Hormuz.

In Noor Mehsud-led TTP calculation Balochistan has become extremely important. The foremost importance of Balochistan for the TTP is that the traditional heartland of the TTP, Waziristan region of Pakhtun tribal belt or for that matter the entire belt, is extremely narrow and in case of a new offensive from Pakistan military, the group fears to face trouncing.

Already, the TTP was effectively defeated in the military offensive launched after the



2014 loathsome terrorist school attack in Peshawar; and by 2016, the TTP had been trounced and all its members fled to Afghanistan. Since then Pakistan military personnel completely manned the length and breadth of the Pashtun tribal belt right in the north from Bajaur district to the South in South Waziristan district, contiguous with Balochistan to the South and established state's writ there.

Having an alliance with Baloch militant groups especially the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), has several advantages for the TTP. Most importantly, it would provide critical tactical depth for the TTP.

Importantly, the TTP emerged in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), a region formed by British colonial rulers in 1901. Significantly, after 2016, Pakistan military has taken very important steps regarding the Pashtun tribal belt on border with Afghanistan. First was the integration of it into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province in May 2018 through the 25th Amendment in Constitution. The second step has been to fence the 2640 kilometers long border with Afghanistan, indeed a very daunting task. The barbed wire fencing of the border was almost completed by 2021 and for this all credit must be given to Pakistani military personnel, who faced extreme conditions and loss of precious lives to complete the task against all odds.

Fencing of Pakistan's border with Afghanistan has been the most important measure ever taken in Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan. Here it is important to note that the TTP has been demanding of Pakistan to restore the previous status of the Pashtun tribal belt by revoking the 25th Constitutional Amendment. Pakistan has flatly been refusing the demand.

Coming back to the TTP agenda in having alliance with Baloch separatists groups: its first objective is to get hideouts and networks in the vast Balochistan province. This would shield the TTP militants to be cornered in Pashtun tribal belt by Pakistani forces and then mopped up.

Balochistan would provide an outlet for the TTP militants to retreat there and re-launch a massive guerilla war plus terrorism. In this process if the TTP support to Baloch separatist groups may enable the latter with the help of India to inflict a doomsday

scenario on Pakistan in the shape of secession of Balochistan, then it would be a win-win situation for the TTP. In the group's calculation it would replicate soon it in the Pashtun tribal belt. For their part, Afghan Taliban have been extending all out support to the TTP and this backing is not without reasons and notwithstanding the rhetoric of Afghan Taliban figures is aimed at weakening Pakistan.



Aims and objectives of Baloch separatist militant groups: for the Baloch armed separatist militant and terrorist groups, an alliance with the TTP would increase the destructive strength of the outfits. Resources, technical know-how and ruthlessness like suicide attacks training from the TTP would make Baloch armed groups more lethal to be of any consequence.

Noticeably, Baloch armed groups have been fighting since 1964 when the BLA was formed but they have not been able to achieve anything concrete. Whereas, the TTP has been there since 2007 only but it has compelled Pakistani state to cede territory at one point in time temporarily and became the deadliest group of Pakistan's history.

However, the TTP and Baloch separatist groups may have several reasons to attain from their mutual alliance although it is not the topic of this analytical piece (to be covered in detailed in another article). This analysis is specifically focused on its consequences for South Asian and Greater Middle East regions.

Consequences for region: forging of an alliance between the TTP and Baloch separatist militant groups would have

large-scale consequences for all regional countries -- most importantly severe and large-scale consequences would be for Pakistan, as explained above. However, Afghanistan would not be able to escape the consequences of the alliance between TTP and Baloch separatist groups in Pakistan.

Afghan Taliban role in TTP-Baloch alliance has been that of complicity. Afghan

Taliban have been the main supporters of the TTP and it has been due to the former support that the latter has been able to regroup and resurge. Moreover, the interest of Afghan Taliban in an alliance between the TTP and Baloch separatists is obvious; that is to relocate the TTP from Afghanistan to Balochistan. Because as long as the TTP is in Afghanistan there is a fear that Pakistani Taliban group may forge an alliance with the IS-K. This fear of Afghan Taliban was officially conveyed to Pakistan to compel the latter to hold talks with the TTP so that the TTP could be reintegrated into Pakistan.

Although negotiations were held between Pakistani authorities and the TTP but of no use because of the nearly unacceptable conditions of the militant-terrorist group to reverse the tribal areas' merger and withdrawal of Pakistan military personnel from the area.

In case Pakistan launches a massive offensive against the TTP and Baloch separatists, the latter would most probably flee to Afghanistan; and if the militants of the groups would continue to attack Pakistan from Afghan soil, then Pakistan would retaliate with both preemptive strikes and offensively defensive attacks.

On many occasions in the past, Pakistan targeted TTP hideouts in Afghanistan i.e. in April last in which dozens of militants were killed. This scenario would further soar relations between Islamabad and Kabul. Such possible Pakistani strikes in Afghanistan to target terrorists sanctuaries would foment war euphoria in Afghanistan against Pakistan and this would not augur well for the regional peace.

On the other hand if Afghan Taliban desist from extending support to TTP and Pakistani Baloch militant groups than both would join hands with the IS-K and pose grave threat to security of Afghanistan.

Afghan Taliban have been a non-state actor, transformed into state actor. However, Afghan Taliban have been behaving like a militia despite ruling a state for the second time. This is not at all good for Afghanistan as a country and its implications for the region particularly Pakistan have been grave.

Iran would be profoundly affected by the alliance between the TTP and Baloch separatist groups. While TTP is a staunch anti-Shiite group and Iran being a Shiite state could not escape the wrath of the group if it is given easy access to its border from having sanctuaries in Balochistan, bordering Iran.

More importantly, Pakistani Baloch separatists have been struggling for creating a Greater Balochistan, which includes

Iran's Baloch inhabited areas, particularly its Sestan-Balochistan province neighbouring Pakistani Balochistan.

Irani Balochistan is mostly comprised of Sunnis and the ethnic issue is made complex by religious-sectarian question. Like Pakistani Balochs, Irani Balochs have been complaining of discrimination by the Iranian state. This twin discrimination was exploited by an Iranian Baloch militant-terrorist group, Jundallah, founded by one Abdul Malik Regi. The Sunni group and Regi had been involved in large-scale terrorist attacks in Iran, particularly on personnel of Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

Jundullah and Regi were trained by al-Qaeda in Waziristan and also had hideouts on Pakistani side of the border provided by Pakistani Baloch separatists. Regi was arrested in a dramatic fashion while travelling by a special aircraft, on 23 February 2010, from Dubai, United Arab Emirates to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, travelling with a forged Afghanistan passport. Regi's aircraft was forced to land by Iranian authorities over the country's airspace and executed within no time.

With an alliance between the TTP and Pakistan Baloch separatists groups like Jundullah would resurge and there would be likelihood of large-scale terrorist attacks on Iran.

China would also not be able to escape the

brunt of an alliance between the TTP and Baloch separatists. Firstly, both sides in order to put Pakistan on the defensive would make attacks on the CPEC projects and Chinese technical personnel working on them in Balochistan.

Consequently, the rail-road route of the CPEC through which China wants to link the land-locked Western Chinese regions with sea through Pakistan Gwadar Seaport, could not be completed in time. This would greatly affect Chinese plans to supply oil and gas to energy-deficient China from the Middle East and the Gulf. Attacks on CPEC by the TTP-Baloch separatists would also result in potential loss of Chinese billions of dollars investment in Pakistan.

As the TTP indeed has global militant aims once having a firm base in Balochistan, it would try its level best to send militants through Afghanistan to Chinese Xinjiang Muslim regions where groups like East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) have been waging an independence struggle. Afghanistan shares a 76-kilometre-long (47 miles) small boundary with China. On their part, Baloch separatists groups would help the TTP send militants to Chinese Xinjiang so to pressurize China to halt work on CPEC projects in Balochistan. Last but not the least the TTP-Baloch separatists' alliance would try its utmost to attack Gwadar.





# Hopeless and Vulnerable

*Kabul has been a notorious example of having created enormous barriers to women's rights to equal access to health and education, physical mobility, freedom of expression, and earning a sustainable income*

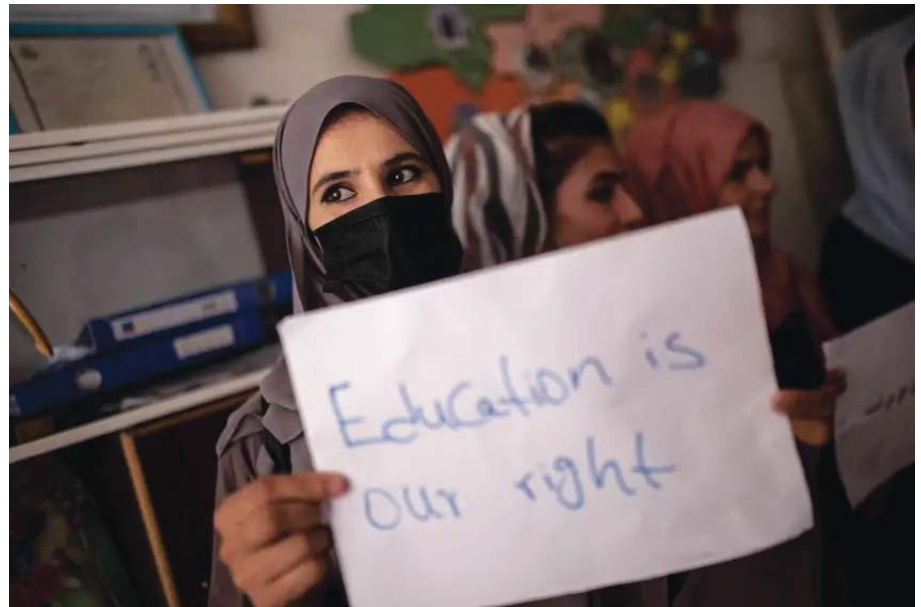
By Sara Danial

It has been more than a year since the US' sudden exit from Afghanistan, where nearly four presidents had been openly declaring war on the country. It has been over a year since the Taliban ruled Afghanistan. Not only has the platonic transition had a devastating impact on women and girls, but research also shows that, in addition to physical mobility restrictions, they have experienced immense mental trauma since the faith-based took control of Ghazni province in southeastern Afghanistan, between Kabul and Kandhar. With one human-rights violation policy after another, the country is nothing short of a political, social, and economic mess. Does the country deserve this? No. Is it new for them? No, again. It has often been attacked during the fighting of the past 30 years.

Kabul has been a notorious example of having created enormous barriers to women's rights to equal access to health and education, physical mobility, freedom of expression, and earning a sustainable income. While the country is at the ebb of a humanitarian crisis with these abuses, we recently came across the latest plunge: that women are not allowed to enter secondary schools. While we thought nothing could be worse for the girls there, here we are with yet another case of outright abuse.

Following the Taliban takeover, one can only imagine the cascading effects of these on the economic realm. High commodity prices, liquidity crises, and cash cutoffs all stemmed from previous donor countries, especially the US. So while peripheral issues of education and health are blatantly ignored, the population is struggling with the basic amenities of food, water, and shelter. So their mere existence is at stake.

There is a tug-of-war between conforming to the existing Taliban norm and the pressure from the international community, which has rendered the Afghan community desperate for basic survival. As many women have been the sole breadwinners of



the family, they are at a loss of what to do, especially after the escalating food prices, transportation costs, and income loss. Only those working in the education and health sectors were allowed to work. And worse yet, even those were not paid owing to the perennial financial crisis.

In the peripheries, one can also witness the sublime changes to the curriculum, which shed more light on religious studies. With the ban on women attending secondary and higher education, they dictate what women must wear, how they must move, and the types of cell phones they may possess. While the present looks bleak, the future is much darker.

Amidst this grave feeling of insecurity, they can see their dreams shattered in front of their eyes. The years of hard work are going down the drain. They have no direction. Or future. The Taliban have dismantled the prevailing police authority, the Ministry of Women's Affairs. They are extracting food and money from the poor communities and are targeting women as prey to enforce intimidation, especially those who worked for foreign agencies and the earlier Afghan government.

Since the takeover, the women have not only experienced physical abuse and social frustration, but their mental health has also reached a serious threshold, with symptoms such as fear, hopelessness, anxiety, helplessness, and insomnia. And none of it seems to end anytime in the near future. With many women practically kept as prisoners in their own homes, the country suffers from a wastage of resources that could genuinely drive the economy with the skills and talent of the female population, which constitutes half of the inhabitants.

So all those who could become impactful and contributing members of the economy lost their paid employment. Only health workers and teachers are allowed to work, while others working in government and non-government fields are forced to stay at home now. While some women could, others were the primary breadwinners for their families and were unsure how they would feed their children in the future.

Others working in non-government organisations and foreign offices were not paid either—largely because these organisations were financed by foreign donors, which have been entirely cut off since the Taliban takeover. So the conundrum of bans

imposed by the Taliban has aggravated the financial crisis faced by women. Even at the subsistence level, for instance, in the farming sector, women are not allowed to work, which has restricted the number of exports and impacted the economy disastrously.

The disseminating effects of the same can be seen clearly. For example, Afghani women are adept at weaving, and their embroidery is extremely popular. However, now that they have stopped working, there is no buying or selling. And without motivation, there is no hope. The economy is near collapse. The banking system is frozen. The Central Bank of Afghanistan has been extricated from the international financial system with no access to the country's foreign exchange reserves.

While marginal humanitarian aid is still flowing in, it is largely minimised and strictly curtailed owing to the Taliban's restrictions. Logistical barriers, transfer issues, security apprehensions, the absence of staff, precarious legal implications, and violations of several sanctions are only a handful of concerns that hinder any positive steps. Afghanistan has been officially named one of the most food-insecure countries by the UN World Food Programme, and yet the situation keeps worsening.



The financial crisis is expected to leave many malnourished (and possibly dead) from hunger as citizens' savings dwindle with no hope of income perpetuity. The return of the Taliban has made survival not only difficult but has also rendered

existence vulnerable. The sad part is that there is no one to complain to, as there is no one to monitor the situation. So while this prevails, one can only hope and pray that the situation takes a different turn.





# History of Kashmir: Part 3

By Azmat M Saqib

Before moving on to the chronology of events from July 1947 to early 1949, excerpts from the Indian Independence Act 1947, the Standstill Agreement of Kashmir, Kashmir's Instrument of Accession to India, and the UN Resolution of August 13, 1948 are laid down.

## Indian Independence Act, 1947

The Indian Independence Act 1947 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom that partitioned British India into the two new independent dominions of India and Pakistan. The Act that received royal assent is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom that partitioned British India into the two new independent dominions of India and Pakistan. The Act received royal assent on July 18, 1947, and thus modern-day India and Pakistan, comprising the west (modern-day Pakistan) and east (modern-day Bangladesh) regions, came into being on August 15.

The representatives of the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, and the Sikh community came to an agreement with Lord Mountbatten on what has come to be known as the "3 June Plan" or "Mountbatten Plan." This was the last plan for independence.

## The Third June Plan

The 1947 Plan was also known as the Mountbatten Plan. The British government proposed a plan, announced on June 3, 1947, that included these principles:

1. The principle of the partition of British India was accepted by the British government.
2. Successor governments would be given dominion status.
3. Both countries have autonomy and sovereignty.
4. can make their own constitution
5. Princely States were given the right to join either Pakistan or India based on two major factors: geographical proximity and the people's wishes.

## Provisions

The Act's most important provisions were:

- division of British India into two new dominions—the Dominion of India and the Dominion of Pakistan—with effect from August 15, 1947.
- Partition of the provinces of Bengal and Punjab between the two new countries
- establishment of the office of Governor-General in each of the two new countries, as representatives of the Crown.
- conferral of complete legislative authority upon the respective Constituent Assemblies of the two new countries.



- termination of British suzerainty over the princely states, with effect from August 15, 1947. These states could decide to join either India or Pakistan.
- Abolition of the use of the title "Emperor of India" by the British monarch (this was subsequently executed by King George VI by royal proclamation on June 22, 1948).
- The Act also made provisions for the division of joint property, etc., between the two new countries, including in particular the division of the armed forces.

## Standing Agreement with India and Pakistan, August 12, 1947

Identical telegrams were sent by the Prime Minister of Kashmir to the dominions of India and Pakistan in August 1947. The texts read as follows:

*Jammu and Kashmir's government would welcome standstill agreements with India (Pakistan) on all matters on which these exist at present with the outgoing British India government. Existing arrangements should be maintained pending the resolution of details.*

Pakistan's government responded on August 1, 1947.

*"Your telegram of the 12th: 'The Government of Pakistan agrees to have a standstill agreement with the Government of Jammu and Kashmir for the continuance of the existing arrangements pending settlement of details and formal execution.'"*

Reply from the Government of India:

*"The Government of India would appreciate it if you or another Minister authorised this."*

*on behalf of the Kashmir government could fly to Delhi to negotiate a cease-fire agreement between the Kashmir government and India's dominion." Early action is preferred to preserve existing agreements and administrative arrangements."*

The representative of Kashmir did not visit Delhi, and no standstill agreement was concluded between the state and the dominion of India.



## Accession Instrument, October 27, 1947

*Whereas the Indian Independence Act, 1947, provides that as of the fifteenth day of August, 1947, there shall be set up an independent dominion known as India and that the Government of India Act, 1935, shall, with such omissions, additions, adaptations, and modifications as the Governor-General may by order specify, be applicable to the dominion of India.*

*And whereas the Government of India Act, 1935, as so adapted by the Governor-General, provides that an Indian State may accede to the Dominion of India by an Instrument of Accession executed by the Ruler thereof:*

*As a result, I, Shriman Inder Mahander Rajrajeshwar Maharaja Dhiraj Shri Hari Singhji Jammu and Kashmir, hereby declare that Naresh Tatha Tibbet Adi Deshahipathi, Ruler of Jammu and Kashmir State, in the exercise of my sovereignty in and over my said state, do hereby execute this my Instrument of Accession; and*

*1. I hereby declare that I have acceded to the Dominion of India with the intent that the Governor-General of India, the Dominion Legislature, the Federal Court, and any other Dominion authority established for the purpose of the Dominion shall, by virtue of this my Instrument of Accession but subject to its terms, and for the sole purpose of the Dominion, exercise such function in relation to the State of Jammu and Kashmir (hereinafter referred to as "this state").*

*2 and 3 are not shown here for the sake of brevity.*

*4. I hereby declare that I accede to the Dominion of India on the assurance that if an agreement is made between the Governor-General and the Ruler of this State whereby the Ruler of this State shall exercise any functions in relation to the administration in this State of any law of the Dominion Legislature, then any such agreement shall be deemed to form part of this instrument and shall be construed and have effect accordingly.*

*5. The terms of this Instrument of Accession shall not be varied by any amendment of the Act or the Indian Independence Act, 1947, unless such amendment is accepted by me by instrument supplementary to this Instrument.*

*6. I hereby declare that I execute this instrument on behalf of this state and that any reference in this instrument to me or to the Ruler of the State is to be construed as including a reference to my heirs and successors.*

*6, 7, and 8 are not shown here for the sake of brevity.*

*This 26th day of October, nineteen hundred and forty-seven, I give my hand.*

## Hari Singh, Maharaja Dhiraj of Jammu and Kashmir State

*acceptance of accession by the Governor-General of India.*

*I hereby accept this instrument of accession.*

*This date is October 27, 1947.*

## Mountbatten of Burma, Governor-General of India

Indian troops landed at Srinagar Airport on October 27, 1947.

Before August 1947, overtures by Nehru and Gandhi, with the silent blessing of Lord Mountbatten, had the Viceroy and Maharaja contemplating removing their anti-accession Prime Minister Ram Chandra Kak on the demand of top Indian leadership, which was enough to create suspicion among the pro-Pakistan Kashmiri leadership. Nehru also predicted that secular and socialist-minded Sheikh Abdullah would lead the future democratic setup in Kashmir. Hence, despite the Standstill Agreement with Pakistan, the delay in the Maharaja's accession decision while ignoring widespread demonstrations of Kashmiri Muslims in favour of Pakistan must have raised alarm bells in the minds of Pakistani leaders as well.

Planning to support the pro-Pakistan Kashmiri resistance as well as the armed struggle in western and northern Kashmir (Gilgit-Baltistan) would not have been a surprise to the British commanding officers in Pakistan and India. When Pakistan Army Chief of Staff General Gracey refused to send troops to Kashmir on the demand of Quaid e Azam M.A. Jinnah, citing that he couldn't send troops to a friendly princely state, Pakistanis acted by organising a tribal invasion to support the low-level insurgency in the State of Kashmir. Indians and Britons believe that "Operation Gulmarg" was planned and commanded by Brigadier Akbar Khan, with the full support of Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan and NWFP Chief Minister Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan.

Earlier, Pakistan had blocked daily supplies to Kashmir. Instead of succumbing to pressure from the tribal invasion and the threat of blockade, Maharaja sought refuge in India on October 26, 1947. Well-trained Indian troops landed in Srinagar with full military equipment and started pushing back ill-equipped and poorly organised tribesmen from several conquered territories in Kashmir.



# 1973-2023 GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS SENATE OF PAKISTAN

House of the Federation



**Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani**  
Chairman Senate

A 45-member Senate of Pakistan was conceived in the Constitution of 1973, as a consequence of a consensus among the then political leadership through the Constitutional Accord of 1972. The rationale was to accommodate Pakistani diversity, give equal representation to the federating units through a permanent and a perpetual House that will not be subject to dissolution and to provide a federal Parliamentary structure.

The Senate of Pakistan is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of its advent in the month of March this year by arranging special events in the federal as well as the provincial capitals to highlight accentuate and reflect upon the monumental journey that the Upper House of Pakistan's Parliament embarked upon 50 years ago to strengthen the federation.

The core objective is to highlight the vital role that the Senate has been playing for half a century, towards ensuring national cohesion and unity by affording equal representation and inclusivity to federating units, promoting a free, fair, balanced democratic parliamentary system and rule of law.



**Habibullah Khan Marwat**  
1973-1977



**Ghulam Ishaq Khan**  
1985-1988



**Wasim Sajjad**  
1988-1999



**Muhammad Mian Soomro**  
2003-2009



**Farooq Hamid Naek**  
2009-2012



**Syed Nayyer Hussain Bokhari**  
2012-2015



**Mian Raza Rabbani**  
2015-2018

## Programme

All the esteemed former and present members of the Senate will be invited to the International Conference in Islamabad.

Unveiling of special monuments at all provincial assemblies.

Commemorative sessions to be held at the provincial assemblies. Sitting senators, former senators from that province as well as members of the respective provincial assembly to participate and witness the sessions.

Presidents of respective Bar Councils, Members of Civil Society, Foreign Delegates, Diplomats and Heads of Parliaments of friendly countries to be invited to the events.

The 50-year celebrations also include an international conference on climate change, which aims to be a wake-up call for nations and role of parliaments to combat global warming and all actions that contribute to it.

A special train, commemorating the occasion to embark from Lahore to Islamabad.

Issuance of commemorative postage stamp to mark the special occasion.



## Note

All esteemed former and current senators are guided to contact Mr. Tariq Bin Waheed, Director General, Department of Protocol, Senate, on 051-9223405, 0300-4016483

## Exports impediments

*Pakistan is struggling to increase its foreign income by \$5 billion or reduce the same sum of imports annually as its coffin is going empty*



By Azeem Waqas

Due to a lack of emphasis on an export-led growth policy, Pakistan's exports will continue to decline after October 2022, and the country's trade and balance of payments will become unsustainable without reducing the current account deficit by around \$5 billion from July to November.

Pakistan is struggling to increase its foreign income by \$5 billion or reduce the same sum of imports annually as its coffin is becoming empty. The short-term coalition government has no export policy; its only priority is to save dollars by curbing imports because the country's economy is in an extremely fragile position.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is also concerned about the country's declining exports, which are rapidly attributable to external debt payments. There has been a continuing decline in the level of exports as a percentage of the GDP. Exports have declined every year and will make up around 10% of the GDP in 2021–22, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

During the last two decades, the country's imports have increased from

15% of the GDP to 22% of the GDP in 2021–22, and its trade deficit is about 12% of the GDP.

According to commerce ministry officials, the IMF wants Pakistan to adopt scarcity, or the market value of the PKR relative to the dollar; to move toward free trade; to eliminate any discrimination between local and imported products; and to avoid any grain of import substitution or rent seeking to improve exports.

A high import tariff deters export-competitive industries and protects local industries. As a result, different factors of production, such as skilled labour and capital stock, are reallocated from the competitive export industry to the local industry. Lower tariffs can increase access to a cheaper supply of new technology-augmented intermediate and capital goods that are significant for uplifting the textile industry.

During the last three tenures of successive governments, Pakistan's share of short- and medium-term debt has also increased from 13% to 35% by 2021–22. The IMF has a straightforward question about how it will be repaid in the coming years. According to the official,

The external debt stands at \$127 billion, equivalent to 40% of the GDP. The external financing requirement is at least \$26.5 billion in 2022–2023. SBP anticipates \$9 billion CAD in 2023; Pakistan has repaid a \$9 billion loan and rolled over \$6 billion; the country must pay \$8 billion in the coming months of its fiscal year.

The All Pakistan Textile Mills Association has requested that the American Embassy take up the case with the US Government to sanction a \$2 billion soft credit or loan for the express purpose of importing 3.5 million bales of cotton from the US.

External debt repayment has gone from \$4 billion to \$14 billion by 2022–2023, net of rollovers, during this time period. This deterioration is primarily due to the high current account deficit as a percentage of GDP.

Pakistan's economy largely depends on textile exports for foreign currency and employment. The dicey international economic situation and the floods have pushed Pakistan's economy to the brink.

According to Textiles and Apparel Policy 2020–25, the textile export target



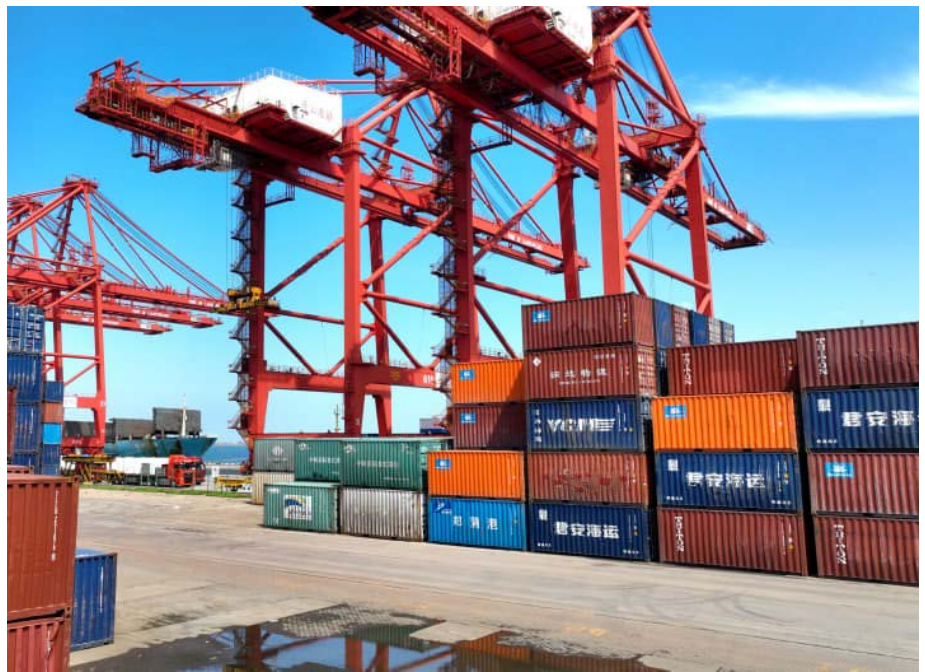
for the current year has been set at \$25 billion.

APTMA patron-in-chief Gohar Ejaz has warned that the textile sector last year exported goods worth \$19.3 billion and has further expanded capacity through an investment of \$5 billion to increase exports to \$25 billion. The expectation and goal were to increase our exports to at least \$24 billion this year. However, this could not materialise for many reasons.

Renowned economist Dr. Hafeez Pasha has recommended that there is a need for a comprehensive review of export policies. The current account deficit has risen once again to \$17.4 billion in 2021–22, equivalent to 4.6% of the GDP. There is a need to learn from the success of countries like Bangladesh and India in South Asia and Thailand in East Asia.

In comparison to India, Bangladesh, and Thailand, Pakistan does not provide the following export incentives: concessionary export finance, which was recently discontinued; full export insurance, guarantees, and quality management; export performance requirements for access to incentives; and export cash subsidies.

The classic case of an export cash subsidy is that of Bangladesh. An export cash incentive of 2% to 20% is offered on 24 export products. The rate is higher for more valuable exports, emerging exports, and exports to new markets. India operates a



duty-free scheme. Thailand allows a double input tax deduction on domestic sales tax paid by exporters.

Dr. Pasha has suggested that there is a need for a review and renegotiation of the FTA with China. It is extremely unusual that there is so much imbalance in trade between two countries in an FTA. China should be asked to expedite the process of moving to zero tariffs, especially on the full range of textile products imported from Pakistan.

Recently, the appropriate decision was made to levy a subsidised tariff of Rs 19.99

per kilowatt-hour on electricity in export sectors. There is also a need to explore the zero-rating of the domestic sales tax in export industries, as was the case prior to 2019–20. Further, a cash incentive may be offered for emerging exports. "Very importantly, the exchange rate should not be overvalued, and the REER should remain close to 95," he says.

Dr. Hafeez Pasha has also suggested that the Pakistan-China Free Trade Agreement be reviewed. A comprehensive review must be undertaken by the Ministry of Commerce along with the National Tariff Commission to determine if particular duty-free imports from China have inflicted severe damage to different industries. In such cases, the zero-import tariff may be withdrawn in consultation with China, he says in his report.

Renowned businessman Zubair Motiwalla has said that Pakistan has only one way to get rid of external debt, and that is to increase its exports by substituting imports. The government needs to focus on long-term and sustainable policies instead of getting rid of problems by applying short-term strategies, which lead the economy toward an even bigger mess. The government should focus on the country's production to enhance its exports, which will ultimately result in an increase in the foreign exchange reserves and help with the balance of payments.



# People in the KP region store natural gas in plastic balloons

By Anum Akram

In some regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, people are desperate for natural gas. It may sound strange, but the people in some regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa use plastic balloons to store natural gas for their cooking purposes. If you ever visit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, you will be shocked to see these balloons of gas. At first glance, you might imagine these balloons as a form of entertainment for children, but these balloons are not any kind of toy. Actually, they are moving bombs. These plastic bags or balloons filled with natural gas are used in kitchens to make food. It is extremely dangerous and poses a risk to life and property.

## Why are people forced to use plastic bags filled with natural gas?

Karak, the district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa known for its natural gas and oil resources, With the country's economy in shambles, the government failed to provide basic necessities. The government reduced the supply of gas for homes, businesses, and other commercial purposes. Because of a lack of proper infrastructure and development in the region, local residents and people in surrounding areas were unable to obtain gas. People are forced to fill gas cans in large, improvised plastic bags, endangering their lives. People are unable to purchase metal cylinders because of their high price, so they adopt cheap and risky methods. Affordability is the main cause of their problem; using plastic bags is the only inexpensive method of storing gas. Moreover, these bags are lightweight and easy to handle, but in a risky way.

From July 2019 to May 2020, exploration and production companies produced approximately 8,543,761.66 barrels of oil and 64,967.32 million cubic feet of gas from five fields in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region of Karak. Farhan Khattak, an activist, claims that "despite protests and demonstrations, gas has not been delivered to the area even though it is produced there."



## How were these bags used in the kitchen?

To meet the demand for LPG, a local gas vendor devises lethal methods for kitchens. With the help of some alleged authorizers, these local gas vendors obtained illegal connections. They use huge plastic bags that look like balloons to store LPG. These bags are filled with gas at shops connected to the country's main gas pipeline network, instead of properly drilling them and then filling plastic bags like helium balloons to transport them from the field. They put a hole in the main gas pipeline network and stole millions of dollars' worth of gas. The local gas vendors use a compressor to fill gas into a plastic bag before sealing the opening with a nozzle and valve. To avoid any kind of leakage, they use a valve and nozzle to close the bag's opening tightly. These bags are sold to people, and then they use them with the help of a small suction pump. It almost takes twenty to twenty-five minutes to fill three to four kg of gas into a plastic bag, which is enough for two to three hours.

## There is danger in using these bags

Using plastic bags to store or transport gas can be extremely dangerous, as they are not designed to hold gas and can easily rupture, releasing the gas and creating a fire or explosion hazard. Additionally, gas is highly flammable and can ignite if exposed to heat or sparks.

When plastic bags are used to store or transport gas, the gas can also permeate the plastic, causing the bag to weaken and become more susceptible to rupture. The gas can also cause the plastic to become brittle, making it more likely to crack or break.

It is very common in the surrounding areas of Karak to see people holding massive balloons on their way home in the afternoon, whether they are on motorcycles or strolling. They are not going to attend any parties, and there is not any kind of celebration. However, locals who are afraid said that there might be funerals if they are not careful. According to Fazal Hakim, a



village councilor, the people of Karak are treated like orphans. "We are literally playing a deadly game on a daily basis."

In the town of Banda Daud Shah, people must make this dangerous walk every day to provide The boys of this town leave every day between 3 and 5 o'clock, making a way for the main distribution line's damaged section, which delivers gas to the nearby district of Hangu. It passes through the Karak neighbourhood of Tehri, where the line has been broken for two years. The location is unsafe because of the leak, but the inhabitants see it as a source of much-needed gas. The danger does not go away after the trek, but the chances of danger increase even more. They put the bag filled with gas a few feet away from the stove; the slightest error can result in a leak and blast. They have no other choice because of the expansive cylinder. By doing so, they are putting not only their property at risk but also their lives.

Furthermore, if a plastic bag ruptures, the gas can quickly escape and create a dangerous situation, especially in enclosed spaces. Suffocation, asphyxiation, or even explosion can result from this. "We are carrying gas in these plastic bags even though all of us are aware of the dangers of this method," said Hazrat Janan, a local resident.



## What we need to do

It is important for people to use properly designed and tested equipment for storing and transporting natural gas to ensure safety. They should contact the local gas supplier for proper storage and transportation options or seek advice from a professional in the field. "We requested the government develop proper gas infrastructure in our area and protect our lives," said a local resident of Karak. When plastic bags are used to store or transport

the gas, the gas can permeate the plastic, causing the bag to weaken and become more susceptible to rupture. The gas can also cause the plastic to become brittle, making it more likely to crack or break. It is also illegal to store and transport gas in anything other than an approved container. So it is very important to always use the approved containers. The government should work on the infrastructure of these areas and provide them with LPG for their needs so they can avoid any disasters in the future.

**The Truth International**

# Do You Want to Write a blog for us ?

Please contribute at Blogger Desk: [Info@tti.org.pk](mailto:Info@tti.org.pk)

# Disgusting failure of FBR action against petroleum smuggling

*FBR templates, formats fail to link violation of petroleum laws with customs; entire exercise ends in reversal of seizure, criminal cases*

By Shahzad Paracha

The Customs adjudicating officers have reportedly dismissed majority of cases furnished by different collectorates, under the direction and supervision of the then member Custom Operations during the FBR's crackdown against petroleum smuggling into Pakistan.

Customs officials claim the crackdown against smuggling led to increased duty and taxes; and that they have also identified 1,675 illegal petrol pumps in three provinces of the country. But insiders say the courts have released the accused in criminal cases registered during the crackdown.

The FBR, sources claimed, had engaged several federal and provincial departments and used their resources to curb smuggling of Iranian diesel into Pakistan, during the crackdown operation. It had made and issued seizure reports, besides lodging of FIRs.

This countrywide multi-departmental crackdown against smuggling of petroleum was spearheaded and monitored by members of the FBR, Tariq Huda and Saeed Jadoon. The operation has reportedly ended without pertinent outcome after reversal of the entire seizure and criminal cases by FBR's own adjudication officers and the court of law.

Sources say that lacunas in templates and formats of the seizures issued by FBR were to the extent that officers of the collectorates defending the cases, were left speechless before the courts. This resulted in zero recovery of tax liabilities and uselessness of FIRs against owners and operators of the unauthorised outlets. According to insiders this was a massive failure on the part of FBR because of its own incorrect perception and wrong planning of the whole exercise.

Unauthorised petroleum outlets were charged with violation of the Petroleum Act-1934 and petroleum marketing rules.

Instead of requesting the Ministry of Petroleum and line departments to take action, FBR's two members of customs took the matter into their own hands, thereby laying the foundation for the collapse of these cases. While assuming this role, provisions of customs laws were 'arbitrarily' exercised to bring these cases within their folds. The prescribed templates and formats had to connect actual violation of petroleum laws with presumed violations of the customs law.



It was assumed that since the unauthorised petroleum outlets operated in violation of petroleum laws, these outlets must have smuggled petroleum and operated in violation of the customs law.

Sources said the most interesting but erroneous application of the law which led to the ultimate collapse of these cases, was the charge under the penal provisions of Section 156(1)(8)(89) of the Customs Act, but a statement of offense in templates and formats did not fit into this charge.

Presumed sales of petroleum for the last five years by unauthorised outlets were calculated by the Customs Department whereas the charging sections 156(1)(8)(89) did not cover that period, said the sources. The charging sections covered only the smuggled goods seized while entering the

country and smuggled goods found in someone's possession, sources said.

Inside sources requesting anonymity, said the 2021 crackdown against petroleum smuggling could have been a phenomenal success, had the FBR officers taken only the responsibility of preventing smuggling of petroleum under the Prevention of Smuggling Act; and had left legal actions to be taken by the Ministry of Petroleum.

A customs official speaking on behalf of

Huda, said that customs collectorates had started operations against illegal petroleum oil and lubricants (POL) retail outlets in Punjab, Sindh and KPK on the directives of the prime minister office. "They identified 2,615 illegal POL outlets during the exercise. Out of these, 859 legal pumps submitted their documents in the requisite time while 1,675 failed to do so.

Meanwhile, 506 cases were stayed by the court or were referred to district administration/OGRA for regulatory actions; and criminal action was initiated by customs against 1,170 cases."

The official informed that a significant rise was observed in the import value of POL products from the previous three years and Rs 8 billion increase in collection of duty and taxes on POL products reported for the month of March 2021 vs March 2022.



# Results of LB polls spark storm of criticism

*Hafiz Naeem alleges JI victory turned into defeat at DRO level; Karachi mayor election tough challenge for PPP; JI deems Karachi mayor office its right*

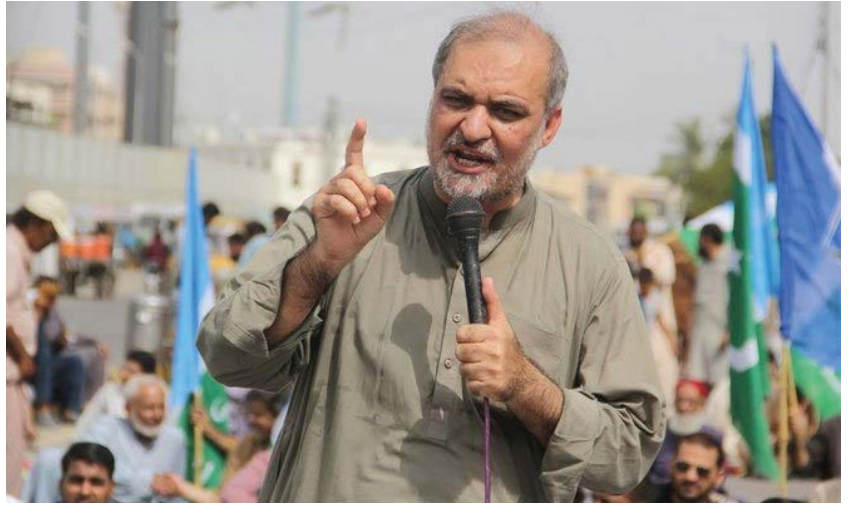
By Azfar Ashfaq

Although the second phase of the local government elections in Karachi and Hyderabad divisions was finally held after getting postponed thrice, the results have brought a storm of criticism amid allegations of vote stuffing and post-polling rigging at the level of returning officers. It takes the ECP nine days to consolidate the official results and issue a notification — an exercise that should have been completed within four to five days.

Except for the ruling Pakistan People's Party and the Jamaat-i-Islami, both raise serious objections against the ECP, other parties including the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, the Grand Democratic Alliance, Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan and even the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan that had boycotted the election a few hours before the polling on Jan 15, demanded that the ECP cancel the elections and hold the exercise afresh.

The turnout in Karachi and Hyderabad remained abysmal primarily due to the boycott of Altaf Hussain-led MQM, which says it was facing an undeclared ban and is not allowed to field its candidates, and then MQM-P's which chose to abstain from the electoral process after failing to get the elections postponed. Uncertainty was also one of the reasons behind low turnout as even contesting parties were not sure whether elections would be held in Karachi and Hyderabad as per schedule because the Sindh government had requested the ECP twice to postpone the exercise after declaring the delimitation of electoral constituencies null and void on MQM-P demand.

However, the ECP refused to budge and held the much-awaited polls on Jan 15 in seven Karachi districts and nine districts of Hyderabad divisions — Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Dadu, Matiari, Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, Tando Muhammad Khan and Tando Allahyar. No major incident of violence was reported from any area during the



polling. However, post-polling clashes between rival parties were reported from Karachi and a few parts of the province. As expected, the PPP has swept the elections in all districts of Hyderabad division and become the single largest party in Karachi followed by the JI and PTI, respectively.

## Controversial polls

But the Karachi election has become controversial to the extent that the winning parties — the PPP, JI and PTI — started trading allegations against each other for carrying out massive rigging. While the JI accused the PPP of manipulating results at the level of district returning officers (DROs), the ruling party claimed that it won seats in its traditional strongholds. The PTI blamed both PPP and JI for vote stuffing and alleged that the two parties had snatched its victory by rigging.

The JI and PTI took to street and staged protest demonstration and sit-in on multiple spots in the city. However, the ruling party used police to end their protest and when activists resisted the police, it booked protesting leaders and workers under anti-terrorism law on the orders of the Sindh government,

JI's Hafiz Naeemur Rehman told a press conference that his party won more than 100 seats but the victory had

been turned into defeat at DRO levels at the behest of the PPP. However, his party doesn't second the demand of holding the polls again.

"We have rejected the whole exercise of election in Karachi and Hyderabad divisions," says senior PTI leader Ali Zaidi who was booked in a terrorism case for just staging a protest outside the office of a DRO. "PPP not only rigged the elections in Karachi but it also deprived PTI of its victory in other parts of Sindh."

PTI Secretary General Asad Umar demanded that the ECP declare the LG polls results null and void and hold the election afresh. The same day, GDA, an umbrella organisation for six political parties of Sindh, held a meeting and decided to reject the first and second phases of the local government elections in Sindh, demanding the ECP to hold the exercise again.

The TLP also took out a big rally and its workers marched on the ECP building and staged a protest against the rigging. And because of the reservations and concerns of parties, the MQM-P also joined the chorus of new election when its leader Wasim Akhtar told a press conference that the failure of the ECP in announcing election result on time has vindicated the doubts that the parties emerging as the leading players



would not represent the true mandate of Karachi.

The political temperature surge to an extent that Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah had to call JI city chief Hafiz Naeem to defuse tensions. On its part, the ECP had rejected criticism and all allegations of rigging and said that the JI had lodged complaints of “irregularities” only in six UCs and the ECP had issued notices to concerned officials. The final results issued on Jan 24 are of 229 UCs as the results of remaining six UCs had been withheld pending investigation / recount.

On Jan 25, a three-member bench of the ECP headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja conducted hearing in Islamabad on JI petition against alleged rigging in six UCs and assured the parties of not only addressing their grievances but also taking stern action against those responsible for alleged irregularities.

The CEC asked JI to provide Form 11 and results issued by the returning officers when he was informed by a JI counsel about differences between number of votes mentioned in the results given by presiding officers and the result from returning officers' offices. However, the PPP asked the CEC to dismiss JI's plea for not being maintainable. They say everyone was satisfied with the election results in Karachi and besides JI there's no complaint. However, CEC put off the matter till Feb 2.

## PPP's mayor in Hyderabad

The PPP that has been ruling Sindh for the past 14 years is in a comfortable position to bring its own mayor of Hyderabad after a lapse of 22 years. In 2001, the party had contested the local government elections in Hyderabad from the platform of Awam Dost Panel and managed to bring Dr Rafik Zaman as the district Nazim of Hyderabad.

The party can repeat the history easily and bring its candidate as Hyderabad mayor since it got simple majority in the second largest city of Sindh. The PPP has won 76 seats, followed by the PTI's 37 seats. The JI miracle doesn't work in Hyderabad as the party bagged only one seat. Even TLP got more seats (two) than the JI. Eight independent candidates also won the polls.



## No smooth sailing in Karachi

While PPP faces no challenge anywhere in Sindh, it will not be a smooth sailing for the ruling party in Karachi where it is difficult for it to get elected a party candidate as the mayor of Karachi without forging an alliance with either the JI or the PTI. According to the party-wise figures released by the ECP, the PPP secured 91, JI 85, PTI 42, PML-N 7, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl 2 and TLP one seats. An independent candidate also won a seat

The 367-member City Council is the electoral college for Karachi mayor and deputy mayor. A total of 246 members are those who contested and directly elected as the chairmen of 246 union committees (UCs), while remaining seats are reserved for women, youths, labourers, minorities, differently abled and transgender persons. However, the Jan 15 general elections were held on 235 of the 246 seats as elections were cancelled on 10 UCs because of the death of some of the contestants while a PPP panel returned unopposed on the 11th UC.

The PPP is the first party that quickly ruled out an alliance with the PTI for the election of mayor. But it shows willingness to hold talks with the JI. First, a PPP delegation visited JI headquarters Idara Noor-i-Haq but the latter made it clear that it would not talk until the ruling party address its grievances of rigging.

Interestingly, the PTI refused to support the JI in mayoral election when a JI delegation visited its headquarters in Karachi. The



talks between the JI and PTI ended up in formation of a four-member committee that would review complaints of the PTI that in certain constituencies its victory was turned into defeat against the JI.

A JI source says a meeting was held at party's Mansoorah headquarters in Lahore which decided that the office of Karachi mayor is the right of the Jamaat and it will not withdraw from it. The source says the difference between the JI and PPP is of only six seats and a decision by the ECP in JI favour can make it the single largest party of Karachi. Besides, elections are going to be held on remaining 10 UCs and there's a good chance the JI can beat PPP in the number game.

On the other hand, the PPP sticks to its mantra of being Karachi's biggest party. Former Karachi administrator and Sindh government's spokesperson Murtaza Wahab says the next mayor of Karachi would be a jiyala from PPP. In a thinly veiled reference to both the JI and PTI, he says people have rejected the politics of sit-ins.

Sindh Labour Minister Saeed Ghani echoes similar thoughts. However, he is more open to form a working relationship with the JI before holding talks about the mayor of Karachi. He also rules out any alliance with the PTI for mayoral election despite the fact that the PPP will not need any other party if it makes a coalition with the PTI at Karachi level.

An ECP official says the mayoral elections

are not going to be held immediately. "It may take two to three months, may be more. First elections on remaining 10 UCs will be held and then on reserved seats in UCs, towns and then City Council. Who knows what will happen by then," he says.

In 2015, the local government representatives took oath of their office more than a year after their election in August 2016.

## MQM-P down but not out

Boycotting elections came as a big shock for the MQM-P in less than a week after its unification. The Pak Sarzameen Party and Dr Farooq Sattar-led group merged their factions into the MQM-P and were planning to contest the local government election together later this year but the ECP did not pay any heed to their multiple requests and went ahead with the polls.

The MQM-P says the ECP took an illegal step and held the election despite the fact that the Sindh government had withdrawn its biased delimitation and informed it three days before the polling date. The party has demanded that the ECP hold the polls again on the basis of fair delimitation. It considered several options including launching a street protest movement. However, it has delayed the agitation plan and decided to give PPP-led Sindh government and ECP another chance to fix the flaws in delimitation.

Party convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui told a press conference on Jan 25 that despite the fact that the Sindh govern-

ment withdrew the notification on delimitation, the ECP has not initiated the process of fresh delimitation.

"The Jan 15 election is an attempt to steal our mandate. We reject these elections and appeal the judiciary to protect the true mandate of the people of Karachi and Hyderabad," Dr Siddiqui says, adding: "even those parties who contested the election will accept one day that our stance was right."

MQM-P leader and former Karachi mayor Mustafa Kamal says the 'gerrymandering' was done to deprive Karachi of more than 70 UCs. He says the election result on the basis of the existing delimitation doesn't reflect the true mandate of Karachi.

For many political analysts, the MQM-P had made a mistake and it should have contested the LG election under protest. But for MQM-P taking part in the electoral exercise would have meant to give legitimacy to gerrymandering and biased delimitation.

"Right now we are more focussed on reorganisation of the party after the unification as our target is general election. We are waiting for the response of the EC; we will challenge the election before apex court and we are hopeful that judiciary will do justice with us," says a senior MQM-P leader, adding the party enjoys overwhelming support from the establishment and no set-up, be it municipal or provincial and federal, will last long without MQM-P's participation.



# Gwadar's Haq Do Tehreek chief's political rise, influence

*Maulana Hidayat's campaign joined by womenfolk; port city turning into kind of battleground*

By Ayaz Khan

"I want to talk to some fishermen regarding a story," this scribe asked Zareef Baloch, a political analyst and journalist based in Gwadar. "They all are in jail," he replied.

For the last two months, Gwadar has been in the grip of intense tension, apparently turning into a kind of a battle ground between workers and supporters of the Haq Do Tehreek (HDT) led by Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman and the administrative and security apparatus of the town trying to curb the protests.

On December 27, the protests took a violent turn. Yasir, a police constable, lost his life due to alleged firing by armed workers of the HDT. This prompted the provincial home minister to order FIR against the head of the movement, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman. On 3rd January, Hidayat was charged with murder and attempt to murder, besides other offences.

Before appearing in a local court to comply with what he previously said via his twitter handle that "I am ready to surrender," Maulana was arrested by the police along with three of his close aids. However, soon after the killing of the constable, Maulana rebuffed all allegations and instead held police responsible for the death of the constable.

It's not the first time: though Maulana appeared to be what his supporters and general masses consider a symbol of struggle for the rights of the deprived residents of Gwadar, his movement gradually spread to Makran and other parts of the province. Maulana's holding of political spotlight in view of HDT is not new, as he has been resorting to such ventures in the past.

Apart from his 50-day Gwadar sit-in, Hidayat spearheaded a similar protest in 2021 which lasted for 32 days and ended after 'successful' negotiations with the then government. The current HDT protest is nonetheless a continuation of the previous



one, because of the broken government promises.

Maulana's demands: initially, protest movements were started by the fishermen community in Gwadar, who were concerned about deep sea fishing by illegal fishing trawlers, considered as a threat to their livelihood.

In 2021, Maulana began his struggle in support of the fishermen community demand. In addition to halting fishing trawlers, he demanded removal of 'unnecessary' check posts set up to 'bother' residents of Gwadar—seeking cross border trade, mainly with Iran, flexible and civic amenities like supply of clean drinking water.

Maulana's rise: Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman's affiliation initially was with Islami Jamiat-e-Talba (IJT), the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan and currently he serves as the Balochistan general secretary of the JI.

He started his political career in 2003 via IJT. Belonging to a fishermen family living in Gwadar's small town of Surbandar, Maulana is quite familiar with the problems faced by his community.

Maulana rose to further prominence after his struggle led to closure of some liquor

stores in town. He paralleled this demand with those of his community, the fishermen. His stint-in calls drew unmatched attention not only in Gwadar but across the province.

Maulana's supporters: politics in Makran is predominantly nationalist, but following the rise of Hidayat, many have started questioning the nationalist ideology, that has considerably failed to deliver anything on ground.

Zareef Baloch shares a similar view; for him people were not following JI, but the HDT. "Maulana's demands are genuine, and people have found someone to materialize them practically."

Women participation in HD: women's, including Hidayat's mother, joining the HDT differentiates it from other rights movements in the province. Women supporters have played a vital role in the success of Maulana's movement. Initially, they went door to door to address household women to join the protests. And with their attempts paying off, women participation enhanced.

Mariyam Suleman Anees, a journalist and research scholar from Gwadar currently based in Canada, endorses the fact. "Women participation made the protests



unique. A huge number of women supporters was never seen in the past," Mariyam says.

Another factor, Mariyam believes, was the fact that first time women were being addressed by fellow women which is something turning the course of protest from culturally male dominated ones.

"First, the women came from fishermen community and later on they were joined by other women along with Jamaat-e-Islami women workers."

State response: to deal with HDT, the government of Balochistan adopted a sit-and-watch policy in the beginning. The first protests were called off by the leadership of the Haq Do Tehreek after negotiation with government. But situation took a turn when Maulana alleged that government was reneging on its promises.

The response, says analyst and journalist Adnan Aamir, was quite repressive at the end of the day. The government was quite lenient (in terms of holding talks) towards the protests initially which encouraged the supporters to put more pressure.

"There is no doubt the protests were peaceful; though there were allegations by the government that Maulana's movement had turned to an armed struggle. In the end, some of the supporters could be seen wielding weapons but it was to send a message



that if government's response turned repressive, they might move to defensive mood," says Aamir further.

A shopkeeper, who wishes not to be named, asserted the protesters never forced shopkeepers to pull their shutters down. "People themselves," he says, "closed their business to join the protesters."

Inayat Ullah, a student of Lasbela University, recalls the moment when Gwadar plunged into darkness which led to a 10-day long disconnection of internet in the city.

"Soon I arrived in Gwadar to visit the city, I found myself in the middle of protests. After hearing slogans chanted by women

supporters of the movement, I came out to guess what was happening. The roads resembled scenes of Palestine streets; women were running fervently when police resorted to shelling injuring many," Inayat said.

The protests are eternal part of the province and addressing the issue while holding talks is the only viable way to opt for. However, this appears to be too early to predict as the security apparatus and political forces in Balochistan seem least bothered. What seems longlasting is further turmoil since the current government is left with little or no prowess to deal with the protest successfully-- making it a win-win situation.



# Brain Drain: The Experience of Pakistani Youth on Leaving Pakistan

*37% of Pakistan's population wants to emigrate and live overseas*

By Mahnur Mehfuz



Although brain drain has existed throughout recorded human history, it came to the attention of the world in the 1960s when the United States of America launched its space programme to catch up with the Soviet Union and relaxed its immigration laws to allow the transfer of scientists from the USSR, Germany, and other countries to the USA.

This was motivated by the Soviet Union's advances in space technology. Although people from all walks of life have long emigrated to Pakistan to settle there, this trend has recently accelerated as young and seasoned professionals from nearly every sector of the economy have begun to favour moving to developed nations like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and other nations in Europe and East Asia.

In a recent public opinion survey, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) asked people about their decision to live in Pakistan or leave the country if given the opportunity and the motivation behind their choice to determine whether Pakistanis want to stay in the country or leave it. According to the

study's findings, 37% of Pakistan's population wants to emigrate and live overseas. Male youth between the ages of 15 and 24 have a substantially higher desire to leave Pakistan, with 62% of respondents in this group expressing such a desire.

While just 36% of respondents from rural areas said they would leave Pakistan if given the chance, the desire to leave Pakistan was significantly higher in cities, where 40% of the population preferred to do so. It may not come as a surprise that most respondents, when asked what their main incentive was for wanting to relocate and live abroad, cited economic factors or the potential for improving their standard of living. However, a sizable portion—44%—of those who choose to relocate abroad claimed that getting greater respect was the main motivator for their desire. What is more surprising is that in Sindh and Balochistan, the desire to emigrate was driven primarily by a desire for greater respect rather than a desire for a higher standard of living.

The analysis also reveals that more respondents in Sindh indicated that they would leave Pakistan for increased or improved

security. Gender equality and the biological basis for identity were two of the main causes of the desire to leave Pakistan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a slightly related study conducted by Gallup Pakistan in June last year, Gallup Pakistan noted that young Pakistanis under the age of 30 showed a stronger desire to leave Pakistan than the elder population, capturing the alarming trend of an increasing number of young Pakistanis wanting to do so.

The desire to leave Pakistan for better prospects, higher education, and greener pastures is not particularly Pakistani. It should be concerning that a significant portion of young Pakistanis are choosing to depart Pakistan more frequently. The fact that migration is typically driven by factors other than the need to enhance one's economic future is another worrying development. Pakistanis' reasons for leaving, including respect, safety, gender equality, and ethnic or biological identity, reveal the nation's shortcomings in relation to its citizens. Even though human migration has a long history, it is nevertheless a difficult decision. Modern migration is more than just the enrichment of one civilization via ability and the agony of another through brain drain. There is a wealth of literature on the effects of migration on people, households, and communities in terms of social, cultural, and economic development. It is also widely agreed that remittances sent home by migrant workers can help Pakistan's economy.

Magnificent literature and artwork have also been influenced by the emotional repercussions of migration across nations. The eerie *Les Voyageurs*, or "Travellers," statues by Bruno Catalano, installed in Marseilles in 2013, have come to represent economic migration as well as the loss of one's place in the world and sense of



identity. The bronze statues, which depict men who have had large chunks of their bodies hollowed out and are carrying briefcases that are both a burden and their main source of support, serve as moving reminders of the personal cost of migration.

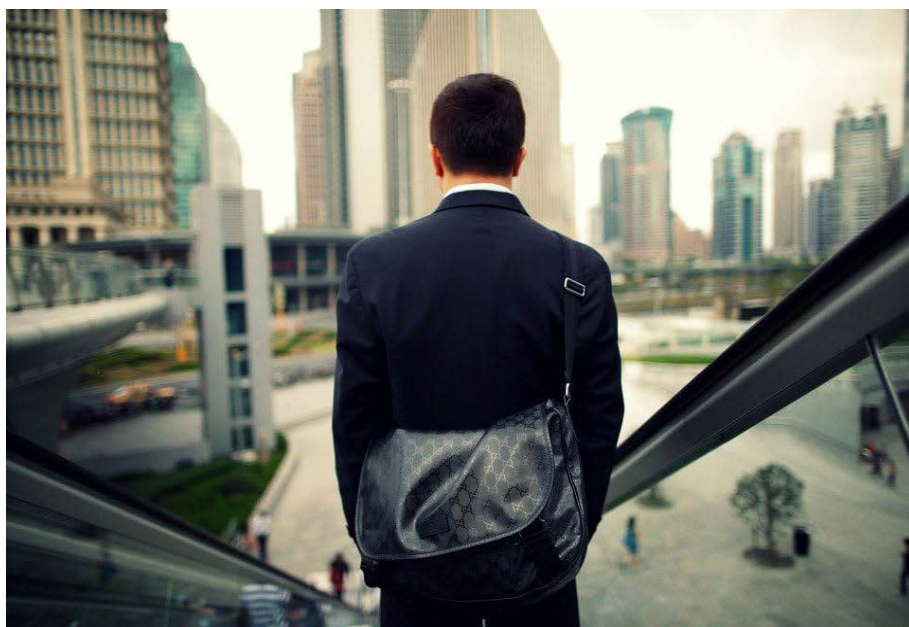
To understand why younger Pakistanis want to leave their country, an examination of young people's growing dissatisfaction with Pakistan's past, present, and future is required. Serious concerns about the failure of our society, as well as our leaders and governments, to ensure the national, social, civic, and cultural integration of our diverse youth across Pakistan are raised by young people's desire to leave the country. The core of the disaffection among the youth is this ongoing failure. According to the most recent PILDAT Voice of Youth Survey, which was conducted from November 22 to December 2, young people want Pakistan's political parties to devote all of their attention and take decisive action to control rising inflation, unemployment, and corruption through the 2023 General Election.

After identifying the top three challenges, their main concerns are finding a solution for the lack of access to high-quality education and the nation's escalating gasoline prices. Disillusioned with the nation's political unpredictability and disarray, a staggering 70% of the youth respondents supported having an early general election rather than waiting until the scheduled date at the end of 2023.

The UNDP painted a very gloomy picture with some startling data in its 2018 Human Development Report about the accessibility of essential facilities for Pakistani youth to live, grow, and succeed. According to the UNDP assessment, based on interviews with more than 130,000 people in Pakistan, 90% of whom were youth, including those from disadvantaged and underprivileged areas, only seven of those 100 people had access to sports facilities, while a staggering 93 did not. Only one had a car, 12 had motorbikes, 10 had bicycles, and 77 had none of these modes of transportation. Only six had access to a library, and 94 did not. Pakistan has arguably been the nation that has suffered the most from the "brain drain." It is further highlighted that approximately 36,000 professionals,

including doctors, engineers, and teachers, have migrated to other countries in the last 30 years, as mentioned in official estimates of Pakistan's Overseas Employment Corporation.

Nearly 3,500 annual graduates of Pakistan's medical colleges are jobless; the majority go abroad. Since the majority of emigrants do not register, this number only represents a minor part of the actual migration. According to his research, the number has reportedly climbed by about 45,000 over the past



few years. The effects of brain drain go beyond a simple numerical drop in output; they also lead to the development of subpar goods and services. Giving accurate information is crucial in order to come up with effective corrective measures.

After giving careful consideration to all the circumstances and causes that lead people to permanently emigrate from their home countries and go to foreign countries. In this regard, the following steps are advised to stop the trend of brain drain from underdeveloped nations: includes the most immediate and ubiquitous factor contributing to brain drain is when the employed person or professional feels that he or she is not required in his or her country.

The usual explanations for widespread unemployment and underemployment, as well as low morale, are sentiments. Poor pay, little respect, and few opportunities for professional or career advancement to

prevent the uncontrolled exodus of human capital from developing nations, support from both the host nation and the international community is also required. International organisations like UNESCO, the ILO, the International Court of Justice, and others could be involved in containing the unlawful transfer of resources from impoverished to rich countries. Professionals and skilled labourers who have emigrated can return and be inspired to contribute to the economic and social growth of their native countries.

However, the existence of a positive environment, advantageous working conditions, an improvement in the living environment, the advancement of democratic principles, and a participatory culture at home are all necessary for such an endeavour to be successful. There is an urgent need to stop this threat by taking many coordinated actions. The provision of adequate employment opportunities, career and professional development, improved living conditions, the revival of democratic disposition at national as well as organisational levels, and the involvement of international agencies are important measures to restrain the tendency of brain drain.

Finally, both new and seasoned professionals need to be reminded of their moral and ethical duties to their own people, who have, in one way or another, supported their education and way of life.

# Microsoft says services have recovered after widespread outage



Microsoft services have recovered after tens of thousands of users reported its products, including Outlook and Teams, had stopped working.

The company tweeted that its "impacted services have recovered and remain stable".

Downdetector, which tracks website outages, showed dwindling numbers of users reporting problems.

Microsoft blamed the outage on a change it made to its "Wide Area Network", which had now been "resolved".

In a statement to the BBC, Microsoft explicitly ruled out a cyber-attack as a potential cause of the issue.

Knock-on effect

Wednesday's problems affected a range of widely used Microsoft products.

Services including Teams and Xbox Live were also reported as not working.

Microsoft said cloud computing service Azure also experienced problems which affected "a subset of users".

The service provides computing power to many other businesses, some of which reported they were facing problems as a result.

Many people and businesses will be breathing a sigh of relief now Microsoft

services have come back online.

But for the thousands who lost access to services, it's been a significant inconvenience. It is also a reminder of how much so many of us rely on Big Tech to help us run our lives and our businesses with products we can't control when they go wrong.

Systems and networks are always more vulnerable when maintenance or upgrades are under way, as there's more potential for the tiniest thing to either go wrong or not to plan - and the ripple effects, as we've seen today, can be widespread.

Eurostar, for example, tweeted that it was having problems with its services as a result of the outage affecting Azure - a popular rival to Amazon Web Services, and used by many big businesses for both storage and extra processing power.

Reports of problems came in from many countries, with Downdetector receiving thousands of reports in India and Japan alone.

But the impact seems to have been uneven, and relatively modest given the number of users of some of the affected systems.

Microsoft Teams, for example, is used by more than 280 million people globally, primarily in businesses and schools, where it can be of critical

importance for calls, meetings and general service organisation.

Some users shared memes celebrating an unexpected break from work, or disappointment that their workplace Teams seemed unaffected.

As well as Teams and Outlook, the services affected, according to the Microsoft 365 status page, included SharePoint Online, OneDrive for Business, Microsoft Graph, PowerBi, and Microsoft 365 Admin Center.

Job cuts and sales down

The disruption came a day after Microsoft reported its sales rose only 2% in the three months to December, to \$52.7bn (£42.8bn) - with overall profits falling by 12% to \$16.4bn.

The slowdown in sales accounts for the corporation's smallest quarterly increase in more than six years.

Meanwhile, on 19 January, Microsoft announced it would reduce its workforce by roughly 5%, eliminating 10,000 jobs.

It is the latest round of staff redundancies to hit the tech industry, and will cost the business \$1.2bn in severance and reorganisation costs.

Courtesy BBC



# Afridi, Sethi and the New Chief

*Afridi stated that Shan cannot be given a leadership role in the Pakistan team based on his performance at Derbyshire*

By Ali Abdullah

Shahid Afridi recently served as the Chief Selector of the Pakistan Men's Team. He served as the Chief Selector only for the New Zealand series and then stepped away from the role due to his personal commitments. Recently, Afridi spoke to a local news outlet and talked about certain things regarding the latest developments in the Pakistan team.

Firstly, Shahid Afridi revealed who was involved in making Shan Masood the vice-captain of the Pakistan team. Afridi told me that it was solely the decision of Chairman Najam Sethi. "Neither the selection committee had this plan, nor Babar Azam. "I think we should have been consulted first before naming Shan as the VC, but the chairman announced it himself," the former Chief Selector stated.

In other words, Afridi stated that Shan cannot be given a leadership role in the Pakistan team based on his performance at Derbyshire. Furthermore, Shan Masood has never been Pakistan's top priority in the White House. He did not even get a chance in the first two ODIs against New Zealand.

Afridi also said that Babar Azam still has a lot to learn as a captain. He was in favour of a split captaincy. Afridi wanted one captain for T20Is and another one for the other two formats. Afridi opposed having three different captains and said that for the shortest format, there should be a separate captain, and for the two long formats, there should be a single captain.

Regarding the new head coach of Pakistan, the veteran all-rounder made a strange statement. "I do not think Pakistan needs a head coach." You only need someone to motivate your players. "Coaching is needed at the grassroots/U-19 level," Shahid Afridi stated. He also revealed that the PCB wanted to extend his tenure as the Chief Selector, but he was rather



interested in working at the U-19 level and for the development of future Pakistani players.

This was Shahid Afridi's first interview on a TV channel after finishing his tenure as a chief selector. Many names came up as rumors. Shoaib Akhtar and Kamran Akmal's names were surfacing on social media the most. A few days later, Najam Sethi announced the new chief selector. Najam Sethi announced that Haroon Rasheed will be the new chief selector of the Pakistan Cricket Team. Prior to this, Rasheed held the positions of team manager, director of cricket operations, and chief selector for the men's squad for the years 2015 and 2016. Haroon stated that he was "honored to have been given the duty."

The PCB has a big task in hand after a not-so-great 2022. They are even the hosts of the Asia Cup this year. "I want to congratulate Haroon Rashid and hope he will use his cricket knowledge, understanding, and background while picking squads for the upcoming international assignments," Najam Sethi said.

Accepting the position of PCB Chief Selector, Haroon Rasheed said, "One

of the key aspects I would like to focus on with my time will be improving communication." This is a critical area, as the players need to have absolute clarity on why they have been selected or not selected, which, in turn, will help them deliver the desired results, work harder on their skills, and remain motivated. Rasheed was named to the PCB's managing council for cricket on December 22 of last year, but he will now withdraw from that position.

With the tenure of the head coach ending as well, the PCB has been communicating with Mickey Arthur to find a way out. Currently, there are no games scheduled for Pakistan. They will resume their cricket season in March when they play Afghanistan in a 3-match T20 series. This will give the management and the new chief selector, Haroon Rasheed, a chance to go through the recent mistakes and rectify them. In the last few months, the men in green have lost three tests at home and drawn two. lost the finals of the T20 World Cup and then lost the ODI series against New Zealand. PCB is also dealing with the injuries of several players, which are making the team weak.

# Babar Azam Caught in A Honey Trap?

*'Joke' Indian tweet lands Babar Azam in a fake sexting media storm*

By Pavan Manzoor

Social media has brought forth unparalleled connectedness. However, it has also allowed misinformation and so-called "fake news" operations to spread and thrive.

Disinformation, which includes incorrect and out-of-context information transmitted with the intent to deceive or mislead, is mostly spread by those seeking to influence public opinion and advance certain objectives.

Babar Azam, the captain of Pakistan's cricket team, has become embroiled in a scandal after some of his ostensibly personal videos and photos went viral on social media.

Babar Azam, Pakistan's captain, is currently facing new challenges. Rumor has it that Azam fell for a honey trap while having love chats with another Pakistani cricketer's girlfriend.

A few chats, audio files, and videos have gained widespread popularity on social networking sites, but the true authors of the media files are unknown. The unidentified owner of the *eish.arajpoot1* Instagram account shared the pictures, audio, and video on social media.

Supporters of Babar, however, assert that these are morphed images, videos, etc. that were produced to damage the cricketer's reputation.

Eisha posted a story on Instagram:

"I hope you get what you deserve. Can you not support a woman as a woman? Are you making noise because I am bringing his real face in front? The garbage will be revealed. He has to suffer for what he did. Everyone will see how he went around with six to seven girls. He will face the consequences. Should we die in silence? I will reveal the truth before committing suicide."

In another story, the user said:

"There is noise in Allah's baton." Everyone will know the truth. Have some patience. Wait and watch. The truth will be revealed.

People jump in to defend this person. Is he honest, right? He is God for you. "Show proof if he is not wrong."

Azam's face was captured on video, as was the nail-adorned hand of someone else (possibly a woman) on the other end of the phone call.

In a new Instagram post, Eisha stated:

"How can someone engage with his cousin and still talk to his other 5-6 girlfriends?" Wow, you think that's how heroes should be? "Such heroes should die; that will be better."



The claims that Pakistani captain Babar Azam was "sexting" another player's girlfriend have been widely publicised in the Indian media. The problem is that the erroneous information originated from a "joke" tweet from a parody account. The media missed—or chose to overlook—the fact that the Twitter account was not meant to be taken seriously, demonstrating how fake information can become accepted reality and explode online. The unknown author of the fake account apologised to Azam on Twitter and slammed India's "c." The original tweet, posted by the "Dr Nimo Yadav" account, stated that Azam had been "sexting with the girlfriend of another Pakistan player."

Furthermore, the account tweeted to its over 27,000 followers that the player was

"promising her that her BF (boyfriend) will not be kicked off the squad if she keeps sexting with him."

The tweet contained a picture of a topless man in bed who appeared to be Azam, as well as a screenshot of Azam with a heart on it. The proprietor of the Twitter account stated that the photo and video were taken from an Instagram account that has since been removed.

Despite the fact that the Twitter handle is marked as a "parody account," the message was extensively shared in Indian and worldwide media.

Even though the owner of the Twitter account stated that the message was fraudulent and withdrew it the next day, at least eight Indian news websites still carried articles containing the false claim.

When the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) voiced its unhappiness at its "media partner" for publishing on the "unsubstantiated personal claims," one international sports website withdrew their story, despite citing the "verified Twitter account of Dr Nimo Yadav."

Twitter users expressed their support for Azam by using the hashtags #WeStand-WithBabar and #StayStrongBabarAzam to express their feelings.



# Pakistan versus New Zealand



Pakistan played three One-Day Internationals against New Zealand in Karachi. After losing the test series against England and then tying the red ball series against New Zealand, fans expected the team to win the white ball series because they dominate the format. One-day internationals were to be played in Karachi.

In the ODI series, the first match was won by Pakistan, the second by New Zealand, and by winning the last match by two wickets, New Zealand not only won the third ODI but also the ODI series 2 to 1. Pakistan won the toss and elected to bat first. Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman was the top scorer with 101 runs. Pakistan also faced two early dismissals, with Shan Masood going for a duck and Babar Azam scoring four runs after facing 13 balls. Then came Muhammad Rizwan; he played along with the opener Fakhar Zaman for a long time and scored 77 runs on 74 balls.

Other than that, Agha Salman scored 45 and Haris Sohail scored 42 runs. For the rest, no one else scored in double figures. At the end of Pakistan's 50 overs, Pakistan had lost 9 wickets, while they had given New Zealand a target of 281 runs to win the match.

From the New Zealand bowling side, Tim Southee took 3 wickets and Lockie Fergus-

son took 2 wickets. Other than that, Michael Bracewell and Ish Sodhi took one wicket each. Mitchell Santner was not able to take any wickets in his 10 overs. All five bowlers mentioned bowled their entire allotted 10 overs.

From the New Zealand batting side, Glenn Phillips played a very impressive knock of 63 runs on 42 balls. Glenn Phillips came out to bat when New Zealand's chances were dwindling and Pakistan's chances of winning the match were much greater.

However, his impressive batting turned the match on its head. Glenn was the top scorer for New Zealand; his impressive 63 runs involved 8 boundaries, 4 sixes, and 4 fours, to be exact. He played with a strike rate of 150 runs; he was the star of the show and the player of the match for today's ODI. There were two other significant factors that aided New Zealand's victory. These were 52 runs from Devon Conway and 53 runs scored by Kane Williamson.

Other than that, Daryl Mitchell scored 31, the opener Finn Allen scored 25, Tom Latham scored 16, and Mitchell Santner scored 15 runs. No one else from the New Zealand side has gone into double figures. Overall, New Zealand was able to chase down the total and win the match by two wickets in 48.1 overs.

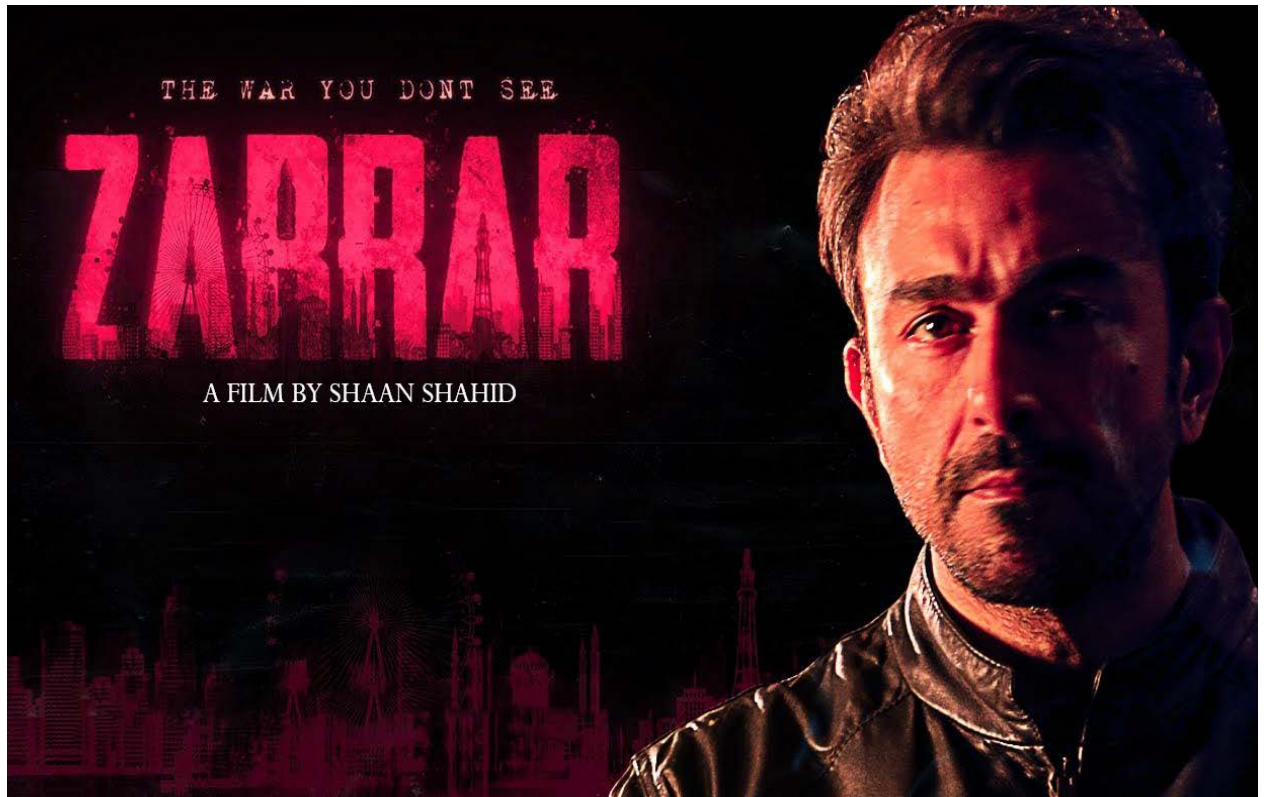
As far as the Pakistan bowling side is concerned, Naseem Shah was missed in the game. Another question was raised about why Abrar Ahmed was not added to Pakistan's ODI squad after his exceptional bowling in tests. He was not given a chance in even one ODI. Muhammad Wasim and Agha Salman took two wickets each, while Usama Mir and Muhammad Nawaz took one wicket each. Muhammad Hasnain and Haris Rauf were not able to take any wickets. Pakistan won the toss and elected to bat first. In their 50 overs, Pakistan scored 280 runs, and New Zealand was given the target of 281 runs to win the match. New Zealand successfully chased the target in just 48.1 overs with 11 bowls remaining and two wickets in hand. This way, New Zealand won the third ODI against Pakistan by two wickets.

Pakistan appeared to be in command at one point, but Glenn Phillips turned the game on its head with a 63-run knockoff of 42 deliveries. He won the Player of the Series award for this impressive performance.

New Zealand won the series of three One-Day International (ODI) matches by a score of 2 to 1.

By Ali Abdullah

# We should continue to make more films to revive cinema. Shaan Shahid



By Kaukab Jahan

**S**haan Shahid needs no introduction when talking about the film industry of Pakistan. A true believer in his art, Shaan still strives and contributes his share to the revival of Pakistani films. *Zarrar*, a spy thriller in which he not only acted but also directed and wrote the script, stars Shaan in the titular role as a secret agent who becomes involved in his mission after learning about a secret international operation that plans to take control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. He intends to make two more films, one of which will be a comedy.

The Truth International talks to Shaan Shahid about his recent and upcoming films and the overall situation of the Pakistani film industry.

## What was the thought behind *Zarrar*?

*Zarrar* addressed external threats to Pakistan. Our mainstream media only talks about the internal threats to Pakistan, but I believe that these threats are very much related to external extortion. That is why I keep *Zarrar*'s tagline, "The War You Don't See." I wanted to make it a brand through the lead character, *Zarrar*, just like James Bond in *MI 6*. This character will continue to fight against these threats to Pakistan in future films. Actually, it is purely a public relations exercise for Pakistan; we are not what the world perceives us to be through the media. Moreover, *Zarrar* is a commercial film, but its characters are very much related to our political scenario.

What it was like to wear three hats in *Zarrar*: writer, director, and, of course, actor.

It was not very difficult. I have been observing these things since my childhood. Yes, it is true that when you are directing yourself, nobody is there to ask for changes in the scenes or act. So, it is a bit trying, but I enjoy it.

## What is next?

I am there to make more films. I am working on the pre-production of two projects: one is a light and funny romantic comedy, while the other is an action Punjabi film. I will soon announce its details and cast.

## What would be your role in these projects?

I would be a writer, director, and, of course, an actor.

So we will see you in a comedy role after a long gap.

Yes, I have played several comedy roles in Punjabi films. The one I did in *Wohti Leker Jani Hai* became well-known. Sometimes, we as actors are afraid of taking the risk of experiencing new things. If actors are successful in a certain role, they are offered the same kind of role in their next projects. This practise impairs the actor's ability to perform a wide range of roles. As a result, I believe that actors must step outside of their comfort zones by taking on challenging roles.



### How much time do you take getting in and out of the character?

I get into the character when on set and leave it there before going home. I don't get overwhelmed by any character in my film. My characters are like my friends but live in their place. I am most concerned about my own character, which needs more care than any other.

### What steps, in your opinion, should be taken to get the audience back to the cinema?

I believe that the peace of mind of the public is necessary for the consumption of entertainment. It seems very difficult that in this chaotic economic situation, which Pakistan is currently going through, we make a film and ask the public to come and buy tickets for it. In Pakistan, inflation has forced many families to live hand-to-mouth. But yes, even then, if we want to make a good film that attracts public attention, we should check off all the areas: good production, talented actors, and a talented director.

### What do you think can ignite our film industry again?

I believe that the number of production The more films that are released, the more choices there will be for the audience. For this, our production houses, media channels, and exhibitors must unite to develop the market for cinema. Besides, other investors should also come forward to invest in the films as well. In India, every big business entity is involved with Bollywood. So, it is an overall effort from every section to build a prosperous environment for the film industry. There must be something other than cricket in Pakistan now. In a country of 22 million people, not everyone is interested in cricket. Secondly, we should emphasise exporting our films. Recently released films did well overseas, which ultimately benefited the Pakistani economy.

### For the last many years, you have been acting in your own direction. So now, would you want to work with any other director?

I would love to work with any of them. I like Asim Raza and Ahsan Rahim. They should also come forward and collaborate with other actors. Our media houses also need to expand their menu card of entertainment. I have worked on about 580 films, all with other directors. I have no issue with any of them. Every writer or director has an actor in mind for their characters. So if they call me, then I would definitely consider it.

### Who do you want to cast as female leads in your next film(s)?

I think there are many good female actors out there. Mehwish Hayat is very talented, and I would also like to work with Mahira Khan. I am sure it would be a good sharing and learning experience. Besides, there are very good actresses on television as well, but one thing one should keep in mind when working on the big screen is that the best player at one-day cricket needs to change his gaming strategy for T20. The film is T20 while television is one day, and I have observed that most of the time when we crossover, we forget about this timing.





## حکومت بلوچستان کی جانب سے حالیہ گندم اور آٹا بحران میں عوام کو ریلیف پہنچانے کیلئے مثالی اقدامات

★ عوام کو سرکاری نرخوں پر معیاری آٹے کی فراہمی کیلئے حکومت پوری طرح

فعال اور متحرک پاسکواور حکومت پنجاب سے 4 لاکھ بوری سے

زائد گندم کا حصول گندم اور آٹا کے ذخیرہ اندوزوں اور منافع خوروں کے خلاف بھرپور کارروائیاں

★ حکومت کی جانب سے فلور ملوں کو پسائی کیلئے گندم کی فراہمی کا آغاز عوامی سہولت کیلئے

محکمہ خوراک اور ضلعی انتظامیہ کے اشتراک سے صوبائی دارالحکومت کوئٹہ میں 12 آٹا سیل پوائنٹس کا قیام

★ جبکہ دیگر اضلاع میں بھی عوام کو آٹے کی فراہمی کیلئے اقدامات جاری ہیں

تاکہ صوبہ میں گندم اور آٹے کے بحران کا جلد خاتمہ ہو

عوام کو سستے آٹے کی فراہمی۔۔۔۔۔ حکومت کا عزم اور اولین ترجیح



حکومت بلوچستان



محکمہ اطلاعات

MG15/January2023



www.dpr.gob.pk



@dpr-gob



dpr.gob



dgpr.balochistan