
A woeful tale of the tail-enders

PTI's reforms tsunami looks like an illusion in KP

Line of Control: Where life exists in the shadow of constant fear

Minus One Formula Fatal Contraption



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**Message from Dr. Arif Alvi
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan**



For 'The Truth International' Magazine first edition

I am happy to learn that "The Truth International" is launching its first edition. I would like to congratulate the management of the magazine and hope that it will play its role in promotion of responsible journalism.

The world is transforming into an age of information and media plays a pivotal role in informing and educating the people about the developments taking place in the world. To feed credible news is an earnest service to the nation and I hope this magazine will promote unbiased journalism in the country. The media men, however, need to observe journalistic norms and ethics while reporting news stories. The power of pen should be used constructively for promoting truth and moral values in society. The media needs to educate people and create awareness about social problems like increasing population, breast cancer and women's rights in inheritance.

I hope that the Magazine "The Truth International" will uphold the principles of accuracy, impartiality and fairness while publishing news stories.

**Message from Senator Shibli Faraz
Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting**



For the First Edition of 'The Truth International' Magazine

I congratulate the team and management of the magazine; The Truth International at the launch of its first edition.

I am sanguine that the magazine would be a good addition in publications of capital city by providing quality content with objective analysis on issues of national and international importance to its readers.

The government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan firmly believes in fundamental and constitutional right of freedom of expression and would continue to support and facilitate the growth of free and responsible media in the country.

I again extend my best wishes to the team of editors, writers and journalists associated with the magazine and hope their hard work and dedication would help the magazine to reach great heights in the years to come.

Media - A Public Service Industry

By Zia-ud-Din Ahmed



Media being a public service industry and truth being its main product, it needs all the freedom it can muster to make the commodity available to the general public without fear or favor. And that too in the larger national interest.

Given the peculiar socio-cultural, politico-economic and security conditions of a society in which the media industry functions, and also given the dynamism of each of these conditions that continuously keep pushing the boundary lines, the industry cannot be forced to abide by a straightjacketed code of ethics. In plain words, what is taboo for media today could be okay tomorrow.

Considering the evolving dynamism of the platforms, from notice boards to newspapers to broadcast media to social media, and with information technology merging with telecom technologies, a static media code of ethics would only cause wasteful, counterproductive and harmful news/views traffic jams.

The best course, therefore, is to leave it to the media industry to keep evolving a code of ethics of its own, dictated continuously by the changes occurring in the code of ethics governing a given society. And since the quality of the output is tested constantly at the bar of media's integrity and credibility, media organizations, it is believed, in their own self-interest would ensure strict adherence to their main public service role of seeking the truth, and nothing but the truth.

And in case of any serious violation of legal norms the industry could be subjected to the existing laws of the land. There is no need to introduce special laws to discipline the media.

In a free market economy to keep the profit motive of the private sector within the bounds of reason, each industrial sector is regulated by a specific autonomous regulatory body

set up under laws legislated by parliament. The private sector media industry too, for the same reasons, needs to be regulated by such a body.

Our print media is being regulated by the Pakistan Press Council (PPC) and broadcast media by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). However, since the two bodies are not legally autonomous but are the line departments of the information ministry which in turn is part of the government of the day, they function at the whims of the latter and not always in the best interest of the nation.

Since it is the information ministry which controls these bodies, governments tend to manipulate them to promote their own political interests or misuse them to undermine those of the opposition. That is perhaps why directives issued by these regulatory bodies are often challenged by the media. Therefore, to make them truly autonomous regulatory authorities, they should first be liberated from the information ministry.

Social media is a double edged sword. With one click it opens a dynamic new world of knowledge and information, limitless in its scope and reach. But the same click can take one on a journey into a warped world-- high-profile scandals related to electoral interference, fake news and misinformation, violations of data privacy, and suppression of political activism by anti-democratic regimes.

On the face of it, the situation demands stricter regulations. But any attempt to regulate social media via government controls risks limiting the limitless world of knowledge and information. Therefore, until an ideal regulatory system is evolved for the social media, it would be advisable to let the users themselves function as the regulators voluntarily abiding by the law of the land and the code of ethics operating in a particular society.



Minus One Formula Fatal Contraption

By Hammad Ghaznavi

No political lexicon includes the term “Minus One Formula”. Ask a political science professor at Harvard and they will sound ignorant as for the Formula and what it implies. In Pakistan it is different though. Even the man in the street here is well versed in the “Minus One Formula” as the phrase is a regular feature of our political discourse ~ a local infection, as it were.

Will Prime Minister Imran Khan be the next victim of the Formula? That is the question being asked by many today. If the Formula is slapped on him, how will PM Khan respond, media debates enthusiastically. PM Khan has himself mentioned the sleazy Formula, rubbishing it albeit, in a recent parliamentary speech. From the PM to the peasant, in a word, we all know the formula inside out.

Simply put, the Minus One Formula means ‘the leader, the soul, the driving force, of a political party is no more acceptable to the powers that be and shall be replaced by someone from within the party maybe, and then the party will be acceptable to them’. No matter how ludicrous it sounds, this is the Formula ~ the body is acceptable but not the soul, Pakistan is acceptable but not the Quaid, Karbala is acceptable but not Hussain (AS), so to speak. Yes, this is the Formula.

It is an unthinkable monstrosity in any constitutional dispensation but in our polity it is thriving. Popular party heads, who have enough political following to garner votes for their candidates in a decent number of electoral constituencies, qualify for the minus-one status. The formula comes into action, however, only for those popular politicians who deviate from the dictated line, history testifies.

The term Minus One Formula was first seen in print during the first term of Benazir Bhutto (1988-1990) though,

the concept had been there for a long time, since 1947 perhaps. Let’s not discuss the details of that fateful journey of Jinnah sahib on 11th September 1948, in that dilapidated ambulance that broke down on the way.

The first Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawabzada Liaqut Ali Khan may be a good starting point to trace the history of the minus one concept. L.A Khan was the confidant of Quaid, most respected and popular politician after the father of nation. He had all the credentials to qualify for the minus one status. Hence, on September 16, 1951, in broad day light at company (Bagh) garden Rawalpindi, he was killed while addressing a public gathering. His suspected assassin Said Akbar was shot dead.

Finally, the Chopper carrying investigation record of the case was crashed. Mystery shrouds the murder of Pakistan’s first premier to date as for who the assassin was working for. That was the birth of the infamous formula; the most towering of us was murdered with impunity.

After Jinnah, the most popular and revered figure in the country was that of Madir e Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah. The entire nation looked up to her for guidance as she was not merely Quaid’s sister but his aide and confidant, a true soldier in the struggle for Pakistan. Immediately after Quaid’s death she was removed from the national scene, her contact with her countrymen was deliberately and systematically broken. It was only after a couple of years of Quaid’s death that she was allowed for the first time to communicate with the people through a radio broadcast, parts of which were censored. Her book, My Brother, was judged against the ideology of Pakistan, and not allowed to be published.

She was dubbed an Indian agent by General Ayub Khan when she decided to contest the presidential election against the tin-pot dictator. The worst was, however, yet to come.

She died due to ‘cardiac arrest’ on 9th July 1967. But her Ghussaal (the one who had given her corpse the bath and late sharifudin pizada authenticated this publically) had another horrendous story to narrate. He said Fatima Jinnah was murdered; her body had wounds with blood oozing out of them and her clothes were soaked in blood. She was laid to rest without a postmortem. Many believed in light of evidence that Fatima Jinnah was assassinated. A petition was also filed in the High Court in this regard. But to no avail. The formula (minus-one) had succeeded again; Apnay Aala Aadmi Ko Qatl Kernay Ka Rawaj continued.



The next candidates for the Formula were Shiekh Mujeebur Rehman and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Both were the most popular political leaders in the country as the results of the first general elections in Pakistan had confirmed. Mujeebur Rehman’s Awami League had swept the polls in East Pakistan, while Bhutto’s Pakistan People emerged victorious in the western wing. First, it was Mujib’s turn.

Mujib’s landslide victory in the elections had established him as the most loved leader of the country. His ‘minus-one’ was fraught with the danger of disintegration of the country. The risk was taken.



Mujeeb was arrested in March 1971, after his electoral triumph, and was flown into West Pakistan to be tried for his crimes against Pakistan. For the next nine months, East Pakistan was given a bloodbath, while Mujeeb was kept in prison and the world knew nothing about his whereabouts. Finally, the minus-one formula won. Mujeeb was gotten rid of, as he was a little too popular among the masses to be spared. The cost of this minus-one was rather steep ~ the dismemberment of Pakistan.



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the next. He truly deserved the minus-one as he was the most popular political leader of the new, abbreviated Pakistan. Despite his numerous failures during his five and a half years rule, he remained taller than his political adversaries. His popularity was his cardinal sin. On 5th July 1977, five and a half years after the dismemberment of the country, yet another martial law was imposed on the country, abrogating the consensus constitution of 1973. Bhutto was imprisoned, and later charged with the murder of a political opponent. The Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered Bhutto's execution in the murder trial, a decision later termed a 'judicial murder' by the legal fraternity. The minus-one, however, was achieved. He was used against Mujeeb and finally discarded.

The price of this minus one was not paltry either. The military action in Sindh during the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy catalyzed a sense of alienation in the province, and the federation was further weakened. The passion for the

Formula, like always, had been so strong that this anticipated fall out of Bhutto's execution was accepted perhaps as a quid pro quo. The entire structure of the state and the fabric of society, in fact, suffered cracks during the 11 years of Ziaul Haq's rule. The minus-one doesn't come easy as Pakistan is still struggling to repair the damage of the Zia era. Most of Pakistan's failures as a state emanate from the womb of this atrocious Formula.



The day first party based polls, after a hiatus of 11 years, were held in the country in 1988, Bhutto's daughter, Benazir Bhutto returned to power - so much for the efficacy of Formula. Benazir, despite knowing that she was the next most suitable candidate for the Formula, could not dissuade herself from following the path of her father. Jail and exile failed to discourage her. Even her unenviable government stints could not push her into political oblivion. She remained popular, hence, unacceptable to the powerful. Finally, in December 2007, she was eliminated. The Formula devoured another popular politician who had refused to toe the line.

Then it was, deservedly, Nawaz Sharif's turn. Till 1993, it was unthinkable that one day Sharif would revolt against his own makers and qualify to be a victim of the formula. But then he surprised many by refusing to take dictation any longer. That day onward, he has been a continuous prey of the formula. Jail, exile, humiliation, he has suffered it all but refuses to budge. Examples of minus one are many, from

Altaf Hussain (once own boy of power corridors) to Akbar Bugti (one of the patriate voice among sardars), if the provincial politicians are also included in the list. But let's stick to the national level for the dearth of space.



Next? Who deserves it the most? Imran Khan has a huge following; he is the leader of one of the two most popular political parties in the country; he is the incumbent prime minister. None of his predecessors with these characteristics could dodge the Formula. Would he continue to toe the line to evade the destiny all popular political leaders met before him?

No matter how hard he tries, Imran Khan is no Shaukat Aziz. Already, Khan seems to have differences with his 'mentors' on Nawaz Sharif's return, and Punjab CM Buzdar's future. A new chapter will be written in Pakistan's political history if Imran Khan escapes The Formula.



Presently, there is no move to replace Imran Khan, but the trends in Pakistan's political history show that the situation may develop to minus Imran Khan after the next Senate Elections, scheduled to be held in March 2021.

Pakistan's Choices in a Changing Regional Scenario

By Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed

The region where Pakistan is located is undergoing a transformative phase that is witnessing changes in perceptions, policies and ground realities. The region, which includes the broader Middle East as well as South West Asia, is seeing 3 fundamental far-reaching new realities. First, President Trump, probably the first American President since John F. Kennedy whose views are at variance with the American security establishment, has pursued a policy that can best be summed up as the retrenchment of US military power in the Muslim world. Since 9/11, according to a study by the Brown University's Cost of Wars Project, released on November 14, 2018, the United States has spent almost \$ 6 trillion in wars in the region that proved futile in the end: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia, etc. Hence, it is no accident that President Trump has been firm in his belief not to get embroiled in any new land war in the Muslim world which requires American "boots on the ground". The American decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, after signing an agreement with the Afghan Taliban, and the decision by President Trump not to use the military option either in Iran, Syria and Libya are pointers to this policy of retrenchment. Overcoming the reluctance and the resistance of his generals, President Trump has chosen to militarily withdraw from Afghanistan after fighting the longest, unwinnable war in American history and this process is likely to be completed by May 2021.

The second major reality in the region is the rise of China which, according to IMF projections, can make China the world's biggest economy by 2024. This rise of China has not gone unnoticed in the West, particularly the United States which has launched what amounts to a New Cold War to 'contain' China by projecting the "China threat".

Interestingly, the Coronavirus crisis has brought into sharp contrast the responses of China and the United States, with the success of China in containing COVID-19, matched by the failure of the United States and the United States has then conversely blamed China for what it calls the "China virus". Led by hawks in the US administration, the trade war that began earlier this year between China and the United States has now been converted into an ideological Cold War with the United States directly attacking the Communist Party of China and also bringing legislation and other measures to pressurize China, ranging from curbs on Huawei technology to growing interaction with Taiwan plus raising issues regarding Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

The third major reality is that in the vacuum that has been created with retrenchment of American military and political power in the region, new forces are in resurgence, seeking to fill the vacuum created by the American retrenchment. For example, a number of Muslim Middle Powers are now having a more proactive and assertive role in their respective regions. Pakistan, for example, has been pivotal to the Afghan peace process, brokering a settlement between the United States and the Afghan Taliban and Pakistani

diplomacy is also centered on projecting the Kashmir cause following the annexation of Occupied Kashmir by India.

Turkey, under the dynamic President Erdogan is flexing its political and military muscles in the region, reaching out to Russia for military equipment, supporting Qatar in its conflict with Saudi Arabia and there is now a Turkish military contingent based in Qatar. Turkey is also actively supporting the UN recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya where the opposing faction is supported by Egypt and the UAE. Turkey also does not hide its sympathies for the Muslim Brotherhood which is being persecuted by the regime in Egypt, a sympathy that is shared by Qatar as well.

Iran, despite the pressure of sanctions, remains a major player in the Middle East and the assassination of its revolutionary guard General Qasim Sulemani last January has not diluted either its proactive role or its political presence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon or Yemen. Additionally, Iran remains the principal supporter of such Palestinian organizations as Hamas, which is ruling Gaza in occupied Palestine, as well as other militant factions like the



Islamic Jihad and the Hezbollah in Lebanon plus the Houthis in Yemen, which makes Iran one of the key players in the Middle East. Apart from Muslim Middle Powers, Israel too has been active, both in promoting its interests as well as countering Iran. Israel has developed a strategic relationship with

Modi's India since both have similar policies in Occupied Palestine and Occupied Kashmir respectively, primarily using demography to transform a majority into minority in the respective occupied regions.

Israel has also launched a diplomatic offensive to get recognised by the UAE, which is its first inroad into the Persian Gulf region, although this development does not have a bandwagon effect since no other Muslim country has followed suit.

The most significant element in the Middle East equation is the virtual unraveling of the 70 year old strategic understanding between the United States and Saudi Arabia, which essentially boiled down to an 'oil for security' deal in which uninterrupted supply of cheap Saudi oil to the United States was guaranteed in return for an American security umbrella that would protect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the House of Sauds from all internal and external threats.

With the United States no longer dependent on Saudi oil to fuel its industrial machine, given the discovery of shale gas as a fossil fuel alternative and the fact about the retrenchment of US military power from the Middle East which was exemplified by the sudden withdrawal of American Patriot missile batteries from Saudi Arabia after Saudi oil installations had been attacked from anti-Saudi rebels in Yemen, the nature of the chasm between Riyadh and Washington is evident. The American security establishment or the 'Deep State' as President Trump labels it has also been sniping at the Saudi Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman (MBS) on a host of issues. Trump himself also made

disparaging remarks about Saudi Arabia in a famous public statement on October 2, 2018, when he said that “if we stop supporting the Saudi Arabia, their regime would fall within two weeks”. In fact, this process of distancing from Saudi Arabia had started earlier during the Obama administration when he signed the landmark nuclear deal with Iran much to the annoyance of Saudi Arabia and Obama also accused Saudi Arabia of fomenting religious extremism in different parts of Muslim world, during his famous interview with ‘The Atlantic’ in April 2016.

Given this context of historic and transformative change, Pakistan has been carefully calibrating its policies but at the same time clearly shown its preference for what it feels for areas that are deemed as the ‘core interests’ of Pakistan.

There are five key components of the future contours of Pakistan’s strategic choices in foreign policy in the context of the rapidly changing regional scenario. First is the China factor, Pakistan’s most reliable foreign friend with whom Pakistan’s future is inextricably intertwined, whether it is defence or diplomacy, economy or energy, regional strategy or science and technology and on this issue, there is a broad across the board national consensus among all stakeholders be those in the government or outside government. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is testimony to this strategic linkage and in the new context of looming cold war and an aggressive India under Modi which is now more closely aligned with the United States in that effort to contain China, Pakistan’s strategic tilt towards China is more pronounced. Pakistan’s Prime Minister, in his recent interview marking his 2 years in office, has also linked Pakistan’s future economic progress and strategic alignment with China.

Second, in an attempt to reverse wrongs of the past, the Pakistani military establishment has changed course on its flawed Afghan policy, naively labelled ‘strategic depth’, which played favourites and which dabbled in internal Afghan conflicts with the result that Pakistan ended up with more adversaries than friends in Afghanistan. Today, Pakistan’s position is to support the Afghan peace process through negotiations between Washington and the Afghan Taliban is welcomed change of hearts. Politically, it has a better balanced relationship with all Afghan factions, moving beyond narrow confines of the Pashtun-centric policy of the past. More so, since peace, security and stability in Pakistan is inextricably intertwined with peace, security and stability in Afghanistan.

Third, after the aggressive policies of Modi regime in India which are based on a xenophobic, anti-Islamic ideological approach both against the Muslims in India and Pakistan as well, Pakistan too has taken a more proactive, assertive diplomatic approach with India making Occupied Kashmir as the centre-piece of that policy. To complement that approach, Pakistan has done a diplomatic outreach to smaller countries of South Asia like Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh who are also alienated by India’s ‘bully on the block’ mentality.

Fourth, of late, there had been some ripples in Pakistan’s other strategic relationship, namely, with Saudi Arabia which necessitated a recent fence mending mission by the Army Chief to Riyadh. While Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have a strategic confluence of interests, with a mutual dependence, occasionally, policy differences had cropped up. In 2015, for example, Pakistan

refused a Saudi request to support its Yemen adventure with military troops and Saudi Arabia is well aware of the fact that all its regional adversaries, Iran, Turkey and Qatar, have a close diplomatic and political rapport with Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan is fully aware that Saudi Arabia has developed a close economic and political relationship with India, hence the Saudi stand on Kashmir has been somewhat soft.



Despite these tactical differences on specific areas, there is a mutual dependence which is at the core of Pakistan-Saudi relationship. Pakistan is dependent on Saudi Arabia on the economic front given that 3 million Pakistanis live and work in Saudi Arabia and send home remittances worth billion of dollars. During key moments in Pakistan’s history, Saudi Arabia has also offered a financial bailout as it did when Pakistan faced sanctions after the nuclear tests in 1998 as well as in 2018. Saudi Arabia too is dependent on Pakistan for security and since 1982, there is a security pact that enables Pakistan to provide a Pakistani military presence through troop contingents to be based inside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the defence of Saudi Arabia from any external military threat. Such a contingent was placed during 1983 to 1987 and this contingent was replenished during the 1991 Gulf War when Saddam Hussain had occupied Kuwait. During the Afghan War years, 1979-1989, Saudi Arabia gave matching funds of \$ 2 billion to Pakistan which was an addition to the \$ 2 billion by CIA for the biggest covert operation in history after World War-II to finance, organize and train Afghan Mujahideen in the war against the Soviet Union. Later, during the Afghan civil war, 1996-2001, only three countries recognized the Afghan Taliban regime namely, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

Finally, like other countries in the region, Pakistan is waiting for the outcome of the November 3 presidential election in the United States which will decide either President Trump could get the second term or President Biden will take over, in which case, some key US priorities would likely to change as Biden is closer to the thinking of the American security establishment than Trump. That election will also determine the answer to 3 questions that impinge directly on Pakistan:

- 1) Whether the policy of US military exit from Afghanistan will continue?;
- 2) Whether the New Cold War with China will continue with the same intensity?;
- 3) Whether the Iran-US nuclear deal will be restored?

November 3 will determine the fate of these questions while the jockeying for power continues with proxy wars, a looming new cold war and other brewing conflicts, from Libya to Kashmir. But one fact will remain unchanged, irrespective of whoever comes into power on November 3. There is an inescapable conclusion about America’s decline and loss of political clout with the balance of economic and political power shifting from the West to the East in what is now increasingly viewed as the ‘Asian Century’ in which the rise of China will remain an abiding and irreversible reality.

(The writer is Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and served as Editor of ‘The Muslim’ newspaper during 1982-1987)

Taliban Chief Assigns Close Aide to Lead Key Negotiations

By Tahir Khan

On Tuesday, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad met with the head of the Taliban's political office in Doha, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and the new head of the Taliban's negotiating team, Abdul Hakim Haqqani, to discuss the upcoming intra-Afghan negotiations.

This meeting comes in the aftermath of a major shift on the Taliban side as earlier in the week, Taliban supreme leader Haibatullah Akhunzada announced that a new, 21-member team responsible for these negotiations will be headed by Haqqani and not Baradar, a co-founder of the Taliban.

But perhaps more importantly, Haqqani replaces Abbas Stanekzai, who was a part of the team that negotiated the recently inked US-Taliban agreement, and was supposed to lead the negotiations before Akhunzada's announcement. Does this shift reinforce Pakistan's role in the negotiations? Or is this measure a reflection of the seriousness on the Taliban side to move forward a process that has been delayed since March? Abdul Hakim Haqqani is the former defacto Chief Justice for the Taliban. His newly constituted Abdul Hakim Haqqani is the former defacto Chief Justice for the Taliban. His newly constituted 21-member team will also include 13 members from the "Rehbari Shura" or Leadership Council, the powerful decision-making body of the insurgents. Taliban officials argue that the appointment of Hakim Haqqani is aimed at making the negotiations team more acceptable to the Taliban at large, especially the military commanders and foot soldiers, who hold religious scholars in high esteem. "The nomination of Sheikh Hakim also aims an attempt by the Amir-ul-Momineen (commander of faithful) to avoid any controversy over the possible decisions in intra-Afghan negotiations," a Taliban negotiator told The Truth International this week. "Formation of a strong and powerful team is also a message for the Kabul administration and the world that

we take the intra-Afghan negotiations very seriously that is expected to end the 20-year of war in Afghanistan," said the Taliban leader, who did not want to be identified by name.

The negotiations were initially scheduled to start on March 10 but the Taliban refused to join the process unless the Afghan government released 5,000 Taliban prisoners. The government has now freed almost all prisoners. Taliban have also freed 1,000 government's prisoners under the deal.

Abbas Stanekzai will now serve as deputy of the negotiations team. Before this change, The Truth International spoke with the Stanekzai and asked him about the formation of the negotiating team. "The Amir-ul-Momineen (chief) Sheikh Haibatullah has appointed a new team for intra-Afghan negotiations. I have been assigned to lead a 20-member team including 13 members of the Rehbari Shura (Leadership Council). There is 65 percent share of the leadership council's members. This is a powerful and competent team. The team will be independent in its work for talks with Afghans, the Americans, and other sides to pursue peace process, discuss the prisoner issue, implementation of the agreement between the US and Afghans.... The team is called "Da Bain-ul-Afghani Muzakirato Riasat" (The Directorate of Intra-Afghan negotiations). This will be an independent directorate and will be in direct contact with the 'Amir-ul-Momineen (commander of faithful) and answerable to him."

Of particular importance is Stanekzai's approach to regional partners, that may have Islamabad concerned and may also have triggered the change. In what seemed to have been an invitation to India to play a bigger role in the peace process, he said, "We welcome any country if it takes positive steps related to the peace process. We invite them to meet us face-to-face with the negotiation team and cooperate with it in its work." "I want to appeal to our neighbors especially Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and China to play their role in a positive way to

take the peace process forward. We also want regional countries like Russia, India and Gulf countries, Middle East, which are involved in



Afghan issue to remove all hurdles in the way of the peace process and to pave the way for the positive conclusion of the intra-Afghan negotiations to restore peace and security in Afghanistan."

Intra-Afghan negotiations were due to start in March this year. But a major sticking point between the parties was the release of prisoners. "There are certain logistic problems that will be removed in a short period to start the negotiations. The other side is not ready as they have not yet completed the process of the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners in accordance with the US-Taliban agreement. Over 300 are still in jails. We have freed 1,000 as per our commitment. The talks will start when the process of release of prisoners is completed."

But the release of prisoners is not very straightforward. France and Australia have opposed the release of some Taliban who were accused of killing their nationals in Afghanistan. This has further delayed the release of 320 prisoners despite the Loya Jirga's approval. Yet the Taliban's patience on the issue seems to be running thin. He argues that these objecting countries have not spoken to the Taliban directly. "The list of our prisoners was shared with the Americans two months before signing of the agreement on Feb. 29... now Kabul has suspended the process under the pretext that France and Australia oppose release of some prisoners.... Prisoners should be freed in accordance with the agreement.... This is a game by the US, NATO and Kabul to sabotage the peace process. They will lose more than us. They should not create more problems." The handing over of the negotiating team from Stanekzai to Haqqani is seen by some as a signal by Akhunzada to move things along. Whether this move will be able to trigger movement in the deadlocked positions of both sides is yet to be seen.

Afghan Negotiations - A Graveyard of Peace Efforts

By Umer Farooq

Afghanistan is not simply a graveyard of empires, but also a graveyard of peace efforts. On various occasions, several regional countries with discernible interests have tried their hand at resolving the conflict. However, these efforts gained speed in the later part of the last decade with Washington's realization that military solution was not a viable option.

In the initial phase, these efforts remained immersed in the murky world of intelligence, as they attempted to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table. For instance, Saudi Intelligence arranged a meeting between government representatives and Taliban officials in 2012 in the Port City of Jeddah, but to no avail. Similarly, US Intelligence held their own secret parleys with Taliban representatives in Germany in December 2011.

However, in May 2018, a diplomatic event in Tashkent extricated these efforts from the hands of the agencies. The conference was organized by the Uzbek government, described at the time as another attempt to bring Afghan government and Taliban to the negotiating table. It was widely attended by diplomats from regional countries including foreign ministers of five Central Asian states, and officials of the Afghan government. Diplomats from important Western powers as well as neighboring states too were in attendance.

Therefore, it came as no surprise that these peace efforts were spearheaded by Pakistani Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi. Optics were arranged such that television cameras showed the Director General of the ISI standing beside Mr. Qureshi to welcome the Taliban delegation. This was when the Taliban were convinced to enter a negotiation process with the Afghan government – a feat they had consistently refused.

While there have been frequent efforts to bring the two players to the table, they proved futile due to a divergence in interests and uncontrolled conflicts. In November 2011, a senior US official disclosed to the then Pakistan Army Chief, Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani, that their diplomats were secretly negotiating with the Taliban in Germany. This disclosure came with the request to protect their interlocutors. While Gen. Kiyani was not surprised by this news, he was shocked by their demand.

In the latter part of 2011, Tayyab Agha, a close aide of Mullah Omar serving in the Afghan embassy in Islamabad, travelled to Germany on Pakistani passport to hold talks with American officials. The request for protection stemmed from the fear that upon the revelation of talks in early 2012, there could be attempts to eliminate the interlocutors. Nevertheless, direct talks are what the Taliban now demand. This is considering the growing notion that the Kabul government is merely a puppet and is powerless in the greater scheme of things.

Due to the persistent distrust between the Kabul government and Afghan Taliban, former Advisor to the then Prime Minister, Sartaj Aziz, advised the Afghan side to dissolve precondition to talks, in a bid to create a conducive environment. As a result, the talks never took off. Tashkent Conference, focused exclusively on Afghanistan and terrorism, enabled the regional powers to arrive at a consensus to create a solid bloc within

Afghanistan to prevent the rise of ISIS (or any other terror organization) inside Afghan territory. In April 2018, a senior defense official told a meeting of Defense Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Council (SCO) in Beijing that ISIS's growing presence in Afghanistan is a source of concern for all regional countries neighboring Afghanistan.

Only two months ago, when the deposed Foreign Minister, Khawaja Asif visited Moscow, Russian Foreign Ministry officials told him in unequivocal terms that the introduction of ISIS fighters into Northern Afghanistan is a sinister development which was extremely concerning. The Russian Foreign Ministry official briefed him regarding the delivery of ISIS fighters into Northern Afghanistan. Since then, Pakistan military and political leadership has been in direct talks with at least Russia and Iran over the rise of ISIS as a military force in Northern and Eastern Afghanistan, a senior government official said. The Russian Federation is particularly concerned about bordering Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan under their sphere of influence.

For Pakistan, the rise of ISIS is concerning in the Eastern Afghan province of Nuristan, bordering its territory due to the subsequent impact on sectarian violence within the country. It is believed that most of these attacks have been carried out by ISIS along with their local partners. Despite refuting the spread of ISIS, the civil-military leadership have brought this new situation under careful consideration. Although concerns were routinely brought up by the Russians and Iranians, no formal arrangement or mechanism was initiated to combat the ISIS threat.

In sight of this danger, Pakistan military's age-old dream of bringing Taliban into the diplomatic mainstream of regional diplomacy finally sees realistic form, to the extent that each country is now in talks with the Afghan Taliban. Although, no attempts have been made to conceal links, the Russians have recently publicly acknowledged their ties with the Taliban. Similarly, Iranian ties with Taliban surfaced following the murder of Taliban supreme commander, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, killed in a US drone strike. Wall Street Journal reported that Mansour was traveling to Quetta after a 'lengthy' stay in Iran.

Furthermore, renowned Afghan expert, Rahimullah Yousafzai spoke of links between the Chinese government and the Afghan Taliban. "Chinese want to mediate between Afghan government and Afghan Taliban", he said. These ties are not for naught, rather will provide legitimacy to the Taliban within and beyond the Afghan society.

Since 9/11, this is perhaps the first time negotiations are being pursued neither in political offices, nor in intelligence agencies. Apparently, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry is leading these efforts which could be considered a product of the Tashkent Conference. Experts, however, are of the opinion that the success of this peace effort would depend on the likelihood of Afghan Taliban bringing down their violent streak. Pakistani government has so far desisted from providing any guarantees in this regard to either side.

Who Damaged the Economy?

By Dr. Ashfaque Hasan Khan



Dr. Ishrat Hussain had described the decade of the 1990s as a lost decade for Pakistan. For me, the decade of 2008-18 was yet another lost decade for Pakistan. It is

unfortunate that a country like Pakistan experienced two decades of lost economic opportunities in its seven decades of existence.

The second lost decade (2008-18) witnessed economic growth slowing to an average of 3.8 percent per annum at the back of declining public and private sector investment. In fact, this decade made 3.5-4.0 percent economic growth a new normal for Pakistan, resulting into slower job creation and rising unemployment.

This decade also witnessed perpetuation of fiscal indiscipline, resulting in growing fiscal deficit and rising both public and external debt and liabilities. While the decade of the 1990s added \$17.4 billion in external debt and liabilities, the second lost decade (2008-18) added over \$55 billion to the same. These two lost decades therefore, added \$72.4 billion or over 75 percent to the outstanding stock of external debt and liabilities as of end-June 2018. Alarming, over three-fourth of \$95.2 billion debt and liabilities as of end-June 2018 were accumulated during the two lost decades, more so in the second lost decade.

This decade also witnessed massive deterioration of Institutions. In particular, Institutions dealing with economic policy witnessed massive erosion of professional capacity which compelled the successive governments to rely on “consultants”. Weakening of the Institutions also weakened policy-making ability of the governments, resulting in excessive reliance on donors for policy formulation.

Against the backdrop of the second lost decade, came the present government at the helm of affairs. The present leadership, while in opposition, raised enormous expectations of the people of Pakistan. There is no two opinion that the present government had inherited an economy which was really in a bad shape. Current account deficit was at all-time high at \$20 billion in 2017-18, budget deficit (excluding circular debt expenditure) was as high as 6.6 percent of GDP, economic growth was slowing and unemployment was rising. It was indeed a gigantic task for the new government to address multi-dimensional challenges. There is a general consensus among independent economists that instead of addressing humongous challenges that it inherited, the inexperienced economic team further compounded the difficulties.

The government either had no option but to seek a balance of payments support from the IMF or was “forced” to go to the IMF for a 22nd IMF Program. In either case, the government went to the IMF for a balance of payments support. It was an interesting coincident that the present leadership came to power after 22 years of continuous struggle only to land up in 22nd IMF Program.

It is essential for the readers to know the mindset of the IMF as an institution. The intellectual philosophy of this Institution is based on the Chicago School of Thought, that is, everything is a monetary phenomenon; balance of payments is a monetary phenomenon caused by excessive demand in the economy and that inflation is also a monetary phenomenon, again caused by the excess of demand over supply of goods. The excessive demand is caused by “too much money chasing too few goods”.

At the back of this philosophy, the standard IMF prescription is geared towards addressing the issue of excessive demand. That is why the IMF Program is known as demand management/demand destruction/austerity Program. The standard prescription to manage demand dates back to the early 1980s and enshrined in the so called stabilization policy. While the world has changed in the last four decades, the prescription of the IMF has remained unchanged.

For managing demand, the standard IMF prescription of the 1980s included: a) tight monetary policy; b) tight fiscal policy; c) market-based exchange rate regime; and d) adjusting utility prices. The previous 21 IMF Programs had rested on these four policy prescriptions; the current Program is once again based on the same four policy prescriptions. How these policy prescriptions work to curtail aggregate demand (after all, it is a demand management program)? Firstly, through tightening of monetary policy, that is, raising discount rate as fast as possible. Since discount rate serves as a benchmark for all the lending rates, private sector investment declines which, in turn, reduces import demand. Since developing countries economic activity depend principally on imported raw materials, imported capital goods, imported machinery and equipment, and imported energy, any decline in imports slows down the economic activity. In other words, demand destruction is achieved by chocking the economic activities of the country.

How else can we discourage imports, promote exports and, hence reduce current account imbalances? Very simple! Go for massive devaluation. Devaluation increases the landed cost of all the imported items including inputs to the production process. Higher cost of imported items not only discourage its consumption but also increases the cost of production. Hence, lower import slows economic growth. Since devaluation is also inflationary by definition, the Central Bank justifies tightening of monetary policy (i.e., raising discount rate) to contain inflationary pressures.

Higher interest rate, on the other hand, increases cost of borrowing of the government to finance fiscal deficit and therefore, increases interest payment. In the absence of commensurate rise in revenue, the overall fiscal deficit increases. Hence, an irrelevant tax target is given under the IMF program to achieve targeted fiscal deficit. The government is also being asked to raise utility prices, supposedly to improve the financial health of the utility companies, but actually it also increases the cost of production. The entire focus of the program is therefore on increasing the cost

of production to make the industry non-competitive in international market as well as raising public debt. Higher interest rate increases cost of capital; devaluation increases cost of imported inputs; higher utility prices (gas, electricity) increases cost of production and irrelevant revenue target further burdened the industry with tax incidence. Devaluation accompanied by higher interest rate drowns the country into debt.

In this article, I intend to present the impact of only two policy prescriptions of the current IMF Program. One deals with discount rate because we have been told time and again that this rate is increased to counter inflationary pressure. The other deals with devaluation because we have been told time and again that this will improve the competitiveness of our industry and exports will increase to correct external imbalances. Let us see whether these policies have historically worked to achieve the desired results.

1) Discount Rate and Inflation



As stated above, we have been told time and again that the SBP has increased the discount rate to control inflation. In other words, there is

an inverse relationship between discount rate and inflation. A cursory look at Fig. 1 is sufficient to see a strong positive relationship between the two variables. The graph shows that whenever discount rate is raised, the CPI-based inflation rises accordingly. As stated, earlier, interest rate is a cost of capital. When it is raised, the cost of borrowing goes up and accordingly, it is passed on to the consumers.

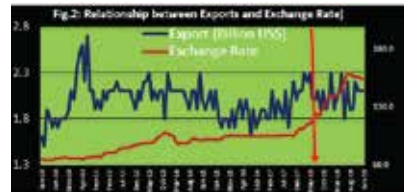
The Governor SBP had stated several times during the release of monetary policy statement that inflation in Pakistan is a supply side phenomenon followed by the rise of government administered prices (prices of gas, electricity etc.) and yet he continued to use the demand side instrument (discount rate) to contain inflation. He failed to see the composition of the CPI-basket where almost 35 percent contribution comes from food items followed by the prices of gas, electricity, fuel, water and house rent (24%). House rent is measured through the quarterly survey of the housing units for rent purpose. Transport charges are linked with fuel prices and it accounts for almost 6 percent weight to the CPI. Prices of medicines are largely controlled by the government (2.8%) Schools are not free to charge tuition fee (education) of their likings (3.8%). Thus, almost three-fourth of the CPI basket are not affected by discount rate at all and yet our Central Bank continued to use this instrument to control inflation. This misconstrued policy alone added Rs. 1687 billion to interest payment during July 2018 till March 2020. It has simply eroded fiscal space, contributed immensely in widening fiscal deficit and raising public debt.

The high interest rate policy on the other hand attracted "Hot Money" in our short term Treasury Bills, benefited immensely to foreigners by damaging local economy. The high interest policy attracted "Hot Money" by putting the domestic economy in cold storage. High interest rate policy certainly did not reduce

inflation but it contributed to the rise in interest payment, deterioration in fiscal balance, addition to public debt, reducing investment, slowing economic growth, rising unemployment and poverty, reducing tax collection and so on. Who is responsible for this damage to the economy?

2) Export and Exchange Rate

We have been told by the SBP and its ill-informed Governor that devaluation would improve the competitiveness of our industry abroad and hence would help increase exports. A cursory look at Fig. 2 is sufficient to see that our exports have remained invariant to the adjustment of exchange rate. This graph covers over 100 months of exports and exchange rate numbers. It is clear that our exports have moved in a narrow monthly range of \$1.7 billion to \$2.3 billion, irrespective of exchange rate, whether it is Rs. 60 per dollar or Rs. 160 per dollar. I have been arguing time and again that by adjusting exchange rate Pakistan cannot increase its exports. Devaluation raises input cost of export-oriented industries and make them non-competitive. According to Dr. Ishrat Hussain, close to 60 percent of the inputs to export-oriented industries are imported, hence devaluation raises their costs and make them non-competitive. While devaluation failed to increase exports, it certainly added Rs. 4666 billion to public debt without borrowing a single dollar during July 2018 to March 2020.



On exchange rate policy, I have been telling to the people of Pakistan through electronic media that devaluation would not

increase exports. It will simply add to public debt. My views, were based on personal experience that I gained during eleven years of my stay in the Ministry of Finance. I was glad that Dr. Ishrat Hussain, a former Governor of the SBP also came to the same conclusion.

Once again, no body listened to us. We added almost Rs. 4666 billion to the public debt because of the devaluation without raising exports. Prime Minister and others never bothered to get alternative views. The nation has paid a heavy price of these misconstrued policies. People who landed from helicopter had little or no idea about the statistics of Pakistan. They have never studied Pakistan's economy. They brought the knowledge of the western economies and their policies and brutally implemented the same in developing country like Pakistan.

Such policies have severely damaged the economy, dented the popularity of the Prime Minister and put the government in back foot, trying to hide behind inheritance. Interestingly, Prime Minister on the other hand has collected the failures of the 2nd lost decade to build Pakistan's economy. Good luck to the Prime Minister.

A Historical Review of the IMF Program in Pakistan

By Mehtab Haider

Pakistan's economy had experienced "boom and bust cycles" on frequent basis and every time after passing through imbalances on the macroeconomic front it landed into seeking another IMF program.

To ascertain reasons for experiencing imbalances on economic front, whenever economy started achieving higher growth it remained unsustainable mainly because it never fuelled with raising required investment and savings. So the country had to rely upon unsustainable avenues to fuel its growth trajectory. Secondly, the country had never made efforts to undertake structural reforms to fix loopholes so it re-surfaced after pause of few years again and again.

The macro imbalances resulted into appearing of twin deficits known as current account deficit and fiscal deficit. In order to stabilize the economy, the prescription lies with the IMF usually folded into suppressing the demand through fiscal, monetary and exchange rate measures. But when the IMF completed then again macroeconomic imbalances re-appeared and after few years of plunging into spending spree again the country had to go back to the IMF program.

Pakistan had so far signed total 22 lending program with the IMF including 12 Stand-by Arrangement (SBA), 9 Extended Fund Facility and 1 Structural Adjustment Program. Only one program completed with success under the PML (N) regime while one program was said goodbye by Pakistan without getting last tranche during the Musharraf-Shaukat Aziz regime in 2003-4.

All other programs remained incomplete and Pakistan was known as "one or two tranche" country among the comity of international lenders.

Now the existing IMF program of \$6 billion under Extended Fund Facility (EFF) stands at crossroads because it was

lying in stalled mode since February 2020 after the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. Although, the IMF's Executive Board had provided \$1.4 billion to Pakistan under Rapid Financing Instruments (RFI) but the normal IMF program could not be revived.

There were expectations that the IMF program would be revived after approval of budget for 2020-21 but it did not happen. The government presented budget with signal to the IMF that it wanted to revive the program as the government did not increase salaries and pension despite immense political pressures. The subsidies



amount was also slashed down in line with the IMF program.

Despite getting approval of budget for 2020-21 in line with the IMF conditions, the Fund program could not be revived mainly because of major conditions on account of presenting viable plan to achieve FBR's desired tax collection target of Rs 4963 billion, fixing energy sector problems through raising power tariff by at least 30 percent, erasing the monster of circular debt and undertaking legislative reforms of State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), NEPRA, Debt Office and others.

There is another view existing among the dwellers of Q Block (Ministry of Finance) that the IMF program should linger on for period as much as possible as the government wants to remain without IMF's



tough condition in guise of COVID-19 pandemic but at same time it does not want to get out of the IMF program. So, IMF program in suspension mode suits both sides and serious efforts will be made to revive it after first half (July-Dec) period of the current fiscal year. However, without placing viable plans on FBR and energy fronts, the IMF program cannot be revived.

Pakistan and the IMF high-ups would have to decide whether second and third tranche would be clubbed or couple of reviews would have to be abandoned in order to finalize modalities for reviving back the Fund program. On other side, Ministry of Finance high-ups are confident that they were in constant touch with the IMF team and when both sides evolved consensus on macroeconomic front the stalled IMF program would be revived.

They argued that there was favorable development regarding the curtailment of the budget deficit. The government was able to restrict it at Rs3,376 billion, equivalent to 8.1 percent of GDP against projection of 9.1 percent of GDP for the last fiscal year ended on June 30, 2020. The government was able to bring down the budget deficit because of two major factors. One was reduced debt servicing, because of lower mark up rates, while the second was that the government could not fully utilize the stimulus package of Rs1.2 trillion.

Against budgetary estimates of Rs2,891 billion for mark-up payment of foreign and domestic loans, the actual utilization of debt servicing remained at Rs2,619 billion, thus Rs272 billion was saved from this head. The second major saving came from

the inability of the government to fully utilize Rs1,240 billion stimulus package announced to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. If these two heads would not have been curtailed then the budget deficit might have gone close to 10 percent of GDP for last fiscal ended June 30, 2020.

The budget deficit ultimately increases the burden of debt and liabilities that had already ballooned to Rs 44.5 trillion equivalent to 106 percent of GDP on June 30, 2020. The public debt and liabilities went up by Rs 14.6 trillion in last two years rule of PTI led regime.

Although, the PTI led regime claims it as an achievement of the incumbent regime for restricting the budget deficit at 8.1 percent of GDP, but in absolute terms the budget deficit remained second highest in the country's history. The PTI-led government jacked up fiscal deficit to a record high of Rs3,444 billion in the first year of its rule in 2018-19, when it touched 8.9 percent of the GDP.



Primary deficit that was considered one of the major conditions under \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility of the IMF programme for Pakistan was kept at Rs756.81 billion or 1.8 percent of GDP during the last fiscal year 2019-20, against the Fund's projection of negative 3.1 percent of GDP. There is another worrisome development. Statistical discrepancy increased to Rs89 billion in fiscal year 2019-20 against Rs22.4 billion for 2018-19, indicating that it went up despite having a meagre amount in overall massive

budgetary numbers, which ran into trillions of rupees.

However, development spending both at federal and provincial levels remained lower, as federal Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) utilisation stood at Rs467 billion and provincial spending was recorded at Rs641 billion.

According to a presentation given by the prime minister's finance adviser before the federal cabinet, the total revenues were Rs6,272.168 billion, including tax revenues of Rs4,747 billion and non tax revenues of Rs1,524 billion. The Federal Board of Revenue's collection stood at Rs3,997.921 billion in the last fiscal year 2019-20, while all four provinces collected a meagre amount of just Rs413.617 billion.

Out of total non-tax revenue collection of Rs1,524.366 billion, the federal government collected Rs1,421.977 billion while provincial governments fetched Rs102.3 billion.



Meanwhile, the highest refunds were paid as the government ordered release of Rs40 billion refunds last Monday. Current Account Deficit was brought down too from \$20 billion in 2018-19 to \$3 billion in 2019-20. Foreign currency reserves increased from \$8.5 billion to \$12.5 billion held by the SBP.

Finally, the government managed to get stamped approval of FATF-related legislations from the Parliament except two bills that Senate did not pass. It is yet to be seen how the FATF review responds on these developments in its next meeting expected to be held in October 2020.

All these developments could only be beneficial for Pakistan if it helped reviving the GDP growth on sustained basis otherwise the objectives of creation of jobs, eradicating poverty and unemployment will remain just a pipe dream.

Total expenditures of the country consumed Rs9,648.488 billion in last fiscal year out of which the current expenditures utilised a major chunk to the tune of Rs8,532.02 billion. The federal current expenditures consumed Rs6,016.19 billion while provinces utilised Rs2,515.8 billion on current expenditures.

Finance Ministry stated that remittances remained at all time high despite COVID-19. The PSDP utilisation went up as Finance Ministry dispensed with the requirement of ways and means.

Auditing the Auditor: Finance Division, AGP Locked in Legal Battle

By Ashraf Malkham

A constitutional battle fast degenerating into a fierce war of words between two financial institutions of the country on whether the Auditor General Pakistan's (AGP), responsible for the audit of federal government, can be audited itself by the former as sought by the Finance Division through a move enjoying backing of the President and the federal government.

It all started during the Financial Year 2018-19 when the Finance Ministry got an approval from the President of Pakistan to conduct an audit of the Auditor General of Pakistan and also tasked a BS-21 officer of the Finance Division to initiate the exercise. The Finance Division's audit officer approached the AGP through a letter dated 30th January 2020 for provision of the relevant record but the latter took some time until the advent of COVID-19 and asked for rescheduling of the exercise in view of the pandemic.



After buying time from the Finance Division, the AGP went to the Islamabad High Court in March where it assailed the Finance Division's move on the ground that the AGP was not part of the Federal Government as defined in Chapter 3 of the Constitution and the AGP, appointed under Article 168 by the President, is also independent of executive control or the federal government and enjoyed special safeguards for "independence in performance of its functions".

The High Court admitted the petition and issued directions that the audit of the AGP, if not initiated, could be delayed or if it had been undertaken already, then its report would not be prepared

opinion of the Law Division that matter could be pursued during the pendency of the court case as well.

In response to the Finance Division's letter, the AGP has stuck to its stance and reminded the Finance Division through a letter dated 26th August 2020 that the decision to appoint Additional Secretary (21-grade officer) to conduct audit was against the constitution, in contravention of Islamabad High Court order, and an effort to undermine independent status of AGP. "The decision is tantamount to conflict of interest as AGP conducts audit of Finance Division, and Finance Division's officer working as audit officer will not be functioning independently," says the letter.

The letter also urges the Finance Division to avoid what it describes as "impolite language" while communicating with AGP office. It reminds the

Finance Division that "neither the external audit of office of the Auditor General of Pakistan has ever been conducted in the past, nor is this office, resorting to any pretext to deny it".

The AGP's letter also contested the interpretation offered by the Law Division in the matter, calling it "not consistent with the Constitution". "The scope of audit of office of the AGP, envisaged in Section 19A of the Auditor-General's (Functions, Powers & Terms and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2001 etc., as provided in Section 19A, is limited to audit of sanctions.

This office's letter No. F.35-Coord/C/2020/319 dated 27th Feb, 2020, explicitly offers the definition of audit of sanctions as recognized in auditing literature and practices. Therefore, this office does not agree to the interpretation of the term, provided by the Law Division, as it is substantially different from recognized definition of the term."

Wheat, Sugar and the Making of Crisis

By Abdul Moiz

“The commodity crunch has exposed the power of the mafias and utter mismanagement by the government”



Prime Minister Imran Khan has publicly accepted his government's failure in dealing with the wheat and sugar issues properly after Pakistanis faced a wheat and sugar crisis which led to skyrocketing of prices due of powerful mafias, and the government machinery consequently failed at both the administrative and monitoring fronts.

The Punjab Government and Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) acquired wheat from growers at a price of Rs1,400 per 40kg. However, when the Punjab government failed to meet the procurement target, the Food Department officials raided the stocks of private parties and seized their wheat.

Overall availability of wheat was reported at 26.059 million tons, including the production of 25.457 million tons and carry forward stock of 0.602 million tons, reflecting a shortage of 1.141 million tons. Public sector wheat stocks were reported to be 6.32 million tons as compared to 7.65 million tons during the corresponding period last year.

The main reason for the wheat crisis,

according to officials and documents, is smuggling of the commodity to Afghanistan through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and

Balochistan, as the prices in the international market are higher compared to Pakistan.

The Punjab government had imposed a ban on inter-provincial movement of wheat to stop smuggling to Afghanistan. However, KP Chief Minister, Mahmood Khan, approached the PM and succeeded in getting the ban lifted. KP has always depended on supply from Punjab, but provincial agencies never played their due role to stop smuggling. The role played by officials of federal agencies deputed at borders has also never been satisfactory.



There have been around 40 per cent less production of wheat this year in KP. With the lifting of the ban on inter-provincial movement of wheat, its smuggling increased manifold, especially after speculators increased the price on the pretext of short supply.

The public sector of Sindh procured about 1.25 million tons of wheat this year but is not willing to release its stocks, despite pressure from the federal government. It fears that early release of wheat may create a shortage and the federal government would hold it responsible for the crisis.

As the prices of wheat and flour were rising, the government decided to import wheat without any duty to deal with the issue. The wheat imported from Ukraine started arriving at the end of August, while that from Russia is expected by the end of September.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister's Advisor on Finance and Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, is also responsible for the wheat crisis as he neither took prompt decision to import the commodity, nor approved support price at the right time.

Sources said the ECC in its meeting decided to allow provincial governments, PASSCO and Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) to invite tenders/bids immediately for import of wheat in addition to the private sector. The ECC has allowed the import of 0.2 million tons of wheat through TCP.

Regarding government to government import of wheat, the Russian Federation was contacted for the immediate arrangement of at least 200,000 tons of wheat to replenish the public sector's strategic reserves. The private sector has also been facilitated to import wheat without any restriction and the FBR has waived all duties and taxes.

Endorsement from Punjab for 0.7 million tons, KP for 0.3 million tons and PASSCO for 0.5 million tons have been received. Sindh has not responded. Department of Plant Protection, an organization of Ministry of National Food Security and Research, has issued import permits to 359 importers for

1,475,296 tons of wheat.

The private sector has stated that LCs for 200,000 tons of wheat have been opened which has started arriving in the country. Further booking of 565,000 tons from the Black Sea region has been made and its arrival is expected to start in October.

The Punjab government announced the release price of wheat at Rs1,475 per 40kg and has so far provided 411,650 tons to flour mills. The initial price of flour was fixed at Rs860 for a 20kg bag. The KP government had signed an MoU with PASSCO for provision of 200,000 tons of wheat.

The average market prices of wheat and wheat flour are reported to be Rs1,867 per 40kg and Rs1,067 per 20kg, respectively. Accordingly, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics has reported wheat and wheat flour prices at Rs2,026 per 40kg and Rs1,004 per 20kg, respectively.

Meanwhile, the government has fixed wheat release price in the range of Rs1,600-1,700 per 40kg to discourage hoarding. It also wants issuance of a new SRO with Withholding Tax (WHT) at 0.25 per cent as full and final settlement on the import value of wheat during the Financial Year 2020-21.

The federal cabinet, in its meeting held on August 4, allowed TCP to import 1.5 million tons of wheat by waiving all duties and taxes on the import specifications. The TCP has estimated the financial cost of the imported wheat at Rs2,000 per 40kg or Rs75 billion for 1.5 million tons of wheat.

The imported wheat will be supplied on the basis of the entire cost-sharing by the provinces and Finance Division (in case of PASSCO) or it may be subsidized by picking the price differential options.

Provinces will also notify exemption of Anti-Hoarding Act on imported wheat. The provincial governments have been asked to ensure free movement of

imported wheat otherwise it will be construed as compromising essential food security.

tons as strategic reserves for intervention in the market if the price rises sharply. The government has approved some incentives



A Bitter-Sweet Affair

The country is facing a sugar crisis due to speculations of short supply of the commodity and strained relations between the sugar industry and government after the official agencies started raids on mills and took on the dealers. Export of 0.3 million tons of sugar to China was also one of the reasons for the shortage of the commodity.

Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) had clearly indicated to the government that abrupt action against the mills and sugar dealers will lead to a hike in prices and panic in the market.

The government, and Prime Minister Imran Khan himself, took the PSMA's letter as a threat. However, the apprehensions of PSMA proved correct and now the sugar prices are hovering around Rs110 per kg as compared to Rs57 per kg in 2018.

In July, there were about 1.6 million tons of stocks which tentatively cover the requirements for about three-and-a-half months. Ministry of Industries and Production proposed that the government should import at least 300,000

for import of sugar such as in case of taxes, otherwise the cost of imported sugar would have been between Rs125 and 130 per kg.

An importer, Mr. Hussain Sharif, is of the view that the whole purpose of importing sugar to extend benefits to the masses and discourage sugar mafia will go in vain as an import from India, which is the nearest supply source for Pakistan, is not allowed.

Market sources are of the view that with a maximum reduction in duties and taxes on sugar and wheat, supply will improve which will lead to reduction in prices.

Despite “Performance”, Buzdar Not in Danger



Chief Executive of the province with a “pro-active doer” but the prevailing political situations around did not let the political move of replacing chief minister happen.

Mr. Fawad Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Science & Technology had remained a vocal critic of Usman Buzdar from day one and just recently tweeted and apparently termed Buzdar as a mediocre chief minister: “Conventional provincial administration particularly

By Qasim Malik

Two years on, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf’s (PTI) Punjab government is still struggling to sail smoothly as people’s expectations regarding service delivery and plugging corruption have not met primarily due to poor governance and ‘weak’ Chief Minister.

Sardar Usman Buzdar, who was picked by Prime Minister Imran Khan from a remote constituency of D.G. Khan to lead country’s most densely populated province as its Chief Executive, has continuously been facing the threat of replacement alongside strong criticism for his inability to take up matters actively and produce results. For a long time, the party stalwarts could not digest that a new entrant in the party was picked and made Chief Minister. Despite severe criticism, Buzdar’s government is striving hard without any threat of change, as it has a significant place in the eyes of the Prime Minister, Imran Khan.

Mr Buzdar recently himself admitted his shortcomings at a media talk saying, “I cannot say that everything is good in Punjab. It’s a big province and no one can guarantee about anyone”.

Criticism against the Buzdar-led Punjab government was not only being made by the general public and the opposition parties, but dissenting voices from within the ruling party were getting stronger every passing day, too. The party leadership has severally felt the need to replace the ‘figurehead’

mediocre chief ministers cannot run administrative affairs. Provincial governments’ non-performance is the reason behind the non-availability of civic amenities, devastated police system and largely unsatisfactory education and health system,” Mr. Chaudhry tweeted and urged the political parties (including PTI) to think over the crisis. Despite many tall-claims, Mr. Buzdar seems more powerful and seems to complete his entire tenure.

Since the voices of replacing ‘puppet’ CM Usman Buzdar with a “pro-active doer” Chief Minister started getting strength, Prime Minister Imran Khan had himself started listening to the party men about the ground realities and perception of the PTI government at the grassroots level in Punjab. Some party stalwarts suggested that replacing Buzdar with an active chief minister would help restore public confidence in the PTI government and remove opposition’s allegation that Punjab was being run directly from Banigala. “The PTI Punjab government’s current performance will lead the party to pay price in the next general elections,” they had also hurled a soft warning to the prime minister.

As the party chief started listening to the voices explaining ‘ground realities of governance’ in Punjab and sought more such updates, as many as four provincial cabinet members’ names surfaced being potential candidates for Punjab chief minister: Senior Minister Abdul Aleem Khan followed by Provincial Finance Minister Hashim Jawan Bakht, Industries

Minister Mian Aslam Iqbal and Irrigation Minister Mohsin Leghari.

Publicly, the Prime Minister terms all aspirants as foes of the Punjab Chief Minister and have severally asserted that Buzdar would continue serving as CM till the completion of the government's constitutional term in 2023. A party leader told this reporter, "Imran Khan and his close aides sometimes enjoy counting Punjab chief minister candidates".



After NAB summoned Mr. Buzdar in an alleged case of liquor license and a bribe of Rs.50 million, the Prime Minister yet again lauded the Buzdar-government's performance, claimed by party sources as a change of heart.

Political analysts see the summoning of Chief Minister Usman Buzdar by NAB in the alleged liquor license case as the country's establishment itself surfaces to ensure removal of Mr. Buzdar from the position of province's Chief Minister. NAB is also already investigating the Chief Minister in the sugar subsidy case.

Disturbed over the alleged role of the establishment, in a bid to remove Mr Buzdar, party insiders say the PTI and the Prime Minister felt the threat against Usman Buzdar as a threat to them. "The PTI thinks, if Buzdar will go without its consent, then the PTI government will also become vulnerable," says political analyst Suhail Warraich and adds that eventually, PM Imran Khan will put his full weight behind Usman Buzdar.

Mr. Khan's concern over NAB summoning of Mr. Buzdar can be gauged from the fact that the Prime Minister never commented on the summoning of any party man by NAB but in Buzdar's liquor case, Imran Khan came up saying that he had strong reservations over the case.

Party insiders say the PTI is observing the NAB case as if other forces now want to remove Usman Buzdar. "This is not just the NAB action against Buzdar but involvement of other state institutions as well," a source said and added that in this situation PTI was united and Imran put his weight behind Mr Buzdar.

"Prime Minister Imran Khan has recognized that he himself would become weak if Buzdar was removed without his consent," says a close confidant of the premier and adds the party looking after the NAB case (against Buzdar) as establishment's attack to weaken the prime minister.

The Punjab bureaucracy too did not offer support to Prime Minister's Wasim Akram-Plus and continued looking towards the centre for directions. The bureaucracy has also been

reluctant in taking bold and major administrative decisions, particularly involving big money primarily because of the premier's warning of strong action on corruption, soon after he had assumed the charge of country's Chief Executive Office.

Eventually, public spending was squeezed and the private sector was already in crisis owing to the introduction of certain anti-traders and anti-business policies, leading to a severe economic crisis since

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A bureaucrat on the condition of anonymity said the governance crisis would stay in Punjab if the province would continue to be run through remote control and independent decisions disallowed. The official says no bureaucrat is able to deliver until and unless he is allowed to focus on his department for a longer period of time.

Feeling the need to improve governance, the Punjab government has recently constituted a Good Governance Council with the chief minister as its head. The council members are primarily the true faces of the PTI, who have been standing alongside PTI chief Imran Khan through thick and thin at least during the past one decade and more.

The council eventually began thinking and finding out solutions to public problems, bringing improvements in service delivery and good governance besides effectively projecting government performance.

Interview with Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron

By Palwasha Khattak

The focus of The Truth International's (TTI) first-ever interview is the President of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Gabriela Cuevas Barron. She started her

gender, age, religion, ethnicity, and other pluralities."

She appreciates Pakistan's passion for

stated that IPU is the best organization worldwide, in terms of their acceptance rates for women parliamentarians. UN Women and IPU also published a list



journey at the age of 15, spent 20 years in politics and now serves as a Mexican Member of Parliament. Her focus lies on the human rights of migrants, Children's protection, fight corruption, and environmental protection.

On the importance of IPU, she said that IPU is a powerful platform for bringing dialect and different parts of the conflict together which is why it's neutral. Since its inception, this platform has helped translate dialect into understating and cooperation. IPU's mandate is to promote democracy and equal representation of all genders in the political sphere. The 24.9% of women parliamentarians' worldwide and 5% head of state is quite opposite to the world's population.

Pakistan's Democracy:

IPU's President says Pakistan is a young democracy with important debate, more dynamic politics with significant changes. "I think, changes are always for good when the parliament and the senate are involved. Because parliament reflects all the plurality of the society in terms of

professionalizing their parliamentary duties and having training institutions. Pakistanis are looking for a more dynamic democracy. Since democracy cannot be built from scratch, it has to start with important issues like education, training institutions, and involving all segments of society.

Women's Representation in Parliament:

President IPU appreciated the 30% quota for women in parliament. However, Mexico is thirty years ahead already. They also changed the constitution to ask for gender parity which is the only way to accelerate a cultural change, otherwise, it can take centuries like all Asia-pacific countries. She said, "I believe Pakistan can be a leading force in terms of having more inclusive parliaments and democracies". More than half of the total world's population are women and youth which creates a gap that needs to be fixed.

On suggesting other member countries to allow women in their parliaments she

of countries that have the highest percentage of women in 2019.

Gwadar City Visit:

After visiting the Gwadar port she mentioned that Pakistan has a privileged geographical location. She said, "Sometimes we only see the complicated signs of our geography, but we don't see the opportunities". And Pakistan is now seeing the opportunities with strategic decisions in terms of urban planning. Cooperation and joint efforts are also sending a powerful message in the form of Chinese investment on Pakistani soil.

Pakistan might have an important position in terms of international trade, improved logistics, and attracting investments. The global economy also needs national strategies and when these global opportunities are not translated to a national plan, the nation loses. Gwadar project also has potential since it has a beautiful sea, beaches, and wonderful Pakistani people.

About the Human Rights situation in Indian Held Kashmir she said, IPU's standing is an organization advocating for cooperation and reserving any kind of controversies.

She remarked, "Democracy, all around the world, is now under a lot of threats



from territorial regimes, populist regimes, and dictators". She expressed her concern that some governments are clearly using people's fear during the pandemic to restrict liberties and human rights. Even Iran and Afghanistan have a good spirit and a will for stronger institutions.

She gave an interesting yet factual statement that without proper channel and legislative support, asking youth to participate in politics is not enough. Her entry into politics was possible because it was allowed in Mexican legislation. One can be elected at the age of 21 for the Federal Parliament.

She put emphasis that it's the politicians' responsibility to make legislation, provide incentives, and welcome youth. She had dreams to bring change and those values and dreams are very

much needed in politics. Inviting young people means competitive politics but with better decisions and information.

On gender parity, she said that the world was progressing but women's growth is going backward. The international conversation usually revolves around providing support and care for essential workers. Whereas, the services of health workers are neither recognized nor paid well and 70% of them are

women, worldwide. She further said, "Looking at the statistics of violence against women globally before the pandemic, 137 women were killed every single day, not by a drug cartel or a terrorist group but a member of their own family".

She recalled memory and told us, "I remember the first time we voted the gender quotas in my country 18 years ago, a Member of Parliament voted against it. I went and asked him the reason, to which he said that I don't want to see my wife in here".

She suggested that Pakistan needs to develop better communication strategies to reach out to more countries and improve its image at the international level.

She highlighted, "Pakistani people are literally offering their hearts. It is a traditional and Muslim society in many ways but, it is also a free society".

She further suggested that Pakistan's beautiful places should be promoted in a touristic strategy. Pakistan cannot escape reality just like any other country and needs to be united to work in a more harmonious way.

When asked to support Pakistani

candidate; Sadiq Sanjrani in the next elections for IPU President, she said that she cannot support any candidate because she is the president of the IPU and will be acting as referee.

She called Mr. Sanjrani, a very good surprise. She observed him as an interesting combination of clear determination and a good sense of humor which is very strange in politicians. He is focused on details and is careful. He is punctual about the meetings, is well prepared about different topics, policies, legislations, and happenings around the world.

We could see her excitement while talking about Pakistani food. She liked Pakistani fruits, tried Pakistani vegetable samosas and Pakistani fish, and rated shrimps in Gwadar the best shrimps ever.

Ms. Cuevas Barron said Shukria (thanks) to the team of TTI at the end of the interview.

Forsaken and Forgotten

By Sibtain Naqvi

She stands by herself, disheveled and distraught, body half submerged in the drifting water, sobbing and begging for help. It is obvious that floods arising from the heavy deluge have left her destitute and at the mercy of the elements. If there can be a face of the tragedy of Karachi, it is she. But she is far from being alone. Across Karachi, from Surjani town to North Nazimabad to Clifton and DHA, the story is the same. Flooding, destruction of property, and loss of power. They say Karachi is the city of lights, the rains turned it into a dark wasteland.



How does one make sense of Karachi? The numbers boggle and bewilder: population estimated to be the same as Australia's and more than half of Sindh's, providing half the total tax collection of the Federal Board of Revenue and generating almost a quarter of Pakistan's GDP. And yet, Karachi is ranked the fifth least livable city in the world and for a decade has been placed near the bottom. Its Pakistan's commercial capital but its infrastructure is worse than that of Amroha, a small town in Uttar Pradesh in India. When its citizens get electricity, it comes from a utility company ranked worst by the World Bank Group among the companies operating in large cities of South Asia and Asia Pacific.

It would not be so shocking if the city had been bombed in war, suffered a calamitic tsunami or an earthquake or was the site of frequent hurricanes and other natural disasters. It would also be understood if the city had always been a dysfunctional wasteland. But tragically, that is not the case. The first federal capital of Pakistan, Karachi, until the 1980s was a livable city with a working infrastructure. The financial and industrial capital of Pakistan it attracted people from all over the country and following the Afghan war, became host to the largest refugee population in the world. The population explosion and mass rural-to-urban migration led to unplanned growth and soon unscrupulous builders started constructing buildings on storm drains and on encroached land making the

situation worse. Throw in the ineptitude of the MQM and PPP, the two parties that have ruled Karachi for most of the past three decades, and one can easily see why the city has been known as among the least livable on the planet.

While there have been reams of paper and oceans of ink spent on documenting Karachi's problems, nothing much has been done about it. The resourceful elite have risen above the problems, divorced from the city through their SUVs, private water supply, power generators, gated communities and other

amenities that enables a cocooned existence. Disfranchised people have neither the resources nor the time to fight for their rights and were mostly resigned to their fate. There was an unstable equilibrium that suited everyone, specially the politicians and city administrators. And then the heavens opened.

The metropolitan department has raised warnings for the monsoon and issued statements saying they expected massive rains. This time it was even beyond their or anyone else's expectations. Records were broken, most single day rain, most rain in a month, most rain in a season and so

forth. Karachi's creaking infrastructure that had been held together almost by spit and rubber bands, finally broke down. Homes were flooded and power was out, for days in some areas. People could not make it to workplaces, factories were shut and supply lines broken down. Internal movement of goods stopped and exporters were adversely affected. Yusra Zehra, a graduate of Habib University works for The Citizens Foundation and could not make it to her office for several days and Farah Zehra a school teacher at Habib Girls School was unable to conduct online classes because there were no internet services. Farah said, "Online classes are hard as it is and with no power for 24 hours and no internet services how is one expected to continue? My students are also suffering and I have received dozens of messages from them regarding this terrible situation."

Ali Syedain is a phlegmatic businessman and former corporate banker. On the night of August 27, he stepped out to buy diesel fuel for his generator which had been running for most of the day. Karachi Electric had cut power across the city and as people rushed to the buy fuel for generators, there was the inevitable diesel shortage. "I dove around the water logged roads for a few hours until I finally found a petrol station that had some diesel. After standing in line for another hour I finally brought fuel. But I am lucky I can afford a generator and fuel; most people have no choice but to suffer" he said.

Later that same night, Ali stepped went out for more supplies only for his car to get submerged in a hidden road depression and last we spoke its still being fixed for water damage to engine and interior.



Finally, the citizens had had enough and spoke out. However, due to the flooding in the affluent areas of DHA and Clifton it was not the proletariat who can be easily ignored or the netizens who will vent on social media and then quieten down on the streets. The people protesting were the resourceful elite who were demanding their rights from Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC) and Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and not about to walk away without an answer. On Monday, August 31 residents of Clifton and DHA gathered outside the CBC's office and demanded that the office holders listen to their complaints and resolve their issues. There were demands of audit of accounts to see where the duties collected from residents are being utilized and that they should be reimbursed for the damage to their homes which has happened because of their incompetent and mismanagement. A video of artist Shahid Rassam's house went viral on social media and showed the interior of his DHA Phase 4 home flooded and furniture floating around. There were other horror stories and residents knew they will have to resort to extreme measures. "I am not leaving without a commitment even if I have to resort to legal action," said Akbar Ahmed* who works in a brokerage house.

It was interesting that the residents had understood the concept of cantonment and that their area does not fall in the purview of city authorities. Karachi's administration is divided among the cantonment authorities, KMC which is dominated by the MQM-P and other agencies such as the Malir Development Authority, Karachi Development Authority, etc. which are independent of the KMC. There are other bodies such as the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board which is responsible for trash collection but does come under the mayor of Karachi, the last one resigning during a press conference during which he had his usual complain of his office being underbudgeted and lacking administrative powers.

As the usual blame game between the federal, provincial and

local government was being played out, Karachi continued being submerged. The citizens on the south side managed to finagle some weak commitments from CBC and DHA, the latter event bringing in a new CEO, but those in other parts of the city carried on the best they could. IBA graduate and business owner Hasan Mahmood* lives in Federal B Area and had to move his family out of his house because of the rain water which had flooded his basement. When I spoke to him on the phone, he had to shout over the noise of the pump which was removing the water. "There is five feet of water in my basement and I have lost precious books, photographs and mementos. My academic degrees and certificates were all here and now I cannot find them. It's unbelievable what the government has done to my city", he said angrily. The working professionals had a roof over their head and resources to manage the catastrophe but what of those who live on daily basis. Shakir Pervaiz* sells vegetables at the corner of Tariq Road and lives in Korangi.

For many days I did not see him at his usual spot and when I saw him, he looked haggard and lose. "My son works in a pharmaceutical company in Korangi and could not go to work for a few days. He got a call to come, otherwise he would be fired and when he stepped out his motorcycle broke down in the water. I have not been able to get supplies for a few days and even if I did, there is no way I could have made it here because of the broken roads and standing water. Only Allah can manage this city," he said despondently.



The spell of rains ended on August 29 and the city has slowly limped back to what it its version of normalcy. There are still areas such Naya Nazimabad, parts of DHA, and others that are still flooded and Karachi's situation has been the lead story in media for more than two weeks. There has been a flurry of political activity, the Prime Minister has announced a development package of Rs. 1100 billion and KE has been fined and taken to task. The besieged citizens, resilient or just stubborn, are carrying on but skeptical of change. As Hooria Ali said, "Talk is cheap and I cannot rely on promises. I am now reassessing my life in Karachi and if I can help it, I will be gone from the city by the time the next monsoon comes around." Seeing her damaged car and flooded home I can only numbly nod.

Tragedy Meets Success: In Conversation with Mr. Asad Umar



By Oroba Tasnim Siddiqui

Since 26th February 2020, when the first COVID'19 case emerged in Pakistan, a total of 298,903 cases have been identified – of which 6,345 (2%) resulted in deaths. Despite criticism from major stakeholders, the Government of Pakistan continued to tread upon the path passing through the realm of smart lockdowns to ensuring minimal economic loss.

With the success of Pakistan's COVID-19 strategy, recently hailed by members from the European Union, it has become a miraculous recovery under the eye of numerous organizations worldwide.

However, tragedy has not escaped Pakistan. During the monsoon rains, the heart of Pakistan was inundated with water, with severe floods damaging the lives and livelihood of thousands throughout the city.

In an attempt to understand the growing problems and in lieu of the recent announcement of the Karachi Transformation Plan, we sat down with **Mr. Asad Umar**, the Federal Minister for Planning and Development.

He not only headed the National Command Operation Center that spearheaded the COVID policy, but has also been upfront in the quest to revive the true essence of Karachi.

The Miraculous Decline of COVID'19 in Pakistan

In a question regarding the strategy to curb the spread of coronavirus, Mr. Umar began with attributing it to God's intervention. Terming it a pillar of faith, he stated that despite strenuous efforts, it would have been impossible to reach the current state without the spiritual backing enjoyed by the incumbent. However, he did not refrain from crediting the behavioral change amid the general Pakistani populace and the timely actions that were taken by the government.

Citing the example of countries like Bangladesh and Iran - both Muslim countries - Mr. Umar emphasized upon the efficacy of the mechanisms adopted early on by Pakistan. Despite constraints dissipating in the past few weeks, due to the decline in total infections and vectors (virus carriers), the numbers have fallen significantly, he said.

Moreover, he applauded the methodology that was adopted and likened it to international standards which was primarily replicated from the Gold Standard of South Korean TTQ mechanism. He further believes that Pakistan has been able to surpass even the standards set by South Korea.

Controversy surrounding the accuracy of PCR Tests in Pakistan

In a comment regarding the accuracy of the PCR results, Mr. Umar stated that there was a 70% accuracy rate of the best tool which still risked 3 in 10 false results. However, the accuracy of tests in Pakistan was largely unquestionable although, blood samples were a far better approach. However, due to the restraint in funds, they could not be carried out in such large numbers.

Who is to blame for the current state of Karachi?

When asked about the status of Karachi and who he deemed responsible for the mess Mr. Umar stated that the onus lied largely on the provincial government following the passage of the 7th NFC Award and the 18th Amendment. Through these measures, a system of devolution was orchestrated such that the powers and resources would be transmitted to the grassroots levels. However, Sindh remained an anomaly where local bodies continued to be stripped of their legal powers and resources, hence, there was no one else who could be blamed but the PPP led provincial government in Sindh.

Nevertheless, because of PTI's electoral victory in Karachi, combined with its MQM-ally, the PTI boasts 19 of the 21 seats in Karachi. Therefore, to resolve the grievances of the Karachiites as well as the provincial government which continues to grumble about lack of funding and support, the PTI led Federal Government has decided to facilitate all stakeholders through the Karachi Transformation Plan. Having learnt from the COVID-19 experience, the government was able to better plan, coordinate and cooperate with provincial heads and in this regard, a collaborative approach has been adopted.

Combined system for the resolution of Karachi's problems

Through this approach, three tiers of coordination will be manifested – briefly described below as per the hierarchy:

1. Government Advisory Committee consisting of 6 members, 3 from the Sindh Government including the Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah and 3 from the Federal Government including Asad Umar, and the Federal

Ministers for Maritime Affairs and Information Technology.

2. Provincial Coordination Committee chaired by Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah and consisting of members from the Federal Government, Ministry of Planning and Development, representatives from the Armed Forces and National Disaster Management Authority.

3. Working Level Committee to take on board all stakeholders of Karachi.

4. Citizen Liaison Committee to create a system of accountability and transparency.

Explaining the concept of transparency, he stated that all related information would be made accessible so that citizens can directly monitor and keep a strict check on the financial handling of the Provincial and Federal governments. Regarding the nature of these projects,

Mr. Umar recalled how they had been envisioned decades earlier but could not move beyond the documentation phase. However, he believes this time will be different as the focus is built upon the structure of coordination, collaboration, pooled resources and expertise as well as accountability to the people.

When speaking of the major problem that led to these disastrous floods, Mr. Umar felt that the current problem was less about coastline encroachment and more about the natural streams that flowed into the ocean with excess water. **'It was a conundrum that wrested in the lands, both under civilians and the cantonment boards'**, he said.

The flooding experience in Karachi: a personal tale

Citing his personal experience, Mr. Umar said, **'My house in Karachi was one of the worst affected. For three days, we were unable to go out. And because we do not have big cars (SUVs), I had to request a friend to drop me off at my house. Our under**

ground tanks were contaminated by sewerage water from the street mixed with rainwater and so we barely had potable water. We spent 62 hours without electricity and on top of that, due to the networks shutting down during the Ashura holidays, we



basically had no WiFi or any sort of communication when the generators collapsed'.

However, despite relaying out his personal experience during the Karachi floods, he believes the wealthiest should not be compensated. Although, for the lower income class adversely affected during this tragedy, a meeting has been scheduled with the Prime Minister and all relevant stakeholders including Chief Ministers from across Pakistan.

This is because flooding is no longer a Karachi problem but has grasped hold in major parts of Interior Sindh, Balochistan, KP and most recently in Khushab and Jhelum in Punjab.

Compensation for the adversely affected The purpose of this meeting is to reiterate the commitment of the Federal and Provincial governments as well as enforce an immediate relief mechanism for those most affected by recent events.

In the same context, it has also been suggested that the second phase of the Ehsaas Program announced last week,

be extended to include the lowest income groups, however, not the 'richie rich'.

Concluding the discussion, when asked about PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's statement regarding the

resettlement of people from encroached areas, Mr. Umar stated that the Federal Government had already started a project to resettle 12,000 people worth Rs. 70 billion.

'Unfortunately, Bilawal has never done anything himself. What he does however, is take credit by preemptively attributing it to himself and announcing it beforehand. In the words of the Prime Minister, jumping in front of a parade and calling it a march'.

A Woeful Tale of the Tail-Enders

By **Qurban Baloch**

Corruption, political influence and mismanagement are causing water shortages in the tail areas of Sindh and devastating agriculture.

A few months ago, the paddy crop of Mir Noor Talpur of Badin was close to drying up because of water shortage and later after heavy rains 30 per cent of his cotton crop is damaged. The torrential rains created havoc in Badin and adjoining areas, and he expects just a few acres of his paddy crop would survive.

According to Muhammad Siddique Rodnani, a grower of Johi, his paddy crop had dried up before the rains. Now the flood from Nai Gaj in Kacho area and rainwater has damaged road infrastructure to the south of Johi.

Water shortage in Sindh is a reality, especially in the tail areas of many districts, which has made millions of acres of irrigated land barren in the past 20 years. Corruption, political influence and mismanagement are the real causes of water shortage on both sides of Indus River, which is damaging agriculture.



This is evident from the statements of local growers, representatives of associations and politicians of the affected areas who blame the Irrigation Department for the problem. Due to this situation, thousands of people from various areas had to leave their lands and ancestral villages and move to irrigated areas in search of livelihood. The most affected districts are Mirpurkhas, Badin, Thatta, and Taluka Johi of District Dadu.

Mr. Nawab Yousuf Talpur is a grower, an MNA from the ruling party of Sindh, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and Chairman of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Water Resources. When he was contacted to know the causes of water shortages in the tail areas, he revealed two major reasons.

The senior parliamentarian said the first reason was the

nonexistence of proper regulation of water from Tarbela Dam to tail barrages of Sindh, whereas the second was mismanagement by the local Irrigation Department.

Citing an example, he said due to better management there was no water issue in District Umerkot and Hyderabad. On the other hand, Badin, Thatta, Mirpurkhas and Taluka Johi are suffering badly due to mismanagement of the Irrigation Department.

Mr. Talpur claimed that overall Sindh and Balochistan were not facing issues due to water distribution by Indus River System Authority (IRSA). He suggested that the water shortage issue could be resolved if the provincial governments worked on better irrigation management.

Information Secretary of Sindh Abadgar Board, Mr. Muhammad Aslam Mari, claimed that water theft and silting up of canals were the main reasons for water shortages. He said on one hand, the influential class was taking extra water by force or by bribing the irrigation officials, while on the other hand

the irrigation officials did not release due water share in the canals or showed wrong gauges to save the watercourses from breaches, as most canals were unable to take water till the tail due to silting.

The chief patron of Sindh Abadgar Association Sukkur Barrage, Mr. Fayaz Shah Rashdi and Mir Noor Muhammad Talpur, asserted that most parliamentarians in the area were drawing extra water through

direct outlets and illegal flood canals. To benefit the upper area landowners, the Tiyoon Mail (Third Mail) Imam Wah and Alipur regulators of Phuleli Canal were chocked. They also claimed that the water capacity of Goni Wah was increased from 6,000 to 18,000 cusecs to benefit powerful landlords of the Gollarchi area.

They claimed there were two ways of getting water from Phuleli, Goni, Akram and Sultan Wahs. The first option is to pay Rs700,000 to Rs800,000 as bribe to irrigation officials, whereas the second option revolves around having a strong political background or political support.

They disclosed that water of Akram Wah of Kotri Barrage had been diverted to the Sukkur Barrage command area to irrigate the lands of the influential people. For this purpose, new

regulators of 400 to 500 cusecs have been installed in different places. This has reduced the irrigated area of Akram Wah from 700 acres to merely 100 acres.

This situation has forced most tail area growers to not only migrate for survival but also switch professions.

Mr. Hanif Samoon, a journalist from Badin, revealed that 300,000 to 400,000 acres of rice crop of Pangriyo, Sahdi large, Khoski, Kadhan, Nando city, Serani and Ahmed Rajo have been severely affected due to water theft and illegal water distribution.

Mr. Mir Noor Talpur also disclosed that hundreds of acres of Naser Canal of Subdivision Khairpur Gambo became barren due to low gauges and only half of the water supply. He also said he owned 320 acres of land on the watercourse of 640-acre water command area, but it can hardly cultivate 38 acres.

Irrigation water availability on the left side of River Indus including Sukkur and Khairpur Mirs, Naushahro Feroze, Nawabshah (Shaheed Benazir Abad) and Sakrand is comparatively better since they are on the upper side.

Water situation on the right side of the Indus River is not different from the tail areas on the left side. Some areas of Larkana and Mehar are facing water shortage issues because of theft and mismanagement. The tail area of Johi branch is the most affected and many people have migrated to other places.

Following protests against water shortages by growers of Johi branch, Irrigation Minister Mr. Suhail Anwar Siyal visited the area without informing local growers. He ordered Deputy Commissioner Dadu to close all the illegal direct outlets and pipelines and soon the local administration started an operation to this effect.



Mr. Manzoor Chandio, a grower of Bego Dero minor of Johi branch, said Bego Dero minor consisted of 80 reduced



distance (RD) signs. Local influential have created illegal water courses till RD 60 from where water is taken without any measurement. He further revealed that growers from RD 80 down to RD 60, especially RD 70 and 80, cultivated paddy in large quantities which left not a single drop of water for drinking.

Vice Chairman of Sindh Abadgar Board Dadu, Haji Muhammad Umer Jamali said command area of the Johi branch was about 150,000 acres of which 50,000 acres were in Khairpur Nathan Shah. The influential are utilizing the maximum share of poor growers of Johi because a majority of them live in Khairpur Nathan Shah.

He said the government and opposition parliamentarians belonging to the Leghari, Butt and Jatoti families were using Johi branch water to cultivate paddy although cultivation of the crop is banned in the area.

There is a dire need to desilt Johi branch from head till Nine Mile, stop cultivation of paddy in the banned area, and take swift action against illegal direct outlets and pipelines.

When IRSA spokesperson, Khalid Idrees Rana was asked to comment on the situation, he casually denied the issue. According to him, the department released about 215,000 cusecs downstream Chasma Barrage for Sindh whereas the requirement was only 175,000 cusecs. During the current Kharif season that began on April, 1, 3.357 million acre-feet of water escaped downstream Kotri.

This huge quantity of water flowing to the sea is proof that there is no shortage in the Indus system and the current situation is only mismanagement.

PTI's "Tsunami" Reforms Looks Like an Illusion in KP

By Ghulam Dastageer

The party has failed to fulfil its pledge of major changes in the governance system

The election sloganeering of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was to bring about an overall change/reforms in the governance set-up. Outside KP, the PTI government succeeded to a large extent in building a perception of having introduced major reforms in the governance system. But, one needs to dig deeper into the facts to reach the conclusion whether PTI's assertions are genuine or a bluff.

Unlike in the Centre and Punjab where the PTI government completed its two years on August 18, it has governed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province since 2013 when it emerged as the single largest party in general elections.

The PTI had pledged to establish the rule of law and service delivery. In this connection the people at the helm of affairs initially targeted three sectors: police, health and education.

Education is the sector that the PTI can rightly boast of. First of all, teachers' appointments were totally made through third party NTS. More than 40,000 new teachers were appointed and an able lot joined the schools.

A school-based teacher appointment system was introduced, ending the politically-motivated posting/transfer system. The performance of teachers was reviewed through Independent Monitoring Unit to keep a check on their attendance and activities.

The two-room sanctioned space for a primary school was raised to seven rooms while the number of teachers was also increased from two to seven.

In December last year the Elementary and Secondary Education Department had decided to outsource 650 government schools – out of the total 33,000 –



to the private sector from April 2020 under a Rs1.2 billion pilot project. However, this could not materialize due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite all these steps, the examination results of the government-run schools further deteriorated.

According to Alif Ailaan's Pakistan District Education Ranking 2017, KP was at the fifth position among the eight territories it monitored.

The KP Elementary and Secondary Education Department had started assessment of the students of grades 5 and 8 in government schools. But sources in the department say the assessment results were too embarrassing to be made public.

Despite enrollment campaigns twice a year, 1.8 million children – 64 per cent girls and 36 per cent boys – from five to 16 years of age are out of school, according to the Pakistan Education Report 2016-17.

Regarding police reforms, the KP police established nine specialized schools for the capacity-building of personnel.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Act was passed in January 2017. Under the new law, public safety commissions – both at provincial and district levels – were envisaged, engaging the civil society in the implementation of the law. The heads of police were made accountable to the respective public safety commissions.

During the last stint of PTI government in KP, 12 district public safety commissions were formed, which after completing their three-year term are dysfunctional for the last one year almost in the whole province, including Peshawar.

In April 2019, a member of the KP Assembly said on the floor that the powers conferred on police under the Police Act have sent their performance into a constant nosedive.

In the health sector, the KP government recently announced a project, costing the provincial exchequer Rs18 billion annually, to provide health insurance to all and sundry.

Presently, 2.1 million families are covered under the Sehat Insaf Card

and another six million would be included starting from October. Under this program, Rs1 million health cover would be provided to each family for hospitalization in any of the 250 hospitals.

The KP government passed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Medical Teaching Institution Reforms Act, providing for running the tertiary hospitals through a board of governors (BoGs).

But a large segment of the doctors' community believes that the formation of BoGs was basically a tool to accommodate their blue-eyed people on the board and on key positions in these hospitals.

They say at least three hospitals have chairmen of the BoGs from Shaukat Khanum Hospital and term it a clear clash of interests.

Provincial Assembly and Legislation

Presently PTI enjoys two-thirds majority in KP Assembly, so they don't have any problem in legislation work. As many as 170 bills were passed in the first five years and 68 during the last two years.

Though they are steadfast in legislation process, yet more than 40 laws don't have by-laws, so practically they are useless. Most of the laws relate to amendments to already existing Acts, while the number of new laws is very small.

Fight against Corruption: Myths and Realities

The PTI leadership, right from the inception of their political struggle, blamed the previous governments of being involved in massive corruption and promised the masses that they, if voted into power, would put a permanent damper on corrupt practices by introducing a transparent governance system where everyone would be accountable.

But their tall claims do not match reality, at least in KP. For instance, the KP government established Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ehtesab Commission in 2014



under an Act of the provincial legislature that was abolished by the same government in 2018. It cost the provincial

government Rs1.056 billion but not a single rupee could be recovered from the corruption suspects.

The PTI government formed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil and Gas Company Ltd in 2013 to explore oil and gas. During the last seven years it failed to successfully explore a single oil or gas reservoir despite consuming billions of rupees.

The Billion Tree Tsunami is widely presented as the flagship project of PTI. The government claims to have planted over a billion saplings across the province. Opposition parties in the provincial assembly term this number as exaggerated and demand the constitution of a parliamentary committee for a detailed forensic audit of this project. But the government is reluctant to do so.

Same is the case with the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), a mega project of the KP government. The stipulated period of the project was six months.

However, this project became operational in August – after 34 months – while a reasonable portion of the project has yet to see the light of day.

It was initially started with an estimate of

Rs49 billion, which jumped to Rs71 billion. After the final PC-I, 38 changes were made in the project, with 38 per cent cost escalation.

According to the law, the cost of a project can escalate only by 10 per cent.

The Peshawar High Court, in the backdrop of the Chief Minister Inspection Team and Auditor General reports, ordered an inquiry into the case through National Accountability Bureau.

But the provincial government challenged the order in Supreme Court which stayed the investigation. The PTI government is taking cover behind the stay instead of presenting itself for accountability.

Many in the PTI leadership – including Imran Khan – have been facing NAB inquiries in a number of cases pertaining to corrupt practices.

Prominent among these are cases related to misuse of official helicopter by PTI chairman Imran Khan and Malam Jabba Resort Project.

So far they have managed to avoid the wrath of NAB, which it shows when grilling politicians from the opposition parties.

Line of Control: Where Life Exists in the Shadow of Constant Fear

By Danish Irshad

Thousands of people have died as a result of shelling and firing at the Line of Control (LoC) and any hope that this situation will end is fading with every passing day. The tragedy of the LoC can be felt from a recent incident. Raja Shafqat Aman, who is a resident of Neelum Valley, says, "During the shelling on July 22, Ibrahim Khalil, an 11-year-old boy, was badly injured in the stomach by a shell, while playing in the courtyard of his house in Falakan village in Neelum Valley. The shelling was so intense that none of the neighbours could help him for two hours. During this time the child could not be taken to the medical centre and the bleeding could not be stopped. Two hours later, when the shelling subsided, he was taken to a nearby military medical centre, called MDS. After first aid the child was shifted to Muzaffarabad where he is still in a life and death struggle."

Residents of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K) are affected by this division in multifarious ways and those who live along the LoC are the direct victims of the Kashmir issue.

Mr. Aman further says, "There is a Pakistan Army Medical Center in Neelum Valley that provides first aid to those who are wounded during shelling along with a district hospital. However, the district hospital is right in front of the Indian Army check posts."

When the firing and shelling starts and the first shell lands near the hospital, the staff leaves the premises to save their lives. He said there was no place in the hospital that could be considered safe during the shelling. The government has not even built a bunker for the hospital staff.

The general opinion regarding AJ&K is that this region is not affected by the Kashmir issue, however, this is based on false assumptions.

According to Mr. Aman, if a person is seriously injured and the shelling does not stop, his death is certain. A large section of the Neelum Valley to Muzaffarabad highway is right in front of the Indian Army check posts. Traffic cannot ply during the shelling and it takes around three hours to reach Muzaffarabad from Neelum Valley. During this time, most of the injured people lose their lives.

The Editor-in-Chief of a newspaper, Zahid Tabassum, who migrated from the LoC 30 years ago and settled in Rawalpindi, says, "When the militancy began in the Kashmir Valley, the firing on the LoC intensified." He said his house was on the LoC and it was destroyed during shelling. This forced his family to leave their ancestral land and property and settle in Rawalpindi. Their native land is not cultivable due to the conditions at the LoC, nor the houses in the area are habitable anymore. Landmines have now been laid there too.

This tragic story is not limited to one house or family; every other house at the LoC is affected by such incidents. This devastating situation has created humanitarian issues and destroyed the tourism and wildlife of AJ&K. Persistent fear, lack of health facilities, and the sorry state of education have



assailed the residents with psychological and mental health problems. Moreover, during the firing incidents, the food items become ten times more expensive. In short, peaceful life at the LoC is just a delusion. Geographically, AJ&K has 6 out of 10 districts and 14 out of 29 constituencies along the LoC. At present, there are 110,000 families living along the 742km long LoC. This population

of about 600,000 is living in the shadow of constant fear and uncertainty.

According to official figures, about 1,100 locals in AJ&K have lost their lives as a result of the firing. According to local sources, the number of deaths is much higher while the number of injured people is in the thousands.

In 2016, the Federal Government had allocated a budget of Rs5 billion for the construction of security bunkers for the population living along the LoC for use during firing. However, even after four years, the bunkers that were expected to bring some relief to the local population are nowhere to be seen. The fact is that these firing incidents affect the population on both sides of the LoC.

Haseeb Shabbir Chaudhry, a resident of Abbaspur, says, "If firing takes place in sectors of the LoC in Poonch Division, the people become trapped in their homes."

In case of firing anywhere in the Poonch Division, the injured must be brought to Kotli or Rawalakot for treatment after first aid, and if anyone is seriously injured, they lose their lives during the journey that takes more than two hours.

Haseeb said that the Indian Army check posts are high in the area while Pakistani Army check posts are located among the populated areas. When tensions rise, the Indian Army first targets the schools at the front and fires at the civilian population. Under the pretext of firing, the schools remain closed for months and people are bound in their homes. They can't even go to the springs to fetch drinking water for they fear the Indian Forces. Markets are closed during shelling and people cannot drive on the roads, leading to food shortages and multiplication of prices.

"If someone is injured, they are transported in the dark of the night with the car lights turned off to Rawalakot as there is no facility available at the health centre other than first aid," said Chaudhry.

He said that due to shelling, it is not possible to do any kind of cultivation in these areas and even if seeds are sown, the shelling destroys the crops.

When will this situation change and there will be peace and tranquility at the LoC? It remains an open question.

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prime video

Licensed Amazon Prime

Enjoy films, seasons & dramas



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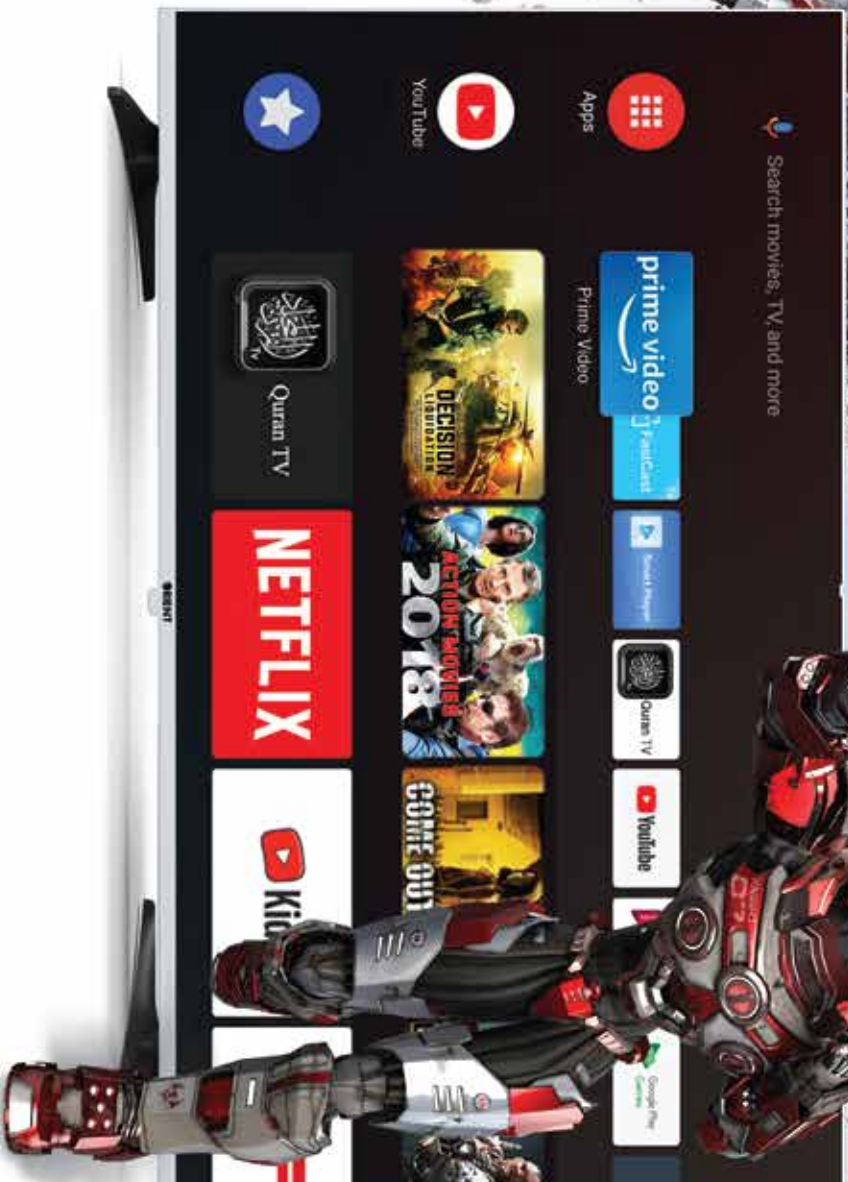
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Indian Sports Channel Incurring Heavy Losses to State-Owned Channel PTV

By Hamza Habib

Despite Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority's complete ban on producing and broadcasting Indian content on local news or entertainment channels, a sport company owned by Indians is running a complete sports channel in Pakistan.

And this is being done at a time when the Indian attitude towards Pakistan is very hostile. Indian company Sony Entertainment is running sports channel through proxy company.

This generosity is shown at a time when Indians are trying their level best to damage Pakistan politically and financially at all levels. When it comes to cricket, Indians are proving to be the worst enemy of Pakistan and blocking it at all levels. A shocking example was witnessed during the last Pakistan Super League tournament when the Indian company was hired to telecast matches in Dubai.

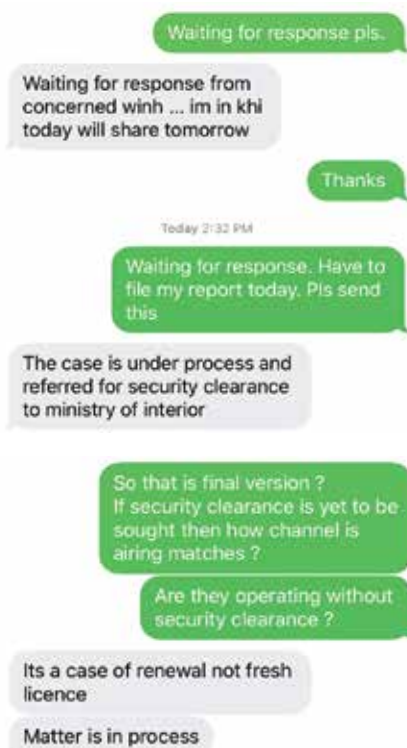
When the venue of these matches, as per schedule was shifted to Pakistan, Indian company simply refused to cover matches in Pakistan. At the last moment, Pakistan had to arrange another company, which of course caused more financial damage due to its urgent need.

Even authorities did not take notice of the letter written by Special Assistant (former) to Prime Minister Yousaf Baig Mirza (YBM) to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

In this letter, he highlighted the issue of Indian companies operating in Pakistan, damaging state broadcaster (Pakistan Television) financially. YBM in his letter said, "It is evident

that Indians are trying to block and damage Pakistan in every possible manner, whenever they feel that Pakistan is getting any commercial benefit or positive promotion in the field of sports and otherwise."

He pointed out that some Indian origin channels are operating in Pakistan through a proxy of a Pakistani company or individuals, who have obtained the licenses from PEMRA fronting Indian businessmen or



Indian origin channels. The primary examples are of Ten Sports & Ten Sports 2 which were previously owned by ZEE Network and now by Sony Entertainment India.

In the letter it was mentioned that Sony logo is also being shown on Tens Sports & Ten Sports 2 with regular intervals. The licenses for

Ten Sports & Ten Sports 2 are taken by proxy of these people through company named Tower Sports (Pvt) Karachi. YBM, in his letter said "PEMRA has shown a great deal of leniency, despite the fact that all content and investment in Ten Sports is being done by Indian origin channels previously by Zee Network and now by Sony".

The former advisor was of the view that it is in common knowledge that all beneficial owners are either Indians or of an Indian origin.

In the letter, he urged the then Federal Minister for Information Fawad Choudhry to advise Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory to stop transmission and cancel the licenses of M/S Tower Sports (Ten Sports & Ten Sports 2) as they are taking worth millions of dollars business from Pakistan. This has inflicted huge losses to the exchequer and curtailed the revenue of PTV Sports.

Market sources also endorsed the concerns expressed by Yousaf Baig Mirza. One of the top executives of an advertising company said Ten Sports is minting money in Pakistan like anything. He said the annual revenue for Ten Sports from Pakistan is in the range Rs 1 billion to Rs 1.5 billion. He further said the management of Ten Sports knows very well the potential of Pakistani market, that is why they wanted to launch Ten Sports 2 in Pakistan on a big scale early this year.

However, outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic delayed the launch. He

said during the coverage of World Cup last year, the revenue Rs 1.2 billion was generated through advertising. He said half of it went to Ten Sports which could easily have gone to PTV if this Indian owned channel wasn't allowed to operate here.

“The government and the establishment know very well that Ten Sports is Indian owned channel but strangely they want to remain ignorant of this issue and one fails to understand why,” he observed.

Last year over two dozen Indian nationals, came to Pakistan for the coverage of Pakistan-Sri Lanka and Pakistan-Bangladesh series, despite the fact that Pak-India relations were so strained that both countries were on the verge of war.

Sources in Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said that Tower Sports (Ten Sports & Ten Sports 2) is a Singapore based company due to which the government or PEMRA didn't raise any objections.

However, sources privy to the matter informed that Indian national, Aneel Mohan is currently working with PCB. Aneel previously worked for the PCB. When contacted, PCB officials refused to comment. A PCB office-bearer, requesting anonymity, said the services of Aneel Mohan were hired because there is no one in Pakistan with state-of-the-art television technology.

Senior sports journalist Abdul Majid Bhatti said that lack of expertise made Pakistan totally dependent on

Indian companies. He further stated that PCB acquired services of an Indian crew for the coverage of Pakistan Super League, however, airfare or service charges for the Indian technical staff were paid since it only cost them bus fare from across the Wahgah Border. PEMRA spokesman through text message said that they had already sent this case for security clearance to the Ministry of Interior. He also said that the future course of action by PEMRA against Ten Sports will depend on whatever directives it will receive from the Ministry of Interior. When asked how Ten Sports is airing its transmission without security clearance, he clarified that they only renewed the license of Ten Sports and no new license has been further issued.

Cricket Returns Home - Once Again

Mishaal Ashraf

As the rain pelted down into the Rawalpindi stadium, the crowd waited with unabated breath, willing for the match to continue. This was not the first match that had been victimized by the play of the weather. But who would have expected a calamity much worse?

On the 26th of February 2020, the first COVID-19 case emerged in Pakistan. Subsequently, there were rumors of suspected coronavirus cases amongst team officials and players, until the tournament was finally called off on 17th March 2020. After a year of excitement and anticipation to witness an entire tournament in Pakistan, the global pandemic unexpectedly hit the world, obstructing all prior plans of engagement.

There were mixed emotions amongst the public, but the team owners specifically took charge and tried to reassure fans that it was in the interest of the nation. ‘After reviewing the situation altogether, I believe it's right in favor of everyone involved in the PSL 2020’, Javed Afridi, Despite statements pouring in,

uncertainty plagued the resumption of the tournament. When a rumor erupted regarding the cancellation of the remaining matches and the top team be declared the champion, Ali Tareen who heads the Multan Sultan (the top team in the PSL 2020 edition) tweeted, ‘This would be a huge injustice against the teams who have qualified. Especially Lahore Qalandars who qualified after so long and had a genuine shot of winning’.

Following months of anticipation, it was finally decided that the knockout matches, as well as the finals of the fifth edition of the Pakistan Super League, would resume in November 2020. As per the updated schedule, all matches will be held in Lahore from November 14, 2020. Previously, November hosted the PSL drafts ceremony which is expected to be moved to the 1st week of December.

In a bid to promote local talent and allow cricket in Pakistan to flourish, it was imperative that the tournament meet its fruitful end. In the wake of



COVID-19, amidst the cloud of gloom and despair, there seemed to be little hope of the eliminators seeing the light of the day.

However, now that the situation has improved significantly, cricket fans across Pakistan are jubilantly seeking the finale of the much awaited PSL 2020. The question remains, who will be the lucky winner at the end of a tournament cut short by an unpredictable twist of fate?

Will it be the Multan Sultans who consistently outperformed others earlier this year? Or the resurrected Lahore Qalandars vying for an opportunity to break through? At the end of the day, whoever wins, the victory lies with the people of Pakistan – as cricket returns home once again.

Churails exhilarates the upheaving feud between liberals and conservatives on feminism.



Churails, first web series of Pakistan, exhilarates the upheaving feud between liberals and conservatives on feminism. A group of fearless, independent women who call themselves Churails, avenge women who have been tormented by their murderous and infidel husbands while working under guise for ‘Halal Designs’ a burqa store.

Roshan Waseef, a student at LUMS says, ‘Absolutely loved the show! It’s different from what we watch on TV. If you want to watch a show on women empowerment, watch Churails. It’s understandable that the show may be hard to digest by our local population, especially men, considering the use of abusive language, alcohol/drugs and obviously, the feminist values the show encourages. However, this series is much more than that, I hope people make an effort to understand that.’ Similarly, another student, Aaina Ameer appreciated that it had not just highlighted rape, infidelity and harassment but also hidden social stigmas such as parental abuse, forced marriages, racism, LGBTQ and a lot more.

While many call it a perfect representation of feminism, some find it morally misleading. ‘Why is it that the feminists have to cross moral values? Why does every feminist have to do the “right” thing being a smoker and have an indecent body language?’ says Maha Kamil, a sophomore law student. ‘Personally I didn’t like the character building. I thought the women were impulsive and emotionally unstable.’ Says Bareera, a medical student.

Normally, female characters are portrayed as submissive, pretty women with make up on even if its’ midnight. While in Churails, it is not so, there are women from different backgrounds, in different situations portrayed realistically in terms of their getup. Alongside this, the story-building engages the audience with every episode introducing cameos of famous Pakistan celebrities.

Dar Si Jati Hai Sila and Pyar Kay Sadqay receive notices from Pemra

50% of the Pakistani dramas are focused around divorce, a submissive protagonist not defending herself and the remaining 50% is now about women going after married men or having multiple affairs. However, there are some exceptional dramas such as Bandhi, Udaari, Khuda Mera Bhi Hay who bring out social and domestic issues about corrupt feudal lords, honor killing, child abuse, the humiliation of transgender, which are common but ignored. Similarly ‘Dar si jati hay Sila’, and ‘Pyar k Sadkay’ having Yumna Zaidi as one of the protagonists both the times, were focused on child abuse, domestic abuse, childhood trauma, gender discrimination, physical, verbal & sexual harassment wherein the antagonists were the male members of the house such as the uncle and the step father respectively. Unlike most dramas, there were both male and female characters who stood up for justice and that too not just in the end but they stood their stance throughout the drama. PEMRA, however, finds the content ‘instigating’ saying that the stories rather give ideas to predators or pollute people’s mind. However, the dramas are finished but PEMRA isn’t allowing their repeat telecast.



Celebrities address Government in their tweet about Karachi Rain



Pakistani celebrities residing in Karachi broke the silence on social media by lashing out against the way Sindh Government has been handling flooding sewage that has drowned the entire Karachi.

Feroze Khan, one of Pakistan’s leading actors responded Bilawal Bhutto being straightforward about the Sindh Government when Bilawal Bhutto tweeted about how Karachi has come to its’ present condition for the first time in 90 years. To this the actor questioned the PPP politician whether he and his party members are aware of the situation in Karachi for the past decade and then satirically remarked “What’s your party been doing handing out ajraks?” Further questioning the contribution of Sind Government he asked, ‘Where did the tax go? Zero infrastructure? My city and the people are both underwater Mr. Zardari.

Famous actor Muneeb Butt posted 5 pictures of the flooded city on his Instagram account and wrote a caption about how helpless the citizens are and how the government isn’t intervening. He categorically addressed PTI, PPP and MQM complaining about the current situation asking Imran Khan for help.

His wife, another renowned actress, Aimen Khan commented ‘Shame on the Sindh Government’ and another actresses, Shagufta Ansari commented questioning the utility of taxes, ‘Hum jo taxes day rahay hain who kahan ja rahay hain?’

Harsh Varrdhan, Anil Kapoor’s son praises Pakistani clothing brand on his Social

Harsh Varrdhan, son of renowned actor Anil Kapoor, with a following of 685k is huge social media influencer himself along with being a film actor and model. In a recent Instagram post, he wrote a long caption about how he stumbled across a Pakistani clothing brand, ‘Rastah’ through a social media page, ‘homegrownin’ on Instagram and how wonderful the experience was collaborating with the brand, tagging the brand manager (@zainoo_95), the official brand page (@rastashah) and his friend, Aqsa Shah who connected him to the brand artists. He went further describing how rare and eye catching the designs were and how amazing the quality was of the outfits being hand embroidered, “The jacket that I’m wearing here was something I knew I had to have, I Honestly haven’t seen many streetwear brands in south east Asia source materials the way they do and create unique pieces like this ... the fabric for this insanely beautiful patch work jacket was sourced from the tharparkar region in Sindh .. all hand embroidered.” Praising the brand and sharing his experience, he ended the caption on a ‘peace-loving’ note promoting goodwill and harmony between both the countries, saying, “We are all brothers and sisters after all” and added ‘India Pakistan friendship’ hashtag.



Indian Couple names their twins Corona and Covid



Vinay Verma and Preeti Verma, an Indian couple residing in Chhattisgarh, named their twin baby boy and baby girl Covid and Corona. The delivery was successful but numerous difficulties because of the lockdown so the couple wanted to cherish the achievement of having a successful delivery during the lockdown having them devoid of any help from the relatives which is why they named their kids Corona and Covid. "Besides this, these names are beautiful in their own, with Corona being Latin for crown," added Mr. Verma. "Also, we want the fear associated with these names to end and the public to focus on sanitation and hygiene."

A 4ft long snake slithers into a woman’s throat

A middle aged woman residing in Dagestan, a South Russian village slept outside in her garden and woke up with a snake in her throat. The doctors deduced that it must have slithered into her throat when she slept with her mouth open since there is no other possible reason. The when the woman woke up, she felt an unusual shortness of breath as if there was something suffocating her. On rushing to the hospital and alarming the doctors, she was put to sleep under anesthesia where the doctors decided to see what was inside her throat before inserting the tube. It was then when the doctor jumped back when he realized he was pulling out a 4ft long snake. The woman is alright but the species of the snake is yet to be confirmed.



Jo Cameron, 72, never feels physical pain

Jo Cameron, a 72 year old woman residing in Whitebridge, Scotland says she has never experienced what it is like to have physical pain. She realized this when she went into labor for the first time and didn't feel any pain and even during her hip replacement surgery which shocked the doctors since she went through it without taking any painkillers. "This will hurt more than the last one, you'll need more painkillers," the hospital anesthetist had told her. She refused to take them and told him she can bet on him that it won't hurt her. When he came to see her after the procedure she grinned saying, "No painkillers and no pain either."

Man accidentally swallows a 2ft long mobile charger

A 30 year old man in Guwahati Hospital, North India came to a doctor complaining about abdominal pain. On taking an X-ray it was found that he had a 2 foot long mobile charging cable to which he admitted to having a similar 'accidental' experience but with swallowing earphones. Even though the doctors believe both the times the patient swallowed them for 'sexual gratification'. After a 2 days course of laxatives and a 45 minutes surgery, the charging cable was successfully removed from the bladder, however, the surgeon said that they weren't sure if the surgery would be successful since this was the first time in his 25 years of career that he has witnessed such a case.





Japanese opt for good screams in Coffins for Stress relief

Kowagarasetai, a Japanese production house opened a ‘15 minutes horror house’ wherein one person enters a ‘haunted room’ and is put in a 2 meters windowed coffin, watching actors perform a horror story with realistic audio and visuals as if the person himself is a part of it and to make the entire experience more realistic, the spectator in the coffin is poked, shake and sprayed with water (for depiction of blood). Kenta Iwana, production coordinator says this was initially started to distract people from the pandemic stress with a good scare as a relief, “The pandemic is stressful, and we hope people can get a bit of relief by having a good scream,” says the coordinator of Production Company, Kowagarasetai.

29 year old Jenny dreamt of swallowing her engagement ring, woke up realizing she actually did.

Jenna Evens who has a history of sleep walking and sleep talking, dreamt of swallowing her engagement ring with a glass of water and felt it so real that the surprise of swallowing a ring itself woke her up. She ran downstairs to tell her friends and fiancé who all laughed until she saw the ring missing from her finger. "When I woke up in the morning, there was no ring on my finger," Evans told "I couldn't help but laugh at it, and then I had to wake my fiancé up and tell him that I had swallowed my engagement ring." She urgently went to get an X-ray to see if it was real and it was then when the gastroenterologist performed an upper endoscopy to get the ring out of her throat.



Alzheimer’s patient forgot he has Alzheimer’s and got his memory back

Melvyn Armine, an Alzheimer’s patient above 60 years of age was an Alzheimer’s patient for almost 3 years. Until one day, his family found out that he wasn’t in the house. It was the day before Mother’s Day and every Mothers’ Day before Alzheimer’, he would bring his wife Doris, a bouquet of flowers. His family alarmed the police who the found him 2 miles away from the flower shop from where he bought flowers for his wife. He didn’t remember details of proposing or getting married to his wife but something made him remember that Doris was his wife, they had kids and that he loved her. “It’s special, because even though the mind doesn’t remember everything, the heart remembers.” Said



Book Review: Permanent Record

By Oroba Tasnim Siddiqui

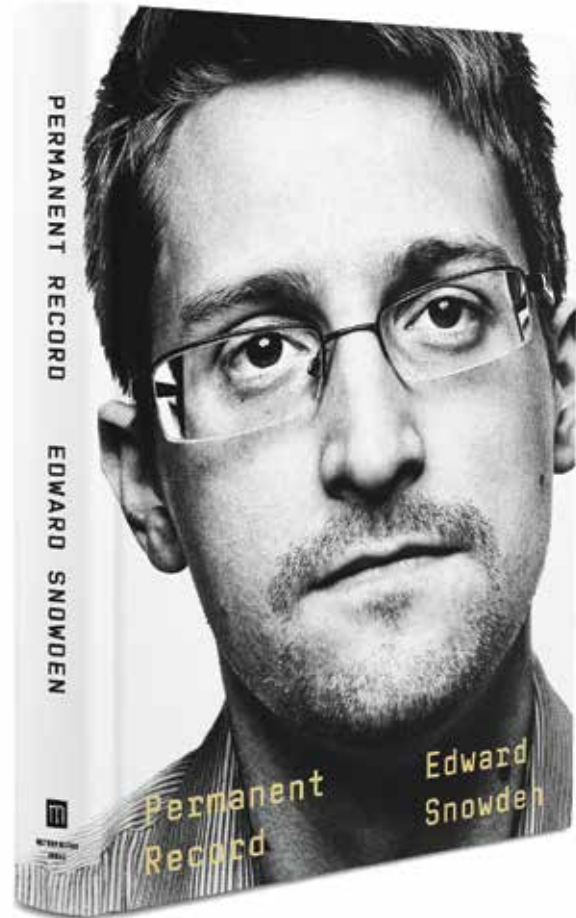
In the wake of the catastrophe of 9/11, monitoring and surveillance morphed into the daily lives of citizens worldwide, but the extent to which this surveillance advanced, was beyond the comprehension of the wide public at the helm of this scrutiny. In this regard, only an insider could reveal the tyranny of these agencies to associate clearly what and how these objectives were being undertaken. Edward Snowden not only accepted it as his responsibility but also paid a heavy price by being stripped of his badge of national identity as well as his comfort and ease - driving him to this exposé.

Permanent Record is a riveting tale of a young boy intrigued by the peculiarities of technology more specifically computers. Disillusioned by the system of grading that was laid out in front of him, he initiated his journey of hacking by cracking the code to pass through without having to submit his homework. The early chapters of the book explain in detail how this young boy, introverted and geeky, developed a unique thought process through his passion for computer games and cyberspace.

Allegations regarding his true agenda reflect clearly in the book where Snowden tries to defend his patriotism by discussing his ancestry, not just in a passing manner, but in significant detail. It is commemorated as a story of an individual who was so deeply engrossed in cyberspace that it not only became his constant companion, but his first love, rather than just a pastime hobby. Snowden hints that it was through IT learning, that he understood the mindset of the people, as well as the universal community. He attributes it to the reason behind his choice of partner and credits it to helping him understand and analyze the systemic problems within his country. It was perhaps due to his lapse in one on one communication that it took him ten years to truly perceive the truth behind the works of the establishment.

The story is built with amusing anecdotes that provide accurate insight into his mind, attempting to explain his current standing. As a teenager, he logged onto the website of a research laboratory where he stumbled upon a security loophole. He called them up and left them a message apprising them of it, until sometime later, when he was approached by a man offering him a job in their company, which he declined since he was pretty busy at high school. Such incidents intricately woven together in this book, depict the journey of the man that he became.

He sells himself as an individual who was relentlessly unaccepting of the status quo, and gives us a peephole through which we can delve into the worlds constructed by the establishment. His ingenious passion for IT as the knife and intriguing, spy



like nature as its razor sharp edge, cuts through the American security establishment, exposing the cross section in a way any educated layman can understand. The details he provides manifest the need to inform the ordinary global citizen of the havoc that the security is wreaking upon such victims, specially post 9/11.

The intelligence and information that is neatly embedded within this book helps the reader realize why there was a sudden, deliberate shift towards communication and related technologies by the United States in the eighties, when they emphasized upon the need to focus and prioritize these for the next two decades.

Their motives and objectives were shredded to pieces by Snowden's leaks in 2013 which in some ways, was fueled by the crisis in 2008. In his words, it sowed the seeds of populism across Europe and America, the testament of which manifested that the misery of the people was in fact extravagantly beneficial for the elite- what may be described as the turning point in Snowden's life.



However, this was not the first time he made such a drastic move. Following 9/11, he responded to the incident by signing up for the army as a way to serve his country, despite opposition from his parents. It was not until he had a bad fall and was invalidated that he actually spearheaded his way through his incredible computer skills, which till that point were more a matter of love than a field of profession to be pursued.

Once amidst the secret keepers, he felt betrayed and deceived by the invasion in Iraq. 'We - me, you, all of us - were too trusting', he writes. He failed to understand why secrets were kept from the secret keepers themselves.

But he continued to struggle. As a systems analyst, he acquired high prestige and power as the sole person who could decipher the systems of cyber intelligence. At full liberty to propose projects, he assimilated how the National Security Agency whilst technologically advanced, was intrinsically weak in its security systems.

Similarly, while it led the path to cyber intelligence, it was smeared by obstructions and obstacles on its way to cyber security. He also cracks open the dilemma of meta data which is a sharp contrast of actual content when it comes to surveillance, by projecting behaviors and habits as the permanent record to be castrated and conjured in times of need - an objectionable manner of handling control over monitoring.

Permanent Record comes at a time when news of Snowden's prosecution is rife with speculation. It is a crude source of information that attempts to unveil the atrocities advocated through artificially maneuvered intelligence.

Nevertheless, it is not only an expose of the exploitation and enslavement that is backhandedly progressing, but also encompasses shards of details of his personal life, his family, the love

of his life Lindsay and his years before and after exile. It is a scintillating tale of a man who transcended the normalcy of human nature and presented himself as a sacrifice to attempt to rid the world from the onslaught of technological advancement and poor cyber security. It also appears to be a testimony of a man who loved his country beyond measure and could not see it withering and faltering from the rights and liberties it assigns in its constitution.

With the discrepancy of information in sight of his six years long exile, Permanent Record looks to respond to questions and queries seeping in from all across the globe. It looks to explain, distinguish and elaborate upon the need to be secure, safe and informed whilst living amid such a technologically induced environment. It does not dictate, but harnesses the mind to become absorbent and open to these harrowing realities.

According to Snowden, no movement, action or word escapes the watchful eye of the security establishment, which conclusively suggested in his own words 'is the result of two decades of unchecked innovation - the final product of a political and professional class that dreams itself your master. No matter the place, no matter the time and no matter what you do, your life has now become an open book'.

Pakistani American Listed 66th Richest Person by Forbes



By Palwasha Khattak

Shahid Khan, a Pakistani-American is now the 66th richest man in the United States as per Forbes list of 400 richest Americans, 2020. His total worth stands at \$7.8 billion.

The founder and CEO Amazon Jeff Bezos is number one for the third consecutive year with an estimated total worth of \$179bn. The second slot is achieved by Microsoft founder Bill Gates with \$111bn total worth and CEO Mark Zuckerberg is the third on the list and has \$85bn.

Elon Musk, Tesla founder is considered this year's biggest gainer as he has jumped from 23rd number from 2019 to 7th number this year, worth \$19.9bn to \$68bn, respectively. In percentage terms, this makes him 242 percent richer than last year.

The only Pakistani on the list; Mr. Khan immigrated to the US at the age of 16 with \$500 in the pocket and a plane ticket. He is an engineer by profession and started this astounding journey by buying an auto parts supplier Flex-N-Gate from his former employer where he made his first billion.

The same company now has 64 plants all over the world with over 24,000 employees. His success journey essentially started from his design for a one-piece truck bumper.

Khan launched All Elite Wrestling with his son in 2019 which aired its first weekly show in October and signed a four-year contract extension with Warner Media in the next year January.

He is the owner of NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars since 2012 and UK's Fulham football club since 2013. Mr. Khan is also a major financial backer of a recently launched news channel; Black News Channel.

US President Donald Trump has plunged 119 ranks lower than his rank before becoming president and is now the 275th richest person in America.

According to Forbes, Trump's branding businesses are facing a downturn as the real estate developers no longer feel the need to be associated with Trump's name.

Trump's real estate licensing business was worth \$170m a year ago that has declined to \$80m now after Trump's oath to not do foreign deals while in office.

Forbes suggests that America's 400 richest people are now 8 percent wealthier than last year and the Covid-19 pandemic did not affect their industries. Collectively, now they stand with a record net worth of \$3.2 trillion and added \$240bn to their riches, "aided by a stock market that has defied the virus", Forbes notes.

This year's \$2.1bn threshold troubled 25 billionaires who were on the 2019 list, tumbled down this year.



Haaris Mahmood Chaudhry is a financial professional currently serving as the Chief Executive Officer at the Universal Services Fund Company in the Ministry of IT & Telecom. He has previously served on prominent posts in the banking sector and has 15 years of extensive international experience.

By Amna Shoaib

What and who does he attribute his success to?

As a person of great accomplishments, Mr. Chaudhry attributes it foremost to God's greatness and then, his parents' prayers. Coupled with that, the willingness to work hard, utilizing opportunities timely and the appropriate mentoring facilitated him in reaching his current position. He expressed his luck in being able to find exceptional mentors early on who were able to explore his potential and geared him towards overcoming his weaknesses. However, he explained that rewards must not come in the way of opportunities, especially ones that could profess significant learning experiences. **'Grasping the opportunity is important to understand your potential and where you fit in the market'**, he said.

What are his strengths and weaknesses?

Mr. Chaudhry felt that he was a man of many weaknesses, but his inability to manage time for his family, his over-ambitious nature, and failure at being able to extricate emotion and impulse from decision-making probably bothers him the most. Although, in some scenarios it did backfire, but he is a fervent believer in Quaid's saying, **'Don't waste time making a decision. Once you take a decision, make it right'**.

What have been his greatest challenges so far?

Mr. Chaudhry felt that his greatest challenges were yet to come. He feels each day brings with it new and different challenges. However, one of the toughest challenges was the cultural shift from the corporate to public sector. It stemmed from a difference in attitude and mindset but as an adaptable person, he was able to adjust to the new environment quite smoothly.

Was it difficult to make the shift from corporate to government sector especially one constantly under the watchful eye of accountability?

While it was difficult to make the switch, controversy did not scare Mr. Chaudhry, particularly because as a senior official, he was always prone to controversy. During a breakfast meeting at his college in the United States, President Bill Clinton inquired of his future plans, now that he had lived the American dream. To this, Mr. Chaudhry replied, **'Yes, I do intend to work in the U.S., but not to build my American dream, rather to learn your techniques and values so that once I am ready, I am able to replicate them in Pakistan'**. Citing this, he felt that now was the right time to do just that.

As a C.E.O., specifically one during this unexpected global pandemic, what is he most proud of in his company?

Responding to this question, he felt that COVID-19 provided their team the opportunity to understand the importance of technology better and canvass its significance in bridging the digital divide. He felt that the company built his passion to introduce technology in far flung areas to make a difference in the lives of people. COVID-19 did not hinder them but assisted them in actualizing the dream of a more connected Pakistan.

Apart from his life as a C.E.O., what are his activities when he is not working?

He said that the family time he missed out on was something he prioritized when he wasn't working. Furthermore, he enjoys physical exercise, particularly gym and jogging which he tries to indulge in regularly. Moreover, his eagerness to learn prompts him to read books and newspapers to keep himself updated on national and international occurrences.

FASCINATING FLORA & FAUNA

SCO invites all Photographers for the competition
on the theme



Capture the Wild
Flowers, Plants,
Trees, Insects,
Mammals, Wild Life
of AJ&K and GB



HOW TO PARTICIPATE?

Send up to 3 HD Photographs meeting the following criteria via email mentioning the subject line as "**Fascinating Flora & Fauna**" Photography Competition.

- **JPEG** with a minimum resolution of **2500x2500** pixels @**300** dpi or above
- A write-up of 50 words or less describing the photograph and the location where it was taken
- Your Full Name, CNIC, Age Group and Mobile Number should be mentioned in your email

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

This competition is open for all interested candidates in photography and in capturing the beautiful North (AJ&K and GB) region of Pakistan.

Last date of photographs submission
25TH September, 2020
Email your photographs at
photography2020@sco.gov.pk

The Participants can submit their entries in one of the following groups:

- Group - A University Category
- Group - B College Category
- Group - C School Category
- Group - D General Category



Winners will be recognized in all SCO Publications and will be given cash prizes

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