THE COMPLETE MAGAZINE FOR THE REGION

SOUTHASIA

November 2021

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Hong Kong	HK$ 30
India	Rs. 100
Japan	¥ 500
Korea	Won 3000
Malaysia	RM 6
Maldives	Rf 45
Myanmar	MMK10
Nepal	NcRs. 75
New Zealand	NZ$ 7
Pakistan	Rs. 300
Philippines	P 75
Saudi Arabia	SR 15
Singapore	S$ 8
Sri Lanka	Rs. 100
Thailand	B 100
Turkey	Lira. 2
UAE	AED 10
UK	£ 3
USA	$ 5

It is generally percieved that democracy is the panacea for all evils of governance. The experience of developing countries has proven otherwise. The Pakistani nation has also been running after democracy for more than seven decades but has unfortunately arrived nowhere.

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SPECIAL EDITORIAL FEATURE

25 Years of Jubilee Insurance



Photo taken below Byco's Single Point Mooring near Charna Island, off the coast of Balochistan, 11 January, 2021.

Byco's Environment: Diverse & Vibrant

In 2012, Byco installed Pakistan's first and only Single Point Mooring (SPM), a floating buoy that allows Byco to import and export crude oil and refined petroleum products directly to and from its Refinery in Hub, Balochistan. Fuel is transported from the SPM to Byco's Storage Tanks through a 12 km pipeline laid on the ocean floor.

The underwater pipeline has given rise to an artificial coral reef, an underwater natural living structure which attracts fish to feed upon it, and therefore produces ideal living conditions for marine life.

Byco recognises the impact of carbon emissions on climate change, and has therefore launched several green initiatives to mitigate emissions. To increase Pakistan's green cover, Byco distributed 2 million Moringa Seeds Nationwide and also is planting trees according to the Miyawaki Method in and near its refinery. Byco commits to becoming carbon neutral in the coming years.

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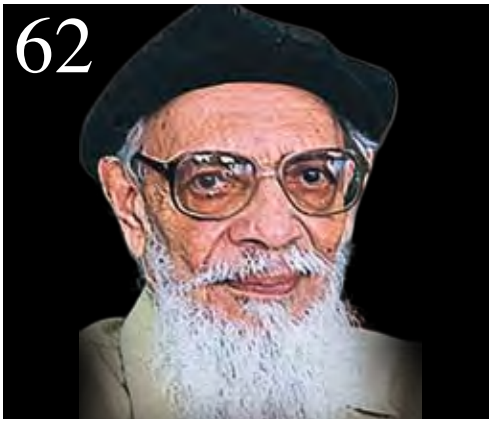
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Could one-party system be considered an ideal option for Pakistan?

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Gentleman's Spirit



A true sportsman is defined by his decorum and mannerism, his ability to hold the rules of conduct of the game as well as his respect for the opposition, no matter what the result. Cricket is referred to as a gentleman's game. This has something to do with the fact that the real spirit of the game remains intact no matter how hard a defeat hits the losing side or how gratifying a win turns out to be for the winners. The recent face-off between arch-rivals Pakistan and India in their opening match in the ICC T20 World Cup in the UAE, was quite a refreshing breather for the two cricket crazy nations. A cricket match between the two countries is nothing less than a do-or-die contest as people do not mind even losing an entire tournament if they are able to beat their arch-rival at any stage of the event.

This time when Pakistan and India met on October 24, tensions were at a boiling point, even well before the high-voltage game took place. Fingers were crossed and fans on both sides of the border were praying, crying and hoping for a must-win. For India, it was yet another opportunity to continue their winning streak against Pakistan in the World Cup. Opening their T20 campaign against India with a win was much more crucial for Pakistan, since the country had never defeated India in any World Cup fixture, be it One-Day or T20 Internationals. However, emerging as the winning side this time, Pakistan were able to break the jinx after 29 years. They did not win the match 'on the edge' but with a very convincing margin of 10 wickets. They did not let the Indian team bowl all 20 overs and reached the 152 runs target with 13 balls still to go.

> دل کے ہر کھیل میں ہوتا ہے بہت جاں کا زیاں
> عشق کو عشق سمجھ مشغلۂ دل نہ بنا
> حمایت علی شاعرؔ

International cricket experts rightly refer to any Pakistan-India contest as a battle of the mind, of nerves and much more, but surprisingly, sanity prevailed all through the high-octane contest at the Dubai cricket ground this time. No wonder then that Indian fans, the Indian team and the Indian media accepted their defeat hands down and there were no excuses for them to lean on. After the win, the iconic moment came when the 'Spirit of Cricket' was visible in its full glory. Indian captain Virat Kohli willingly came forward to congratulate and shake hands with Pakistan skipper Babar Azam. Kohli also hugged Mohammad Rizwan in a spirit of true sportsmanship. By making such a gesture, Kohli showed what a 'gentleman's game' cricket is. A few days later, the gentleman's spirit was again at its height during and after the match played between Pakistan and New Zealand in Sharjah. In the post-match conference, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson admitted the fact that Pakistani players harboured no grudges and showed any sign of aggression towards Kiwi players, despite the fact that New Zealand had cancelled their tour and left Pakistan just hours before the first ODI at Rawalpindi for security threats. Pakistani cricket lovers, media and players must at all times display grace and generosity. This is a time for them to celebrate the memorable moments of victory but it must be done in a gentlemanly manner.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal
President & Editor in Chief

Rising Inflation

The increase in inflation has made people realize that the government will keep making promises to deflate the high cost of commodities, but nothing will be done to reduce inflation.

The cabinet members' consistent justification of inflation in Pakistan through pointless reasons seems



like an attempt to ridicule ordinary people. Of late, ministers and advisors have made several statements that reflect on their insensitivity towards the issue. A federal minister has advised the people to eat less to fight inflation. Another minister said that food prices had gone up due to the appreciation of the dollar. Recently, the chief minister of a province blamed the previous governments for inflation.

It may be recalled that in May, Prime Minister Imran Khan had directed his economic team to give special attention to controlling inflation, but five months have passed without any relief. Instead, prices of essential commodities continue to rise regularly. The government needs to seriously realize that inflation must be controlled and necessary measures adopted without further delay.

Hussain Siddiqui,
Islamabad, Pakistan

Economic Prosperity



The cover story on the policies of the World Bank to eradicate poverty and bring economic prosperity was logical. The story 'The Grapes of Wrath' highlighted the aim of the World Bank and the IMF to boost the economy in under-developed nations. Unfortunately, the fruits of their funding have not achieved much so far.

While economist and former VP of the World Bank, Javed Burki, terms the institution as a supporter of a large policy content, Dr Farrukh Iqbal and Dr Aadil Nakhoda of IBA question the World Bank's contribution towards the development of poor countries.

The World Bank has always helped in improving access to quality education, addressing childhood stunting and malnutrition, strengthening health systems and services in the South Asian region. However, not much has been done when it comes to governance for reduction of poverty and growth as mere policies cannot bring about economic prosperity.

Lubna Taha,
Karachi, Pakistan

Dengue Again

Once again the mosquito with the dengue virus is back and people are more than afraid. Cases of dengue have been increasing for the last few years. Yet, the government has failed to take



effective measures to prevent a high number of dengue cases.

Punjab recorded 92 more cases of dengue. The affected included the former governor of Punjab, Malik Rafique Rajwana, while a person passed away in Lahore due to dengue.

The rise in dengue cases is intensifying the situation. In addition, people must take care of cleanliness and avoid throwing garbage in public places. They should be more responsible and active in saving themselves from the dengue virus. The government should also initiate precautionary measures to bring safety against dengue.

Abdul Rahman Shahbeer,
Lahore, Pakistan

Building Image

The article 'Improving Image' by Sajad Jatoi discussed what the Taliban should do to make amends. The writer enlightens the Taliban to focus more on sports to maintain a better stand in the world as sports is one thing that is recognized all over the world.

The Afghans have made quite a wave in sports since 2004, but now it is difficult to say as to what will

be the situation of sports in the country and what lies in store for them. However, it is clear that the



return of the Taliban will affect the development of sporting activities positively. They must give sports an important consideration.

Aila Akram,
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Promoting Tourism

A country's image and reputation is judged by its capacity to provide basic facilities to tourists. Pakistan is full of breathtaking tourist spots such as Neelum Valley, Deosai Plains, Siri Paye, Kumrat Valley, Naltar Valley, Babusar Top, Fairy Meadows, lush green mountains and so many other cultural, heritage, historical and archaeological sites.

For the PTI government, a good way to generate funds would be to promote tourism. The government needs to launch an advertising campaign on international media to show Pakistan's beauty and invite people to visit and explore it. The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) should launch an e-portal for visitors to facilitate bookings. This will bolster the country's fragile economy and portray a soft image of Pakistan in the world.

Insaf Brohi,
Karachi, Pakistan



Modern Times

In the article 'Beyond the Straitjacket', the writer Taha Kehar has highlighted the experience of watching television soaps in the past years with what is



presented now.

While it is true that watching television plays in the past used to be entertaining in its own way as everyone used to gather to watch their favourite shows, today the concept of binge-watching and over-the-top content, offers viewers more comfort as they can watch the shows whenever they want.

The writer also emphasizes the quality of the content as now, in most television plays, women are portrayed as the weaker gender who can forgive everyone. In short, they don't have any self-respect. Hence, writers should explore aspects of social life that are seldom featured in television plays and avoid saas-bahu and jaadu-tona stuff.

Tehreem Bilal,
Islamabad, Pakistan

Court Marriages

For some years now, the number of court marriages has been increasing in Pakistan. According to the law of the country, court marriage is also a legal act, because it provides the right of liberty to all the people of the country and it is also essential to have the consent of both parties.

Usually, a court marriage occurs when the parents of the groom or the bride are against the relationship. Such events also lead to honour killing, which is now quite on the rise and sometimes ends the life of the female spouse.



According to a report, half of the court marriages fail due to lack of trust in relationships, a gap of understanding and no love or respect for parents. Spouses need to know all about each other so that they can live a comfortable life ahead. Also, the parents should avoid managing their childrens' marriages.

Mohammad Ameen,
Quetta, Pakistan

Speaking Out



Frances Haugen joined Facebook in 2019 as a product manager on the company's civic integrity team. Her role focused on issues related to elections worldwide. Haugen says the internal workings of Facebook are anything but. She decided to speak up because she was alarmed by company policies that continuously prioritized profit over public safety. Haugen explicitly said: "The version of Facebook that exists today is tearing our societies apart and causing ethnic violence around the world."



Expert Advice



Former Pakistan fast bowler has had his day. The Rawalpindi Express now divides his time 'experting' on cricket on PTV and advising cricketers. He says Sharjeel Khan must fix his mindset while Babar Azam must believe in himself more. He has advised Mohammad Hafeez to stop talking because now Rameez Raja is PCB chairman. Shoaib also thinks Wahab Riaz needs another hair transplant and has advised Shaheen Afridi to get more muscles on his thighs.

Changing Perspectives



It's amazing how Muslim women in Europe are working towards a positive change. They are making their position strong by changing perspectives. Where there are issues in France barring Muslim women from wearing burkinis in public, there are still women who are making an effort for their names to be known in the fashion world for the modest trends followed by them.



Arranged Affair

About his married life, actor Aijaz Aslam says his marriage was an arranged affair. He had never met his wife before they got engaged. They were under family pressure to get married soon. His only priority was that the girl should be tall to maintain a balance as he is quite tall. What he most likes about his wife Sabeen is that she does not make herself prominent on social media as she is busy with her kids and home and her priorities are quite different.



'The people of Pakistan deserve a committed, selfless leadership, which can help them realize their boundless potential'
–Pervez Musharraf, former President of Pakistan.

'Leader follows his ideology, Leader does not follow his relatives and friends'.
– Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan.

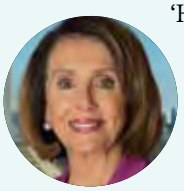




'In my opinion, the most important thing in governance is management control.'
– Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia.

'Holding public office demands a certain level of discretion and propriety'.
– Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, former Prime Minister of Pakistan.

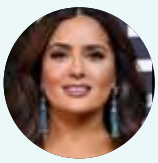




'Hamas is a humanitarian organization.'
– Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives.

'In the battle between the heart and the mind, winners always listen to their hearts.
–Rameez Raja, Chairman, Pakistan Cricket Board.





'Life is tough; and if you have the ability to laugh at it, you have the ability to enjoy it.'
–Salma Hayek, Mexican-American actress.

Focusing the World's Attention

As bombs continue to fall on Aleppo, Syria's ravaged metropolis, Israel's first Arab newscaster Lucy Aharish switched from Hebrew to English during an evening broadcast of her show on Channel 2 television, to direct a message at viewers around the world.



Emphasizing the genocide in Halab, Syria, she says that the genocide is basically a holocaust that no one wants to hear or talk about.

In the age of social media where information can fit into the palm of your hand and where people can see and hear the victims and their horror stories in real-time, they are standing doing nothing while children are being slaughtered every single hour. The situation is getting worse and nobody in France, the UK, and Germany or America is doing anything to stop it.

The Arab newscaster called out the UN for holding meetings of security councils and wiping away a tear when they see the image of a father holding the body of his little daughter. She calls it hypocrisy.

Aharish is an Arab, a Muslim, a citizen of the State of Israel but she's also a citizen of the world who is ashamed as a human being because the leaders are incapable of being articulate in their condemnation and powerful in their actions. The world is being taken hostage by terrorists and murderers and no one is doing anything to maintain peace. Armenia, Bosnia, Darfur, Rwanda and World War II, all are living examples of the catastrophe.

Quoting Albert Einstein she ends her broadcast saying, "The world won't be destroyed by those who do evil but rather by those who watch them without doing nothing."

Asian Junior Tennis Player

Mikaeel Ali Baig, the grandson of Khushbakht Shujaat and Shujaat Ali Baig, has made Pakistan proud by winning the gold medal at the Junior Asian ITF Tournament 2021 held in Islamabad. Pakistan won against India in the finals with a score of 10-5.

The 11-year-old tennis player plays and trains in both the US and Pakistan. He is currently ranked amongst the top 10 in Florida, USA. From having his first racket at the age of 2 and attending various training sessions, Mikaeel has been enthusiastic to own the game of tennis.

His coaches praised him saying he's one of the few tennis players who can slide like Novak Djokovic on hard courts and Mikaeel is a big admirer of Novak.

He also has a YouTube channel by the name 'Lead the Way' where he interviews local readers, small business owners and frontline workers impacted by Covid-19 in his community. He is hoping to bring change through 'Lead the Way'.





The picture is from Indore.

Aryan D'Rozario posted this photo on his Twitter account saying that folks in Pakistan would be very interested to see this as the boy in white, right in the middle, went onto become the Chief Justice of Pakistan from 1960-68. All his other siblings remained in India.



With the rising inflation in Pakistan, the common man is left with nothing but more difficulties for him in fulfilling the needs of his family. In a country where poverty is already a serious issue, the government is increasing prices of even the basic necessities.



Yes, the similarity is visible. The photo is widely circulating on social media for its resemblance to the famous web series 'Money Heist'. Titled '50 Crore', one wonders if this really is the Pakistan version of 'Money Heist'.

World's Largest Quran



Shahid Rassam, a renowned Pakistani artist, and his over 200 associates have been working since 2017 in placing Quranic script crafted out of 2000 kg of aluminium and plated in 200 kg of gold on 600 canvas rolls to prepare the world's largest copy of the Holy Quran.

It is the first time in over 1,400-year history of Islam that the Quran is being cast in aluminium. Calligraphers have previously produced classic art in creating copies of the holy book using conventional materials like wood, paper, animal skin and cloth.

Inspired by Turkish, Arabic and Iranian art designs, the artist is using precious stones like rubies, sapphires and emeralds to illuminate and enrich the design. Italian glazing technique and acrylic colours are used to develop the design so it can last for hundreds of years.



The artwork, measuring 8.5 feet long and 6.5 feet wide, is poised to break the record currently held by a copy of the Quran sized at 6.5 and 4.5 feet, which was prepared in Afghanistan in 2017 and is now kept at the Kul Sharif Mosque in the Russian city of Kazan.

Rassam will display the first sample of his artwork, Surah Rahman, at the ongoing Dubai Expo in November. The rare project is scheduled to be completed in 2026.

African Novelist Wins Nobel

Tanzanian-born novelist Abdulrazak Gurnah won the Nobel Literature Prize for his writings on post-colonialism and the trauma of the refugee experience.

Gurnah grew up in Zanzibar but arrived in England as a refugee at the end of the 1960s. He is the fifth African to win the Nobel Literature Prize. He has published 10 novels and a number of short stories.

The head of the Academy's Nobel committee, Anders Olsson considers Gurnah's reflections on the plight of refugees particularly topical for his writings and extremely interesting for people in Europe and around the world.

The theme of the refugees' disruption runs throughout his work, with a focus on identity and self-image, also apparent in the 1996 novel 'Admiring Silence' and 'By the Sea' from 2001.



Born in 1948, Gurnah fled Zanzibar in 1968 following the revolution there which led to oppression and the persecution of citizens of Arab origin. He began writing as a 21-year-old in England. Although Swahili was his first language, English became his literary tool. He is best known for his 1994 breakthrough novel 'Paradise', set in colonial East Africa during World War I, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction.

New PAA Office Bearers



Ahmed Jamal Mir of Prestige Communications was elected unopposed as Chairman of the Pakistan Advertising Association (PAA).

Mir thanked all members for reposing their confidence in him and assured them that the new team, with the support of the PAA members, will work towards creating a positive change to enhance the image of the advertising industry in Pakistan.

Numan Nabi Ahmed of The Brand Partnership was elected Senior Vice-Chairman while Muhammad Zeeshan Khan of TNI Communications as Vice Chairman. Mahmood Parekh of MCM, Usman Atiq Butt of InteRlink and Rizwan Ashraf of Velocity were elected Chairman of PAA Zones A, B and C, respectively. Javed Qadeer of Marksman was elected Secretary of Finance.

Yasra Rizvi's Social Campaign



Actor and writer Yasra Rizvi's recent social media campaign is meant to make some viewers uncomfortable as it speaks out against forced marriages and divorce shaming, two social evils of our society.

Rizvi posted a series of pictures on social media as a visual commentary against forced marriages and divorce shaming. The pictures show Rizvi in a festive red outfit with gold jewellery. She is bound in chains, her make-up badly smudged and hair dishevelled.

The actor says marriage is a social contract that ensures the rights of and responsibilities towards one's partner. It is unfair to make marriage an experience akin to imprisonment or death sentence. She has even encouraged her followers to stand up for those who experience oppression because of their marriage.

Women and young girls often bear the brunt of forced marriages in Pakistan. Such marriages can prove detrimental for girls as they are unprepared. Though ending the marriage can be difficult as it is considered a taboo, Rizvi is trying to make more people understand with her campaign that these practices are wrong. S

SUN Academy Farewell

SUN Academy recently organised a farewell to appreciate students for scoring good grades in Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKUEB). This is the first batch of Matric students who passed out from SUN Academy.

Madam Naureen Mansoor (Head Teacher) welcomed the guests after which trustee SUN Academy Rafia Khan and Trustee of the Society of the Unwell and Needy, Engr. Mohammad Ahson Khan, addressed the audience. The SUN Management also acknowledged the hard work by awarding certificates and shields to students and teachers.

Mr Saeed, (former President of NBP),





Mr Mohammad Aslam (Principal of H.B Malik School), Mr Ahson Shamsi (Owner of TSNA School), Mr Mohammad Naeem and Mr Feroz Khan (Trustee SUN Academy), also attended the event.

The SUN Management had also invited its pioneer teachers who had initially worked for SUN Academy. S

Pakistani American to Head US College

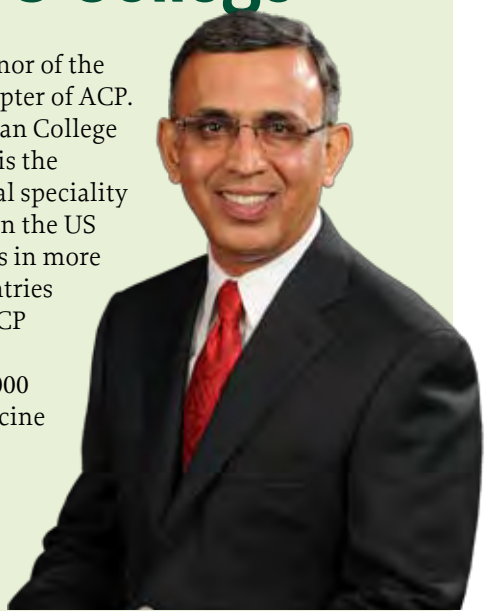
A Pakistani American physician, Dr Omar Atiq, has been nominated as the next President of the American College of Physicians (ACP). He is the first physician of Pakistani descent and only the second international medical graduate selected for the position.

Dr Atiq, a professor of medicine and otolaryngology head and neck surgery, is based in Arkansas. He earned his medical degree from the Khyber Medical College, University of Peshawar. He is board-certified in medical oncology, haematology and internal medicine.

In December 2019, he sent out a holiday greeting to his patients before Christmas letting them know that their outstanding payments worth $650,000 would be cleared.

He was named chair of ACP's Board of Governors and serves on the Arkansas State Medical Board. He was previously president of the Arkansas Medical Society. He has also served a four-year term as governor of the Arkansas Chapter of ACP.

The American College of Physicians is the largest medical speciality organisation in the US with members in more than 145 countries worldwide. ACP membership includes 154,000 internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists and medical students. S





Coldplay's Eco-Friendly Tour

British band Coldplay recently announced that they will be powering their upcoming world tour via a dance floor along with bicyles that generate electricity.

This is part of the band's 12-point plan to cut their carbon footprint, a plan they devised two years ago. They will also plant a tree for every ticket sold. The band last played to 5.4 million people on their 2016-17 tour, making it the biggest tour of all time, earning more than $500 million.

Coldplay's world tour will start in March in Costa Rica, a city that has one of the highest rates of renewable energy generation in the world. S

Tony Bennett Sets More World Record

The Grammy Award-winning singer has added another record to his 70-year career by becoming the oldest person to release an album at the age of 95. His song 'Love for Sale' in collaboration with Lady Gaga was released on October 1.

Previously, he made the Guinness World Records by being the oldest person to reach no.1 on the US album chart with a newly recorded album for 'Cheek to Cheek'. He again set a record by having his songs among the UK top 20 albums for 39 years, the longest in history. He then became the oldest person to enter the UK top 20 album chart with 'Duets: An American Classic' when he was 80. He made another record by taking the longest time between the release of an original recording and a re-recording of the same single by the same artiste. S



No More Social Distancing in Makkah





The Grand Mosque in the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia operated at full capacity with worshippers praying shoulder-to-shoulder for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic began. Workers removed floor markings that guide people to social distance in and around the Grand Mosque which is built around the Kaaba.

While social distancing measures were lifted, the authorities said visitors must be fully vaccinated against coronavirus and must continue to wear masks on mosque grounds. Also, the Kaaba remained cordoned off and out of reach.

The Umrah draws millions from around the globe, as does the annual Hajj, raking in a combined $12 billion annually but the pandemic hugely disrupted both Muslim pilgrimages.

Saudi Arabia is slowly opening up and has started welcoming vaccinated foreign tourists since August 1. Masks are also no longer mandatory in most open spaces.



PAKISTAN TO HOST ASIA CUP 2023

The ACC has recognized that it is the turn of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to host the Asia Cup and the Pakistan board, as it has been maintaining in recent times, has declared that it will host the event in Pakistan.

The Asia Cup 2023 will be played in a one-day format and the schedule of events will be finalized soon.

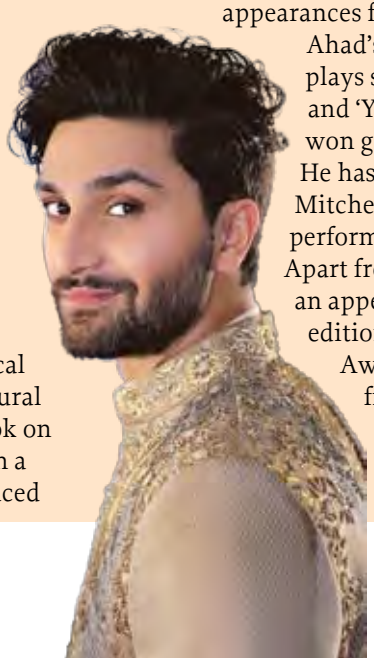
The Asia Cup 2020 will be held in Sri Lanka in 2022. Asia Cup 2022 was to be held in Pakistan, but now it has been rescheduled to be held in 2023.

Ahad at First Renaissance Awards

Pakistani actor Ahad Raza Mir appeared alongside Oscar award-winning British actor Colin Firth, supermodel and activist Gisele Bundchen, legendary musician Nile Rodgers and musician, political activist and philanthropist Annie Lennox in the first edition of the Renaissance Awards.

The Renaissance Awards empower young leaders all over the world and its first edition took place on October 18. Unlike typical award shows, the inaugural Renaissance Awards took on a cinematic format, with a film presentation produced by Pulse Films Italia and directed by Grammy-nominated Giorgio Testi.

The ceremony took the form of a movie, filmed inside the Palazzo Vecchio and included celebrity appearances from several stars.



Ahad's performances in TV plays such as 'Ehd-e-Wafa' and 'Yeh Dil Mera' have won great appreciation. He has also won the Betty Mitchell Award for his performance in a stage play. Apart from him making an appearance in the first edition of the Renaissance Awards, Ahad has also finished filming for an coming Hollywood project.



Saba Qamar's New Project

Saba Qamar has announced her new project called 'Serial Killer' written by Umera Ahmed, who has previously collaborated with Saba Qamar in the serial 'Maat'.

She posted a photo of her new character in an Instagram post saying, "I am very elated to announce my new project #Serialkiller. Couldn't say no to another promising script, written and offered by our intellectual genius Umera Ahmed."

Saba was last seen in the hit drama 'Cheekh' in 2019.

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The One-Party Solution

There are different evaluations of the dominant one-party system in China. CCP leaders see the system as a true and tried platform for China's success.

BY PROF. BAOGANG HE

On the first of July this year, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) celebrated its centenary anniversary, noting among its list of achievements, e.g. the transformation of China's economy, the elimination of absolute poverty, and the rise of China as a great power. China rose from a developing country with a per capita Gross National Income of $US200 to a middle-income country with more than $US100,00 in 2020. China's GDP surpassed Canada in 1993, Italy in 2000, France in 2005, the UK in 2006 and Germany in 2008. In 2010, China overtook Japan to become the world's second-largest economy and, in 2014, overtook the United States in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. Given the current crisis of Western democracy, the success of China offers a clear example for other developing countries to follow but at what cost? Is China's one-party dominant system applicable to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka?

While the search for a "one-party solution" in South Asia may be seen to accentuate the perception of a rivalry between democracy and autocracy - an ideological dichotomy the Biden administration willingly promotes - such a view overlooks the fact that both the US and China fall into the capitalist system, with the former featuring the domination of private capital and the latter the domination of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The rivalry between the US and China, therefore, ought to be seen rather as a competition between different economic models within the capitalist system. Treating China's one-party dominant system instead as a function of its state capitalism system, will help us better understand its advantages and disadvantages.

A distinct advantage of the CCP is that it controls all governmental organisations, other eight "democratic parties", 97 national SOEs, and 460,000 local SOEs (which makes the CCP the wealthiest party in the world). The CCP also has comparative advantages in its institutional ability to develop and implement long-term plans or policies necessary for the completion

of large-scale infrastructure projects. Its scope to mobilise national wealth and resources and deliver a high level of efficiency is unparalleled. In the two-party system, by contrast, defeated parties are often witness to the termination of infrastructure projects when opposing parties come to power. Even when parties are in power, projects can be debated for months and sometimes years on end without any results due to the blocking of motions by other parties or due to checks and balances of the branches of the government itself. A good example, is the separation of political powers in the US system.

The CCP has other comparative advantages. The intrinsic value of SOEs is that they are controllable entities that can be relied upon to toe the Party line – they can be deployed overseas to implement China's global expansion. Answerable to the CCP, SOEs have a political utility – and can be leveraged by the CCP, often in pursuit of non- or semi-economic objectives. For example, the China Export-Import Bank (EXIM), established with a mandate and model that covered costs without necessarily making a profit, is a noteworthy manifestation of this. Unlike Britain and the United States that 'succumb(e)' more and more to the money-lending classes dressed as 'imperialists and patriots' in the words of Hobson, the CCP is unique in that it controls five central state-owned banks plus other banks like EXIM. Within China's one-party-dominant system, its banking CEOs are merely implementors of the decisions of the CCP; their mandated job is to ensure financial stability and suppress financial speculators. Under its party-controlled financial system, the CCP successfully defeated George Soros's speculation in Hong Kong during the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and withstood the global financial crisis in 2008-2009. Remarkably, China has not generated a major financial crisis in the last 40 years. The key feature of its party-controlled system is its ability of preventing colossal scale speculation in China's financial markets and accordingly providing economic and financial stability.

China's party-controlled capital system does, however, have its problems and deficiencies. As Chinese leaders seek to develop an offshore market for the Renminbi (RMB), the CCP maintains strict controls on capital flows, thus preventing the RMB from developing into a global currency. In growing its global financial system, China has ironically sown the seeds of its demise. To compete with the USA, China attempts to expand the channels for foreign investors to enter the Chinese market and for domestic investors to issue Yuan-denominated financial products overseas. This policy would inevitably encourage a version of speculative capitalism. China might follow the example of the US by reducing its incentives in the production sector to earn quick money in the financial market.



"China has never really had a full democracy, but during the years of communist rule the pendulum has swung between 'hard' and 'soft' authoritarianism."

– Rana Mitter

Several more serious problems are also associated with the CCP, one of which is how it goes about maintaining its one-party rule; this being a top priority for the ruling elite. To prevent any significant challenges and reassert its ideological position, the CCP has instituted a rigid and extensive control system over NGOs, scholars, and social media to stop any dissent. This destroys independent thought and innovative ideas (which are the markers of any progressive society), thus inhibiting effective policy development, and generally making intellectual life in China miserable.

Another major problem is the governing of its 92 million party members, which is costly and raises serious management issues. Succession is also a challenging issue. Although Deng Xiaoping had introduced a two-terms rule, its abandoned in 2018 means that Xi Jinping will rule indefinitely. Rather than shoring up CCP power well into future indefinite rule will likely at some point result in a succession crisis potentially leading to the decline and erosion of CCP power. Whether Xi Jinping will pass his power onto the next generation of leaders remains to be seen. The most serious problem associated with the CCP's rule, however, is on-going rampant corruption which is deeply rooted in state capitalism and the dominant one-party system, owing largely to fact that the CPP lacks external checks on its power.

The scale and level of corruption is shocking and has progressively worsened under Xi Jinping's rule, which reflects poorly on leadership in this area, even though he has launched a ferocious campaign against corruption. Finally, but certainly not the least of its problems, is that while the CCP believes it has successfully framed the crisis and decay of American democracy, at the domestic level it is overwhelmed by the persistent demands of its own citizens' for more democracy. A dominant one-party system cannot meet this demand half-heartedly; there appears to be no recourse other than to accommodate it. The CCP's refusal to embark on democratisation also puts in a bind at the global level, such that it remains a critical factor preventing China and Europe from cooperating against US hegemony.

There are different evaluations of the dominant one-party system in China. CCP leaders see the system as

a true and tried platform for China's success and by extension their own personal success. For example, the top leaders have easy access to a portion of China's GDP, which, less than one per cent of GDP amounts to more than one hundred billion dollars annually to spend on selected foreign countries, or high tech-areas for investment. Having this kind of money at their disposal to use on projects brings speedy results. From the perspective of about 600 million ordinary Chinese citizens, earning an average of US$145 per month, however, this use of public money rarely benefits them in any direct way, and they have no say on such a matter too!

Finally, whether other countries can successfully reproduce China's model depends on several conditions. It is important to acknowledge that the practice of meritocratic leadership in China developed within its long-standing Confucian tradition had established the cultural conditions for CCP hegemony and China's economic success. Without its meritocracy and thereby its citizens' confidence in the system, it is unlikely that China would be the greater power that it is today. In this respect, it is difficult to see how the different colonial traditions and the multiple modern party systems of countries in South Asia could establish a CCP-style ruling.

The potential risks of creating a one-party state in terms of economic costs and citizen revolt against the government cannot be underestimated. Besides this, the other problems associated with the CCP mentioned here raise two substantive questions for imitators: is it possible to establish a hegemonic position similar to that of the CCP while South Asian countries are themselves still wrestling with China's hegemonic ambitions in the region? If they are not able to surmount problems that are inherently rooted in the Chinese one-party dominant system, then would it still be desirable to emulate the CCP model? If Pakistan and other South Asian countries want to replicate China's success story, rather than look to the CCP model in its entirety, in the end it comes down to pursuing its own adaptive, judicious, hybrid and creative policies and practices. S



Professor Baogang He is an Alfred Deakin Professor and Chair in International Relations since 2005, at Deakin University, Australia. With a PhD in Political Science from Australian National University, he is widely known for his work in Chinese democratization and politics. He has published 7 books and 63 articles. He has also held several honorary appointments and research fellowships at renowned universities, including Stanford, Cambridge, Columbia, Leiden and Sussex. He can be reached at baogang.he@deakin.edu.au

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INTERVIEW

'Pakistan has had a de facto one-party system in place.'



Justice (R) Wajihuddin Ahmed talks to *SouthAsia* in this exclusive interview with Faizan Usmani.

What are your views on a one-party system? Would such a system be suitable for Pakistan?

Pakistan has been a guinea pig when it comes to putting different forms of governments to test. Honestly speaking, Pakistan has had a de facto one-party system in place, particularly during the military regimes, with a tendency to call the shots by setting up their own political parties. Elected through democratic means on the surface, however, the civilian governments also adopt a dictatorial approach to governance as they rarely consult other political and state stakeholders in matters of governance. The role of the Parliament in the legislative process is also limited since most legislation is carried out through the Presidential Ordinances. That's the way the ball bounces in the name of democracy and electoral authoritarianism.

In the early stages, the democracies in the West were also not mature, but they kept improving their political systems on the basis of trial and error. Now democracy in the Western countries has reached a stage of maturity and all the political parties, including the ruling party, cannot move away from the basic tenets of democracy. Principally, the multiparty system is better than one-party rule. Different European states such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom, etc. take dissimilar electoral routes to form a government, but despite such procedural differences, the entire spirit of democracy remains intact. On this account, democracy is the name of achieving political awareness and applying the acquired political consciousness the right way.

A true democracy does not require the electorate to be highly educated, but they must have a certain level of political awareness and be able to exercise their electoral rights independently on their own. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Pakistan owing to a confluence of factors. First and foremost, the people living under the feudal system cannot vote against the will of their feudal lords, be it a *sardar*, *chaudhry*, a *vadera*, and the like. The same is equally true for a well-entrenched *baradri* system, blindly followed by a large number of people in both rural and urban Pakistan. In the *baradri* system, people always vote for an electoral candidate, who belongs to their family's caste. When I was part of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), for instance, I was quite surprised to see that the candidates for the local bodies elections in the Punjab were mostly chosen from the Gujjar clan. Sectarianism is another factor that drives the people to vote for a candidate from their own sect or religious order during the general elections. Whether it is a one-party form of governance or multiparty rule, no system would ever produce the desired results unless we uproot the *baradri* system, feudalism and sectarianism, together with those stakeholders who are serving their

vested interests.

What are the factors that don't allow democracy to flourish in the country?

There are many factors that do not allow democracy to consolidate and become a social norm. For example, in an attempt to make sure that all the registered political parties adhere to the norms of democracy within the party, the Election Act 2017 made it obligatory that no political party will be registered by the Election Commission of Pakistan unless the party has a membership base of at least 2,000 people. One way or the other, political parties are able to observe these formalities but they have no intent to hold intra-party elections. At the PTI, I have been a witness to their intra-party elections and also once headed the PTI's intra-party tribunal. However, those elections were rigged to the maximum and we were left with no option but to set aside the elections altogether. Since then, Imran Khan has not held intra-party elections in the right manner and the process of holding intra-party elections at the PTI is totally derailed.

If you examine the country's three leading political parties, namely the Pakistan Peoples Party, the PML-N and the PTI, they all don't even have a membership base on the ground. In the name of intra-party elections, the party leadership nominates a panel of candidates, who are elected unopposed and thus returns are submitted to the Election Commission. That's it. One must say the multiparty situation is worse than the one-party system. In Western democracies, those who lead the political parties select the right candidates for the elections and don't nominate themselves as electoral candidates. The situation in our political scene is just the reverse. For example, when I was a member of the PTI Parliamentary Board I found that other than myself the rest of the board members were standing in the elections. How can a member of the board of a democratic political party nominate himself as an electoral candidate? I think there must be a law to curb this anti-democratic practice. However, many things cannot be corrected through legislation such as the systematic development of democracy, the establishment of democratic norms, etc.

At the time when the Soviet Union was alive, the top leadership of the Communist Party, despite being the sole political party of the country, could not become part of the government. The secretary of the communist party was the most powerful person in the Soviet Union, but he never put himself forward to play a role in governance matters. The most pressing thing which must be addressed through legislative means is the mandatory inclusion of technocrats in the government. Similar to the reservation of seats for women and minorities in the Assembly, about 20 to 25 percent seats in the upper and lower houses of the Parliament, including the lower bodies, should also be reserved for technocrats at federal, provincial and local levels. Seemingly, the government in the United States is based on elected representatives, but in practice it is the form of the government, which is based on technocrats who have relevant experience and expertise in their respective fields. In short, we cannot have a real democracy in political parties in Pakistan unless various issues are effectively addressed, a task which is difficult to achieve given the present situation ruled by vested interests of the powerful elements.

What we can do through the law is to make sure that the political parties within and outside their political setups, adhere to democratic norms in letter and spirit. It is commonly said the Judiciary in Pakistan is a powerful institution. It is also said that both the Judiciary and the Armed Forces together tend to make and break the elected government. I do not subscribe to this notion as such, but I do know that the bureaucracy rules the roost amidst the lot of public representatives with no or a miserably low level of professional competence. Since power emanates from the barrel of the gun, the institutions run by competent people always call the shots, whether it is the Judiciary or the Armed Forces.

I do not subscribe to the notion that Imran Khan is an honest and upright person.

How could a positive change be brought about when even an honest person like Imran Khan with no record of corruption or abuse of public office, seems to fail in putting the country on the right path to social justice, economic growth and development?

First, I do not subscribe to the notion that Imran Khan is an honest and upright person. I spent about five to six years with the PTI, rubbing shoulders with the party's top hierarchy. As time passed by, however, I and one of our fellows from the PTI left the party, one by one. The fellow once told me a beautiful thing about Imran Khan. He said, 'How could a man be referred to as an honest person when his own shoelaces are not his own? My PTI fellow further said,

"Someone who does not run his household on his own, has others to pay his home utility bills as well as monthly salaries of his housemaids and domestic servants, cannot be called an incorruptible person. A person does not fall in the category of being honest and upright, who has such luxurious vehicles as Pajero, Hilux and many others, which have all been provided and maintained by others. How could you call someone a high-minded and financially clean person, who has never taken out his wallet from his pocket? How could someone who does not even know how to run his household, run the country's economy?

Secondly, the PTI, through its platform, sent the wrong people to the Parliament and it somehow cobbled the majority and successfully formed the cabinet as well. However, the PTI is unable to effectively run the government and can never do so, thanks to the so-called electables. As things stand today, the government is being run by a bevy of assistants, advisers and coordinators to the prime minister.

I am no economist and am just a graduate in Economics. But I can firmly say that in a country, there are two parallel lines of economy, categorised as domestic economy and external economy. The domestic economy necessitates appropriate taxation at the right place, optimal revenue generation and its rightful spending and disbursement. Unfortunately, a taxpaying culture has never flourished in the country, which cannot merely run on the basis of income tax. The country can only manage its financials on the basis of indirect taxes and deficit financing or loans. Therefore, it is not possible to run this country by imposing income taxe on people. Considering the low revenue generated through direct taxes, the country is basically being run through indirect taxes. However, the government is not capable of collecting indirect taxes too. When it comes to the external aspect of the economy, Pakistan is currently receiving remittances of about 25 to 30 billion dollars, while the gap between the country's imports and exports is more or less equal to its total remittances. Given that fuel imports take away a major chunk of Pakistan's revenues, the automobile sector is mass producing cars, in place of buses and locomotives, thus burdening the country's already inflated import bill with an increasing cost of crude oil. The same goes for various luxury items which are being imported into the country without imposing regulatory duties.

If the Judiciary was not taken on board, the constitutional deviations in Pakistan would not have been possible.

In my opinion, Pakistan can easily control its imports and maintain the balance between imports and exports without resorting to heavy loans. Pakistan can easily pay off its foreign debts within 3 to 4 years by using the sizable remittances sent by overseas Pakistanis every year. However, what measures has the PTI government taken in this regard? As you know, where there's a will, there's a way. Let alone such basic attributes as honesty and competence, there is absolutely no will to do so at the government level.

Your views on the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

Personally, I am in favour of using electronic voting machines (EVMs) in elections. However, would we be able to ensure that the EVMs would not be manipulated? If it is possible, then we must go for the EVMs. Otherwise, there is no use in replacing the existing voting system with a new one.

In your opinion, is the Judiciary also responsible for the poor state of the country?

The Judiciary has had a major role in the country's poor state of affairs. If the Judiciary was not taken on board, the constitutional deviations in Pakistan would not have been possible. From the pre-Constitution era of Pakistan, Justice Munir and his cronies were taken under the influence of the powers that be. At that time, when the Supreme Court was not set up, the five judges of the Apex Court and the Central Court were also managed. As a case in example, one of the five judges was sent to the then East Pakistan as an acting governor and Justice S.A. Rehman of the Lahore High Court was placed in his position. The move was taken to settle the case of Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan and the Assembly was accordingly sent home. Another worse case took place in 1955 when the Federal Court led by Chief Justice Muhammad Munir ruled in support of the Governor General on the basis of the 'Law of Necessity,' which was introduced for the first time in deciding constitutional matters. The floodgates were then opened and when General Ayub Khan took over the reins, it was again the Supreme Court Judges who approved the Martial Law takeover, making a historic remark in the verdict's observation that 'a successful revolution brings its own law.'

Later Justice Munir admitted that he was consulted and asked to adjudicate on the legitimacy of the provisional constitutional order of the Martial Law regime in 1958. Though the court tried to mend the trend in 1972 in Asma Jilani's case,

it failed. In 1977 again in Nusrat Bhutto's case, the Supreme Court judges had decided that they would not grant General Zia-ul-Haq the power to amend the Constitution. My father was also part of the Supreme Court bench. Having retired from the Supreme Court in 1974, he was recalled to function as the ad hoc judge in 1977. In fact, he was the first Supreme Court judge to be recalled. In Nusrat Bhutto's case, however, Chief Justice Anwar-ul-Haque surreptitiously inserted a particular phrase in the order, which conferred constitutional amendment powers on Zia-ul-Haq. On the other hand, the Judges had already decided that Gen Zia-ul-Haq would go back to the barracks soon after holding the elections. However, when the nitty-gritty of the verdict before its official proclamation, was being discussed and finalised by the bench of judges, Chief Justice Anwar-ul-Haque incorporated a sentence 'including the power to amend the Constitution' in the verdict. And you already know what happened after that, for instance, in 2002. In short, the Judiciary has a major role in what we have come to today.

What is the future of democracy in Pakistan?

If truth be told, we have never had democracy in Pakistan. You are completely wrong if you think that those who sit in the Assembly are truly the public representatives. In fact, they represent the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie in whose hands the entire wealth is concentrated. Interestingly, this is not the case in Pakistan only, as in well-entrenched democracies of the West, the public, comprising the proletariat and petty-bourgeoisie classes, is never represented in its true sense because with low income they can never afford to go to the Assembly. On the contrary, in a country like China with a one-party system in place, a common man from the Communist Party of China may find his way to the government, though the Communist Party does not represent the entire 1.402 billion population of the country. Their political leadership does not stick to the top position for the rest of their lives and they have to sidestep for other members after a fixed period of time. Even a person like Mao had to give way for new faces.

Honestly speaking, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Be it a one-party rule or the multiparty way-out, the system must be able to deliver for the welfare of the people. This is also evident in the history of Islam. For example the Ottoman Empire was run for centuries by a single-party format, but it delivered. However, the Muslim rulers of yore started losing their reins on governance and control when the connection between the rulers and the public was cut. That disconnection, as a corollary, led to the end of the Ottoman dynasty too. The Holy Quran does not approve any particular system of government, but it directs us not to deviate from the straight and th right path, referred to as Sirate al-Mustaqeem. And the beginning of the end starts the moment one deviates from the right path. Be it a multiparty system, one-party governance, real democracy, or so-called democratic rule, it takes time to evolve and improve things, which otherwise cannot be implemented through a revolution.

Justice Wajihuddin Ahmed, a retired justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, human rights activist, and former Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court, took up a leading role in the Lawyer's Movement in 2007. He was Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court from November 5, 1997 to May 4,1998. He was moved to the Supreme Court in 1998. During his tenure as Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court, a large number of suo moto actions were taken. In 2011, he joined the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), being the party's candidate for the presidential election in July, 2013. He lost the election to Mamnoon Hussain of Pakistan Muslim League (N). Later, Justice Wajihuddin left the PTI owing to differences with the party's top leadership and formed his own political party 'Aam Log Ittehad.'

What is the future of Karachi, since the financial and economic hub of the country now looks to be a city conquered by the Sindh Government?

I think the Sindh Government, being run by the Pakistan Peoples Party, is playing a detrimental role for the city. I wonder why don't they realise the repercussions of their actions that could even lead to taking over of the city by the Western powers as a replacement of Hong Kong, or the city of Karachi could become a separate province down the road. The PPP-led Sindh Government seems to fail in realizing the consequences of their actions, but wittingly or unwittingly, they are moving in this direction. In my opinion, the rulers of Sindh are probably doing it quite knowingly as if they have solely been appointed to steer the city towards more chaos and anarchy by pushing it to absolute independence or something similar in the vein. How could one kill the hen that lays the golden egg? No one can deny the fact that the revenue generated by the Interior Sindh is minuscule compared to the revenue generated by Karachi alone. If you go out of Karachi and see Larkana city, the PPP's citadel as well as its real capital, you will find the city ina shambles. I strongly feel they are not fools and are intentionally working on a well-defined agenda to get things done in their favour. S

A System for Growth

Pakistan must get out from the grip of failed politicians and a failed political system.

BY BRIG. (R) SALEEM QAMAR BUTT



The proposition under discussion in this short piece is to analyse whether or not 'A one-party state or a single-party system' is suitable for Pakistan with reference to the spectacular rise of China, which is mainly attributed to its one-party rule.

Let's first examine a few essential details about the 'One Party System' along with a brief hint at its bright and dark side. A one-party state or a single party system is a type of unitary state in which only one political party has the right to form the government, usually based on the existing constitution. All other parties are either outlawed or allowed to take only a limited and controlled part in elections. The rule of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in the Ottoman Empire following the 1913 Ottoman coup d'état is considered the first 'one-party state'.

One-party states explain themselves through various methods. Most often, proponents of a one-party state argue that the existence of separate parties runs counter to national unity. Others argue that a single party is the forerunner of the people, and therefore it's right to rule cannot be legitimately questioned. For example, the former Soviet government argued that multiple parties represented the class struggle and because of this the Soviet Union legally authorized and recognized a single party leading the proletariat, namely the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Some one-party states only outlaw opposition parties, while allowing allied parties to exist as part of a permanent coalition such as a popular front.

Examples of this are the People's Republic of China under the United Front and the Democratic Front for the Reunification of Korea in North Korea. Most one-party states have been ruled by parties forming in one of the following three circumstances: an ideology of Marxism–Leninism and international solidarity (such as the Soviet Union for most of its existence); some type of nationalist or fascist ideology (such as Italy under the National Fascist Party or Germany under the Nazi Party), parties that came to power in the wake of independence from colonial rule.

As of 2021, the following countries are legally constituted as one-party states: most notably China (under Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China) following an ideology of Socialism with Chinese characteristics for almost 72 years. There are six more countries in a comparatively less enviable condition like Cuba, Eritrea, Laos, North Korea, Sahrawi (Western Sahara) and Vietnam. It may lead one to a quick conclusion that China is the only country, which can be cited as a success story capitalizing on the 'One Party System'.

A closer and detailed study of the other six countries that are still following the same 'One Party System', but are unable to achieve progress akin to China may be attributable to certain factors like different history, geography, culture,

internal challenges and external threats being confronted, missing or misuse of the gift of natural resources, rampant corruption and greedy political elite, inability to improve the indigenous and imported human resource, failure to take advantage of industrialization and sophisticated technologies, and the greatest blessing of all: a sincere, visionary and dynamic leadership.... all sound familiar and applicable to Pakistan in all types of governments we have had.

It may also be of great relevance and interest to note that there are more than 130 countries which have tried the 'One Party System' but have eventually abandoned it for multiple reasons. Some of the prominent states include the former Ottoman Empire, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Syria, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Libya, the Democratic Republic of Sudan, the United Arab Republic, Azerbaijan, East Germany, Poland, Yemen, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Brazilian military regime, Kingdom of Spain, and Iran, with different episodes of successes and failures before and after abandoning the 'One Party System' and the ideology that led to it.

Since August 1947, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has experimented with different political systems of governance, including parliamentary democracy, presidential governance, and even military regimes which were in fact always a hybrid system with the same political elite in the power corridors. In February 1956, the Constituent Assembly decided that the country shall be a federal republic known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with a parliamentary political system.

From August 1947 to date, Pakistan has had 30 prime ministers (from Liaquat Ali Khan to Imran Khan). There have been thirteen Presidents of Pakistan since the introduction of the post in 1956. Six presidents have been members of a political party and four were active party members of the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP). The first president was a retired military officer; four others were incumbent military officers of which three gained power through successful military coups – Gen. Ayub Khan Gen. Zia-ul-Haq and Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

Ayub Khan remained in office for the longest period (approximately ten years and five months). While Ayub's presidential rule is remembered with reverence by the public for his mega national development projects, the political elite that joined hands to ultimately topple him criticized him for his reforms that threatened their existence in the power circles.

Ayub khan's rule was the one that came pretty close to a One Party System as a result of his concept of Basic Democracies.

Ayub khan's rule was the one that came pretty close to a One Party System as a result of his concept of Basic Democracies. During his time, the National Assembly, consisting of 156 members (including six women) and elected by an electoral college of 80,000 Basic Democrats, was established as the federal legislature. Legislative powers were divided between the National Assembly and provincial legislative assemblies. The National Assembly used to hold sessions alternatively in Islamabad and Dhaka; the Supreme Court would also hold sessions in Dhaka.

The ban on political parties was operational at the time of the first elections to the National Assembly and provincial legislative assemblies in January 1960, as was the prohibition on "EBDOed" politicians. Many of those elected were new and merged into factions formed on the basis of personal or provincial loyalties. Despite the ban, political parties functioned outside the legislative bodies as vehicles of criticism and as opinion formers. In late 1962, political parties were again legalized and factions crystallized into government and opposition groups. Ayub Khan combined fragments of the old Muslim League and created the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) as the official government party.

The presidential election of January 1965 resulted in a victory for Ayub Khan but also demonstrated the appeal of the Opposition. Four political parties joined to form the Combined Opposition Parties (COP). These parties were the Council Muslim League, strongest in Punjab and Karachi; the Awami League, strongest in East Pakistan, the National Awami Party, strongest in the North-West Frontier Province, where it stood for dissolving the One Unit Plan and the Jamaat-i-Islami, surprisingly supporting the candidacy of a woman. The COP nominated Fatima Jinnah (sister of the Quaid-i-Azam), as their presidential candidate.

The nine-point programme put forward by the COP emphasized the restoration of parliamentary democracy. Ayub Khan won 63.3 percent of the Electoral College vote. His majority was larger in West Pakistan (73.6 percent) than in former East Pakistan (53.1 percent). On the foreign policy front, deep friendship with China, neutrality by the USSR and business-like friendship with the USA ultimately resulted in the book 'Friends not Masters' by Ayub Khan that stands vindicated even today

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with Pakistan somewhat in a similar environment.

A 'One-party system' often arises from decolonization because a single party gains an overwhelmingly dominant role in liberation or in independence struggles; e.g. Pakistan Muslim League led by founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who didn't survive long enough to consolidate and mature the political system in the newly independent Pakistan. The consequent polarisation in the political domain was largely due to cunningly choreographed incorporation of the filthy rich elite that had served the colonial masters for gaining rewards like titles, foreign education/ settlements, great land chunks, high wired connections and unlimited wealth and subsequent share in the governments to come in the newly liberated states.

Politics in Pakistan got muddy and was further complicated by insertion of religious, ethnic, sectarian, sub-nationalist and sectarian elements/ parties, all without any criterion like higher education, clean character/ conduct sheet, and competitive examination for entry into politics. The only driver for quick entry and rise in the political arena was abundance of ill-gotten wealth and right or wrong connections with the civil-military bureaucracy. The plunder of national wealth and wasteful expenditure on self-comfort, enjoyment of condemnable perks and privileges on public funds and multiplication of personal-wealth through corrupt practices with no fear of law by almost every politician barring single digit exceptions has been the main reason for the failure of almost all political systems tried so far in Pakistan. Ironically, the corrupt ruling elite enjoying the bounties of freedom had no positive role in attaining it or subsequently defending it. Amost all function as cults and mafias without adherence to any decent political or democratic norms even within their parties despite unashamedly self-serving use of the word democracy.

Paradoxically, while the same democratic system is serving the former colonial countries so well due to mature political leaders as well as aware and educated masses, the same system has been deceitfully corrupted by the ruling elite in Pakistan and has only helped them and their partners in crimes to become richer and stronger by keeping the masses generally ignorant, uneducated, deprived and continually coerced.

One is compelled to conclude that having tried most political systems, Pakistan cannot afford to repeat the same experiments again and again and expect different results until it focuses on removing the bugs that failed Ayub Khan's visionary endeavour of putting the country on the path of progress. Without upsetting the apple cart, Pakistan must follow both a long-term and a short-term approach to run the country's political system with 'two main political parties' resembling the USA (Democrat and Republican), while still following the parliamentary system under stricter checks and balances and much higher criteria for politicians. It is a foregone conclusion that a semi-literate and corruption-fed human resource can make any system of governance fail miserably. As a long term approach, iy is necessary to groom institutions as Germany and Japan did after their complete devastation in the Second World War.

In the short-term, under the chairmanship of the prime minister, a strong constitutional reform institution, including heads of all political parties, members of National Security Committee/ Council and technocrats should have closed door discussions to form two major political parties (by voluntary merger or banning the unwilling others) and undertake due legislation for laying down criteria for participation in national politics. The minimum qualification for provincial and national assembly members should be a Master's degree from a HEC recognized university, minimum age 30 years, minimum five years' experience in local/ basic politics, clean character certification from police and national intelligence services, no dual nationality, clearance of a competitive examination akin to CSS and ISSB, perfect medical fitness certification, 6 to 9 months grooming in the National Defence University and 3 to 6 months physical service with troops deployed in the operational areas on the Eastern and Western borders.

Since such a proposal is bound to disqualify the majority of the so-called politicians-cum-plunderers and blackmailing smaller parties/ characters, an enormous uproar and political mayhem with external hands will immediately emerge to exploit the situation and this is unavoidable. For realisation of this obviously challenging national cleansing plan, which is bound to be opposed vehemently by the vultures in the political arena, the Pakistan Armed Forces will have to play their due role.

If Pakistan has to rise, it neede to commence the process forthwith so that it is assured a better governance system and has efficient politicians. Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision of change can be accomplished by undertaking a gigantic step forward where angels fear to tread. Being a bold sportsman, one hopes he would play it on the front foot. S

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ONE-PARTY RULE

In order to become a self-reliant state, Pakistan must abandon multiparty democracy for some time and pursue a single-minded agenda to put the nation on track.

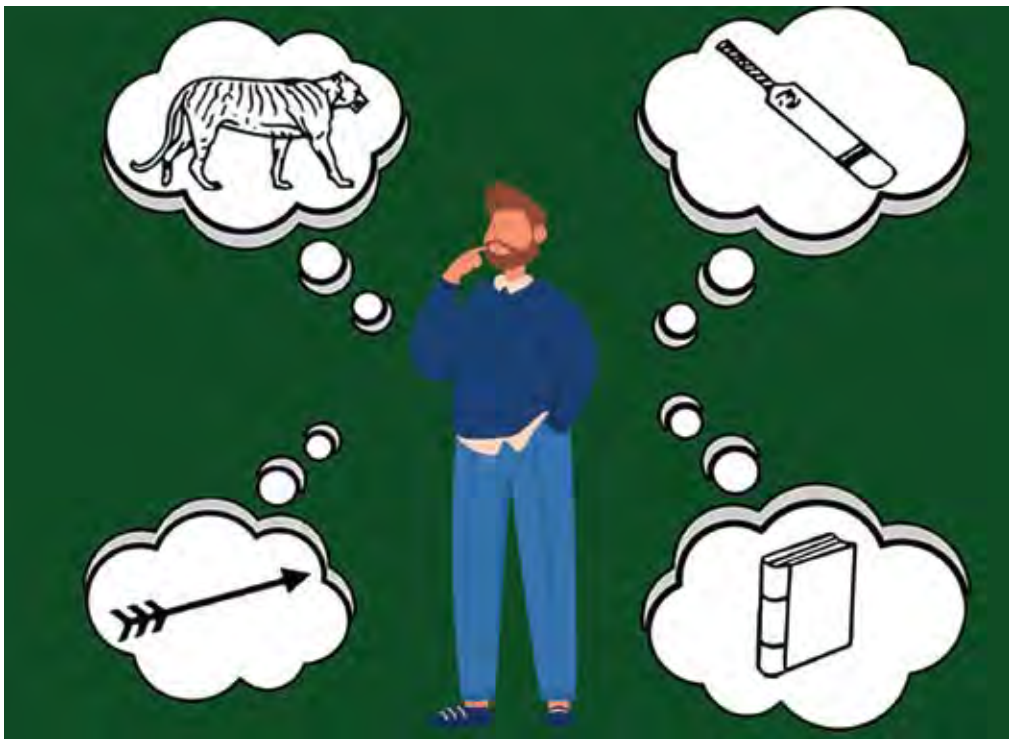
BY COL. MUHAMMAD HANIF (RETIRED)

Pakistan has been administered by elected governments under the multiparty parliamentary democracies of 1956 and 1973 constitutions . Now there is a strong perception in Pakistan that this system of governance has failed to deliver, and probably one-party rule seems to be the solution. Will one-party rule prove better for Pakistan?

Successive Governor Generals and Presidents, have quite often dismissed prime ministers of Pakistan. Six prime ministers were appointed and removed from October 16, 1951 to October 7, 1958, when finally Gen. Ayub Khan declared Martial Law. These governments remained inefficient and barely managed the country's affairs.

Gen. Ayub Khan's martial law was a golden period for Pakistan, with many positive achievements. The economy attained 6 per cent average growth, touching the highest in 1965. Manufacturing growth rose to a record 8.51 per cent. People's incomes increased, prices remained stable and a lot of employment opportunities were created. The law and order situation was also quite good.

In Ayub Khan's era, Pakistan established its first automobile and cement industries, and the government constructed several dams, (notably Tarbela Dam and Mangla Dam), canals, and power stations, in addition to launching Pakistan's space programme. Thus, in the 1960s, Pakistan was seen as a model of economic development around the world. Many countries sought to emulate Pakistan's economic strategy, including South Korea which replicated the city of Karachi's second "Five-Year Plan". Ayub's foreign and defence policies were also very robust and successful.



Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's time from January 1972 to 1977, based on adopting socialist policies, reversed the advantages achieved by Ayub Khan. It was marked by nationalization of industries and other key institutions, such as banking, insurance and education. This adversely impacted industrial production and overall national production, thus lowering annual economic growth to 4 per cent and reversing the gains made in Ayub Khan's time. But, Bhutto forged strong foreign relations and started Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme.

The PPP governments under Benazir Bhutto (1988 onwards) as the PM (twice), and Yousaf Raza Gilani and Raja Pervez Ashraf as PMs and Asif Ali Zardari as President, (from 2008 to 2012), were marked by low economic growth, corruption and governance failures, as was clear from Benazir's

dismissals twice by the President and dismissal of PM Gilani by the Supreme Court on grounds of governance failure. Some PPP stalwarts are still facing corruption and money laundering charges. The PPP governments relied heavily on foreign and domestic loans. The government ignored development projects but it countered rising prices by increasing salaries and pensions.



"Corruption creates distortions; bends rules to hide itself; obliterates meritocracy; waylays attempts to alleviate poverty, inequality and inequity. Do away with it and you get a flourishing, thriving political culture and multi-party system."

– Farrukh Khan Pitafi

The martial law of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq from 1977 to 1988 brought stability. The economy and prices remained stable, foreign aid and loans were well-managed, very good law and order situation prevailed and corruption and black marketing was considerably controlled. However, much attention was not paid to new economic development projects.

Compared to the PPP, Nawaz Sharif-led PML/PML (N) governments from 1991 to 2018, are known for carrying out some economic development. The PML (N) government also gets credit for signing the CPEC agreement with China and for speedy construction of power projects. As the government depended on heavy foreign and domestic loans, the currency and prices remained stable. However, exports and forex reserves remained quite low as dollar outflow was allowed. Nawaz-led PML (N) governments also faced corruption and governance failure charges, as Nawaz Sharif was dismissed three times as PM and was disqualified and punished too.

The martial law government under Gen. Pervez Musharraf, from 1999 to 2008, remained politically very stable, the economy progressed well with 8 per cent economic growth and there were good forex reserves and minimum foreign loans. Prices remained stable and road construction and development projects were encouraged. A very good law and order situation also prevailed. However, not much was done to address corruption and provincialism. Not constructing the Kalabagh Dam was also a failure. The period was visibly hampered by expanding terrorism.

The current PTI government has been spearheading the accountability process since 2018 but has not achieved results mainly due to institutional weaknesses and the wealthy people facing corruption charges being too influential. The government is also facing difficulties in handling Pakistan's economy due to heavy loan installments, stringent IMF conditionality and COVID-19 lockdowns. Also, due to devaluation of currency, and poor control over black marketers and profiteers, the rising prices have created immense frustration in the people. The PTI government is also sluggish in implementing development projects, although this government gets credit for increasing exports/forex reserves and for starting new hydropower projects as part of the CPEC.

It can be gauged that under the multiparty parliamentary system, despite some successes, governments have not been able to create a just society and make Pakistan an economically self-reliant sovereign state. Quaid-e-Azam wanted to eliminate bribery, corruption, black-marketing, nepotism and provincialism but these have multiplied. He wanted law and order, justice, fair play and impartiality to prevail in Pakistan, but this is not so.

Also, not much attention has been paid to education and health, and the country's economy has become much weakened, being under heavy foreign debt burden, thus negatively impacting Pakistan's integrity and sovereignty, despite it being a nuclear power. Provincialism has been further strengthened through the 18th Amendment, which gives too much autonomy to the provinces, weakening the Centre.

It seems that one party rule, like China, Singapore, Vietnam, etc., like Ayub Khan's rule in Pakistan, Mahathir and Erdogan's rule in Malaysia and Turkey respectively, is worth trying in Pakistan. The country needs to ensure sustainable economic progress and true nation-building. The countries mentioned here are ruled by single parties, led by honest leaders.

It is obvious that in Pakistan it is not possible to have a clear one-party system as in China and Vietnam, nor is it possible to end the multiparty parliamentary system, as it has become deeply entrenched . However, it is possible to have successful one-party rule if a political party led by an honest, dedicated and bold leader emerges and is backed by the powers that be.

Since there will be a lot of opposition by the corrupt to accept one-party rule for Pakistan, it will be possible only if such a leader and his party are fully supported by the people of Pakistan. It is also important for the relevant Pakistani institutions to cooperate with such a leader, in addressing corrupt practices, ending crime and providing quick justice and carrying out socio-economic development of Pakistan. Sincere nation-building efforts must be made to make Pakistan a cohesive and self-reliant state. S

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POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Although freedom is more likely to flourish with multiple parties, the measure of democracy is not the number of parties but the degree of recognition of individual rights.



BY SIRAJUDDIN AZIZ

Feudalism was not meant to be a political system, yet always through history, it had a political context or, in the least, a connotation. The feudal system hinges on a lethal combination of legal, economic, military and cultural systems and has flourished from Japan to Europe, over centuries. It is exploitative because the landowner demands in exchange, labour and services, from the landless. In his book, Wealth of Nations, Adam Smith referred to what he called 'feudal government', as an economic system. In actuality the decentralization of an empire inspires feudalism. The sub-continent, during the Mughal era, in particular, was a perfect case in point. They (rulers of Delhi) handed over large estates to submissive rajas, maharajas, nawabs, etc., they lorded over the masses and the peasantry. It is another matter that such craving for administrative purposes diluted the powers of Delhi's rulers.

Feudal society is from the lowliest of the low, to the wealthiest of the filthiest order, of the economic strata. The powerful distinct social groups acquire prominence through the perpetuation of exploitation of labour and the peasants. A feudal society comprises the nobility (read all the ignoble), the clergy (read the religious opportunists) and the peasants (read the hapless). This is not about Pakistan -- it is a broad definition of feudalistic society. But the existing system's similarities with our politicians' feudal outlook are striking.

Capitalist society or capitalism as an economic system is a trivial refinement over the feudal system, where the relationship of social contract is established between powerful entrepreneurship and the working class, cum labour. There is free enterprise, but there are only fetters for the working class.

Democracy is a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance (H.L . Mencken). Upon gaining independence, both Pakistan and India thought it proper to pursue the Westminister model of parliamentary democracy. In doing so, at least Pakistani politicians failed to see if its contours suited the local situation. Shashi Tharoor. in his book, 'An Era of Darkness' is describes the British parliamentary system in the following words: "I am far from convinced that the British system is suited for India. The parliamentary democracy we have adopted involves the British perversity of electing legislature to form an executive: this has created a breed of legislators, largely unqualified to legislate, who have sought election only in order to wield (or influence) executive power.... It has distorted the voting preference of an electorate that knows which individual it wants but not necessarily which policies".

This is so true for Pakistan, as well. Many disputed elections indicate that, possibly it is insanity that drives people to vote.

In our context, self-interest of politicians is projected as contest of values and principles. People have to learn that a good politician and an honest dacoit can never make an acceptable equation. Most politicians, regrettably, agree with Frank Mcnally's views, that if the politician

wishes to succeed in politics, he/ she must keep the conscience under control. Somewhere it is said that a politician is one who lays down his life for his country. Theadore Roosevelt, I am certain had no idea of our parliamentary setup when he remarked, "when they call the roll in Senate, the senators do not know whether to answer, "Present" or "Not Guilty". Unfortunately the poor (uneducated mostly) electorate has to choose between candidates to know which of them would do the least harm. Political systems developed over centuries have been many. The political party system is based on the adult franchise that exercises its right to vote for a person / party, of his/ her choice, with free will and no coercion.

Under the political party system, we have the Indian and Chinese examples of a single dominant party, with some differences. India at least for the first 30-40 years, following Independence, had the Indian National Congress as the dominant party, within a multi-party system; China on the other hand, has a single and only dominant party. The Chinese cannot form any other political party. Membership to the Communist party is limited as not all 1.4 billion Chinese are members of the party.

Against the single party system is the two party system. These two are powerful political parties. The best example is that of the Democrats and Republicans in the USA and the Labour and Conservative parties in the UK. In both scenarios, one of the two parties see-saw themselves to power, of course through electoral ballot.

The other and possibly the most common political party system is the "Multi-Party" political environment. Here there are several parties, equally or even not equally placed, vis-a-vis, popularity. The party that gets the majority of seats is entitled to form the government; and if no single party emerges with a majority, the political process and engineering for 'coalition' sets in. Many times, coalition governments are held together by only a few votes. Under such circumstances, the government becomes indecisive, incoherent and significantly unable to legislate. The legislature fails to frame policies and is easily immobilized. Only Switzerland is a classic example of a successful multi-party system - all the big four political parties, through an act of the parliament, share power.



"The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has always said the country will never copy the political systems of other countries, in particular the Western notion of democracy. But under Xi—the most powerful Chinese leader in four decades—China's own one-party system is one that is ready to be exported to regimes everywhere."

– Zheping Huang

Added to these systems are the parties, whose playing field is in the realm of religious ideology - and usually a single party is dominant.

India was extremely lucky to have Jawaharlal Nehru at the helm for a good seventeen years in the beginning. The Indian National Congress adopted without resistance Nehruvian Socialism. He was the architect of undoing the Rajas, Maharajas, Princes, Nawanbs, etc. Vallabhbhai Patel wiped out the feudal structure at the grassroot level. The action was so swift that feudalism does not even have any remnants in India today. Pakistan was unfortunate - it had only politicians who were large landowners. They kept the feudal structure intact.

In India, the Congress did not splinter into groups, at least until Nehru and his close associates lasted. Unlike India, we witnessed political instability once Mother Nature removed firstly, Jinnah and secondly when Liaquat Ali Khan was taken out by an assassin. The roller-coaster ride continues since then..... we have experimented with all possible formats of government and governance, ranging from totalitarianism to autocratic; from basic democracy to polluted democracy; and from partyless elections to an army load of parties, participating in the milieu of elections, farce or real.

The Muslim League was orphaned in 1951 and every orphanage-keeper that promised to keep it safe, abused it to the fullest. It broke up and over the years splintered into various factions, from Muslim League to PML- N and PML-J, PML-Z and of course PML-Q . We seem to be running out of English alphabets for adding new suffixes. Most of these off-shoots of Muslim League were fathered outside the realm of politics or the proletariat. Political parties, in our context, die due to overeating of the spaghetti of lies they cook. We have witnessed on the parliament floor brawls, both verbal and physical. The legislators bring to the table a truckload of inadequacies of speech, choice of words, articulation and, above all, grace and decency in conservation.

Given our cultural and traditional orientation, my personal view is that what may suit us best is a directly elected president from amongst the people, who should have a cabinet of his choice (not electables!). This system must exist for a minimum of thirty years; and it can last, with frequent elections.

Regardless of what systems any country chooses to adopt, it is significant, to keep in perspective, firstly the level of education and its quality; and secondly how the politicians define themselves, dishonest or honest. A combination of both these elements needs to be evaluated before concluding, what type and how many political parties should exist in any given political system. S

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NO-WIN TRADE PROSPECTS

KABUL

While Indian imports from Afghanistan have taken a serious hit, exports from India too are suffering after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan.





BY HAMID SULTAN DAWOODI

The arrival of the Taliban government in Afghanistan has created a severe threat to Indian trade, as millions of dollars worth of its products were exported there, whereas large quantities of different products were also smuggled into Pakistan through the border or via Dubai. These included silk cloth, betel leaf, tea, hardware, medicines, spices, auto parts, tyres, electronic products, etc. Apart from losing the market by Indian traders, their billions of rupees debit amounts had been stuck there because most of the exports transactions were based on borrowed contract i.e., at sight payment.

In today's world, the development of any country is not possible just by improving internal affairs. Improving external affairs is also a matter of time. The most important aspect in foreign affairs is relations with neighbouring countries. If we talk about Pakistan, on the one side it is Afghanistan, a war-torn country, and on the other it is China, the world's largest trading power.

Due to changing geopolitical and regional dynamics, it is important the government should re-set its priorities and focus on emerging regional economies for trade and exports. Presently, through CPEC, China, the Central Asian States and East Asian countries have immense business potential for Pakistan and they should be given more focus for trade relations.

Afghanistan is a landlocked country and has always depended on the cooperation of Iran, India and Pakistan to develop its international trade links with the world through the Pakistan's economic relations with Afghanistan passed through various stages after the creation of Pakistan. From 1947 to 1965 their economic relations witnessed ups and downs owing to political reasons but once it concluded the Transit Trade Agreement of 1965, their economic ties solidified despite all odds.

By concluding the Transit Trade Agreement of 2010, ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan further consolidated because now they became international trade partners. After 9/11, Pakistan provided financial and technical assistance to Afghanistan for its reconstruction, rehabilitation and development. It is a fact that Afghanistan is a fast up-and-coming market of strategic importance, and it is close to some of the fastest-growing and largest markets in the world. Strategically, it is located between the energy-rich, republics of Central Asia, and the major seaports in South Asia, providing a key transit route, for Central Asian oil and gas to markets in South Asia and elsewhee.

Many national and international companies are investing in Afghanistan right now and two major international hotels (Hyatt and Serena) have invested in the counrry. Leading international banks have opened their offices such as Afghanistan International Bank (AIB), the National Bank of Pakistan Jalalabad Branch, the Standard Chartered Bank and the Habib Bank Ltd.

Afghanistan's location is such that it is not only called the gateway to Central Asia, but also the central point of the Great Game in the world. That is why big and rich countries like the USA, Russia, France, China and the UK want control over Afghanistan. Whenever India needs to expand its trade in Central Asia, it will need Afghanistan. If India makes the wrong decision in a hurry and its relations with the Taliban deteriorate, it may face difficulties in trade with Central Asia.

There was competition between Pakistan and Iran to attract Central Asia's trade with Arabian Gulf countries to their respective ports. Iran offered to dedicate the port of Bander Abbas to Central Asian trade while Pakistan developed Gawadar, a port on the Balochistan Coast, with Chinese help. This competition benefited Afghanistan because all routes passed through Kabul. If only Afghanistan could offer good power, cold storage and other facilities, trade and custom revenues for Kabul would increase dramatically.

Demand for Pakistani products has multiplied since the change of government in Afghanistan.



"Various forms of Indian assistance to Afghanistan were not only humanitarian in nature. They also laid the foundations for bonhomie in Kabul-New Delhi relations, and expanded India's clout among various groups."

– Krzysztof Iwanek

The biggest increase is in food demand. Demand for goods sent to Afghanistan has increased by 200%. The change in Kabul has brought new opportunities for Afghan importers and now more export orders are coming from Afghanistan. Although Pakistani exporters are receiving more orders from Afghanistan, the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries is not much and is limited to only two and a half billion.

It must be emphasized that the Taliban have taken over the government after 20 years of war and they will not allow any country to dominate them. In the current situation there is nothing in Afghanistan's economy that Pakistan can gain by getting control there as the IMF/ World Bank has captured their billion-dollar assets. The GDP in Afghanistan is only 20 billion, of which 75% is foreign aid. Now that aid has stopped.

According to the NCIA, Afghanistan receives more than 500 items from Pakistan, including wheat, flour, rice, cooking oil, dried milk and live animals. Nasir Khan, who trades in foodstuffs with Afghanistan, said three-quarters of Afghanistan's imports come from foodstuffs.

At present, Indian trade with Afghanistan has been paralyzed; however trade relations between Afghanistan and India are centuries old. The positive thing for India is that its balance of trade with Afghanistan has always been in its favour. In other words, India's exports have exceeded its imports. It is considered better for any country and its economy to have more exports than imports.

If we look at the figures for 2021, we see that this year India has exported about $35, 835 million worth of goods to Afghanistan. The products included tea, coffee, sugar, spices, medicines, garments, cement and transmission towers. Its imports from Afghanistan - raisins, walnuts, almonds, pistachios and figs - are about 10,510 million dollars. India's exports to Afghanistan exceed its imports and India is one of Afghanistan's major trading partners. Now, if the transit route is reported to be closed, not only could India lose billions of dollars economically, but the risk prospects for the future could be doubled. Many projects and India's TAPI gas pipeline through Afghanistan could also be jeopardized. S

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KANDAHAR

THE NEW TALIBAN

Will the Taliban succeed this time in governing Afghanistan?

BY DR. FARAH NAZ

The Great Game has been played for decades in Afghanistan and has always left behind chaos, confusion, uncertainty and instability. The region has never had a stable government that can bring peace and stability both within and outside. For instance, from the 1979 invasion of the Soviets to the recent withdrawal of America and its western forces contributing to some kind of stability in Afghanistan, remained a huge question. With the resurgence of the Taliban in 2021, the Western states via media outlets have raised their concern that will the Taliban this time succeed in governing Afghanistan? To address their concern it is vital to understand if there is any difference between the Taliban 20 years back and the Taliban this time around.

To reflect on both versions, the earlier Taliban can be said to have been immature in their approach towards government formation, governance mechanisms and the conduct of politics. They were fresh graduates from madrassas - trained under the leadership of CIA specialised trainers. They were prepared as extremists to eliminate the Soviet forces from Afghanistan with the use of force, torture, killing, bloodshed, bombing, suicide attempts, etc. Their agenda was only to defeat the Soviet Union. They were tasked with achieving a larger goal and for that trained on extreme lines to use highly skilled weaponry. But, they were not trained to engage at political and diplomatic levels. Their interaction was limited to madrassas or training camps. The Taliban this time are not tasked to defeat any state or group but work towards the liberation of their motherland from foreign occupation. They are educated mostly in western countries, engaged politically and diplomatically with the world powers and have sat on the negotiation table like any other sovereign state with America in Doha to get their share in politics. This is not what the Taliban were able to experience earlier. The Taliban 20 years later are different from the earlier Taliban in their outlook towards politics in Afghanistan and the world.

In terms of their approach towards the civilian population, the Taliban in the 90s were harsh and their war tools and ideology were extreme. When they came to power then, they used hard measures on the entire Afghan population, particularly young girls and women. They restricted the females from seeking worldly education and emphasized on madrassa's hardcore training that never allowed them to learn about what was happening around them. The Taliban have learnt over the years, that seeking worldly education is not a curse but important for all, irrespective of gender. They bring along western education and exposure to the world and are expected to apply the same set of skills in Afghanistan.



The new Taliban are mature. They have shown this while taking over Afghanistan. Like the earlier version, they are not hostile but

more peaceful in their war tactics and ideology. Their actions have proven their peacefulness as they have not been involved in any massacre while taking over power. They never got involved in revenge killing, which once used to be the basic toolkit of the Taliban This time they provided safe exit to all those who wanted to leave Afghanistan including the US and NATO forces and declared amnesty for all. The incident involving Afghans hanging from a C-17 aircraft was not the way the Taliban wanted people to leave the country.

When it comes to governance, the Taliban now do not seem to be in any hurry and are taking time to consult the regional powers on how best to deal with the challenges. They have not committed any blunders despite the fact the West has frozen their $9 billion assets. Regional powers are also helping the Taliban unlike the way they reacted earlier when only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE recognised them. Regional powers are not in a haste to recognise the Taliban government. They are gradually expanding their cabinet and raising the share of other ethnicities/groups. Seemingly, both the Taliban and regional actors are taking their time and are not in a haste to form a full-fledged government.

The new tools of the Taliban are patience, consultation, maturity, power-sharing, zero revenge, amnesty, etc. This was never their approach earlier. The current Taliban are making efforts to succeed because they want peace. For that, they will not allow any foreigners to destabilize and dictate their country. They will probably be able to frame a government that will run smoothly and function as per international requirements only if the western forces stop intervening in their affairs. S

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Good Governance

ISLAMABAD

The government must control the scourge of corruption, abuse of power and unfairness in its institutions by devising a proper mechanism of transparency and accountability.

BY MISHA ANWAR

Governance plays a vital role in the uplift and amelioration of the livelihood, lifestyle and life standards of citizens. Unfortunately, the interrupted democratic system, lack of accountability, corruption and the absence of the rule of law have been major hurdles in the way of good governance in Pakistan. Besides this, incompetent politicians and bureaucracy, an unfair recruitment system and absence of accountability across the board have affected the efficient service delivery to the general public. For this, the government must control the scourge of corruption, abuse of power and unfairness in its institutions by devising a proper mechanism of transparency and accountability. This is the only way the government can govern the hearts of people and pull out the public from the dark ditch of bad governance.

As the first vital pillar of good governance, overall participation of citizens and residents is necessary to achieve the ideals of true transparency and accountability, as this participation can assist governments to understand the grassroot problems surrounding the communities, as well as the on-going solutions to counter such issues. We can see Prime Minister Imran Khan taking strides in this direction by attending to live calls and also providing a portal to facilitate the

general public. It is a step in the right direction but true change can only be accomplished when the feedback is taken into consideration by holding the respective departments responsible and resolving the problems.

Serving as the second pillar, consensus orientation involves including interested groups that could be affected by new legislation. For instance, while increasing tax on online transactions, consensus orientation requires the uninhibited opinions of vulnerable traders. However, in Pakistan, most decisions are taken without broad-based consensus, such as the federal government enhancing the powers of NAB without considering businessmen and bureaucrats. This has resulted in a national economic halt as bureaucrats have stopped signing files and businessmen have paused investments.

As the third crucial pillar, accountability plays a central role in good governance. There are a multitude of accountability institutions such as the NAB, FIA, the police force, anti-corruption departments and the department of the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP), yet none live up to their purpose. The accountability system needs utmost focus and attention, including the AGP and the Public Accounts Committees (PACs), which are supposed to be respectively responsible for the overall audit and accounting and control of federal, provincial and local governments.

The fourth pillar is something Prime Minister Imran Khan has tried to champion – transparency. The government has tried to pave the way for greater accountability, progress is non-existent owing to the corruption at all levels. Tactics such as the Board of Revenue self-praising accomplishments that have yet to come true continues to frustrate the public, leaving it with barely any hope for reform. Prime Minister has stalled



"Pakistan can achieve good governance by introducing integrity and facilitating coordination and cooperation among institutions, besides economic sustainability and policy process implementation."
– Muhammad Usman Asghar

The interrupted democratic system, lack of accountability, corruption and the absence of the rule of law have been major hurdles in the way of good governance in Pakistan.

all senior bureaucracy promotions; however, a system to receive public feedback is non-existent.

As the fifth pillar, responsiveness, relates to the government implementing policies and solving crises within a practical timeframe, especially when it comes to unforeseen situations, such as the recent global Covid-19 pandemic. With Imran Khan having profound respect for the Chinese system of governance at the local level, Pakistan should learn to understand how local governments can truly improve the country's governance.

The sixth pillar is a balanced partnership between efficiency, which is the ability to achieve something using minimum money, time, energy and efforts, and effectiveness, which is the degree of a desired and successful result. The Pakistan Ministry of Energy issued a report showcasing how circular debt has spiked significantly, regardless of prices in electricity continuing to increase, which only proves the ineffective decision by the government to assist with debt.

Failure to uphold the seventh pillar of good governance, equity and inclusiveness, led to the unfair treatment of East Pakistan, which eventually paved the way for the creation of Bangladesh. However, steps are being taken to ground this pillar into Pakistan's foundation, with the 18th Amendment ensuring the inclusiveness of Balochistan and the Prime Minister strongly advocating a uniform curriculum.

Finally, rule of law serves as the eighth pillar and is the most crucial. In Pakistan, there is a clear divide between the rule of law for the rich and the poor. The infamous victory signs by model Ayan Ali and Sharukh Jatoi showcase the derelict system. To ensure good governance, rule of law ought to be upheld religiously at all levels of government, without boundaries, exemptions or leniency.

Overall, Prime Minister Imran Khan and his government are trying to pave the way for better governance in terms of implementing various initiatives to counter issues and facilitate the masses. However, Pakistan still has quite a journey to travel to achieve true political stability, transparency and accountability. There is certainly light at the end of tunnel, especially if corruption, unprofessionalism and unfairness are properly dealt with by keeping aside vested interests. If the government understands the importance and interdependency of all the 8 pillars, Pakistan can become an example of good governance. S

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BY ALI HASSAN BANGWAR

ISLAMABAD

DANGEROUS IDEA

There are many questions that Pakistan must answer before its begins to talk peace with the TTP.



The Taliban takeover of Kabul has altered the regional security dynamics, foreign policy choices and realities. It has also affected the regional powers' activism and interest, with China, Russia and Iran being at the forefront. The Taliban regime is a single manifestation of the changing security paranoma. Pakistan is not an exception. Being Afghanistan's immediate neighbour and sharing the longest botder with it, Pakistan is the country most affected by the political and security instability in Afghanistan. However, the Taliban's accession to power has changed its security posture and threshold. Unlike Ghani's and Karazai's regimes, when the RAW-NDS nexus and Indian-sponsored proxies posed the greatest security threats to Islamabad, the Taliban's ascendency has transformed the threat spectrum. Put another way, the threat threshold has been reduced to a considerable extent. This is mainly because of two reasons: Taliban's denial of space to India as a launchpad against Pakistan and the latter's say and primacy in Taliban leadership. This is evident from Pakistan's intelligence and political leadership rushing to Kabul in the immediate aftermath of the Taliban's accession to power.

Although the Taliban takeover did diminish the TTP's operational and logistic capabilities, it is still a cause of concern for Islamabad. After being released from prisons in Afghanistan, the group members are reported to be regrouping in the tribal regions of Pakistan. The Taliban's assurance of not allowing its soil to be used against any other state notwithstanding, radicalisation and extremist tendencies might still exist, and perhaps may be rejuvenated. Weakened by reining in of Indian influence and the Ghani government's collapse, the TTP might be softening it's tone both with the Taliban and Pakistan, in a ploy to restore their relevance. Taliban ascendency is one of the greatest reasons for the TTP, which may have led to its postponing its nefarious plans to earn legitimacy both in the eyes of Kabul and Islamabad. Kabul has already asserted its reluctance to take action against the TTP as it probably assumes that the terrprist group poses no threat to Kabul.

In this backdrop, Pakistan's engagement with the proscribed group that bled the country and its innocent citizens for over a decade, calls for concern and caution. More troubling, however, is Islamabad's official willingness to grant general amnesty to the hard-core TTP.

In a interview with TRT , the Turkish TV and radio channel, Prime Minister Imran Khan revealed that talks were underway with the TTP under the facilitation of the Afghan Taliban.

"There are different groups which form the TTP and some of them want to talk to our government for peace. So, we are in talks with them. It's a reconciliation process," he said.

Similar assertions were made in mid-September by Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Quraishi.

"Our government would pardon them if they (TTP terrorists) promise not to get involved in terrorist activities and submit to the Pakistani Constitution," Quraishi said.

The Pakistan president has also talked of a general amnesty for those who lay down their arms and respect the constitutional and ideological landscape of the country.

These peace overtures with a nationally and internationally proscribed group have been distressingly received by many a quarter in and outside the country. Calling for general amnesty and concessions for the very groups that played at the hands of the country's enemies, wreaked havoc and destroyed both men and materials and ruthlessly and mercilessly killed over 80,000 Pakistanis, is nothing short of mockery of the state's sanctity and blood of martyrs. Moreover, the group hijacked the country's peace and order for over a decade and kept Pakistan from getting on the path of prosperity. Its activities led to regionally and globally tarnishing the image of Pakistan crippling sanctions, Pakistan-phobia

and international isolation. It is now the very group that Pakistan is inclined to extend general amnesity to.

The engagement with the TTP is a myopic peace-building plan sans a pragmatic reflection on the repercussions the country would further suffer nationally, regionally and globally. The ground realities seem to have been overlooked this while deciding talks withthe TTP.

Since the RAW-NDS nexus has broken up and the US influence reduced to naught under the Taliban, the group has lost sponsorship against Pakistan and has been looking for time and space to reorganize, rejuvenate and restore its relevance. It aims at earning legitimacy with Islamabad and Kabul only to strengthen its position. Even if general amnesty is granted and its members lay down arms, what assurance would they offer that they wouldn't relapse to their old ways of militancy?

It might serve as motivation and inspiration to other anti-state militant organisations vying for destabilising the country. Moreover, a sense of alienation and resentment among the masses of Balochistan would be another setback to the country's dream of sustainable peace and order. Absolving the TTP would be tantamount to stabbing in the backs of those valiant relatives of the lion-hearted military personnel and martyrs who fought till the last drop of their blood to safeguard the sanctity of the country and the lives of their countrymen. Apart from that, ceding TTP enough public space under the pretext of amnesty would give the militant group enough time to regroup and reorganize.

The serious implications of extending general amnesty to the TTP would also suffer a setback on the international front. First is the FATF saga. Since the USA has time and again scapegoated Islamabad for its own failure in Afghanistan, it would use FATF to further tighten the noose around Pakistan. A negative message would be sent to the world for Pakistan's lenient approach against hard-core militancy and terrorism. It would serve as an instance for the Indo-US nexus to lobby against Pakistan and its diplomatic manoeuvrability on the issues afflicting the Muslim world in general and Kashmir and Palestine in particular.

Since national security and sanctity are areas of vital significance, the country's leadership should adopt a cautious approach in dealing with the TTP. If Islamabad is bent on the inevitability of talks, they should be carried out in such a pragmatic and cautious way that potential negative implications are minimised

The hard-core TTP leadership shouldn't get easy escape and relief under the guise of talks and amnesty. Even if they renounce violence and pledge allegiance to the constitution and the law of the land, they should be made to face the music under provisions the constitution has envisioned.

Since the country has already suffered great losses, a repetition of similar episodes of violence should be avoided for the sovereignty, sanctity and security of the larger good of the people. . S

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ISLAMABAD

Lop-sided Equality

The SNC (Single National Curriculum) is a fantastic concept but there are many hurdles.

BY BEENISH MAHMOOD

"If we are to make any real, speedy, substantial progress, we must bring our educational policy and program on the lines suited to the genius of our people consonant with our own history and culture and having regard to the modern conditions and vast developments that have taken place all over the world...



what we have to do is mobilize our people and build up the character of our future generation which means highest sense of honour, integrity, selfless service to the nation and sense of responsibility and we have to see that they are fully qualified or equipped to play their part in the various branches of economic life in a manner which will do honour to Pakistan." (Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah)

The lines spoken by the Quaid give a far-reaching insight into the reason and causes behind creating a progressive society. Since independence, many educational policies have been implemented. Despite the reforms, the state fails to provide free and quality education to all.

What are the reasons?

The biggest reason is perhaps the fact that Pakistan is a polarized society. There have been divisions at every level - religious, political, economic and social. More divisions took root during Zia-ul-Haq's era. With the fervour of Islamization combined with the surging private schools, the class system was endorsed.

The single national curriculum introduced by the incumbent government of Imran Khan is no doubt a noble cause to remedy the class hierarchy, but its sustainability is questionable. It is definitely a step forward but it cannot be implemented overnight. On the face of it, the SNC is a fantastic concept, but there are many hurdles. The provision of teacher resource material and practice textbooks are a big void that needs to be filled.

Another question is, will the SNC provide equal opportunity for all? The question of equality can be seen through the example of a child with mental and physical impediments in the rural area and a boy of a rich family studying in Aitchison College? Are they equal at any level? The reader needs to ponder over the question.

Another concern is whether the SNC with the slogan of 'One Nation, One Curriculum', promoting uniformity? Is it not opposed to diversity? Is it not taking away its pluralism? Pakistan has four provinces, all with different cultures, traditions, language and literature. And what about the large Urdu-speaking population, mainly in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur and other parts of Pakistan? Are we not eliminating our identity through the SNC?

Coming to the curriculum, is it an issue or not. The logical answer is that it is not! What is important is how you deliver the concepts. And for that the need of the hour is to introduce teacher training workshops, assessment learning outcomes and good educational books.

Looking in retrospect, the 18th Amendment in which the political system was decentralized and the provinces were given power to decide their own matters and each province made its own educational policy is a major factor obstructing the way forward to an integrated national curriculum. The decision-making power must rest with the federal government. With so much diversity in language and culture, it is not possible to achieve a uniform education system across the country.

Another major hurdle is how to provide the money to bring about this massive change since Pakistan allocates only 2% of its GDP to education. Looking at a few examples of successful persons such as Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, brings to light an important question. How did they become so successful? Did it happen overnight? Were they solely responsible for their accomplishments or did the state provide them with the resources to achieve such a pinnacle of success?

The primary reason behind it was the inclusive education system that their country, the USA, gave them. And they made the most out of it. They are big technological giants of the time.

Coming back to Pakistan and the new educational reform, in the long term, yes, it is viable. But for that to happen, the 18th Amendment must be redefined. A council of common interests should be set up to solve the provincial problems through common dialogue.

Addressing the question of textbooks designed for grades 1, 2 and 3 by the Punjab Text Board, Taimur Rehman, a teacher of political science at LUMS, says they are very text heavy. With no proper gradation in the levels, they are also lacking in exercises which help the students stimulate their brain and the teacher is only successful when the child is curious to find out for him/herself.

Books cannot achieve the desired pedagogical impact.

Pervaiz Hoodbhoy, a renowned scholar, has commented on the law that clearing the Quran test is a prerequisite for awarding a higher education degree such as Masters, M.Phil or PhD and in his opinion this will surely turn the schools into madrassas and the hope to walk with the modern world will be lost.

To mix two different things, two different ideologies, that of religious education preparing you for the hereafter and the education to cope with the world is surely going to lead to disaster.

The real question is will the SNC be able to bridge the gap for a child who started with an unequal opportunity in the first place? Pakistan has unmet educational needs and unmet population needs.Will it be able to come out of this crisis through the SNC? What if the government changes in the next election and the new government reverts Imran Khan's decision? What will the people do then?

Allam Iqbal said:

Ek Hi Saf Mein Kharay Ho Gaye Mahmood-o-Ayaz,

Na Koi Banda RahaAur Na Koi Banda Nawaz.

The verse beautifully sums up the rationale of how religious equality is not a prerequisite for equality in the world.

Hence, the question of the SNC being triumphant in the long run. S

The writer has a double Masters in English Literature with experience in magazine journalism. She has a passion for reading South Asian fiction and about environmental issues. She can be reached at beenishmhmd@gmail.com





Jubilee
LIFE INSURANCE

25th Anniversary
Celebrating Life



Jubilee Life is today the largest private insurance company in Pakistan with over 7.5 million lives insured.

The year 2021 marks the 25 year anniversary of Jubilee Life Insurance Company, commonly known as Jubilee Life. Two and a half decades ago, Jubilee Life started its journey with the vision of enabling people to overcome uncertainty. Since its inception in 1996, Jubilee Life has been instrumental for people all across the country in realizing the need for having necessary insurance policies in place to mitigate financial woes and to take the edge off the risk and protect them in the event that they suffer a loss.

Having achieved many milestones in such a brief period of time, Jubilee Life is today the largest private insurance company in Pakistan with over 7.5 million lives insured so far. Jubilee Life is also the largest Takaful operator nationwide. Thanks to its innovative and customer-centric approach, a vast array of insurance solutions tailored by Jubilee Life to cover various financial protection needs, make them the highest premium writer in the country. With a proven business acumen, rich expertise and well-established credentials, Jubilee Life happens to be the fastest growing financial funds in Pakistan.

Mr. Javed Ahmed is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Jubilee Life. Mr. Ahmed joined the company in 1997 and under his exemplary leadership, the company has earned distinctive respect over the years, successfully emerging as one of the leading private sector insurers in the country. From the very beginning, Jubilee Life launched scores of trailblazing initiatives like Bancassurance, Micro-Insurance and Takaful business and won many prestigious awards. Today, Jubilee Life ranks high as the largest private sector insurer in Pakistan, be it Life Insurance, Health Insurance or be it Family Takaful.

Through its robust insurance solutions and resolute commitment to timely payment of claims and benefits, Jubilee Life has instilled a sense of confidence and trust in its customers and stakeholders. Through the years, Jubilee Life Insurance has paid about PKR 120 billion in terms of insurance benefits and has secured over 7.5 million lives. Thanks to Jubilee Life, families across the country have the peace of mind that they can always get the support they require - when and where they need it.

Initially, the company started its operations as Commercial Union. Later it was acquired by the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) and renamed to NJI Life. In 2011, the company was rebranded as "Jubilee Life Insurance," since it is associated with "Happiness", a universal guiding principle which very much relates to its core business. Over the 25 years, Jubilee Life has taken huge strides and has successfully acquired a strong presence in the market.

As an insurance provider, Jubilee Life knows better how to weather the storms of life through its vast range of products and services, providing a safe harbour in times of uncertainty. The past couple of years has undoubtedly tested Jubilee Life's resilience as it battled to maintain its business stability as well as operational continuity in the face of prolonged lockdowns and drawn-out disruptions. Rising to the occasion, Jubilee Life has adapted well and has continuously been delivering on its promise to its both individual and corporate customers.

Jubilee Life has its footprints entrenched in every nook and corner of the country, having attained the position of the leading private sector life and health insurance company in Pakistan. This has only been attained through the trust and confidence reposed in Jubilee Life by its valued policyholders. The endless trust of its policyholders, partner banks, panel of hospitals, shareholders, and their human resources over 25 eventful years have made the impossible possible. Providing the highest levels of excellence and service, Jubilee Life reaffirms its commitment to its policyholders, and is looking forward to celebrating many more anniversaries together. S

Forging Ahead With CSR Initiatives

A responsible corporate citizen, Jubilee Life Insurance is well-committed to a lifelong mission of responsibility and sustainability towards the environment and the society at large.

Jubilee Life's CSR Philosophy

Boasting of an all-encompassing vision geared towards 'enabling people to overcome uncertainty,' Jubilee Life Insurance is well-committed to a lifelong mission of responsibility and sustainability towards the environment and the society at large. In doing so, the CSR philosophy of the Jubilee Life is underscored by a keen sense of integrity and ethical values that cover a broad spectrum of activities with respect to the environment, human well-being, diversity, education, and sports.

CSR Activities

Protecting the Environment and Climate

Playing its crucial role as a responsible corporate citizen, Jubilee Life has initiated a net zero project to mitigate and offset the negative impacts on climate. Primarily aimed at becoming carbon neutral by 2030, Jubilee Life is actively working towards reducing and offsetting its carbon footprint to combat climate change and adapt to its impacts. The project framework comprises calculating, reducing, and finally offsetting the Company's carbon footprint through the formulation and implementation of result-oriented measures, involving the Company's processes, real estate, people and customers.

In this regard, Jubilee Life took the following initiatives in 2020 to reduce pollution, conserve energy and to trim down paper wastage:

- Investment in solar energy adaptation in place of using high generator units;
- Investment in digital applications for customers and employees to avoid using paper to stop deforestation and stay green.

Promoting Health and Well-Being

Microinsurance, Health Awareness Campaigns and Social Health Protection Initiative – Gilgit-Baltistan

In 2020, Jubilee Life extended its microinsurance facilities to over 4 million individuals and organized Health Awareness Campaigns across the country. A successful initiative in Gilgit-Baltistan covered over 35,000 people across 5,340 households.



Helping Healthcare Institutions

Jubilee Life made hefty donations to the Aga Khan Health Services Pakistan, the AKU Planning and Building Services Pakistan as well as the Coronavirus Emergency Fund (CEF), which was established by the Government of Sindh to mobilize much-needed resources in its fight against the pandemic.

Fostering Quality Education

Enterprise Challenge Pakistan

Since 2017, Jubilee Life has been collaborating with the SEED Ventures for the Enterprise Challenge Pakistan, a programme affiliated with the Prince's Trust International, U.K. The Enterprise Challenge Pakistan (ECP) is a pan-Pakistan, inter-school competition that encourages 13 to 16-year-old secondary school students to pursue entrepreneurship as a career path.

Reducing Inequality

As part of its Equal Opportunity Employment programme, Jubilee Life has set up two dedicated branches in Lahore and Faisalabad. The branches are run and managed by special persons with over 30+ employees working for them. To promote the employment of persons with special needs and disabilities and vocational training to equip them with the relevant job skills, Jubilee Life is actively engaged with the Lahore Businessmen Association for Rehabilitation of the Disabled (LABARD), the Network of Organizations Working with Persons with Disabilities Pakistan (NOWPDP) and the Karachi Vocational Training Centre for the Intellectually Challenged (KVTC).

Furthering Gender Equality

With over 28% of its employees being women, Jubilee Life takes pride in its inclusive work culture and strives to offer flexibility and develop supportive policies to ensure that women employees continue their career journey with the Company.

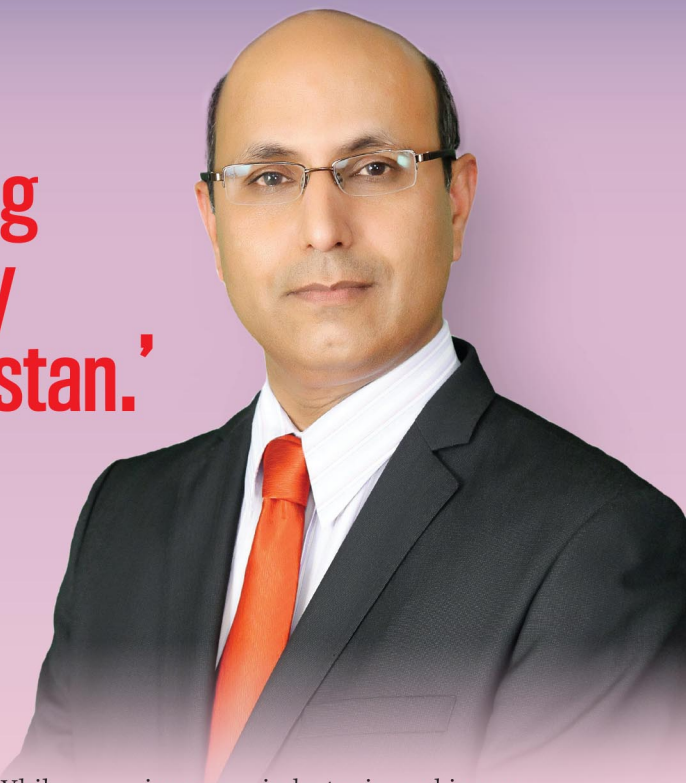
Alleviating Poverty

Relief Programme

As part of the Aga Khan Development Network's (AKDN) initiative, Jubilee Life carried out a Ration Drive to help feed daily wagers, who were severely affected by lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic. S

INTERVIEW

'We pride ourselves in being the most customer-friendly insurance company in Pakistan.'



An exclusive interview with
Javed Ahmed,
Managing Director & CEO,
Jubilee Life Insurance

How do you make an insurance plan effective for the customers to understand?

First, our plans are transparent. Potential customers can see the expected outcomes of the policy in advance through detailed illustrations, which are prepared in line with the SECP guidelines. Every plan is customized to meet the specific needs of customers.

Once the policy is issued, customers can monitor as well as manage the policy through a mobile app, web portal, IVR call centre, etc.

How does the company handle disputes over claims?

We pride ourselves in being the most customer-friendly insurance company in Pakistan. All claims are expeditiously settled as soon as the documents are completed. We have a dedicated team that helps customers in completing claim requirements. We also have a Customer Grievance Unit that manages all complaints lodged by customers. If a claim is declined (which is rare for Jubilee Life) and the customer is not satisfied with our decision, then the customer is advised to approach the Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO) for review. The FIO is a regulatory forum especially formed for addressing grievances of insurance customers without any cost to the customer.

What was the most challenging moment in your career?

Challenges help people and organizations grow and think differently. While there have been many challenges in my career, COVID-19 was an unprecedented one for everyone. By the grace of Almighty, Jubilee Life successfully navigated through the pandemic and is well-positioned to embrace new opportunities.

How do you see the company improving in the coming years and where do you place yourself creating that change?

We see great opportunities in the new digital wave that emerged during COVID-19. Despite already having multiple digital sales and service solutions for our customers, we will continue to explore areas to further improve customer experience and engagement. We would like to position ourselves as a Company that sets an example for others to follow.

What would you say is the biggest challenge the insurance industry is experiencing? And what can influence the market in the next 24 months?

Compliance with the AML/CFT regulations, implementation of new insurance laws and digitalization are the main challenges that the insurance industry is working on. The way digital payment platforms are evolving, coupled with the FBR's and SBP's push for digital transactions, is likely to change the business models of many industries. While being challenging, this also presents some new opportunities for the insurance industry.

Did the company face any challenges during the pandemic?

In order to protect the health and well-being of our employees, we closed down our office during the pandemic. This had an adverse effect on the business generated by the Company. However, with the Government's drive for vaccination, the situation is now normalizing and we are seeing very good growth in business.

Who are Jubilee's top competitors?

State Life being the largest state-owned insurer and EFU Life being the second largest insurer in the private sector are our worthy rivals. Both have contributed significantly in the development of life insurance business in Pakistan alongside Jubilee Life. S

Jubilee
INSURANCE

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Fulfilling promises for 25 years. For a quarter of a century, we at Jubilee Life, have been on an exciting and evolving journey. Today we are proud of the many things we have achieved and learnt from along the way. As a first, we are the largest private insurer in Pakistan with over 7.5 million lives insured. We are also the largest Takaful operator nationwide.

Our innovative and customer-centric approach, offering an array of insurance solutions for various financial protection needs makes us the highest premium writer in the country. Our business acumen and expertise has also made us the fastest growing financial funds in Pakistan.

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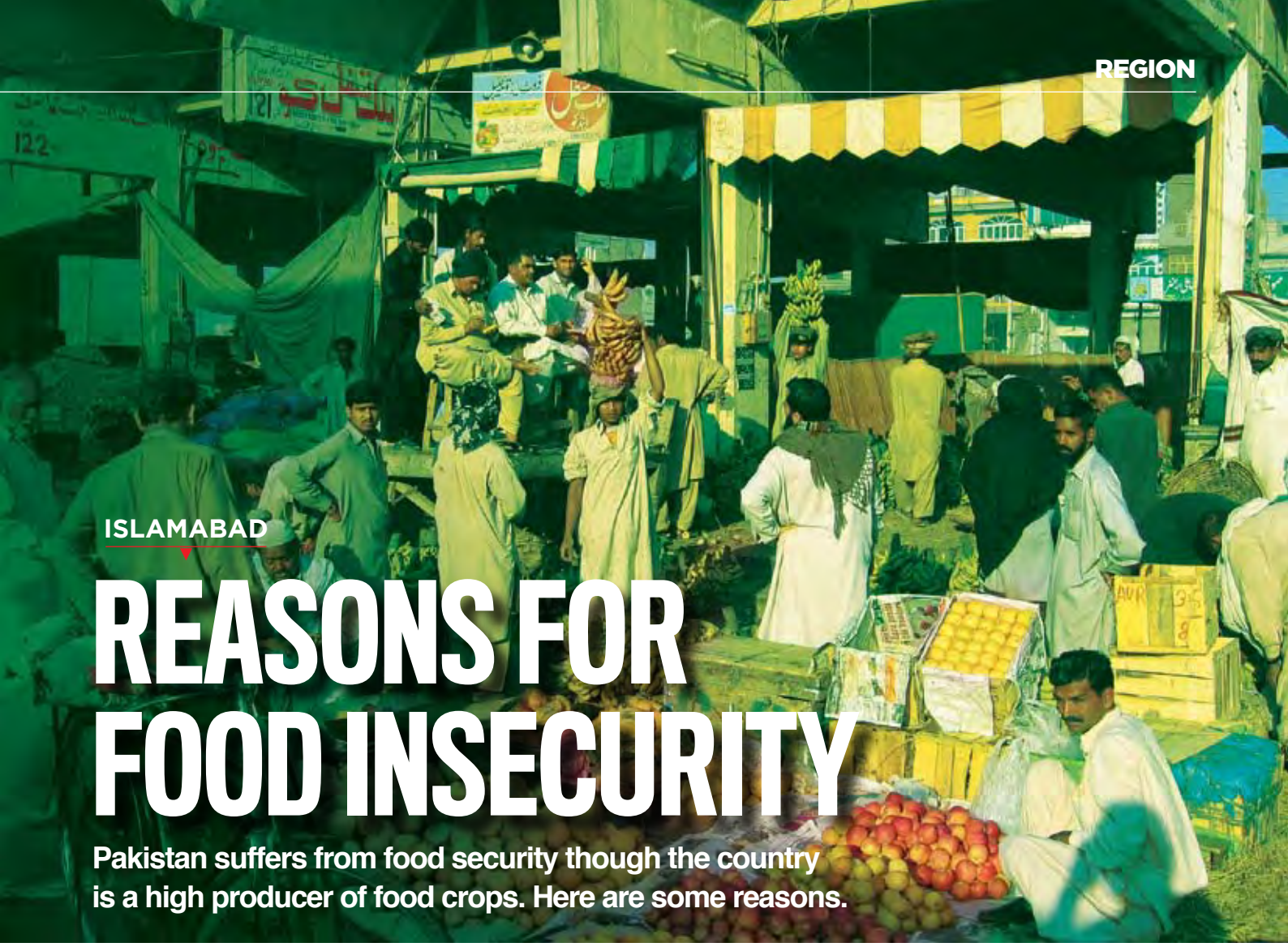
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25th Anniversary Celebrating Life

PRESTIGE



ISLAMABAD

REASONS FOR FOOD INSECURITY

Pakistan suffers from food security though the country is a high producer of food crops. Here are some reasons.

BY SHAKEEL AHMED SHAH

Pakistan is one of the world's largest wheat and rice producers. Wheat and rice play a primary role in the diet and food choices of Pakistanis, accounting for more than half of their daily consumed calories. The production of these crops in Pakistan is in mega tonnes. In 2020-2021, Pakistan produced roughly 25 million tonnes of wheat and around 8 million tonnes of rice. Along with wheat and rice, many other agri-food crops are being produced in Pakistan in huge quantities, including sugarcane.

Reports published by reputable organizations working on the theme of agriculture and food security, like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), still reveal that Pakistan is facing high levels of food insecurity. This fact is further substantiated by other similar studies and surveys carried out by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) and the Future Directions International (FDI). According to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) 2019-2020 surveys conducted by PBS, as much as 16.44 percent of the households in the country face severe or moderate food insecurity. At the provincial level, food insecure households are rather less in Punjab (15.66%) and KPK (14.44%) as compared to Sindh (17.52%) and Balochistan (23.36%). These figures are the government's official figures. The food insecurity rate calculated by other stakeholder organizations are way higher than these figures, with WFP saying it is 36%. The prevalence of food insecurity in the country raises the question that why does such insecurity prevail despite Pakistan producing surplus food?

This is very significant and it is pertinent to understand what food security and food insecurity mean?

A widely agreed definition of food security is one that is used by the FAO which defines food security in terms of "physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food". In the light of this definition, scholars like Walter Fraanje and Samuel Lee-Gammage have tried to understand food security in terms of "availability of food" and "access to food". Availability is concerned with the supply side, that is, the physical presence and inflow of food in a country or a market. Access, on the other hand, is concerned with the ability of households and individuals to buy and consume the available food.



"Food Inflation is a global phenomenon which hurts poor more than the rich."
– Muhammad Nadim Hanif

In the context of Pakistan, it is agreed by almost every stakeholder in the field of agriculture and food security that the issue is not with the availability of food. This stands mostly true, except in some instances recently when wheat and sugar were scarce in the market due to hoarding by influential people involved in the trade of these items.

The actual cause pointed out is the "access to food". Agricultural economists argue that it is the lack of means (money) to access food that is the cause of prevalent food insecurity. The proponents of this argument believe that the rise in food inflation has a direct relation with the increase in the number of food-insecure households in the country. According to Phoebe Sleet of the FDI research institute, although per capita income of Pakistan has increased, this increase has been outnumbered by the increase in food prices. Certainly, daily wages have increased but due to high inflation, purchasing power has declined. According to the findings of the study done by Sleet, the purchasing power of the skilled labourer class declined by 18.5% in 2019. This fall in purchasing power is a key factor in causing food insecurity as it significantly hinders access to food.

The arguments related to "availability" and "access" to food are related to physical and economic aspects of the definition of food security. The social aspect, however, is understudied so far. This aspect is very much related to the social structure of the Pakistani society.

Feudal lordship system shapes the social structure of Pakistan, where a huge number of people deriving their subsistence from agriculture do not own the land. In practical terms, ownership of the land and subsequently the ownership of food is only in the hands of a few, and the rest look up to them for survival. The possibility that in certain places "sufficient food" is inaccessible to certain social classes, cannot be denied. Focused studies, however, can reveal more of it.

In a nutshell, food insecurity in Pakistan is not because of availability issues. It is rather because of economic problems related to "access to food". Increased inflation and decreased purchasing power are causing food insecurity. Moreover, the socio-economic structure of society and ownership of agricultural production can also be a significant factor to study in order to unearth more factors contributing to food insecurity.



The writer is a development practitioner. He has done Master's in Governance, Development and Public Policy from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex and has also earned his Master's in Philosophy of Humanities from the IIS London. He can be reached at shakeelahmedshah@yahoo.com

MULTAN

Missing 'Rape Culture' Shield

Although women are protected by law in Pakistan, in practice this is not systematically enforced because of an inadequate justice system, coupled with deep-rooted social, cultural and economic barriers and prejudices.

BY ORUBAH S. AHMED



There is something perversely specific about sexual crimes that makes it even harder for victims to obtain justice in Pakistan. There is the narrative that statistics bolster and experts in panel discussions rightly expound on points to the practical on-ground problems that the victims have to encounter at every stage of the criminal justice

system. The act of filing an FIR can be riddled with apathy, discouragement or the constant pressure to compromise, and investigations are frequently led by police officers and medical examinations by medico-legal officers who are not trained or equipped to handle evidence in rape cases nor sensitized on how to treat a victim.

An environment where officers, judges and prosecutors are rarely women, routine questioning in courtrooms is a triggering ordeal combined with lack of appropriate institutional or familial support and can especially alienate victims. Lack of rape shield laws that protect a victim's past sexual history from being dragged into proceedings and reductive definitions of rape, coupled with judicial gender bias against victims, make convictions a rarity.

An environment where officers, judges and prosecutors are rarely women, routine questioning in courtrooms is a triggering ordeal.

The situation does not exist in a vacuum. Explanations elaborating the underlying reasons are seeping into the vernacular of at least a small section of society. Simplistically put, at the root cause is the societal adherence to end perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes that cage the potential of what both men and women can be. In the particular context of sexual crimes, it involves viewing women not as individuals but as either fetishized repositories of male honour that need to be guarded from other "men", therefore policed more heavily, or sexual deviants who need to be punished – the Madonna-whore complex thrives.

This narrative also disservices men, by terming sexual crimes as an understandable loss of control – as if to rape is not a choice. Both form part of an overarching "rape culture" where violence is seen as a normal societal response to anything that a woman should have anticipated or prevented and perpetuate victim blaming tendencies. Why do women expect to not be violated if they do not take the necessary steps to protect themselves – from methods as arbitrary as wearing more clothes, making fewer public appearances, becoming less visible, and become less in general? The problems faced by rape victims in the criminal justice system only mirror this societal narrative, and are not separate from it.

Does this mean that eradication of practical problems and slow change in societal narrative would make it easier for victims to obtain justice? I am still skeptical. The legal justice system in itself, inherently, is predicated on the dominant male perception of what justice should look like.

Legal definitions showcase male understanding of what violence is, such as the requirement in our workplace sexual harassment laws that sexual harassment should be of a "sexual nature", discounting that it is often not driven by lust but as a means of perpetuating power and sex discrimination.

Superior judicial decisions may interpret evidence to rule in the favour of a rape victim but discount evidence where there are added complexities that cut across religion, caste, class or hierarchy and don't produce the male perception of what a rape victim should behave like.

When men plead the defence of grave and sudden provocation in cases where they murdered a partner or female family member after discovering a love affair, the law can assess that the culprit deserves a lesser sentence on the basis of the reasonable "man" standard – what would a reasonable man do? Because reasonable women rarely murder their spouses, and almost never their male family members for sexual indiscretion, in a fit of rage. Lack of availability of alternative sentencing options or adherence to a restorative form of criminal justice system also showcases the patriarchal notion of justice: punitive, focused on only putting away poorer men behind bars, with little focus on what victims want.

This theoretical vacuum left by the inadequacies of our criminal justice system has also allowed another worrying trend to fill it up. In the age of social media hashtags, where the public demands and decides who should be the recipient of speedier justice, some cases and victims are likely to get more traction than others. Where the society gets to decide which case causes it greater moral outrage, only a select few make it to the top – in this paradigm not all victims are equal as justice demands they should, and privilege, class, and narrative that again display our Madonna-whore complex – steer the subjective wheel of our calls for justice.

A reorientation of the criminal justice system in itself, with more female and minority voices shaping the change is imperative for a theoretical shift in our notion of justice, and is a legitimate way of granting a more diverse cross-section of society a say in what it should mean. S

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KARACHI

POL Pricing Aberrations

It is being argued that the POL prices are the lowest in Pakistan as compared to other similar countries.

BY M. ABBAS RAZA



The government keeps giving the impression that the POL price increases or decreases due to fluctuation in international prices of POL products and foreign exchange fluctuation. However, in Pakistan there are intrinsic factors which determine the Import Parity Price (IPP). These factors pertain to ECC and government decisions. Since POL pricing has affected the entire economy and consumers have to pay a heavy cost, its aberrations need be brought to light.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan took notice of the POL pricing mechanism in April 2009 and formed a Commission under late Mr. Justice Rana Bhagwan Das. The Commission considered the details of the inquiry conducted by the NAB in 2006 and submitted its report to the SCP. The NAB's inquiry report identified legal, financial and procedural aberrations besides quantification of financial loss to the exchequer and the public due to corruption and corrupt practices by the POL sector. Since the TOR of the Commission, determined by the SCP, was confined only to the POL pricing mechanism, it did not look into the corruption aspects.

NAB's inquiry report, revealed that the ministry flouted the directions of the Cabinet and did not monitor/regulate price fixation by the Oil Companies Advisory Committee (OCAC). The Ministry also failed to independently verify the fortnightly calculation sheets with Platts Oilgram, an internationally accepted POL price journal. The NAB report identified areas which were and are even now causing undue and arbitrary price escalation in MS and HSD and pertain to (a) non-performance of monitoring/regulatory function by DG Oil (b) pricing of motor spirit on redundant formula (c) illegal charge of margins of OMCs and dealers on GST (d) adoption of wrong basis for exchange conversion for Import Parity Price (e) depriving GOP of profits above 40% rate of return (f) violation of financial rules/procedures in the payment of price differential claims (PDC) (g) Inland Freight Equalization Margin (IFEM) (h) local HSD price higher than imported HSD (i) import incidentals wrongly charged at 2% (j) non-capping of OMCs and dealers' margins (k) addition of inadmissible/non-existent premiums on HSD, MS, and other POL products, (l) inflated premiums paid on import of HSD by PSO and (m) allowance of deemed duty in the guise of tariff protection to refineries without seeking specific legal approval.

These aberrations have led to undue profits for the OMCs, dealers and the refineries. The findings of the report placed the responsibility of aberrations on OMCs, dealers, refineries and OGRA besides the officers of the Ministry of Petroleum.

The NAB report observed that the IPP was approved for refineries to give them true import price of the products. It was found that since July 1, 2001, price of local HSD remained most of the time higher than that of the imported HSD.

The Ministry, in its summary for ECC on February 20, 2002 while seeking increase in margins, gave the assurance that in case of abrupt increase, a maximum ceiling on margins shall be placed. When margins abruptly increased on account of sudden rise in oil prices from 2004 onwards, no action was

taken.

As per the ECC's decision on April 29, 1993, the products not appearing on Platts Oilgram were required to be priced as per the prescribed formula till they started appearing on Platts. MS (motor spirit) being one of them, started appearing on Platt's from January 1, 2002, thus requiring its pricing on the basis of Platts. This did not happen, and the Ministry allowed the pricing of MS 87 RON on the basis of the old naphtha formula which was higher than the price of MS 95 RON, a much superior product than produced by domestic refineries. The pricing of MS continues to be on basis of the old naphtha formula violating the ECC's decision.

The ECC allowed import parity price to three refineries (NRL, PRL and ARL) with effect from July 1, 1992, limiting the range of profits between 10-40 per cent of their paid-up capital i.e., profits up to 10 per cent were guaranteed while profits above 40 per cent were to be mopped up by the government. In June 2002, the ministry through budget summary got approval of the Cabinet for removal of lower limit of 10 per cent and in lieu thereof allowed tariff protection by imposing import duty at 10 per cent on HSD. The removal of upper cap of 40 per cent was neither sought nor approved. The ministry on the other hand, illegally removed the upper cap and transferred the government's share in profits above 40 per cent to refineries. The removal of the cap of 40 per cent has deprived the government of its rightful share in profits amounting to billions. The disposal of this amount aggregated till date needs to be put to strict audit by the AGP. This amount, lying in the special reserves of the refineries, should be retrieved and deposited into the government exchequer or adjusted against the subsidies to the sector.

Gross violation of the financial rules and procedures are being committed in the payment of price differential claims (PDC) by the Ministry of Finance and Petroleum and the OCAC on account of disbursements without adhering to audit and financial norms and practices.

The NAB also identified Inland Freight Equalization Margin (IFEM) as one of the causes of arbitrary POL pricing and involving deviation from rules and regulations. Moreover, the mechanism and the basis for fixation and determination of IFEM for various POL products was not open to the public and has never been audited by independent auditors.

Correction of deliberate legal aberrations can bring down the prices of MS and HSD by at least Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 per liter even at the current international prices and dollar parity.

The NAB also pointed out that the ministry allowed refineries to charge premiums on HSD, with one per cent sulphur content, and MS, which have never remained premium products. This aberration continues and is generating undue and illegal profits for the POL sector.

In July, 2002 a new duty protection element was added to the import parity price for four products viz. HSD, kerosene oil, LDO and JP-4, in lieu of the guaranteed minimum rate of return as stated in the foregoing. OCAC adds the tariff protection to the import parity price for the said products to derive the ex-refinery price. Deemed duty levied in the guise of "protective duty" was primarily collected for reconfiguration of desulphurization and continues.

The NAB's inquiry, based on the scrutiny of the record of the ministry and statements of various officials in the report, concludes that intentional distortions/deviations were made in the laid down policy and procedures of oil pricing mechanism to benefit the oil industry. This all is duly supported by documentary evidence.

The NAB also pointed out the supply of substandard diesel by PSO to the nation, which is imported at lower rates but supplied to the consumers as high-quality premium product with less than 0.5 per cent sulphur content and higher rates are charged from the consumers.

It is being argued that the POL prices are the lowest in Pakistan as compared to other similar countries. However, this fact needs to be confirmed by independent sources along with the breakup of prices to determine as to what the government and POL industry get per liter.

It is understood that NAB's inquiry report was forwarded to the then prime minister with a copy to the president. However, no action followed. The issue was also taken up by the incumbent government, but it soon became hostage in the hands of the oil mafia due to severe shortage, which was removed the next day after the increase in prices. Moreover, accentuation of the pricing issue in the respective high courts has also yet to yield results.

Correction of deliberate legal aberrations can bring down the prices of MS and HSD by at least Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 per liter even at the current international prices and dollar parity, which can further be reduced if the SBP is able to restore the Rupee to Dollar parity at a reasonable level. S

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NEW DELHI

INDEPENDENT MEDIA

What could we expect from those democracies of South Asia which are camouflaged versions of kinship, wealth and thugs?

BY SHAZIA ANWER CHEEMA

Whistleblower Frances Haugen who is a former Facebook employee has accused the company of putting profit over the public good and her revelations have generated a heated debate about how media giants have become so powerful that they are now acting as states within a state.

Media outlets can be immensely powerful and can overturn or even deny the existence of the sovereignty of the public. As all human atrocities boil down to capitalism, media corporates also have become commodities and can be purchased and sold out. This means the basic right of citizens can be sold and purchased.

Media outlets can prolong the tenure of a corrupt fascist government and with the help of the same outlet, a coup d'état can be executed against a democratically elected government. For the sake of the capital they are getting, they can force you to believe the alternate truth.

If the Western textbook democracy is alarmed by the influence of media, which is of course far better and transparent in terms of electoral procedures, what could we expect from those democracies of South Asia, which are by core camouflaged versions of kinship, wealth, and thugs?

The logical moral declination of a street thug making his/her way up to State Parliament is undeniable. The power-hungry individual hustling his way upward can never be the saviour of those who have elected him willfully or he somehow staged that he has been elected by power, bullying, wealth, and fear.



As a communication practitioner, I strongly believe that in dictatorships the media is controlled by the State while in democracies media is controlled by wealthy individuals and objective media and journalists simply do not exist in the mainstream. I also believe that the western form of democracy is a total failure in South Asia and the infectious relation between media and power has made my case stronger.

A unique demographic is the criterion of becoming a politician is not the personal conduct and agenda for civil service. On the contrary, it is the level of corruption. The richer bully can become a minister. This is the indigestible state of affairs of South Asian democracies.

"You have to leave Lakhempur (a city of Kheri district of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh) otherwise you know what I can do against all of you if you will not obey me".

"Come on line, otherwise I will do

that. I am not only a minister, you better know what I was prior to that; you have to leave Lakhempur".

This is not a recorded conversation of a drug cartel but a public speech of an Indian state minister who was threatening innocent farmers while refereeing his previous criminal record and barbaric acts against his opponents. He was not only owning his shady past but also harassing the public by giving it as a reference. The media coverage of his speech did not solidify the pretence the minister was providing because media men might have gotten their booty. During the same protest, five people got killed among whom one was decisively crushed under the minister's vehicle.

All big Indian media hubs bombarded the information which was fed to them and which was part of their contract with the current serving democracy. After this sad incident, BJP ministers and Godi Media had been blaming the farmers for the accident by claiming that farmers were armed and were not even farmers but paid agitators. Godi media also claimed that the incident of killing five persons took place somewhere else. Media also claimed that protestors were members of the Khalistan Movement--- a banned organization in India. However, a video clip that got viral on Twitter exposed the reality, showing peaceful farmers and a fleet of vehicles owned by a minister crushing an innocent farmer.

(Godi Media is a term coined and popularized by NDTV journalist Ravish Kumar, for the sensationalist and biased Indian print and TV news media, which supports the ruling NDA government).

If the protestors are not farmers (as claimed by Godi Media), there could be a point when citizens are not citizens. It will be a powerful ruling class and a loaded media that will decide who are the protesters, who is a parasite and who is an *andolanjeev - (One who cannot live without protests and is constantly finding ways to stoke protests).*

The role of Indian media during over one year and long peaceful protests of farmers has exposed what kind of democracy India has and what brutal role the media can play to block any group of society who wishes to execute democratic rights ensured in the Constitution.



"As a proud Indian citizen, I have to hang my head in shame at the gross misbehaviour of our elected leaders – both for their attempt to curb media independence and for their efforts to violate freedom of speech in the country."

– Amartya Sen

Therefore, the handling of farmers' protests exposed the credibility of democracy as well as of media in mainland India. Forget the situation in Indian occupied Kashmir and seven sister states where special laws are playing havoc against subjugated communities and religious groups.

Such events indicate ethical declination of media as well as democracies and no one seems to worry about it while professional integrity of media and decency, the so-called power of democracy, have become cliché.

I remember an article written by a senior Pakistani journalist who narrated the proceedings of a meeting of media owners and practitioners with a former President after he clamped Emergency in the country in 2008. In the meeting, the then powerful president told the delegation of Pakistan Broadcasting Association (PBA) that there is (was) no relation between media and democratic rights and media owners would keep getting good business even if there were no democracy in the country. He added that private and corporate businesses flourish (flourished) under autocratic rule so the share of media in advertisements was good. Such veracities indicate that the conventional view has gone away with the wind that the interrelation of media and democracy is based on inevitable existence of both. This understanding has become just a cliché because of changing formats of emerging media scenarios and the huge money involved in advertisements.

We must accept that majority of South Asian media succumb to financial gains and democratization of society is the agenda of few in the South Asian media scenario. The un-proportionate growth of private media, the introduction of social media, the contests around government-controlled media, and broadcast deregulation in South Asia have formed a complex democracy-media relationship. We are living in the midst of a communications revolution that is affecting democracies born in the era of print media. As a result, we seem to be heading towards a more pluralistic but also more fragmented media environment that may pose a threat to the shared civic arena essential to democracy.

I believe free media and the rights of those not in power have binary relations and media has to play the role of a watchdog and whistleblower. However, realities tell me that the aforestated statement can be my innocent desire but not the reality we are living in. S

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ATTARI

HORRORS REMEMBERED

The tragedy is not that Partition happened, but how it happened. It is cited as one of the bloodiest and most violent events in world history, with over 15m people displaced and between 1m-2m killed, raped and maimed.

BY NIKHAT SATTAR

"In a sense, 1947 has yet to come to an end", wrote the historian William Dalrymple in 2015 on the Partition. This is probably truer for India than for Pakistan, for though I have witnessed much resentment against it in India, it has never been so grotesquely referred to as by the Indian PM, Narendar Modi, when he recently declared commemorating August 14 as "Partition Horrors Remembrance Day". His cabinet colleagues may have advised him to do so and many of his ilk might follow this instruction, but it is doubtful if the saner elements of Indian society would agree.

The whys and whos of Partition have been conveniently laid at the door of Mr. Jinnah, who has been cast as the villain of the piece in India. People do not realise that both Gandhi and Nehru played an important role in the division. In 2009, Jaswant Singh, a BJP leader, wrote that Jawahar Lal Nehru was primarily responsible for Partition and that India had demonised Jinnah for political gains. Singh paid the price for telling the truth by being expelled from his party and his book erased from the collective memory of the people. Since then, much more has been written about the circumstances that led to Jinnah's demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims. In Pakistan, Jinnah is portrayed as a devout Muslim who founded Pakistan on the basis of Islam, an idea far from reality. Both countries have successfully, but tragically, developed their respective narratives around opposing and totally false depictions of their founding fathers.

According to the Hindi writer, Krishna Sobti, Partition is difficult to forget but dangerous to remember. The memories, seen, heard and read, are seared onto our minds, and the danger has multiplied. The tragedy is not that it happened, but how it happened. It is cited as one of the bloodiest and most violent events in world history, with over 15m people displaced and between 1m-2m killed, raped and maimed. Perpetrators and victims belonged to Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, the carnage being particularly severe in Punjab and Bengal. Many were excessively violent and still others were tremendously kind and gracious. People were so brutal that one historian has suggested the event was more cataclysmic than the Holocaust. Even after seven decades, objective research has eluded generations of Indians and Pakistanis, whose views of what happened remain clouded by emotions, painful stories and nationalist narratives that have increasingly painted "the other side" as the devil who was solely responsible for the horror. It is these often one-sided stories of what transpired during the fateful days of August that fester in our minds.

Partition is also unique in that it was the first time that two communities that had lived in relative harmony for centuries (although rifts had been

created by the British after the War of Independence in 1857, an "uprising" blamed upon Muslims) turned upon each other with ferocity while the colonial rulers left after looting the country. There are no similar examples to learn from.

Now imagine a scenario when two countries would decide that the past is only meant to not repeat mistakes and the future must be built on mutual recognition, respect and collaboration. But first, truth has to be unearthed, faced and accepted. Joint teams would conduct research on historic and heritage issues and religious, cultural and other festivals are celebrated together.

This was not to be.

The hatred that stoked the fires of violence has been deliberately and consistently nurtured and given new leases of life throughout the 74 years of independence. The Kashmir issue, cited as the most contentious between the two neighbours, could have been resolved during earlier years, had both sides shown political wisdom and savvy. Instead, communalism and the religious divide have shaped lives in phenomenal measure, much to the detriment of social and economic well being. Muslims have been sidelined since 1947 and seen the highest level of discrimination and violence to their existence in India since 2014 when PM Modi came into power. Pakistan, where the population of minorities has declined substantively, has faced consistent sectarian and religious intolerance over the last two decades.

Under these circumstances, for Mr. Modi to declare August 14 (a day of celebration for Pakistanis) as a day to celebrate their independence, to remember the horrors of Partition is nothing less than rubbing salt on the wounds of all who experienced the brutalities, whether in Pakistan or India, and a taunt to Muslims on both sides of the border.

If the logic of Mr. Modi is to be followed, Muslims might very well commemorate August 17, 1947, when Radcliffe finalised dividing a country he had never visited before; they might choose to remember the days in January, 1948, when Muslim majority Jammu was converted into a Hindu majority by killing and displacing hundreds of thousands of Muslims. They might commemorate another day in 2002 when Mr. Modi presided as CM over butchering and rape of more than 2000 Muslims in Gujrat: these were horrors no less, inflicted upon the Muslim minority.

But it benefits no one to commemorate a day of independence of one country as one of horrors by anotherm especially when both were victims of each other. The only way to commemorate sacrifices of people is to use this time as one of introspection and try to comprehend the anatomy of violence that had gripped them in its claws and still does. A day of such remembrance would bring people from both countries (and a third one: Bangladesh) to truthful readings of shared and individual history, however painful it might be. Only then our nations may move towards reconciliation. We might accept finally that we too are culpable and others too are honourable and kind.

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LUCKNOW

Front-running Yogi

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is seen as the BJP's future. He is the only BJP leader who seems like he can act on his own. He is regarded as the party's number one polariser.

BY SHAHRUKH MEHBOOB

If Narendra Modi has any competition for national headlines, it comes from his party's chief minister in Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath. First, it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who said the chief minister's handling of the Covid-19 crisis was "unparalleled". Days later, party president JP Nadda commended Adityanath for turning Uttar Pradesh into one of India's "leading states". Of late, it was the turn of Amit Shah: the Union home minister declared Uttar Pradesh under Adityanath was the "top" state in the country on the law and order front.

Against this backdrop, the unequivocal endorsement of Adityanath in the last couple of weeks by all those who matter in the BJP is somewhat intriguing. Central leaders, for their part, say the party feels no need to change the status quo. "The party is doing extremely well under the leadership of Yogi Ji," said Y Satya Kumar, the BJP's co-in charge for Uttar Pradesh, referring to Adityanath as he is popularly known. "He has a proven track record." But few political observers are willing to buy the claim that it is Yogi's governance record that

has made the BJP lean on him again.

The decision to hoist Adityanath, they say, is primarily the BJP falling back upon the muscular brand of Hindutva politics to save the day as the country's economy lies in shambles. "The economy is bad, there is no employment, farmers are upset, and Covid has destroyed the rural economy," said Satendra Kumar, who teaches at Allahabad University's GB Pant Social Science Institute, listing out the grievances frequently aired in rural Uttar Pradesh. "So what do you do? You say you are building temples, protecting Hindus from Muslims," he said, attempting to explain why the BJP was banking on Adityanath. "The more Hindutva you project, the better for you." In an early sign of this strategy, Kumar pointed out, the Uttar Pradesh government in July announced plans to put in place population control measures, drawing on an enduring – and mythical – Hindutva trope of a demographic threat posed by higher Muslim fertility rates.



"One may summarize Yogi's behavior and his actions with three topics: Ksatriya dominance, the Hindu dimension and the hate for Muslims. The three dimensions are interrelated and fill out Adityanath's performances and his strategy of omnipresence (especially in the media)."

– Véronique Bouillier



"Things like that tantalize and stimulate Hindu voters because it is seen as an anti-Muslim move," he said. "These elections are going to be a lot about that and so projecting a Hindu hardliner helps sends a clear message that helps bring together upper-caste Hindu votes – a formidable number in UP. "

While he was never the front-runner for UP's chief ministership, Yogi's elevation was greeted with a sense of euphoria in the party. Part of the euphoria also came from the belief that with the defeat of the caste-identity-based parties, the state would now have a leader free of family encumbrances to rescue it from decades of decline. The state's law enforcement is as much "better" as you find in your headlines. Similarly, he was expected to turn the state's economy around. It would seem that in the second half of Akhilesh Yadav's term, UP had broken out of its stagnation. Its GSDP grew at 8.85 percent in 2015-16 and 10.87 percent in 2016-17. Yogi took over in early March 2017, just ahead of the new financial year. The growth rate under him over the next three years kept declining — 7.24 percent in 2017-18, 5.33 in 2018-19, and 4.38 percent by 2018-19. If anything, the state's growth halved under his three years from what he had inherited. This is a pandemic year, so let's not talk about. Despite all this, Yogi is seen as the BJP's future. He is the only BJP leader who seems like he can act on his own. He is the party's number one polariser. If Modi and Shah dreamt of a Congress-mukt Bharat, he's working towards his idea of Muslim-mukt Uttar Pradesh, in the sense of completely marginalizing them — five crore Indians.

His personality, power, and politics are *sui generis*. He hasn't done much good for his state, but Modi and Shah will now need him if they want to win UP again in 2022 and India in 2024. This signals a Yogi Adityanath-sized change in BJP politics, even under Modi. The BJP high command makes a categorical announcement on the decisions taken at their meetings regarding the political situation in UP. All contentious issues, right now in the public domain, will remain in the realm of uncertainty.

However, it can be safely concluded that a range of meetings in recent weeks, in Delhi and Lucknow, has largely revolved around the state assembly polls (to be held early next year) and remedial steps needed to iron out friction in the party, correct caste equations through cabinet expansion and poll alliances, defuse the rising anger against Adityanath in the party's rank and file, and steps to improve the government's image after what is widely perceived to be the mismanagement of the second wave. Significantly, this is not the first time that a section of party cadres and lawmakers have rebelled against the CM's style of functioning, sharing their angst with the central leadership. But addressing these voices has become more urgent, as the party high command knows a friction-ridden party can't swim through choppy electoral waters, especially after a clear dent in the state government's image. S

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HYPOCRISY!

Mandela "the terrorist" is revered globally as a symbol of resistance to subjugation and as an icon of peace and freedom. The West's hypocrisy remains unparalleled.

BY MIR ADNAN AZIZ

A thousand years after the advent of Islam, France was holding a discourse to assess whether a woman was a human being. During the reign of King Henry VIII, it was declared that as she was impure, it was unlawful for a woman to read the Bible. On the death of their husbands, Hindu women were condemned to perform self-immolation.

In Europe and North America, more than sixty thousand women were executed or burnt at the stake on the mere suspicion of practicing witchcraft. Until the 19th century, women did not have the right to own property or obtain a divorce. European literature portrayed women as mere chattel. In "Taming of the Shrew", she was meant to be reformed by man. Hamlet, addressing his mother Gertude, said, "Frailty, thy name is woman"; a line epitomizing the prevalent mindset.

When established, British universities such as Oxford, Wales and Cambridge, allowed male admissions only. France granted voting rights to women 155 years after its independence and till 1964, women needed their husbands' permission to open a bank account or get a passport. Today, a woman choosing to wear a hijab in France may face a prison sentence of up to two years.

However, since the Taliban took over Kabul, the one thing that is tormenting the sanctimonious West and Modi, is their ignoble cling on women's rights. This is despite the fact that none of the Taliban leaders boast a Modi, Macron or Trump, the ultimate alpha males, within their ranks.

Trump was propelled to office by what Micheal Kimmel, world-renowned sociologist on gender studies, describes as "the US's angry white men". White House Advisor,



Sebastian Gorka, heralded Trump's presidency as a "return of the alpha males". Trump's inaugural address site was packed with half a million women protesters the very next day.

Shirley Chisholm, author and the first Afro-American Congresswoman, was spot on saying the emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females begins as soon as the doctor says, "it's a girl". The fact is epitomized when Trump tells American-born Democratic congresswomen of colour to "go back and help fix the totally broken and crime-infested places from which they came".

Apart from calling Hillary Clinton a bigot, Trump referred to certain women publicly as "lowlife, fat pigs, slobs and horse-face". He had far worse things to say throughout his presidency. Facing allegations of rape and assault, the POTUS gloated publicly that "he felt entitled by his celebrity status to grab women by their genitals"; an epitome of unparalleled hypocrisy of the alpha males regarding sanctity of women rights!

Timothy Weeks, an Australian professor at the American University in Kabul, spent three and a half years in Taliban captivity. He converted to Islam and was released in exchange of Anas Haqqani. He traveled to Doha to attend the first session of the Afghan peace talks on the invitation of the Taliban; Anas Haqqani was at the airport to receive him.

Caitlan Coleman and Joshua Boyle, a Canadian couple, were Taliban captives for five years. They converted to Islam as did Yvonne Ridley, a British journalist. Western politicians and media dub it as the Stockholm Syndrome. (This is a condition in which hostages develop a psychological bond with their captors during captivity).

Why don't released Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib or Pul Charkhi inmates fall prey to the same syndrome?

It was Yvonne Ridley who told the world about the plight of Aafia Siddiqui, the only woman prisoner at Bagram and incarcerated with male inmates. In 2010, Dr Aafia was sentenced to 86 years in prison. The preposterous charges: a frail woman snatching a gun and trying to murder two American soldiers in Afghanistan!



"If the United States is to recover its status as the world's human rights leader, it must renew its commitment to multilateral institutionalism and must avoid double standards that undermine the legitimacy of human rights discourse."

– Scott Turner

Rape during wars or occupations has been used as a weapon despite its international designation as a war crime. History records these gruesome acts on mass scale, such as when the Allied Forces took over Berlin and the 90s' Balkan (Bosnia) war.

On a bitterly cold night of February 23, 1991, 300 soldiers of India's 4th Rajputana Rifles cordoned off the Kunan and Poshpora villages in Kupwara district of Occupied Kashmir. Reeking of alcohol they entered houses; the gory aftermath of that single night saw the despicable rape of 150 girls and women.

This state-sponsored atrocity is documented in international reports and in a book penned by five Kashmiri women titled, "Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora?" It narrates heart-wrenching facts of how minor girls, the physically impaired and even pregnant women were not spared. Mothers and daughters, grandmothers and their granddaughters were molested in the same room. One of the victims was told by her rapist, "We have orders to rape you".

The West with its unparalleled hypocrisy remained mute and callously unmoved about this atrocity. However, it raises a cacophony with its dichotomous chest beating for the Afghan women; the same women who were murdered and maimed along with their children, fathers, brothers and husbands during attacks, bombings and drone strikes during the devastating twenty year war.

Even in the last days, as the US forces fled Kabul, they bequeathed an Afghan home with 10 dead bodies, including seven children, from a drone strike. This strike, which President Biden said had taken out ISIS members, is now heartlessly termed a case of mistaken identity. A US 4-star general has even apologized that it happened.

What could be a greater crime; a greater act of infamy perpetrated time and again on innocent people?

All nations that gained freedom from tyrannical subjugation did so by rising against the occupiers; Afghanistan did the same. When Nelson Mandela and his ANC was banned in 1960, Mandela became head of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), ANC's military wing. Convicted of treason, he was sent to prison, and remained incarcerated for 27 years remaining, till 2008, on the US terror watch list.

The same Nelson Mandela became a Nobel Peace laureate in 1993; he was sworn in as the President of South Africa a year later. Mandela "the terrorist" is revered globally as a symbol of resistance to subjugation and as an icon of peace and freedom. The West's hypocrisy remains unparalleled. The fact remains that the Afghans fought and won their freedom; Occupied Kashmir shall one day achieve the same. It is ordained since the dawn of time; tyranny shall never endure. S

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WASHINGTON

DIRTY GAME

America's dirty game involves bombing poor nations like Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Yemen as proxy battlegrounds. The chessboard of wars against Russia and China is nothing more than an American excuse to impose unnecessary burden on the American taxpayer.

BY DR. SEEMA KHAN

There is a plethora of literature around criticizing the Pakistan armed forces and the defence budget. Critics in their naiveté, overlook the reality that the defence budget is allocated to defending a state's territorial boundaries and keeping the nation safe from external aggression. With this premise, one would like to draw attention to the most contentious roles played by a few armies in the world, creating conflicts for their own employability. These militaries suck the blood of their citizens—using their tax money, and impose wars on other countries' innocent citizens. It's not a cliché or social media news, but a statement of a former CIA contractor and academic, Chalmers Johnson:'I guarantee you, when war becomes that profitable, you're going to see more of it'.

Can we question the relatibility of recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with a former CIA contractor? In 2001, the war planning cell under the President George W. Bush administration pushed its armies into decades-long conflicts in these two countries with a false claim of transforming them into western-friendly and liberal democracies. Was it a legit claim or there was a clandestine rationale behind it?

The CNN described the war in Afghanistan as a 'catalog of waste, fraud, and abuse' costing hundreds of billions of dollars. The US administration and its media are trying their best to build up a narrative that the war's ignominious ending is someone else's fault.'

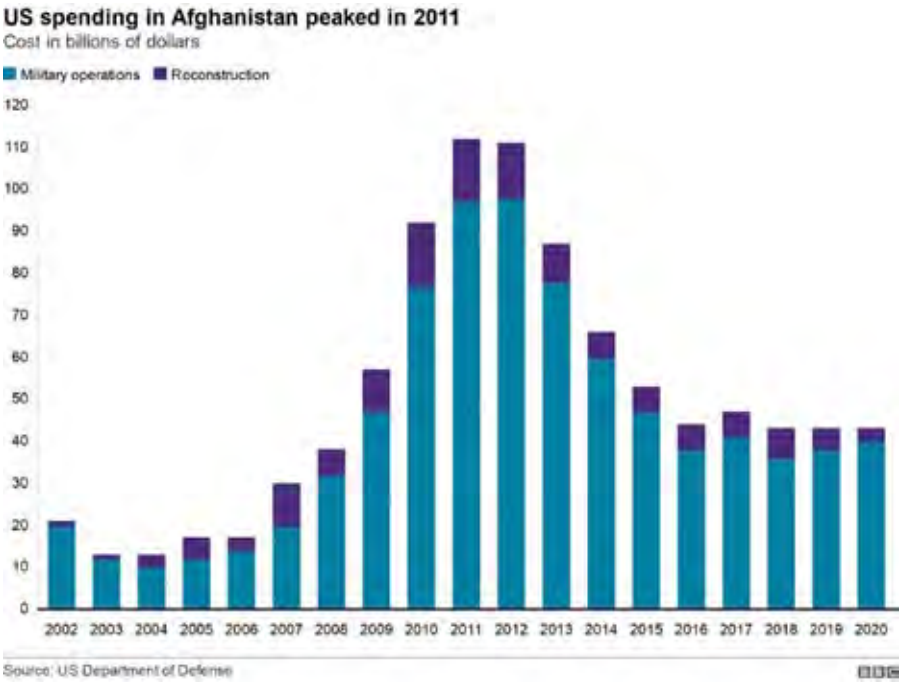
The Pentagon, or Department of Defence, and its leadership are always looking for pretexts to protect human rights or defend democracies around the world, as if they were hired to do so.

Under the guise of the 'universal principles of democracy', Pentagon's policymakers really defende the never-ending flow of money through continuous (self-created) conflicts around the world. Jon Schwarz claimed that the 20-year Afghanistan war was an 'extraordinary success' for the top five U.S. defence contractors despite the American strategic defeat. Xin Ping in Global Times further explained how the 'iron-triangle' of arms dealers, congressmen and the Pentagon, benefited the American Military-Industrial Complex (AMIC)—a group of arms companies comprising Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics. It was the AMIC behind these unnecessary wars.

Ping claims that the AMIC stock had increased in value by ten times or more, surpassing the stock market by 58 percent. Within the past two decades the war had made the AMIC buildi-up their bloody empire standing on the pillars of Afghan skeletons. Different studies suggest that a $10,000 investment in these five companies on Sept.18, 2001—the day President George W. Bush signed the bill authorizing the use of military force in a foreign land—would have shot up to $97,795 in 2021.

The graphic depiction of the exorbitant increase in the American budget over the two-decade-long war in Afghanistan is shown above from a BBC story .

Fred Kaplan refuted the surge in the defence budget due to wars. He described it as an American strategic move to contain China and Russia so that modern artillery and new and expensive fighter jets, bombers, missiles, ships, and submarines could be included in American arsenals. According to his analysis, the taxpayers were 'lawfully' squeezed to protect the strategic interests of America and not to benefit the AMIC. Nevertheless, his





"If a nation chooses to fight a war, it has to pay enough to win it."
– Anthony H. Cordesman

argument has no merit; it illustrates the American dirty game of power politics, which involves bombing poor nations like Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Yemen as proxy battlegrounds. The chessboard of wars against Russia and China is nothing more than an American excuse to impose unnecessary burden on the American taxpayer by denying people free access to basic services such as healthcare, employment, and education. As a matter of fact, these wars have stuffed hundreds of billions of dollars into the coffers of five defence contractors.

Even after the US exit from Afghanistan, the AMIC has continued to benefit, necessitating fresh contributions in terms of surveillance and intelligence equipment and gadgets. Biden's statement about America's greater role in global affairs, which includes 'over the horizon' tactics and demands constant US monitoring so that the evolving situation in Afghanistan can be monitored, is based on more AMIC contracts and money flowing into its accounts.

America will continue to foment wars and conflicts in order to benefit the AMIC. Ethiopia is the latest testing ground for American agencies, which are fanning the flames of violence. US taxpayers are paying for 'westernized democracy' in another country and emptying their pockets. There is some solace in the fact that money will return to America, albeit not to the people, but to AMIC. S



The writer is a PhD in Defence Studies with special focus on militancy in Balochistan. She has been working for the Government of Pakistan for over 20-years and can be reached at seemashafiq71@icloud.com. Twitter: @seemashafiq71

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Towards a Financially Inclusive Society

PMIC is helping the microfinance sector to help it to cater to the unbanked population.

Pakistan is the 5th most populous country of the world. In terms of financial inclusion, however, almost 70% adults and approximately 100 million individuals, do not have a bank account. The commercial banks mostly cater to urban markets. Thus, a lot of effort is required to provide access to financial services for underserved communities living in rural areas of Pakistan. Microfinance industry, currently serving more than 8 million clients, has a lot of responsibility to reach out to these segments of society. The Microfinance Providers (MFPs), particularly the non-bank Microfinance Institutions, struggle to get access to finance from other financial institutions, including commercial banks, due to which their ability to meet financial needs of rural communities is compromised.

Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company (PMIC) was established with a primary aim to meet financial requirements of these Microfinance Providers (MFPs), together with Microfinance Banks and Non-Bank Microfinance Institutions, as a wholesale lender. Registered with the Securities & Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), the PMIC is an investment finance company, which has three shareholders: PPAF (which used to provide wholesale funding before PMIC came into existence), Karandaaz (which was set up by the DFID, now known as FCDO), and KfW ((a German state-owned investment and development bank). PMIC has a mission to empower the underserved by contributing to their financial inclusion and ensuring job creation, income enhancement and improvement in socio-economic conditions of the people that do not have enough opportunities. Over the last 5 years, PMIC has been able to build a portfolio of around PKR 25 billion, provided financing to about 26 MFPs and has impacted the lives of 850,000 people, 86% of whom are women and almost 62% of the portfolio in rural areas.

In addition to funds provided by the shareholders, PMIC has also been able to attract commercial funding of Rs 9 billion for MFPs and has also closed four transactions of subordinate debt and TFCs for microfinance banks. The investment and guidance provided in improving the governance, management and transparency to the MFPs has made them more attractive to commercial banks and international lenders. PMIC now offers a wide range of financial instruments and services, such as senior debt, guarantees, credit enhancement facilities, Tier II debt and advisory services. PMIC also deploys 15% of its income towards impact financing in the areas of agriculture, enterprise development, renewable energy, education and poverty alleviation. These initiatives use a blended finance approach where grants and technical assistance is provided along with financing to stimulate innovation, product development, value addition and risk mitigation, leading to enhanced productivity. More than 100,000 people have been impacted through these initiatives.



Yasir Ashfaq, CEO, PMIC.

PMIC has contributed to improve financial inclusion in the country by working with the regulators, both the SBP and the SECP, industry associations and practitioners in the development of a favorable ecosystem for the microfinance sector. The PMIC's efforts, in collaboration with other stakeholders, have greatly helped in growth of the microfinance sector, both in terms of clients as well as loan book. The sector is now gearing to reach 15 million clients by 2025. This would require the sector to almost triple its portfolio size and a huge influx of liquidity for both debt and equity would be needed. PMIC is preparing for this next phase of growth in the sector by expanding its range of services for the sector players.

PMIC aims to explore a number of different avenues to diversify its investment portfolio and bring new players to the industry. In this regard, PMIC is preparing to launch its **Challenge Fund** to deploy the grant-based microfinance plus initiatives. PMIC is also working to adopt the Securitization and/or Asset Purchase model, where it could purchase some portion of the MFP's loan portfolio (based on certain geographic area or business sectors) and share a revenue model with the respective MFPs. This would allow the PMIC to fill the funding gap, created as a result of asset purchase/securitization model. As another key initiative, PMIC aims to explore its **Institutional Development Fund**, where it intends to bring new players to the microfinance industry. In this regard, PMIC is working on a program structure based on which SECP/SBP-registered entities will be provided with financing and technical support to offer microfinance services in their operational areas and business segments.

Digitization is also an important area for PMIC as well as the microfinance sector. However, there is a risk that "digitally excluded would also be financially excluded," particularly in a country where a large number of individuals do not have access to smartphones and have a very little digital footprint. PMIC believes that digitization should not direct microfinance towards providing nano and consumption loans, rather it should help in attracting more clients. With this aim in view, PMIC is exploring different options for making investments in Fintechs, as Pakistan being an emerging market for such firms.

Through the above-mentioned initiatives, PMIC is going an extra mile to create a financially inclusive society, where women are empowered, rural communities enjoy prosperity and more jobs and income generation opportunities are offered to youth. S

NAPA HONOURS GHALIB

An event took place recently at the premises of National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) on the poetry and writings of the great Urdu poet Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib. Since the President of Pakistan, Dr Arif Alvi, is a huge admirer of the poet, he was requested to attend the programme as the Chief Guest of the event along with his wife Ms. Samina Alvi.



Dr. Arif Alvi

The President was welcomed by NAPA Board of Directors President Syed Jawaid Iqbal, President Emeritus Zia Mohyeddin, Honorary Acting President Javed Jabbar and members of the board, including Tariq Kirmani, Shahrukh Hassan, Mahtab Rashdi, Anwar Rammal, Satish Anand and Fauzia Naqvi.

President Alvi praised impeccable rendering of some of Ghalib's memorable poetry and writings by Zia Mohyeddin, NAPA President. Dressed immaculately in a black sherwani, Zia sahab vividly evoked glimpses from the unique life and times of the legendary poet.

A group of NAPA alumni, comprising both young women and men, led by the Head of the Music Faculty Ustad Nafees Ahmed on the sitar, presented five ghazals written by Ghalib with impressive talent and sensitivity. The music was composed by Arshad Mahmud and the programme was conducted by Head of the Drama Faculty, Khalid Ahmed. The beautiful presentation was lauded by all.



Members of the Board of Directors, NAPA



President Dr. Arif Alvi, his wife Mrs Samina Alvi, Zia Mohyeddin (President, NAPA) and Syed Jawaid Iqbal (Chairman, NAPA) with the performers of the event.

Speaking at the conclusion of the programme, President Dr. Arif Alvi emphasised the formative role of creative and performing arts, culture and literature for reflecting the rich heritage of the country and fostering a dynamic national identity. He called for NAPA to set up similar centres of excellence across Pakistan so that people in those areas could have convenient access to the enormous wealth of the country's civilisational heritage which began over 5,000 years ago.

Since Covid-19 has its restrictions, the event was held in attendance of the NAPA staff and students only. The 10-member ensemble comprised Mehboob Ashraf, Yusuf Bashir, Sara Waqar, Amoon Daas, Liza, Cynthia, Obaid, Nigel Bobby, Simal Nafees and Sabeen Nawab Khan. S



‘The thriller market is super-busy.’

- Phoebe Morgan

British author Phoebe Morgan talks to Awais Khan for this exclusive interview in *SouthAsia*.

With four major thrillers under your belt, you’re an old hand at writing. What got you into writing in the first place?

I have always been someone who loved words; as a child I would be endlessly making up stories and reading books, but it wasn’t until I was in my twenties that I started thinking more seriously about writing my own. I had done a creative writing module whilst studying in America and loved it, but I don’t think I realised that writing professionally was really an option. Finally, in my twenties I suddenly realised that I ought to at least give it a try, and I forced myself to complete a first draft of what went on to become my debut, The Doll House. Writing is now a job for me, and I have to remind myself of that whenever a deadline is looming! I love the creative process and it’s a huge privilege to be able to write novels but it is also hard work so I try to count my blessings as often as I can.

In addition to being an author, you also work in publishing. How do you manage to balance the two and find time for both?

I think this year (2020-21) has been harder than usual in this respect – being confined to our own homes has not been great for creativity, and having to work and write in my flat without the separation that the office usually brings felt particularly hard for me. I prioritise my publishing job over my writing, and then write at weekends – I can get quite a lot done in one weekend if I put my mind to it, and then the week is for my day job (though being an editor, submission reading often bleeds into weekends and evenings too!). I think it helps that I genuinely love both jobs and want to succeed in them; that motivates me and keeps me going, as do messages from readers which are always lovely to receive.



Your books are edgy and bold. Ome of them (The Wild Girls) was set in Southern Africa. How do you get your books to stand out in a market that is saturated with thrillers?

It’s definitely tough! The thriller market is super busy but I try to engage as much as possible with my readers, responding to messages and showing them a little more of the process, and I love it when the same people come back book on book. I try to write authentically, usually about women, family and friendships, and then I sometimes go bolder with the setting. I like to think of the setting as another character in itself – my books have been set in Suffolk, Essex, France and Botswana, and I’ve loved writing those varying landscapes. I’m lucky that my publisher HQ manage to come up with brilliant jackets every time that I think help the books to stand out both online and in-stores, and I do always think about the ‘hook’ when I am writing, too, and try to hone my pitch as I think this helps novels to gain some cut-through, too. But I definitely don’t know all the secrets to this, and I’ve a long way to go in terms of reaching more readers! However, I like to think I am growing my readership book on book, not only in the UK but overseas too, thanks to the brilliant foreign rights team at my agency, Darley Anderson.

What’s the secret recipe for writing a bestseller?

Aha, I wish I knew! I think you do need a clear proposition – e.g. what is the book really about, how would you distil it in one line, how can you make it feel memorable? And the voice needs to feel authentic and elevated – recent bestsellers that I have worked on such as GIRL A by Abigail Dean manage to have completely gripping plots combined with beautiful writing, and often I think

that can be the secret to big success. The market is constantly looking for something a little bit different, and personally I love books that shine a light on a world or a story that we haven't seen before. I also think persistence is key – I know several authors whose 'break out' books didn't come until further down the line, and that's always really inspiring. You have to keep writing, learning, growing, and if you persist I do believe success will come if you have a dedicated publishing team that really believes in you. A strong publishing team behind you is really important too and some authors sadly do get under-published for multiple reasons – if that's the case, don't be afraid to speak to your agent about moving publishers or having an honest conversation about what is and isn't working. There are so many factors that go into making a successful book and your writing is actually only a small part of it. A lot of elements are beyond the author's control.

Phoebe Morgan is a bestselling author and editor, based in London. In 2018 she was awarded a Trailblazer Award for her work as an editor, and in 2021 she received the Bookseller Shooting Star award for services to the publishing industry. She studied English at Leeds University after growing up in the Suffolk countryside. She has previously worked as a journalist and now edits commercial fiction for a publishing house during the day, and writes her own books in the evenings. Her books have sold over 225,000 copies and have been translated into 10 languages including French, Italian, Norwegian, Polish and Croatian. Her new thriller The Wild Girls will be published by William Morrow in the US. Her books are also on sale in Canada and Australia. Phoebe has also contributed short stories to Afraid of the Light, a 2020 crime writing anthology with proceeds going to the Samaritans, Noir from the Bar, a crime collection with proceeds going to the NHS, and Afraid of the Christmas Lights, with all profits going to domestic abuse charities. Her four thrillers are: The Doll House (2017)'; The Girl Next Door (2019); The Babysitter (2020) and The Wild Girls (April 2021).



What are you working on at the moment?

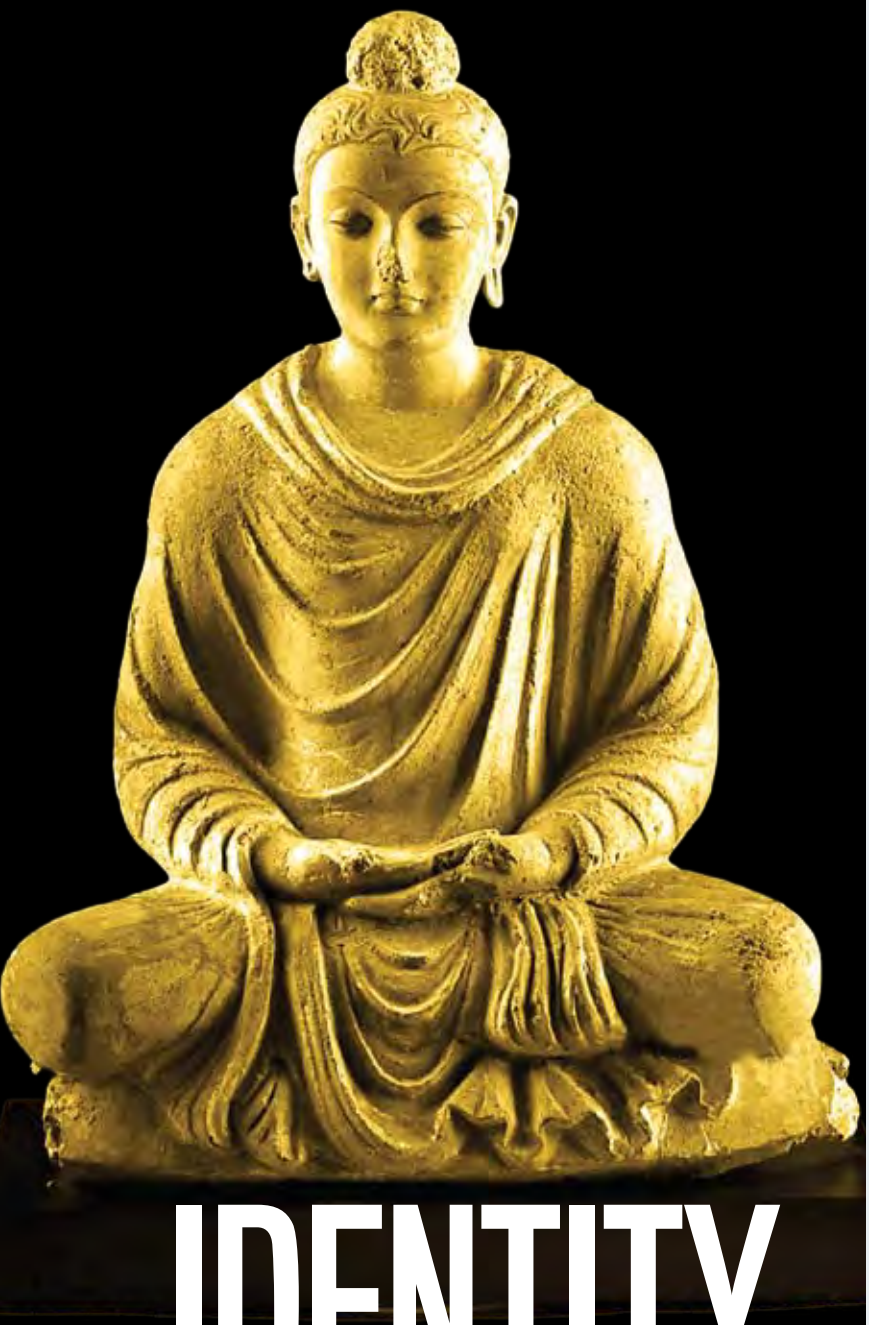
I am currently working on the edits for my fifth book, THE TRIP. It's about a couple who have saved up to travel the world, but on the day they are due to fly to Thailand, one of them disappears – and the other is forced to endure a horrible plane journey without them, wondering where they are. I had the idea because I thought how awful it would be to sit in your seat on an aeroplane, not being able to contact anyone, with no idea what had happened to the person you loved and not knowing what awaited you on the other side. This one is a thriller but it's also a character-led love story and I am super excited about it. It should be out in Spring/Summer 2022.

Your latest novel "The Wild Girls" is being published in the US. How different is that market from the UK?

It is definitely different – I'm always fascinated by the fact that some really successful writers in the UK are virtually unknown in the US, and vice versa. For crime writing, the US is less drawn to visceral or violent books, and big domestic thrillers are still cutting through there whereas here they are slightly waning, I think. My jacket for THE WILD GIRLS uses similar colours to the UK one but it's subtly different, too – more atmospheric, overall, and of course it also says 'a novel' on the front, which I always love! I find the different markets around the world so interesting, and feel lucky that I get some insight into that as part of my day job. I also absolutely love seeing my jackets for foreign editions!

As a writer and publisher, what is your advice for aspiring authors out there?

Firstly, I'd say do your research – there are lots of amazing resources out there for writers, explaining about agents, publishers, and types of deals and it is key to make sure you know what you're entering into as there can be some dodgy websites out there! You need to understand a bit about the publishing industry – talk to other authors, attend talks if you can, read around the subject – information is power! Secondly – keep going. It might not be your first idea that sells, but if you don't keep going you will never know what might have been! Writing is hard work and it can take time to become successful, but if you love the craft and you want to find a readership, arm yourself with information and then write the best book you can – and then polish it! Writing is also so subjective and if you experience rejection (which you likely will – everyone does!) try not to take it personally. As an editor I have turned down some great books for many reasons and it's usually not that the book is bad, it's that I am not the right person to champion it, and remember, it only takes one agent and one editor to say yes to you and then you have a deal! . S



IDENTITY LINKS

Pakistan is endowed with a large number of ancient sites and historic structures. It is incumbent upon all Pakistanis to stabilize and conserve them.

BY MUHAMMAD ZAHID RIFAT

Pakistan is endowed with a large number of ancient sites and historic structures. Indeed, these historic assets are the country's link with the past.

In an age when globalization is all-pervasive, it is Pakistan's ancient linkage that provides a distinct identity. It seems to be a well-kept secret from the outside world that Pakistan is a treasure house of ancient heritage spanning over scores of centuries.

Pakistan is home to Mehrgarh, Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. It is the land of the spectacular Gandhara civilization. As the seat of Buddhism, it has the devotional carvings of the Hindu Shahi temples of the Salt Range and Tharparkar, the stately funerary clusters of Makli, Multan and Uch Sharif and a fusion of local trabeated and imported arcuate, representing successive Sultanate dynasties. The chahar-baghs are heart-expanding. And then, there are jewels like edifices of the greatest kingdom of the world, established by the young ruler of Farghana. The Sikhs have emulated the Great Moghuls and the shared legacy of eclectic architecture with its European overtones, is a bouquet of the British who colonized this land.

It is not only the ancient sites and historic monuments but equally the historical urban cores, stretching from the peaks of the Khyber in the farthest north to the southern-most edge of the mighty Indus River, Peshawar, Multan, Thatta and Karachi, and scores of other living cities with their historic environments. They are all valuable in the search for and understanding of the cultural diversity of this land. Buddhism took roots some 2300 ago under the Mauryan king Ashoka in areas today forming Pakistan. It has a long history over time, being part of areas within Bactria, the Indo-Greek Kingdom, the Kushan Empire, ancient India with the Maurya Empire of Ashoka, the Pala Empire, the Punjab region, and Indus River Valley areas.

Talking about Buddhist heritage alone, there are hundreds of sites scattered all over Pakistan. Among them are the Dharmarajika Stupa in Takht-i-Bahi in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Votive Stupa, Shinggardar Stupa, the Amluk Dara Stupa situated in Taxila (previously known as Takshashila) and an iconic Buddha statue in Swat.

The city of Taxila, about 35 kilometers from Islamabad, with its riches of archeological sites, is generally regarded as the first stop by foreign tourists, particularly Buddhists. Most of the Buddhist archeological sites in Taxila were built between 600 BC and 500



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AD and are located around the Taxila Museum. For over a thousand years during the heyday of the Gandhara civilization, Taxila remained a centre for promoting sculpture, architecture and education in Buddhism. Over 50 sites of archeological importance are scattered within a radius of 30 kilometers around Taxila and all of them are based on the life of Lord Buddha.

It may be interesting for many to note that Lord Buddha was born in Lumbini in Nepal. Dharmarajika Stupa situated in Taxila was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980.

Another Buddhist site of archeological and historical importance is in Takht-i-Bahi, which is located about 170 kilometers from Islamabad in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The site comprises ruins of an ancient Buddhist monastery situated high atop a 152-meter hill. Tope Mankiala in Punjab is the Buddhist site where, according to a legend, Lord Buddha had fed seven hungry tiger cubs with his body parts. At Katas Raj is a famous Buddhist stupa, which is sacred to Hindus, Buddhists and Jains.

Around Peshawar city alone, there are over 500 heritage sites and monuments. The only functional Buddhist temple in Pakistan is located in the Diplomatic Enclave in Islamabad and is used by Buddhist diplomats from Sri Lanka and other countries.

Pakistan is an Islamic country but the cultural heritage and historical monuments of all other religions and faiths are duly preserved and protected in the country. This rich heritage makes it an important pilgrimage destination for the followers of Buddhism and many other faiths.

The Swat Valley has many Buddhist carvings and stupas, and Jehanabad contains a Seated Buddha statue. Kushan era Buddhist stupas and statues in Swat Valley, most unfortunately, were demolished by religious extremists. After two attempts, the Jehanabad Buddha's face was dynamited. Only the Bamiyan Buddhas were larger than the carved giant Buddha statue in Swat near Mangalore which the extremists had attacked.

Preservation of heritage along with religious tolerance quite obviously is key to restoring the confidence of pilgrim-tourists, especially the minorities. The regions are also being preserved and maintained.

Pakistan has been carrying out infrastructure development programmes ceaselessly. It has built wide highways across the country and possesses good road networks to connect people and resources. Construction work is underway for operation of metro trains in major cities. A separate road lane has been designated for operation of metro buses in Islamabad and Lahore.

The Pakistan Government is paying special attention to promotion of tourism and has taken a number of steps, including easing visa restrictions for the tourists and foreign investors

Islamabad could organize package tours for visitors from China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and other countries, including trips to Buddhist sites in Takht-i-Bahi, Swat, Peshawar and Taxila.

The region now known as Pakistan once had a large Buddhist population with the majority of people living in Gandhara, present day North Western Pakistan and Eastern Afghanistan. Gandhara largely had Mahayana Buddhists and was also a stronghold for Vajrayana Buddhism. The Swat Valley, known in antiquity as Uddiyana, was a kingdom tributary of the Gandhara civlizarion. There are many archeological sites from the Buddhist era in Swat.

Gandhara remained a largely Buddhist land until around 899 AD when the Pashtun people invaded the region from Southern Afghanistan and introduced Islam. Buddhists in Punjab converted to Hinduism from 600 AD onwards. Buddhism was the faith practiced by the majority of the population of Sindh right up to the Arab conquest by the Umayyads in 710 AD. After the Partition of the sub-continent, the Buddhists fled to India, just as most of the Hindus and Sikhs did.

During the Muslim period, Gandhara was administered from Lahore or Kabul. During Mughul times the region was part of the Kabul province. The Gandharas were settled since the Vedic times on the banks of Kabul River (river Kubha or Kabol) up to its mouth into the Indus. The region is known as Peshawar Valley. Later, the Gandharas crossed the Indus and invaded parts of north-west Punjab. Gandhara was located on the grand northern high road (Uttarapatha) and was a centre of international commercial activities. It was an important channel of communication with ancient Iran and Central Asia. S

The writer is a Lahore-based freelance journalist, columnist and retired Deputy Controller (News), Radio Pakistan, Islamabad, He can be reached at zahidriffat@gmail.com



Shanul Haq Haqqi

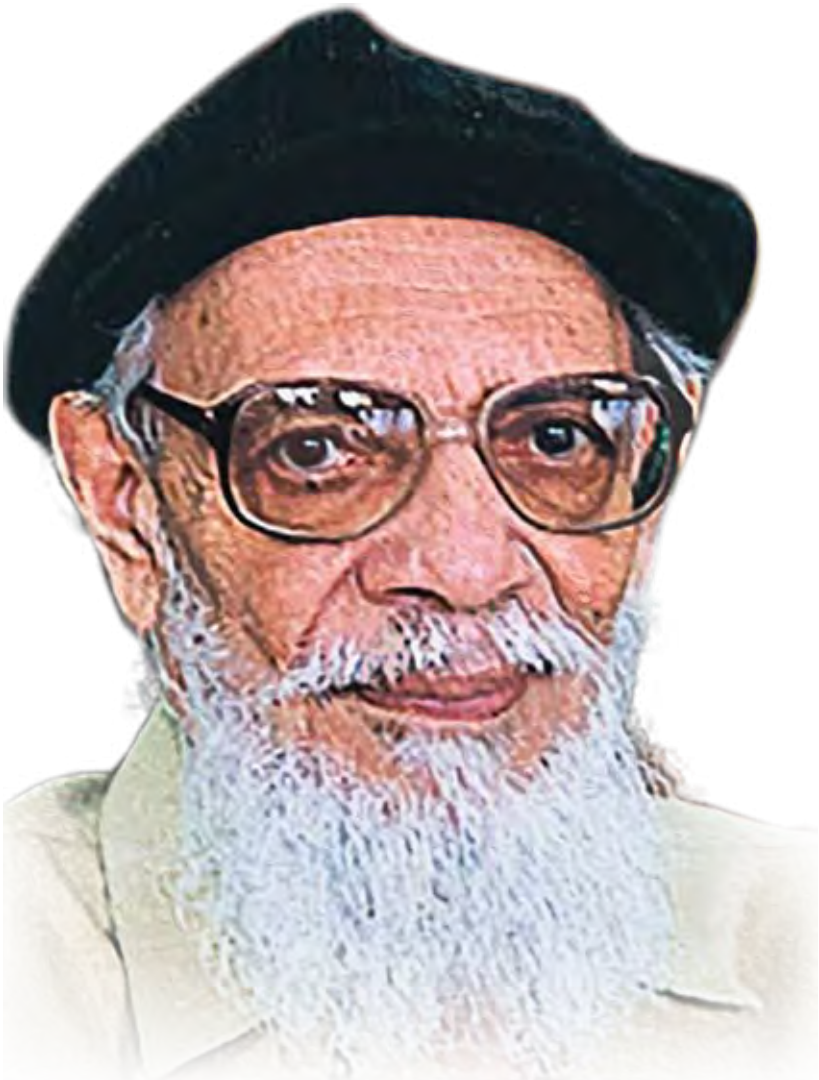
A LUMINARY OF URDU LITERATURE

BY TAHA KEHAR

On October 11, 2005, noted Urdu writer Shanul Haq Haqqi passed away in Ontario, Canada. His death created an intellectual vacuum that was increasingly difficult to fill. In his long, illustrious career, Haqqi took on many avatars and proved his mettle as a multifaceted literary figure. He was a poet, critic, broadcaster, translator, linguist and lexicographer - a formidable feat that few writers can accomplish in a lifetime. An esteemed Urdu writer once declared that Haqqi left behind a substantial body of work that would keep his memory alive for centuries.

Unfortunately, memory often has a fickle, fiendish quality and usually fades away. Sixteen years after Haqqi's demise, his tremendous contributions to Urdu aren't widely known or celebrated. In an age when even the most trivial tweets by celebrities regularly grab headlines, the media seldom spotlights the achievements of those whom we owe a debt of gratitude. At this critical juncture, a concerted effort needs to be made to remind the public about such notable figures. If this isn't done on a war footing, their names would be forever lost in the annals of history.

Born in Delhi on September 15, 1919, Haqqi was the son of a distinguished



man of letters. His father's claim to literary fame stemmed from a valuable collection of short stories, a comprehensive study of Persian poet Hafiz Shirazi and a translation of Diwan-i-Hafiz in verse. Haqqee's father also helped Maulvi Abdul Haq in compiling Lughat-i-Kabeer, an exhaustive Urdu dictionary.

It is only befitting that a child who was raised in this milieu would develop a fondness for literature. However, Haqqi's university days exerted a much stronger influence on him in steering him towards literary pursuits. Haqqi pursued a BA degree at Aligarh Muslim University and obtained a Master's in English Literature from St Stephen's College. As per an obituary published at the time of his death, he recited his first ghazal at an annual poetic gathering of St. Stephen's College. This is a glaring testament to his profound fascination in Delhi's mushairas. Fuelled by his abiding interest in poetry, Haqqi went on to publish two anthologies of verse - Tar-i-Pairahan (1957) and Harf-i-Dilras (1979) - and later released a collection of his selected ghazals.

A quick glance at Haqqi's oeuvre reveals that he wasn't a prisoner to a particular genre. In a literary career that spanned several decades, he served the Urdu language through multiple avenues. Throughout his career, Haqqi also dabbled in a series of fairly little known genres of poetry, such as Paheliyan, Qitat-i-Tareekhi and Kehmukarnian. A vast majority of these works appeared in a collection titled Nazr-i-Khusru. In addition, he wrote poems for children that were released by the Hamdard Foundation.

Moving beyond the realm of poetry, Haqqi wrote short stories. He also ventured into literary criticism and wrote Naqd-o-Nigarish, which is billed as a formidable academic text. His research articles on Urdu poetry are considered a valuable resource, and have also been compiled into books.

As a translator, Haqqi demonstrated his command over English, Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian. Through the power of his pen, he traversed the boundaries of language and made a range of foreign texts available for an Urdu readership. Haqqi has the distinction of rendering the Bhagavad Gita into Urdu. The Urdu writer also translated the poems of Bengali poet Qazi Nazrul Islam and American writer Jack Schaefer's novel Shane. William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and Chanakya Kautilya's Arthashastra were also among the titles that he translated into Urdu.



"Shanul Haq Haqqi was a genius whose literary endeavours in almost every genre of literature were worth going through. His ghazals contained all the classical elements, and at the same time were not devoid of contemporary sensibilities."

- Dr Fatima Hasan

Apart from his persistent literary efforts, Haqqi was associated with the department of films and publications at PTV's marketing department. In the early 1950s, he wrote countless musicals for Radio Pakistan. Between 1958 and 1975, Haqqi was associated with the Urdu Lughat Board and worked arduously to prepare a dictionary with over twenty volumes. He also compiled Farhang-e-Talaffuz, a dictionary on Urdu pronunciation that was issued by the National Language Authority. Years before his death, Haqqi translated the eighth edition of the Concise Oxford Dictionary, which was originally published in 1911.

A strong testimony of the Urdu writer's proficiency as a memoirist can be found in his forty-one part autobiography that was serialized in the literary magazine Afkaar.

Haqqi also received accolades for his enormous contributions to Urdu literature. In February 1991, Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Urdu Pakistan awarded him the Tamgha-e-Nishan-e-Sipaas. In 1968, the Government of Pakistan conferred on him the Quaid-e-Azam Award. Seventeen years later, Haqqi was awarded the Sitara-e-Imtiaz.

At a time when there isn't a voracious appetite for Urdu literature in Pakistan, the significant contributions of luminaries such as Haqqi seem to have been swept under the carpet. There is a pressing need to revive interest in the work of this notable writer, translator and critic. In 2018, the Oxford University Press compiled Haqqi's literary essays in the form of a book. This has encouraged a resurgence of interest in the late writer's work. Even so, Pakistan's government and its literary community should do more to build awareness about Haqqi's vital services to Urdu. S

The writer is a journalist and author. He analyses international issues and can be reached at tahakehar2@gmail.com





A STRATEGIC BLUNDER

A catastrophic proposal has reportedly been given by the Chairman of Expert Group on Petroleum to the Pakistan government for shutting down the country's three oil refineries.

BY PIRZADA FAIZAN

Crude oil, which is refined to produce all kinds of fuels like petrol as well as numerous byproducts like plastic, plays a critical role in driving economic growth in a country. For Pakistan, crude oil not only keeps its economic engine running but is also a key element of its national security. Since Pakistan does not have sufficient oil reserves, the country meets its ever-growing energy demands by buying and importing crude oil and refined products like motor spirit (petrol) or high-speed diesel from other countries.

In this environment, the oil refineries play a critical role in satisfying the nation's energy needs. There are five oil refineries in Pakistan namely Attock Refinery, Byco Petroleum, National Refinery, PARCO, and Pakistan Refinery. These refineries convert crude oil into refined products and reduce the country's requirements for importing petrol, diesel, kerosene, and a variety of other petroleum products, thereby saving millions in foreign exchange. The oil refineries also employ thousands of people, directly and indirectly. Furthermore, they also contribute substantially to the national exchequer. The refineries pay various levies and duties and are among some of the highest tax-paying sectors of the country.

However, the chairman of the Expert Group on Petroleum has reportedly suggested to the government to shut down three oil refineries – Byco Petroleum, Pakistan Refinery, and National Refinery. Such a move could be disastrous for the country considering the three facilities produce jet fuel and kerosene and play an important role in safeguarding the nation's energy security. These facilities ensure Pakistan has ample supplies of strategic fuels and have also been managing the product's supply chain.

The Expert Group on Petroleum is an independent body, formed by the government's Economic Advisory Council, which advises the authorities on all kinds of commercial matters related to the petroleum industry. The Expert Group has given this absurd advice in the hopes that Pakistan's long-time Arab friends, namely Saudi Arabia and the UAE, would set up oil refining facilities in Pakistan. The Expert Group believes that the existing plants would no longer be required and should be shut down. However, in reality, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE haven't given any confirmation or indication about their seriousness to set up such facilities in Pakistan. The government officials have also not provided any details about whether any progress has been made in this regard. The highly valued refineries funded by foreign investors, for whom some are even willing to shut down local plants, exist only on paper.

The proposal to close down some of of the country's biggest oil refineries

seems to have been formulated for the benefit of one specific group – the fuel trading mafia which is mainly engaged in the business of importing petroleum products and seems to have been lobbying intensely to permanently close the country's oil refineries. This will be nothing short of a strategic blunder, which could severely hurt the country's energy security as well as the livelihoods of thousands of individuals employed by the oil refining industry. The economic costs could be immense, but the fuel traders will make windfall profits. With refineries out of the way, oil trading mafia will import huge quantities of refined products from foreign countries to earn substantial income at the expense of national interest.

Additionally, the closure of three refineries could create even more problems at the country's ports and terminals which have already been stretched beyond their capacity. Following the enactment of LNG terminals, the ports in Karachi have been continuously experiencing operational issues, hampering their ability to smoothly transport crude oil. The Pakistan State Oil (PSO), for instance, had to pay considerable demurrage charges in millions of dollars, owing to the severe congestion at ports. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs is planning to install two new LNG terminals but that will not improve the situation either. In the given scenario, if the existing refineries are shut down, this will put even more pressure on the ports and they will have to handle significantly greater quantities of such refined products as petrol and diesel. As a corollary, the ports will face more congestion which could seriously hurt the country's energy supply chain.

One can never deny the fact that the oil refineries are already working to develop energy infrastructure assets that could strengthen Pakistan's energy supply chain. Some have even allocated millions of dollars for such projects. But if the refineries are shut down, their entire investment will go up in smoke and the country will also lose an opportunity to enhance its energy processing, storage, and handling capabilities without using taxpayers' money.

For a country like Pakistan, which is an emerging economy with fast-growing energy needs, closing down well-established refineries will be nothing short of a catastrophe.

No country should ever hurt its strategic assets. Instead, steps should be taken to bolster their capabilities. The oil refineries are one of the pillars of Pakistan's economy. They satisfy the nation's energy requirements, produce all kinds of high-value petroleum products locally by processing crude oil, and reduce the country's need to import expensive refined products. As a result, they cut down the country's import bill. However, if the existing refineries are closed down, Pakistan would be spending billions more on buying costly refined products from foreign sellers.

For a country like Pakistan, which is an emerging economy with fast-growing energy needs, closing down well-established refineries will be nothing short of a catastrophe. The oil trading mafia may continue to lobby for the closure of oil refineries for their self-serving interests, but the concerned authorities shouldn't pay heed to such advice. Rather, a slew of effective measures must be taken to safeguard the interests of the country's energy sector in general and the oil refineries in particular. S

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WAJID SHAMSUL HASAN

Man of All Seasons

BY SYED JAWAID IQBAL



Wajid Shamsul Hassan addressing the book launching ceremony of the 'Invisible People' by Senator Mian Raza Rabbani, who is sitting in the centre and Syed Jawaid Iqbal in the right.

How quickly time flies. Recalling exact dates of past events is more of a Herculean task for me, but it was a memorable day somewhere in the late 1960s when I first met Wajid Shamsul Hasan in Karachi in his Daily News office. He was the newspaper's editor at the time. It seems just like yesterday but my first encounter with Shamsul Hasan was destined to turn into a lasting relationship, thanks to his sharp witticism, spontaneous one-liner comments and a refined sense of humour that one can rarely find today.

Wajid Shamsul Hasan earned his Bachelor's degree in Law and did his Masters in International Relations from Karachi University. In 1968, he was awarded the "Commonwealth Press Union Scholarship" in the U.K and received practical training in journalism at the Bristol Evening Post, London's 'Evening Standard' and the Oxford and Thomson Media Foundation in Cardiff. In early 1989, he left Daily News to become Chairman of the National Press Trust (NPT) and also served as an Advisor to Benazir Bhutto in her first term as Pakistan's Prime Minister.

In early 1994, Waid Shamsul Hasan was appointed as Pakistan's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. He relinquished the post in November 1999, but in 2008, was again appointed as Pakistan High Commissioner to the U.K. Wajid Bhai, as he was commonly known, then stepped down as Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK in April 2014 after serving for six years. He was at the time the longest-serving Pakistan envoy to the UK. He was a prolific writer and a sought-after commentator on world affairs. As a senior journalist with more than 42-years' experience in the field, he attended several international conferences and seminars. Hasan was the author of 'Bhutto Khandaan Meri Yaadon Mein: Wajid Shamsul Hasan Ki Nisf Sadi Par Muheet Yaadein'.

It was in the early 90s when, as a public relations practitioner, I was entrusted with the challenging task of perception management of the Pakistan Peoples Party, alongside the party's leading figures, namely Benazir Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari. It was none but Wajid Shamsul Hasan, a true supporter, who assisted and relentlessly coordinated with me througout the course of the communication campaign.

A man of all seassons, Wajid Shamsul Hasan was second to none in minting off-the-cuff, but quite meaningful quips just like that. In 1966, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was coming to Karachi by train after resigning as foreign minister during the presidency of General Ayub Khan. Mian Mumtaz Daultana, a veteran politician and former chief minister of West Punjab, was also aboard the same train along with his son. When the train reached Karachi, Bhutto, with all his grace and political charm, disembarked from the train at the main platform of the Karachi's Cantt Station and was received by a huge crowd of supporters.

In contrast, Mumtaz Daultana chose to cut his journey short at the outer railway signal, a few metres before the main platform and left, as if in a desperate hurry, through a narrow gate, cut in the station's boundary wall. Escaping alone like a thief with luggage in his hands, Daultana could not avoid the watchful eye of the paparazzi who captured the moment without mercy. Kudos to Shamsul Hasan for his mastery of coining meaningful one-liners.

He put two photos side by side, on the front page of Daily News the next day with a short caption, 'A Tale of Two Leaders,' saying so much about Bhutto's triumphant arrival and Daultana's hasty exit.

The last time I met Wajid Shamsul Hasan was in London in September 2017 at the launching ceremony of 'Invisible People' a book of short stories by my old friend Senator Mian Raza Rabbani. Hasan was especially invited to speak on the occasion. Though he was not feeling well in those days, he came with his wife and addressed the event as requested. I had absolutely no idea that the evening in London with Wajid Bhai would be my last meeting with him.

There are so many highlights of Shamul Hasan's personal and professional life that one could recall: his adventurous journalistic career, his impressive diplomatic acumen, his unflinching loyalty with the PPP until his last breath, his heartfelt friendships and the best coffee he always served at the High Commission.

He was always more than willing to write for SouthAsia and never said no to our article requests. After a prolonged illness, Wajid Shamsul Hasan passed away on September 28 in London. The sun set that day with all its light and glory. S



DR. ABDUL QADEER KHAN

A LEGEND IN HIS OWN RIGHT

BY ABID AZHAR

The dawn of Sunday, October 10, 2021, brought about the demise of the brightest star of the country, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan. After the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, no one commanded the respect that Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan had earned through his great services to Pakistan. He was truly a national hero, an exceptional scientist and nuclear physicist as well as the chief architect of Pakistan's nuclear programme.

Born on April 1, 1936 in Bhopal in India, Dr. Khan completed his graduation from the University of Karachi in 1956 and pursued his further studies in Metallurgical Engineering from Berlin. However, his significant advancement came after the completion of his advanced studies from the Netherlands and Belgium. He started working for the Anglo-Dutch-German Nuclear Engineering Consortium (URENCO), providing him a golden opportunity to hone his proficiency in Nuclear Physics. Later on, Dr. Khan returned to Pakistan and took charge of the country's uranium enrichment project. Doing so, he virtually laid the foundation of what later came to be recognised as Pakistan's deterrence programme, allowing Pakistan to become the first nuclear state of the Muslim world.

Despite all odds, Dr. Khan continued to enrich isotopes and redesign a technology-oriented defence policy. He worked day and night to make Pakistan a nuclear power, initiating various other programmes to establish a formidable defence system for the country.

Despite a relentless character assassination of him by international forces, Dr. Khan remained committed to his goal of serving the nation. "My objective in making the atomic bomb was that Pakistan becomes safe," and "What happened in 1971 should never be repeated," he often used to say. This is what established the late scientist as a legend in his own right. Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan is the only Pakistani to have twice received the highest civil award 'Nishan-e-Imtiaz', in 1996 and 1999.

Dr. Khan was also engaged in social work and helped establish many health and educational institutions. I became part of his circle and came to know about his exceptional qualities after joining the Dr. A.Q. Khan Institute of Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering (KIBGE), established by him at the University of Karachi. I found him always respectful towards his colleagues and the people around him. A lively and buoyant individual with a great sense of humour, he was fond of art, literature, poetry and music. Dr. Khan was a sensitive and thoughtful person who was always ready to go to any extent to support those in need. I last met him on July 29, 2021 when he came to Karachi to attend the meeting of the Governing Council of KIBGE. Incidentally, it turned out to be his last visit to Karachi.



The writer with Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan.

The entire nation will remember him for his contributions to Pakistan's defence technology, which made the country unassailable. Being one of Pakistan's most accomplished and ingenious scientists, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan will continue to live in the hearts and minds of his colleagues, friends, and the entire nation at large. S

An Award Well-Deserved

Dr. Ishrat Hussain has been bestowed the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Pakistan Microfinance Network.

Dr. Ishrat Hussain, Pakistan's leading economist and former Governor State Bank of Pakistan, has been conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Pakistan Microfinance Network. The Award was bestowed on Dr. Ishrat Hussain in recognition of his lifelong services and contributions to the banking and financial sectors of Pakistan.

Shaukat Tarin, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Dr. Reza Baqir, Governor, State Bank of Pakistan, Amir Khan, Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan and Ghalib Nishtar, Chairman, Pakistan Microfinance Network, were also present at the occasion.

Being an economist, a civil servant, a central banker, and a financial expert as well as an educationist, Dr. Ishrat has served the policy and socio-economic sectors of the country. He was appointed as the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan in 1999 and became the Chairman of the National Commission for Government Reforms in 2006. From 2008 till 2016, he served the IBA, Karachi, as its Dean and Director.

Dr. Hussain has also served the World Bank for over two decades. Among the key positions he held at the Bank were Resident Representative to Nigeria, Head of the Bank's Debt and International Finance Division, Chief Economist for Africa between 1991-94, and later as Chief Economist for East Asia and Pacific Region. He became the Bank's Director for Poverty and Social Department and was named the Country Director for Central Asian Republics in 1997.



Pakistan's Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Tarin presenting the award to Dr. Ishrat Hussain. Dr. Reza Baqir, Governor, State Bank of Pakistan, is in the centre.

During 2016-17, he was a Public Policy Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Centre in Washington D.C. Dr. Hussain has authored two dozen books and monographs, together with scores of research papers, articles and chapters and contributed to books and journals of international repute. He was conferred the prestigious award of "Hilal-e-Imtiaz" by the President of Pakistan in 2003. The Banker Magazine of London declared him as the Central Bank Governor of the Year for Asia in 2005 and he received the Asian Banker Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006.

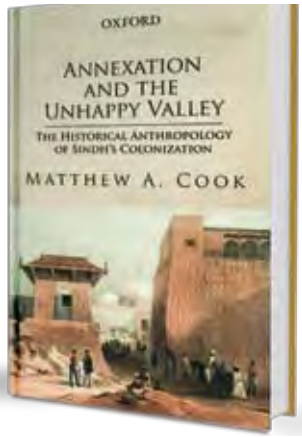
Dr. Hussain earned his Master's in Development Economics from Williams College, and completed his Doctorate in Economics from Boston University in 1978. He is a graduate of the Executive Development Programme, jointly sponsored by Harvard, Stanford and INSEAD. He is also a HEC National Distinguished Professor, Professor Emeritus and Chairman of the Centre for Excellence in Islamic Finance at the IBA. He started his career with the Civil Service of Pakistan and worked in Sindh and Bangladesh for grassroot development. The other people who given the Lifetime Achievement Awards were Qazi Azmat Isa, CEO, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, Syed Nadeem Hussain, Chairman, Pakistan Fintech Network and Ms. Naghma Rashid, the founder of Damen Support Programme. A posthumous award was conferred on Gulbaz Afaqi, founder of the Soon Valley Development Program. S

BOOK

ANNEXATION AND THE UNHAPPY VALLEY

Napier the Great

BY NADYA CHISHTY-MUJAHID



Title	:	*Annexation and the Unhappy Valley*
Author	:	*Matthew Cook*
Pages	:	*297*
Publisher	:	*Oxford University Press*
ISBN	:	*9780340960196*

Professor Matthew Cook's treatise on the complexities of Sindh's annexation by Charles Napier, was first published by the Dutch press Brill five years ago. It is pleasing to observe the Oxford University Press branch in Pakistan publish an affordable paperback version of this highly erudite and well-researched text. The book possesses a superb bibliography of which Cook appears to have made full and extensive use—his endnotes after every one of his four chapters are thorough to the point of being semi-exhaustive. In addition to this, his index helps one situate oneself ably as regards this complex book, much of which deals with the ongoing battle between the autocratic Charles Napier and one of his fiercest critics, James Outram.

But although that debate takes up much of the latter portion of the book, the first chapter is fascinating too in that it examines the role of the East India Company when it came to business affairs of Sindh, especially those taking place in Karachi, Mirpur, and Hyderabad. Cook is well-versed in the history of the indigenous people of Sindh, such as the Talpurs, the Ameers, the Bhaibands, the Lohanas and various kardars [deputies] who managed business and legal matters on behalf of the upper echelons of Sindhi society. We regard Napier as being arguably the most powerful man in Sindh during his heyday, but Cook astutely draws our attention to Seth Naomul of the Bhaiband clan who was in his own way so enormously influential that Napier was downright jealous of him. So too were members of the other Sindhi clans and Naomul's coming under fire for corruption is described in avid detail by Cook who compares it to the most intense of Shakespearean dramas. It is interesting to note that Napier was reluctant to make too public a trial of this strong-willed businessman's shady affairs because naturally that would have resulted in certain aspects of his own less than kosher dealings being exposed.

But if the Sindhis themselves were not capable of metaphorically hanging, drawing and quartering Charles Napier, some of his own countrymen had no such qualms. In the chapter following the one mentioned above, Cook informs us that James Outram wrote a strong critique of Napier in Britain's prestigious Gentleman's Gazette. The publication of this shocked both Charles as well as his brother William Napier, who had written fulsome praise of his sibling in a book on the conquest of Sindh. Some readers found it irritating that Napier was described in a manner that presented him as a Victorian Alexander the Great, but one should not forget that Napier had almost absolute power over the province. Cook posits that this was partly because he reported directly to the Governor-General, in spite of Charles Napier's being fundamentally a Bombay Army officer.

Aside from Outram, some of Napier's most die-hard critics came from the Bombay Civil service that deeply resented the high-handed manner in which Napier would go over their heads and divert precious resources and men to suit his colonial purposes in Sindh. Among others, Bombay's most senior and respected civil servant, J A Willoughby, was supportive of many of Outram's views. And Cook does a very fine job of delineating the power struggles between Napier's despotic militarism and the gubernatorial cautions necessarily exercised by the civil service.

The latter chapters describe the escalation of this conquest, by underscoring historical events such as Merewether's ultimately disastrous attempt to subdue the warlike Bugtis, which resulted in much violence, most of it senseless. The looting and plundering of Hyderabad is also meticulously documented, and I was struck by Cook's inclusion of minute details such as a pregnant Hyderabadi woman being returned her confiscated bed due to the pleas of Napier's secretary! The Governor-Generals who dealt with Napier appeared to have their hands full when it came to maintaining a delicate balance between listening to perfectly valid criticisms of him on one hand and supporting his agenda on the other. Even the Duke of Wellington is mentioned as having been made aware of things, although in the post-Napoleonic period the main political affairs of London were far removed from those of Sindh, although it was apparently considered important enough to be referred to as a 'young Egypt'! The term 'unhappy valley' was coined by Sir Richard Burton for Sindh, but it would be fair to note that his own countrymen lay at the root of much of that unhappiness.

The book is suitable for graduate scholars and serious academics; undergraduates will simply not possess the critical vocabulary or intellectual sensitivity to do it justice. It presents

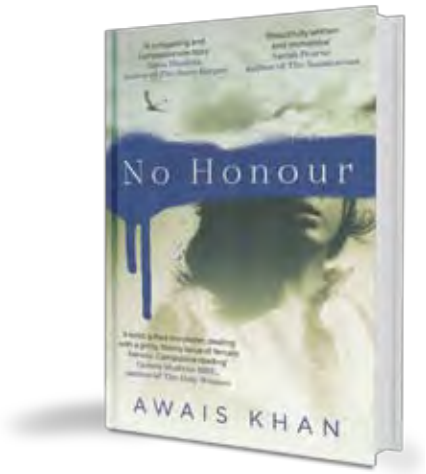
some of the challenges faced by Sindh's most famous conqueror in a remarkably balanced and egalitarian light and is to be commended for that point alone, if nothing else. In spite of us having now entered the twenty-first century, one of Karachi's [indeed Asia's] most prestigious schools still retains the name 'Napier' for one of its school-houses. Myself and many of my family members belonged to that house and while we never thought of ourselves as part of a colonial agenda, Cook's book makes me appreciate that we, as Napierites, were in some way undoubtedly part of Sindhi history, which is vast, complex, and worth perusing by means of Matthew Cook's academic endeavours S

BOOK

NO HONOUR

Silent Voices

BY BEENISH MAHMOOD



Book	:	*No Honour*
Author	:	*Awais Khan*
Publisher	:	*Orenda Books*
Pages	:	*289*
Price	:	*$12.21*

"Honour. A word that brought death to countless girls. How was it that a bunch of men sitting under the peepal tree got to decide whether a woman was honourable or not? How was it that they had the right to pass judgement on whatever she had or hadn't done, that they had the audacity to rip a woman's shirt and stone her to death. Or to drown her in a river. Why didn't these jirgas have female representation?"

"How long would women in Pakistan continue to suffer like this?"

The questions weigh heavily on the protagonist, Abida's mind. Will she be able to put an end to this practice so 'deeply engrained?'

The title 'No Honour' is apt, given the theme of the novel by Awais Khan.

It opens on a grim note. Strained with a patriarchal current of misogyny and hatred for women, it creates a suffocating atmosphere.

Paraded naked through the streets, with the villagers throwing a string of abusive words such as 'filth' and 'scum' and drowning of their daughters in milk because they believed girls were a 'curse,' the village is no place for compassion and freedom to give to women. In the name of 'honour'; several village girls were killed by the Pir.

As Abida escapes the wrench of the Pir and moves to the city with Kalim, she is happy at last, thinking she is safe, not knowing how shortlived the joy would be?

Is the city safe or is karokari or honour killing a common practice there as well?

With its perils of thievery, murder, abduction, drugs, domestic violence and prostitution, the city is no better than the village, if not worse.

Abida's fate it seems had been decided. There was no escape from this patriarchal setup of exploitation of women. It was when she had lost all hope that she sees a ray of light.

Jamil, Abida's father is not the typical man. He is a progressive, modern man with a liberal mindset.

Awais Khan beautifully delineates Jamil's character - the complete opposite of what a man should be like in our society!

Torn between the love for his daughter and the norms or definition of a man set by society, Jamil goes against all odds to save his daughter from the menacing world out there.

Awais Khan, through the portrayal of Jamil as a kind, loving and affectionate father, reverts the common philosophy of male chauvinism. A man does not need to inflict pain on his wife, daughter or sister to prove that he's a 'man.'

Khan conveys the message of how our society can become healthier and happier if we were to educate our men to be endearing and tolerant of the women around them.

The grave issues our women are facing everyday can only be solved if men and women are at par with each other. Giving women rights through promoting gender equality and punishing the perpetrators of crime such as 'rapists' and 'murderers', is the only way forward.

The voices of Noor Makhdoom, Qandeel Baloch, Malala Yousafzai and a million others, shouldn't drown in the humdrum of life. The victors should be hanged! Justice must be meted out to put a stop to these horrible practices, where women are treated like animals.

Henceforth, Abida becomes the voice of all such women and what gives her urgency is her 'indomitable courage' and determination.

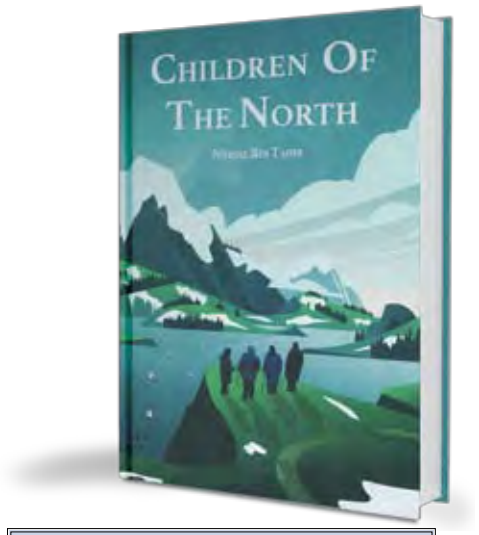
Awais Khan shakes us out of our complacency with a jolt every now and then. He surprises us with what happens next each time and there is no denying that he has done justice to the issue of 'honour killing.' S

BOOK

CHILDREN OF THE NORTH

Uncharted Terrain

BY TAHA KEHAR



Book : Children of The North
Author : Niddal Bin Tahir
Pages : 128
Publisher : Harf Academy

Few would deny the fact that Pakistani literature in English is limited in terms of its geographical focus. A vast majority of authors have set their novels in the country's chaotic urban centres instead of the quiet rural backwaters. It is, therefore, refreshing to come across fiction that breaks this stereotypical mould and ventures into uncharted terrain.

Viewed in this context, Niddal Bin Tahir's Children of The North arguably stands out for its unique choice of setting. In a novel that spans 127 pages, readers are taken on a heady, memorable journey through destinations that usually elude the canvas of other writers who belong to the local literary set. The author evokes the sights, sounds and flavours of these neglected localities with a keen eye for detail. Images of the verdant mountains of Naran Valley as well as the azure splendor of Saiful Malook bounce off the page and come alive as glowing miniatures of an unexplored world.

However, a novel cannot rely solely on the painstaking art of world-building, and must also possess an airtight plot and compelling characters. Tahir's debut work chronicles the challenges of four young men who travel from Islamabad to the northern areas. Their adventure proves to be a long, tedious one that lands them in more trouble than they would have expected. The novel is avowedly based on true events. As a result, the twists and turns in the narrative appear somewhat organic and don't resemble awkward plot contrivances that are fairly common in the genre. Even so, the storyline bears a meandering quality that may be an acquired taste for some readers.

Children of The North captures the intricacies of the public sphere and primarily comprises male characters. The androcentric focus of the novel often renders it a testosterone-fuelled meditation on travel in Pakistan. However, the author's decision to depict an intrinsically male world cannot be construed as a fault in the book. Tahir's characters belong to a society where men and women inhabit fundamentally separate domains where the possibilities of intermingling with members of the opposite sex are scarce.

As a whole, the novel is written in a crisp, engaging manner with few noticeable slip-ups. Through the effective use of dialogue, the author succeeds in building on the cinematic appeal of the story. On the strength of these ingredients, Children of The North could make a voyage to the silver screen. Even so, the cinematic style isn't always executed with great care. In the initial segments of the novel, long passages that provide character sketches tend to interrupt the flow of this dialogue-driven approach. While this technique serves to add variety to the narration, it can be quite jarring.

The crowning glory of Children of The North is that it portrays the disparate realities of Pakistan's urban and rural life. It is believed that urban dwellers tend to be wily, high-minded and manipulative whereas those who reside in rural centres are traditional and backward. Tahir presents this distinction in a nuanced manner. His city-dwelling protagonists find their lives in disarray on account of their own ignorance, which lead them to prioritize the instinct of self-preservation and disrespect their surroundings. The unsuspecting victims of their activities purely act out of an earnest desire to defend their turf from exploitation.

Laden with spine-tingling adventures, Children of The North breaks free from the troupes that Pakistani writers tend to employ and presents a unique story. Tahir's novel reminds us that there is ample room to widen the scope of Pakistani literature in English. While the novel has its occasional pitfalls, it cannot be written off as amateurish as it succeeds in weaving a powerful story of survival. S

FILM

FREE GUY

SENSATIONAL VIDEO GAME



BY SYEDA MAHAM RASHEED

Directed by Canadian director Shawn Levy, 'Free Guy' has a clever concept, dizzying action and a bright pop of colours with a unique and delightful lightness to it. Since Levy enjoys breathing life into the non-living, the film showcases the same; a character takes form unaware that he's not alive in the real world.

If you are wondering whether the film has the chills of the 1968 'Night of the Living Dead', you are mistaken. 'Free Guy' is a sci-fi action comedy that talks about a non-playable character or NPC who jolts out of the background role and takes things in his own hands.

The film introduces us to a bank teller Guy (Ran Reynolds), a NPC, who is in an open world video game called "Free City". Unaware that he is in a game, Guy seems to be content with his life. He wakes up every day, kisses his fish, wears the same outfit, gets the same coffee, goes to work at the same bank which gets robbed many times a day by actual players in the game and enjoys the fun banter with his best friend Buddy (Lil Rel Howery).

Everything is perfect for Guy until he sees the woman of his dreams Molotov Girl, the online avatar of Millie (Jodie Comer). His curiosity leads him to follow her, breaking the pattern. The encounter changes everything for Guy as now he wants to be the hero of his own story. He, somehow, gets a pair of sunglasses that reveals what the actual players see around them, including missions, medi-kits, hubs, and other things that are somewhat familiar to modern gamers. He soon befriends the Molotov Girl.

While Guy is an NPC, Millie is playing the game for a reason. She is on a quest to find the source code that proves that the Soonami Games' head developer Antwan (Taika Waititi) stole the game that she co-created with tech genius Keys (Joe Keery) to build the wildly successful 'Free City', formerly called 'Life Itself'.

On coming to terms with the truth that he is in a game, Guy tries to raise his rank by choosing only the positive missions in the game and thus, becomes an internet sensation with everyone figuring out who the mysterious gamer might be. What no one knows is that he's the most remarkable breakthrough in artificial intelligence in history. When Millie and Keys discover their first-ever NPC character, they are more eager to save their game from Antwan and with Guy as the perfect inside man, they might be able to do so.

We know what Ryan Reynolds is capable of. The kind of action sequences he does is impeccable for he is so comfortable in this genre. No one could have done a better job at depicting Guy as he is smart as well as witty. Still, I feel there was a whole lot of scope for Reynolds to shine because we have seen the same acting in many of his previous films. He is much more hilarious as Dude, his slightly thick avatar.

The best thing about the film is Jodie Comer for she outshines everyone. She is the ultimate character that holds together both the action-driven scenes as Molotov Girl and the more character-driven ones as Millie. Joe Keery as Keys gets his best role to date. His performance as the tech genius is simply incredible.

Writer Matt Lieberman very smartly sketches the difference between the ordinary guys and extraordinary guys (guys with sunglasses) to showcase how ordinary people are neglected and the extraordinary are praised in real life. The message of the film is sewed beautifully into the intriguing sub-plots of the film as it motivates people to have faith in themselves and do whatever they desire. You just have to read between the lines.

The cinematographer also gives attention to detail by maintaining a slight difference in his camerawork when the characters are in the game versus when they are outside it. One can feel the contrast in the FPS (frames per second) as they slightly differ in the game world.

Overall, 'Free Guy' is a simple yet breezy film about a video game that makes sure it has the attention of the audience, especially the gamers. Without making much noise, it comes with a lot of exploration to be done under the base. Though the video game film proves to be a difficult nut to crack, this one finds a place of its own. S

TV SERIAL

YUN TOH PYAAR HAI BAHOT

TRIUMPHANT UNDERDOG



BY AFREEN SEHER

In today's massive ocean of poorly written and regressive Pakistani TV plays being broadcast almost uncensored as prime time entertainment, Yun Toh Pyar Hai Bahot, written by Aliya Bukhari and directed by Kashif Saleem, is a breath of fresh air, touching upon contemporary society, relevant themes, noteworthy issues and brimming with, for a change, a strong and highly progressive female protagonist.

The standard of storytelling for prime time television has been deteriorating since entertainment became privatized. Today, the quality and genre of content is dictated by the marketing departments and production houses where advertising revenue along a skewed system of TRPs decide which drama serial qualifies as a 'hit'.

Given the current scenario of mass entertainment on private TV channels, which is unfortunate, to say the least, it is all the more necessary to laud a television serial which modestly attempts to uphold a feminist narrative, has a strong female protagonist driving the story (who is neither moping, wailing, oppressed or being constantly beaten up by men around her, nor dying to get married) and surprisingly strays clear from the extremely jaded saas-bahu-aur-saazish trope that has featured on our TV screens ad nauseum. YTPHB will keep you at the edge of your seat, which is one of the fundamental traits of an engrossing narrative (thankfully the serial is not on air three to 4 times a week or has double episodes packaged as one).

Yun Toh Pyar Hai Bahot wins your heart with a strong leading lady carrying the plot on her shoulders. Hira Mani as Aima makes a statement right from the first scene where she makes her entrance as a part-time office employee, who is juggling a job whilst pursuing her law degree and is consistent in her performance throughout. Aima struggles to find a job as a fresh law graduate, despite being a bright student who has topped university examinations.

Aima's character deserves to be celebrated because such fortitude on the small screen has now become a rarity. She has inadvertently given strength to all women watching this serial with her undaunted spirit and progressive outlook. She neither succumbs to the trap of shortcuts for easy success, nor turns to any man for moral, emotional or financial support and persistently fights all her battles on her own. The Main Bechari Main Dukhyaari syndrome prevalent in TV plays today is crippling the very minimal presence that women on screen can potentially have in the not-so-empowering scripts being written for Pakistani television today. YTPHB tries to break these very shackles through Aima's character.

Following a gruelling job hunt, Aima begins fighting cases for underprivileged women who come to seek help at an NGO run by elite women (who are generally bored in their lives so they undertake social work as a pastime). Watch out for a hard-hitting scene where the women running the NGO are having a gala tea party, and social justice remains a far-flung superficial goal for them. As things go, when Aima comes over to meet the underprivileged women, she makes it clear to the head of the NGO that she is only there to do her job and not squander her time socializing.

Affan Waheed as Zain has paired Hira's character and is also laudable in myriad ways as the (surprisingly) creative, positive and sincere leading male protagonist. He promises to give an adopted child his name, and takes on the financial and parenting responsibilities for the six to-7 year old boy named Saru and channels his affection and care towards him; he enrolls him in school as if Saru were his own kith and kin.

Affan moves to Lahore after Aima rejects his proposal, but never becomes embittered towards her. He continues to love Aima but channels his hurt and dejection into his music. He tries to be a pillar of support when Aima's family is forcefully evicted from their rented home, although Aima vehemently rejects his help and repeatedly expresses her disdain for him.

YTPHB is not without flaws; the production quality could have been better and there are some extraneous sub-plots which tend to drag the story a bit. For instance, the character of Aima's sister Nazee who is irresponsible, hasn't completed her education and is looking for a fast track to success, so she ends up attracting a millionaire sugar daddy. And then the tedious sub-plots of Zain's close friends (who are also his ex-band mates), their family problems and financial issues followed by their love interests and their employment challenges, are unnecessary and do not really help move the story forward.S

TV SERIES

MAID

DIARY OF A SINGLE MOTHER

BY MUHAMMAD ALI KHAN



The 2019 memoir 'Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive' by Stephanie Land made waves back at the time of its release as it highlighted the beautiful and gritty exploration of poverty in America. Land candidly wrote in her memoir about trying to raise her young daughter while working as a maid. Taking inspiration from the memoir, Netflix has come forward with a 10-episode story adapting Land's narrative to TV. But while most TV series adapted from books are credited as 'based on', 'Maid' is uniquely called 'inspired by' as a lot of new and fictional material is added to the play, including change of actual locations, where necessary, and addition of characters. And Land doesn't seem to mind. In fact, she is constantly praising the TV show's approach for the story, which is both captivating and relatable.

Dealing with issues of parenthood, domestic violence and the precariousness of life below the poverty line, the Netflix mini-series tells the story of a 25-year-old aspiring writer Alex (Margaret Qualley) who is living in the North of Seattle with her two-year old daughter Maddy (Rylea Nevaeh Whittet) and abusive husband Sean (Nick Robinson).

The first episode starts with Alex waking up to see that Sean is sleeping. Fed up with his nonsense behaviour and abusive nature, she gathers a few things along with her daughter Maddy and tiptoes out of the home. With only $18 in her pocket and nowhere to go, Alex must find a way to piece her life back together. She keeps roaming from domestic violence shelters to relatives and friends' homes and because she is in no position to pay a rental deposit, she makes her way into a trailer.

Tackling one catch-22 situation after another, she finds a cleaning job at a firm whose owner Yolanda (Tracy Vilar) is a bit creepy. She builds a relationship with her client Regina (Anika Noni Rose), a high-class woman who longs for a child but is afraid of raising it without her husband. Regina wants a family that Alex has and Alex needs money and a home that Regina has. Their friendship soon blossoms with both realizing that they need each other.

She also crosses paths with her bipolar mother Paula (Andie MacDowell), who is her mother in real life as well, and her estranged father Hank (Billy Burke). Alex always tries to keep her distance from her parents because they remind her of the bad days she had as they used to underestimate her at all times.

Her journey through the precincts of poverty is frustrating at times as one can witness how Alex's finances tick down to zero before she can even think of saving some for the next day's food, petrol and Maddy's daycare. Even when she is purchasing something at a store, she is cautious in buying only the things that are extremely important.

It is clear from the start that the series has important roles of women for the men in Alex's life are no good. Andie MacDowell as Paula is rude because she speaks the harsh truth but she plays her part fair and square. Alex doesn't like her mother but deep down they both know that they have each other's back. Even Anika Noni Rose as Regina is intelligent yet emotional who turns out to be a support for Alex.

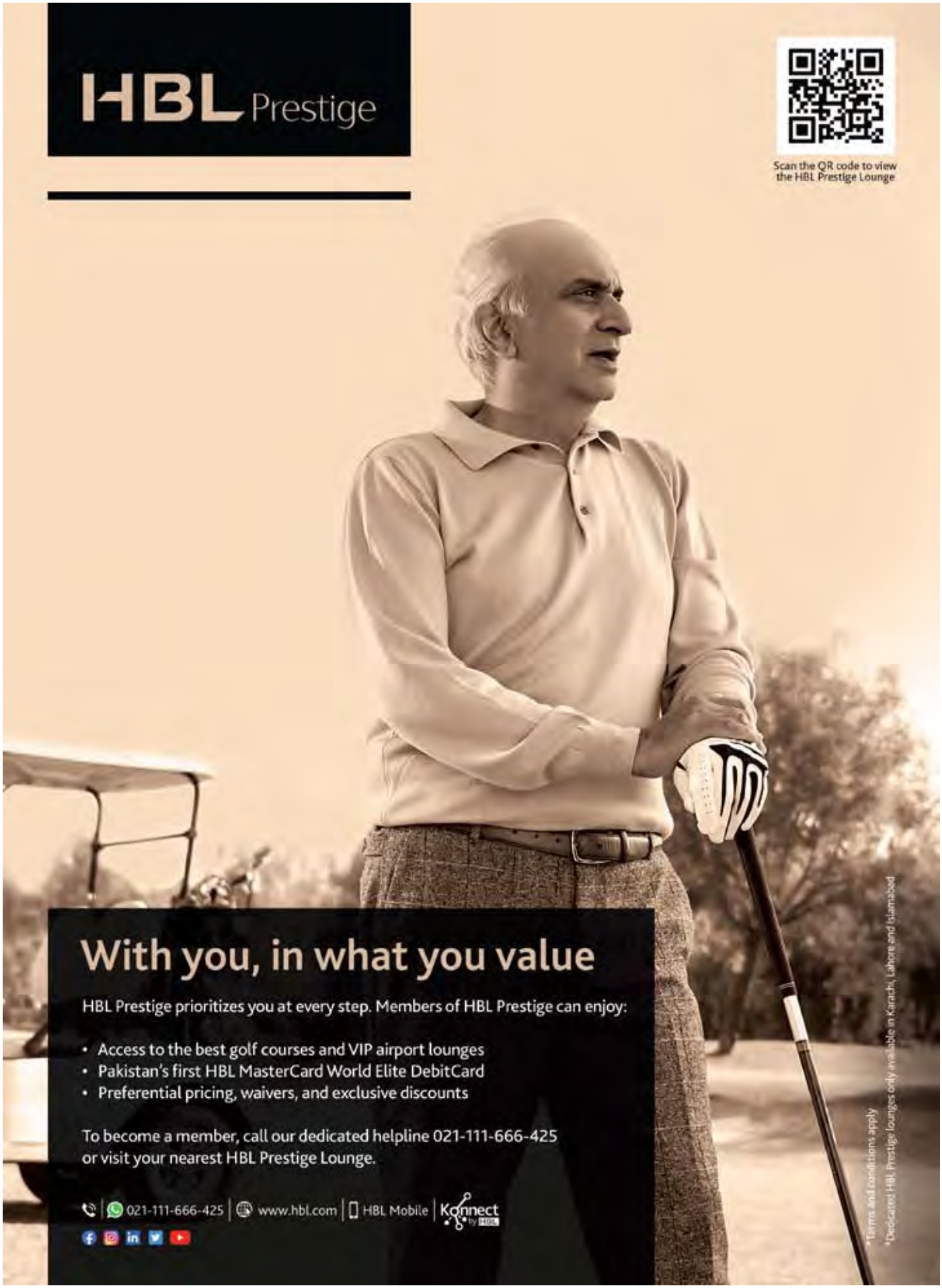
This Netflix show, without a doubt, belongs to Margaret Qualley who plays Alex. Her presence on-screen is captivating as she captures Alex's constantly shifting mentality quite brilliantly. From the mental pressure she feels due to Sean's nature to making sure people like her, she depicts a strong-willed woman who is fighting for survival. Even her expressions make you feel the pain and fear she has. The series isn't afraid to emphasise her emotional perspective over strict reality.

One thing that is missing in the series is a proper projection of male leads. The characters of Sean and Hank both have anger and addiction issues and they have the largest role in making Alex's life miserable. While creator Molly Smith Metzler lacks in giving perspective to male roles, John Wells, who directed four episodes, does a great job at giving 'Maid' an engaging look.

Emphasizing the concept of who is more worthy of charity, the series talks about the hard reality of poverty in our society. It shows that a person does not get help until he/she has not suffered enough. The series also sheds light on issues of domestic violence that is still considered taboo in many countries.

'Maid" serves as a breather for many single mothers who are fighting every day to live a happy and healthy life with their children. The brilliant performances and attention to detail make this TV series a compelling drama, one that keeps you hooked to the TV screen. S


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