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Editorial Board:

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PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE (N) PUNJAB

FROM EDITOR'S DESK

Former PML-N MPA's struggle for sanitary workers wins global recognition

Mary Gill bags Sweden's prestigious Anna Lindh Award 2020 for fighting against taboos associated with sanitation work, improving workers' quality of life.

LAHORE

Mary Gill, a former PML-N member of the Punjab Assembly, has won this year's prestigious Swedish Anna Lindh Award in recognition of her committed efforts to improve the quality of life of sanitation workers.

Anna Lindh's Memorial Fund Chairperson and former Swedish foreign minister Lena Hjelm-Wallén, in a press note, said, "We are very proud to award the Anna Lindh prize for 2020 to Mary James Gill for her insistent work for the most vulnerable groups, based on human rights."

The credit for this global recognition goes to former Chief Minister Punjab Mian Shehbaz Sharif and former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif whose guidance and unflinching support have had a profound impact on Mary Gill.

Guided by the vision of the PML-N and working under the wings of Mian Shehbaz Sharif and Mian Nawaz Sharif, Mary Gill sought to fight the taboos associated with sanitary workers and to improve their standard of living through provision of better facilities, required PPEs, better service structure and inclusion in Social Security, EOBI framework etc.

The PML-N leadership understood the importance of essential workers, and due to its high regard for human rights and dignity of work, the leadership sought to disassociate the taboos linked with sanitation work. The leadership also sought to widen the EOBI, Social Security network to include more work groups and essential workers in its domain. The move was a way to increase the scope of welfare oriented schemes in Punjab and to elevate the quality of life of its people.

In 2017, a sanitary worker named Irfan Masih died while trying to open a clogged sewerage line in Umerkot, Sindh. The incident highlighted a fault line in the service and social structure for these essential workers and, without further ado, the PML-N leadership launched a full-fledged campaign for the safety of sanitary workers as well as bringing dignity to the sanitation work by fighting the cultural and social taboos associated with it.

Over 250 sanitation workers have died in Punjab over the years due to the absence of safety equipment. Taking notice of the plight of the workers, Mian Shehbaz Sharif ordered immediate implementation of the best practices and provision of high quality PPEs to all workers.

The leadership also stressed on the importance of the sanitary workers in Punjab government's WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) initiative.

In 2015, while working as the coordinator for the Punjab Minority Advisory Council, Mary strived to strike down the discriminatory policy of hiring only "non-Muslims" for sanitation work. The policy was abolished on the instructions of Mian Shehbaz Sharif in the same year, making Punjab the only province where this discriminatory practice has ended.

From December last year, the PML-N leadership launched Dignity Awards for sanitation workers who risk their lives for us. The awards are meant to destigmatize the sanitation work and draw public attention to plight of these workers.

The efforts of the PML-N leadership have also been highlighted in the international press with coverage from leading publications, including the New York Times and BBC, lauding the achievements and the best practices adopted by the PML-N's government in Punjab for improving the lives of sanitary workers.



PUBLIC SERVICE- BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY



Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan

LAHORE

When we think of Mian Shehbaz Sharif, one term that immediately comes to our mind is “**Khaadim-e-Aala**”, a person who has served the people of Punjab with dedication, honesty and integrity.

Shehbaz Sharif has served Punjab as Chief Minister on three occasions, all with distinction. Anyone who has worked with Shehbaz Sharif knows him to be a tireless, energetic and hands-on CM who is not afraid to take tough decisions for the betterment of the people. His energetic and fast paced project completion record has endeared him to millions of Pakistanis, who fondly call projects finished within record time “Shehbaz Speed”.

Shehbaz Sharif revolutionized the standards of performance-driven governance and outcome-oriented delivery with strict fiscal discipline. It is ironic that Shehbaz Sharif's business background is held against him even though during his multiple tenures as the Chief Minister of Punjab, he managed to initiate globally acclaimed projects, streamlined processes and was also able to save over 1 trillion rupees, which is unprecedented in Pakistan's history.

The jewel in Punjab's crown is the Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) that has brought affordable transport to the doorstep of people who struggle day in, day out for their livelihoods yet they are left with little money at the end of the month due to the hefty costs incurred on commuting to their workplaces. The vision behind this project was twofold. OLMT currently has the capacity to transport over 245,000 passengers daily, which will cut the general public's travel cost and enable them to use the saved money for fulfilling other needs. The landmark project will also result in reducing the traffic load on the city roads, which means there will be less toxic emissions that are hazardous to our environment.

Shehbaz Sharif set the pace by engaging in government to government competitive bidding, and then relentlessly negotiated with the lowest bidder that resulted in the saving of an additional 600 million dollars. This was also the first time when expressing satisfaction with how the Punjab government was handling this project, the winning bidder handed over the civil works to Pakistani contractors.

OLMT was built at “Shehbaz Speed” despite the fact that forces inimical to the project's success used all possible means to derail it. It is unfortunate that soon after coming into power, the PTI government immediately set upon disengaging itself from the OLMT project, escalating the cost and depriving the people of this much needed mode of public transport. Now that the OLMT is fully operational despite the PTI government's delay tactics, the love and adoration Shehbaz Sharif is receiving from the people reflects their appreciation of the former CM's farsighted vision.

Before launching the OLMT project, Shehbaz Sharif introduced the Lahore Metro Bus that revolutionized intra-city public transport in Pakistan. Earlier, people had to change several passenger vans to reach their destinations, which was not only expensive but also put their lives at risk due to the high percentage of accidents resulting from reckless driving.

Despite facing severe criticism from the PTI, which was in opposition at the time, Shehbaz Sharif succeeded in completing the project within the stipulated period. Its success can be gauged from the fact that even though the PTI is in power now, it is forced to continue with the transport service due to its popularity in the masses.

Welfare of the youth of Pakistan has always been close to Shehbaz Sharif's heart, which is evident from the many schemes that were launched during his tenure as CM Punjab.

In 2015, the Apna Rozgar Scheme was launched to create job opportunities for the youth and to also help budding entrepreneurs in realizing their dreams of owning their own businesses. Today the youth of Punjab who benefited from this scheme can be seen living their dream, whether it is to reach their job destinations or creating a self-sustainable business. It merits a mention here that Shehbaz Sharif ensured that the Punjab government saved over 20,000 rupees on each vehicle purchased from Pak Suzuki Limited under this scheme.

Under Shehbaz Sharif's visionary leadership, Punjab embarked on a state-of-the-art Lahore Safe City project, which is the envy of every city in Pakistan today. Under the project, 8,000 surveillance cameras were installed across Lahore which have been instrumental in tackling crime in the metropolis. The Punjab government saved over 4 billion rupees thanks to Shehbaz Sharif's shrewd bargaining with the vendor.

PUBLIC SERVICE- BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

The water table in Punjab has dropped at an alarming rate but at the same time the presence of extremely high levels of arsenic in the water available for consumption is affecting the health of millions of people of the province. The overzealous PTI government has tried to ensnare Shehbaz Sharif in frivolous cases, one amongst them is the Saaf Pani Project, a scheme which was set up to provide water filtration plants across the Punjab to provide safe drinking water to the people. Instead of celebrating the fact that the previous government was providing safe drinking water, the incumbent government launched an attack against the PML-N and the Saaf Pani Company. Despite the government's best efforts, the Lahore High Court eventually granted bail to Saaf Pani Company officials, ruling that there was no corruption involved in the project and that the Saaf Pani Company had won the bid fairly and in a transparent manner.

When the PML-N came into power, Pakistan was facing a huge shortfall of electricity while the circular debt was also on the rise. Not the one to shy away from a tough challenge, Shehbaz Sharif took the bull by the horns and embarked on several projects which have today given a cushion to Pakistan in terms of electricity generation.

For the first time in Pakistan's history, energy projects of 5,000MW were completed at Bhikki, HBS, Balloki, Trimmu, Quaid-e-Azam Solar Project and Sahiwal Coal Power Plant in record time under the dynamic leadership of Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif. An additional three RLNG-powered projects were completed in record time under the direct supervision of Shehbaz Sharif, which resulted in a net saving of 1.36 billion US dollars. Just by completing the Sahiwal Coal Power project seven months before its due date, Shehbaz Sharif saved taxpayers a whopping 162 billion rupees.

Another project started by Shehbaz Sharif that has acclaimed people's respect is the initiation of the Lahore Waste Management Company. The provincial capital had become infamous due to large heaps of garbage on almost all the main roads and streets. Soon after assuming charge as the CM Punjab, Shehbaz Sharif set up the Lahore Waste Management Company which took over the function of cleaning Lahore from the Metropolitan Corporation. The Company

subsequently engaged a renowned Turkish company, which had revolutionized Istanbul's waste collection system, to implement a similar system in Lahore resulting in efficient waste disposal that has truly transformed the city.

There has been a huge controversy over the Sharif family's sugar mills, a matter that has been inflamed by the PTI's quest for power even whilst being intellectually dishonest. Fact of the matter is that under Shehbaz Sharif's watch, nepotism was discouraged and the family business was not taken into consideration while taking decisions in the best interest of the people.

In his drive to give relief to the people of Punjab, Shehbaz Sharif's government took tough administrative decisions which resulted in a net loss of 1.5 billion rupees to the Sharif family's sugar business. It is noteworthy that Shehbaz Sharif refused to succumb to the pressure exerted by the Punjab Sugar Mills Association to give subsidy or to lower the support price of sugar on the pattern of the Sindh government.

Shehbaz Sharif set the rare example of forgoing all entitlements in terms of his salary, TA/DA and other admissible allowances. He even paid for his foreign trips out of his own pocket, a fact that has been admitted by the PTI government on the floor of the Punjab Assembly.

In spite of several frivolous cases filed against Shehbaz Sharif and other members of his family, the PTI government and National Accountability Bureau, which has become a tool of political victimization in the hands of the incumbent regime, have failed to tarnish their reputation because people of Punjab and other parts of the country are fully aware of the struggle and efforts that their "Khaadim-e-Aala" has undertaken to alleviate the suffering of the common man.

END OF LUCKY IMRANI CIRCUS



Sehar Amir Tarar

THE WRITER IS A ENTREPRENEUR WHO HAS BEEN WORKING AS A BUSINESS ANALYST IN USA FOR LAST 7 YEARS.

Democracy is a right guaranteed under our constitution to every citizen of Pakistan, regardless of his or her station in life. Democracy is what keeps the body politic healthy and brings transformation and is an incubator for diverse ideas which makes a nation strong and durable.

Our democratic way of life is under siege in Pakistan today and we stand at the precipice, from which we are determined to pull back and reinvigorate our nation. While reading on democracy and democratic principles, I came across a very interesting quote from a writer who says, "It is not the voting that's democracy, it is the counting". This quote aptly describes the struggle that the constituent parties of the Pakistan Democratic Movement are carrying out against the current setup, which has usurped the rights of the citizens of Pakistan by stealing their votes and "electing" candidates who came through vote manipulation of the worst kind that this country has ever seen. PDM was formed in September 2020, around the slogan of "Vote ko Izzat Do", a clarion call for every citizen of Pakistan to come out and fight for their right to freely choose their representatives without undemocratic machinations.

What compounds the matter is the fact that almost every hardworking Pakistani is reeling from the misguided, reckless, and foolhardy policy decisions being carried out by this government. When a post-mortem of this government is carried out after its ouster, a litany of errors, huge scams, and amateur decisions will speak volumes of the crises this government has left Pakistan in. Whether it is shortage of wheat and sugar, or it is international embarrassment, this government has ensured that they go out of their way harm its own people and to also dent Pakistan's prestige. As this article is being written, eggs, which are the basic necessity of Pakistanis, have touched 216/dozen, which is simply criminal. The PMLN – along with other political parties – decided that enough was enough and that they cannot allow Imran Khan and his machinery to destroy Pakistan just for the sake of allowing a government – especially an illegitimate one – to complete its 5 years tenure.

Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is one of those once in a generation leaders who due to their vision and foresight become statesmen. Today he rules the hearts of millions of Pakistanis who fondly refer to him as a member of their own family, an honor that has been reserved for very few prime ministers, and especially not the incumbent who has destroyed many lives in his quest for power. Mian Nawaz Sharif breathed a new life in the opposition to this charade of a government when he joined social media and then while addressing millions of his fans, he named every individual involved in the destruction of democracy in Pakistan. Thereon it became a question of not if, but when the movement to reclaim Pakistan would begin.

Sensing that the Sharifs will be at the forefront of the restoration of true democracy, the vengeful government immediately had the other leader who is known for his extraordinary hard work and empathy for his people, Mian Shehbaz Sharif. He was arrested on vague charges – as is the government's wont – and has repeatedly stood in the way of him getting bail so that he could join at the frontline in the fight for his people. Mian Shehbaz Sharif may be in jail, but there isn't a day when he doesn't yearn to be with his people in their struggle for democracy and their rights. Every large project which the people of Punjab are benefiting from has been delivered by Mian Shehbaz Sharif, not for glory or vanity as the incumbent government does, but because he identified the issues that affect people and rapidly mobilized to fix them. Just on this account he receives the prayers of millions of Pakistanis everyday.

The Pakistan Democratic Movement represents a diverse group of political parties from every corner of the country, having diverse ideologies and cultural background: Pakistan Muslim League (N), Pakistan Peoples Party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Awami National Party, Jamiat Ulama-e-Pakistan, Balochistan National Party (Mengal), National Party (Bizenjo), Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Jamiat Ahle-Hadith, and the Qaumi Watan Party.

END OF LUCKY IMRANI CIRCUS

These parties are not led by just any politicians, but by stalwarts who have the resolve and dedication to help people achieve their aims. Maryam Nawaz Sharif has become an anchor around which the entire PDM has coalesced. After Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, no female leader has captured the entire nation's imagination quite like her. Plenty has already been written on her role as a daughter, which she has fulfilled par excellence, however, what hasn't been delved upon nearly enough is the power, the vision, the dedication, the resolve, the nerves of steel, and her ability to look adversity in the eye. There is no challenge difficult enough for her to surmount. Without nary a care about the fact that the government could illegally send her back to jail, she marches on, carrying the hopes of millions of Pakistanis on her shoulders.

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Maulana Fazlur Rehman is a seasoned leader with a mass appeal amongst the people of Pakistan. As chairman of the Kashmir Committee he made significant efforts and made great headway in highlighting the Kashmir issue on the international stage. Maulana's role in raising the voice for Kashmiris must be doubly appreciated in the backdrop of the fact that India effectively annexed Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir during the current government's tenure due to their sheer incompetence and neglect of this vital cog in our foreign policy. The people of Pakistan will never forget this betrayal of the Kashmiri brethren.

Similarly, all leaders including Asfandiyar Wali Khan, Owais Noorani, and all other senior leaders and workers bring a unique power to this movement, which has been strengthened due to this diversity.

The government has been trying its best from the start to discount the PDM as a force to reckon with, and has attempted to hijack the movement by arresting and/or persecuting politicians associated with the constituent parties of the PDM. The only way to dislodge from the position of Prime Minister that Imran Khan has illegally occupied, the PDM decided to launch a series of public gatherings (jalsas), and eventually march on Islamabad if he doesn't resign.

The first PDM jalsa set the stage for a power show, having a phenomenal and an historic turnout by people from all walks of life. The old came because they were unhappy to see what has become of their country, the youth came because they were worried about their future, the housewife came because she was struggling to balance her house budget, the father came because he was struggling to pay for his children's education. People came together to give a final warning to the government and their backers that their time and experimentation with their lives was over. This jalsa put the PDM on the map and gave it an energy which isn't even looking like dissipating anytime soon.

After Gujranwala, similar large jalsas were held in Karachi and Quetta, where the government again tried to stop people from attending, but to no avail. People streamed from all cities to listen to their leaders. The continued success of the jalsas became a cause of grave concern for the PTI government as the popularity of PDM was rising by the day directly in proportion to the misery increasing in the lives of citizens. Failing to placate people, the government decided to heavily crackdown on PDM leaders and workers right before the Multan jalsa, which resulted in the arrests of over 2500 workers from all parties. This heavy-handed action only resulted in the PDM gaining more momentum and more people were drawn to its just cause. So by D-day, all efforts by the government failed, and the PDM jalsa was a phenomenal success. This can alone be gauged by the sights one could see of the ocean of people surrounding Maryam Nawaz Sharif's entourage, with people reaching out to her to show their love and affection to the lioness who had come to their city to fight for them. This show of love and affection for Maryam Nawaz Sharif and the PMLN was unprecedented, and became an unmitigated disaster for the government and its attempts to drown this sea of people in the ocean of its fascism.

END OF LUCKY IMRANI CIRCUS

"All roads lead to Islamabad through Lahore", it then makes sense that the final salvo – the final ultimatum – to the PTI government be issued in the heart of Punjab. No better venue could have been chosen than the Minar-e-Pakistan to hold, what turned out to be a mammoth rally, which struck deep wounds in the psyche of this government, wounds from which it has yet to recover. Days leading to the PDM jalsa were replete with conspiracies that PDM constituent parties are at loggerheads, that not enough people will turn out, that NOC won't be granted to the jalsa, and the icing on the cake was the PTI government – in panic mode – deciding to ban all public gatherings on account of spreading COVID-19. A prohibition which seemed only to target the PDM jalsa as the PTI ministers and members of parliament were busy holding their rallies all across the country. None of the government's antics mattered on D-day, when not just Lahore, but the entire country turned out to demand a restoration of their rights under the shadow of the Minar-e-Pakistan, which symbolizes our yearning for freedom from all oppression.

It was indeed a sight to behold, the thousands upon thousands of people waving flags of Pakistan, and those of their parties in the cold winter night. Despite the government's attempt to downplay the jalsa, there were people as far as the eye could see, and indeed roads were blocked for several kilometers by those wanting to get into the jalsa-gah. Neither the cold, nor the threats of arrest could stop the people of Lahore from turning out in record numbers to stand with their leaders and workers people from coming. The Jalsa was more successful than anybody could have envisioned, so much so that the government spokespersons were denying the strength of the jalsa for several days after it happened, which speaks volumes of the actual success of the jalsa. The crowds roared with glee and delight when their leaders stepped up to the podium to deliver speeches which struck terror in the hearts of this government.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif, in her element as a fiery orator, whipped up the crowd into a thunderous mood, who returned her calls for justice and equality with equal gusto. One could not only see the reflection of her father and uncle in her, but also something which is very unique and which shakes the government to its core – the fact that a woman has risen to seek justice for her people. Maryam Nawaz Sharif is the torchbearer of equality

and justice the way our maadar-e-millat Fatimah Jinnah was who took on the might of the Ayub Khan's regime, and also in the way of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto who took on the Musharraf regime.

Post the successful PDM Lahore Jalsa, the constituent parties of PDM have issued a "Lahore Declaration" which may be explained as the broad framework of a new social contract between the citizens of Pakistan and those who seek to serve them in any capacity. The salient features of this declaration are that free and fair elections be held, the current hybrid regime be removed, media must have the freedom to report on any matter without pressure, the judiciary be allowed freedom to decide cases strictly on the basis of applicable law, and foremost, the constitution of Pakistan be followed in letter and spirit. Furthermore, the declaration also acknowledges the severe economic hardship that the country is facing on account of flawed policies of the government and promises the nation to give them relief when free and fair elections are held to elect them. In addition, in light of the PTI government literally gifting IOJK to India and the recent attempts to establish relations with Israel, the PDM parties have emphatically stated that they will never compromise on the freedom and dignity of our brothers and sisters in Kashmir and Palestine.

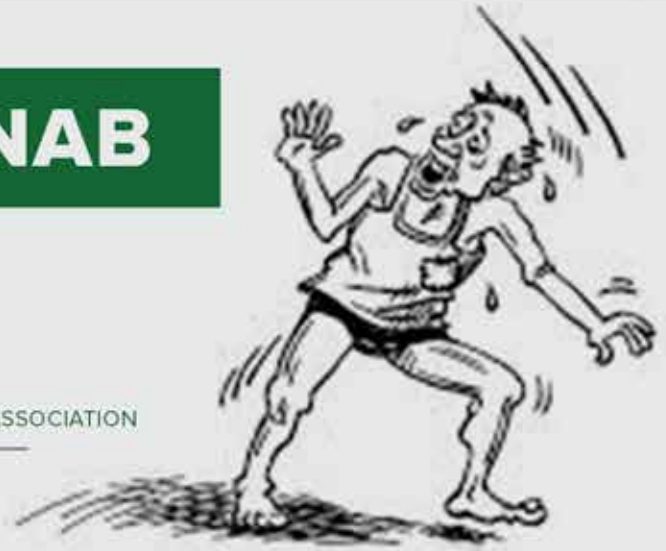
It must be noted with great admiration that all members of the opposition in parliament have tendered their resignations to the leaders of their respective parties to submit them in parliament if need be. I must express pride in the fact that parliamentarians from PMLN have spearheaded this form of protest at the instructions of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and the party leadership. It remains to be seen if this incompetent government sees the writing on the wall and willingly goes home, if not, then the PDM parties will have no choice but to mobilize the entire nation and go on a long march to Islamabad to besiege the government in an expression of their democratic right to protest the harshness and vindictive policies of this government towards its own people. The Pakistani nation has awakened, and is spearheaded by leaders who have taken an oath to protect the dignity and respect of each and every citizen of Pakistan. Inshallah, we will succeed.

MUZZLING THE NAB



Rana Asad Ullah Khan ,

ADVOCATE SUPREME COURT
FORMER SECRETARY LAHORE HIGH COURT BAR ASSOCIATION



The Supreme Court of Pakistan's landmark judgment in Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leaders Khawaja Saad Rafique and his brother Khawaja Salman Rafique's civil petition for bail in the Paragon City Housing Society reference has badly exposed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB)'s political victimization of the opposition leadership.

This is perhaps the first time that the apex court has been so forthright about the true nature and purpose of the accountability process in this country and the unfair means adopted to procure convictions at any cost. It also rightly describes NAB's endemic abuse of power under the garb of "accountability" where accountability means to persecute, not prosecute; to punish without due process of law; and to politically engineer and thereby negate the purpose of accountability itself. The Ehtesab Ordinance Act 1997 was already in place to deal with corrupt practices but in 1999, soon after overthrowing the democratically elected government of then Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, General retired Pervez Musharraf abolished it and introduced the NAB Ordinance to muzzle the opposition forces and coerce them into joining the "King's Party". It's a known fact that several political leaders were charged with corruption but inquiries against them were put on the backburner when they jumped over to Musharraf's side.

This abuse of power is not uncommon in Pakistan's history. Field Marshall Ayub Khan also removed his adversaries by using the corruption mantra against the democratically elected government by employing the Elected Bodies Disqualification Order (EBDO). Unfortunately, the country paid a heavy price for the military's political adventurism in the shape of its disintegration. It merits a note here that during Musharraf's 9-year dictatorial role, corruption remained at an all-time high and Pakistan was ranked 144th in the corruption perception index of Transparency International.

The Supreme Court ruling in the Paragon Housing reference bail petition astutely questioned the very purpose of the accountability watchdog's effort in the first place, clearly pointing to its partisan behavior in the drive against corruption.

The court lambasted NAB for dragging its feet against government leaders involved in financial

scams of massive proportion, while on the other hand it was arresting and incarcerating opposition leaders for months and years without providing any sufficient cause even when the law mandates that investigations be concluded expeditiously and trial be concluded within 30 days.

Justice Maqbool Baqar and Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhel noted in their judgment:

"The present case is a classic example of the trampling of fundamental rights, unlawful deprivation of freedom, and liberty and the complete disregard for human dignity as guaranteed by the Constitution."

The SC in Khan Asfandiyar Wali & others v Federation in 2001 declared several clauses of the NAB Ordinance unconstitutional and in violation of basic human rights. The court again ordered amendments in the NAB Ordinance in 2009, while hearing the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) case, but no significant progress was made in this regard.

Since 2013, NAB has been viciously used against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as punishment for holding General Musharraf accountable for subverting the constitution and sacking the superior judiciary illegally.

The sitting prime minister of the country, Nawaz Sharif, was removed from his office on 'corruption' charges. It was alleged that Nawaz Sharif did not disclose "un-withdrawn receivables" from his son's company at the time of submission of his election nomination papers.

The SC, meanwhile, ordered the formation of a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to probe into the corruption allegations against Nawaz Sharif and his family members. The JIT comprising officials from the country's top intelligence and investigative agencies produced a report containing 10 volumes, but failed to produce any concrete evidence of corruption against the former prime minister.

NAB filed three references against Nawaz Sharif on the basis of this JIT report, and in all three courts.

MUZZLING THE NAB

unprecedented move, the Supreme Court appointed a 'monitoring judge' to supervise the proceedings of the accountability court. Unlike Musharraf, Sharif did not flee the country and boldly faced the legal battle with determination and resilience by making a record 165 appearances before the accountability NAB's wrath was not only limited to the PML-N top leadership as it also targeted other senior leaders to manipulate the 2018 general elections. A majority of candidates nominated by the PML-N were facing NAB inquiries and canvassing under constant fear of arrest during election days. At least 11 PML-N candidates returned their nominations under pressure and opted to contest the polls as independents. Engineer Raja Qamarul Islam, contesting from NA-59, Rawalpindi, was arrested a day before the election in the Saaf Pani scam. NAB arrested Mian Shehbaz Sharif in the Ashiana-Iqbal Housing Scheme and his son Hamza Shehbaz in an alleged money laundering and illegal assets case. Maryam Nawaz was charged with money laundering while the Khawaja brothers were arrested in the Paragon case, without any credible evidence, as usual.

The SC judgment comprehensively shatters NAB's tall claims of across-the-board and impartial accountability and shows that the real intent is and has always been political engineering whereby, in the words of the Supreme Court, "pygmies" are opportunistically selected, nurtured, promoted, and brought to prominence and power.

If this is not the case, then why is NAB silent on the report of the Auditor General of Pakistan on misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds to the tune of over 12 billion rupees with irregularities of government funds amounting to 258 billion rupees in the first year of PTI's governance? Dr. Babar Awan is enjoying an unwritten NRO in the 27 billion-rupee Nandipur power project. NAB has also turned a blind eye to mega corruption in the Peshawar Bus Rapid Transit project whose cost surged from 49.3 billion rupees to 69.3 billion rupees. It is also silent on the foreign properties of Prime Minister Imran Khan's sister Aleema Khan and has conveniently ignored General (r) Asim Salim Bajwa's estimated wealth of \$39.9 million.

The SC recently showed its dismay over the procedure of appointments in NAB and considered unfettered powers of the NAB

chairman under Section 25(g) of the NAO1999, in violation of Article 240 of the Constitution of Pakistan. The apex court also objected to the qualification and experience of NAB Rawalpindi Director General Irfan Naeem Mangi, who is an engineer by profession and has no experience of investigation of criminal cases.

In 2017, the SC removed four NAB directors general in a suo moto case after finding their appointment in contravention of the rules. Unfortunately, NAB reappointed them, making a mockery of the country's apex court. The NAB chairman has lost the moral authority to remain in office after the shocking revelation of his immoral conduct but he has shown no remorse over the issue and continues to cling to his position.

As the Supreme Court observed, the dignity of man is the only unconditional fundamental right under our Constitution. This makes the abuse of power by state functionaries worse than corruption itself as a wrongful conviction is far worse than a wrongful acquittal; and when deliberate attempts are made to subvert the spirit of the constitution, such conduct destroys public confidence in the legal system and is potentially even treasonous. Thus, the court appropriately opined, "Under no circumstances should the courts... condone highhandedness or look the other way as the State deprive citizens of their liberty in derogation of the law and the Constitution."

It is the integrity of the accountability process that needs to be preserved and protected including where necessary, from the excesses and abuses of the accountability watchdog itself. The NAB law needs to be amended by parliament to include the right of bail and restrict the powers of remand as well as those of the NAB chairman to unilaterally order arrest or attachment and grant pardons.

*One may smile and
smile and be a
villain*

~William Shakespeare

WHEN THE LION ROARS



Sardar Ayyaz Sadiq, a renowned politician, former speaker of the National Assembly, businessman and a philanthropist, was born to a Kashmiri family in 1954. He received his early education from Aitchison College, Lahore where Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, former interior minister Nisar Ali Khan, former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Pervez Khattak, Sardar Akhtar Mengal and Zulfiqar Ali Magsi were amongst his school fellows. He received a bachelor's degree in commerce from Hailey College of Punjab University in 1975.

Sadiq's family has been involved in business since the time his grandfather established factories of plywood and chemicals. His family is also running the Sardar Trust Eye Hospital and established a school in Garhi Shahu, Lahore, which was nationalized in 1972.

In a candid conversation with Horizon, Sadiq shares intimate details of his student life, his entry into politics and the future he sees for Pakistan and for the PML-N.

Horizon: Sir, how were your youth days?

Sadiq: I was more disciplined, very cautious about hygiene, an average student, and very much interested in sports. I always passed the exams but never got any distinction except for once. I used to play hockey, cricket and table tennis. I loved to fly kites and played table tennis at the provincial level. Once, while playing hockey, I unintentionally hit Imran Khan on the cheek. The media has sometimes made wrong assertions about that incident but it is a fact that Khan and I had good relations until the 2002 general election.

Horizon: Kashmiris normally are foodies. Are you a foodie, too?

Sadiq: Absolutely! Our whole family is fond of eating. My wife is an excellent cook. When we hosted Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) leadership for the historic Lahore Jalsa, she cooked for all the guests herself. We are so much in love with food that we are always discussing it. At the same time, I work out daily to maintain my physical fitness.

Horizon: Tell us about your marital life?

Sadiq: I got married when I was 23 years old. It was an arranged marriage. I was totally a mama's boy so all these affairs were left to my mother. My mother and my wife's mother were friends. I am very happy with my mother's choice.

Horizon: How did you enter politics?

Sadiq: Politics runs in our family. My grandfather was a politician too. He was the deputy mayor of Lahore. He campaigned for Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah during her presidential election. Later, my father also joined politics and was a local bodies representative. But he quit politics on my mother's insistence. In 1997, Imran Khan requested my elder brother to contest elections from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf platform, but he refused and referred Imran to me. Interestingly, my mother did not stop me from joining politics. I contested my first election in 1997 on the PTI ticket and lost to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Tariq Aziz by a huge margin.

In the 2002 elections, I contested on the PML-N's ticket and won. As a matter of fact, I was supposed to be a covering candidate but the party later decided to have me as the main candidate. By Allah's grace, I had a convincing victory and it was the first one against Imran Khan, which is why things never remained the same between us.

Horizon: How would you describe joining PML-N during dictatorship and your journey onwards?

Sadiq: I joined the PML-N in February 2001, after realizing that IK's actions and statements didn't match while the PML-N vision of public service was quite appealing. Despite having paid a heavy price for joining PML-N, time has shown that my decision at the time was right. Under Mian Nawaz Sharif's leadership, we have been able to serve the people.

Even though, it was my first time in parliament, the ruling party offered me a ministry of my choice to change my loyalty but, by Allah Almighty's grace, I stood firm on my principled stance. It was a tough period for the party and the leadership but by His grace, we passed through it with dignity. I participated in the 2008 election and was again bestowed with the honor of representing my constituents in the National Assembly.

The toughest challenge was the 2013 elections when I ran against Imran Khan, who was contesting on five seats. He had won on four seats but when our result came out I had beaten him with a sizeable margin. After the election, Mian Shehbaz Sharif and Mian Nawaz Sharif called me to Islamabad and, with the consultation of the senior leadership, nominated me as the speaker of the National Assembly. This tenure was quite strenuous due to the anti-government movement and sit-ins.

Horizon: Why you did not accept resignations of PTI parliamentarians in 2015?

Sadiq: I ran the House by the book. I simply followed Rule 43 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007, which makes it compulsory for the Speaker of the House to ensure that the resignation is voluntary and genuine and the

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Speaker has no information or knowledge to the contrary. Resignations tendered by PTI parliamentarians were submitted with the Speaker's office and not to the Speaker in person. I, under the Rules, was obliged to determine the genuineness and voluntary nature of these resignations. No PTI member was ready to verify the genuineness and voluntary nature of those resignations. When Shah Mehmood Qureshi along with other members of PTI attended the joint session, they despite being asked to come to speaker's chamber to discuss the resignations, left the House without any response. I could not accept the resignations without following the due procedure. You can read all the details in Ruling given during Joint Sitting Debate of 6th April, 2015.

Horizon: You were often accused of not allowing MNA Sheikh Rasheed to speak on the floor of the National Assembly. What do you say about it?

Sadiq: Totally wrong. I conducted the House under the rules. After the government, the right to debate was of the main opposition party – PPP, then PTI, and then the other parties as per their number of seats in parliament. Sheikh was the only MNA of his party and his number was always to be last as per the rules. Though, I often adjusted him by requesting the other parties to voluntarily give him their slot, which they allowed.

Horizon: How do you see the current political situation?

Sadiq: Democracy in Pakistan has seen many ups and downs and political parties have learnt a lot and have come a long way. The only goal of the PDM is to ensure the rule of the will of people under the constitution of Pakistan. As I said earlier, political parties have come a long way, I am very optimistic and confident that this movement will succeed in establishing true democracy in our beloved country. Now, there is more inter-party trust and all parties are focused on free and fair elections and I have no doubt whatsoever that we will succeed because we have mass public support behind us. Democracy is the only way forward. All the national issues can be resolved via dialogue without use of any force and this is the beauty of democracy. Democracy is the future of Pakistan.

PML-N has also evolved and this is very heart-warming. Our upcoming young leadership is highly educated and true democrats. I can proudly say that PML-N is better than ever and is always improving. Our vision and criteria have always been merit, performance and public service.



Panorama

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