

HORIZON

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RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT
PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE - NAWAZ

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the July issue of Horizon magazine, proudly brought to you by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). As we delve into the content of this edition, we cannot help but note the remarkable progress and accomplishments that PML-N has made during its tenure whenever entrusted with governance.

Our party has consistently stood by its promises and manifesto, and our dedication is evident across various sectors. Be it the economy, education, health, or infrastructure development, PML-N's achievements have left a lasting impact on Pakistan's growth and prosperity.

One of the most recent successes we are proud to highlight is our role in saving Pakistan from the brink of default on its external debt. Through strategic negotiations, we secured a substantial bailout package of \$3 billion from the International Monetary Fund, which played a crucial role in stabilising our economy during a challenging period. Additionally, we established the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), a bold initiative designed to attract foreign direct investment, especially from Gulf countries. The potential economic recovery that may result from this move holds tremendous promise for our nation's future.

PML-N has also made significant strides in the education sector. In this issue, we shed light on the revolutionary reforms implemented by the Punjab government during our ten-year rule from 2008-2018. These initiatives not only transformed the education landscape but also provided access to quality education for numerous bright students from underprivileged backgrounds, empowering them to shape their futures.

The energy sector, too, experienced a much-needed transformation under PML-N's leadership. Our dedication led to a doubling of the installed capacity for energy generation, but unfortunately, the PTI government failed to capitalise on this energy infrastructure due to poor governance, leading to economic crises and mounting circular debt. However, we continue to strive for Pakistan's energy independence, as evidenced by our deal to purchase discounted Russian oil in Chinese currency, with the first consignment arriving in Karachi in June. This agreement aims to reduce our oil import bill and alleviate the trade deficit, further bolstering our economic prospects.

PML-N is deeply committed to nurturing a new generation of educated and dynamic young leaders. In this issue, we present an exclusive interview with Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, a young face of PML-N, currently serving as the coordinator to the prime minister on commerce and industry. His inspiring journey, starting from assisting his father, Rana Muhammad Afzal Khan, in political campaigns as a student, to stepping into the world of politics as a young professional, truly embodies the spirit of our party's vision and values.

As a party with a global presence, we take immense pride in our cadre of Pakistani expatriates living around the world. Their unwavering support, valuable foreign exchange contributions, and dedication to uplifting Pakistan through various programs and policies are commendable. This issue highlights the activities of PML-N chapters overseas and their continued commitment to Pakistan's development.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together. Your feedback and support mean a lot to us, and we look forward to continuing this journey of progress and prosperity together.

Sincerely,

Saira Bano
Editor-in-Chief

EDITORIAL BOARD

Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Saira Bano, Attaullah Tarar, Badar Shahbaz



EDUCATION IN PUNJAB: A DECADE OF PROGRESS

SULTAN ALI RANJHA

Education is a crucial factor in the socio-economic development of any region. Over the past decade, the province of Punjab in Pakistan has witnessed significant advancements in its education sector. This article aims to explore the remarkable developments and achievements in education from 2008 to 2018, focusing on the efforts made by the Punjab government to promote education. Through a descriptive research design, incorporating qualitative and quantitative data from various sources, this piece provides insight into the initiatives, challenges, and prospects of education in the province.

Shehbaz Sharif's Contribution to Education (2008-2018)

During his tenure as chief minister, Shehbaz Sharif played a pivotal role in transforming the education landscape in Punjab. Recognised as an able

administrator, he prioritised developmental projects and facilitated access to education for all (Zeidan, 2023). One of the significant achievements was the increase in enrollment rates. Under the Schools Reforms Roadmap Program, the Punjab Government outsourced 43,000 schools through public-private partnerships, resulting in a rise in enrollment (The Express Tribune, 2017).

In the pursuit of these educational reforms, Shehbaz Sharif received significant support from his education minister, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan. As the education minister, Khan played a crucial role in implementing various educational initiatives and policies. His dedication and strategic leadership complemented Sharif's vision for improving educational outcomes in Punjab. Together, they worked towards enhancing the quality of education and expanding educational opportunities for students.

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DURING HIS TENURE AS CHIEF MINISTER, SHEHBAZ SHARIF PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN TRANSFORMING THE EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN PUNJAB.

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Literacy Rates

The emphasis on adult literacy programs, particularly for women, contributed to the increase in Punjab's overall literacy rate from 55.53 per cent in 2008 to 57.01 per cent in 2018 (Macrotrends LLC, n.d.). Although progress has been made, certain rural areas still face challenges in achieving widespread literacy.

Infrastructure Development

In addition to internal reforms, Shehbaz Sharif focused on improving the educational infrastructure in Punjab. The government initiated numerous projects to construct and upgrade schools, libraries, and laboratories. This investment provided students with improved access to quality education and enhanced learning environments.

Government Initiatives and Schemes

The government of Punjab introduced several educational initiatives during the 2008-2018 period to enhance educational outcomes. These initiatives included:

1. Punjab Education Endowment Fund:

The Punjab Education Endowment Fund (PEEF) emerged as a positive scholarship scheme, providing financial assistance to talented students not only in Punjab but also from other provinces. Since its inception in 2009, PEEF has awarded over 440,000 scholarships to deserving students (The Punjab Educational Endowment, n.d.).

2. Laptop Scheme: The laptop distribution program was launched in 2011 by the Punjab government under the leadership of Chief Minister

Shehbaz Sharif. The scheme aimed to bridge the digital divide and promote digital literacy among students. Initially, the laptops were awarded to high-achieving students enrolled in government institutions. Later, the program expanded to include students from private institutions as well.

3. International Trips for High Achievers:

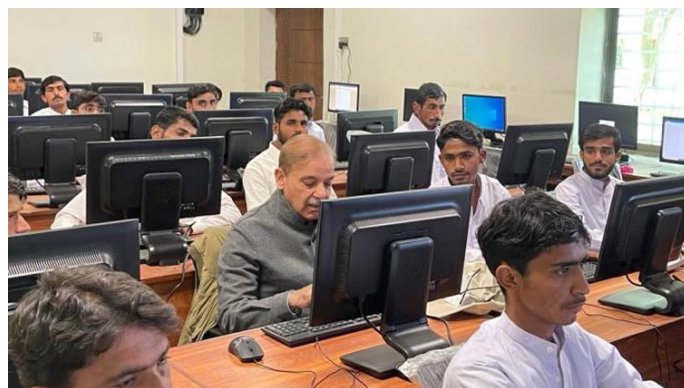
As part of the government's efforts to encourage excellence in education, Shehbaz Sharif facilitated agreements with international educational institutions. This initiative allowed outstanding students to pursue higher education or participate in academic programs abroad, thereby gaining exposure to global educational standards and opportunities.

4. Scooties for Female Students:

The government of Punjab recognised the challenges faced by female students in accessing education, particularly in remote areas. To address this issue, the government introduced the provision of scooters (scooties) for female students. By providing transportation assistance, this initiative aimed to enhance the enrollment and attendance of girls in schools, promoting gender equality.

5. Waseela-e-Taleem Program:

Launched in 2012, the Waseela-e-Taleem program was a conditional cash transfer initiative designed to support the education of disadvantaged children. The program targeted families living below the poverty line and provided them with financial assistance in exchange for enrolling their children in schools and ensuring their regular attendance. The program initially covered five districts and later expanded to 50 districts across Punjab, reaching thousands of underprivileged children.



6. Foundation Assisted Schools (FAS): The Foundation Assisted Schools program was established in 2005 by the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF). It aimed to improve access to quality education in underserved areas. The PEF partnered with various private schools, including those in rural, urban, and slum areas, to provide financial and technical assistance. Through this program, over 1.80 million students had the opportunity to receive a quality education.

7. TEVTA Revitalisation: Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) is responsible for promoting technical education in Punjab. During the 2008-2018 period, Shehbaz Sharif's government allocated funds to revitalise TEVTA. The funds were used to modernise the technical education curriculum, provide training to teachers, and collaborate with Turkish institutions to acquire expertise and improve the quality of technical education in Punjab.

8. Daanish Schools: The Punjab Daanish Schools and Centres of Excellence Authority were established in 2010 to provide quality education to underprivileged students. Daanish Schools, operated under this authority, are a network of residential schools that cater to children from low-income backgrounds. These schools focus on providing a high standard of

education, along with boarding facilities, to ensure holistic development and equal opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

9. Zewar-e-Taleem Program: Recognising the critical role of girls' education in the development of Pakistan, the government of Punjab launched a commendable initiative called the Zewar-e-Taleem program. This program aimed to enhance female education by focusing on the enrollment and retention of girls in schools, with the overarching goal of ensuring gender equality in education.

The Zewar-e-Taleem program operates under the umbrella of the Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA), which was established with the mandate to evaluate, review, and streamline existing social protection and anti-poverty programs. Created in 2015 during Sharif's tenure as the chief minister of Punjab, the PSPA is a statutory body established through an Act of the provincial legislature. Its primary objective is to set up a comprehensive, efficient, effective, and inclusive social protection system that caters to the needs of the poor and vulnerable population in Punjab (Social Protection.org, para. 1).

10. Punjab Youth Policy 2012: The Punjab Youth Policy emerged as a well-planned scheme, specifically focusing on the youth. This policy comprehensively



addresses key issues concerning the young generation and provides an agenda that promises socio-economic and political empowerment. Its primary objective is to foster a cohesive vision for youth development by creating an enabling environment that facilitates the development of skills, capabilities, and a passion for positive change, thereby contributing to the country's progress. The policy aims to cultivate the human resource base of young individuals and transform them into valuable social capital by nurturing their competencies, skills, and social commitment. Among the notable features of this policy, the provision of scholarships to high achievers and the arrangement of training programs to guide youth in starting and running their own businesses after graduation are noteworthy initiatives (Punjab Youth Policy 2012, Pgs. 7&18).

II. Induction Training of College Teachers

Teaching and learning are inherently interconnected. Teachers must be well-prepared to address the logical and thought-provoking questions posed by intellectually gifted students. Moreover, with the rapid advancements in technology, learners often outpace teachers, making it essential for educators to continually update their knowledge and teaching techniques. Recognising this, Shehbaz Sharif foresaw the importance of developing a teacher training program to ensure that educators are equipped with

the latest teaching methodologies, with a particular emphasis on activity-based learning to enhance students' skills. These training sessions are not limited to teachers alone but also extend to principals across Punjab. By prioritising teacher development, Shehbaz Sharif intended to elevate the teaching profession and maintain the respect it deserves while facilitating effective learning experiences for students.

The work done in Punjab has been recognised by international media. The purpose of all these reforms was to provide comprehensive training to the youth right from the start, to shape their lives, careers, and futures. This training is crucial not only for addressing national challenges but also for preparing them to effectively tackle global challenges alongside other nations.

PML-N demonstrated its commitment to realising this vision during its governance in Punjab from 2008 to 2018. By implementing groundbreaking reforms in the education sector, the party exemplified that determination and dedication can turn any aspiration into a reality. With unwavering resolve, PML-N aims to forge ahead and sustain educational reforms in Punjab and extend them throughout the rest of the country ■

The writer is an educationist and teaches at the University of Central Punjab.



TOWARDS ECONOMIC RECOVERY

MUHAMMAD ALI BHALLI

After a prolonged period of uncertainty and decline, Pakistan's economy has received a significant boost. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a much-needed \$3 billion bailout package for Pakistan, a crucial move to prevent the country from defaulting on its debt repayments. These funds would be released over nine months, with an initial disbursement of approximately \$1.2 billion. The positive impact of the anticipated approval was already evident following the conclusion of a staff-level agreement between the IMF and Pakistan late last month.

The economic climate showed signs of improvement when the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) reopened after the Eid-ul-Azha holidays on 3 July 2023. Within a short period, the KSE-100 benchmark index surged past 2,400 points, prompting a temporary suspension of trading for an hour after reaching its upper circuit limit of 5 per cent around 9:30 am. The market has continued to perform well since then.

The agreement with the IMF paved the way for the receipt of crucial support from other countries who were awaiting this outcome. Shortly after the staff agreement was finalised, Pakistan received an important transaction from Saudi Arabia. "State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has received [a] deposit of \$2 billion from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This inflow has increased the forex reserves held by SBP and will accordingly be reflected in the forex reserves for the week ending July 14 July," Pakistan's Minister of Finance Ishaq Dar announced on Twitter.

The next day, United Arab Emirates (UAE) disbursed a fresh loan of \$1 billion further strengthening the country's foreign exchange reserves at the central bank, which had touched critically low levels in recent weeks.

With economic certainty returning, the business community anticipates that Pakistan's stock market will begin performing in alignment with its true value.

ECONOMY

Previously, the market was undervalued and did not reflect its fundamentals accurately.

When the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) assumed the government from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in April 2022, the country was on the verge of default. It took some time for the current administration to curtail the damage done to the economy during the PTI's tenure. Acknowledging the extent of this damage, the government formulated a comprehensive roadmap for economic recovery, prioritising genuine solutions over temporary fixes.

A significant step towards economic revival is the establishment of a Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in coordination with the military.

“Employing a whole-of-the-government approach, the coalition government has decided to set up a Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) with a mandate to frame economic policies that ensure policy predictability, continuity & effective implementation to revive the economy,” Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Twitter.

The successful civil-military coordination in meeting the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) targets and getting Pakistan out of its grey list last year demonstrated that bureaucratic hurdles can be overcome through effective coordination at the highest level of the state. That strategy is now being employed for Pakistan's economic recovery and prosperity.

According to a government press release, “The plan envisages capitalising Pakistan's untapped potential in key sectors of defence production, agricultural / livestock, minerals/mining, IT and energy, through indigenous development as well as investments from friendly countries. To fast-track the development of projects, the establishment of [a] Special Investment Facilitation Council has been undertaken to act as a ‘single window’ interface for...potential investors.”

Previously, foreign investors faced a cumbersome process involving multiple layers of checks and approvals that could extend for months, if not years,

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THE MILITARY'S INVOLVEMENT IN SIFC SERVES AS A PIVOTAL FORCE FOR IMPLEMENTING NECESSARY STEPS TO ATTRACT INVESTMENTS REGARDLESS OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

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before they could establish a business in Pakistan. However, with the introduction of the SIFC, investors can now benefit from a streamlined approach. The SIFC functions as a dedicated help desk, eliminating the need for investors to navigate through various government offices. Instead, they can receive prompt responses and necessary approvals more efficiently.

SIFC comprises an apex committee, an executive committee, and an implementation committee, with the chief of army staff (COAS) would be a member of its apex committee. The press release states that the COAS assured “the Pakistan Army's all-out support to complement government's efforts for economic revival plan.”

The military's involvement in this initiative serves as a pivotal force for implementing necessary steps to attract investments regardless of the political situation. It is the nature of Pakistan's politics that governments often avoid taking tough economic decisions in the election year for fear of losing votes. It has been a rough year and a half for the PDM government since coming to power, but it did not hesitate to take hard decisions for the sake of the country.

While challenges persist, the government's commitment to the country's long-term prosperity bodes well for sustainable growth. The successful implementation of these initiatives and continued cooperation between various stakeholders will be essential in ensuring a robust and resilient economy ■

The writer is a corporate financial specialist.



EXPANDING ENERGY PORTFOLIO: AN OVERVIEW

HAMMAD RAZA

Pakistan has received its first consignment of Russian crude oil under an agreement signed between the two countries in April 2023. The cargo carrying 45,000 metric tonnes of crude oil arrived in Karachi; while another 50,000 metric tonnes is expected to arrive later on, according to the Pakistan Refinery Limited (PRL), where the crude oil will be processed for usage.

Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif called the arrival of the Russian crude a “transformative day” for Pakistan as a new supply line of oil has been created by the government. It is worthwhile to note here that no such agreement was inked between Pakistan and Russia before that as propagated by the PTI. It is the achievement of the current government of PDM and its allies alone, which took advantage of this opportunity and turned it into reality.

As Russia is under sanction due to its invasion of

Ukraine last year, cutting its oil and gas exports to the European Union and the United States, the new oil deal with Pakistan will give Moscow a new oil market after India and China as the Ukraine conflict rages on. Pakistan’s Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik predicted that petrol prices in the country will fall once the supply from Russia is received regularly and refineries start refining oil in line with the principle of demand and supply. “If we start getting one-third of our crude oil from Russia, then there will be a big difference in prices and its effect will reach people’s pockets,” he said.

The coalition government under the premiership of Shehbaz Sharif is working hard to reduce the import bill of oil so that the trade deficit may be reduced. According to one forecast, the import bill in terms of oil payments will be reduced from \$13 billion to \$10 billion, saving a hefty amount of \$3 billion, thus reducing the current account deficit too.

ANALYSIS

In a major boost to the Pakistan-Russia energy trade, a shipment of Russian liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) has also reached Pakistan via land route through Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, a day after a Russian oil tanker docked the Karachi Port. The shipment comprises 10 containers of Russian LPG.

Coal

While Pakistan has vast coal reserves, its production is quite low. The total consumption of coal by different sectors of the economy stood at 15.418 million metric tonnes during the period under consideration, out of which 9.402 million metric tonnes were mined indigenously from various coalfields of the country, the main among them the Thar coalfield. The remaining 6.576 million tonnes were imported from various international suppliers.

Pakistan plans to continually increase its domestic coal production in order to meet the burgeoning demand of its power sector and expand the industry. There is an urgent push by the government to shift away from imported coal and to increase dependence on indigenously produced coal.

Pakistan has more than 186 billion tonnes of coal reserves. These reserves have the potential to meet the energy needs of the country for a long time to come. However, power generation and the development of industry using coal as a raw material cause environmental issues.

Coal can help Pakistan end its power woes, and supercharge its industry to grow while creating employment and generating income along the way.

It must, however, be stressed that too much reliance on coal will inevitably cause environmental pollution, which has already become an existential threat to the country and the world. Therefore, the country must switch to clean and green sources of energy as soon as possible while using coal to reach that end.

Oil and gas

Pakistan has been heavily reliant on fossil fuels, particularly oil and gas, for power generation. However, the power production mix has undergone some changes in recent years.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), as of 2020, fossil fuels accounted for approximately 63 per cent of the total power generation, followed by hydropower at 29 per cent, nuclear energy at 5 per cent, and renewable energy at around 3 per cent. The portion of renewable energy in the entire energy portfolio has been at an abysmal level.



“ THE WORLD BANK REPORTS THAT PAKISTAN HAS A POTENTIAL OF 40 GW OF SOLAR POWER AND HAS SET A TARGET OF ACHIEVING 20 PER CENT OF ITS ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLE SOURCES BY 2025. ”



Solar power

In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed substantial investments in solar power projects, both domestic and foreign. It has introduced a financing scheme for renewable energy to make financing available for consumers in the private sector to invest in renewable electricity generation. Until February 2022, SBP had provided Rs 74 billion (about \$400 million) in financing to over 1,175 projects with a combined capacity of 1,375 MW in renewable energy.

The World Bank reports that Pakistan has a potential of 40 GW of solar power and has set a target of achieving 20 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2025.

Several challenges need to be addressed to fully harness Pakistan's solar energy potential. These challenges include the high initial costs of solar installations, limited access to financing, lack of awareness about solar energy benefits, and inadequate grid infrastructure.

To overcome these obstacles, the current government is working on a new 25-year energy policy that seeks to have 20-30 per cent of all energy derived from renewable energy sources by 2030. The policy also



aims to reduce dependence on imported fuel products and increase the share of indigenous resources.

Alternative and Renewable Energy Policy

The current government has approved the Alternative and Renewable Energy Policy 2019, which provides incentives and facilitation for renewable energy projects. The previous government also faced challenges in implementing the National Electricity Policy 2021, which was approved by the Council of Common Interests in February 2021. In budget 2023-2024, the government has planned to switch 50,000 tube wells to solar energy to boost the agriculture sector and save energy bills.

Hence, the coalition government under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is expanding the energy portfolio of Pakistan by exploring new suppliers as well as working on indigenous and renewable energy resources to attain a sustainable energy profile for Pakistan ■



RANA IHSAAN AFZAL KHAN: PML-N'S RISING STAR

RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT

We are delighted to present to you our guest, Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, coordinator to the prime minister on trade and commerce, and one of the most recognised faces of the PML-N in the media. Known for his calmness, composure, and evidence-based arguments, Ihsaan Afzal Khan has earned praise not only from his supporters, workers, and party leadership but also from his political opponents.

PML-N's Research and Policy Planning Unit takes pride in claiming Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan as one of their own, having been an active part of the team before moving on to his current responsibility.

Horizon: Welcome, Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, or should we say welcome back?

RIAK: Thank you very much. I would say it's more like "welcome back home." The Research and Policy

Planning Unit of PML-N will always be like family to me. I was fortunate to be part of this dynamic and talented team from the early stages of my political career. Working with such dedicated professionals and researchers from various fields groomed me and contributed significantly to my growth. I want to express my gratitude to Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, the founder of the unit, and Saira Bano, our team leader, for giving me this opportunity.

Horizon: That is wonderful to hear. So, let's get to know more about Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan. Can you tell us about your background and upbringing?

RIAK: Certainly. I was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 1983, as my family had moved there due to my father's work after he retired from the army. Our roots are in Faisalabad, Pakistan, where my father, Rana Afzal Khan, later returned and established a 100-bed



hospital. My childhood was spent in and around the hospital, as our residence was on the top floor of the building. I was the third of four siblings. My mother, Najma Afzal Khan, is a doctor and later served as a member of the Punjab Assembly. My parents maintained strict discipline, but we also had the freedom to explore and grow. When I grew up a little, I got to work various jobs at the hospital as an intern -- as a gatekeeper, a receptionist, and an accountant.

Horizon: That sounds like a unique upbringing. What is your educational and professional background?

RIAK: I am a graduate of LUMS, where I majored in economics. After completing my education, I joined my family business and played a role in diversifying it. We ventured into chipboard manufacturing, and I had the honour of serving as the Chairman of All Pakistan Chipboard Manufacturers thrice. Additionally, I served as a board member of Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO).

Horizon: You mentioned that you entered politics after the passing of your father, Rana Afzal Khan, who was a respected member of the National Assembly and a former state minister for finance. What motivated you to pursue a political career beyond his legacy?

RIAK: Participating in my father's election campaigns allowed me to connect with the people and understand their issues. After his passing, I felt a strong sense of responsibility to continue his legacy of serving the people he cared deeply for. My

experiences during those campaigns and my desire to make a positive impact on people's lives compelled me to enter politics.

Horizon: Your dedication to public service is commendable. How did you transition into active politics, and did your family name significantly influence your journey?

RIAK: Although my father's name did open doors for initial introductions, in PML-N, we are results-driven. Merely having a big name isn't enough; one must deliver to be relevant. I joined the Research and Policy Planning Unit as Ihsaan Khan, where I had to prove my worth through hard work and dedication. We successfully published white papers and exposed the government's falsehoods based on facts. Simultaneously, I started appearing in the media. That's when I gained some recognition, and the party leadership noticed me, gradually entrusting me with additional responsibilities.

Horizon: Could you elaborate on the responsibilities you have undertaken within the party?

RIAK: After working in the Research and Policy Planning Unit, I was picked to serve within PML-N Punjab under Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz. Unfortunately, due to an unjust interpretation of Article 63-A of the Constitution by the Supreme Court, he had to vacate the office. Subsequently, I was called upon to work with the central government and joined the team of the federal finance minister. He



allowed us to attend all high-level meetings to prepare us for leadership roles in the future. It was during this time that I fully realised the dire state in which the previous government had left our economy. Pakistan was on the verge of default. Our team spared no effort to avert this crisis and made difficult decisions in an election year. Normally, political parties avoid making such decisions even in the first year of government for fear of losing political capital. But our party places the love for Pakistan above everything else, and *Alhamdulillah*, we succeeded.

Horizon: As the coordinator to the prime minister, you work closely with him. How would you describe him as a leader?

RIAK: The prime minister is a man of action. He is incredibly focused and deeply involved in every aspect of his work. There is no room for idleness or a laid-back approach in his office. He excels in forming teams of highly capable individuals who consistently deliver results, as exemplified by the establishment of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), where all stakeholders will collaborate to expedite decision-making. His meetings are characterised by remarkable efficiency, leaving no room for repetitions. Quick decisions are made, and he diligently pushes

for their prompt implementation. If PML-N is elected again, I am confident that Pakistan will soon emerge from its current crisis.

Horizon: It's inspiring to witness such dedication in leadership. Given your experience at the highest levels of government, where do you believe reforms are most urgently needed?

RIAK: Pakistan requires comprehensive political, economic, and bureaucratic reforms. One of the significant flaws in our political system is the barrier to entry for new and diverse voices. Many of our parliamentarians are property tycoons or, in the past, were traditional landowners (*waderas*). These individuals may not be motivated to bring about meaningful change in the system. We need to reform the system so that ordinary people can reach parliament, not just the super-rich. Second, we need strong local governments to deal with civic issues. Ideally, our national and provincial legislators should focus on legislation, but they are often bogged down with their constituents' civic problems and issues of *thana kachehri*, which hampers their ability to legislate effectively.

Similarly, our economy calls for structural reforms.

Revenue reforms should entail tax reform, bringing sectors that currently pay minimal or no taxes, such as retailers, agriculture, and property, into the tax net. We must also address tax evasion. Simplifying the tax system can increase direct taxes while reducing regressive ones. On the expenditure side, we need reforms in pension schemes, subsidies, and government size. Streamlining government operations at federal and provincial levels and empowering local governance can enhance efficiency. We must improve financial planning for government schemes and better manage state-owned enterprises. Additionally, the burden of debt needs to be shared with the provinces, as they receive a significant portion of the finances. Without these reforms, the status quo will prevail, hindering progress.

Reforms in the bureaucracy are equally important. The current practice of rotating central superior services officers across different departments lacks continuity. It is unrealistic to expect an officer to be an expert in health, finance, education, energy, and other diverse fields. This flawed model yields flawed results. Instead, we should allow professionals to grow within their respective fields, rather than constantly rotating them through various important positions.

Horizon: Why haven't we been able to bring such reforms so far?

RIAK: Implementing these reforms requires bold decisions. Often, there is internal pressure within political parties to avoid challenging the system due to the potential impact on the vote bank. However, we must communicate to the public that these reforms are essential for Pakistan's long-term prosperity, even

if they entail temporary hardships. It is crucial to resist politicising issues like petrol, electricity, and gas prices, as the government should not subsidise these commodities.

Horizon: On a lighter note, what kind of music do you enjoy, do you play any sports, and what is your favourite food?

RIAK: My taste in music depends on my mood and the situation. When I'm at the gym, I prefer to listen to energising gym songs to keep me motivated. Sports have been a significant part of my life; I was part of the squash and swimming teams in school, and I also enjoyed playing football and hockey. During my university days, I joined the snooker team, and I have skills in skiing and riding as well.

As for food, one of my favourites is qeema topped with cheese, paired with roti.

Horizon: That sounds delightful! Is your wife also involved in a professional career, and do you have any children?

RIAK: My wife is a dentist, and while she technically could be working, she is currently fully focused on taking care of our three wonderful children.

Horizon: Family is essential, indeed. In conclusion, what message would you like to convey to our readers?

RIAK: I would like to urge all readers and supporters to stand by PML-N, the most progressive party in Pakistan, with a track record of delivering on its promises under the dynamic leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif and Mian Shehbaz Sharif. Our party's future looks bright, with enthusiastic youngsters and aspiring politicians in its ranks. The face of PML-N under Maryam Nawaz and Hamza Shahbaz reaffirms our faith in democracy.

Horizon: Thank you for your time, Ihsaan.

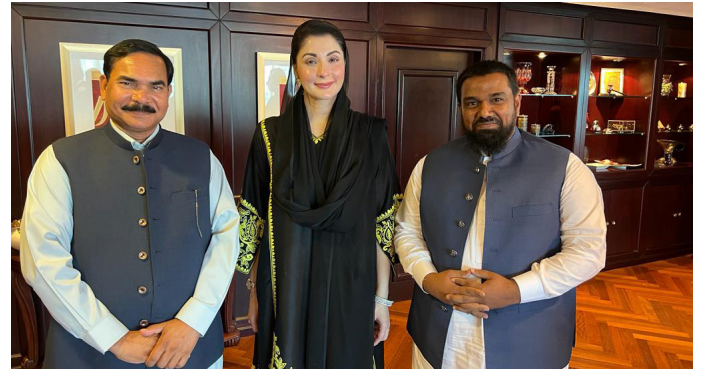
RIAK: The pleasure is all mine. It is always good to be back home ■



PML-N OVERSEAS

DR RANA KHALID MEHMOOD

In recent overseas engagements, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has been actively addressing the concerns of its global chapters while reaffirming its commitment to overseas Pakistanis. Former Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has been at the forefront of these meetings, where he expressed his determination to restore Pakistan's economy and development.



France chapter meeting



On 16 June 2023, Barrister Amjad Malik organized a meeting of PML-N's France chapter with Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in London.

Dubai chapter meeting



On 2 July 2023, Pakistan Muslim League-N leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif had a detailed meeting with a delegation of the PML-N UAE chapter during his visit to the country. PML-N Senior Vice President and Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz was also present on the occasion.



During the meeting, Mian Nawaz Sharif offered prayers for the late party president of the UAE chapter, Chaudhry Muhammad Altaf, and paid tribute to his services. He expressed concern over the economic situation of Pakistan, expressing disdain for those who have caused its downfall. He criticised the unjust decisions made by judges, unparalleled in modern human history.

The President of Pakistan Muslim League-N Gulf Region and Member of the National Assembly, Chaudhry Ehsan Ul Haq Bajwa, warmly welcomed Mian Nawaz Sharif, stating that his presence is vital for Pakistan's development. General Secretary Raja Abubakar Effendi also expressed a warm welcome, highlighting the significant development work accomplished during Nawaz Sharif's tenure.

The meeting was attended by other prominent members, including PML-N-Gulf General Secretary Iftikhar Butt, Vice President Khawaja Abdul Waheed Pal, Senior Vice President Chaudhry Abdul Ghaffar, Vice President Chaudhry Faisal Altaf, and Vice President Raja Khalid Mehmood.

Saudi Arabia chapter meeting



On 11 July 2023, PML-N leaders convened a meeting with Nawaz Sharif in Saudi Arabia. The delegation led by General Secretary PML-N Saudi Arabia, Malik Manzoor Hussain Awan, included General Secretary Jeddah Maher Abdul Khaliq Lak, senior leader Irfanul Hasan Sadra, Deputy Social Media Head Zohaib Shahzad Khokhar, Saif Manzoor Malik, and Maulvi Abdul Shakoor.

During the meeting, Mian Nawaz Sharif reaffirmed the importance of overseas Pakistanis, calling them the country's capital. He pledged to address the challenges faced by overseas Pakistanis, emphasising that PML-N is the representative party for Pakistanis living abroad. Nawaz Sharif expressed

his determination to restore Pakistan's economy and development, which he said was disrupted in 2018 due to a conspiracy.

Meeting with Punjab governor



PML-N General Secretary Overseas MNA Chaudhry Noor-ul-Hasan Tanveer and President PML-N Saudi Arabia Sheikh Saeed Ahmed met with Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh Ur Rehman at the Governor House to discuss the problems faced by Pakistanis in the Middle East. They emphasised the significance of foreign exchange sent by Pakistanis from the Middle East and urged the government to pay special attention to resolving their issues.

PDM parties' UK press conference



Barrister Amjad Malik organised a press conference of UK-based leaders from the Pakistan Democratic Movement parties in London. The leaders strongly condemned the events of 9 May in which PTI followers attacked military monuments, offices, and homes, as well as vandalised public property. They called for strict action from the government against those involved in the tragic incident ■

PICTURE GALLERY



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF AND COAS GENERAL ASIM MUNIR INTERACT WITH SOLDIERS ON THE OCCASION OF EID UL ADHA IN PARACHINAR, KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA. 29 JUNE 2023



SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF ORGANIZER PML-N MARYAM NAWAZ ADDRESSING THE YOUTH CONVENTION AT SHUJAABAD, MULTAN. 11 JUNE 2023



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF MEETS GERMAN CHANCELLOR OLAF SCHOLZ ON THE SIDELINES OF THE SUMMIT FOR A NEW GLOBAL FINANCING PACT IN PARIS. 23 JUNE 2023



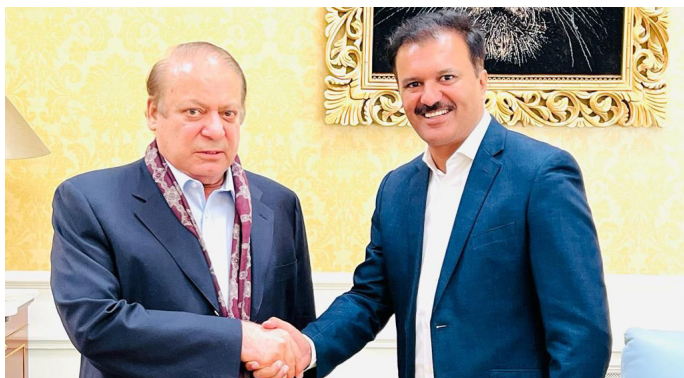
PRIME MINISTER SHEHBAZ SHARIF MEETS PRESIDENT OF THE EU COMMISSION URSULA VON DER LEYEN ON THE SIDELINES OF THE NEW GLOBAL FINANCING PACT SUMMIT IN PARIS. 23 JUNE 2023



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF MEETS PRESIDENT OF FRANCE EMMANUEL MACRON ON THE SIDELINES OF NEW GLOBAL FINANCING PACT SUMMIT BEING HELD IN PARIS, FRANCE. 22 JUNE 2023



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF MEETS CROWN PRINCE AND PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA MUHAMMAD BIN SALMAN ON THE SIDELINES OF NEW GLOBAL FINANCING PACT SUMMIT HELD IN PARIS, FRANCE. 22 JUNE 2023



PML-N LEADER FROM PUNJAB SULTAN ALI RANJHA MET WITH MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF IN LONDON. 16 JUNE 2023



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF IN A GROUP PHOTO WITH SEVERAL FEDERAL MINISTERS, SENIOR OFFICIALS OF ISLAMABAD POLICE AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AFTER THE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY OF NATIONAL POLICE HOSPITAL IN ISLAMABAD. 20 JUNE 2023



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF LAYING FLORAL WREATH AT THE YADGAR-E-SHUHADA IN POLICE LINES HEADQUARTERS. ISLAMABAD. 20 JUNE 2023



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF BEING BRIEFED ABOUT THE MARGALLA AVENUE PROJECT AT ITS INAUGURAL IN ISLAMABAD. 20 JUNE 2023



WANG YONGGE, PRESIDENT OF CHINA NATIONAL NUCLEAR CORPORATION OVERSEAS LTD AND MUHAMMAD SAEED UR REHMAN, MEMBER POWER, PAKISTAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION SIGNING AN AGREEMENT FOR UNIT 5 OF CHASHMA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT (C-5) IN ISLAMABAD. 20 JUNE 2023



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF HANDS OVER THE KEYS OF TRANSPORT VEHICLES DONATED TO PAKISTAN SWEET HOMES ORPHANAGE BY GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN IN ISLAMABAD. 20 JUNE 2023



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF INTERACTS WITH CHILDREN FROM PAKISTAN SWEET HOMES ORPHANAGE IN ISLAMABAD. 20 JUNE 2023





PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF IN A GROUP PHOTO WITH THE WINNERS OF PM'S NATIONAL INNOVATION AWARD. ISLAMABAD. 19 JUNE 2023





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