

# HORIZON

December 2023

**TRUTH TRIUMPHS,  
NAWAZ SHARIF  
VINDICATED**

RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT  
**PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE - NAWAZ**

# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

As we draw the curtains on this year, a momentous chapter concludes for Mian Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and indeed the nation itself. After enduring seven arduous years, justice has finally prevailed, with Mr Sharif acquitted of corruption charges found to lack merit. His profound faith in Allah sustained him during a period marked by gross injustice that compelled him to vacate the highest governmental office and led to his incarceration. This transgression was not merely against an individual; rather, it amounted to an affront against the entire nation, wherein an elected leader was unjustly removed through what can only be described as a judicial coup, trampling upon the will of the people.

As the year draws to a close, it is serendipitous that Mian Nawaz Sharif can celebrate his birthday on the 25th of December with peace of mind unburdened by the label of corruption unjustly affixed to his name. The Horizon team extends heartfelt congratulations to him for his triumph over injustice and for commemorating his birthday, coincidentally shared with the birthday of the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. We are reminded of Jinnah's message of steadfastness and political struggle, principles that should resonate in our collective memory.

In the wake of Mian Nawaz Sharif's return, the PML-N is reinvigorated, gearing up for the forthcoming general elections with renewed determination. Mr Sharif has engaged in crucial discussions with political allies to reestablish contacts and explore potential alliances. Internally, the party's manifesto has been meticulously crafted, and the parliamentary board has convened numerous times to select PML-N candidates for various constituencies.

In parallel, the Supreme Court's directive to the Election Commission to promptly issue the election schedule for the 8th of February, 2024 is a welcome assurance, ending speculations. These developments augur well for democracy, offering a glimmer of hope to a populace long deprived of its true electoral mandate.

As the year draws to a close, let us take a moment for collective reflection on the nation's past and cast our gaze towards the future with optimism. In the spirit of inclusivity, we extend warm wishes to our Christian brothers and sisters, hoping they experience the joy and warmth of the festive season during their celebrations and wish them a Merry Christmas.

Best regards,

Saira Bano  
Editor-in-Chief

---

## EDITORIAL BOARD

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



# TRUTH TRIUMPHS, NAWAZ SHARIF VINDICATED

**RANA ASADULLAH KHAN**

Mian Nawaz Sharif was elected prime minister in 2013 by the people of Pakistan, but the decision of the masses was not acceptable to a few powerful individuals in the topmost echelons of power. They planned to remove an elected representative of the people by orchestrating a long march and later judicial victimisation. They thought that by bringing a cricket star, who by his oratorical skills promised ‘Naya Pakistan,’ they would change the fate of the country but the results proved otherwise. He messed with everything and Pakistan was brought to the verge of default.

It is not only Nawaz Sharif, but the entire nation that has paid the price for this political venture by the characters who stand exposed after the Islamabad High Court (IHC) decisions in the references brought against Nawaz Sharif and his family members. The last decision was announced by the IHC on 11 December 2023, acquitting him in the third reference of Al-Azizia Steel Mills after the Avenfield Properties reference earlier on 29 November 2023. National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has also withdrawn its appeal in IHC against his acquittal in the Flagship Investments reference.

The story of de-tracking the country begins with the long march started by Imran Khan on 14 August 2014 against the so-called rigged elections, the results of which were neither expected by him nor by his collaborators. The election rigging saga turned into a corruption scandal when the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) named Nawaz Sharif as one of the owners of offshore companies in Panama Papers. Imran Khan on the advice of Justice Asif Saeed Khosa approached the Supreme Court and filed a petition under Article 184(3) of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court immediately constituted a bench, ignoring the fact that ICIJ had withdrawn the name of Mian Nawaz Sharif in April 2016, clarifying that his name was mistakenly displayed as the original papers did not contain his name. The bench constituted a six members joint investigation team (JIT) who were nominated by the registrar of the Supreme Court against an order passed by the Supreme Court. When their nomination was challenged, they were called ‘six diamonds’ by the Supreme Court itself. Finally, in July 2017, the elected prime minister was removed from office, not on Panama Papers allegations but for



“  
**THE REFERENCES FILED  
 AGAINST NAWAZ SHARIF AND  
 HIS FAMILY HAD NO LEGAL  
 STANDING FROM DAY ONE  
 AS NAB SOLELY RELIED ON  
 REPORTS SUBMITTED BY JIT IN  
 THE SUPREME COURT.**  
 ”

not taking a salary from his son – a decision that will always be considered a blot on the name of Pakistan’s judiciary.

The Supreme Court, after removing Mian Nawaz Sharif from office, asked NAB to file references against him and his family members Maryam Nawaz, Hassan Nawaz, Hussain Nawaz, Capt (retd) Muhammad Safdar, and his finance minister, Ishaq Dar. In an unprecedented move, the Supreme Court nominated Justice Ijazul Ahsan as the monitoring judge to supervise and monitor the proceedings conducted by NAB and the accountability courts on the reports submitted by the JIT.

Three references related to the Avenfield properties, Al-Azizia Steel Mills, and Flagship Investments were filed against the Sharif family. The government and the courts maintained a biased and objectionable attitude during the court proceedings. Mian Nawaz Sharif and his family stood firm, maintaining their commitment to contest politically motivated cases on their merits, as he had declared after his removal. The accountability court had reserved the judgments as Nawaz Sharif had gone abroad to see his ailing wife, Kulsoom Nawaz. However, upon his announcement to

return to Pakistan on July 13, 2018, the accountability court promptly delivered its verdict, sentencing him to 10 years in jail along with a fine. His daughter Maryam Nawaz was given seven years in prison for abetment and concealing the properties of her father, and his son-in-law Capt (retd) Safdar one year for not cooperating with NAB.

It was presumed that Mian Nawaz Sharif would not return after the announcement of the verdict. Still, he landed in Lahore on 13 July with his daughter and submitted himself for arrest, a few days before the general elections of 2018. Later, in December he was convicted in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills reference.

The sole purpose of these convictions was to block Nawaz Sharif from contesting the election to pave the way for a favoured politician to ascend to power. The experiment went wrong when the cricket star-turned-politician, lacking experience in governance, started running the affairs of the state on the pattern of the cricket ground. Much credit goes to Shehbaz Sharif for bringing the country back on the right track and saving us from this dismal situation, after sending the blue-eyed boy home through a vote of no confidence in April 2022 and revitalising the dying economy.

The references filed against Nawaz Sharif and his family had no legal standing from day one as NAB solely relied on reports submitted by JIT in the Supreme Court. The leaked interview of Arshad Malik, the late accountability court judge, also proved how he was forced to decide against Nawaz Sharif and his family in NAB references. The IHC acquitted Maryam Nawaz and Capt (retd) Safdar in the Avenfield reference in 2022. The same court acquitted Nawaz Sharif on 29 November 2023, more than five years after his conviction. This followed Maryam Nawaz’s acquittal, whose verdict stated that NAB had failed to produce any evidence to substantiate the claims that the London properties were owned by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and that Maryam Nawaz abetted in acquiring, owning, and concealing these properties. The IHC also considered the statement of JIT head Wajid Zia in which he candidly admitted that there was no direct evidence of Nawaz Sharif’s ownership, possession, or title of registry of the



“ IT IS NOT ONLY NAWAZ SHARIF, BUT THE ENTIRE NATION THAT HAS PAID THE PRICE FOR THIS POLITICAL VENTURE BY THE CHARACTERS WHO STAND EXPOSED AFTER THE ISLAMABAD HIGH COURT DECISIONS IN THE REFERENCES BROUGHT AGAINST NAWAZ SHARIF AND HIS FAMILY MEMBERS. ”

properties in his name.

Earlier, Mian Nawaz Sharif was acquitted in the Flagship Investment reference by NAB in the year 2018 and the only case left against him was the Al-Azizia/Hill Metal Establishment. On the instructions of Mian Nawaz Sharif, his legal team withdrew the application for further investigation into the conduct of Arshad Malik and his confession of being coerced into delivering a guilty verdict in this case. This decision was made following the former judge's passing. Nawaz Sharif wanted the case to be decided on merit as he had forgiven the judge and had left everything to Allah.

During the appeal proceedings, the NAB counsels insisted on remanding the reference back to the trial court to have a decision on merit as former accountability judge Arshad Malik had been removed from service for misconduct. However, the division bench of the IHC did not agree with the NAB prosecutors and chose to decide the case on merit after seeing the evidence. IHC judges asked the NAB prosecutors what evidence they had gathered but, to the utter astonishment of the bench, they said that they only relied on the JIT report and documents.

The court wondered why they did not investigate independently before filing the references. The court questioned the mandate of the Supreme Court to interfere in the affairs of an independent organisation without any lawful authority. The prosecution could not satisfy the court when it was asked why they relied on photocopies instead of original documents and whether they confronted the writers of the documents to prove the veracity of the documents as required by

the law of evidence. The prosecution did not question the members of the JIT about the source of their information but made it part of their investigation. The court noted that the conviction appeared to rely on presumptions without any supporting evidence.

The IHC verdict has undoubtedly spared the judiciary from acquiring another blemish on its reputation, ultimately exonerating Nawaz Sharif from all baseless charges. One must appreciate Mian Nawaz Sharif and his family members' resilience and commitment to fight back against all corruption charges.

This decision has also exposed the characters who colluded to oust an elected prime minister through a judicial coup. The decision also raises questions about the ability of the monitoring judge and the role of the Supreme Court as it had no authority or power to appoint him. The Supreme Court, being the highest court of justice, must reconsider its limits and must learn to work within its ambit to avoid embarrassing itself by becoming party to a political campaign against an elected government in future. All the characters who played with the fate of the country must be held accountable for their actions.

The nation is optimistic that with a clean slate, Mian Nawaz Sharif will secure a significant majority in the upcoming elections. This sentiment is echoed by political analysts, who point to the monumental reception given by the people of Pakistan on October 21, 2023. There is hope and a resolute belief that Nawaz Sharif will pave the way for a brighter future for Pakistan ■

*The writer is an advocate of the Supreme Court.*



# CHOKED SKIES, A CALL TO ACTION FOR CLEAN AIR

ISHRAT ANSARI

Toxic smog, a form of air pollution, is taking a heavy toll on the residents of Punjab, particularly Lahore and its surrounding districts. Hundreds of people can be seen lined up at the hospitals awaiting treatment for illnesses caused by smog.

Several cities including Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Multan, Sahiwal, Sargodha, and areas of Sindh have been affected by smog. However, Lahore has been most severely affected by poor air quality in December and was ranked the most polluted city in the world. On December 13, the air quality index level of Lahore remained hazardous with an AQI of 348, according to the air quality index (AQI) ranking by IQAir, a Swiss air quality technology company.

Inhaling smog can lead to respiratory ailments and

also cause or aggravate conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, lung cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Moreover, it contributes to cardiovascular diseases as air pollutants impair blood vessel function.

The government imposed smart lockdowns in Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Multan, Sahiwal, and Sargodha to protect people from the harmful effects of smog. However, significant policy measures and coordinated efforts among various governmental departments are needed to combat this environmental hazard.

## WHAT CAUSES SMOG?

The phenomenon first emerged in parts of northern

“ THE INTRODUCTION OF EFFICIENT, RELIABLE, AND AFFORDABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR. IN ADDITION, THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY VEHICLES AND CLEAN TECHNOLOGIES IS IMPORTANT TO GRADUALLY REDUCE SMOG. ”



Punjab some two decades ago. Experts say that Lahore's air is polluted throughout the year but remains invisible. Pollution becomes evident in winter when it mixes with fog to form smog. Winter air pollution is worse because temperature inversion prevents warm air from rising and traps pollutants closer to the ground.

As per the National Climate Change Policy Report 2021, increasing air pollution from agriculture, transport, and industry results in smog inflicting huge loss to aviation, reduced mobility, and loss of lives in accidents due to poor visibility and health hazards. Smog is not only Pakistan's issue but it is indeed a regional issue.

### WHO IS MOST AFFECTED?

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), air pollution is one of the top five causes of death among the entire population of Pakistan and young children are the most severely affected, along with the elderly. "Children are physiologically more vulnerable to air pollution than adults because their brains, lungs, and other organs are still developing," it said, adding that children breathe twice as fast as adults, increasing exposure.

As soon as the smog set in, major public hospitals' paediatric emergency rooms in Lahore were packed with sick children and their parents. "It has gotten a lot worse than the previous years and it is affecting the health of children," Dr Maria Iftikhar, senior registrar at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital's paediatric department

told Dawn newspaper. Provincial Health Minister Dr Javed Akram said hospitals were on high alert. "Beds and ventilators have been set aside for extra emergency cases."

A report published by the University of Chicago has revealed that the average lifespan of residents in Lahore will decrease by seven years due to the effects of smog.

### IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING ENOUGH?

In order to deal with toxic smog, the government made mask-wearing outdoors mandatory, increased days off in schools, prohibited crop residue burning, took action against smoke-emitting vehicles and environmentally polluting factories, issued directives to brick kilns to adopt zig-zag technology, and even experimented with the extremely expensive option of artificial rain. But despite these efforts, smog continues to significantly impact the lives of residents.

Some experts argue that artificial rain is a potential solution to alleviate smog in Lahore. However, it is essential to recognise that this approach addresses the symptoms rather than the root cause of smog, offering only a temporary relief.

The Punjab government came up with a smog master plan and cracked down on brick kilns operating without zig-zag technology, banned crop burning, issued tickets to owners of smoke-emitting vehicles, and set up a commission to deal with illegal housing societies.



“ ACCORDING TO A REPORT BY THE URBAN UNIT OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT OF PUNJAB, 83 PER CENT OF LAHORE'S POLLUTION STEMS FROM THE TRANSPORT SECTOR. ”



Pakistan relies heavily on private transportation which leads to significant vehicular emissions that contribute to air pollution, therefore, the government must take initiatives on a war footing to enhance public transport.

According to a report by the Urban Unit of the Planning and Development Department of Punjab, 83 per cent of Lahore's pollution stems from the transport sector. The Urban Unit's May 2023 report titled Sectoral Emission Inventory of Lahore states that primary sources of pollution in Lahore include transportation, industry, agriculture, open-waste burning, and inefficient fuel consumption in commercial and domestic sectors. According to the report, the burning of crop residues contributes 3.9 per cent, while waste burning accounts for 3.6 per cent.

The report acknowledges that vehicle figures may be an overestimate since a large number of vehicles operating in various cities of Punjab province are registered in Lahore. However, the real figures would still be alarming enough to call for serious measures.

So far, the government has not devised a solid plan to curtail vehicular emissions to acceptable levels, which are responsible for causing a major share of the

air pollution in a city of 11 million people. Experts have proposed a regional clean air incentives market (RECLAIM) programme to clean air in Pakistan as the United States of America did in 1993.

In May 2023, Pakistan's Ministry of Climate Change introduced the National Clean Air Policy which aims to reduce harmful emissions in the next decade by introducing interventions in transport, industry, agriculture, waste, and household sectors. The main objectives of the policy are converting wood stoves and biomass cooking into cleaner and more fuel-efficient cooking and heating methods, removing the worst-emitting vehicles and implementing Euro fuel standards in the transport sector, stopping open burning in the agricultural sector as well as open burning of waste, and properly regulating industry emissions.

The introduction of efficient, reliable, and affordable public transport is the need of the hour. In addition, the use of renewable energy vehicles and clean technologies is important to gradually reduce smog. The government is trying to come up with policies to combat air pollution but only introducing policies will not work as implementation of the policies in letter and spirit is essential to get clean air and save lives ■





# A CANDID CONVERSATION WITH HINA PERVAIZ BUTT

## RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT

In this exclusive interview, we have the privilege of featuring Ms Hina Pervaiz Butt, a dynamic leader and one of the most distinguished female figures within PML-N. From the moment she entered the realm of politics, she has consistently taken centre stage in driving the party's political initiatives. Her commitment and dedication have recently led to her appointment as the Youth Coordinator of PML-N in Lahore. Join us as we delve into Ms Hina Butt's insights, experiences, and vision for the future in this illuminating conversation.

**HORIZON:** Thank you Ms Hina for taking time out of your busy schedule.

**HINA PERVAIZ BUTT (HPB):** I would say thank you to your team for allowing me to be your guest and

be part of the official publication of PML-N. I am a regular reader of Horizon and I commend the team for their outstanding work on this publication.

**HORIZON:** Thank you for the kind words. For our readers, could you tell us who Hina Parvaiz Butt is?

**HPB:** I am a mother, a daughter, and a Pakistani citizen concerned for my fellow citizens, interested in politics solely to play my part in the betterment of society.

**HORIZON:** How has your journey been as a female politician in the Punjab Assembly and Pakistan Muslim League, mainly?

**HPB:** I joined the party in 2013 and, before



becoming an MPA, I worked on issues concerning gender, especially for women and girls. I had very close interactions with underprivileged women. The desire to be their voice at the highest available forums compelled me to join politics. My journey with PML-N and as an MPA in Punjab has been excellent. I am satisfied with my performance and believe in continuing to strive for betterment.

**HORIZON:** Do you think PML-N provides equal opportunities without gender bias?

**HPB:** With the promotion of Maryam Nawaz as senior vice president and chief organiser of the party, I think all the doubts about PML-N's vision for women's empowerment should be laid to rest. Our party believes in merit, and women are given prominent positions based on their expertise and dedication. PML-N awards tickets to women to contest elections on general seats solely based on their work and presence in their constituencies. As a party, PML-N is evolving. It is considering suggestions for the political empowerment of women. You will see the difference yourself in the coming times.

**HORIZON:** You have been an MPA in the Punjab Assembly twice. How has the experience been, and how do you rate your performance?

**HPB:** Being part of the largest legislative assembly in Pakistan has been wonderful. It has enabled me to play my part as a legislator for women's empowerment,

youth affairs, and other issues. I cannot rate my own performance. People are the judge of politicians' performance, and I can only present mine in front of my constituents. From 2013–2023, I submitted the largest number of resolutions in the Punjab Assembly on different issues, the majority of which were adopted by the assembly. As an opposition member, I was one of the most active members raising questions during assembly sessions, holding the government accountable for their poor performance and making them rectify their mistakes.

**HORIZON:** As a female politician, have you faced challenges like chauvinistic comments and disrespectful remarks by male colleagues? You also have been a victim of online trolling and even physical harassment in London. What do you have to say about it?

**HPB:** I have faced gender-based disrespectful remarks from not only male politicians but also from female political opponents. Online trolling and abuse have been introduced as a weapon by a certain political cult. It has no respect for differences of opinion and freedom of speech.

The incident of physical harassment you are referring to was one of the most horrible experiences of my life. I was with my teenage son when I was surrounded by supporters of a rival political party, who were shouting and abusing me. They also threw bottles and other things at me. The saddest part is that all this happened on our Independence Day. I was advised to report the incident to the police, but as our leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has always practised and urged patience, I decided to forgive those involved.

**HORIZON:** You have worked with Mian Shehbaz Sharif and are close to PML-N's Senior Vice President and Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz. How do you describe the experience?

**HPB:** It is challenging to work with both; both are result-oriented. Shehbaz Sharif emphasises task completion speed, while Maryam Nawaz builds a bigger team to complete tasks on time. I also wish to work with Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for a



once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn from a three-time prime minister.

**HORIZON:** Coming to your personal life, please tell us about your childhood and educational background.

**HPB:** I was born in the Mozang area of Lahore. My father is an entrepreneur and founded Waves Pakistan, the pioneers in deep freezers and refrigerators. I studied at the Convent of Jesus and Mary, Kinnaird College, and later completed my BBA and MBA degrees from the prestigious Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS).

**HORIZON:** Is it true that you left medical college to pursue business studies?

**HPB:** Very few people know this. I must appreciate the homework team Horizon has done. My mother wanted me to become a doctor, but I always wanted to do business like my father. I was admitted to Fatima Jinnah Medical College on open merit. However, I soon realised medicine was not what I wanted to study. I left medical college to pursue my dream of studying business. After completing my MBA, instead of finding a job, I launched my clothing brand and worked hard to make it successful. After entering politics, however, I had to shelve my business, but I

intend to return to it at some point.

**HORIZON:** What are your hobbies and how do you spend your day?

**HPB:** I love to read, but due to intense political activity leading up to the upcoming elections, nowadays I get very little time for reading. I used to listen to music quite a lot but for the past two years, I have almost stopped listening to music.

Recently I developed an interest in studying the Holy Quran in depth and currently, I am taking classes to learn to read the Quran with Tajweed. This has helped me to evolve into a better person. Whatever time I get, I try to spend it with my Creator.

**HORIZON:** You belong to a Butt family and Butts are famous for their fondness for food.

**HPB:** (Laughing) I am a true Butt who loves eating daal chawal, paaye, nihari, etc. But I also practice a healthy lifestyle. I am a regular gym goer.

**HORIZON:** We have heard that you go to the gym even on Eid days.

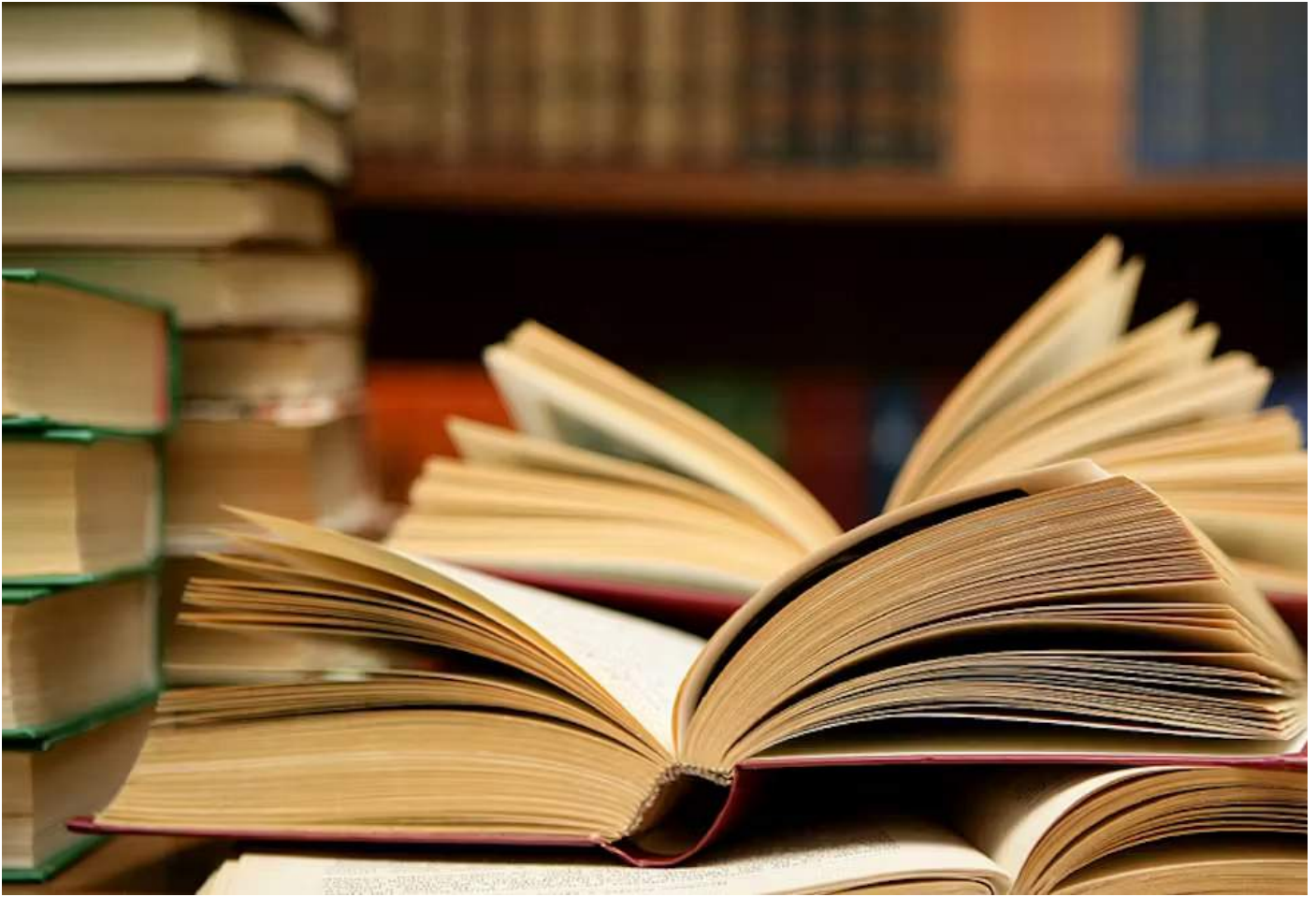
**HPB:** That is an exaggeration. I go to the gym five days a week but I ensure that I maintain my health.

**HORIZON:** Where do you see yourself in the next five years?

**HPB:** I do not plan that far ahead. I only give my best efforts and leave the results to Allah. All I can say is that you will see a better version of Hina in five years.

**HORIZON:** Ms Hina, thank you very much for your time. In the end, do you want to give a message to our readers?

**HPB:** As a female politician and youth coordinator, my message for all women and young people is to focus on education and work honestly in whatever field you choose and then leave the results to Allah. Allah is the only one who will give the best results for your efforts ■



# PEEF BREAKING BOUNDARIES IN EDUCATION

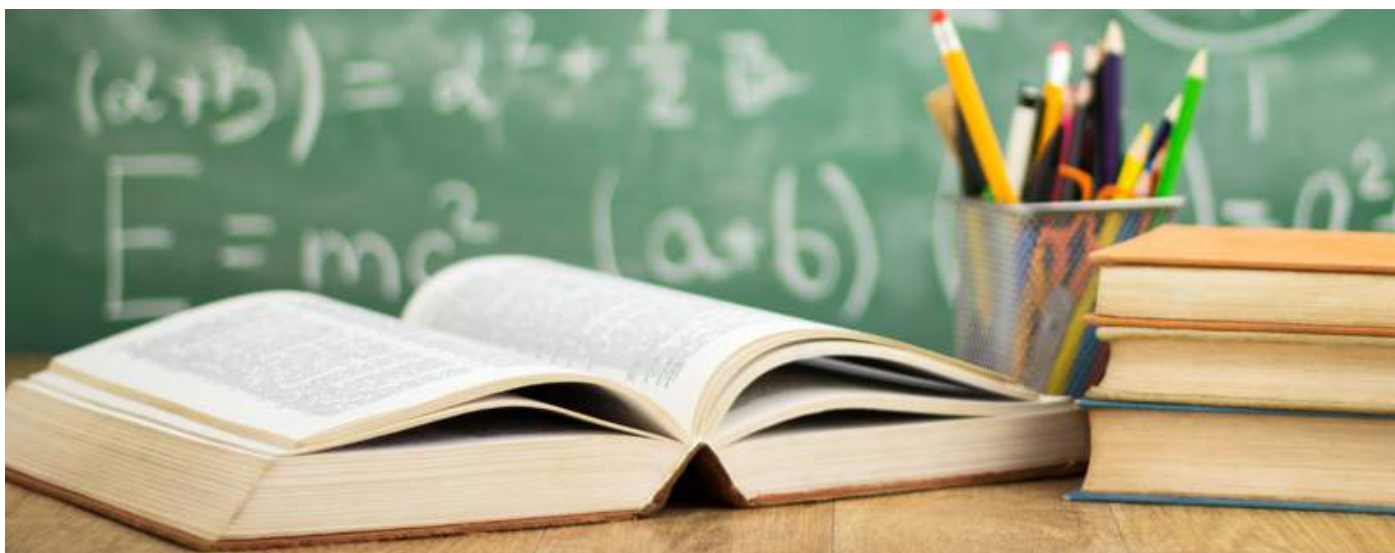
MUHAMMAD MUGHEES ARIF

“My name is Dr Gulshan Rasheed. I belong to Jampur, a tehsil of district Rajanpur. My father is an electrician by profession. It was difficult for my father to manage the expenses of my education. I still remember when my family faced a lot of criticism from relatives and friends as they allowed me to migrate to Lahore for higher studies. Education, especially for females, is considered a shameful practice in isolated areas like Jampur. The portal for my higher education seemed to be closing down but the bold step taken by my family gave me the confidence to work hard. Eventually, I scored good marks in the intermediate and Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) and succeeded in getting admission to MBBS at Fatima Jinnah Medical University, Lahore. Financial constraints were still there, but trust in Allah alleviated my worries. My parents and I felt immense pride when I received a merit-based scholarship from the Punjab Education

Endowment Fund (PEEF). This scholarship was very helpful during my MBBS. My becoming a doctor has earned respect for our family in our area. After finishing my degree, I started my career as a house officer at the Ganga Ram Hospital in Lahore.”

Another PEEF beneficiary recounts his experience.

“I am Najam-Ud-Din. I hail from a village near Sargodha. My father is a heart patient and runs a general store. I am the youngest of six siblings in the family. When we grew older and started to study, it was difficult for my father to make ends meet. My parents dreamed for their children to get higher education. However, financial constraints came in the way. To cope with this situation, I started a part-time job and also gave tuition to students whilst studying myself. I scored good marks in BS (Hons) and secured



admission in MS Forensic Chemistry at Government College University (GCU), Lahore. But the lack of financial resources was a continuous worry. When I started my MS degree, I came to know about PEEF scholarships from the students' resource office at the university. I applied immediately for a PEEF master's level scholarship.

It was a day of immense joy for my family and me when I received a letter from PEEF informing me that I was selected for the scholarship. Not having to worry about my fees boosted my confidence so much that I was able to study with full devotion. I scored third position in my programme and also won the 'Student of Session Award' in the final exams. I am happy to announce that I was appointed as a junior forensic scientist at Punjab Forensics Science Agency after finishing my degree."

The PEEF is a significant initiative that aims to provide financial assistance and scholarships to talented and deserving students in the province of Punjab. It was established to ensure that lack of financial resources did not hinder bright students from accessing higher education. Shehbaz Sharif, the former chief minister of Punjab, played a pivotal role in the establishment and expansion of the PEEF, a collaborative effort involving the government, the private sector, and various stakeholders.

In 2008-09, the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund was established under the umbrella of The Companies Act 2017 as a section 42 organisation. As a not-for-profit entity, PEEF was created with a resolute mission: to facilitate educational opportunities for underprivileged

but gifted students, with a particular focus on Punjab, while also reserving a portion of its efforts for students from other federating units.

Shehbaz Sharif's government formulated policies and allocated substantial resources to ensure the effective implementation of PEEF, emphasising the value of investing in human capital for the province, as well as the country's development.

PEEF functions with a proactive approach to identify and select deserving students across the nation. Over the years, it has meticulously developed a streamlined process of selection and disbursement of scholarships that minimises the burden on students. Rather than requiring students to visit the PEEF office for formalities, PEEF reaches out to them, making the credential verification process effortless and efficient.

To foster unity and harmony among all regions of Pakistan, PEEF dedicates 5 per cent of its scholarships to students from other provinces. From secondary school students to master's and PhD scholars, PEEF has thus far awarded an impressive 450,000 scholarships, amounting to a substantial Rs28 billion. The annual scholarship allocation is based on income projections for the year from its investments without seeking a budgetary grant from the Government of Punjab. PEEF has also successfully executed projects in collaboration with international donors, as well as federal and provincial governments.

One noteworthy project ran from 2013 to 2021, in partnership with the Department for International

“

**THE GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB PROVIDED AN INITIAL ENDOWMENT OF RS2 BILLION TO ESTABLISH PEEF. AS OF JUNE 2023, THE TOTAL FUNDING FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB HAS INCREASED TO AN IMPRESSIVE RS13.8 BILLION.**

”

Development / Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK, awarding 87,000 scholarships to female students in southern Punjab at a total project cost of Rs3 billion.

Under then Chief Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, the fund expanded its reach and scope, increasing the number of scholarships and beneficiaries, and covering a wider array of educational programmes.

The Government of Punjab provided an initial endowment of Rs2 billion to establish PEEF. As of June 2023, the total funding from the Government of Punjab has increased to an impressive Rs13.8 billion. Following the board's directives, 10 per cent of the annual proceeds from investments have been reinvested, bringing the total endowment value to Rs16.178 billion as of June 2023. These investments have been strategically managed from both long-term and short-term perspectives, in accordance with the guidelines of the Finance Department of the Government of Punjab.

To meet the standards of transparency and accountability, PEEF's annual audits and half-yearly reviews are meticulously conducted by top accounting firms in Pakistan. The auditors have consistently issued unqualified audit reports over the years. The Auditor General of Pakistan, Commercial Audit Wing, has accepted these audits through June 2022 as valid.

To meet statutory requirements, PEEF maintains an independent internal audit function that directly reports to the board of directors. This internal audit thoroughly examines all functional departments, with its findings presented to the audit committee and the board for scrutiny.

#### ► PEEF Performance:

- Total No. of Scholarships Awarded: **449,924**
- Total Amount Disbursed on Account of Scholarship Stipend (Rs.): **28.02 billion**
- Total No. of Active / Continuing Scholars: **22,050**
- Scholarships allocation for FY 2023-24: **19,000**

► **Scholarships for Deserving Students:** PEEF offers scholarships to students from various socio-economic backgrounds based on merit and need. These scholarships cover tuition fees, living expenses, and other educational expenses, enabling students to pursue higher education without financial constraints.

► **Increased Access to Higher Education:** By providing financial assistance, PEEF enhances access to higher education for talented students who might otherwise be unable to afford it. This leads to increased enrollment rates and a more educated workforce.

► **Merit-Based Criteria:** PEEF scholarships are awarded based on merit, encouraging academic excellence and rewarding students who demonstrate outstanding academic performance.

► **Support for Various Levels of Education:** PEEF supports students at multiple education levels, including undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate studies, covering a wide range of disciplines and fields of study.

► **Inclusivity and Equity:** The fund aims to promote inclusivity by providing opportunities to students from marginalised communities and underprivileged backgrounds, ensuring that education is accessible to all.

The time has come for Pakistan to replicate the success of projects like PEEF in other provinces, as it holds the potential to combat poverty, ignorance, and illiteracy, fostering a transformative revolution throughout the country■

*The writer is a political activist and works in youth development.*

# PAKISTANI TEACHER SISTER ZEPH WINS GLOBAL AWARD

MALIK M TAYYAB

In the realm of education and empowerment, there are individuals whose dedication transcends boundaries and leaves an indelible mark on the world. Sister Zeph, born Riffat Arif in 1983, hails from Gujranwala, Pakistan, and stands as a shining example of resilience, compassion, and tireless commitment to education. Her remarkable journey has recently been crowned with the prestigious Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize for 2023.

Sister Zeph's story begins with her own experiences as a student, where she faced adversity and mistreatment from her teachers because of her faith. Belonging to the Christian minority, it was these challenging moments that fuelled her dream of becoming a teacher who treats every child with respect and love, without any discrimination. Unable to find such a teacher, she decided to be that change herself. In 1997, at the tender age of 13, she took a bold step and founded a school in the courtyard of her home, open to all children and free of cost.

Fast forward to 2023, Sister Zeph's unwavering dedication and transformative work have been globally recognised. Out of over 7,000 nominations from 130 countries, she emerged as the winner of the Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize, accompanied by a significant \$1 million award. The trophy was presented to her at a prestigious dinner held in her honour in Paris. Sister Zeph's impact reaches far beyond the walls of her school. Her foundation, Zephaniah Women's Education and Empowerment Foundation (ZWEF), has become a beacon of hope for countless lives, particularly women



“ IN THE ILLUSTRIOUS JOURNEY OF SISTER ZEPH, WE WITNESS THE POWER OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S PASSION TO IGNITE CHANGE. ”

and children. Her policy of love and respect for all children and strict prohibition of corporal punishment has earned her respect among her students and the community. In addition to the Global Teacher Prize, she has been bestowed with numerous other awards, establishing her as a true change-maker and a staunch advocate for women's rights and children's education worldwide.

Recently, Sister Zeph had the honour of meeting the President of PML-N Mian Shehbaz Sharif, who congratulated her on making the nation proud. As PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif has stated, the commitment to education and progress remains at the forefront of their agenda.

In the illustrious journey of Sister Zeph, we witness the power of an individual's passion to ignite change. Her story serves as an inspiration for educators, activists, and policy-makers alike, underscoring the transformative impact of education on society and the profound difference one person can make in the lives of many ■



# PML-N OVERSEAS: CELEBRATING JUSTICE

**DR RANA KHALID MEHMOOD**

PML-N's overseas activities showcase a unified front among its members worldwide. The acquittal of PML-N leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in the Avenfield and Al-Azizia Steel Mills references, along with other legal triumphs, has sparked joy among Pakistanis around the world. PML-N leaders in Oman, Spain, Bahrain, Sweden, and South Africa organised events to express solidarity, share their optimism for the future, and outline their commitment to steering Pakistan towards prosperity. As the party gears up for the upcoming elections, PML-N's global outreach efforts aim to energise its base and contribute to Pakistan's progress on multiple fronts.



On 3 December, General Secretary of PML-N Bahrain Nadeem Hafeez organised a ceremony to celebrate Mian Nawaz Sharif's acquittal in the Avenfield Apartments reference and NAB's withdrawal of appeal against his acquittal in the Flagship reference. President of PML-N Saudi Arabia Sheikh Saeed Ahmed attended as the chief guest. Nadeem Hafeez expressed confidence in PML-N's victory in the upcoming elections, predicting Nawaz Sharif's return as the prime minister for the fourth time. The event showcased strong support from PML-N leaders in Bahrain for the party's future leadership.

## BAHRAIN



## SWEDEN







On 6 December, PML-N's chapter in Stockholm, Sweden, organised an event featuring Barrister Amjad Malik as the chief guest. Newly elected officials of PML-N Sweden expressed their commitment to working for the progress of Pakistan. President Saeed Sheikh welcomed Barrister Amjad Malik and assured continued efforts to contribute to the country's development. The chapter leaders emphasised unity and consensus, pledging to follow Nawaz Sharif's narrative for the betterment of Pakistan.

## OMAN



On 9 December, under the leadership of PML-N Oman President Muhammad Ali Fazal, the Pakistani community in Oman gathered to celebrate Nawaz Sharif's acquittal and NAB's withdrawal of the appeal against him. The event saw the participation of prominent PML-N leaders, including Ijaz Maharvi and Shandar Bukhari. President Muhammad Ali Fazal hailed Nawaz Sharif as the solution to Pakistan's economic challenges and coined a new slogan,

”خوشحالی کی اصل تعریف، نواز شریف، نواز شریف، نواز شریف“

(The true definition of prosperity: Nawaz Sharif, Nawaz Sharif)

The speakers expressed confidence that Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif would lead Pakistan to a future of progress after the upcoming elections.

## SPAIN



On 12 December, PML-N's Trade Coordinator for Europe Chaudhry Amanat Hussain Mehr organised an event in Barcelona, attended by Spanish business and political figures. PML-N's Chief Coordinator Overseas Barrister Amjad Malik, who was in Spain on the second leg of his Europe tour, emphasised the importance of trade coordination for the benefit of all Pakistanis. Chaudhry Amanat Hussain Mehr highlighted the direct contact established with Nawaz Sharif and affirmed the crucial role of trade development in improving Pakistan's economy. The ceremony also witnessed the election of Chaudhry Shoaib Virk as the president of Spain Business Trade.

## SOUTH AFRICA



On 12 December, in Johannesburg, PML-N's South Africa Chapter celebrated Mian Nawaz Sharif's acquittal and NAB's withdrawn of appeal against him. PML-N Spain's Chief Patron Ashfaq Anwar, Senior Vice President Shazia Shaukat, Senior Vice President Rana Zahid Iqbal, Youth Coordinator Malik Asim Ali, and other leaders attended the event, expressing their optimism for Pakistan's economic and social development under Nawaz Sharif's leadership. The ceremony included a cake-cutting to commemorate the honourable acquittal ■

# PICTURE GALLERY



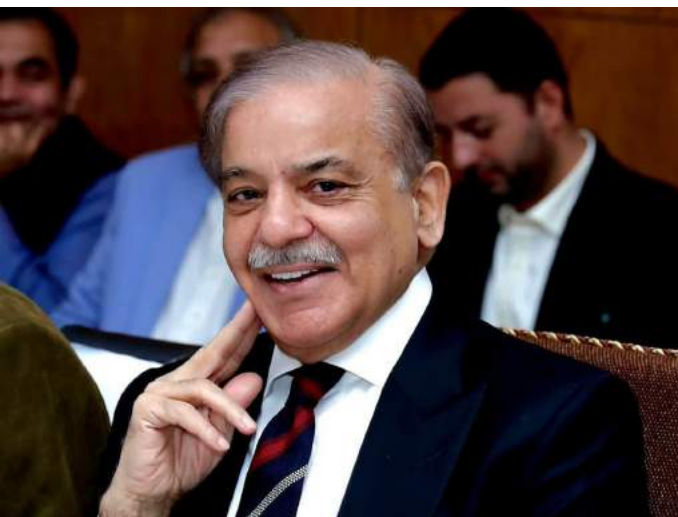
MIAN MUHAMMAD NAWAZ SHARIF IS ADDRESSING A WORKERS CONVENTION AT THE RESIDENCE OF KHAWAJA MUHAMMAD ASIF IN SIALKOT. 25 NOVEMBER 2023



MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF PREPARING TO ADDRESS THE NATION. LAHORE. 14 DECEMBER 2023



A LIGHT MOMENT DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY BOARD MEETING IN LAHORE. 06 DECEMBER 2023



PML-N PRESIDENT MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF AT PARLIAMENTARY BOARD MEETING IN LAHORE. 6 DECEMBER 2023



PML-N SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT MARYAM NAWAZ AT JALAL PUR JATTAN YOUTH CONVENTION. 9 DECEMBER 2023



**PML-N SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT MARYAM NAWAZ AT THE PARLIAMENTARY BOARD MEETING IN LAHORE. 8 DECEMBER 2023**



**MIAN MUHAMMAD NAWAZ SHARIF ADDRESSING THE PARLIAMENTARY BOARD MEETING IN LAHORE. 8 DECEMBER 2023**



**A MEETING OF PML-N PARLIAMENTARY BOARD WAS HELD IN LAHORE UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF AND MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF. 5 DECEMBER 2023**



**MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF AND JUI-F CHIEF MAULANA FAZLUR REHMAN HAD A MEETING IN LAHORE TO DISCUSS SEAT ADJUSTMENTS ACROSS THE FOUR PROVINCES. 4 DECEMBER 2023**



**PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE-N PRESIDENT SHEHBAZ SHARIF MET WITH PML-N GENERAL SECRETARY LAHORE KHAWAJA IMRAN NAZIR TO DISCUSS THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN LAHORE. 18 NOVEMBER 2023**



**MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF AND PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE-QUAID CHIEF CHAUDHRY SHUJAAT HUSSAIN HELD A MEETING AFTER 15 YEARS. LAHORE. 6 DECEMBER 2023**



# HORIZON

Research and Policy Planning Unit  
Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz