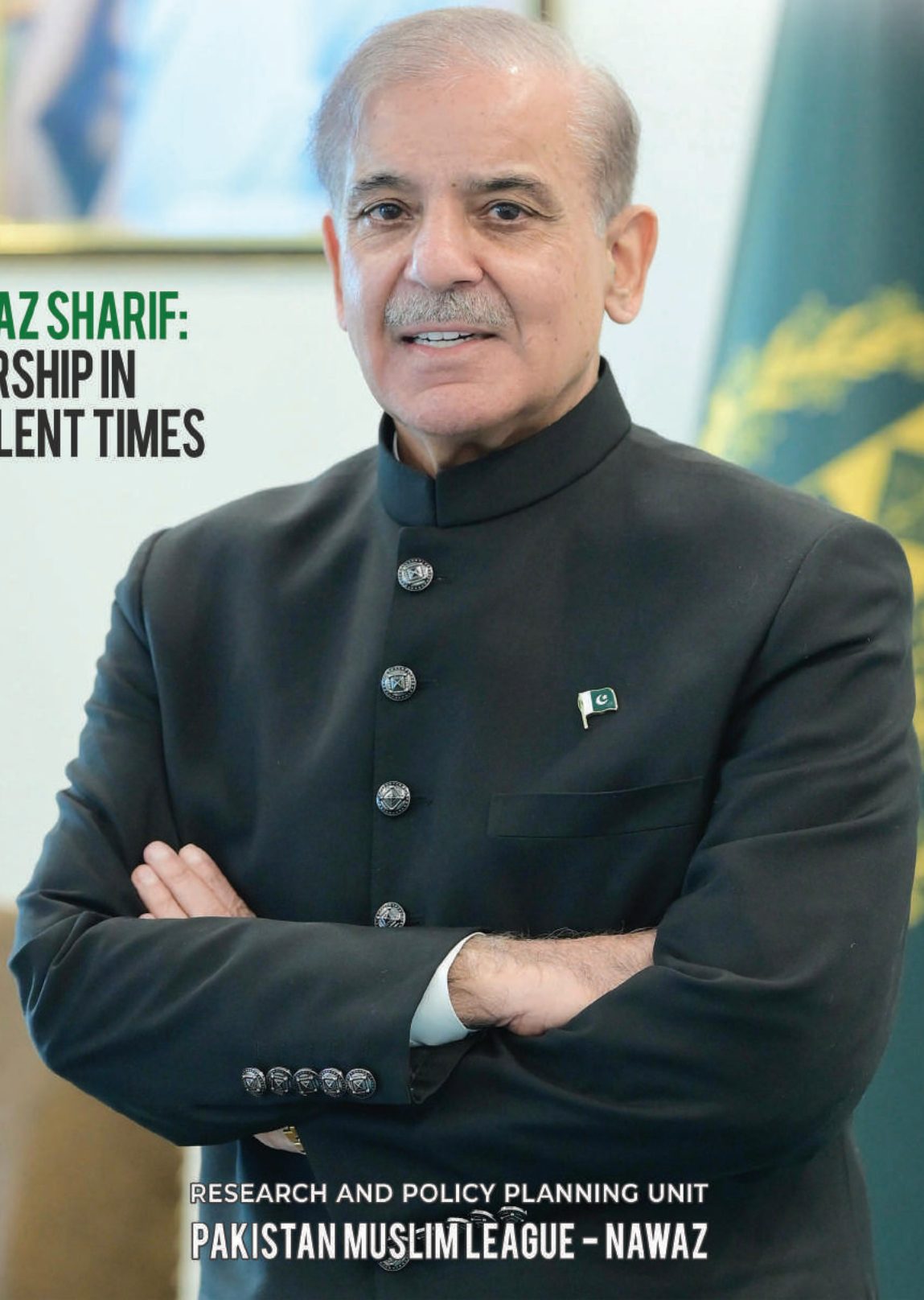


HORIZON

March 2024

**SHEHBAZ SHARIF:
LEADERSHIP IN
TURBULENT TIMES**



RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT
PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE - NAWAZ

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

We return with the March issue of Horizon magazine, which highlights important moments and addresses pressing issues that shape the current landscape of Pakistan.

First and foremost, we celebrate the culmination of the democratic process in Pakistan following the 2024 elections. With the formation of federal and provincial governments, in addition to the presidential election, the nation has taken significant strides towards upholding democratic principles and ensuring the representation of its diverse populace.

However, amidst these democratic triumphs, Pakistan faces multifaceted economic, security, and political challenges. The recent wave of terrorism in the country underscores the persistent threats that endanger the lives and livelihoods of its people and its relations with neighbouring countries. Attacks in North Waziristan, Turbat, Gwadar, and Bisham send alarming signals that there are forces intent on destabilising Pakistan. However, the government of Pakistan is resolute in its determination to prevent such attempts from succeeding. We unequivocally condemn these acts of violence and stand in solidarity with the victims and their families.

Turning our gaze beyond national borders, we express deep concern over the recent terrorist act on a concert hall in Moscow, which claimed 130 innocent lives. Acts of terrorism know no boundaries and require a collective response from the international community.

Furthermore, we welcome the UN Security Resolution calling for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza, emphasising the urgent need for a lasting and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Only through dialogue, cooperation, and respect for international law can lasting peace and stability be achieved in the region.

As Pakistan commemorates Pakistan Day on 23rd March, we extend warm congratulations to the nation on this momentous occasion. Let us reflect on the sacrifices of our forebearers and recommit ourselves to the ideals of unity, faith, and discipline that continue to guide our nation towards progress and prosperity.

On the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March, we recognise the critical role played by the women of Pakistan, whose resilience, dedication, and achievements continue to inspire us all. This year's celebration takes on added significance as the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) reaffirms its commitment to empowering women and advancing gender equality within the political sphere and beyond.

Horizon magazine remains dedicated to providing insightful analysis and encouraging informed dialogue on issues of national and global significance.

Sincerely,

Saira Bano
Editor-in-Chief

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COALITION GOVT: THE ROAD TO STABILITY AMID CHALLENGES

RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT

On 3 March, Shehbaz Sharif was elected as prime minister of Pakistan by a coalition of parties. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has shown immense courage by taking on the responsibility of leading a coalition government under extremely challenging economic, security, and political circumstances.

In the elections held on 8 February, no political party, including independent candidates belonging to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), secured a simple majority (134 seats) in the National Assembly required to form a government. In his speech to party workers on 9 February, PML-N founder Mian Nawaz Sharif urged all political parties to work together to form a government and take Pakistan out of the current crisis.

However, soon after the poll results, PTI spokesperson Raouf Hasan told Al Jazeera that party leader Imran Khan had mandated him to approach all political parties other than the “Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), PML-N and MQM.” Following the PTI’s announcement, the PML-N and PPP decided that they would join hands with smaller parties because it was

in the country’s best interest to form a government as soon as possible and deal with urgent matters on war footing

It took some time for the PML-N, PPP, and four smaller parties, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party, and Balochistan Awami Party to initiate talks, discuss power-sharing modalities, and form the government.

ECONOMIC WOES, INFLATION

Currently, the biggest challenge is stabilising the economy as the country faces a grave economic situation. The PTI government’s four years of corruption and mismanagement have caused a serious financial crisis in the country, which was impossible to avert in 16 months of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government that followed PTI’s rule. People belonging to low-income segments of society are the most affected by inflation and find it hard to buy even essential commodities.

The new government must manage some crucial

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THE GOVERNMENT IS SET TO TAKE TOUGH ECONOMIC DECISIONS THAT ARE ESSENTIAL TO STABILISE THE ECONOMY AND STEER IT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

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issues, foremost among which are reducing the trade deficit and high import bill, which will cause concern among the business community heavily reliant on imports. However, without key structural reforms, the economy will remain on life support, requiring constant intervention to stay afloat.

The year 2023 saw unprecedented inflation, affecting large swathes of the population, especially the poor, yet hard times are far from being over. Rising food and energy prices, expected currency depreciation, and Pakistan's need to rely on more loans from the IMF are troubling signs that the economy's health is severely compromised.

According to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), inflation consistently hovered around 29 per cent for three consecutive months until December 2023. It was chiefly due to increasing prices of kitchen items, gas, and electricity. However, the downtrend in inflation, starting from January 2024, presents some hope. As per CPI, inflation decreased to 23.06 per cent year-on-year in February.

SECURITY

As the new government is gearing up to deal with economic turmoil, tensions at Pakistan's western border are rising. In mid-March, in a suicide and gun attack on a military base in North Waziristan's town of Mir Ali, seven soldiers, including two officers, were killed, and many more were wounded. In response, Pakistan carried out aerial strikes in Afghanistan to target bases of the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the TTP has conducted numerous terrorist attacks in Pakistan from its sanctuaries in Afghanistan, a charge that the Afghan government denies. Unless dealt with



an iron hand, the terrorist threat is likely to expand to the rest of the country.

TACKLING THE CHALLENGE

Despite the enormous challenges ahead, the PML-N is well-prepared to handle them. It has the benefit of hindsight, having previously worked with its coalition partners. In 2008, after Musharraf's eight-year rule ended, PML-N and PPP worked together to bring the country back on the democratic track. In 2022, the parties worked together to remove Imran Khan from the office of prime minister and then partnered in the coalition government that followed. This time around, PML-N will work with PPP to bring political and economic stability.

The government has a clear roadmap to provide relief to the masses, win their confidence, and improve their standard of living through economic development, job creation, taxing the rich, and lowering inflation.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif asked his government to start negotiations with the IMF for a medium-term bailout, after the current agreement is cleared, as Pakistan is still reeling from the blow dealt to the economy during PTI's corrupt rule. Despite the stringent conditions attached, the IMF's loan will pave the way for direct investments from brotherly



countries, accelerating the speed of economic development. The government intends to broaden the tax net, instead of increasing taxes to boost revenues. During a cabinet meeting, Shehbaz Sharif highlighted the issue of certain high-earning businesses going untaxed and emphasised the necessity for the government to engage in negotiations with them to bring them into the tax net. The government is set to take tough economic decisions that are essential to stabilise the economy and steer it in the right direction.

Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency President Ahmed Bilal Mehboob was quoted in Dawn as saying that a party demonstrating greater adjustment has a better chance to succeed. Reconciliation will improve the chances of the incoming government to complete its mandated five-year electoral term.

However, concerns loom over the effectiveness of the newly formed government, given the divergent interests and approaches of various political parties and independent candidates such as Mohsin Naqvi and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. “This is a very difficult time in Pakistan’s economic history. The elected government will be compelled to make unpopular choices to qualify for a new IMF loan,” Farhan Bokhari, an economic analyst, told DW. “And those decisions will bring the risk of public discontent in the near future. There’s going to be no honeymoon period for this government.”

Another big challenge for the government is managing the parliament in which Imran Khan’s party members form a large bloc. The independent candidates associated with PTI performed well in the polls and emerged as the biggest single group in the National Assembly, with 93 lawmakers.

At a time when national unity is essential to address Pakistan’s challenges, the PTI’s divisive tactics are exacerbating the situation. Echoing its actions in 2013, the PTI has refused to accept the election result and vowed to oppose the government in parliament and on the streets. Unless dealt with judiciously, this could escalate into a significant obstacle for the government to overcome.

However, analysts have pointed out that, currently, the coalition government has a two-thirds majority in parliament and is in a position to pass constitutional amendments. The most PTI can do is create some noise in parliament and take to the streets.

PML-N’S STANCE

Although PML-N is leading from the front, all coalition partners are responsible to the public for the successes and failures of this government. The party aims to forge consensus on economic policies to combat inflation and seeks cooperation from other political parties.

On March 21, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired a special session of the Apex Committee of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). During the meeting, the prime minister candidly talked about Pakistan’s economic challenges, emphasising that the federation cannot deal with the economic crisis alone. He urged all provinces, whose chief ministers were present, to work together.

This is a step in the right direction, as an uncertain political environment can never stabilise the economy. It is hoped that all political actors will set aside their differences and work with the PML-N to steer the country out of troubled waters ■



SHEHBAZ SHARIF: LEADERSHIP IN TURBULENT TIMES

ABU HADI BIN MUHAMMAD

On the 3rd of March 2024, Pakistan witnessed yet another seamless transition of power as Mian Shehbaz Sharif was re-elected for his second term as Prime Minister. Garnering a decisive 201 votes, Prime Minister Sharif's victory reaffirms the nation's commitment to democratic principles amidst a competitive political landscape. His opponent, Omar Ayub of the Sunni Ittehad Council backed by the PTI, received 92 votes, highlighting the clear mandate bestowed upon Prime Minister Sharif by the mainstream political parties of Pakistan.

Born in Lahore in 1950, Shehbaz Sharif is the younger brother of Mian Nawaz Sharif, who served as prime minister of Pakistan for three terms. He attended St Anthony's High School, Lahore, and later graduated from the prestigious Government College, Lahore. Shehbaz Sharif, president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), has served three terms as chief minister of Punjab. Initially, he held the post from 1997 to 1999 until former military dictator

Pervez Musharraf imposed martial law, leading to the Sharif brothers' exile to Saudi Arabia. He resumed office from 2008 to 2013 and then again from 2013 to 2018.

Additionally, with a background in business, Shehbaz Sharif was elected president of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industries in 1985. Renowned for his tireless work ethic, Shehbaz Sharif referred to himself as Khadim-e-Aala, i.e. chief servant, rather than chief minister in his last two terms in this office.

During the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government's tenure from 2018 to 2022, Shehbaz Sharif served as the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly. When the PTI government failed to perform and created severe challenges through its incompetence, leading to economic turmoil and political instability, the country teetered on the edge of default. In this scenario, political parties associated with the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)

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THE NEED FOR SOMEONE LIKE SHEHBAZ SHARIF AT THE HELM TO NAVIGATE THE COUNTRY THROUGH THESE CHALLENGING TIMES HAS NEVER BEEN MORE CRUCIAL.

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moved a vote of no confidence in parliament, leading to the end of the PTI rule and its bad governance. Shehbaz Sharif emerged as PDM's consensus candidate for the position of prime minister and subsequently assumed office for the first time from April 2022 to August 2023.

Shehbaz Sharif is renowned in Pakistani politics for his experience and political wisdom, earning him the moniker of “doer” due to his unmatched leadership abilities and dedication. As a three-time chief minister, he strengthened provincial governance and addressed areas of development long neglected by previous regimes in Punjab.

During his two consecutive terms in office, Shehbaz Sharif undertook “the most frenetic education reforms in the world,” according to The Economist, to increase school enrolment and provide quality education at public schools in Punjab. His other notable contributions were the establishment of the Daanish Schools, the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund, and the implementation of the Chief Minister's Laptop Scheme.

In his tenure, the health department was restructured

into primary, secondary, and specialised health, and the Punjab Healthcare Commission was established to regulate hospitals, clinics, labs etc, and to develop and enforce minimum service delivery standards. His government also developed the Punjab Kidney and Liver Transplant Institute (PKLI), the country's premier state-of-the-art hospital providing free treatment and comprehensive facilities. His all-out efforts in combating the dengue fever outbreak set high standards in public service. Additionally, his vigorous campaign against quackery saved countless lives, while his innovative province-wide public-private partnerships to combat hepatitis cured millions.

Shehbaz Sharif is a pioneer of the mass transit system in Pakistan. He introduced transformative projects such as the Lahore Metrobus, Rawalpindi-Islamabad Metrobus, Multan Metrobus, and Orange Line Train in Lahore. His initiatives have revolutionised public transportation, providing millions of people with efficient daily commute facilities.

For a country grappling with a severe energy crisis at the time, the election of the PML-N with a significant mandate in 2013 marked a turning point in the power sector of the country. The party's government doubled



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Pakistan’s power generation capacity in just five years. As chief minister, Shehbaz Sharif initiated numerous mega projects in Punjab, notable among which were the Nandipur Power Project and the Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park.

lush green olive grooves on thousands of acres of land. Olive cultivation offers immense opportunities to local farmers, labourers and businessmen. It can potentially reduce Pakistan’s dependence on imported olive oil and save precious foreign exchange.

At the same time, his government took measures to improve governance and ensure transparency in the delivery of public services. Digitisation of land records in Punjab was a revolutionary step that transformed manual land records management into an efficient, accountable, secure, and transparent system through integrated technology solutions.

On the social side, Shehbaz Sharif initiated extensive gender reforms in the province. His government established and empowered a provincial commission on the status of women and was instrumental in passing the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act, 2016, which provides the legal basis for establishing an effective system of protection, relief, and rehabilitation of women against violence. Likewise, the Punjab Assembly passed a historic law, the Punjab Sikh Anand Karaj Marriages Act 2018, to regulate Sikh marriages in the province.

During his time as chief minister, Shehbaz Sharif initiated one of the largest road infrastructural projects named the Khadam-e-Punjab Daihi Road Programme in 2015 at the cost of Rs15 billion. The project connected villages with urban arteries, which improved communication and gave direct market access to smaller areas of the province.

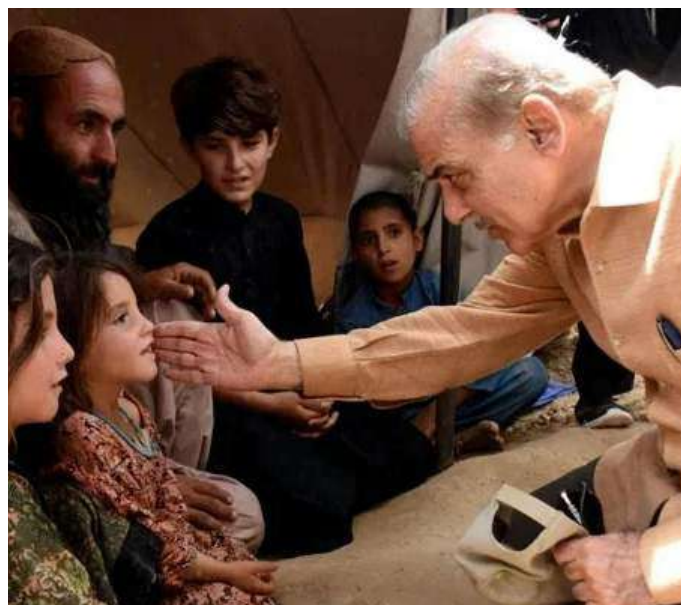
This, by any means, is not an exhaustive list of Shehbaz Sharif’s achievements in Punjab.

Under Shehbaz Sharif’s government, considerable work was done on agricultural research. Over the years, Punjab experimented with olive cultivation in arid areas, an initiative that has now bloomed into

In his first term as prime minister, the country was on the verge of economic default, a situation marred by political uncertainty. Shehbaz Sharif got down to work immediately and skilfully united members of diverse political parties into a cohesive team, addressing

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Metrobuses in Lahore, Rawalpindi-Islamabad and Multan
- Orange Line Train in Lahore
- Daanish School System
- Punjab Forensic Science Authority
- Pakistan Kidney & Liver Institute and Research Centre
- Punjab Educational Endowment Fund
- Computerisation of land records in Punjab
- Punjab E-Libraries



numerous domestic and foreign challenges.

Bad governance and flawed policies of the outgoing PTI government created a severe economic crisis, which ultimately pushed the country to the brink of default. Shehbaz Sharif spared no effort to save the country from this lurking danger and secured a \$3 billion standby agreement from the IMF in June 2023 for nine months.

Another big challenge that Shehbaz Sharif faced as prime minister was the devastating floods in the monsoon season of 2022 that affected almost 33 million Pakistanis, killing 1,730 people and demolishing over two million houses, 23,900 schools, and 1,460 healthcare facilities throughout the country. The economic loss caused by the floods was estimated by UNDP to be over \$30 billion. Quoting Pakistan's floods as an example, the prime minister and his team demonstrated at various international forums how climate change is impacting countries most vulnerable to climate-related disasters. Through Pakistan's concerted diplomatic efforts together with other nations in G-77, the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) agreed to establish a loss and damage fund that will help low-income developing countries offset the damage from natural disasters caused by climate change. This was a landmark achievement for all the developing countries that will also benefit Pakistan when the fund becomes operational.

Shehbaz Sharif steps into the role of prime minister

for the second term amidst some of Pakistan's most challenging circumstances on economic, security, and political fronts. As the new prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif faces the daunting task of navigating this intricate web of challenges while promoting national cohesion.

After he was elected prime minister for the second time, Shehbaz Sharif thanked all political parties who voted for him. He paid homage to the exemplary services of his elder brother and PML-N founder Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, noting his achievements, including his significant contributions to making Pakistan a nuclear state, ensuring its security and resilience, undertaking the building of major infrastructure projects like motorways, tackling terrorism, and overcoming the worst power crisis the country faced at the time. Shehbaz Sharif called upon all political parties to unite in addressing the pressing issues confronting the nation.

His government has already formulated a five-year economic plan aimed at addressing the multifaceted economic challenges, including restructuring the Federal Board of Revenue to broaden the tax base, privatising loss-making state-owned enterprises, attracting foreign investment, strengthening diplomatic relations with developed nations, and effectively managing IMF negotiations to mitigate inflationary pressures.

The need for someone like Shehbaz Sharif at the helm to navigate the country through these challenging times has never been more crucial ■



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN PAKISTAN'S AGRICULTURE

AEYESHA GULZAR

Agriculture production in Pakistan is becoming insufficient to cater to the needs of an exponentially growing population. Due to political challenges, institutional deficiencies, and market failures, agriculture policy targets have not been achieved. The farming system is caught up in a vicious cycle of low investments, leading to low productivity, thus creating low business orientations, resulting in low value addition, low profit margins, and low income. It is becoming difficult to escape this brutal cycle with added challenges like climate change, water scarcity, and urbanisation pressure.

A look at past trends indicates that the agriculture sector in Pakistan has been, to a large extent, a victim to a case of policy, institutional, and market failure.

Policy failure is attributed to historical price distortions by implicit taxation of agriculture with unfavourable terms of trade. There have been exceptions for a few years but policy prescription has been very misguided and ad hoc. Antithetical and incomplete policies are yet another cause of policy failure.

Institutional failure stems from the failure to provide strategic input, especially improved seed varieties, and impeded private sector entry in seed development. Institutional failure is also attributed to marketing inefficiencies, substandard chemicals and fertilisers in the market, and poor post-harvest handling of the produce.

Market failure emanates from treating strategic natural resources such as water and forestry as almost free goods. This implies that crucial social costs (including environmental or damage costs) and benefits are excluded from producers' and consumers' budgets, or they remain unaccounted for as unassigned social costs — costs being incurred without clear attribution to any specific entity. A good example is irrigation water, still perceived as a free good to be provided by the public sector through canals. Now, solar tube wells are extracting water like it is coming from a perennial spring, not realising the long-term consequences on the natural water table. Another case is the irrational use of pesticides and fertilisers. In Pakistan, excessive and indiscriminate use of pesticides has affected the

“ A VIABLE PATH FORWARD INVOLVES MODERNISING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR THROUGH EXTENSIVE DIGITISATION. THIS SHOULD BE COUPLED WITH ENHANCED MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTED POLICIES. ”



natural ecological balance in different agroecological zones, whose financial and economic costs are often unaccounted for.

The PML-N has demonstrated a strong commitment to the agriculture sector, particularly evident during its tenure from 2013 to 2018, marking it as a priority sector for Pakistan’s economic growth. In Punjab, the leadership spearheaded the Punjab Agriculture Policy and Strategy 2017-18 by implementing plans to spur investment and establish a conducive environment to facilitate agricultural transformation.

In order to improve the agriculture sector performance in Punjab, both the federal and provincial governments made concerted efforts. The Kissan package introduced by the federal government in October 2022 targeted the overall agriculture sector with a special focus on the marginalised, small, landless, and flood-affected farmers.

Broadly, the three dimensions of the Kissan package are,

- i) agri loans, business loans for subsistence and flood-affected farmers in particular (subsidy on mark-up, waiver on mark-up, increased access to credit, increased volume of the credit),
- ii) fertiliser price reduction (subsidy on imported urea and negotiating DAP prices with stakeholders), and
- iii) mechanisation facilitation (old tractors scheme and new tractors scheme).

There are a few water sector projects as well on the roster.

Capitalising on the powers granted by the 18th Constitution Amendment Bill 2010, the Punjab government implemented policies (AgriPlan 2015, developed under PML-N) that aimed to boost sectoral growth rates, enhance crop yields, improve access to extension services, foster ICT-based agriculture development, and attract greater private investment in the sector. However, such policies need continuity and consistent government support to bear fruit.

Despite strenuous efforts of the policymakers, the agriculture sector still lacks modernised practices, a strong digitisation role, integrated and coordinated policy/efforts, proper monitoring and evaluation of agricultural policies, efficient and productive efforts of agriculture-related government staff, and public-private partnerships/investments in agriculture.

A viable path forward involves modernising the agricultural sector through extensive digitisation. This should be coupled with enhanced monitoring and evaluation of implemented policies, aligning institutional performances with relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). To optimise the efficiency of the agriculture department staff, it is crucial to disengage them from non-productive efforts and assign dedicated tasks. Additionally, embracing value chain and blockchain approaches is imperative for fostering innovation and sustainability in the sector. Otherwise, the upcoming challenges like climate change, water scarcity, and urbanisation will make it near impossible to cater to the needs of growing populations ■

The writer is an agriculture policy expert currently serving as country director of J. E. Austin Associates and COO of Agribusiness Support Fund.



Marriyum Aurangzeb

Marriyum Nawaz

PML-N'S WOMEN IN POLITICS

ISHRAT SALEEM

In the 1990s, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was viewed as a centre-right party with conservative perspectives about women's role in society. Despite the presence of prominent female representatives in parliament like Zakia Shahnawaz Khan, Tehmina Daultana, and Syeda Abida Hussain during that era, the perception of the party's stance on women's issues persisted.

A clear shift in this perception was marked under the leadership of Begum Kulsoom Nawaz during a critical period of political upheaval. In 2000, when the entire party leadership was incarcerated, Begum Kulsoom Nawaz rallied party workers to struggle against the military dictatorship of General Pervez Musharraf, who overthrew the elected government of Mian Nawaz Sharif in October 1999.

Musharraf criticised both PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in his speeches but faced no significant opposition. Benazir Bhutto was in exile and PPP's condemnation of the military takeover did not

go beyond statements. At that time, Begum Kulsoom became an icon of resistance as she confronted General Musharraf through street protests. She also worked behind the scenes and ensured the release of Mian Nawaz Sharif, Mian Shehbaz Sharif, and others who had been hauled into jails after the military coup.

When talking about women politicians associated with PML-N, one cannot ignore the legacy of veterans like Begum Najma Hameed, Tahira Aurangzeb, Saba Sadiq and Nuzhat Sadiq, who paved the way for a new wave of dynamic female politicians. Building upon the strong groundwork established by these trailblazers, the party has nurtured a cadre of young female leaders who are now assuming important roles and continuing the mission of their predecessors.

Marriyum Aurangzeb was elected to the National Assembly on a reserved seat in 2013 but quickly proved her worth as a party worker and politician. She was first appointed minister of state for information and broadcasting in October 2016 in Mian Nawaz

“**BEGUM KULSOOM BECAME AN ICON OF RESISTANCE AS SHE CONFRONTED GENERAL MUSHARRAF THROUGH STREET PROTESTS. SHE ALSO WORKED BEHIND THE SCENES AND ENSURED THE RELEASE OF MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF, MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF, AND OTHERS WHO HAD BEEN HAULED INTO JAILS AFTER THE MILITARY COUP.**”



Kulsoom Nawaz



Romina Khurshid



Rahila Khadim Hussain

Sharif’s cabinet. After his disqualification in the Panama Papers Case, his subsequent resignation, and the disbandment of his cabinet in July 2017, Marriyum was re-appointed to this position by the succeeding prime minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, who later elevated her to the position of federal minister for information and broadcasting in April 2018. Marriyum Aurangzeb became the official spokesperson of PML-N in June 2018 and has since served the party and the country with great dedication. Ayesha Raza Farooq is another young leader who was first elected to the National Assembly on a reserved seat for women in 2013. In November of the same year, she was appointed as the prime minister’s focal person on polio eradication. She resigned from the National Assembly in 2015 and was elected to the Senate the same year on a reserved seat for women. In March 2018, she was awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz in recognition of her services for polio eradication in Pakistan. Currently, she is serving as chairperson of the National Commission on the Rights of Child.

Romina Khurshid Alam was elected as MNA on a reserved seat for women in 2013 and again in 2018. She was appointed special assistant to the prime minister on 10 June 2022 and served until August 2023. She was also the convener of the Parliamentary

Taskforce on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and represented Pakistan at the Fourth Global Conference on Strengthening Synergies between the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Agenda 2023. She reached these positions through hard work and sheer determination.

Shaista Pervaiz Malik started her political career on a reserved seat for women in the National Assembly in 2013 and was re-elected in 2018. After the death of her husband Pervaiz Malik, also a PML-N MNA, she resigned from her reserved seat and contested in the by-election from her late husband’s constituency in December 2021, which she won. She returned to the National Assembly in 2024 on a reserved seat.

In 2015, PML-N nominated MPA Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani for the position of speaker of the Balochistan Assembly, to which she was elected unopposed. This was the first time a woman served in this position in Balochistan.

The PML-N awarded Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar the party’s ticket to contest the by-election in NA-75, a seat that fell vacant after the demise of her father, PML-N MNA Syed Iftikhar Ul Hassan in August 2020. The by-election for this seat was first held on



Shaza Fatima

19 February 2021 but was marred by violent clashes and the disappearance of 20 presiding officers. The Election Commission of Pakistan declared the by-election null and void on the appeal of Syeda Nosheen and held a re-election on 10 April 2021, in which she secured a decisive victory against her opponent, PTI's Ali Asjad Malhi. Syeda Nosheen was re-elected to this seat in the 2024 general election and is currently serving as MNA. She also serves as president of PML-N's Women Wing in Punjab.

In March 2023, Hina Pervaiz Butt was appointed as the youth coordinator of Lahore District. Tasked with the challenge of mobilising the youth in this sprawling metropolitan area, she reached every corner and performed her job remarkably well.

Sobia Shahid first entered the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly (KP) on a reserved seat in 2013. She emerged as the most active female lawmaker in the year ending in May 2015 by raising 89 questions and moving a call-to-attention motion. She returned to the KP Assembly in 2018 and again in 2024 amid intense harassment from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members when she waved a watch on the assembly floor to indicate PTI leader Imran Khan's embezzlement of state gifts. Though she was lauded for her immense courage in the face of objectionable behaviour by fellow lawmakers, the incident highlighted the kind of atmosphere women lawmakers encounter in the workplace.

Shaza Fatima Khawaja is another success story of a young, educated woman choosing the field of politics to make her mark. Niece of PML-N stalwart and current defence minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, she was first elected to the National Assembly



Hina Parvez Butt

on a reserved seat for women in 2013, the youngest parliamentarian at the time at less than 25 years of age. Due to her active participation in the parliamentary business, she was elected general secretary of the Young Parliamentarians Forum in the National Assembly and has participated in organising various national and international conferences. In 2017, she served as parliamentary secretary for the Ministry of Trade, Commerce, and Textile. She was again elected to the National Assembly on a reserved seat in 2018 and remained an active opposition member. When the Pakistan Democratic Movement's government took charge, she was appointed special assistant to the prime minister on youth affairs in the federal cabinet of then-Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in May 2022 – a role she performed with great dedication until the term of the assembly expired in August 2023. In the 2024 election, she returned to the National Assembly on a reserved seat for women and has been inducted into the federal cabinet as minister of state for information technology and telecommunication.

The daughter of a dedicated political worker Begum Sardar Khadim Hussain, Raheela Khadim Hussain has been active in politics since the 2000s, when she first contested the election of the Union Council nazim in 2005. The defeat in the election did not defeat her spirit. She continued her political work and first entered the Punjab Assembly in 2008 to return to the assembly in each subsequent election on a reserved seat for women. She has served as chairperson of the standing committee on gender mainstreaming and contributed to legislation for the empowerment of women during 2013-2018. In 2023, she was appointed organiser of PML-N's Minority Wing and mobilised minority members from across Punjab to join party ranks.

“ **WHETHER NOMINATED ON RESERVED SEATS OR ELECTED DIRECTLY ON GENERAL SEATS, PML-N WOMEN HAVE CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATED THEIR EXCELLENCE AS LAWMAKERS AND AGENTS OF CHANGE. THE FEMALE MEMBERS OF PML-N HAVE CONTINUALLY DEBUNKED THE STEREOTYPE THAT WOMEN OCCUPYING RESERVED SEATS ARE LESS EFFECTIVE.** ”



Shaista Pervaiz

The most renowned among PML-N women is Maryam Nawaz who stood by her mother, Kulsoom Nawaz, as she waged a campaign against dictatorship in 1999 and 2000, a role that she replicated from 2018 onwards when Mian Nawaz Sharif, Mian Shehbaz Sharif, and other party leaders were incarcerated in politically motivated cases.

Although Maryam Nawaz had the advantage of being the daughter of PML-N's founder, she worked hard for more than a decade and proved her worth before being nominated as chief minister of Punjab. None of the scions of the Sharif clan had the charisma or succeeded in rallying workers and supporters as Maryam Nawaz did. The party had other strong candidates for the position of chief minister, yet it chose Maryam Nawaz to lead the largest province of Pakistan, giving a strong message that women's empowerment is a priority for PML-N.

To assist Maryam Nawaz in this onerous task, Marriyum Aurangzeb chose to not return to the National Assembly and took oath as a member of the Punjab Assembly instead. She was inducted into Punjab's cabinet as senior minister with the portfolios of Planning and Development, Environment Protection and Climate Change, Forestry, Fisheries & Wildlife, also including Chief Minister's Special Initiatives.

Since she assumed office, Maryam Nawaz has announced several steps to empower women. On

8 March, she launched a women's safety phone application run by Punjab Police, which has detailed guidance and access to safety resources for women. In addition, she announced an increase in the job quota of women in the Punjab Public Service Commission from 10 per cent to 15 per cent. In her inaugural speech as chief minister, Maryam Nawaz announced the construction of hostels for working women in major cities and inclusive infrastructure in public buildings, such as separate washrooms and daycare centres. On Women's Day, she indicated that one billion rupees would be allocated for this purpose. She vowed to enact and enforce strict legislation to eradicate domestic employment of young girls across Punjab. While talking about sports, she specifically highlighted the need to reserve time for women in stadiums and gymnasiums.

Maryam Nawaz brings with her a woman's perspective to the powerful office of Punjab's chief minister. Just her presence in this position has shifted the gaze to the neglect women face at various levels. In the post-MeToo era, she is the first public office holder in Pakistan to call harassment of women her red line. Maryam Nawaz is not only affecting policies and shifting the narratives but is challenging public perception and serving as a role model by her presence alone.

Whether nominated on reserved seats or elected directly on general seats, PML-N women have consistently demonstrated their excellence as lawmakers and agents of change. The female members of PML-N have continually debunked the stereotype that women occupying reserved seats are less effective ■



PML-N OVERSEAS: UNITY AND CELEBRATION

DR RANA KHALID MEHMOOD

PML-N overseas chapters play a pivotal role in advancing the party's agenda, strengthening ties with overseas Pakistanis, and promoting economic diplomacy. Through their active engagement in various activities, these chapters serve as effective bridges between Pakistan and the global Pakistani community, contributing to the country's development and prosperity.

One of the highlights of the recent engagements of the PML-N overseas chapters was the participation in the oath-taking ceremony of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on March 4, 2024. Senior Vice President and Chief Coordinator of International Affairs for PML-N, Barrister Amjad Malik, graced the occasion and extended congratulations to the party leadership on their electoral triumph.

PARTICIPATION IN THE OATH-TAKING CEREMONY



CELEBRATING THE VICTORY





The PML-N overseas chapters organised various events to commemorate the electoral victory, expressing solidarity and support for the newly elected government. An event held at a local hotel in Lahore saw the presence of distinguished guests, including the President of PML-N Germany Chapter, Rana Liaquat, Muhammad Hanif and Rashid Nasrullah, personal secretaries of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. PML-N's Trade Coordinator for Europe, Amanat Hussain Mehr, emphasised the importance of addressing the concerns of overseas Pakistanis and pledged support to the government. Barrister Amjad Malik highlighted the significance of various aspects such as trade, women's participation in politics, and the role of social media in advancing the party's agenda.

UAE CHAPTER'S CONTRIBUTION



The United Arab Emirates (UAE) holds a special

place for PML-N, with its chapter actively engaged in promoting the party's interests. Led by PML-N UAE President Ghous Muhammad Qadri, the UAE chapter organised an event in Dubai to celebrate the formation of national and provincial governments in Pakistan. As chief guest, Barrister Amjad Malik reiterated the overseas chapters' firm support for Shehbaz Sharif's government and emphasised the empowerment of women represented by Maryam Nawaz Sharif's appointment as chief minister. The PML-N UAE leadership, including Chairman Mustafa Mughal, General Secretary Raja Abu Bakar Effendi, Trade Coordinator Majeed Mughal, Women Wing President Farzana Kausar, and youth representative Manan Pal, expressed optimism regarding the government's performance and highlighted the importance of addressing the concerns of overseas Pakistanis.

PROFILE: CHAUDHRY NISAR AHMAD KHAN

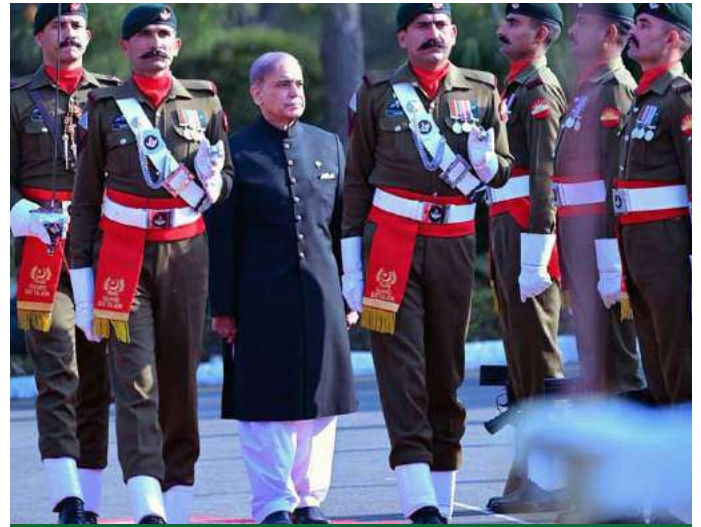


Chief Patron of PML-N Malaysia Chapter Chaudhry Nisar Ahmad Khan brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his role. With a background in business spanning over three decades in Malaysia, Khan has established strong connections with government officials and investors. Having recognised the trade deficit between Pakistan and East Asian countries, Khan is actively involved in promoting Pakistani products and attracting Malaysian investors to Pakistan. His efforts aim to bridge the trade gap and promote economic cooperation between the two nations. Khan also advocates for the appointment of a competent trade and welfare attaché in Pakistan's embassy in Malaysia to further facilitate bilateral relations ■

PICTURE GALLERY



PRESIDENT DR ARIF ALVI ADMINISTERS THE OATH OF PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE TO MIAN MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF AT AIWAN-E-SADR, ISLAMABAD. 4 MARCH 2024



PRIME MINISTER MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF INSPECTS THE GUARD OF HONOUR PRESENTED BY A CONTINGENT OF PAKISTAN'S ARMED FORCES UPON HIS ARRIVAL AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE, ISLAMABAD. 4 MARCH 2024



MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF ADDRESSES THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN THE PRESENCE OF PML-N FOUNDER MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF AFTER HE IS ELECTED PRIME MINISTER. 3 MARCH 2024



PRIME MINISTER MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF DISTRIBUTES RELIEF ITEMS AMONG THOSE AFFECTED BY TORRENTIAL RAINS IN GWADAR. 5 MARCH 2024



CM PUNJAB MARYAM NAWAZ ON AN INSPECTION TOUR OF THE UNDER-CONSTRUCTION RAWALPINDI RING ROAD, RAWALPINDI. 29 FEBRUARY 2024



CHIEF MINISTER PUNJAB MARYAM NAWAZ ANNOUNCES THE RAMADAN PACKAGE IN A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE CHIEF MINISTER'S HOUSE, LAHORE. 6 MARCH 2024



PRIME MINISTER MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF IN A GROUP PHOTO WITH THE RECIPIENTS OF THE "KHATOON-E-PAKISTAN" AWARDS ORGANISED TO MARK INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY. ISLAMABAD. 08 MARCH 2024



CHIEF JUSTICE JUSTICE QAZI FAEZ ISA ADMINISTERS THE OATH OF THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ASIF ALI ZARDARI AT AIWAN-E-SADR IN THE PRESENCE OF PRIME MINISTER MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF. ISLAMABAD. 10 MARCH 2024



PML-N FOUNDER MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF ALONG WITH PML-N AND PPP LEADERS AT THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY OF PRESIDENT ASIF ZARDARI. ISLAMABAD. 10 MARCH 2024



PRESIDENT-ELECT ASIF ALI ZARDARI WELCOMES PRIME MINISTER MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF ON HIS ARRIVAL AT ZARDARI HOUSE. ISLAMABAD. 09 MARCH 2024



PRIME MINISTER MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF INTERACTS WITH FAMILIES OF THE DECEASED AND INJURED IN THE WAKE OF RECENT TORRENTIAL RAINS AND HEAVY SNOWFALL IN PESHAWAR. 6 MARCH 2024



PRIME MINISTER MIAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF ADDRESSES PARLIAMENTARIANS AT A BANQUET IN ISLAMABAD. 7 MARCH 2024



PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER MARYAM NAWAZ ADDRESSES A CEREMONY AT AL HAMRA HALL ON THE OCCASION OF PUNJAB CULTURE DAY. LAHORE 09 MARCH 2024



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