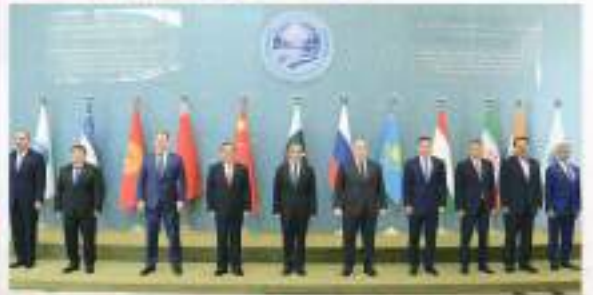


HORIZON

December 2024



RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT
PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE - NAWAZ

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

The political climate in Pakistan reached a critical point on November 26, as protests by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters spilled into chaos in Islamabad's Red Zone. The use of state resources, including cranes and heavy machinery from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to remove barriers and enter the city, was a glaring misuse of power. This disruption coincided with the state visit of Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko, an occasion meant to enhance bilateral ties and promote Pakistan's image on the global stage. Instead, the streets of Islamabad became a theatre of political unrest, undermining the country's efforts at diplomacy.

Compounding the embarrassment, wrappers of Brazilian tear gas discovered at the scene suggest that professional agitators came prepared to provoke and challenge law enforcement. PTI's allegations that law enforcement opened fire on protesters lack credible evidence. The city's lockdown in anticipation of this unrest inflicted severe economic damage, amplifying the public's frustrations with ongoing political instability.

Amid these troubling developments, the need for dialogue is more urgent than ever. Encouragingly, there are signs of flexibility from both the government and PTI, with back-channel contacts and calls for negotiations emerging. However, meaningful dialogue requires maturity and restraint from all parties. PTI must abandon preconditions that risk stalling negotiations. Political differences should not be settled through disruptive street protests or calls for foreign intervention, as these undermine national sovereignty and public trust.

The events of November 26 are a stark reminder of the costs of political intransigence. The PTI's grievances must be addressed through structured and peaceful dialogue, not through spectacles that harm the nation's economy and international reputation.

As the nation grapples with economic challenges and political uncertainty, there is no greater need than for sanity to prevail. Dialogue, not discord, is the only path forward. Both sides must seize this opportunity to demonstrate leadership and put the country's well-being above partisan interests. The citizens of Pakistan deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,
Saira Bano
Editor-in-Chief

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PMYP SHAPING PAKISTAN'S FUTURE

RANA MASHHOOD

Pakistan, with 64 per cent of its population under the age of 30, stands at a defining moment in its history. Confronted by deep-rooted challenges like economic instability, widespread unemployment, environmental crises, and a growing skills gap, the nation's path forward hinges on unlocking the potential of its youth.

In a visionary move, then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif launched the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) in 2013. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reinvigorated the programme's spirit when he assumed charge of his office in 2022 and again in 2024. PMYP is more than a series of one-off initiatives — it is a powerful, transformative force designed to channel the energy, creativity, and resilience of young Pakistanis. Through the 4Es — Education, Engagement, Employment, and Environment—the PMYP provides critical opportunities for the youth to shape their future and contribute meaningfully to the country's progress. This programme is not merely about addressing today's challenges, but about laying the foundation for a dynamic and prosperous Pakistan driven by the ingenuity and leadership of its younger generation.

What sets the PMYP apart from previous initiatives is its integrated approach. This is crucial because Pakistan's youth need more than just job opportunities or education — they need to feel engaged and connected to the nation's governance and future. The programme encourages active participation in decision-making processes by involving young people in platforms like the National Youth Council. This is not just about listening to the youth; it's about positioning them as stakeholders in shaping the country's future.

Under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, the government has allocated Rs 150 billion to youth-focused initiatives. "Education is the foundation of progress," the Prime Minister often emphasises, reflecting his understanding that a prosperous future for Pakistan begins with a knowledgeable, well-equipped younger generation. The Youth Laptop Scheme, one of the flagship components of the PMYP, has already distributed over 600,000 laptops. This is not just a technological upgrade — it represents a deliberate effort to bridge the digital divide, offering students



access to global resources, enabling research, and fostering innovation. Other schemes like 216,151 skill development scholarships, 1,000 PhD scholarships to study in top US universities, and 5,000 scholarships for students from underrepresented regions such as Balochistan and former FATA also signal a strong commitment to closing educational inequities across Pakistan.

Employment is a central concern for young people in the country. With soaring unemployment rates, the PMYP has introduced vital measures like the Ba-Ikhtiyar Naujawan Internship Programme, offering 60,000 paid internships to young graduates. The Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme also empowers aspiring entrepreneurs and young agriculturalists, providing financial backing to those looking to innovate in critical sectors. These initiatives will have a far-reaching impact on stimulating innovation and addressing employment gaps because they are not confined to urban centres, where most government programmes traditionally had their reach. Extending

these opportunities to rural areas is essential to reduce regional inequalities, create balanced economic growth, and foster a more inclusive economy.

While education and employment are the main pillars of PMYP, environmental stewardship stands out as a forward-thinking and highly necessary component. Pakistan, one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, cannot afford to overlook environmental degradation. The Green Youth Movement encourages young people to engage in sustainable practices, from renewable energy to waste management. This environmental focus will inspire a generation of eco-conscious entrepreneurs and activists, who not only adapt to the impacts of climate change but actively work to mitigate them. The long-term benefits of embedding sustainability into youth programmes cannot be overstated. In a world where climate change is a defining challenge, this focus on green practices positions Pakistan to become a regional leader in environmental resilience.



International Convention



“ THE PMYP REPRESENTS A SHIFT IN HOW THE GOVERNMENT VIEWS ITS YOUTH — NOT AS PASSIVE POLICY BENEFICIARIES BUT AS ACTIVE DRIVERS OF CHANGE. ”

Leadership plays an essential role in the successful implementation of such transformative programmes. I am grateful to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for trusting me to steer the PMYP towards its ambitious goals. Since assuming charge, I have focused on forging collaborations between the private sector, educational institutions, and government bodies to expand the programme's reach. We are working on giving youth from all walks of life the tools to contribute meaningfully to Pakistan's development.

The PMYP represents a shift in how the government views its youth — not as passive policy beneficiaries but as active drivers of change. We understand the structural challenges facing Pakistan. While the programme's ambitions are high, its success will depend on its ability to execute these initiatives effectively and inclusively. We will ensure these opportunities truly reach marginalised communities,

particularly in rural areas and conflict-affected regions. The PMYP has the potential to transform not only the economic landscape but also the socio-political fabric of Pakistan, making youth the architects of the nation's progress.

Yet, the success of this programme hinges on the active participation of the youth themselves. The government has provided the tools and laid the groundwork. We urge the young Pakistanis to seize these opportunities. Whether through education, employment, entrepreneurship, or environmental action, this is a moment for youth to rise to the occasion. As Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has emphasised, “The future of Pakistan lies in the hands of its youth.” ■

The writer is chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme.



2024: A LOOK BACK FOR A STEP FORWARD

RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT

The end of the year 2024 calls for a moment of reflection for the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). Under the guidance of its visionary leadership, the party has delivered on its promises and shaped Pakistan's trajectory toward stability and growth.

Mian Nawaz Sharif, the founder of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), resumed the party's presidency in March 2024. Following years of political exile and legal battles, his return to active leadership reaffirmed his enduring influence in national politics. Under his leadership, the PML-N has revitalised its vision for economic revival, governance reform, and infrastructure development. Here is a comprehensive review of PML-N's accomplishments in 2024.

PML-N began the year with a monumental exercise — the formulation of its manifesto for the 2024 general

elections. This extensive and inclusive process involved inputs from experts, grassroots workers, and stakeholders across all sectors of society. Over 4,000 suggestions from the public were reviewed to shape a policy document that addresses the aspirations of Pakistanis. The manifesto laid out a comprehensive strategy to address Pakistan's challenges, focusing on economic revival, institutional reforms, and international cooperation. It spans key areas such as infrastructure development, education, health, agriculture, and youth empowerment.

The party achieved a notable performance in the February 2024 general elections, securing victory in Punjab and forming a coalition government at the federal level. Despite no single party winning a majority in the National Assembly, the PML-N's strategic alliances with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and smaller parties enabled it to emerge as a

“ AFTER ASSUMING CHARGE OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE PARTY ADOPTED A ROBUST APPROACH TO ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AMID CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES. THE PML-N-LED COALITION GOVERNMENT FOCUSED ON STABILISING AN ECONOMY BATTERED BY YEARS OF MISMANAGEMENT AND EXTERNAL SHOCKS. ”



dominant political force. Maryam Nawaz’s historic election as Punjab’s first female chief minister marked a milestone for women’s representation in the country’s politics.

As allegations of rigging and irregularities emerged from various political factions, independent observers like the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) concluded that the elections broadly reflected the people’s mandate. By-elections in Rahim Yar Khan for a National Assembly seat and Sheikhpura for Punjab Assembly further demonstrated PML-N’s ability to counter allegations surrounding Form-47, consolidating its mandate and restoring public confidence in electoral processes.

After assuming charge of the government, the party adopted a robust approach to economic governance amid challenging circumstances. The PML-N-led coalition government focused on stabilising an economy battered by years of mismanagement and external shocks. Key achievements included negotiating a medium-term bailout with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), broadening the tax base, and attracting foreign investments. The government implemented several measures to control inflation, leading to a significant decrease in the inflation rate from over 40 per cent in 2023 to 6.9 per cent in September 2024 — the lowest in more than

three years. To manage energy prices, the government terminated costly power agreements, saving 60 billion rupees annually, and promoted renewable energy projects like solar power to reduce reliance on imported fuel. Tariff adjustments for winter months to increase consumption further eased the burden on consumers.

Infrastructure investments and youth entrepreneurship programmes, aligned with the party’s manifesto, laid the groundwork for job creation and economic growth. Despite inherited challenges, PML-N’s governance signalled hope for recovery, with its policies receiving optimism from economists and stakeholders.

Under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s leadership, the PML-N-led government performed outstandingly on the diplomatic front to rebuild Pakistan’s international standing, securing economic, political, and security interests. An important highlight was Pakistan’s successful hosting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government meeting, which brought several foreign leaders to Islamabad. This high-profile meeting reflected the country’s growing importance within the SCO framework and its ability to facilitate dialogue among member states, including China, Russia, and Central Asian republics.



“ **THE PML-N GOVERNMENT IN PUNJAB HAS SET NEW STANDARDS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE. CHIEF MINISTER MARYAM NAWAZ WORKED TIRELESSLY TO TRANSFORM THE PROVINCE INTO A HUB OF DEVELOPMENT.** ”

Pakistan’s enhanced ranking in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index further boosted its international credibility. However, challenges remained, particularly in countering narratives around terrorism and addressing regional tensions. Through its focus on multilateralism, economic partnerships, and climate diplomacy, the government made significant strides in reinvigorating Pakistan’s global presence and laid the groundwork for sustained international cooperation.

Building on its proactive climate diplomacy, particularly its success in operationalising the Loss and Damage Fund at COP28 in December 2023, Pakistan played an active role in COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, where it highlighted its climate actions and sought collaboration with Business 20 countries on regional climate solutions. Additionally, Pakistan requested \$1 billion in climate financing from the IMF’s Resilience

and Sustainability Trust (RST) to support its climate adaptation and clean energy efforts, recognising the urgent need for funds to address the severe impact of climate change, especially following the 2022 floods that affected millions.

On the domestic front, an important development was the passing of the 26th Constitutional Amendment, representing an important shift in the country’s legal framework. This amendment introduced critical judicial reforms, including the creation of a dedicated constitutional court to address long-standing inefficiencies and delays in the legal system. This court is intended to ensure a more balanced and depersonalised approach to constitutional cases, judicial transparency, and mitigating the effects of past judicial overreach. The amendment reflects a collective effort across parliamentary parties, emphasising dialogue and consensus to safeguard the judiciary’s integrity.

The PML-N invited all political parties to collaborate for the country’s betterment. It engaged in dialogue on critical national issues and accommodated opposition parties in various roles across democratic forums and legislative bodies. The party has consistently coordinated with provincial governments on significant matters and worked to unite all stakeholders to initiate reforms and address pressing national concerns. However, it is unfortunate that



certain opposition factions believe street violence can pressure the government into meeting their demands. Such tactics risk destabilising the nation and impact governance.

The PML-N government in Punjab has set new standards of good governance. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz worked tirelessly to transform the province into a hub of development. From infrastructure projects to health and education reforms, Punjab's progress under her leadership became a benchmark for other provinces. Educational advancements feature prominently with the expansion of the Daanish School System, the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund, and the revival of scholarships for child labourers at brick kilns. Health initiatives include fully operationalising the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute and Research Center, expanding existing hospitals and establishing new cancer and cardiac hospitals, equipping rural health facilities, delivering free medicines to hepatitis, TB and cardiac patients, and launching an air ambulance service.

Maryam Nawaz announced the digitisation of public services under the Digital Punjab initiative.

Agriculture has been enhanced through smart farming zones, tech-driven solutions, and export facilities for produce like citrus. Infrastructure developments focus on better road connectivity, repair systems, and sewage disposal. For youth, merit scholarships, skill training, and startup incubators have been introduced. Women have benefitted from financial and professional empowerment programmes, safe workplace initiatives, and increased job quotas in government. Environmentally, the province has promoted solar energy with subsidised panels for low-electricity consumers.

Recognising the invaluable contributions of the overseas Pakistani community, PML-N prioritised their welfare and representation. The party expanded the Overseas Pakistanis Commission in Punjab to the district level, strengthening its operations to provide a dedicated platform for resolving property disputes, legal matters, etc. Additionally, PML-N worked on strengthening diplomatic ties to protect the rights of overseas Pakistanis and facilitating access to healthcare and education for their families.

In 2024, Pakistan achieved sports victories that reinvigorated national pride. After 13 years, the national hockey team reached the final of the Sultan Azlan Shah Hockey Cup and secured a bronze medal in the Asian Champions Trophy. These achievements were supported by improved sports management and infrastructure development initiatives, including uniting hockey federations and establishing a sports endowment fund for player welfare.

Arshad Nadeem's spectacular javelin throw of 92.97 meters at the Paris Olympics secured Pakistan's first Olympic gold in 32 years. Though the credit for this historic victory belongs entirely to Arshad Nadeem and his coaching team, the triumph was celebrated nationwide, inspiring a renewed sense of hope among Pakistanis.

Arshad Nadeem's victory reminds us that while milestones mark our progress, true success lies in the unwavering resolve to overcome challenges and staying focused on our goals. It serves as an enduring lesson for us to unite around a common purpose and strive to build a brighter future for generations to come ■



PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC RESURGENCE

MUHAMMAD ALI BHALLI

In February 2024, the current government took charge amidst an unprecedented economic crisis. On the macroeconomic front, several critical challenges loomed, including historic inflation at 38 per cent, dwindling foreign exchange reserves, stagnant foreign trade, soaring debt servicing, an inefficient power sector, and declining GDP growth. The government made difficult and unpopular decisions, implementing tough policies with resolve, ultimately steering the economy away from a dire situation.

These policies included a high interest rate and an increased tax burden, primarily borne by those already within the tax net. While not a permanent solution, the result was significant: the persistent current account deficit — which resurfaces every few years to drain foreign exchange reserves — disappeared, turning into a surplus. Additionally, the fiscal deficit was brought under manageable control.

The current account and fiscal deficits were the primary reasons behind the depletion of the country's foreign exchange reserves and the surge in inflation to historic highs. With both deficits now under control, the reserves have stabilised, and prices have plateaued. While it would be premature to declare the economic crisis over, one thing is clear: confidence and economic stability have been achieved.

This stability has helped reduce inflation and supported rebuilding foreign exchange reserves. By the start of FY 2024-25, the positive impact of these measures became evident, with nearly every macroeconomic indicator showing resilient improvement. Furthermore, in September 2024, the successful implementation of the \$7 billion IMF program restored market confidence and garnered support from global financial lenders. A brief overview of the economic performance is elaborated below:

“ THE CURRENT ACCOUNT AND FISCAL DEFICITS WERE THE PRIMARY REASONS BEHIND THE DEPLETION OF THE COUNTRY’S FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES AND THE SURGE IN INFLATION TO HISTORIC HIGHS. WITH BOTH DEFICITS NOW UNDER CONTROL, THE RESERVES HAVE STABILISED, AND PRICES HAVE PLATEAUED. ”



FOREIGN TRADE

During the first five months of FY25, the trade deficit narrowed by 7.39% year-on-year (YoY), declining to \$8.651 billion compared to \$9.341 billion during the same period in FY24. Exports saw a growth of 12.57 per cent, rising to \$13.691 billion in July-November FY25, up from \$12.162 billion in the corresponding period of FY24. Meanwhile, imports remained within controlled limits, registering a modest increase of 3.90 per cent to \$22.342 billion, compared to \$21.503 billion in the same time frame last year.



BALANCE OF PAYMENT

Pakistan’s current account posted a notable surplus of \$218 million in the first four months of the current fiscal year (4MFY25), in contrast to a massive deficit of \$1.528 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

The surplus is expected to help the Pakistani currency remain stable against the US dollar and other global currencies, bolster the foreign exchange reserves, and boost the country’s capacity to smoothly pay for the rising imports and repay the maturing foreign debt.



INFLATION

Inflation in Pakistan has long been a significant and persistent economic challenge. Today, the inflation rate has dropped to a remarkable 4.9 per cent, the lowest in 70 months — an achievement once considered unimaginable.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif commended his economic team’s performance, stating that the country’s economy was firmly on the path to progress. He attributed this turnaround to a stringent clampdown on smuggling, a sharp decline in inflation, and doubled revenue collection, which have collectively helped stabilise the eroding economy.

The Prime Minister noted that sentiment on the ground was positive as inflation declined. He emphasised the need to focus on sustained growth, particularly improving the GDP ratio, boosting exports, strengthening industry, increasing employment opportunities, and developing special economic zones (SEZs).



FOREIGN RESERVES

Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves reached a 31-month high in December 2024, with total liquid reserves standing at \$16.62 billion.

This boost in reserves, coupled with improved economic stability, prompted global credit rating agencies, including Moody’s and Fitch, to upgrade Pakistan’s rating by one notch within the ‘C’ category during the current fiscal year.



BUDGET SURPLUS

Pakistan achieved a budget surplus during the first quarter of FY 2024-25 (July-September), breaking a 24-year cycle of consecutive fiscal deficits since FY 2001. The budget surplus for this period stood at an impressive Rs1,896.01 billion.

Additionally, the Government of Pakistan successfully achieved a cumulative provincial surplus of Rs360 billion, surpassing the IMF-agreed target of Rs342 billion for Q1 of FY 2024-25.

The country’s primary surplus, which excludes interest payments from the fiscal balance, also reached a historic peak of over Rs3 trillion — equivalent to 2.4 per cent of GDP. This figure is nearly double the full-year target of 1 per cent of GDP, or approximately Rs1.24 trillion.

REMITTANCES

During the first five months of FY25, remittances increased by a remarkable 33.6 per cent year-on-year, rising to \$14.8 billion compared to \$11.1 billion in the corresponding period of FY24. The inflow of workers’ remittances is projected to reach an all-time high of \$35 billion by the end of FY 2024-25.

Home remittances play a crucial role in supporting the country’s external account, stimulating economic activity, and supplementing the disposable incomes of remittance-dependent households. This significant boost in remittances is the result of efforts by the State Bank of Pakistan and the Federal Government to revamp the incentive structure for banks and exchange companies (ECs). Under this revamped system, both the banks and the ECs benefit from two types of incentives: fixed component incentives and variable component incentives.



PAKISTAN STOCK EXCHANGE

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) reached a significant milestone in December 2024 as the KSE-100 Index surpassed the 110,000-point mark. This outstanding performance reflects positive investor sentiment and a robust market trend.

Like life itself, economic progress is a journey of resilience and reinvention. Just as the darkest nights give way to dawn, nations too must endure trials to emerge stronger■

The writer is a corporate financial specialist.



REIMAGINING WASTE MANAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN

SULTAN ALI RANJHA

Most remain unaware that Sweden imports waste from other countries to generate energy. Sweden has embraced the idea of a circular economy, where nothing goes to waste. The country has an impressive network of waste-to-energy plants that process domestic as well as imported waste from other countries. By doing so, Sweden generates electricity and district heating for its residents. The idea is simple: turn waste into something valuable. The concept behind viewing waste as an economic opportunity could inspire similar projects elsewhere. If waste can be transformed into energy, materials, or even income, it becomes a resource rather than a problem.

As cities grow and more people move into urban areas, managing waste has become a huge challenge for public health, the environment, and the economy. With its rapidly growing population, Pakistan urgently needs better waste management solutions. However, it is not always easy or affordable for a developing country to adopt the high-tech systems used in the

West. Instead, we can learn from simple, practical ideas that have worked in other countries with similar challenges, as well as from successful initiatives within our own country.

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Pakistan produces over 48 million tons of solid waste annually, and much of it ends in open dumps, polluting land and water. In cities like Lahore and Karachi, overflowing garbage is a common sight, with waste management systems struggling to keep up. This is not just an environmental issue, but a human health crisis. Uncollected waste becomes a breeding ground for diseases, contaminates drinking water, and releases harmful gases into the air.

Punjab is making significant strides in waste management by implementing modern practices aimed at enhancing cleanliness and efficiency. Cities like Lahore, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi have adopted door-to-door waste collection systems, combining

RESEARCH

mechanical and manual methods to ensure regular and effective waste disposal. This approach minimises the reliance on community waste bins, keeping streets cleaner. One exemplary case is the Sargodha Solid Waste Management Company (SWMC), which uses innovative solutions such as GIS mapping to optimise collection routes and ensure comprehensive coverage.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist in achieving a truly sustainable waste management system. Rural areas often lack adequate infrastructure, leading to the accumulation of garbage and associated health risks. Limited budgets constrain the adoption of advanced solutions like recycling plants, while low public awareness hampers efforts to encourage waste sorting and recycling. Cultural stigmas around waste management jobs, reliance on informal waste pickers, and weak enforcement of waste disposal laws add to the complexity of the issue. Moreover, environmental hazards such as open waste burning, and floods exacerbate pollution and undermine cleanup efforts. Addressing these challenges requires both, infrastructural investment and a cultural shift driven by education

SINGAPORE: TURNING TRASH INTO ENERGY

Singapore, a small and crowded country, has found a way to turn waste into energy. The government recognised that with limited space for landfills, they needed a different approach. By burning waste, they cut the amount of trash going into landfills by 90 per cent, and the energy created powers the city. The incineration process is highly regulated to minimise pollution, and the ash produced is safely stored. This model could prove especially useful for Pakistan's urban areas, where land is scarce, and energy shortages are common.

SOUTH KOREA: PAY FOR WHAT YOU THROW AWAY

In South Korea, the government took a different approach by focusing on waste reduction at the source. Citizens are charged based on the amount of waste they cannot recycle, encouraging them to sort waste carefully and recycle as much as possible. This

“pay-as-you-throw” policy has reduced waste and has created a more environmentally conscious society. For communities struggling with waste management, a policy of this kind could push people to be more responsible about the waste they generate. Local governments could implement a similar system, providing incentives for recycling and penalties for excessive waste.

JAPAN: THE ZERO-WASTE MINDSET

In Japan, the emphasis on waste management is not just about systems; it is a cultural movement. The town of Kamikatsu has a strict zero-waste policy, and residents sort their waste into 45 categories. Schools teach children the importance of recycling from an early age, and the entire community takes pride in reducing waste. This cultural dedication is something any country could adopt. Teaching people to care about their impact on the environment can drive change from the ground up. Pakistan could introduce waste education in schools and involve community leaders to foster a similar mindset.

GERMANY: MAKING COMPANIES RESPONSIBLE

Germany has a well-oiled recycling system that involves everyone — from individuals to large corporations. The “Green Dot” programme requires companies to pay for the waste their packaging generates. The more eco-friendly packaging, the less they pay. This policy has motivated companies to design recyclable or biodegradable products. This kind of responsibility-sharing could be game-changing. Businesses in Pakistan and beyond could be encouraged or required to play a more active role in waste management, reducing the burden on municipal systems.

CHINA: WASTE-TO-ENERGY FACILITIES

China, known for its rapidly growing urban centres, had to devise large-scale solutions for waste. They built numerous waste-to-energy facilities that reduce landfill use and generate energy for millions. The key here is ensuring that emissions are controlled, something China has heavily invested in. With energy shortages and overflowing landfills, adopting a similar

“ IF WASTE CAN BE TRANSFORMED INTO ENERGY, MATERIALS, OR EVEN INCOME, IT BECOMES A RESOURCE RATHER THAN A PROBLEM. ”

model could significantly impact large cities facing waste and energy challenges.

PUNE, INDIA: WASTE PICKERS TAKE CHARGE

Pune used to have a waste crisis, but things turned around when the city partnered with SWaCH, India's largest cooperative of waste pickers. These workers, often overlooked in the past, now collect waste from homes, sort it, and recycle as much as possible. Residents pay a small fee for this service, and the government supports the initiative with funding and logistics. This model has not only improved waste management but has also uplifted the lives of thousands of waste pickers. It is proof that involving the community and valuing informal workers can create a win-win solution.

DHAKA, BANGLADESH: COMMUNITY COMPOSTING

In Dhaka, an NGO called Waste Concern found a simple yet powerful way to manage organic waste. They collect organic waste from markets and homes and turn it into compost, which is sold to farmers. This has reduced landfill waste and provided a steady income for the people involved. The government has supported these efforts by providing land for composting facilities. It is a great example of how community-driven initiatives, with the right backing, can make a huge difference.

SURABAYA, INDONESIA: WASTE BANKS

In Surabaya, waste management has been revolutionised with waste banks. Residents bring their recyclables to waste banks, where they earn money or points that can be used for household needs. The city has also promoted composting and created community-driven initiatives to reduce landfill waste.



This grassroots approach has made a significant difference in managing waste sustainably.

THE WAY FORWARD

To tackle the challenges of implementing better waste management solutions, Pakistan needs a multi-pronged approach that combines policy reform, public awareness, and infrastructural development. The local governments must prioritise waste management by allocating higher budgets and offering incentives to attract private sector investments in modern technologies, such as waste-to-energy plants and recycling facilities. Strengthening regulations and ensuring their enforcement is crucial to creating accountability among individuals and businesses, with measures like fines for improper waste disposal and rewards for sustainable practices. Public education campaigns starting at the school level can instil a culture of waste segregation and environmental responsibility. Community involvement can be encouraged through grassroots initiatives like composting and waste banks. Integrating informal waste pickers into formal systems, and providing them with proper training and equipment, can improve efficiency and uplift marginalised communities. Additionally, localised solutions tailored to urban and rural needs, coupled with climate-resilient infrastructure to handle disruptions like floods, will ensure a more sustainable and inclusive waste management framework.

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



PM SHEHBAZ VOWS SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS PAKISTANIS

DR RANA KHALID MEHMOOD

December witnessed a vibrant array of activities by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), aimed at engaging overseas Pakistanis and addressing their concerns. Under the leadership of key representatives, efforts were made to strengthen ties with expatriate communities and highlight their crucial role in Pakistan's economic and social development.

Vice Chairperson of the Punjab Overseas Pakistanis Commission (OPC) Barrister Amjad Malik met with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Lahore. The Prime Minister congratulated him on his appointment and emphasised the indispensable role of expatriates as the backbone of Pakistan's economy. He reiterated the government's commitment to resolving their challenges through coordinated efforts at both federal and provincial levels. In response, Barrister Malik expressed his gratitude and praised the government's economic achievements, particularly the recent improvements in the stock market and fiscal stability. He further highlighted the need for expedited judicial processes

for expatriates, particularly by introducing speedy trial courts and applauded the government's efforts to restore PIA's direct flights to Europe. The two leaders also discussed the importance of combating disinformation on social media, which often disrupts harmony among overseas communities.

OPC AND OPF TO COLLABORATE



Barrister Amjad Malik's leadership drew praise from General (Retd) Bilal Akbar, former Pakistani Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and Overseas Pakistanis

Foundation (OPF) Chairman Syed Qamar Raza. During their meeting, they discussed the vital contributions of overseas Pakistanis in the Gulf region and the need for enhanced collaboration between the Punjab OPC and the OPF.

Both leaders highlighted the necessity of creating investment opportunities for expatriates and addressing their legal and social issues. General Akbar emphasised the importance of stronger communication channels between expatriates and government institutions, while Chairman Raza proposed new welfare programmes to further the cause of overseas Pakistanis.

PML-N ITALY CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS IN GUJRANWALA



In Gujranwala, the president of the minority wing of PML-N's Italy chapter, Shahzad Bhatti, hosted a grand reception to honour overseas Pakistanis. On the occasion, a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony emphasised the importance of interfaith harmony. The event highlighted the contributions of expatriate Pakistanis in Europe in supporting Pakistan's economy and global image. The participants, including Dr Amjad Malik, called for increased cooperation among overseas Pakistanis to counter the challenges they face abroad. They lauded the government's efforts to bridge gaps and build stronger connections with overseas communities.

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY BY PML-N OMAN



In Sialkot, Chaudhry Maqsood Ahmad Butt, senior vice president of the PML-N Oman chapter, hosted a dinner in honour of Barrister Amjad Malik. The gathering brought together expatriate leaders visiting Pakistan, and PML-N supporters to discuss the challenges faced by Pakistanis abroad.

Prominent figures, including MPA and the Punjab Land Records Authority Chairman Chaudhry Tariq Subhani, attended the event. They praised Barrister Malik's leadership and emphasised the importance of coordinated efforts between federal and provincial bodies to address the expatriate community's concerns. The evening provided a platform to strengthen ties and discuss investment opportunities for expatriates.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNTERING DISINFORMATION



In Hong Kong, Zain Ali Imran, a dedicated youth leader from PML-N's Hong Kong chapter and a law student at the University of Hong Kong (HKU), took the initiative to combat the spread of misinformation by bringing together a diverse group of 25 Pakistani students from prestigious institutions like HKU, CUHK, and Science Park.

Participants discussed ways to counter fake narratives and called for projecting a positive image of Pakistan on international platforms. Key attendees included Muhammad Zeeshan (City University of Hong Kong), Noor ul Hadi (HKU), and Wasim Ullah Khan (HKSTP-City University), who shared insights on building a cohesive community abroad.

Zain aims to expand this engagement, with the next phase involving over 100 participants in a larger gathering ■

PICTURE GALLERY



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF AND CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF GENERAL ASIM MUNIR AT THE FUNERAL OF RANGERS OFFICIALS MARTYRED DURING PTI PROTESTS IN ISLAMABAD. RAWALPINDI. 26 NOVEMBER 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF AND CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF GENERAL ASIM MUNIR OFFER FUNERAL PRAYER FOR RANGERS OFFICIALS MARTYRED DURING PTI PROTESTS IN ISLAMABAD. RAWALPINDI. 26 NOVEMBER 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF RECEIVES PRESIDENT OF BELARUS ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO AT PAF NUR KHAN AIR BASE. RAWALPINDI. 25 NOVEMBER 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF AND PRESIDENT OF BELARUS ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO SIGN A JOINT COMMUNIQUE. ISLAMABAD. 26 NOVEMBER 2024



THE PRESIDENT OF BELARUS ALSO MET WITH PRESIDENT PML-N MUHAMMAD NAWAZ SHARIF AND CM PUNJAB MARYAM NAWAZ IN MURREE. 28 NOVEMBER 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF WAVES THE PAKISTANI FLAG AT A CEREMONY TO CELEBRATE ALLAMA MUHAMMAD IQBAL'S BIRTHDAY. ISLAMABAD. 08 NOVEMBER 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF ADDRESSES THE COP29 CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT IN BAKU. 13 NOVEMBER 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF IN A GROUP PHOTO AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF COP29 CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT IN BAKU. 12 NOVEMBER 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF UNVEILS THE PLAQUE OF RESTORATION OF KACHHI CANAL. PUNJAB AND BALOCHISTAN CHIEF MINISTERS ARE ALSO PRESENT. TAUNSA BARRAGE/KOT ADDU. 22 NOVEMBER 2024



IN RECOGNITION OF HIS SERVICES IN IDENTIFYING SALES TAX FRAUD, PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF PRESENTS A SHIELD TO FBR OFFICER AIJAZ HUSSAIN. ISLAMABAD. 21 NOVEMBER 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF IN A PHOTO WITH THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE 26TH NATIONAL SECURITY WORKSHOP IN ISLAMABAD. 28 NOVEMBER 2024.



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF IN A GROUP PHOTOGRAPH WITH PROBATIONARY OFFICERS OF THE INFORMATION SERVICE OF PAKISTAN. ISLAMABAD. 09 NOVEMBER 2024



HORIZON

Research and Policy Planning Unit
Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz