

HORIZON

July 2024

100 DAYS
OF FEDERAL
GOVERNANCE

RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT
PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE - NAWAZ

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Pakistan stands at a crossroads, facing a convergence of political, economic, and security challenges. The recent terrorist attacks in Bannu Cantonment and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan are stark reminders of the relentless threats we face. The tragic loss of security personnel, civilians, and children has cast a shadow over our nation. The bravery of our forces, who eliminated the terrorists responsible, is commendable. Yet, the resurgence of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and their refuge in Afghanistan underscores the persistent danger. The Foreign Office's strong demarche to Afghanistan emphasises our stance against these heinous acts, which have previously targeted vital projects like the Dasu Dam.

In response to the deteriorating security situation, Pakistan's top civilian and military leadership initiated a nationwide counterterrorism campaign named "Azm-e-Istehkam." or Resolve for Stability in June. This comprehensive operation, approved in a high-powered meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, aims to combat extremism and terrorism. Despite some reservations from certain quarters, all political parties must support the government's efforts to eradicate terrorism. Only through collective effort can the safety and security of our citizens be ensured.

Economically, Pakistan has reached a significant milestone with a staff-level agreement with the IMF for a 37-month Extended Fund Facility Arrangement worth approximately US\$7 billion. While the conditions are stringent, this deal offers a path to long-term economic stabilisation and potential foreign investments. However, Fitch's warning that political instability could derail economic recovery cannot be ignored. Political unity is crucial to sustain this fragile economic lifeline.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court's recent verdict on reserved seats for the Sunni Ittehad Council is a cause for political uncertainty. Granting relief to an entity that was not even party to the case sets a concerning precedent. The government is committed to challenging this decision and will not stand to see those who attacked military facilities on 9 May 2023, gain influence in parliament.

Amidst these challenges, there are glimmers of hope. The Prime Minister's proactive diplomacy at the SCO summit in Astana and his engagements with leaders on the sidelines are steps towards strengthening regional cooperation. On his way to the summit, the PM stopped over in Tajikistan where he highlighted the importance of regional connectivity and integration for sustainable development. The visit of Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev to Islamabad and the pledge to enhance bilateral investments up to \$2 billion is a promising development.

The PML-N government is determined to pull the country out of the morass it is stuck in and towards the road to progress.

Sincerely,
Saira Bano
Editor-in-Chief

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



100 DAYS OF FEDERAL GOVERNANCE

RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT

For Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the path to success is clear, thanks to his ability to prioritise, strategise, and forge ahead. Challenges only fuel his resolve, as he possesses an indomitable fighting spirit.

In just 100 days, his government has made significant strides toward national prosperity. Sworn in on March 4, 2024, amidst financial instability and political division, Shehbaz knew precisely what needed to be done to drive progress across multiple sectors. His firm commitment and strategic vision are setting the stage for a brighter future for Pakistan.

By June 15, the federal government completed its first 100 days. Shehbaz pledged to end the country's dependency on foreign aid and International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailouts, introducing multiple reforms

to revive the economy. He addressed the nation, expressing hope that the current IMF bailout package would be the last in the country's history.

FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

The prime minister emphasised his commitment to establishing trade relations during his foreign trips, rather than seeking loans, as a means to break the debt cycle. To promote investment, the prime minister has adopted an open-for-business approach, removing barriers to investment through the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), which helps navigate bureaucratic hurdles that discourage investors.

In May, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) committed \$10 billion to invest in promising economic sectors in

REPORT

the country. During Shehbaz's visits to Saudi Arabia and UAE, each country committed to investing billions of dollars in Pakistan in various sectors, including mines and minerals, agriculture, defence production, and information technology. The initiative is also part of Pakistan's new economic revival strategy under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

In April, the Iranian president visited Pakistan and both countries agreed to increase their annual trade volume to \$10 billion over the next five years, to deepen relations across all sectors.

Prime Minister Sharif's visit to China in the first week of June also came as Pakistan is seeking more foreign investment and looking to boost exports. On the visit, the PM was accompanied by over 100 businessmen who had back-to-back meetings and agreements with Chinese firms/companies.

PRICE CONTROL

Inflation in Pakistan remained under control from January to May. It only spiked in June for the first time in six months due to increased energy costs. The Ministry of Finance, in its Monthly Economic Update and Outlook report, attributed this rise to higher prices of perishable items driven by Eid-ul-Azha. However, in May, Pakistan's consumer price index (CPI) dropped 11.8 per cent from a year earlier, the lowest reading in 30 months and below the finance ministry's projections. Last year in May, inflation had jumped 38 per cent amid IMF bailout programme reforms.

A report from the second quarter of the Consumer Confidence Survey 2024, which included responses from 1,000 participants nationwide, indicates a significant shift in financial confidence among Pakistanis. The percentage of respondents who reported being able to save and invest rose from 4 per cent to 15 per cent, while those who said they were unable to save and invest decreased from 89 per cent to 85 per cent.

The survey also revealed increased confidence in making big purchases, such as houses or cars. Previously, only 2 per cent of respondents felt



confident in making such a purchase; however, this figure has now risen to 7 per cent. Conversely, the percentage of those expressing uncertainty about major purchases has dropped by 5 per cent, now standing at 93 per cent.

Furthermore, the mean reduction in the price of petrol from March 2024 to June 2024 is about Rs 11.39 per litre. The reduction in petrol prices has a positive ripple effect across various sectors, from economic to social. Gasoline prices went down 7.1 per cent in the past month alone.

REMITTANCES

In July-May FY2024, workers' remittances were recorded at \$27.1 billion, an increase of 7.7 per cent compared to \$25.1 billion for the same period last year. The share of remittances (July-May) from Saudi Arabia remained the highest at 24.4 per cent (\$6.6 billion), followed by UAE and the UK.

FISCAL STABILITY

According to the Finance Government Economic Update June Report 2024, the government's policy management and administrative measures have restored market confidence, leading to a pickup in economic activity. GDP growth accelerated to 2.4 per cent in FY2024.

During July to April FY2024, net federal revenue

grew by 51 per cent to reach Rs5627.5 billion against 3715.3 billion last year. The substantial rise in revenues was primarily driven by a 96 per cent growth in non-tax collection and a 31 per cent rise in tax receipts.

RESTRUCTURING OF FBR

To improve tax collection, the federal government has tightened the noose around the tax evaders, pressuring the tax authority to perform efficiently. In March, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif launched the digitisation and restructuring of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), aiming to modernise tax collection, enhance transparency, and boost revenue growth. The reform has been underway for a month and is expected to address long-standing issues in revenue collection.

To improve taxpayers' compliance with tax measures, the FBR blocked over 230,000 mobile phone SIMs of non-tax filers until 10 July. Consumers could get their SIMs unblocked after filing their tax returns.

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH

According to the Finance Government Economic Update June Report 2024, the agriculture sector has emerged as a main driver of economic growth in the current fiscal year, registering growth of 6.3 per cent.

STOCK EXCHANGE PERFORMANCE

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has continued with a bullish trend, setting new records since this government was sworn in. The benchmark of PSX, the KSE-100 index gained 4,097 points in April and closed at 71,103 points as of 30 April 2024. It surged past the 73,000-point milestone, closing at 73,085.5 points after gaining 427 points (0.59 per cent) on 10 May. The May rise was driven by investor optimism that inflation would fall faster than expected, leading to potential lower interest rates. Key analysts cited expectations of reduced inflation and interest rates as reasons for increased investment, particularly in cyclical and leveraged sectors like cement.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In pursuit of meritocracy, the prime minister has held individuals responsible for their subpar performance. In April, the federal government took action against top officials of the FBR for their non-compliant attitude just before the budget preparation exercise for the fiscal year 2024-25. A notification stated that the FBR placed 12 officers of grades 22 and 21 from the Inland Revenue Service and Customs under the admin pool. The FBR transferred almost all key members, including the member Inland Revenue (Policy) and member Customs (Operations), to the admin pool of the board.

The FBR said that it will issue more notifications of transfers and postings of BS-20 and BS-19 officers after reshuffling senior officials in grades 22 and 21.

On June 15, PM Shehbaz Sharif promised to abolish all institutions and ministries burdening the national exchequer without serving the public. "One such department is the Public Works Department (PWD) known as the 'most notorious' one in terms of corruption," he added.

GDP GROWTH

A United Nations economic survey released in April this year indicated economic growth for the current year and the next year with real GDP growth of two per cent and 2.3 per cent, respectively. The survey also forecast a decrease in inflation from 26 per cent in 2024 to 12.2 per cent in 2025. It highlighted that an agreement with the IMF in mid-2023 and assistance from China, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE had helped stabilise the economy in 2023. The survey recommended that strengthening tax revenue collection and boosting domestic savings were crucial steps forward.

The actions taken by the federal government over the past four months have been significant, setting the stage for the direction of the coming months and years. While this period is too short to fully assess the government's performance, the initiatives mentioned above are crucial indicators of their future trajectory.



IT entrepreneur
Muhammad Talha Javed

THE POTENTIAL OF E-COMMERCE IN PAKISTAN

SULTAN ALI RANJHA

The e-commerce sector in Pakistan has experienced remarkable growth over recent years, driven primarily by the country's youthful demographic. With more than 67 per cent of the population under 30 years of age, Pakistani youth are not only significant consumers of e-commerce but also its primary innovators and entrepreneurs.

Muhammad Talha Javed, hailing from Kotla Panah in Sargodha, is a pioneering entrepreneur and the founder of Cyfrow Solutions, a thriving IT hub. His journey from a small village to becoming the number one freelancer of DigiSkills is an inspiration for many.

Raised in a village with limited resources, Talha pursued his early education locally and completed his intermediate studies at Punjab College. He received training in e-commerce through the government-run

DigiSkills programme.

After receiving this training, Talha started freelancing and quickly rose to prominence, becoming the number one freelancer of DigiSkills in Sargodha. His remarkable achievements were recognised in 2023 when Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif awarded him for his contributions.

Fuelled by this recognition, Talha sought to give back to his community, leading to the establishment of Cyfrow Solutions. Currently, the company boasts a team of 55 digitally skilled professionals and has ambitious plans to expand its strength to 1,000 individuals.

Cyfrow Solutions is not about job creation but empowering individuals with the skills needed for

the digital age. The company's impact is evident in the search engine optimisation (SEO) industry, where it has generated over \$1.4 million. Operating in 60 countries, Cyfrow Solutions utilises 88 Fiverr accounts and ensures that every member of the company earns at least \$200 monthly.

Talha's story is one of pride and ongoing commitment to the mission of Cyfrow Solutions. Together, they are making significant strides towards a brighter, digitally empowered future for Kot Momin and beyond.

The Pakistani government recognises the potential of its youthful population and has implemented various policies and initiatives to support the growth of e-commerce. The Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) is at the forefront of advancing e-commerce education and empowerment across the province. These efforts aim to create a conducive environment for online businesses by addressing regulatory barriers, enhancing digital infrastructure, and promoting financial inclusion.

The government's National E-commerce Policy outlines strategies to promote e-commerce in Pakistan. This includes simplifying business registration processes, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and encouraging innovation in the digital economy. Programmes focused on enhancing digital literacy, web development, digital marketing, and financial management help young entrepreneurs effectively understand and leverage e-commerce platforms. Initiatives like the Kamyab Jawan Programme provide young entrepreneurs with financial support, training, and mentorship, helping them start and grow their e-commerce businesses.

To enhance e-commerce capabilities in Punjab, the government should integrate digital literacy into school curriculums from primary levels, covering basic computer skills, internet usage, online safety, and introductory e-commerce concepts. Advanced courses for higher grades should include digital marketing, setting up online businesses, e-commerce platforms, and financial literacy.

It is recommended that every high school graduate

“**SUPPORTING YOUTH IN E-COMMERCE HAS SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS, INCLUDING JOB CREATION, ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND ENHANCED TAX REVENUES.**”

undergo a mandatory four-month training programme in digital skills and e-commerce. This programme would equip them with the necessary skills to earn money independently and contribute to their family's income as well as the national economy.

Expanding vocational training programmes to include e-commerce skills can provide immediate employment opportunities for young people. These programmes can focus on practical skills such as setting up online stores, managing digital marketing campaigns, and handling customer service.

The Punjab government can establish incubators and accelerators that provide resources, mentorship, and funding opportunities to e-commerce startups. These facilities can help young entrepreneurs navigate the challenges of the e-commerce landscape and scale their businesses.

Collaborating with private sector entities can create a robust support system for emerging e-commerce businesses. These partnerships can provide young entrepreneurs with additional resources, expertise, and market access.

It is crucial to extend digital services and education to small towns and remote areas down to the Union Council level, ensuring community-based programmes that benefit everyone, including those in underserved areas. While urban areas benefit from initiatives like free internet services, many rural regions remain underserved.

Here are comprehensive recommendations for the Punjab government to address this digital divide and empower young kids and housewives with e-commerce education.

“ IT IS CRUCIAL TO EXTEND DIGITAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION TO SMALL TOWNS AND REMOTE AREAS DOWN TO THE UNION COUNCIL LEVEL, ENSURING COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMES THAT BENEFIT EVERYONE, ”



Invest in the expansion of broadband infrastructure to ensure reliable and high-speed internet access in small towns and remote areas. Collaborate with telecom companies to lay down fibre optic cables and establish satellite internet services where necessary. Set up community internet hubs equipped with computers and internet access in central locations. These hubs can serve as educational centres where individuals can learn about e-commerce and access online resources. Ensuring reliable power supply in small towns and remote areas is essential to support digital infrastructure. Investing in alternative energy solutions such as solar panels can provide consistent electricity to training centres and community hubs.

To make the programme systematic and transparent, every Union Council must be monitored by the Union Council representative or under the oversight of their member of provincial assembly (MPA). This will ensure that the programme's transparency is not compromised at any level.

The idea is to initiate this programme by having each Union Council hire an instructor to impart these skills for a minimum salary. Once trained, the skilled aspirants will then educate further students voluntarily. This creates a sustainable, community-driven model where everyone works together, fostering a strong community spirit.

I am personally leading efforts to impart digital skills training to youngsters in my constituency PP73. We have collaborated with private colleges and invite skilled trainers to guide students on how they can earn through freelance work.

The government can establish e-commerce training

centres in community halls and public libraries, offering practical courses for housewives and youth. Regular workshops and seminars, featuring successful local entrepreneurs can provide mentorship and inspiration. Likewise, introducing awards and recognition programmes for successful entrepreneurs will motivate others and highlight local achievements.

Supporting youth in e-commerce has significant economic implications, including job creation, economic growth, and enhanced tax revenues. Educating young entrepreneurs about tax obligations and the benefits of tax compliance can help enhance revenue generation. Awareness campaigns and training programmes can emphasise the importance of paying taxes and how they contribute to national development.

The future of e-commerce in Pakistan is bright, with its trajectory largely influenced by the country's young population. As internet penetration and digital literacy continue to improve, and as more young entrepreneurs enter the market, the sector is expected to witness unprecedented growth.

Facilitating cross-border e-commerce can provide Pakistani businesses with access to international markets. Government initiatives to reduce trade barriers and simplify export processes can support the growth of cross-border e-commerce.

Enhancing the global competitiveness of Pakistani e-commerce businesses through innovation, quality assurance, and efficient coordination can help them compete successfully on the international stage ■

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



CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif signs the budget document 2024-25 in the presence of Senior Provincial Minister Maryam Aurangzeb, Chief Secretary and Finance Secretary. Lahore. 13 June 2024

HISTORIC SURPLUS BUDGET FOR PUNJAB

MUHAMMAD MUGHEES ARIF

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the Punjab government proposed its first annual budget for the fiscal year 2024–2025 on 13 June 2024. In his budget speech, Punjab’s Finance Minister Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman announced a historic budget of Rs5.3 trillion, making it the largest ever for Punjab. Notably, the budget is surplus, signalling a positive shift in the province’s economic landscape. Amid challenging economic conditions, the elimination of the budget deficit has been welcomed as a refreshing change. This budget allows the Punjab government to implement various development and welfare initiatives for the people of the province.

The Punjab government has allocated Rs4,465 billion and a record-setting development budget of Rs842 billion. This historic financial plan aims to balance resources between urban and rural areas, ensuring equitable growth across the province. Special attention has been given to the development of south Punjab, highlighting the government’s commitment to uplifting all regions. By focusing on infrastructure,

health, and education, the budget promises to drive significant progress and improve the quality of life for the people of Punjab.

This budget increases salaries for employees in grades 1-16 by 25 per cent and for grades 17-22 by 20 per cent. Pensions have been raised by 15 per cent, and the minimum wage increased from Rs32,000 to Rs37,000 per month. Punjab’s budget is softer on taxation, featuring measures like free solar panels for electricity consumers using less than 100 units per

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THIS BUDGET, CRAFTED UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF CHIEF MINISTER MARYAM NAWAZ SHARIF, IS A COMPREHENSIVE EFFORT TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND SOCIAL WELFARE.

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UNDER CHIEF MINISTER MARYAM NAWAZ SHARIF'S LEADERSHIP, THE PUNJAB GOVERNMENT HAS ACHIEVED A MILESTONE BY REDUCING ITS DEBT FROM RS1708 BILLION TO RS1685 BILLION.

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month. Additionally, Rs10 billion has been allocated for small housing projects across the province.

Agriculture receives substantial support, with Rs75 billion in interest-free loans available to half a million farmers. The Green Tractor Scheme offers interest-free loans for tractor purchases. Model agriculture malls are planned, costing Rs1.25 billion, and livestock cards worth Rs2 billion will be introduced. Shrimp farming is also a focus, with Rs8 billion earmarked for this purpose, which includes a model shrimp farm in Lahore costing Rs5 billion.

Infrastructure improvements are prioritised, with Rs296 billion allocated to construct 2,380 km of roads and Rs135 billion for repairing existing roads through 482 schemes. In education, Rs2.5 billion have been allocated for undergraduate scholarships and Rs2.97 billion for the Chief Minister's Skills Development Programme aimed at boosting the textile industry. The government has revived the PML-N's flagship laptop scheme, with a Rs10 billion allocation.

Health initiatives include a significant Rs56 billion investment in the Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Research in Lahore and Rs8.84 billion for the Institute of Cardiology in Sargodha. Special provisions are made for differently-abled children, transgender individuals, and minorities.

The budget also proposes amendments to the Urban Immovable Property Tax Act, shifting from a rental-based valuation to a capital value system and bringing properties valued above Rs5 million into the tax net. This change affects many previously exempt properties in urban centres such as Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, and Multan.

The vehicle registration regime will shift taxation from engine capacity to vehicle value, capturing more revenue from high-value vehicles.

Additional revenue measures include raising court fees and stamp duties, with the Board of Revenue proposing amendments to the Court Fees Act, 1870, and the Stamp Act, 1899. On the recommendation of the Mines and Minerals Department, the government will increase the labour welfare cess on mining extracts, which had remained unchanged since 1979, to support mining industry workers.

Renewable energy projects receive strong backing, with Rs9 billion allocated to connect 7,000 tube wells throughout the province to solar power. Further, Rs7.5 billion has been allocated for renewable energy schemes, including Rs2,880 million for ongoing projects and Rs4,620 million for new ones. Specific allocations include Rs228.837 million for solarising public buildings in Lahore, Rs259.1 million for solarising 100 higher secondary schools, and Rs301.115 million for solarising hospitals and rural healthcare centres. Upcoming projects 'The Punjab Ujala Programme' and 'The Chief Minister's Roshan Gharana Programme' also receive significant funding.

It is worth noting that under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's leadership, the Punjab government has achieved a milestone by reducing its debt from Rs1708 billion to Rs1685 billion. This reduction, even if modest, has been driven by transparent and people-friendly policies and signals a positive direction towards relieving financial burdens. The government's commitment to fiscal responsibility is set to further lower the debt, promising relief for the people.

This budget, crafted under the guidance of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, is a comprehensive effort to promote sustainable development, economic growth, and social welfare. The emphasis on tax relief, infrastructure, agriculture, and renewable energy is in line with the promises made by the party in its election manifesto ■

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



FROM CLASSROOM TO SENATE: BUSHRA ANJUM BUTT

RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT

In this exclusive interview with Horizon, Senator Bushra Anjum Butt, a dedicated politician and former educator, shares insights from her inspiring journey. From her academic pursuits at prestigious institutions to her impactful role in the Punjab Assembly and her current position as a senator, Bushra's story is one of dedication, and a commitment to empowering youth in Pakistan. Join us as she discusses her childhood, career, and vision for the future.

HORIZON: Tell us about your childhood and family.

BUSHRA ANJUM BUTT (BAB): We are six sisters and our parents, especially my father, were very particular about our grooming, in which education and travelling had an important place. As soon as we turned 18, each of us received our driving license and a car. My parents were very focused on making us independent. They used to say since we had no brothers, we all had to achieve academic and professional excellence. They insisted on us getting an academic degree and work experience. When I

entered practical life, I understood why they were so particular.

HORIZON: Where did you study and work before joining politics?

BAB: I completed my O and A levels from Lahore Grammar School. After that, I completed my bachelor's and master's in English Language Teaching from Kinnaird College University. After completing my studies, I started teaching at various universities, including the Beaconhouse National University, Lahore School of Economics, and later, at LUMS.

HORIZON: It sounds like you were poised for a promising career as a teacher. How did you change course and join politics?

BAB: During 2012-13, when I worked at LUMS, discussions started on the importance of educating young people in Pakistan's politics. The then Chief Minister Punjab Shehbaz Sharif created room for



younger and more educated women within the party and Punjab Assembly. My political journey started when I was elected to a reserved seat for women in the Punjab Assembly in 2013.

HORIZON: What was the main area of your work as a provincial legislator?

BAB: My focus was on policy making. I was a member of the Punjab Assembly Standing Committee on Education and a board member of 11 educational bodies, including the Punjab Education Endowment Fund, Punjab Education Foundation, and Punjab Examination Commission, among others. As part of Shehbaz Sharif's team, we worked on out-of-school children, freed children trapped in bonded labour and put them into schools, initiated mobile schools for gypsy children, improved teacher training, school nutrition, and worked on building missing facilities at schools, such as toilets, whose lack caused young girls to drop out when they hit puberty. We also worked on the revival of book culture. In 2018, our party sat on opposition benches and boycotted the standing committees, but I remained active on various platforms.

HORIZON: You have worked with the youth as well. Please tell us something about your experience.

BAB: Our youth is going through a critical time where it needs motivation and positivity. Sixty per cent of our nation comprises youth. I want to motivate them and act as a role model, inspiring them to participate in politics positively. I have had many interactive

dialogues with the youth, and I always told them that it is okay to disagree but there is a way to go about it.

The youth have a very harsh image of politics in their minds. Our politicians also think that if we issue incendiary statements, we will get noticed by the leadership. I would advise young people who want to make politics a career to not opt for overnight fame through aggressive statements and viral clips. They should bring stability to their personalities and substance in their conversation, which comes when you have worked on the ground. For a while, you may feel that you are not being recognised but consistent hard work is always recognised by the leadership. I worked for 10 years with dedication and in 2024, the party nominated me for a reserved seat for women in both the Punjab Assembly, National Assembly, and Senate.

HORIZON: We did not see you on mainstream media all these years when you were a member of the Punjab Assembly. Why?

BAB: After I became a legislator, many media persons encouraged me to appear on TV talk shows to get exposure and recognition. I avoided the limelight but continued working with dedication. I did not participate in bashing our political opponents or criticism for the sake of criticism even when I sat on the opposition benches. I did not want to be part of this negative spiral. I am proud to say that in the 10 years of my political career, I have never been on a current affairs programme or tried to appear in photographs with top leaders, yet the leadership



noticed my contributions and nominated me for prestigious positions.

HORIZON: Please share your experience of working with PML-N.

BAB: I joined PML-N because I was impressed by Mian Shehbaz Sharif's style of work. He is a doer and has a progressive mindset. Likewise, Mian Nawaz Sharif had initiated an internship programme after which we saw many young people walk into the Punjab Assembly. I liked this change. I also looked at the party's journey – once considered a conservative, patriarchal party – and its work for young persons and women. It appointed women to important positions, such as Ayesha Raza Farooq, who was appointed as the prime minister's focal person on polio eradication, and Aisha Ghaus Pasha, who was appointed as the first female finance minister of Punjab. And now we have a female chief minister in Punjab, which has had an enormous impact. Maryam Nawaz is doing a fantastic job and making way for other parliamentarians as well. I am fortunate that I joined politics at a time when the journey of progress had begun and got to participate in so many important initiatives.

HORIZON: How is your working experience in the Senate going?

BAB: I was fortunate that my party nominated me for the position of senator and appointed me as chair of the standing committee on education, which is my forte. I am all about legislation and policy making and my role as a senator fits perfectly with my career trajectory. Currently the youngest senator from my party, I represent the youth in this august house. I think there should be more representation of youth in legislative bodies.

HORIZON: Please share with us your experience of working as a woman legislator.

BAB: It is a general phenomenon around the world that we women work harder than men to prove ourselves. Take any field, you will see that women excel. Women are also more active in legislation in Pakistan due to several reasons. One of the reasons could be that women in reserved seats do not have a constituency, which keeps men more occupied. Nonetheless, women give more than is required for a job anywhere in the world, because they do not get these positions easily.

HORIZON: Have you ever faced gender discrimination or harassment in your work?

BAB: During my political and teaching career, I never experienced harassment or felt that men did not take me seriously. I believe that in any profession, women's experience depends on how they carry themselves. Women need to realise that when they act desperate or try too hard, people can gauge and take them for granted. This is a general psyche. Other women may have had a different experience, but I can only speak for myself.

HORIZON: What message would you give to Pakistan's youth?

BAB: My main message to youth is to be tolerant. Do contribute, be a part of the policy-making process and be your own representative.

HORIZON: Thank you very much for your time and valuable insights.

BAB: My pleasure ■

HISTORIC WINS AND NEW BEGINNINGS



The Prime Minister’s Youth Programme (PMYP) has been actively driving initiatives for the development, skill-building, and opportunities for young Pakistanis. The recent achievements and collaborations under PMYP are nurturing talent and provide robust support systems.



Three Pakistani sisters, Sybil, Veronica, and Twinkle Sohail, have made history by winning a total of twelve gold medals at the Asian Pacific African Combined Powerlifting Championship in South Africa in July. Sybil and Veronica each secured four gold medals in the 52 and 57-kilogram categories, respectively, while Twinkle, competing in the 84-kilogram class despite not being fully fit, also achieved a clean sweep with four gold medals. Their achievements were celebrated by officials, including the Chairman of the Prime Minister’s Youth Programme, who praised their dedication and called them the “pride of the nation.” After winning gold, in a video message Sybil and Veronica thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan

for their encouragement and support. This landmark accomplishment highlights the growing support for female athletes in Pakistan, despite the societal challenges and limited access to facilities they often face.

INAUGURATION OF PRIME MINISTER’S YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTRE AT LAHORE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN UNIVERSITY



Chairman Prime Minister’s Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan officially inaugurated the Prime Minister’s Youth Development Centre (PMYDC) at Lahore College for Women University (LCWU) on 8 June 2024. The ceremony was graced by distinguished guests, faculty members, and enthusiastic students.



Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan highlighted the vital role

of the PMYDC in the broader Prime Minister’s Youth Programme. The PMYDC will provide career counselling, internship opportunities, skill building, digital literacy, and AI training. In addition, the centre will engage students in raising awareness about SDGs and climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives. The centre will also offer domestic and international educational exchange opportunities and create a robust alumni network for continuous support, mentorship, and professional networking. Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan encouraged all students to take advantage of the services and opportunities offered by the PMYDC.

PMYP PARTNERS WITH FRIESLANDCAMPINA ENGRO PAKISTAN LIMITED

Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan signed a letter of intent with the FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan Limited (FCEPL) to empower youth in the dairy sector. The collaboration leverages the flagship programmes of both organisations to create impactful opportunities for eligible farmers.



Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan said, “We believe that the holistic development of youth should be achieved through collaborative and cross-sectional approaches. Projects like this demonstrate that together we can achieve great things.”

The two organisations will collaborate in providing value chain financing enabling dairy and livestock farmers to secure loans for purchasing exotic cows, mechanisation, solar solutions, and farm infrastructure, training and capacity building, and engagement and inclusion of dairy and livestock farmers to integrate them into the broader economic framework

SUCCESSSES OF PML-N OVERSEAS MEMBERS

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N's) commitment to the welfare of overseas Pakistanis is evident through the accomplishments of its representatives. Among these distinguished office holders are Ehsan-ul-Haq Bajwa and Adnan Afzal Chatha, whose careers highlight the party's dedication to addressing the needs and aspirations of Pakistanis living abroad.

EHSAN-UL-HAQ BAJWA APPOINTED PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY



Ehsan-ul-Haq Bajwa's election to the Punjab Assembly from District PP-281 in 2013 marked the beginning of his influential political career. He further solidified his position by being elected to the National Assembly from NA-168 in 2018 and, most recently, from NA-162 in 2024. Beyond his domestic political achievements, Bajwa's contributions as an overseas Pakistani have been significant.

After the passing of Chaudhry Altaf Hussain, Bajwa stepped into the role of president of the PML-N in



the Gulf region. His leadership was instrumental in uniting and strengthening the party's presence among the Pakistani diaspora. Currently, he serves as the chief coordinator for PML-N overseas chapters in the Gulf, a role that has furthered his influence and ability to address the concerns of overseas Pakistanis.

On 8 July 2024, Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif appointed Ehsan-ul-Haq Bajwa as the parliamentary secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Resource Development. This appointment is a good example of the "right man for the right job" and demonstrates the trust and confidence the prime minister places in Mr Bajwa's capabilities. With a deep understanding of the issues faced by overseas Pakistanis, Ehsan-ul-Haq Bajwa is expected to be a pivotal figure in formulating policies that cater to their needs, particularly in foreign affairs and human resource development.

ADNAN AFZAL CHATTHA'S APPOINTMENT IN PUNJAB

Adnan Afzal Chattha's win in the 2024 general election from PP-36 of Wazirabad Tehsil in Gujranwala

District marks another significant victory for PML-N. Adnan Chattha, also an overseas Pakistani, has been actively campaigning in Europe, advocating for PML-N's policies and vision. His efforts have not gone unnoticed, and Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz has recently appointed him as the chairperson of the skills development task force.



Adnan Chattha's international exposure gives him unique insights into the skills and qualifications required for global employment markets.

This experience is invaluable as he takes on the responsibility of equipping Pakistani youth with modern market-relevant skills. By aligning educational and training programmes with international standards, Adnan Chattha aims to enhance the employability of Pakistani youth abroad, thereby contributing to economic growth and stability.

PML-N Overseas Chapters Chief Coordinator Barrister Amjad Malik and other party leaders have congratulated both leaders, urging them to implement PML-N's manifesto for overseas Pakistanis.

The appointments of Ehsan-ul-Haq Bajwa and Adnan Chattha at the national and provincial levels are clear indicators of PML-N's strategic focus on integrating the overseas community into the national development agenda. ■

CHAIRMAN PML-N HONG KONG PASSES AWAY



PML-N President Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's long-time comrade and Chairman of the PML-N Hong Kong Chapter, Muhammad Arshad Khan, passed away on 18 July 2024 in Hong Kong.

PML-N overseas and in-country leadership, including Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, expressed condolences on his demise and prayed for the deceased. Muhammad Arshad Khan had been ill and was undergoing treatment at a local hospital in Hong Kong.

Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif visited Muhammad Arshad Khan at the hospital during his visit to Hong Kong in May.

Muhammad Arshad Khan's son and successor, Muhammad Saleem Khan, is determined to serve PML-N and Pakistan with the same dedication as his father.

PICTURE GALLERY



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF AT THE FUNERAL SERVICE OF PAKISTAN ARMY'S SEPOY HAROON WILLIAM ALONG WITH COAS GENERAL ASIM MUNIR AT SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH. RAWALPINDI. 22 JUNE 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF ATTENDS THE FUNERAL OF PAKISTAN ARMY'S SEPOY HAROON WILLIAM COAS GENERAL ASIM MUNIR AT SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH. RAWALPINDI. 22 JUNE 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHAHBAZ SHARIF ARRIVES AT THE RESIDENCE OF MAULANA FAZLUR REHMAN FOR CONSULTATION ON ISSUES OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE. 13 JUNE 2024



A DELEGATION OF THE PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY CALLS ON PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF. ISLAMABAD. 20 JUNE 2024



MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA LIU JIANCHAO CALLS ON PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF. ISLAMABAD. 21 JUNE 2024



A DELEGATION OF YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS CALLS ON PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF. ISLAMABAD. 25 JUNE 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF AT THE NAVRUZ PALACE WITH PRESIDENT OF TAJIKISTAN EMOMALI RAHMON DURING AN OFFICIAL VISIT OF TAJIKISTAN. DUSHANBE. 02 JULY 2024



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF MEETS WITH THE PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA VLADIMIR PUTIN ON THE SIDELINES OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION SUMMIT. ASTANA. 03 JULY 2024



PRIME MINISTER SHEHBAZ SHARIF ON THURSDAY JOINED THE WORLD LEADERS AT THE 24TH SUMMIT OF THE COUNCIL OF HEADS OF STATE OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION. ASTANA. 04 JULY 2024



UAE AMBASSADOR TO PAKISTAN HAMAD OBAID ALZAABI MEETS PML-N PRESIDENT MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF AND PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER MARYAM NAWAZ SHARIF. MURREE. 06 JUNE 2024



PUNJAB CM MARYAM NAWAZ SHARIF PAYS TRIBUTE TO OFFICERS AND SANITARY WORKERS FOR MAKING EXCELLENT ARRANGEMENTS ON EID-UL-AZHA. LAHORE. 21 JUNE 2024



THE AMBASSADOR OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN DR RAZA AMIRI MUGHDAM MET WITH PML-N PRESIDENT MUHAMMAD NAWAZ SHARIF AND CM PUNJAB MARYAM NAWAZ SHARIF. LAHORE. 22 JUNE 2024



CHIEF MINISTER PUNJAB MARYAM NAWAZ LAUNCHED THE TRAFFIC RESPONSE UNIT IN LAHORE. 11 JUNE 2024



CHIEF MINISTER MARYAM NAWAZ HAJJ PARK RAJ GARH TO REVIEW THE PILOT PROJECT OF LAHORE DEVELOPMENT MODEL. LAHORE. 26 JUNE 2024



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