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From Gaza to Baghdad: Israel's War Could Expand to Iraq



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The relationship between Israel and Iran has been characterized by vitriol and brinksmanship for decades. But the past year has raised the temperature to new heights. Following Iran's anticipated attack on Israel on 1 October, in response to the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, when Tehran fired over 200 missiles at Israel, the opening of an Iraqi front underscores how Iran's regional allies are intensifying pressure on Israel. Israel's retaliatory strike on Iran is the latest in a series of escalatory steps many fear could bring the region to wider war. Iran has thus far taken a measured response to the strike, downplaying its damage and significance. As military conflicts and civil wars in the Middle East intensify—and as the actors involved grow to include a complex array of

states, armed groups, and militias—diplomatic efforts to end these hostilities have repeatedly faltered. The region is now plagued by immense human suffering and catastrophic material and moral losses, pushing it to the edge of collapse. This dangerous trajectory threatens the collective stability, peace, and development of the Middle East and risks extending a war of attrition with no clear end in sight. Several critical factors have driven the region to this precipice, with Egypt and Jordan caught in the middle. Identifying and analyzing these factors may help find a path toward recovery, with Cairo and Amman as key leaders. As fears of an all-out war between Israel and Iran mount, it is clear that the United States is backing its longtime ally, Israel. But how much of an impact could Iran's regional allies play in a war between the two? Over the past year, Yemen's Houthis have launched regular attacks on Israeli-linked vessels in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, in solidarity with Palestinians and in protest against Israel's war on Gaza. The protracted war in Gaza has resulted in a substantial humanitarian crisis, with a reported 49,870 Palestinian fatalities in the past year, including approximately 19,000 children. In the past year in the Gaza Strip, Israel has bombed more than 90,000 targets on civilians. Despite international condemnation for its actions, Israel has expanded its military operations, targeting Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Furthermore, around 100,000 individuals have been wounded, and over 10,000 are presumed dead beneath the rubble, according to health authorities in the enclave. The war has led to the forced displacement of approximately 1.9 million people, accounting for 90% of the population, with many experiencing multiple displacements. Additionally, nearly half a million individuals face catastrophic food insecurity, exacerbating the crisis. Israel's invasion of Rafah on May 6, 2023, despite international opposition, has resulted in the prolonged bombardment of the southern Gaza city, which previously served as a refuge for approximately 1.4 million Palestinians fleeing Israeli airstrikes. As a result Israel died own soldiers numbered were 5679 with Injured troops of Israel numbered 14,576. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) said Israel Must Prevent Genocidal Acts in Gaza. Since Israel assassinated longtime Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in a massive air strike on a residential suburb of Beirut last week, plenty of threats have been made across the region. Yemen's Houthis and armed groups in Iraq have continued to target Israel in a show of deterrence, amid escalation between Tel Aviv and Tehran. Iraq, hitherto experiencing a period of relative calm since the American invasion, may soon become the Middle East's next battleground. The recent deployment of drones by Iraqi militia against Israel on November 8th heralds a ominous escalation. The aerial defenses of Israel failed repelled the attack launched by al-Nujaba, vowed big surprises in the coming days in both Hebrew and Arabic. The recent attack by Israel on Iran has brought the two nations to the brink of an all-out war. The conflict's expansion into Iraq is a growing concern, as Iranian officials might attempt to use Iraq as a proxy to avoid retaliation. This move would allow Iran to launch strikes on Israel with less risk, as Iraq's proximity to Israel would reduce the time available for Israeli air defenses to intercept the attack. The reasons behind Iran's strategy is that Iran's leadership is facing a dilemma. On one hand, they are not interested in a regional war, but on the other hand, they cannot absorb the recent attack without retaliating. The Biden administration will try to pressure Iran not to retaliate, emphasizing the defensive nature of the attack. However, this will be a

challenging task, and the hours ahead will be crucial in determining the outcome. As far as the Global Impact, the conflict's expansion into Iraq would have far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the region but also global politics and economies. The international community must closely monitor the situation and work towards a peaceful resolution to avoid a catastrophic escalation. In conclusion, the possibility of the Israel war expanding into Iraq is a growing concern.

The conflict's expansion into Iraq would have far-reaching consequences, affecting regional and global politics and economies. The Iran-allied factions in Iraq have been perpetrating missile and drone attacks on Israel since the commencement of the war on Gaza. These assaults have resumed with renewed vigour following Israel's escalation of the conflict with Hezbollah and Lebanon. It is likely that these hostilities will persist for as long as both conflicts continue to rage. The involvement of Iranian-backed militias in Iraq in the Israel-Iran confrontation bespeaks Tehran's strategic deployment of regional proxies to exert indirect pressure on Israel, thereby avoiding direct military engagement. This tactic enables Iran to prosecute its interests while minimizing the risk of a direct confrontation with Israel. Militias such as Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq have launched numerous strikes on southern Israel and the occupied Golan Heights. Although the physical damage wrought by these attacks may be limited, they underscore the increasing capabilities of these groups to penetrate Israel's traditionally robust air defense systems. This demonstrates Iran's strategy of utilizing allies to apply pressure on Israel. In the aftermath of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the ousting of Saddam Hussein, Iranian-backed militias capitalized on the resulting power vacuum and gained significant

including against oil facilities in the region. If the Persian Gulf energy exports are disrupted in a substantial way, it will have ramifications for the global oil market, for the global economy, for Europe. Oil facilities have long been targets for all sides and strikes on them can cause huge disruption. In September 2019, the Houthis claimed drone attacks on two major oil facilities owned by Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil giant, an attack which the US blamed on Iran. In just one strike, 5 million barrels a day of crude production had reportedly been affected, about half of Saudi Arabia's production, or 5 percent of global oil supply. Today, Israel made the Middle East as a battleground, who attacked in multiple military confrontations in pursuit of the total defeat of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran's proxies in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Concurrently, Israel's aims to fully dismantle the two-state solution—the foundation of all agreements between Israel and Palestine, guaranteed by international and Arab stakeholders—and to deny the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent state. Moreover, Israel seeks to shift the regional balance of power in its favor against Iran by exerting military pressure to freeze Iran's nuclear program, restrict its military capabilities, and diminish its regional influence through the dismantling of its armed network. The Middle East is also a battleground for military responses from Hamas, Hezbollah, and other militias aimed at countering Israeli actions, alongside limited military reactions from Iran, which has been keen to avoid direct involvement in the regional conflict. This network serves the primary strategic objective of safeguarding the security of the Iranian regime, defending its advanced nuclear and military capabilities, and deterring regional threats from adversaries such as Israel and the United States. Iran aims to achieve this objective without fully engaging in the war, maintaining a stance of calculated escalation against Israel.

The possibility of the entire region being dragged into a conflict that could lead to widespread violence and destruction remains the most dangerous of all threats. As a result of these battlegrounds, Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab states bordering the Palestinian territories, are confronted with significant threats to their national security and their regional roles. Both countries advocate for dialogue, diplomacy, and negotiation as the sole means to resolve wars and conflicts, and both aim to foster security and stability in the region. This is a particularly terrifying threat to both Egypt and Jordan, especially as they face dangers on multiple fronts. Egypt is grappling with challenges in the south due to the civil war in Sudan, heightened tensions at the southern entrance to the Red Sea, issues in the Horn of Africa with Ethiopia over water and security, and ongoing civil conflicts in Libya to the west. Similarly, Jordan confronts threats from the north, where widespread smuggling operations from Syria and a deteriorating security situation present significant risk, and from the east, where Shia militias exploit Iraqi territory amid a calculated escalation between Israel and Iran. Such a regional landscape—taking shape at a moment when the Middle East has yet to recover from the economic, social, and political crises of the past decade, with the Gulf being the only exception—places immense pressure on Egypt and Jordan, both of which advocate for peace, dialogue, diplomacy, and negotiation as their primary means of engaging with their immediate and extended neighborhoods. Cairo and Amman oppose nearly all of Israel's current actions and reject the abrogation of the two-state solution. They also disapprove of Iran's regional activities, particularly its focus on defending its own national security while both blatantly disregarding the sovereignty and security of countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen and effectively pushing Palestinian factions into a precarious situation from which Tehran has distanced itself. At this critical juncture, Egypt and Jordan view with great concern both the Israeli military incursions and Iran's military pursuits. Their apprehension stems not only from a refusal to engage in a dangerous arms race but also from the recognition that the militarization of regional conflicts undermines their strategic commitment to peace as a viable path forward. The Palestinian have the right to rebuild their lives in a safe place and with dignity. Anything else, that is to say continuing to prioritise interests over rights, is unacceptable, essentially because renouncing our common humanity can only be synonymous with barbarism. The international community must closely monitor the situation and work towards a peaceful resolution to avoid catastrophic escalation. Entering Iraq into the War would have devastating consequences for the region and the world. It's essential for the international community to come together and work towards a peaceful resolution to avoid a full-scale war.



The Expansion of the Israel War Means A Possible Spillover into Iraq!!

influence over Iraq's political and security systems. Since 2014, the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), also known as Hashd al-Shaabi in Arabic, have evolved from a coalition of militias into an official state apparatus. Over the past year, the PMF has deepened its ties with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), equipping militias such as Kataib Hezbollah with advanced Iranian drone technology and missile systems. Many of these militias are equipped with small arms, drones (UAVs), mortars, and rockets, as well as more advanced ballistic and cruise missiles supplied by Iran. This has increased their capacity to strike Israeli targets with greater precision. While militias within the PMF have various interests - from internal affairs to directly confronting Israel - some factions may focus on increasing the pressure on Israel. And with Iraqi militias showing their growing capabilities, and Israel's multi-front war showing no signs of abating, Iraq could potentially be pulled deeper into an escalating regional confrontation. Iraq's government has sought to avoid being caught up in the confrontation, with concerns it could jeopardise its post-war stability and attempts to rebuild the country. For now, however, there is no clear indication that Israel is planning immediate military action in Iraq. These factions are more of a strategic nuisance to Israel rather than an immediate threat that would prompt a large-scale response. Iraqi armed groups warned that US bases in Iraq and the region would be targets if the US participates in any retaliation against Iran or if Israel uses Iraqi airspace against Tehran. Similarly, when it comes to US bases in the region, including in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and the use of Iranian airspace, Iran has warned that those states would be considered to be complicit in an attack against Iran, and their critical infrastructure would be targets as well. A key leverage point for Iran and its allies are the oil facilities in the region. Iraqi armed groups have been determined that if Israel launches a big attack - Israel has also threatened to attack Iraq - that they would hit back as well,

ia and a deteriorating security situation present significant risk, and from the east, where Shia militias exploit Iraqi territory amid a calculated escalation between Israel and Iran. Such a regional landscape—taking shape at a moment when the Middle East has yet to recover from the economic, social, and political crises of the past decade, with the Gulf being the only exception—places immense pressure on Egypt and Jordan, both of which advocate for peace, dialogue, diplomacy, and negotiation as their primary means of engaging with their immediate and extended neighborhoods. Cairo and Amman oppose nearly all of Israel's current actions and reject the abrogation of the two-state solution. They also disapprove of Iran's regional activities, particularly its focus on defending its own national security while both blatantly disregarding the sovereignty and security of countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen and effectively pushing Palestinian factions into a precarious situation from which Tehran has distanced itself. At this critical juncture, Egypt and Jordan view with great concern both the Israeli military incursions and Iran's military pursuits. Their apprehension stems not only from a refusal to engage in a dangerous arms race but also from the recognition that the militarization of regional conflicts undermines their strategic commitment to peace as a viable path forward. The Palestinian have the right to rebuild their lives in a safe place and with dignity. Anything else, that is to say continuing to prioritise interests over rights, is unacceptable, essentially because renouncing our common humanity can only be synonymous with barbarism. The international community must closely monitor the situation and work towards a peaceful resolution to avoid catastrophic escalation. Entering Iraq into the War would have devastating consequences for the region and the world. It's essential for the international community to come together and work towards a peaceful resolution to avoid a full-scale war.





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The level of civilization in society can be judged by entering their prisons. A true picture of the state of the justice system and the administration of justice will emerge from the functioning of the courts and the number of cases pending. Pakistan's post-colonial legal system is old-fashioned, facing modern challenges and falling to meet the country's growing needs for global integration, reliable trade transactions and justice for the common man. A framework for legal and judicial reforms urgently needed to ensure internal peace and harmony. A report by the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2021 shows that Pakistan is among the lowest-performing countries in terms of its adherence to the rule of law, ranked 130th out of 139. Even in South Asia, Pakistan's position is second only to last. Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh has all performed better than Pakistan in the rule of law while only Afghanistan is limited under Pakistan in the region. Fifty-three thousand cases are pending in the Supreme Court, about 300,000 cases in five high courts and about 2.2 million cases are pending in four provinces and the state capital, according to the Pakistan Law and Justice Commission.

Over the past five years, the number of cases pending in the Supreme Court has more than four times to reach the highest level in the last 25 years. In 2006, the number of pending cases was 13,724. There are currently 2,159,655 cases pending in Pakistani courts which are being heard or will be heard by 3,067 judges in the country. Out of these, in several cases, the parties to a case have passed away and their descendants are now seeking remedy from the courts. In district and high courts across the country, 1,048 posts of judges lie vacant waiting to be filled. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has to hear 53,138 pending cases with a total strength of 17 judges, of which one post is vacant. The Federal Shariat Court, on the other hand, has 178 pending cases only. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has only one vacancy for a judge left to be filled while the number of pending cases currently amount to 16,374. The district and sessions court of Islamabad have 51,849 pending cases with a sanctioned strength of 103 judges. Of these, 70 are working while 33 seats are vacant. As far as the provincial breakdown is concerned, the Lahore High Court (LHC) has a sanctioned strength of 60, but has only 50 judges with 193,030 pending cases. In Punjab's district and sessions courts, 1,345,632 civil and family cases are pending. The Punjab district judiciary has a sanctioned strength of 2,364 judges, of which 1,616 judges have been appointed while 748 vacancies are yet to be filled. The Sindh High Court has a sanctioned strength of 40 judges out of which six posts are vacant. As many as 83,150 cases are still pending, in the district

Reforming Judicial System for Pending Cases!

judiciary of Sindh, out of 622 judges, 568 are performing their duties while there are 54 vacancies to be filled. The number of pending cases in the district judiciary amount to 115,296.

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) should have a total of 20 judges, but is five short from the sanctioned number. The court has 42,180 pending cases to hear. The number of cases pending in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa district and sessions courts have amounted to 240,436. The number of judges appointed in the district and sessions court is 596 while 124 seats are yet to be filled. The Baluchistan High Court (BHC) has a total number of 15 judges allowed, but is five judges short. The total number of pending cases in the high court are 4,663. The province's district judiciary have 208 judges while the sanctioned strength is 270. A total of 15,729 cases are pending. The result high court are 4,663. The province's district judiciary have 208 judges while the sanctioned strength is 270. A total of 15,729 cases are pending. The result is that 59,439 people are currently being held in 21,527 authorized detention centers, 32 in 32 Provincial Prisons. Prisoners under trial are four times the number of prisoners. The number of convicts is 69% and the number of convicted and convicted prisoners is 19.50% and 11.50%. It is clear that there is an urgent need of judicial reforms for pending cases, because the present justice system is ineffective, rampant and slippery and the current state of law and order in the country shows that people are losing faith in the ability to administer justice in order to

behavioural protocols and even the design of courthouses themselves all seem as if they were intentionally configured to put up barriers between judges and lawyers and the rest of us. The most important stakeholders in the justice system are the citizens, and ensuring that they have access to justice is the most important challenge that needs to be overcome. In the status quo, we see that accessing justice in the first place is the problem. Subsequent governments and parliaments in the country have failed to enact legislation and take policy measures to ensure economic and social justice for the common man in the country. Unfortunately, the performance of our law enforcement authorities, accounting agencies, and law enforcement agencies, especially at the grass-

roots level, leaves much to be desired. In particular, the police need radical change in order to be more efficient and to accommodate the people in carrying out their law enforcement and criminal activities. Police and other law-enforcement agencies are seen as hostile, especially for the majority of the underprivileged population. For women, accessing justice is all the more challenging. Character shaming, incredulity, bribery are major challenges that citizens face when dealing with the law-enforcement and justice system. Perhaps technology can empower citizens to hold the law-enforcement system accountable. The legal system in Pakistan still heavily

relies on traditional methods of working and the major one is paperwork. Over the last few years, technology has increasingly been pitched as a solution to that problem. It is of utmost importance that the Court House

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resolve their grievances. The magnitude and magnitude of the problems and these issues require in-depth research to take corrective action before the whole system collapses, chaos and chaos in the community. According to the UN Human Development Report, Pakistan is ranked 147th out of 188 countries, with a population development index of 0.550, less than India and Bangladesh and approximately 24.3% of the population lived below the poverty line, the huge inequality of income and wealth in Pakistan is also one of the cause of this dire news situation. Our justice system was not designed to make things easy for regular people. The problem of access to justice had already reached critical proportions with low-income receiving inadequate or no professional legal help for 96% of the civil legal problems they faced. The complex language, the

it made efficient, affordable, intelligent and smart through technology. The widespread accessibility of video conferencing has made it so that people do not necessarily have to take time off work to participate in a hearing or a trial, while the growth of alternative dispute resolution tools, e-filing and digital evidence platforms all have shown the potential to transform the courtroom. Technological and scientific developments are generating huge opportunities for tackling societal challenges. However, the benefits of technology and innovation are unequally distributed, and they tend to cause economic and political disruptions in our societies that widen inequalities. The introduction of e-courts by the Supreme Court of Pakistan where cases can be heard via video link is a welcome addition to the current setup where complainants and witnesses have to bear the

cost of travel and stay for hearings, something that otherwise deters them from using the justice system. Similar arrangements for recording witness statements via video will also help the cause of justice. Whereas technology can be an important enabler in accessing and dispensing justice, it is essential that the limitations of technology be kept in mind when glamorising it or relying on it too much. Whereas it would be helpful for judges, as announced by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, to use artificial intelligence to access previous precedents and case law on specific cases, letting them make a decision based on computed facts may be a bit of a stretch. In fact, the current system of governance in Pakistan is undoubtedly oppressive and oppressive. It is exploitative because it unjustly rewards the elite with excessive economic benefits by losing the poor contrary to Islamic law and social norms, which require the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. The leading theme of reforms has been the development of judicial efficiency and speed of justice. The love of 'speed' has also diverted attention to other important aspects of the judicial process, as well as the quality of judgment proclamations. It has therefore reduced the chances that the formal justice system will deal with conflict in the community; and the pursuit of greater distributional justice, fairness and equity through judicial interpretations of extant laws. It is very important to shift the focus of the discussion of the transformation of the justice system in Pakistan from technical and legal only to legal and social justice. There is a need for a renewed focus on reform of national and international innovation systems and R&D policies, in an attempt to create a new consensus on how public-private partnerships can contribute to a more open and sustainable use of technology. More open source access for technologies should be sought. It is essential to assure an open diffusion of knowledge, innovations and technologies in the design of development policies. Development policies should support redistributive systems and incentives for successful application of new technologies. Legal frameworks should be promoted to enable innovation and the use of new technologies. Improve the education of the left-behind countries through global schemes. Technological justice should be linked to the SDG Agenda. As a result, the timeframe for proposals should coincide with the 2030 horizon

The judiciary, the legal community and civil society have come together with a shared vision for a Digital Legal Pakistan. They say that justice delayed is justice denied, hopefully, with judicial reforms for pending cases along with the intervention of legal-tech, we will be able to change that. It is important that the laws are fair and respect fundamental constitutional rights, and that they provide sufficient protections to citizens rather than demonstrating their use of technology to exercise rights. Moreover, the laws must not be abused by the state against dissidents and whistleblowers. We are at a pivotal moment in the development of the court system; we have an opportunity to truly raise the game and modernize arcane processes that have been creating unnecessary barriers to justice for far too long. We are talking about the independence of the judiciary and the strengthening of the administration of justice in order to provide justice and freedom for citizens. Only an effective and efficient justice system can ensure the protection of fundamental constitutional rights of the citizens and the independence of the judiciary.



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Pakistan expressed its strong indignation after the Indian government announced Srinagar as the venue for the G20 Tourism Working Group meeting scheduled to take place from May 22 to 24. India's decision to host a meeting of Group of 20 (G20) countries in Srinagar, part of Indian-occupied Kashmir, has been slammed by Pakistan and China, which called it an irresponsible move. Pakistan has made no secret about its opposition to holding any G-20 proceedings in Kashmir -- a focus of dispute since partition in 1947. China, too, has expressed reservations and may not participate in the G-20 tourism talks. Chinese Foreign Ministry said that parties concerned need to avoid unilateral moves that may complicate the situation. Efforts should be made to settle the dispute through dialogue and consultation so as to maintain regional peace and stability. In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) while stressing that Indian government led by Narendra Modi is continuously peddling false propaganda to push the so-called normalcy narrative has reiterated its call for boycott of G20 summit in Srinagar. By holding the G20 event in IIOJK, India, in fact, wants to give legitimacy to its illegal actions of 5 August 2019 in the disputed territory. It's anticipated that India would not be able to achieve the desired attendance since other nations would not compromise on their morals the critical importance of relevant UN Security Council resolutions for a peaceful settlement of Jammu and Kashmir dispute. Pakistan downgraded its diplomatic relations with India after New Delhi revoked the special constitutional status of Kashmir in August 2019 and announced to integrate it with the rest of the Indian union. Pakistan has frequently criticized India for rights abuses in Kashmir and says it is changing the demography of the Muslim-majority region. India's irresponsible move is the latest in a series of self-serving measures to perpetuate its illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir in sheer disregard of the United Nations Security Council resolutions and in violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. Pakistan vehemently condemns these moves. G20 nations should not forget that India is committing serious crimes against humanity in Kashmir, and its summit will not only undermine the UN credibility, but will also raise questions over the Group's adherence to democratic credentials. Modi regime, is trying to distort truth and twist facts to hoodwink the world into believing as if everything is normal in the occupied territory. India is attempting to divert attention from the war crimes committed by its security forces in the region and present a façade of normalcy in the IIOJK through an investment conference and now participation of the G-20 nations in the Summit could undermine the credibil-

G-20 Summit in IIOJK - Total Disaster

the right of self-determination for the Kashmiris, and giving credence to the Indian claims while overlooking the human rights abuses in the region. It is unbecoming of India to host an event in Srinagar which is in a disputed territory. It is very inappropriate, but the way things are, this issue is not taken up as seriously due to Indian importance. It is unfortunate that the Western countries which claim to be champions of human rights choose to ignore India's decision. They are ignoring the fact that India is playing host in Srinagar, but it is also a major violator of human rights -- as well as United Nations resolutions about this region. Kashmir is claimed in full but ruled in part by the two nuclear-armed neighbours who have fought two of their three wars over control of the region. India released a full calendar of events leading up to the summit, which included G20 and Youth 20 meetings in Kashmir's summer capital of Srinagar and in Leh. Such events cannot hide the reality of Jammu and Kashmir being an internationally recognized dispute that has remained on the agenda of United Nations Security Council for over seven decades. For a country that has a grandiose vision about itself, and its place in the world, India has once more demonstrated that it is unable to act as a responsible member of the international community. The Himalayan territory of Kashmir has been a flashpoint between India and Pakistan since they gained independence from British rule in 1947. The two nuclear-armed neighbours have fought three wars, two of which were over Kashmir, which both countries control parts of and which both claim in its entirety. The Kashmir issue further flared up four years ago when India's Hindu nationalist government, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, revoked Article 370 of the Constitution of India, which granted Indian-administered Kashmir partial autonomy. In August 2019, the Indian government unilaterally abolished Kashmir's special status; and divided it into two separate union territories -- Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir, and the Indian-administered Ladakh. It is believed that the Summit in Kashmir is a ploy to deceive the international community regarding they

of the UNSC resolutions; advocating for actual situation in the region. The potential Jammu and Kashmir; and Buddhist-dominated Ladakh. The move has eroded the autonomy of the region and has pushed it towards de facto recognition. India's actions in the IIOJK have drawn widespread condemnation from human rights organizations. The Indian government's imposition of a communication blackout and curfew in the region has led to extensive human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, and instances of torture. Hosting the Summit in the disputed territory is a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Conventions. Article 32 of the Convention prohibits the use of torture against civilians in occupied territory. It states that "The High Contracting Parties specifically agree that each of them is prohibited from taking any measure of such a character as to cause the physical suffering or extermination of protected persons in their hands. The prohibition applies not only to murder, torture, corporal punishment, mutilation and, medical or scientific experiments not necessitated by the medical treatment of a protected person, but also to any other measures of brutality whether applied by civilian or military agents." Article 27 reads that "Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity." The decision to hold a high-profile Summit in the IIOJK, known for its disputed status, has raised questions regarding New Delhi's intentions and the ulterior motives behind the move. In tandem, the silence of the G-20 nations on the rampant human rights abuses in the region is a tragedy in itself. The lack of reaction from the international community to India's selection of Kashmir and Ladakh as G-20 venues could be interpreted as a tacit

approval of India's decision, implying that the region is no longer considered as disputed. The BJP government -- fixated on Hindutva ideology, with Narendra Modi at the helm, appears determined in exploiting the G-20 Summit to advance its own geopolitical and domestic political objectives. This act is believed to be a move towards promoting the dangerous settler colonialism project, which entails the displacement of Kashmiris and the unlawful occupation of their land. recent display of posters in Srinagar was to raise awareness among G-20 nations regarding India's motives behind the Summit. Modi's first axe fell on Kashmir and its Muslim character. On 5th of August 2019, the Hindutva government abrogated Articles 370 and 35 A of the Indian Constitution stripping away the special status to the province and paving the way for a constitutionally sanctioned ethnic cleansing and socio-political disempowerment of the Muslims of Kashmir. This brazen constitutional assault not only violated the political and constitutional guarantees but was also in contravention to United Nations resolutions that recognized the people's right of self-determination. This unwarranted act also violated the bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan and will have far-reaching effects on the people of the territory. This sustained and targeted assault on Kashmir has resulted in the near-total alienation and estrangement of the people of the Kashmir valley from the Indian state and people. Even the people of Jammu, the majority of whom are Hindus, feel disempowered because of their serious concerns over economic and educational losses as well as the new domicile rules, they seek to change the demographic character to dilute the nature of the dispute. Despite serious and continued human rights violations the people continue to pursue the cause of their freedom and the right of self-determination. The BJP government has been incessantly misleading its voters and the international community by playing the hoax of peace and stability in the region. The G-20 countries must consider that Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed territory under the UN resolutions, and that most of them in the past have endorsed or supported these resolutions. Their visit to the disputed territory will add to the miseries of Kashmiris and reward malignant Indian behavior. The G-20 countries who strongly believe in civil liberties and fundamental freedoms should rather make India accountable for its war crimes and goad it to resolve the dispute according to the wishes and aspirations of the people. It should also bear in mind that Jammu and Kashmir is sandwiched between three nuclear powers, and leaving it unresolved is a sure recipe for an unimaginable disaster should the situation get out of hand. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs must intensify its efforts to expose India's nefarious designs and ulterior motives behind its planned move to hold the G-20 summit in the UN-recognised disputed territory. India wanted to dilute Kashmir's international and legal status, strengthen the notion that Kashmir was nothing but its internal matter. There is an urgent need for a mega diplomatic offensive by Pakistan in the UN, and other regional and international fora, to expose India's nefarious designs and its ulterior motives behind the meeting in Indian-held Kashmir. India's illegal action of August 5, 2019 was a gross violation of human rights and the international community, especially the UN, should take its notice. Pakistan would continue to extend moral, political and diplomatic support for Kashmiris' right to self-determination.

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Budgetary allocations show education is not a priority of the ruling class. The Pakistan's public education spending as a percentage of the gross domestic product is gradually declining. For each successive government, education has apparently been a top priority in theory only, and within the realm of education, getting out-of-school children in Pakistan back to schools and increasing and easing access to higher levels of education have proven to be major challenges. The government's allocation of Rs. 97.098 billion for Education Affairs and Services in the federal budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 has drawn attention and criticism for its modest increase of around 5.5 percent compared to the revised allocation of the current fiscal year. Last year, instead of boosting the Higher Education Commission's budget, which was already slashed by the PTI government, the newly established federal government has proposed cutting it by more than half to Rs30 billion for the fiscal year 2022-23, compared to the previous allocation of Rs65.25 billion, which was more problematic. With Pakistan's public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP estimated at 1.7 percent for the fiscal year 2022-23, the country holds the lowest regional ranking in terms of education funding. The need for greater investment in the education sector to address the challenges and gaps in quality education has been emphasized by experts and education advocates. Since the 18th Constitutional amendment, education has been devolved to the provinces, and the federal government primarily focuses on financing higher education. In line with this, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has been allocated Rs. 59.71 billion under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the fiscal year 2023-24, reflecting an increase from the previous year's allocation. While the minor increase in the education budget allocation demonstrates a degree of attention to the sector, the modest growth has raised concerns about the government's commitment to addressing the pressing challenges in education. While all political leaders at the helm of country's affairs claim to have a special place in their hearts for education. Governments in Pakistan are known to make only hollow promises regarding the importance of education, but what is truly more worrying is the fact that whatever little allocations they manage to make, those in power have consistently appeared incapable of utilizing those allocations to the full. After the 18th Amendment, provinces get their own finances for education. Punjab and Sindh both allocated just 2% of their ed

Budgetary allocations show education is not a priority!

ucation budget for technical and vocational education, whereas Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan allocated only 1% percent share of its education budget for the same. Last year, Provinces allocated less than two percent for other sub-sectors, such as teacher education, special education and literacy and non-formal education. Unfortunately, all the provinces couldn't spend the allotted budget they earmarked for education sector for the last many years. The ongoing development projects, research activities and hiring of new faculty members to meet the expenses would be seriously effected.

The Economic Survey of Pakistan 2021-22 has pointed out that only 1.77 per cent of GDP was spent on the education sector last year while the literacy rate was recorded at 63pc. We can see that Pakistan education spending for 2017 was 14.54% which was 0.52% decline from 2016; spending for 2016 was 15.06%, a 1.88% increase from 2015; spending for 2015 was 13.19%, a 1.89% increase from 2014 and spending for 2014 was 11.30%, a 0.21% decline from 2013. The actual percentage share for education out of the entire budget has declined in all but one province, and there too, the education budget saw no real term increase. In Punjab, the percentage share of education in overall budget decreased from 24% in 2014-15 to 19% in 2018-19, whereas it went down from 21% to 18% in Sindh. In Balochistan, it decreased from 21% to 18%. However, the net allocation remained the same in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at 26%.

All provinces couldn't spend the money they earmarked for education sector during 2017-18. Sindh had the highest rate of under-utilization at only 29%. The country's literacy rate, which was 62.8 per cent in 2020-21 compared to 62.4 per cent in 2018-19. The percentage went up from 73 to 73.4 in men and from 51.5 to 51.9 in women. The narrowing down of the men-women disparity was also reported. The area-wise analysis showed the literacy ratio increased from 53.7 per cent to 54 per cent in villages and from 76.1 per cent to 77.3 per cent in cities. All provinces recorded higher literacy rate. It went up from 66.1 per cent to 66.3 per cent in Punjab, from 61.6 per cent to 61.8 per cent in Sindh, from 52.4 per cent to 55.1 per cent

in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and from 53.9 per cent to 54.5 per cent in Balochistan. The enrolments recorded during 2019-20 were 55.7 million compared to 53.1 million in 2018-19 showing an increase of 4.9 per cent. It's estimated to surge to 58.5 million next year. The nationwide educational institutions totalled 277.5 thousand in 2019-20 compared to 271.8 thousand in 2018-19 with the likelihood of the tally reaching 283.7 thousand in one year. Similarly, the number of teachers came to 1.83 million in 2019-20 compared to 1.79 million last year with a likely jump to 1.89 million within a year. There was a budget cut for the higher education regulator, HEC, in the year 2021-22. The federal government initially allocated Rs42.45 billion for the HEC to implement 168 development projects of public sector universities and higher education institutions but later rationalised and curtailed the funding to Rs32.338 billion. Despite HEC's demand in an increase of the education budget, the government has decided to cut costs. Paki-

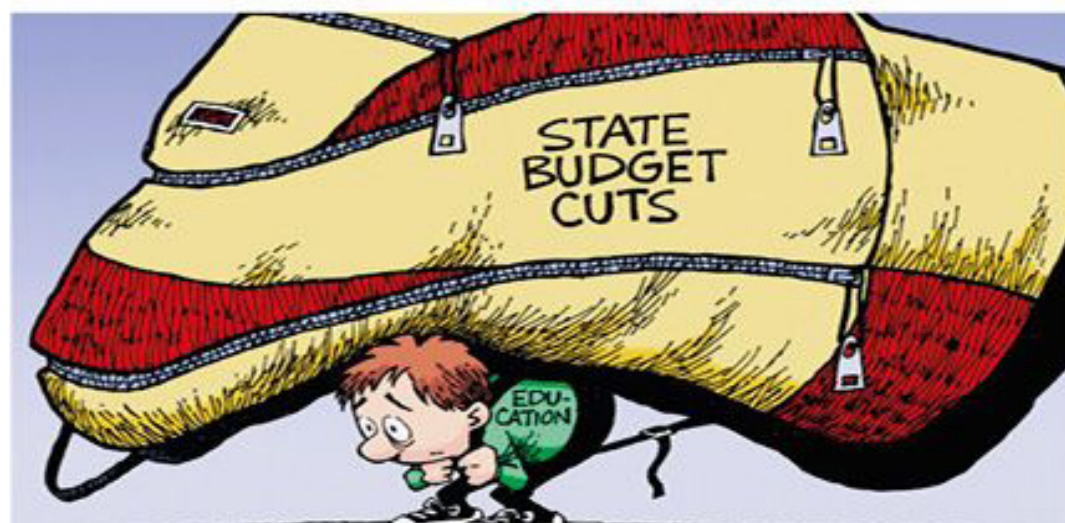
stan's public education spending as a proportion of GDP is expected to be 1.7 percent in fiscal year 2021-22, down from 1.9 percent the previous fiscal year, the lowest in the region. Following the 18th Amendment, the Federal Government has primarily been funding higher learning, with education being divided between different regions. In budget 2022-23, Rs. 74.609 billion has been set aside for Tertiary Education Affairs and Services, accounting for 83 percent of the total allocation under this sector. For 2022-23, the government has set aside Rs. 3.786 billion for pre-primary and primary education, compared to Rs. 3.021 billion in 2021-22, Rs. 8.863 billion for secondary education affairs and services, compared to Rs. 7.632 billion in 2021-22, and Rs. 2 billion for administration, compared to Rs. 1.915 billion in 2021-22, which was later changed to Rs. 2.028 billion. On the side of Development works, for the FY 2022 an amount of Rs9.7 billion was allocated in PSDP FY2022 for 24 on-going and four new development projects of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. An amount of Rs2.8 billion was also allocated for six on-going and three new education related development projects. On schools ed

ucation side, as an election slogan, Single National Curriculum (SNC) has been introduced to minimise disparities in the country's education, but failed due to non-seriousness and non-commitment.

These challenges included government weak political will to implement; capacity building of the existing teachers; induction of new teachers as per the requirements; and uplifting of the educational facilities in the main cities and far-flung areas of Pakistan. All Pakistan Private Schools' Federation (APPSF), the only largest representative Federation for All Pakistan private schools included Punjab, Sindh, KPK, Baluchistan, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir with more than: 300 registered Associations; 207,000 private schools; 15,00,000 teachers and 26.9 million students presented Education Recommendations for Budget 2023-24. APPSF recommended to Federal & Provincial governments to allocated and spend minimum 5% of GDP on education and research for schools and higher education sector in the new budget keeping in view the effects of COVID-19, pandemic, recent devastated flood and high inflation rate. That 25 percent of the education budget should go to higher education and rest 75 percent be spent on schools, colleges and technical education. APPSF further recommended Government should announce tax amnesty and exemption for 5-year for investing in education sector, so that new schools, colleges, universities, technical and vocational institutes can be established. Unless steered with a purpose, the rapid advance of science and technology may widen inequities, exacerbate social fragmentation and accelerate resource depletion. The federal and provincial governments should include a separate statement with the budgetary documents, for the government policy for girls' education; policy measures to be taken for improving girls' education in terms of resource allocation and its effective utilization, detailed break-down of the current and development budgets allocated for girls' education, level-wise enrolment of girls in public schools and state of basic facilities in girls' schools.

More budget for innovative initiatives, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other programs needs to be introduced by the federal and provincial governments by considering the deteriorating situation in education sector, to fulfill the missing facilities and to take special measures on an urgent basis to overcome the increasing challenge of gender disparity, access and quality of education, and worsening situation of gender equity. Education has a vital role to play in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable people to contribute and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future. Education needs to aim to do more than prepare young people for the world of work; it needs to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged citizens. Pakistan needs for substantial investments to enhance access, quality, and inclusivity in education, ensuring a brighter future for the country's youth and sustainable development overall. The regular, smooth, and fair utilization of budget requires interaction and coordination between various departments of regions and provinces. It is important to figure out what are the causes of poor utilization of budget. The present and previous data indicate that there is a dire need to develop a robust financial management system for education sector.

“ Pakistan needs more 200,000 schools and 25 million teachers till 2025 to cater over 25 million currently out-of-school children (OOSC). The Millions of children in flood-hit Pakistan are in dire need of help, school education is at risk for millions of students. But, budgetary allocations show education is not a priority of the ruling class. ”





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According to the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2020-21, Pakistan's worst score in the world, and worldwide is 130 out of 139. Unfortunately, there are many reasons for this performance but one of the most important reasons is the Pakistani Justice System for this long-standing trend. Fifty-three thousand cases are pending in the Supreme Court, about 300,000 pending cases are in the five high courts, and about 2.2 million cases are pending in the subordinate courts and judges in less than four provinces and the state capital, according to the Pakistan Law and Justice Commission. Our justice system was not designed to make things easy for regular people.

The complex language, the behavioral protocols and even the design of courthouses themselves all seem as if they were intentionally configured to put up barriers between judges and lawyers and the rest of us. The problem of access to justice had already reached critical proportions with low-income receiving inadequate or no professional legal help for 96% of the civil legal problems they faced. Over the last few years, technology has increasingly been pitched as a solution to that problem. The widespread accessibility of video conferencing has made it so that people do not necessarily have to take time off work to participate in a hearing or a trial, while the growth of alternative dispute resolution tools, e-filing and digital evidence platforms all have shown the potential to transform the courtroom. The most important stakeholders in the justice system are the citizens, and ensuring that they have access to justice is the most important challenge that needs to be overcome. In the status quo, we see that accessing justice in the first place is the problem. Police and other law-enforcement agencies are seen as hostile, especially for the majority of the underprivileged population. For women, accessing justice is all the more challenging. Character shaming, incredulity, bribery are major challenges that citizens face when dealing with the law-enforcement and justice system. Perhaps technology can empower citizens to hold the law-enforcement system accountable.

Technological transformation of the court system

The legal system in Pakistan still heavily relies on traditional methods of working and the major one is paperwork. It is of utmost importance that the Court House is made efficient, affordable, intelligent and smart through technology. Technological and scientific developments are generating huge opportunities for tackling societal challenges. However, the benefits of technology and innovation are unequally distributed, and they tend to cause economic and political disruptions in our societies that widen inequalities.

The introduction of e-courts by the Supreme Court of Pakistan where cases can be heard via video link is a welcome addition to the current setup where complainants and witnesses have to bear the cost of travel and stay for hearings, some-

thing that otherwise deters them from using the justice system. Similar arrangements for recording witness statements via video will also help the cause of justice. Whereas technology can be an important enabler in accessing and dispensing justice, it is essential that the limitations of technology be kept in mind when glamorising it or relying on it too much. Whereas it would be helpful for judges, as announced by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, to use artificial intelligence to access previous precedents and case law on specific cases, letting AI make a decision based on

computed facts may be a bit of a stretch. Mobile phone applications that connect lawyers with citizens in search of a lawyer were unveiled. However, it is important to consider how those who cannot read or write and spend money on lawyers can be connected to pro bono lawyers without being taken advantage of. This is what innovators should be spending most of their time thinking about. Another major issue that citizens in this country face is the inefficiency of state prosecutors and the court system. Using technology for the attendance record of public prosecutors will go a long way, as the absence of state prosecutors in cases that are cognisable and non-compoundable which requires the state to be a party causes delays. Digitisation of investigation files and court records is another important area in which the justice system can be made efficient through the use of technology. No citizen should have to endure so many struggles, especially if they are the aggrieved party. Further, setting

up of independent forensic laboratories for investigation of data is also very important, as the current high volume dealt by a just a handful of forensic labs causes unnecessary delays in the dispensation of justice. As technology outside the justice system continues to advance rapidly in use and availability, the need for change within the system is becoming unavoidable.

However, it took a pandemic for such technology to become commonplace. In the months following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, as courtrooms around the world shut their doors and already high case backlogs started growing even more rapidly, some pioneering court systems that had been experimenting with technology prior to the pandemic saw an opportunity to solve a problem

and modernize their courtrooms. Along the way, they have made significant progress on access to justice and learned a lot about how technology can be leveraged to make the justice system more equitable in the post-pandemic world. Throughout the pandemic and since, court systems that implemented digital solutions have made been able to make progress on their backlog of cases as judges, lawyers and litigants all started to interact more efficiently. The widespread technological transformation of the nation's court system is going to require a

concerted effort to develop technologies that are purpose-built for legal workflows; resilient enough to respond to endless combinations of use cases; and user-friendly enough for judges, clerks, attorneys and individuals to manage effectively.

To foster a technological convergence among countries, and to aspire to a smart world society, the G-20 should have a central role connecting the 2030 SDG goals which include innovation, technology, justice and equality. More specifically, the policies to apply in developing countries must pursue aims such as the open diffusion of knowledge, improving digital education, producing innovations for local consumption, the reduction of their energy deficits, and the technological empowerment of women. Implementing such policies in a context of international cooperation would make public-private partnerships a key instrument for funding infrastructures, joint ventures, incubators, start-ups and any other of entity with a significant capacity for technology

transfer. Major changes and challenges like automation, digitalization, 3D printing, Artificial Intelligence, retail through the web, etc. are currently underway and, in the years ahead, more change will come from technological and scientific developments. There is a dialectic relationship between technology and society: technology is both part of the solution to societal challenges and part of the problem, and this deepens social inequalities. The concept of technological justice can reconcile these two faces, connecting technology, a critical factor in human development, with our aspirations for social justice and greater equality between economies.

We propose to develop the concept of technological justice, along with relevant policies. The concept of technological justice requires a rethinking of how-both in the developing and the developed world-to encourage and nurture technological innovation that has social value and is environmentally sustainable. There is a need for a renewed focus on reform of national and international innovation systems and R&D policies, in an attempt to create a new consensus on how public-private partnerships can contribute to a more open and sustainable use of technology. More open source access for technologies should be sought. It is essential to assure an open diffusion of knowledge, innovations and technologies in the design of development policies. Development policies should support redistributive systems and incentives for successful application of new technologies. Legal frameworks should be promoted to enable innovation and the use of new technologies. Improve the education of the left-behind countries through global schemes. Technological justice should be linked to the SDG Agenda. As a result, the timeframe for proposals should coincide with the 2030 horizon.

The judiciary, the legal community and civil society have come together with a shared vision for a Digital Legal Pakistan. They say that justice delayed is justice denied, hopefully, with the intervention of legal-tech, we will be able to change that. It is important that the laws are fair and respect fundamental constitutional rights, and that they provide sufficient protections to citizens rather than demonising their use of technology to exercise rights. Moreover, the laws must not be abused by the state against dissidents and whistleblowers. We are at a pivotal moment in the development of the court system; we have an opportunity to truly raise the game and modernize arcane processes that have been creating unnecessary barriers to justice for far too long. We are talking about the independence of the judiciary and the strengthening of the administration of justice in order to provide justice and freedom for citizens. Only an effective and efficient justice system can ensure the enjoyment of basic rights by the average person.

“**The concept of technological justice is important that the Court House is made efficient, affordable, intelligent and smart through technology. Technological and scientific developments are generating huge opportunities for tackling societal challenges.**”



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Who's responsible for 25-Million Out of School Children?

There are two types of OOSC: Children who have never attended school and Children who have attended school in the past but have dropped out. Each type corresponds to a different set of factors and policy implications, some of which are discussed subsequently. Out of all children in Pakistan between the ages of five to 16 years, 35 per cent, i.e. one third, are out of school. This amounts to an estimated total of over 25 million. Balochistan has the highest proportion of OOSC at 47 per cent followed by Sindh at 44 per cent. In absolute terms, Punjab has the largest total population of OOSC roughly estimated at 8.7 million followed by Sindh at 7.5 million. Proportion of OOSC varies considerably among and within provinces. District level data from all provinces identifies the enormity of the challenge facing provincial and district education

apparatuses. Gender disparity in education has remained a persistent challenge. Among the out of school children, 54 per cent are girls and 46 per cent are boys. This translates to 11.8 million girls and 10.2 million boys not going to schools across the country. Rural areas of the country account for 15.4 million of the total OOSC, with 4.6 million of the children not going to school residing in urban areas. The rural majority of Pakistan's OOSC is a factor that remains uniform in many districts across the four provinces. Of all children between the ages of 5-16, the highest enrolment rate is observed among nine years olds (82 per cent) followed by 11 year olds (81 per cent). The same trend is observed for boys and girls virtually across the range of five to 16 years. The only difference is percentage of enrolment of each age group is higher for boys than girls. The dropout ratio rises steadily with age. However, the proportion of children who have never attended school remains overwhelming at all age levels. First time access to school is poorer in Balochistan than in any other province. The government needs to radically improve first time enrolments at early age groups and first time enrolments in accelerated programmes for children between the ages of 10-16 years. Subsequently, it needs to build on the gains in enrolment to target at-risk students in higher age groups. Fifty-three per cent of all out of school 16 year olds in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have never been to school. The dropout ratio rises steadily with age. Early years access needs to be enhanced through aggressive targeting of pockets of OOSC pop-

ulation that has never been to school. At systems level, inadequate financing, limited enforcement of policy commitments and challenges in equitable implementation impede reaching the most disadvantaged. An discouraging decrease in recent education budgets has been observed in the total GDP, which is already well short of the 4 percent target. In order to accelerate progress and ensure the equitable expansion of quality education, Government of Pakistan's should do more efforts to significantly reduce the number of OOSC at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels. Pakistan education programme should focus on Early Childhood Education (ECE) to improve school readiness; expansion of equitable and quality alternative learning pathways (ALP) at basic education levels; and nurturing of school-community linkages to

A deeper understanding of the equity challenge for these 25 million out-of-schools-children especially girls, between the ages of five and 16 years is needed, it's their constitutional right and our duty.

increase on-time enrolment, reduce drop-outs, and ensure completion and transition for all students. At systems levels, we should contribute more equity-focused provincial sector planning and budgeting; strengthening data and assessment systems; and evidence-based policy advocacy. Investment in quality early learning and pre-primary education is important that young children be ready for school has high positive impacts on primary school enrolment, survival and learning, and is cost-effective. Given the limited reach and inequities in the provision of pre-primary education, Pakistan is increasingly recognizing early

learning as a policy priority, and several provinces have already developed ECCE policies, plans, and standards. While several models exist for ALPs, these are still scattered and limited in scale. Pakistan must address the issue of OOSC through studies, supporting provincial sector plan development, development or review of non-formal education policy and direct programme implementation. Socio-cultural demand-side barriers combined with economic factors together drive education deprivation for certain groups of children in Pakistan, particularly girls. These barriers are further exacerbated by a lack of parental awareness of early learning, importance of on-time enrolment, and lack of social protection schemes. However, there is ample room for improvement in large scale enrolment campaigns during early years. Like other provinces, the age group of nine and above is vulnerable to dropouts. Enrolment drives targeting younger OOSC should be complemented with strategies

to improve retention towards the end and beyond primary school level. The necessary steps to address the situation include radical improvements in early years enrolments, and first time enrolments for fast track programmes for children between the ages of 10-16. Building on these the subsequent approach should be to target at-risk students in higher age groups to improve retention. It is important to understand the reasons behind children being out of school. Eighty-seven per cent of the children who have not been to school reported it as too expensive while 13 per cent gave other reasons for not enrolling in a school. Thirty-one per cent of the students who dropped out from school were not willing to continue attending school, while 19 per cent reported it as too expensive. Thirteen per cent dropped out in order to help at home or help with work. Eleven per cent of the students dropped out of school because parents and elders did not allow and six per cent stopped attending school because of long distance between school and home. A deeper analysis of the reason of students dropping out from school at provincial level shows that distance between home and school contributes significantly to children dropping out of school. The children's willingness and educational expenses are cited as the major reasons for dropping out of school. On the equity front, the state needs to ensure that the right to education for girls in rural areas and children with disabilities across the country is provided for. The literacy rate among persons with disabilities in 15 years or older is 31.5 per cent, or almost half of the national average. Challenges in major urban centres and those in rural areas are vastly different. So will be their solutions. Building high schools or upgrading existing primary and middle schools will solve only a part of the problem.

Unless the state responds to the reasons why children are not in school in specific localities and regions, a one-size fits all educational service provision model will continue to see a third of Pakistani children never having the educational and economic opportunities that should be their right. Serious efforts need to be made to ensure that Pakistan has a large population of literate and educated girls and women, only building schools will not suffice. Therefore, Pakistan must focus more closely on the obstacles to on-time enrolment, retention, completion and transition. Equity-based investments by government should continue to ensure education systems include the most disadvantaged girls and boys. Considering insufficient and ineffective allocation of budgets, strategically engages in sector planning, to capitalise on opportunities to influence decision-making on equity issues. With growing technical capacity and focus on assessment of learning, and international expertise also provides an opportunity to add value to Pakistan's efforts to improve assessment systems. System reforms help in improving accountability and evidence-based decision making. We must support healthy dialogue on education budgeting and public financing, to highlight areas of improvement for better planning and improvement in the education sector. A deeper understanding of the equity challenge for these 25 million out-of-schools-children especially girls, between the ages of five and 16 years is needed, it's their constitutional right and our duty.

It has been over a decade since the state made a promise to every child between the ages of five and 16 years of free and compulsory education. The compulsory range of school going age is stipulated as five to 16 years under article 25-A of the Constitution. But Pakistan is facing a serious challenge to ensure all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, attend, stay and learn in school. With an increasing population and a burgeoning youth cohort, Pakistan now has more than 75 million children between five and 16 years. Currently, Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) with an estimated 25 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 35 per cent of the total population in this age group.

Of these, the public schooling system only caters to 24 million and private schooling system caters to 26 million, with over 25 million currently out-of-school-children (OOSC). Pakistan is facing a serious challenge to ensure all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, attend, stay and learn in school. While the percentage varies, this age-specific statistic provides an insight into what is needed to ensure that the over 50 per cent of five year olds who are not enrolled, or the 48 per cent of 16 year olds who have dropped out or never enrolled, are provided an appropriate educational platform. Almost 3.8 million children, with 2.5 million between 14 and 16 years, enrolled in an educational institution but dropped out. While enrollment and retention rates are improving, progress has been slow to improve education indicators in Pakistan. In the 5-9 age group, 5 million children are not enrolled in schools and after primary-school age, the number of OOSC doubles, with 11.4 million adolescents between the ages of 10-14 not receiving formal education. Disparities based on gender, socio-economic status, and geography are significant; in Sindh, 52 percent of the poorest children (58 percent girls) are out of school, and in Balochistan, 78 percent of girls are out of school. Nearly 10.7 million boys and 8.6 million girls are enrolled at the primary level and this drops to 3.6 million boys and 2.8 million girls at the lower secondary level. Gaps in service provision at all education levels is a major constraint to education access. Socio-cultural demand-side barriers combined with economic factors and supply-related issues, together hamper access and retention of certain marginalized groups, in particular adolescent girls. Putting in place a credible data system and monitoring measures to track retention and prevent drop-out of out-of-school children is still a challenge.





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Majority of the developed states United States of America, Russia, China, France etc are ruling their states with the Presidential form of government. The parliamentary system is mostly used in third world countries. The 8th Amendment turned Pakistan into a semi-presidential republic and in the period between 1985 and 2010, the executive power was shared by president and prime minister. The 18th Amendment in 2010 restored Parliamentary Democracy in the country, and reduced presidency to a ceremonial position. Unlike the USA, after the partition of the Subcontinent, the constitution making process was not a matter of reflection and choice but depended on vicissitudes of time and power politics. We were unable to come out of the lasting spell of the Government of India Act, 1935 which remained the constitution of Pakistan till the framing and enforcement of the first Constitution of Pakistan in 1956. The 1973 Constitution, though it declared itself a federal state with parliamentary government at the centre, was a result of limited choices. It is true that Pakistan had experienced different kinds of governments; from democracy to military dictatorship, to civilian martial law by Z.A. Bhutto but governance was construed as a seminal issue.

Given the current political scenario, the presidential system is not perilous for democracy but, in reality, it is a threat to the vested interest of the corrupt political elite of our country. Those who hold that the presidential system failed in the past should not ignore this fact that the previous models of presidency were introduced to this country by military dictators who had designed them according to their own requirements to perpetuate themselves in power. It is erroneous to equate the presidential system with dictatorship as those are completely different. Like parliamentary democracy, the presidential system too is a democratic system. In the presidential system, the president is elected either directly by people or through an electoral college which makes the executive power concentrated in his office. The president derives his authority from the Constitution and law unlike the dictator. The president is elected for a definite period of time but that is not the case with dictatorship. The US Constitution is regarded as the father of the presidential system of government. It worked well over the last more than two centuries and is considered one of the main reasons for building the USA

Presidential System-Pakistan way to the future

into a strong nation and eventually into a world power in the 20th century. The US constitutional model has been followed in the countries that came under US influence in the 19th and 20th centuries. The US Constitution revolves around the doctrine of Separation of Powers coupled with the system of Check and Balance. The American Constitution divides the governmental power into legislative, executive, and judicial categories. These functions are separate and are appropriately exercised by separate branches of governments. These functions of government are commingled through check and balance system only insofar as necessary to preserve the integrity of each branch. It is also pertinent to mention here that under the presidential form of government the president cannot act capriciously, arbitrarily or according to his own personal whims. His actions are subject to scrutiny either by the parliament or judiciary depending upon the model of presidency. The Congress in the USA has power to impeach the president on the grounds of conviction, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors. It can refuse to ratify a treaty negotiated by the president. The US Supreme Court can declare a presidential action as repugnant to the Constitution if the same is ultra-vires the Constitution. It is clear from this discussion that the president cannot go beyond the sphere of powers allotted to him by the Constitution and law. In the presidential system, the president is elected by the people directly which makes the power concentrated in his office. It preserves the head of the government from the fear

of being ousted by the opposition which leads to a focus on public development and service delivery. This lack of fear also entails the depoliticization of administration; talented and skilled manpower is sought to ensure efficient service delivery as the president must maintain its popularity with the masses. In the parliamentary system, there is no separation of powers between legislature and government. The political executive, chosen from the legislators, holds the real executive power, and hence manipulates legislations. Therefore, laws are inevitably made by the government rather than the parliament. This paradoxically transforms the democracy into an elected dictatorship. The representation of whole Pakistan is somehow couldn't be represented. In the parliamentary system, there is a concept that who so ever province will be having more population will form the government. Rooted in British colonial legacy, the parliamentary system of government has continued to fail. Given Pakistan's political realities, the presidential system might deliver better results, as the presidential system is far better than for Pakistan rather than the parliamentary system. Under the presidential system, the president is the de jure as well as de facto head of the country's administration. The president enjoys complete discretion in selecting those people as ministers who possess po-

tential to discharge duties of their respective portfolios effectively and ably. The selection pool is vast and not confined to parliamentarians. The political executive, thus chosen, represents cross-sections of society. The unselected ministers are neither motivated by short-term populist measures, nor bound by party promises, and concentrate on chalking out policies for long-term national goals. The ministers completely devote their energies to the country's development rather than wasting their time in endless politics and conciliations. Another important advantage of the presidential system is that party discipline is maintained, with lesser chances of desertions. They thus pay full attention to the business of legislation along with focusing on strengthening the constitutional framework and rule of law.



It is erroneous to equate the presidential system with dictatorship as those are completely different. Like parliamentary democracy, the presidential system too is a democratic system. It's high time that a referendum must be called in Pakistan on the question of adoption of the presidential or parliamentary form of government.



In a holistic view, the federation always runs on three vital elements, Confidence, Representation and trust. Trust is for ensuring the political parties that they are eligible to run the state, representation is to fulfil the demands of people that they are represented and confidence is in the institutions so they can sustain the system. If people in Pakistan want presidential democracy, it can be introduced through a constitutional amendment. Parliament can amend the constitution with two third majorities of its House. A referendum can also be held under Article 48 of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 which reads as "If the Prime Minister considers it necessary to hold a referendum on any matter of national importance, he may refer the matter to a joint sitting of the Parliament and if it is approved in joint sitting, the Prime Minister may cause such matter to be referred to a referendum in the form of question that is capable of being answered by either 'Yes' or 'No'. Given the current political scenario, the presidential system is not perilous for democracy but, in reality, it is a threat to the vested interest of the corrupt political elite of our country. Although the process of amending the Constitution is described in Article 238 and 239. After the 18th Amendment now, if the joint session of Parliament gave approval of that question then the government can hold the referendum in the country. The Supreme Court of Pakistan termed four as basic pillar of the Constitution including (i) Parliamentary form of government, (ii) Federalism, (iii) Islamic way of Life and (iv) Democratic dispensation. If you have to alter the basic structure of the constitution then you have to elect a constituent assembly only for introducing the amendment. Britain has been exercising the parliamentary system since last 200 years, where the nation is 100% educated with fully disciplined life in dealing and regarding the rule of law. The demograph-

ic and ethnic divide of Pakistani society was so deep that it will never accept the presidential form of government. Besides the Government of India Act 1935, Pakistan inherited penal laws and its procedural code from the British legal system; along with Sharia laws this has in effect formed a hybrid legal system within the country. The confused state of laws, and uncertainty for the common man to ask for redressal has delayed justice. Democracy Index's global ranking in 2020 landed Pakistan at the 105th position among 165 independent nations, and was still considered a Hybrid Regime. Out of the four types of regimes: full democracy; flawed democracy; hybrid regime or authoritarian regime. The country has become the sixth most populous country in the world with an estimated population of 230 million people and it may reach 403 million by 2050. With one of the world's largest youth population, as 65%, the country is ranked as 122nd out of 190 countries in the world in terms of quality and accessibility of health care. As 27% of Pakistan's population lives below the poverty line, the average human development index and the GDP are the lowest as compared to other South Asian countries, and behind all these, one of the chief reasons is Pakistan's fragile political system. In our parliamentary system, members of parliament change their loyalties and are out to blackmail and pressurize the government for their own interests. That's why most of the governments has to use the power of the president to promulgate ordinance frequently. Although major reforms are required for the Presidential system in Pakistan. Presidents should be the sole man with supreme authority and he should be sharing the power with Senate only. Whereas the Senate representatives should be selected by the General Elections. Every state should be having an equal number of seats so the representation should be on an equality. When all the senators would have been selected then there should be a general election through which President should be selected for the nation of Pakistan. This equal representation will sort out the issue of NPC and would have sustained all those separatists' movements who are turning the nation into faltering and fumbling disposition. These reforms should be followed in order to make Pakistan more progressive and sustained. Times have changed, and not just for the proletariat and bourgeoisie. Even the new generation of landed and mercantile class admit that Pakistan's political system is not only rotten, but delivers poorly on governance. The future of Pakistan should be above partisan politics. Nothing is more important than our quest for a stable representative system that delivers democracy and good governance right down to the grass roots. What Pakistan needs today is effective and efficient local governance, a less burdensome system accessible to the citizens, better and transparent institutions so people can rely on them — simply replacing governments and not fixing institutions will not eradicate corruption, but rather add to it. Changing its model of government to the presidential system is the best way to ensure a democracy that works in Pakistan. Therefore, it is high time that a referendum must be called in Pakistan on the question of adoption of the presidential or parliamentary form of government and let it be decided by the citizens.

A Reflection on Decades of Militarization and Human Rights Violations

August 5th marks a sombre day in the history of Kashmir, a region that has endured decades of suffering and resilience in the face of Indian brutalities. Since 1947, Kashmir has been subjected to military occupation, human rights violations, and unspeakable atrocities. 5 Years of Military Siege in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) have completed. The abrogation of Article 370 by the Indian government on August 5, 2019, marked a new chapter in the Kashmir conflict. Article 370 granted special autonomy to the region, allowing it to have its own constitution and limited independence over matters except for foreign affairs, defence, finance, and communications. The revocation of this special status was met with widespread protests in Kashmir and condemnation from Pakistan. The Kashmir conflict, rooted in the violent partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, has been one of the most enduring and bloody conflicts in modern history. The region of Jammu and Kashmir, nestled between India and Pakistan, has witnessed over seven decades of political strife, military confrontations, and, most tragically, the relentless suffering of its people. Each year, Kashmir Siege Day is observed to remind the world of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the region—a crisis marked by widespread human rights abuses, including mass killings, disappearances, torture, and sexual violence. Since 1947, the Kashmir conflict has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people. According to various human rights organizations and local sources, more than 427,000 people have been killed in the conflict, with the majority of the casualties being civilians. The physical scars of the Kashmir conflict are visible in the thousands of people who have been injured or maimed over the years. According to local estimates, over 916,000 people have been injured in the conflict since 1947, many of them permanently disabled. The report also mentioned the destruction of 210,367 civilian properties including houses and structures and the gang-rape/molestation of 21,219 women by the troops during the period to expose the reality of the Indian Army's Sadbhavana-like operations. The



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conflict has seen various phases of violence, including three full-scale wars between India and Pakistan (1947-48, 1965, and 1971), numerous skirmishes, and a full-blown insurgency that began in the late 1980s. Unending hostility between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir dispute has been witnessed by the entire international community for the last seven decades. Kashmir is the most violent and volatile conflict zone between two nuclear rivals – India & Pakistan in South Asia. The conflict becomes more fragile when the stakeholders are nuclear-armed because it certainly risks regional and international peace. The continuing curfew in Indian-held Kashmir in the backdrop of revoking Article 370 and 35(A) on 5th August 2019, heavy military presence, media blackout, kidnapping of young boys, brutal patterns of violence and suppression of masses' voices have ignited a wave of protest and condemnation from the global community, which is emphasizing on a peaceful and sustainable resolution of long-standing Kashmir conflict. Since 5th August 2019, the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35(A) has given the Kashmir conflict a different dimension. It has not only changed the autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) but also compromised the safeguarding of the demographic status of J&K as a Muslim-majority state in India. Since 1947, India and Pakistan have been locked into continuous adverse relations due to the conflict in Kashmir and do not find a common ground to bring peace to the region. Therefore, peace is an urgent need to address and redress the grievances of Kashmiris. In the decades that followed, the death toll continued to rise. The insurgency led to a heavy militarization of the region, with Kashmir becoming one of the most militarized zones in the world. Reports from human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have documented numerous instances of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and summary executions by Indian security forces. The Indian government, while acknowledging some incidents of human rights abuses, has largely defended its actions as necessary to combat terrorism and maintain law and order in the region. The use of pellet guns by Indian security forces, particularly in response to protests, has drawn international condemnation. These weapons, intended to be non-lethal, have caused horrific injuries, with hundreds of people, including children, losing their eyesight or suffering severe facial injuries. The psychological trauma inflicted on the people of Kashmir is im-

measurable. The constant presence of security forces, the frequent imposition of curfews, and the pervasive atmosphere of fear and uncertainty have left deep mental scars on the population. Cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety are widespread, particularly among children who have grown up in the conflict zone. Sexual violence has been one of the most harrowing aspects of the Kashmir conflict. The use of rape as a weapon of war has been documented in several instances, with women and girls being subjected to brutal acts of violence by both state and non-state actors. One of the most infamous cases is the Kunan Poshpora incident of 1991, where soldiers from the Indian Army allegedly raped between 23 and 100 women in the twin villages of Kunan and Poshpora. Despite the outcry and the subsequent legal battles, justice has remained elusive for the victims, with the case still languishing in the courts decades later.

In the immediate aftermath of the abrogation, the Indian government imposed a strict lockdown in the region, cutting off all communication channels, including internet and mobile phone services. Thousands of additional troops were deployed to enforce the lockdown, leading to what has been described as the most severe siege in Kashmir's recent history. The lockdown had a devastating impact on the daily lives of Kashmiris. The communication blackout left the population isolated from the rest of the world, unable to contact family members or access essential services. The heavy military presence and the imposition of curfews severely restricted movement, making it difficult for people to access medical care, education, and even basic necessities like food and water. The lockdown also had a significant economic impact on the region, with businesses forced to close and tourism, a major source of income for many Kashmiris, coming to a standstill. The education of thousands of children was disrupted, with schools and colleges remaining closed for months. Despite the harsh measures, the Kashmiri people continued to resist, using whatever means were available to them. Protests erupted across the region, with people taking to the streets to express their anger and frustration. The Indian government's response was predictably harsh, with security forces using tear gas, pellet guns, and live ammunition to disperse the crowds. Reports of arbitrary arrests, beatings, and torture of protesters, including minors, further inflamed tensions. The resilience of the Kashmiri people in the face of decades of oppression is nothing short of remarkable. Despite the overwhelming odds, they have continued to resist the occupation and assert their right to self-determination. This resistance has taken many forms, from armed struggle to peaceful protests, from political activism to art and literature. The freedom of Kashmir that began in the late 1980s was driven by a sense of betrayal and disillusionment with the Indian state, which had promised autonomy and self-determination but failed to deliver. Many of them young men, took up arms against the Indian state, driven by a desire for independence or, in some cases, accession to Pakistan. The Indian government's response was brutal, with widespread human rights abuses committed by security forces in the name of counterinsurgency. In recent years, however, there has been a shift towards non-violent resistance. Civil society in Kashmir has played a crucial role in documenting human rights abuses, providing support to the victims, and keeping the struggle for justice alive. Human rights activists, journalists, and lawyers have worked tirelessly, often at great personal risk, to expose the reality of life in Kashmir and advocate for the rights of its people. Art and literature have also become powerful tools of resistance. Kashmiri poets, writers, and artists have used their work to express the pain, suffering, and resilience of their people. Their work serves not only as a form of resistance but also as a means of preserving the cultural heritage of Kashmir, which is under threat from the ongoing conflict. The international response to the Kashmir conflict has been a mix of condemnation, silence, and complicity. While some countries and international organizations have spoken out against the human rights abuses in Kashmir, many others have remained silent, either out of political expediency or fear of damaging relations with India, a rising global power. The

United Nations has passed several resolutions on Kashmir, calling for a plebiscite to determine the region's future and urging respect for human rights. However, these resolutions have been largely ignored, and the UN has been criticized for its failure to take concrete action to resolve the conflict. Human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Commission of Jurists, have documented numerous cases of human rights violations in Kashmir, calling for accountability and justice for the victims. These organizations have also highlighted the culture of impunity that exists in the region, with security forces rarely held accountable for their actions. However, despite these efforts, there has been little progress in addressing the human rights situation in Kashmir. The Indian government has dismissed many of these reports as biased and politically motivated and has continued to deny access to international observers and journalists. The role of the United States, the European Union, and other major powers has been particularly disappointing. While these countries have expressed concern over the situation in Kashmir, they have largely refrained from taking any meaningful action, preferring to maintain their strategic and economic ties with India. This has led to accusations of double standards, with critics pointing out that these same countries have been quick to condemn human rights abuses in other parts of the world.

Despite these unimaginable hardships, the people of Kashmir remain steadfast in their pursuit of freedom and self-determination. Their resilience is a testament to the human spirit's capacity for courage and hope. As we reflect on Kashmir Siege Day, we honour the memories of those who have suffered and continue to suffer. We also recommit ourselves to supporting the Kashmiri people's struggle for justice and human rights. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is an unresolved agenda of Britain and a disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Both parties acknowledged the disputed status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the UN Security Council resolutions of August 13, 1948, and on January 5, 1949, both the two countries were considered a party. UN resolutions remain operative and cannot be unilaterally disregarded by either party. As agreed in the UN Security Council resolutions peaceful and bilateral negotiations would be made between India and Pakistan over the future status of Jammu and Kashmir. It, therefore, entails a fair, free and internationally supervised plebiscite that should be aimed at securing the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir. The current status shows both positions on Kashmir, as, Pakistan is, in favour of the UN plebiscite as per the wishes of the Kashmiri people. The future of Kashmir remains uncertain. The conflict shows no signs of resolution, with both India and Pakistan refusing to compromise on their respective positions. The people of Kashmir, caught in the middle of this geopolitical struggle, continue to suffer, with no end in sight to their ordeal. However, despite the bleak situation, there is still hope. The resilience and determination of the Kashmiri people, coupled with growing international awareness of their plight, offer a glimmer of hope for the future. The increasing global focus on human rights and justice, particularly in the wake of movements like Black Lives Matter and the global response to the Rohingya crisis, suggests that the world may finally be waking up to the suffering of the Kashmiri people. For any meaningful progress to be made, however, it is crucial that the international community takes a more active role in resolving the conflict. This includes not only holding India accountable for its human rights abuses but also addressing the underlying political issues that have fueled the conflict for decades. The people of Kashmir must be given the opportunity to determine their own future, free from external interference and coercion. As we reflect on Kashmir Siege Day, we are reminded of the immense suffering and resilience of the Kashmiri people. For over seven decades, they have endured unimaginable hardships, from mass killings and sexual violence to enforced disappearances and economic deprivation. Yet, despite these challenges, they have continued to resist, to fight for their rights, and to demand justice. The international community must not turn a blind eye to the plight of the Kashmiri people. It is our collective responsibility to stand with them in their struggle for freedom and dignity. Only by acknowledging the truth, holding the perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable, and working towards a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict can we hope to bring an end to the suffering of the Kashmiri people. As we observe Kashmir Siege Day, let us not only remember the victims of this long and brutal conflict but also renew our commitment to advocating for their rights and supporting their quest for justice. The people of Kashmir deserve nothing less. Regrettably, even the UN is not in a position to play any positive role without the support of the pro-Indian powers enjoying veto power. That is a stark reality. The international community and the UN, if they ever feel their obligation towards them as per the UN resolution that the Kashmir dispute could be resolved. Pakistan for which Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of the partition will and must continue to persist with its moral, political and diplomatic support to the freedom struggle in IOK as long as it does not succeed.

Despite these unimaginable hardships, the people of Kashmir remain steadfast in their pursuit of freedom and self-determination. Their resilience is a testament to the human spirit's capacity for courage and hope

AESR 2023: A Call to Action for Education and Learning!

ASER Pakistan, a flagship program of Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA), conducted one of the largest household-based national learning assessment surveys in 2023 to gauge the foundational literacy and numeracy proficiency of children in Pakistan between the ages of five and sixteen. Every year, ASER's extensive collection of open-source data allows our citizen volunteers to evaluate Pakistan's educational system by gathering information on the learning outcomes of children along with household and school-level indicators. ASER's methodology of collecting the data by mobilizing 11000 volunteers makes it not only unique but also transparent and inclusive. The MoFE&PT, the provincial governments along the All Pakistan Private Schools Federation (APPSF) through ASER 2023 have access to levels of foundational learning data across Pakistan for formal and non-formal, state and non-state education systems from ASER Pakistan as a regular benchmark and prime reference document for SDG 4.1 tracking by the SDG secretariat and also for Article 25 a, the fundamental right to education in Pakistan. The ASER Pakistan 2023 records will help to improve the enrollment levels across the country corroborating with the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) 2024 Pakistan Education Statistics report, narrowing gender gaps in enrolment and in learning due to both demand side factors and supply side efforts of all actors. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), a citizen-led, household-based survey, was one of the largest conducted in terms of its scale and scope in the year 2023. Along with 151 rural and also conducted the survey in 123 urban districts which was a huge assignment to manage, given the paucity of time. The survey mobilized 16 partner organizations and 11000 educated graduate degree enumerators, a mobile phone and a passion to uncover the core challenges of the education sector as active citizens. The volunteers and the master trainers from partner organizations were provided three days of rigorous field-based training, to conduct the oral one-to-one assessment in homes for both in-school and out-of-school children, triangulated by vital information from the households and visits to the local schools. In some districts, volunteers collected the information for the first time on the application, providing real-time information. The goal was to provide parents and other local actors with vital information on foundational learning so they could hold local officials and schools accountable for learning outcomes. This is why the contribution is so significant it goes beyond simply collecting the annual data mapping children's learning progress, having established a vital component of the changing ecosystem, serving as a catalyst for bottom-up accountability and action to enhance learning in schools and to bring much-needed attention to the core dimensions of access, learning and equity for tracking 25-A, right to education and SDG 4. It's expected that ASER Pakistan 2023 can make significant progress in converting data into action. In addition to capacity building and partnerships provided by ITA teams through ASER Pakistan, as civil society and autonomous organizations are extended a forum to collaborate and create solutions with the local community. Foundational learning is defined as basic literacy, numeracy, and transferable skills such as socioemotional skills that provide the fundamental building blocks for all other learning, knowledge, and higher-order skills. Embarking on the journey of collecting real-time data from the field, and reaching out to both urban and rural areas to present the first National Foundational Learning profile, it believed that the contributions of the ASER and ITA Pakistan can help the potential to change the educational landscape in the years to come, on such an evidence-based democratic citizen-led movement, from assessment to accountability to action. Which has been providing policymakers and practitioners with an important measure of foundational literacy and numeracy levels for children aged 5-16 years across Pakistan since 2009. ASER a call to action for stepping up efforts to improve foundational learning, is an essential public good produced by civil society in close collaboration with the government. ASER 2023 marks yet another important milestone in this journey, providing household-based learning data for children across 151 rural and 123 urban districts. This is a huge undertaking reaching out to 272,370 children 3-16 years and 200,987 children aged

5-16 years whose learning levels have been assessed using a simple grade two level tool (lower primary), robustly mapped to SDG 4.1.1 a and the national and provincial curriculum student learning outcomes (SLOs), in rural Pakistan. ASER fills a critical gap in learning data as no other national or provincial assessment in Pakistan has consistently measured learning levels in early grades. By measuring learning for children across the ages of 5-16, ASER also shows that children who are not learning the basics by grade 3, continue to struggle, with foundational learning gaps persisting in grades 5, 8 and even 10. South-South learning networks, such as the PAL Network, of which ASER Pakistan is an integral member, are making a powerful case to focus efforts on foundational learning. ASER provides open data on foundational learning, along with a host of other important education indicators, and is a national repository for evidence, mobilization, and actions for learning solutions. ASER is a reliable, meaningful measure of student learning and provides comparability over time so that we can tell if things are improving or not. It can be used for reporting on SDG 4.1.1 a and Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan, as a model of good practice and accountability for foundational learning results. Pakistan ranks as the 5th most vulnerable country to the impacts of climate change according to the Global Climate Risk Index (UN-Habitat, 2023). Climate change and displacement caused by rising global temperatures exacerbate the inequalities and barriers that already exist. In particular, the effects of these are felt more deeply by those belonging to more socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, by women and girls, rural communities, and persons with disabilities (UNESCO, 2023). The climate crisis also intersects with another crisis - interruptions to education and learning and the resulting widening inequalities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The founding Development Partners of the Global Coalition for Foundational Learning are FCDO, UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, the World Bank and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). As development partners with a shared commitment to improving foundational learning for all, we have to come together to address this challenge through the Global Coalition for Foundational Learning with a shared commitment to improving foundational learning for all and a desire to work together to drive change more quickly. We have to work differently and together, to ensure we meet the commitments as set out in the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning, launched by the Coalition at the UN Secretary General's Transforming Education Summit (TES). Working closely with government partners, we have to collaborate on addressing the learning crisis, including developing a shared understanding of the challenges in order to support country-led action and implementation, improve learning data and monitoring mechanisms and continue advocacy and communication on the importance of foundational learning. There is evidence to show that disasters are now increasing in severity and occurring almost five times as often as they did 40 years ago and these disasters are disrupting the education of nearly 40 million children a year. The effects of these disasters on education are direct and indirect - flooding, for example, destroys schools, droughts result in children having to go further to collect water, financial impacts of climate shocks mean families cannot afford to keep children in school. Current, high-quality research in global contexts shows that without urgent action, climate change will make it increasingly challenging to achieve a quality education. The findings from ASER 2023 on these issues are stark. It is well known that certain regions in Pakistan are particularly prone to the impacts of climate change. It is well known that the recent floods that hit the country have been a catalyst for the many risks faced by vulnerable and marginalised populations living in these regions. The rural sample has revealed that whilst nationally, almost 22 per cent of the households reported being affected by the floods in 2022, there are

stark regional disparities with 49 per cent of the households in Sindh and 47 per cent in Balochistan noting that their household was affected by the 2022 floods. The findings are even more telling - with 69 per cent of households in rural Sindh and almost two-thirds of those in rural Balochistan reporting being significantly or moderately impacted by any natural disaster/event in the past year. In Balochistan, almost a quarter of the rural respondents sampled reported a decline in earnings between 26-50% and in Sindh the equivalent was almost 19% of households. The impacts of climate shocks will have long-lasting effects on the wellbeing, learning, life and economic outcomes of those directly affected but are also likely to be transmitted across future generations.

According to Article 25A: "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law." Article 25A was added to the basic rights section of the Constitution of the country in 2010. There were laws for universal primary education even before then but the right to education, for all children and, in fact, the obligation (free and compulsory) to educate ALL children for 10 odd years was added to the Constitution in 2010. The tragedy is, despite the constitutional promise we are no closer to fulfilling this promise to our children than we were in 2010. By latest estimates, more than 26 million children between the ages of five to sixteen years are out of school in Pakistan. We have report after report, including many rounds of Annual Status of Education (ASER) data that show that the majority of children who are enrolled in schools have been and are getting poor quality of education. This has been corroborated by reports from the World Bank as well. Grade 5 children can hardly do grade 3 work, and many children in grade 8 are not able to read paragraphs and do simple mathematics. We are simply not living up to the promises we have made, implicitly and explicitly, to our children as far as educational opportunities to access and quality are concerned. As a state and society, we have to encourage the private sector to develop as a provider of education services at both K-12 and university levels. Today we have an education system in the country that is extremely differentiated, fragmented, diverse and inequitable. Educational institutions vary along many variables. Of these, the public schooling system only caters to 24 million and the private schooling system caters to 26.9 million, with over 26 million currently out-of-school-children (OOSC). As per All Pakistan Private Schools Federation's data and Pakistan Education Statistics 2020-21, private educational institutions are serving a sizeable number of students (56%) with 26.9 million students, 1.5 million teachers and 207,000 private schools. We need more than 200,000 schools with 2 million new teachers, to cater to over 26 million currently out-of-school-children (OOSC). Private entrepreneurs and individuals should be encouraged and given incentives to open new schools and adopt schools for infrastructure development and the provision of necessary facilities. The incentives could be in the shape of tax amenities and rebates or the attribution of private schools for at least 10 years. Article 25-A of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan safeguards the Right to Education of children aged 5-16 years. After devolution under the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the Provincial Assemblies also enacted Article 25-A to ensure free and compulsory education to all children and approved Compulsory Education Acts. Pakistan is also a signatory of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which reiterates Pakistan's pledge to mainstream out-of-school-children (OOSC) by the year 2030. This legal provision in the constitution of Pakistan and international commitment shows a strong determination to address the challenge of OOSC. PPPs can expand access to education, particularly in underserved areas. By partnering with private entities, the government can extend its reach, ensuring that quality education reaches every corner of the country. In these circumstances, no doubt, ASER is a national asset

working in close collaboration with public sector departments of school education and literacy and the MoFEPT to be used extensively in relevant citations at provincial, national and global levels for lower primary indicators of SDG 4. No bounty, the efforts of the Government of Pakistan, both at the Federal and Provincial levels are commended in pursuing this fundamental policy priority with the utmost focus and resolve. As a first step, and to complement ASER, we should call on the Government to design and deploy large-scale, nationally, and provincially representative, comparable learning data over time to know whether students are learning, which are being left behind and to understand where to adjust education policies and practices based on agreed minimum proficiency levels.



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ASER Pakistan 2023 can make significant progress in converting data into action, and as a regular benchmark and prime reference document for SDG and also for Article 25 A, the fundamental right to education in Pakistan, will help to improve the enrollment levels across the country

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Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that the ruling PTI had changed Pakistan's decades-long policy of pushing for strategic depth in Afghanistan to ensure that there was a friendly government there. There is a belief that Pakistan's support to Afghan Pashtuns is aimed at finding a counterweight to the nationalists who interfere in Pakistan's internal affairs and challenge the legality of the border. Those Pashtuns who receive support from Pakistan will give in to the Pakistani point of view concerning the border issue among other things. Afghanistan has been mired in chaos and misery over the past 20 years. The war has killed at least 100,000 civilians and left the country's political and economic systems in dire straits. The US wanted to build a new, more palatable Afghanistan to American self-interests, but it did not devote enough resources to rebuilding Afghanistan. Only with its troops in the country, the US only maintained a semblance of stability in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan is expected to complete much before the September 11, 2021 deadline. Over the past two decades, US troops and those of its allies were sent to Afghanistan to support Afghanistan's public security and during this process, it tried to cultivate a pro-America regime, but this was totally a failure. The withdrawal of troops at this time shows that the US has realized its Afghan policy is a failure. At the same time, it also wants to move more resources to the Western Pacific region and focus on strategic competition with China. In comparison to irresponsible US deeds, China underlines that the Afghan issue can only be resolved by political means and the future of Afghanistan should be left in the hands of the Afghan people. Afghan Taliban fighters have captured four more districts from government forces in the past 24 hours amid an escalation in fighting across the country. The Taliban wanted to show their might and seek concessions on the negotiations when the stalled intra-Afghan peace talks resume. Since last month, at least seven other districts have also fallen to the Taliban, two of

Pakistan needs to re-evaluate its Afghan-policy!

them close to the capital city, Kabul, in the Maidan Wardak province. It comes after the US began withdrawing its remaining troops from the war-torn state. In its annual Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict report released in February, the UN's human rights agency and its assistance mission in the country said that there was a disturbing spike in civilian deaths, with 3,035 fatalities and 5,785 injuries registered in 2020. The Taliban have carried out a string of attacks near vulnerable provincial capitals across Afghanistan since May 1, when the withdrawal process for the nearly 3,000 US-led foreign troops began. It has resulted in an uptick in violence, which is a sign that the Taliban is assessing the government's capacity to safeguard the country once the withdrawal process is completed. Islamabad have assessed that at this stage the US wants a safe and respectable withdrawal without a perception of defeat, and a broad-based political settlement in Kabul leading to an inclusive government. The US has about twenty bases in the Middle East region and want to retain some foothold in the region. It is believed that 50 per cent of the area of Afghanistan is currently under the control of the Taliban, 30 per cent under control government and the remaining 20 per cent is hotly contested between the two. Taliban are now an internationally recognised entity. All countries in the region are therefore trying to establish some form of relations with them realising that they will be major players in any future Afghan set-up. Moreover, the Taliban are believed to have around one hundred thousand trained fighters in their ranks. They have also formed a shadow government. The peace talks have hit an impasse for a number of reasons that Taliban insist all their seven thousand prisoners should be released but the Afghan government says it will not order the release till the Taliban reduce the level of violence. Taliban say they do not want US surveillance aircraft to be flying over their territory but the US maintains these flights will continue. The US says Taliban should break all ties with Al-Qaeda etc and agree to become part of a future Afghan government but the Taliban have flatly refused to participate in any such set-up with President Ashraf Ghani. The fear is that if a negotiated settlement is not reached between the Afghan government and the Taliban – and the indications are not too promising so far – then there are chances that Afghanistan could slide into yet another civil war. This would have an adverse impact on the region and especially on Pakistan. A fresh influx of refugees into Pakistan. This will exacerbate the burden that Pakistan is already bearing due to the very large refugee presence in the country. A civil war in Afghanistan could have a spillover effect and regenerate violence and militancy in the border areas including

the erstwhile FATA region as well as in Balochistan. There are genuine fears that the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has found shelter on Afghan soil, could gain fresh traction and attempt to unleash terror on Pakistani soil. It is a delicate time and the government wants to build a domestic consensus on its policy on Afghanistan. However, this is easier said than done in the politically polarised environment as it exists today. If the situation worsens after the withdrawal of US troops, Pakistan may face a volatile situation that will have a direct impact on all aspects of life, including politics. It may be prudent for the government, and for the establishment that continues to have the dominant role in policy on Afghanistan, to make an extra effort to bring all political stakeholders on board and forge a consensus – howsoever loose – on the core policy to deal with the swiftly evolving situation across the western border. This is a lesson worth learning from the history of the past four decades. In these circumstances PM Imran has outlined a new approach that heralds a reevaluation of Pakistan's strategic depth policy that has governed our relations with Afghanistan and India. As the deadline for foreign troops' complete withdrawal from Afghanistan is just a couple of

months away, a political settlement may reduce the risk of a continuing civil war that has ravaged Afghanistan for over four decades now. When the foreign troops leave later this year, for the first time in 20 years Afghanistan will be on its own to tackle all its domestic issues including that of a new government formation. In these circumstances PM Imran has outlined a new approach that heralds a reevaluation of Pakistan's strategic depth policy that has governed our relations with Afghanistan and India. As the deadline for foreign troops' complete withdrawal from Afghanistan is just a couple of months away, a political settlement may reduce the risk of a continuing civil war that has ravaged Afghanistan for over four decades now. When the foreign troops leave later this year, for the first time in 20 years Afghanistan will be on its own to tackle all its domestic issues including that of a new government formation. The people of Afghanistan are going through a lot of fear about what may lie in the near future for them in the wake of an impending Taliban rule. Even though the Taliban say they have

changed, there is fear that a Taliban rule would have consequences for vulnerable groups in the country, including women and minorities. In the same way, a civil war or massive unrest and uncertainty in the country would lead to Afghans crossing the border into Pakistan. This would mean immense economic pressure on Pakistan, which is already struggling to cope with a faltering economy left weaker as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. The current Afghan situation has drawn great attention from the international community. The peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. Afghanistan should form inclusive political arrangements to make sure that all ethnic groups and parties can participate in political life in the future and enjoy equal political rights.

The Afghan national governance structure in the future should conform to the country's unique national conditions and development needs, and should not simply copy foreign models. International community should make due contribution to the final resolution of the Afghan issue, and should also play its due role for the long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan. Pakistan has been contributing its share to promote a peace deal for a future dispensation, but the Taliban seem to be in no mood to budge an inch. A national government in Afghanistan has been suggested. The refusal of the Taliban to

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talk to the Afghan government makes this difficult. It is also understood that President Ashraf Ghani is unwilling to make way for such a setup. Solutions need to be thought out. And the US, which in part created the crisis with its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and its subsequent inability to manage the situation in the country, must play a role. It is now also clear that the US wants to exit from Afghanistan as quickly as possible, regardless of what chaos is left behind, and this is a disturbing situation for every nation in the region, as well as for the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this regard, PM Imran Khan's assertion that Pakistan wants to avoid intervention and will respect whichever government the Afghan people elect to power sounds like an extremely sensible strategy and is a welcome move. Pakistan stands ready to continue working with regional countries and the international community to move the peace and reconciliation process forward, and help Afghanistan realize peace and stability at an early date. Indeed a peaceful Afghanistan means peace in Pakistan.



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BRICS Currency: De-Dollarization of World Economy and Pakistan

By diversifying their holdings reserves into a more multi-currency sort of portfolio, perhaps they can reduce that pressure on their external sectors. The U.S. dollar accounted for 58.36% of global foreign exchange reserves in the fourth quarter last year, according to data from the IMF's Currency Composition of Foreign Exchange Reserves (COFER). Comparatively, the euro is a distant second, accounting for about 20.5% of global forex reserves while the Chinese yuan accounted for just 2.7% in the same period. China is one of the most active players in this push given its dominant position in global trade right now, and as the world's second largest economy. Russia and China have also been working towards connecting their banking communication systems. However, the US has threatened to expel Chinese banks from SWIFT if this proceeds. Nevertheless, both Russia and China have reaffirmed their commitment to advancing bilateral trade in their national currencies.

Based on the calculation of IMF's data on 2022 direction of trade, mainland China was the largest trading partner to 61 countries when combining both im-

ports and exports. In comparison, the U.S. was the largest trading partner to 30 countries. As China's economic might continues to rise, that means that it'll exert more influence in global financial institutions and trade etc. But China isn't the only country calling for a shift away from the U.S. dollar. Brazilian President Lula made a state visit to Beijing in April where he reportedly called for reduced reliance on the U.S. dollar for global trade. Trade between Brazil and China reached \$150 billion in 2022, a 10% jump from a year ago, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence. During a recent visit to China, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was said to have suggested setting up an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar. In early April, Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had announced that India and Malaysia were starting to settle their trade in the Indian rupee. The changing global economic dynamics are driving the co-called de-dollarization trend which can benefit local economies in a number of ways. Trading in local currencies will allow exporters and importers to balance risks, have more options to invest, to have more certainty about the revenues and sales. Another benefit for countries moving away from using the dollar as the middle man in bilateral trade, is to help them move up the value chain. Meanwhile, growth of non-U.S. economic blocs also encourage these economies to push for wider use of their currencies. The IMF estimates that

Asia could contribute more than 70% to global growth this year. U.S. growth might slow, but U.S. growth isn't what it's all about anymore. There is a whole non-U.S. block that's growing, which is going to be a re-internationalization of flows. Geopolitical risks have also accelerated the trend to move away from U.S. dollar. Political risk is really helping introduce a lot of uncertainty and variability around how much of a safe haven that U.S. dollar really is, which accelerated the calls for de-dollarization was the U.S. decision to freeze Russia's foreign currency reserves after Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022. According to Bloomberg, the yuan has replaced the U.S. dollar as the most traded currency in Russia. So far, the U.S. and its western allies have frozen more than \$300 billion of Russia's foreign currency reserves and slapped multiple rounds of sanctions on Moscow and the country's oligarchs. This forced Russia to switch trade to other currencies and increase gold in its reserves. In the Middle East, major oil exporter Saudi Arabia has signaled it's open to trade in other currencies other than the greenback. Although it's not a complete break

So long as that commands the majority, so long as you don't have another currency system or economy that's willing to step up to that international reach, convertibility and free floating and the responsibility of a reserve currency, it's hard to say dollar will be displaced over the next 3 to 5 years. unless someone steps up. In fact, the de-dollarization trend has already emerged in a number of countries and regions including Russia, China and 17 other countries. About a quarter of the decline in the dollar's share can be accounted for by greater use of the Chinese renminbi. But less than 3 per cent of global central bank reserves are denominated in Beijing's currency, IMF data show. Beijing was also in the process of internationalising the renminbi before the current crisis and was already ahead of other nations in adopting a central bank digital currency. The war would also spur the adoption of digital finance, from cryptocurrencies to stablecoins and central bank digital currencies. The greater use of other currencies in global trade would lead to further diversification of the reserve assets held by national central banks. Countries tend to accumulate reserves in the currencies with which they trade with the rest of the world, and in which they borrow from the rest of the world, so you might see some slow-moving trends towards other currencies playing a bigger role in reserve assets. The dominance of the dollar — backed by strong and highly credible institutions, deep markets and the fact that it is freely convertible — was unlikely to be challenged in the medium term. But in the past few years, the trend toward the de-dollarization of economies in the world has become increasingly apparent. The main task is to reduce its dependence on the world's main reserve currency — the US dollar. Indeed, more and more countries striving to switch to settlements in national currencies, and the already-emerging global de-dollarization push could further accelerate with countries increasingly adopting alternatives to the US dollar. Although Pakistan has not been an enthusiastic advocate for such a de-dollarization partnership, but has been exploring a rupee-ruble trade arrangement with Russia. Pakistan must seriously think about diversifying its foreign exchange reserves, increasing investments in other currencies, and by switching to settlements in its own national and other international currencies between partner countries.



BRICS advances alternative to US-dominated financial system and indicated that a new currency project might be announced at the upcoming BRICS summit in South Africa. Earlier this year, Brazil and Argentina also proposed to work towards creating a common currency, called the "SUR," to enhance regional trade and financial exchanges while reducing reliance on the US dollar. The alliance's other members—Brazil, China, Russia, and India—have already taken steps to bypass the US-dominated global trade and finance system. The current BRICS countries already account for 40% of the global population and one-fourth of the global GDP. The alliance is now set to expand with Iran and Saudi Arabia having initiated the formal process to join. Over 10 other countries, including Egypt, Algeria, the UAE, Mexico, Argentina, and Nigeria, have also expressed interest in joining the bloc. The growing trend towards seeking alternatives to reduce dollar dependence, including trade in local currencies, is also being deliberated upon by regional organizations, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Not only is the BRICS bloc seeking to move away from dollarization in matters of trade and finance, it has also attempted to provide an alternative to the US-dominated Bretton Woods institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, in the form of the New Development Bank (NDB). At present, aside from the five BRICS countries, Egypt, the UAE, and Bangladesh are also members of the NDB. More and more countries — from Brazil to Southeast Asian nations — are calling for trade to be carried out in other currencies besides the U.S. dollar. To be clear, the U.S. dollar remains dominant in global forex reserves even though its share in central banks' foreign exchange reserves has dropped from more than 70% in 1999, IMF data shows. Geopolitical risks and economic dynamics have accelerated the trend to move away from the U.S. dollar. The U.S. dollar has been king in global trade for decades — not just because the U.S. is the world's largest economy, but also because oil, a key commodity needed by all economies big and small, is priced in the greenback. Most commodities are also priced and traded in U.S. dollars. But since the Federal Reserve embarked on a journey of aggressive rate hikes to fight domestic inflation, many central banks around the world have raised interest rates to stem capital outflows and a sharp depreciation of their own currencies.

away from dollar-denominated oil trade over the short-term, but what they're saying more is, well, there's another player in town, and we want to look at how we trade with them on a bilateral basis using yuan. Despite the slow erosion of its hegemony, the U.S. dollar is not expected to be dethroned in the near future — simply because there aren't any alternatives right now. Euro is somewhat an imperfect fiscal and monetary union, the Japanese yen, which is another reserve currency, has all sorts of structural challenges in terms of the high debt loads. The Chinese yuan also falls short, the yuan reserves as a share of total reserves, it's only about 2.5% of total reserves, and China still has current account restrictions. That means that it's going to take a long time for any other currency, any single currency to really usurp the dollar from that perspective. The dollar's share of international reserves had fallen from 70 per cent to 58.36 per cent, marking its lowest level in 25 years. Data from IMF shows that as of the fourth quarter of 2022, more than 58.36% of global reserves are held in U.S. dollar — that's more than double the share of the euro, the second most-held currency in the world. The international reserve system is still a U.S.-reserve dominated system.

“ The dollar's share of international reserves had fallen from 70 per cent to 58.36 per cent, marking its lowest level in 25 years. Idea of BRICS New Currency is a Quest for Global De-Dollarization Accelerates. ”



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The 27th of October 'Black Day' as 75 years ago, India without any legal justification, forcibly took control of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Since then, the Indian Occupied Forces are mercilessly killing innocent and unarmed Kashmiris, vandalising their properties and indulging in other inhuman acts. India's decision to allow voting rights to any Indian citizen living temporarily in Indian-occupied Kashmir has again ignited anger and fears of yet another attempt by the Hindu nationalist government to change the demography of its only Muslim-majority region. It is expected to add about 2.5 million more voters on top of the 7.6 million existing voters – a whopping 30 percent increase. According to the 2011 census, of the 12.5 million total population in Indian-administered Kashmir, Muslims comprise 68.31 percent and Hindus 28.43 percent. More than seven million of these residents live in the valley, 97 percent of them Muslims. 20-25 lakh new voters will be added to the electoral list, those who have no connection with J&K. The last electoral roll revision in J&K was done on January 1, 2019, three years ago. Political parties (NC, PDP) have alleged that BJP will import voters to win the election. They are claiming that since BJP cannot win the hearts of J&K people, others will be brought in and asked to vote to increase its voting percentage. Abrogation of Article 370 gave rights to Indian Citizens to Vote in IOK. Before the abrogation of Article 370, many were not allowed to vote in J&K marginalised groups, West Pakistani refugees, Dalits. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is an unresolved agenda of Britain and a disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Both the parties acknowledged the disputed status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the UN Security Council resolutions of August 13, 1948, and to which on January 5, 1949, both the two countries are considered a party. UN resolutions is remained operative and cannot be unilaterally disregarded by either party. As agreed in the UN Security Council resolutions along peaceful and bilateral negotiations would be made be

27th October, Kashmir Black Day!

tween India and Pakistan over the future status of Jammu and Kashmir. Since 5th August 2019, the abrogation of Article 370 and 35(A) has given Kashmir conflict a different dimension. It has not only changed the autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) but also compromised the safeguard of the demographic status of IOK as a Muslim majority state in India. An alliance of Kashmiri political parties said that the inclusion of non-locals in the region's voter list was an attempt at electoral demographic change, after India's election commission allowed troops stationed in Kashmir to cast votes in local legislative polls. The region is claimed in full but ruled in part by nuclear arch-rivals India and Pakistan, who have fought two wars over control of the territory.

Kashmir's special autonomous status was granted by Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which for seven decades was the basis of India's complex relationship with the region. Article 370 allowed the region to have its own flag, freedom to make its own regulations on permanent residency, ownership of property, and fundamental rights, and to bar Indians from outside the state from settling there. With the constitutional change, Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir was split into two federally governed union territories. The announcement that outsiders will be allowed to cast votes in the next polls has raised fears not only in Kashmir but also in Hindu-dominated Jammu, there is a sense

of fear among the people, the fear of the political parties in Jammu and Kashmir is justified given the way the Modi administration has acted since 2019. Until August 2019, voting rights in Indian-administered Kashmir were restricted to its permanent residents only, guaranteed under Article 370 of the Indian constitution that gave the disputed region – The law forbid Indians from outside the region from permanently settling, buying land and holding local government jobs. In the years since, the Indian government has introduced a controversial domicile law that grants citizenship rights to every Indian living in the region for more than 15 years. New laws making every Indian citizen eligible to buy land in the region were also passed. Since 2018, Indian-administered Kashmir is without an elected government and is being ruled directly by New Delhi through a hand-picked administrator. The BJP is so insecure about support from genuine voters

of occupied Jammu and Kashmir that it needs to import temporary voters to win seats, none of these things will help the BJP For the last seven decades, Indian-administered Kashmir was ruled by Kashmir-based political parties and has had a Muslim chief minister who enjoyed political dominance over the region. However, since coming to power in 2014, Modi's government has promised its supporters a Hindu chief minister there. In May this year, Modi's government announced a new electoral map for the region which the residents said was aimed at disenfranchising and disempowering them. The new map increased the number of assembly seats in the Hindu-majority Jammu area by six from 37 to 43, while the Muslim-majority Kashmir part of the region received just one more: 47 in place of 46. That was the move skewed in favour of the Hindu-majority Jammu and accused

the government of violating the universal criteria of considering the population of the area in drawing electoral seats. The decision to bring in more voters has shaken the Kashmiris and the next move could be to ask them to leave their homes. It will ensure complete disempowerment of the Muslim community. Already through many laws, they have been turned into a political minority. Eventual goal is forced demographic change, dispossession of Kashmiris and the erasure of Kashmiri as a political identity. The Indian gov-

ernment's moves fit the classic methods of settler colonialism where rights are offered to non-native settlers through executive fiat and not based on the democratic choice of the Indigenous people. Over the last three years, every single decision on Kashmir has been taken from New Delhi without the consent of Kashmir's people. This is unprecedented in Kashmir's history, while foreign regimes have ruled Kashmir, they have not generally sought to replace the native people with a new population. Kashmiri political parties are concerned that the inclusion of 2.5 million new voters in the Muslim-majority region will permanently disenfranchise Kashmiris. If 2.5 million BJP voters come from the outside, what value will remain for the voters of Jammu and Kashmir? The BJP is oiling the wheels of settler colonialism in Kashmir. This latest hegemonic move is free for all, and it is geared towards full and final dispossession of indigenous Kashmiris.

According to an analytical report, it said that the killing of 95,686 including 7,147 in custody from January 1, 1989 to September 30, 2020 speaks volumes about the 'Goodwill gesture' of the brutal Indian forces towards the Kashmiri people. The report also mentioned the destruction of 110,367 civilian properties including houses and structures and gangrape/molestation of 11,219 of women by the troop during the period to expose the reality of Indian Army's Sadbhavana like operations. The burial of martyred youth in military-run graveyards without funeral prayers on the pretext of COVID-19 pandemic is another example of Indian Army's way of treating Kashmiri people. Indian troops continue to fight an anti-Kashmiris in Kashmir, nearly 1 million soldiers are posted in the region. Although Military personnel must vote only in their native states as is the current rule, but there are fears that if Indian soldiers sign up to vote, it could further sway politics away from Kashmiris and increase tensions. The fallout of voting rights to non-J&K residents will be that tomorrow's assembly will be in the hands of outsiders. The number may go up to 5 million or 10 million, occupied J&K's identity is facing a direct assault.

The Modi government is pursuing a plan to change the identity of the Muslim-majority state the way Israeli did in the Palestinian territories. Jews inflicted extreme sufferings on Palestinian Muslims but could not erase the Palestinian Muslims and the same is with Kashmir. No matter how much they suppress the Kashmiris, they cannot erase them or their resolve, and the BJP's evil designs would not succeed. India's motive behind this recent move was to disempower Kashmiris and to wipe off their political identity. The Modi government had already cleared a way for outsiders by transferring Kashmiri Muslim officers out of Kashmir Valley. Non-state and non-Muslims have been appointed to the highest posts in police and administration. Regrettably even the UN is not in a position to play any positive role without the support of the pro-Indian powers enjoying veto power. That is a stark reality. The international community and the UN, if they ever feel their obligation towards them as per the UN resolution that the Kashmir dispute could be resolved. Pakistan for which Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of the partition will and must continue to persist with its moral, political and diplomatic support to the freedom struggle in IOK as long as it does not succeed. Kashmiris who have always foiled India's nefarious designs, would fight the move tooth and nail, and would continue to play its role on every front to thwart the nefarious ambitions of India. Voting rights to alien is not the final resolution of Kashmir, the final resolution of Kashmiris is to be a part of Pakistan as per the aspirations of Kashmiris, and no power on Earth can stop it.

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Developing Pakistan's human capital for global export



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The significance of the Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) sector requires to create better synergies between all the stakeholders of the TVET eco-system to boost the quality and productivity of Pakistani workforce. In this regard, a meeting of SIFC Working Group (WG) on "HR Training and Accredited Certification" was held at NAVTTC HQs, Islamabad, chaired by Secretary Federal Education and Professional Training for improvement and up-gradation. Pakistan's export performance in the light of emerging global challenges and identifies key structural and policy issues that stifle Pakistan's exports, it is argued that Pakistan has lagged behind its comparators due to a combination of factors including lack of modern technology and human resource development, shortage of required skills, lack of quality certifications and conformity to international standards, poor physical infrastructure, lack of foreign direct investment, and high cost of doing business.

The regional economic integration can help Pakistan boost its exports especially skilled HR export. More than 800,000 Pakistanis left the country in search of jobs in 2022, according to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, and there is a strong uptrend established by now. In the developed world where, as per a report published by the US Labour Statistics, there is a shortage of 40 million skilled workers in the post-pandemic recovery. Moreover, the report suggests that if the trend continues, the companies may stand to lose \$8.4 trillion of revenue due to the shortage of skilled manpower. Being the fifth most populous country in the world with an employable population of 64%, we can turn this impending crisis of skills shortage into an incredible opportunity. By adopting the models employed by many countries that rely heavily on exporting skills such as the Philippines, we can become a reliable supplier of skilled manpower and gain our rightful share in the global market, which currently remains untapped. These strategies require the alignment of national curriculum to global demands by increasing cultural adaptability and employability through focusing on the specific regional requirements such as teaching spoken Arabic with GCC dialect for better adaptability in Saudi Arabia and the UAE or teaching German or French language for adaptability in Europe, etc. The World Bank in its recent report states that Pakistan's potential annual exports are \$88.1 billion, about four times the current level. The opportunity cost of these missing exports is estimated at 893,000 jobs and \$ 1.74 billion in foregone taxes alone, of which 152,000 jobs could have been created in the agriculture export sector, and 741,000 jobs could have been created in the manufacturing export sector. However, neglecting this potential by seeking short-term economic fixes, raising the cost of doing business and making procedures unnecessarily bureaucratic has retarded any progress in the economy. Despite liberalisation of its trade regime, Pakistan has not fully benefitted from opportunities emanating from the growth in international trade during the past decade. Our industrial sector that initially grew under import substitution bias with substantial governmental support has not prepared itself for global market competitiveness. The lack of entrepreneurship and gaps in business support policies have kept Pakistan from moving up on the technology ladder preventing the country to achieve higher value addition and greater export diversification. Pakistan is reforming its industrial strategy to meet domestic and external challenges and attract foreign investment, improve export performance and move towards further integration at the global and regional levels. But at the same time, challenges faced by Pakistan are how to improve its growth, attract more FDI, skill formation, build technological capability and enlarge and diversify exports. In the dynamic areas comprising electronics, machinery, and metal products, progress is nominal in terms of exports for Pakistan. Industries like automobiles have progressed rapidly but confined to the domestic market only. Engineering sector, in general is dominated by either assembly operations based on imported parts, or the production of basic and simple components. Pakistan has not been able to develop a strong capital goods and services sector. Relocation of industries from developed to developing countries in the wake of global restructuring and increasing outsourcing opportunities from developed countries offer greater opportunities for Pakistani exporters. To increase exports especially HR export, first there is a need to increase the production of goods and services in all sectors in general but in exportable sector the most. There is a need to devise policies and strategies to increase the production through capacity utilisation, capacity expansion and productivity growth. There is significant capacity in every industrial unit which cannot be utilised because of expensive raw materials, lack of finance, and shortage of expertise. A comprehensive analysis of all such export units may provide guidelines for optimum utilisation of their excess capacity. To improve global competitiveness, Pakistan needs to create competency in more skilled labor intensive components of complex products gradually advancing to more skill and technology intensive activities. Moreover, there is a need to devise policies and strategies to promote technology upgradation, improve business climate, enhance institutional quality and support small and medium enterprises. These initiatives can be instrumental in achieving greater competitiveness which is essential to galvanize exports and thus enhance the country's long term growth prospects. Human Resources exports provide an interface into how globally competitive a country is. Likewise, a robust HR export base secures a country against deteriorating current account balance. In general, exports facilitate the exploitation of economies of scale; allow resource allocation according to comparative advantage; improve foreign exchange reserves position and guarantee easy financing of imports; increase efficiency and productivity through competition; increase employment and allow for knowledge spill-overs that will encourage domestic innovation. Information Technology (IT) sector presents an opportunity for developing economies to leapfrog due to its transformative nature and lower entry barriers. IT facilitates this transition by improving efficiency and productivity across public and private sectors, potentially benefiting nearly all aspects of socio-economic life. However, IT-led leapfrogging depends on various factors such as the absorptive capabilities of individuals, businesses, and governments; effective coordination among stakeholders; availability and access to IT. The recent growth in Pakistan's IT service exports and tech start-up funding appear

as emerging signs of digitalisation amid Pakistan's large young population alongside regulatory developments aimed at increasing digital adoption and online payments. Further benefitting from Covid-19, which led to increased demand for digital services, the growth in Pakistan's IT service exports averaged 24 percent between FY20-FY22, whereas start-up funding between CY21-CY22 reached around US\$ 709 million compared to approximately US\$ 100.8 million in CY19-CY20. However, to continue this trajectory and benefit from the transformative impact of IT, the digitalisation of the economy has to be prioritized across public and private sectors with a focus on bridging the increasingly noticeable human resource gap in the sector, providing a facilitative environment for investment in local start-ups, addressing the issue of availability and affordability of IT services, and the provision of cross-cutting technology and ancillary frameworks. Pakistan adopted a private sector-oriented approach somewhat earlier than other economies in the region but has not been able to expand its exports especially skilled HR exports, compared to other economies in the region. Though the contribution of private sector enterprises is increasing significantly, there is an urgent need to assist private entrepreneurs who are dynamic, open to innovation and have managerial capabilities, by providing a favourable business environment with good governance, appropriate institutional and financial support mechanisms, an adequate legal and support framework and other physical and social infrastructure. Additionally, creating awareness among enterprises to bring in professional managers and skilled manpower to operate export oriented industries would lead to higher overall productivity. Government's role should be confined to legislation, policy development, regulation, capacity building and facilitation with an objective to increase productivity in all exports sectors. The private sector should take the lead in investment and value chain development on its own. Focus of policy makers should be towards the broader components of national competitiveness, specifically health, education and infrastructure. We should learn from the experience of China, especially how they have promoted their exports especially skilled HR exports while neutralizing import substitution. For sustainable competitiveness, Pakistan may begin by creating competency in the more skilled labour intensive components of complex products, gradually progressing to more skill and technology intensive activities. In this regard, industries and services which have lost their competitive edge should be ignored. For capacity expansion, we need to diversify the production base in favour of goods and services with comparative advantage, global demand and growth potential. Some of these industries are electronic and telecommunication equipment, automotive parts, biological pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, petrochemicals and aerospace. Further as our auto industry is beginning to look efficient other downstream and upstream industries should be established. Within textile sector clothing and value added products should be expanded. Finally, productivity growth will come automatically from investment in human capital and promoting innovation.

Small and Medium Enterprises can play a crucial role in any economy. There is a need to involve SMEs in an organised production network for exports. Currently, SMEs are playing an important role in our manufacturing activities but for exports their weak technological base and management practices and limited access to information is creating major issues in terms of quality, delivery delays, and reliability. Without integrating the export oriented SMEs in an organised production network for exports we cannot stimulate our exports. The formal industrial sector, through strategic alliances, subcontracting, outsourcing can bring the SMEs into the production network and lead to overall productivity gains. The state will have to play a proactive role to ensure easy and affordable access to information, finances and create facilitation centres in cluster areas. The SIFC must stress the need to finalize National Action Plan for skills development and training for domestic and international job market especially on NAVTTC's, TEVTAS, PVTTC, PSDF and other ongoing and upcoming training interventions, aligning with directives, federal and provincial entities must be given tasked with developing short, medium, and long-term action plans. These plans must aim to train a workforce that is exportable, fostering collaboration with the private sector to boost foreign remittance comprehensively. The SIFC must formulate and distribute specialized training programs with a specific focus on generating an exportable workforce at both the provincial and federal levels, by highlighting the potential in overseas markets, introducing new regions and job markets for the Pakistani workforce. A concentrated approach in selecting courses related to IT and overseas job markets, must be emphasised with high-value returns to maximize foreign remittances. To identify Country of Destination (CoDs) skill training & certification requirements, there must be emphasized the crucial need to enhance the export of skilled manpower, urging the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development to initiate the identification of main 10-destination countries with high-yield trades. To streamline this process, the main concerned ministries should establish a real-time databank and digital system for sharing information with relevant stakeholders in Pakistan. There must be a vibrant online portal by the Ministry of OP&HRD to showcase emerging overseas markets and high-yield trades, ensuring effective utilization by training entities to prepare a comprehensive training plan included for each country, such as the associated trade or occupation, tentative demand, certification requirements, language prerequisites, and special skill set requirements. There is also a need to exam local and international accreditation requirements and also recommend for Accreditation of public-private institutes. NAVTTC provided through the National Accreditation Council (NAC), in conducting 655 national accreditations of TVET institutions across Pakistan, and has conducted international accreditation of the first 10-Pakistani TVET institutions as well. But, it's observed that despite readiness to implement the accreditation regime the number of applications from institutes remain low. It's urged Provincial TEVTAs to actively support accreditation by encouraging TVET institutions to apply, and also plan under DB Project, recommending their inclusion for international accreditation. Moreover, it's also suggested that certification and affiliation as a cost-effective alternative to international accreditation, ensuring trainee placement, and encouraged private sector institutes to affiliate with reputable international counterparts, and to align NVQF in-line with regional and COD qualification frameworks to ensure Training programs in-line with skill and job requirements of

CoDs. The significance of the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) in ensuring standardizations, development of high-quality qualifications and its conformity with international standards is also emphasised. The Pakistani NVQF draws its foundation from the European Qualification Framework (EQF) with an effort to further refine its alignment with COD Qualification Frameworks, specific revisions are identified as imperative. These revisions encompass the need to reference the NVQF with qualification frameworks in the Middle East, Far East, and other pertinent countries. This strategic enhancement aims to ensure a comprehensive and globally harmonized approach qualifications in Pakistan to ensure Training programs in-line with skill and job requirements of CoDs, to suggest policy measures for maintenance and synchronization of central database for informed decision making. There is also a need for developing a central database for TVET sector to help make informed decisions by policy makers. The CBT trainings are already managed centrally, however, non-CBT training require similar central management. The private sector should also be incorporated in central database, and all the certificates including for private institutes should be issued by Qualification Awarding Bodies (QABs). After integration of QABs in central database, private sector should also be covered. Moreover, those private institutes should also include as well which are not affiliated and recognized with relevant government entity, so that strategy to manage them should be developed, and the overlapping functions like registration and affiliation of institutes by NAVTTC, PSDA, TEVTA and QABs should also be addressed. There is also need for revisions in National Skills Strategy for Skilling youth in IT, High-End and Conventional technologies in-line with emerging local and international demand. There is a need for revision of the National Skills Strategy, as previously the National Skills Strategy was developed in 2019 for five years, which now needs revision so that for next 5-years all stakeholders and governments should reform and support TVET sector in line with the strategy. It's also suggested to engage International donors who are working on skills development to support revision and development of National Skill Strategy with actionable plan.

In the globalised world it is no longer necessary to master entire production chain and to organize the production processes within a single firm. Effective linkages must be put in place to facilitate production and market. Pakistan can attract the Chinese manufacturing sector by developing a trained workforce for industries together with overcoming the energy shortage and improving business climate. The development projects under CPEC are expected to fulfil energy requirements as well as enhance connectivity. Pakistan's economy has huge strategic development potential, as it is located at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, China and the Middle East. CPEC would link a vast sweep of regional markets from China to Asia to the Middle East and to Europe. This will create enormous inter and intra-regional trade opportunities for Pakistan. Pakistan with a vast population, large and diverse resources, and untapped potential for trade can benefit from this regional development provided it gets its policies right on an urgent basis. Pakistan needs to train its workforce to the Chinese standards. Chinese industry if relocated to Pakistan would have a positive impact on our productivity as well as on our exports especially HR exports. In the changing global environment, another challenge for Pakistan is to build further on suitable international alliances bilateral or regional to foster technological capability in sectors operating at a lower technological level and earn more foreign exchange. Declining exports to United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Middle East, Iran and Turkey, despite having good political relations is quite worrying. We need to revive economic diplomacy in our foreign relations. The role and effectiveness of the Commercial Councilors in improving the relations with trading partners is extremely important. Pakistan has unfortunately become a more inward-oriented economy in recent years. Furthermore, average tariffs on final goods in Pakistan are 50 percent higher than the average for South Asia, and almost three times as high as the average for East Asia. In this context, a reduction in taxes can be observed from the following data: "the first decade of the 2000s, government reduced trade taxes from 23.1% in 1999-2000 to 8.9% in 2014. This had led to gains in exports by 173%. However, this reduction was not consistent and until 2019, the tariffs increased to 11.6%, declining exports to 9.1%" (PIDE). Our diplomatic missions abroad should play active role by fostering stronger ties with destination countries through bilateral agreements and memorandum of understanding (MoUs), which can facilitate smoother recruitment processes and ensure the protection of overseas professionals and workers. It is highly recommended to partner with international organisations to create platforms for skill recognition and certification. This not only enhances the credibility of Professionals and workers but also ensures that their qualifications are recognised globally. In the past many decades, we have heavily relied on exporting semi-skilled or unskilled labour force, particularly to Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar where there was a huge demand for such workers during infrastructure development. However, as these markets are becoming more mature, there is a shift in demand now for more and more skilled workforce in tourism, travel, services, information technology, finance, and industrial sectors. If we do not align ourselves with these changing dynamics, then chances are that we can easily lose our share in these markets. This transformation can be witnessed by the change in the composition of the workforce entering into these markets from all around the globe, which now mostly consist of highly skilled individuals such as IT engineers, doctors, accountants, and financial professionals. Developing Pakistan's human capital for global export is a multifaceted task that requires a concerted effort from the government, educational institutions, and the private sector. By tailoring education and training programmes to the specific needs of different regions (such as GCC, Europe, the US and Asia-Pacific), Pakistan can unlock the full potential of its workforce and establish itself as a key contributor to the global economy. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, investing in human capital development is not only an economic imperative but also a means to strengthen diplomatic and cultural ties with nations across the globe.

The SIFC must stress the need to finalize National Action Plan for skills development and training for domestic and international job market, aligning with directives, federal and provincial entities must be given tasked with developing short and long-term action plans, aim to train a workforce that is exportable, fostering collaboration with the private sector to boost foreign remittance comprehensively.

Trump's 'America First' Foreign Policy and Pakistan



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A second Donald J. Trump's presidency term would mark a return to an era of unpredictable foreign policy, characterized by chaotic decision-making and a departure from traditional diplomatic norms. His "America First" approach would continue to prioritize national interests over international cooperation, leading to a shift away from President Biden's alliance-building and internationalist approach. This change in direction would likely lead to increased tensions with China, a reevaluation of NATO and other alliances, and a more isolationist stance on the global stage. The victory and return of Donald Trump to the White House in 2025 could introduce profound shifts in global politics, significantly affecting Pakistan. Trump's foreign policy, grounded in "America First" principles, emphasizes direct gains over cooperative global frameworks. This realignment impacts U.S.-Pakistan relations, influencing Pakistan's diplomacy, economic stability, and regional security strategy. Pakistan, positioned as a critical geopolitical player between South Asia and the Middle East, faces unique challenges as it balances relations with the U.S., China, and neighboring nations. This delves deeply into the potential impacts on Pakistan's geopolitical strategy, economic stability, security apparatus, and domestic policies under a renewed Trump administration. As we explore the Trump administration's potential influence on U.S.-Pakistan relations, the discussion covers Pakistan's historical context with the U.S., regional alliances, potential strategies for adapting to shifting dynamics, and the implications for Pakistan's broader foreign policy objectives. The Trump administration's first term (2017-2021) brought significant changes to this relationship, marked

by a transactional approach. Pakistan experienced funding cuts, diplomatic pressure, and demands to address terrorism more aggressively. This period redefined U.S.-Pakistan relations, with Trump emphasizing Pakistan's perceived failures in counter-terrorism. Trump's re-election could intensify these dynamics, requiring Pakistan to reconsider its strategic objectives, especially regarding its partnerships with China and other regional players. The U.S.-China rivalry is expected to be a cornerstone of Trump's foreign policy, compelling Pakistan to navigate carefully between these two powers. Pakistan's relationship with China, notably through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), provides substantial economic and infrastructural support crucial for Pakistan's growth. However, Trump's stance against China could pressure Pakistan to limit its engagement with Beijing, especially if sanctions or restrictions target countries involved in Belt and Road Initiative projects. This pressure places Pakistan in a dilemma. While the U.S. remains a vital trade partner and source of development aid, China offers infrastructure investments and strategic support that the U.S. does not provide. A Trump administration may view Pakistan's alignment with China as contrary to American interests, leading to economic or diplomatic repercussions. To mitigate this, Pakistan might pursue a nuanced diplomatic approach, engaging with other global players like Turkey, Russia, and the European Union, to diversify its partnerships and reduce over-reliance on either the U.S. or China. Moreover, India's role as a U.S. ally complicates the equation. Trump's administration could continue fostering a strong U.S.-India relationship, potentially isolating Pakistan. This shift may necessitate a recalibration of Pakistan's security strategy, especially as India benefits from advanced U.S. defense technology and intelligence sharing. Pakistan's efforts to maintain its strategic autonomy would involve not only balancing relations with global powers but also strengthening ties with regional players to counterbalance India's influence in South Asia. Trump's transactional approach to foreign policy could impact Pakistan's security apparatus, particularly regarding counterterrorism cooperation. Trump previously criticized Pakistan for its perceived shortcomings in addressing terrorism, leading to funding cuts and the suspension of military aid. His administration may impose stricter demands for cooperation, potentially including conditions that infringe upon Pakistan's sovereignty. In response, Pakistan would need to maintain a delicate balance, addressing U.S. counterterrorism requirements without compromising its domestic security priorities. The withdrawal of U.S. support could compel Pakistan to rely further on China for defense technology, training, and funding, which may provoke further U.S. distrust. An increased reliance on Chinese military hardware could deepen Pakistan's military ties with China, potentially transforming the region's security dynamics and increasing Pakistan's strategic distance from the U.S.

Trump's Middle Eastern policy, which includes strong support for Israel and confrontation with Iran, could create significant chal-

lenges for Pakistan. Trump's previous administration pushed for normalization between Israel and certain Arab states, an initiative that could re-emerge if he returns to office. The reason of Ms. Harris loses is that she has lost the support of Arab Americans and young voters who believe the Biden administration failed to use its leverage to limit Israel's bombing campaign in Gaza following last year's Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas. Most estimates put the loss of life from the Israeli military action at more than 90,000, including Hamas terrorists. There are few more complex issues on the diplomatic agenda than how to balance Israel's self-defense with the creation of a new dynamic in the Middle East and alleviate the humanitarian crises worsened by multiple wars. Mr. Trump has largely steered clear of both the political and moral complexities. His strongest argument has centered on the optics of the bombing campaign. In April he said Israel was "absolutely losing the PR war," and added, "Let's get back to peace and stop killing people. And that's a very simple statement. But he has offered no cease-fire plan and no ideas for winning the release of hostages held by Hamas. Trump's approach to the Middle East has been defined by strong support for Israel and Saudi Arabia, and a confrontational stance toward Iran. Trump calls Israel a "cherished ally." As president, Trump backed away from previous bipartisan consensus by saying he wasn't interested in a separate Palestinian state. Pakistan's historic stance on the Palestine issue aligns it with many Muslim-majority countries, but U.S. pressure could challenge this position, potentially straining relations with Washington if Pakistan resists normalization. Simultaneously, Trump's confrontational approach toward Iran, especially through sanctions and diplomatic isolation, could have spillover effects on Pakistan. As a neighboring country with strong economic and cultural ties to Iran, Pakistan would face challenges if forced to choose between aligning with U.S.-Saudi interests or preserving its relations with Tehran. Escalated U.S.-Iran tensions could also destabilize Pakistan's western border, leading to increased security risks and economic disruptions. Pakistan's alliance with Saudi Arabia further complicates this situation. Saudi influence over Pakistan, primarily through economic aid, remittances, and investment, provides significant leverage in Pakistan's regional alignment. However, over-dependence on Saudi support could limit Pakistan's policy options, particularly if Saudi and U.S. interests align against Iran. Navigating this complex web of alliances requires Pakistan to adopt a balanced stance that maintains its regional partnerships without alienating key allies, a difficult task given the polarized landscape in the Middle East. Trump's hardline immigration policies, particularly those affecting Muslim-majority countries, could have substantial domestic repercussions for Pakistan. Pakistani citizens, especially students, workers, and professionals, may face restrictions when seeking opportunities in the U.S. Reduced immigration pathways could limit educational and career prospects for Pakistani nationals, affecting families that rely on remittances from expatriates in the U.S. and Gulf states. Immigration restrictions could also lead to public discontent and increased anti-U.S. sentiment within Pakistan. Trump's policies, perceived as discriminatory, may foster nationalistic rhetoric among political factions, making it difficult for the Pakistani government to maintain cooperative relations with the U.S. The strain on cultural and educational exchanges could limit Pakistan's human capital development, as fewer citizens gain exposure to Western education and professional training. Consequently, Pakistan may shift its focus to alternative destinations like Europe, the Gulf, or East Asia, yet these options may lack the same economic opportunities and growth prospects available in the U.S. Donald Trump's stance on Ukraine has been inconsistent. Initially, he portrayed himself as Ukraine's defender, providing weaponry like Javelin anti-tank weapons, which President Barack Obama had refused to supply. However, during his 2016 campaign, Trump complained that the United States should not prioritize Ukraine over European neighbors like Germany. As president, Trump withheld security assistance to Ukraine and asked President Volodymyr Zelensky to implicate Joe Biden in Ukraine-related scandals. After Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022, Trump initially praised Putin's move as genius and savvy but later backtracked due to widespread condemnation. Trump now claims that the war could have been

prevented with the right deal, implying that Ukraine should have ceded territory to Russia. He claims he could end the war "in 24 hours" but lacks a clear plan. Trump has also overstated the depletion of American arms stockpiles and contradicted himself by portraying himself as Ukraine's defender while threatening to cut off military aid. Donald Trump's strategy for China is to impose tariffs, which he believes will address the country's growing economic, military, and technological power. China's leader has pledged to make China the world's number one power by 2049, and the country is already the fastest-growing nuclear power. However, Trump's approach has been criticized for being too simplistic and not addressing the broader security challenges posed by China. Additionally, Trump's foreign policy team has been credited with focusing on superpower conflict and restricting China's access to key technologies, but Trump himself has often undermined these efforts. Furthermore, Trump has pledged to expand domestic fossil fuel production, withdraw from global climate efforts, and remove regulations on fossil fuel production, which has raised concerns about the environmental impact of his policies. As president, Donald Trump boosted defense spending and established the Space Force to counter space competition. He shifted the national security and defense strategy to focus on great-power competition with China and Russia, which caused tension among European allies due to his threat to abandon the NATO alliance. Trump has long been critical of NATO, calling it dead in 2020 and threatening to withdraw from the alliance. He opposes NATO's collective defense clause, which requires member countries to defend one another in case of an attack, and has accused NATO countries of taking advantage of the US by not meeting the required 2% GDP spending on defense.

Donald Trump's approach to trade is centered on the belief that the global trading system is unfair to U.S. interests, leading to significant trade deficits, declining U.S. manufacturing, and the offshoring of American jobs. To address this, Trump has pledged to impose tariffs on most imports, matching higher tariffs imposed by other countries on U.S. products, and additional tariffs on countries seeking an alternative to the U.S. dollar. He has renegotiated NAFTA, which he considered "one of the worst trade deals ever made," and replaced it with the 2018 United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. However, he now proposes a 100 percent tariff on cars imported from Mexico and plans to renegotiate the 2018 trade deal to address concerns about Chinese vehicles. If reelected, Trump has vowed to end the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and has already withdrawn the United States from its predecessor, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). He has also renegotiated a trade deal with South Korea, withdrawn from trade talks with the European Union, and imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. Trump has imposed tariffs on \$360 billion worth of Chinese goods and plans to raise these tariffs and prohibit U.S. investment in China and Chinese purchases of U.S. assets. He also plans to "phase out" imports of Chinese-made electronics, steel, and pharmaceuticals and seek to terminate privileges China gained when it joined the World Trade Organization in 2000. After Trump's victory, some people in Pakistan believe it could have a positive impact on Imran Khan and the relations between the US and Pakistan. However, this assumption may not be entirely accurate, as it is based on the realities of US foreign policy. On Trump's assumes office again, his foreign policy would likely return to an "America First" approach, prioritizing American interests and immediate economic and security gains. This could mean a significant reduction in foreign aid to Pakistan, with funds directed solely toward specific security initiatives rather than long-term development projects. Trump's first term saw a significant decline in US-China ties, and a second term could mean an intensified effort to contain Chinese influence globally. This stance could place additional strain on Pakistan, whose strategic relationship with Beijing could face US scrutiny. Trump's presidency would likely place Pakistan in a challenging position, where Islamabad must balance its longstanding relationship with the US against the pressures arising from its ties with China. As US support becomes more conditional and transactional, Pakistan may need to lean more heavily on China for economic and strategic support if American aid and investment diminish. Trump has shown a clear preference for India as a strategic counterweight to China, which may deepen if he returns to office. The US may prioritize its broader Indo-Pacific strategy over addressing South Asian security dynamics, risking a diplomatic rift if Pakistan perceives a pro-India bias that brushes aside its security interests. Trump has previously expressed concerns regarding nuclear security in South Asia, and his administration could impose more stringent conditions on US aid and support for Pakistan. Increased scrutiny on Pakistan's nuclear assets may be part of his foreign policy, with new demands for transparency and cooperation. Should US-Pakistan relations become selectively engaged, Islamabad may be pushed to prioritize Washington's security interests over its broader. For Pakistan, the stakes under a Trump administration would be high, as maintaining strong US diplomatic and economic ties is vital for balanced foreign relation, Jaaa

On Trump's assumes office again, his foreign policy would likely return to an "America First" approach, prioritizing American interests and immediate economic and security gains. This could mean a significant reduction in foreign aid to Pakistan, with funds directed solely toward specific security initiatives rather than long-term development projects.



Environmental Stewardship for a Sustainable Tomorrow!

Lahore ranked second on the list of most polluted cities in the world on Monday, with an air quality index (AQI) of 382 as thick smog persists in the Punjab capital despite efforts to bring down pollution levels. The AQI, which measures a range of pollutants, exceeded 1,000 to reach an unprecedented 1,194 in the country's second largest city according to data from IQAir, the Swiss air quality monitor. The United Nations passed a significant resolution to declare access to a healthy environment – including clean and breathable air – a human right. Children are predominantly susceptible to these detrimental consequences. A study reporting the long-term effects of the Great London Smog of 1952 concluded that exposure to smog during the first year of life increased the risk of childhood asthma by 19-87%.

This was prompted by the growing concern of rapidly increasing air pollution because of the increasing use of vehicles, industrial development, burning of fuels, and lack of implementation of strict laws and regulations particularly in developing countries. The growing air pollution across the world is a grave concern for public health as about seven million people die prematurely each year. Around 7 million people per year die from air pollution worldwide, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), 4.2 million of which are due to exposure to ambient air pollution. In addition, 9 out of 10 people breathe air that exceeds WHO guideline limits for pollutants, with low- and middle-income countries suffering the most, including Pakistan. Lahore, the second-largest and most polluted city in Pakistan, has been plagued by a heavy blanket of smog recently. On average, the persistent smog reduces the average lifespan of Lahore's citizens by 2.7 years. The ever-growing urbanization and industrialization have contributed to the worsening air quality of the city. Smog, being hazardous to health, is leading to a rapid sprout in multiple health-related problems, as well as raising concerns about the long-term deleterious effects on public health. The current situation is expected to worsen due to the lack of an active action plan from the government's side and a failure of concerned authorities to take note of the urgency of the situation. Hence, this pressing issue alerts the relevant authorities regarding the detrimental consequences smog can have on public health and urges them to take immediate action to avoid further damage. Over the past few years, Lahore has gone from being the 'city of gardens' to one of the most polluted cities in the world. Each winter it grapples with the menace of smog – a mixture of 'fog' and 'smoke' usually emanating from vehicular and factory emissions, and burning of fossil fuels, and is highly unhealthy for all living beings. Yet, despite its expected occurrence, the government has failed to take timely measures to control and mitigate smog and its hazardous impact on the health of citizens. Furthermore, the fact that only around 1% of the country's industrial establishments report their emissions raises distressing concerns over the neglected air quality of the city and its effect on public health. Given the damage that smog can incur, it is imperative that prudent measures be undertaken to improve air quality. Most environmental regulatory organizations fall behind due to the lack of specialized equipment, standardized protocols, trained personnel, and funds. According to a 2021 report issued by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), vehicular emissions contribute the most at 43 percent, followed by industrial emissions at 25 percent, agricultural emissions, particularly from burning of crops during harvest season in winter at 20 percent, and burning of fossil fuels, particularly coal to generate power at 12 percent. The higher percentage of vehicular emissions is three-fold. First, in light of a weak and limited public transport system, privately owned cars and motorcycles constitute the majority of the traffic on the road, with motorcycles comprising about 74 percent of the total number of registered vehicles as of 2018. Second, motorcycles and autorickshaws, contributing a significant share of on-road traffic in Pakistan, have incredibly inefficient engines, thus producing a higher degree of emissions. Third, the fuel Pakistan uses falls under the Euro 2 category of the European Union standards, a with fog during winter months, resulting in hazardous smog. According to World Health Organisation (WHO)'s guidelines, the cut-off for long-term fine particulate matter pollution

(PM2.5) is 25 µg/m³. However, Pakistan's average PM2.5 is significantly higher than the acceptable figure. This is a failure of not only EPA but also the policymakers as well, who badly fail in the implementation. Instead of long-term sustainable measures, the government often resorts to 'panic responses' near or during winter months to counter the prevailing smog; an effort often seen as too little too late. Furthermore, despite the existence of laws and regulations for pollution control and waste management, the government has often failed to effectively implement these policies.

Several countries have successfully addressed smog and air pollution issues, offering valuable lessons for others: London implemented congestion charges, promoted electric vehicles, and increased green spaces; Paris introduced emission-reducing measures like bike-sharing systems and electric buses; Tokyo enforced strict emissions controls, promoted clean energy, and implemented efficient public transportation; New York City and Beijing adopted comprehensive pollution reduction plans, increased energy efficiency, and expanded green spaces. Smog continues to be an issue of grave public health concern for the citizens of Lahore. Despite existing legal frameworks, the inability of the government to effectively implement laws and policies to regulate smoke emissions from a variety of sources has exacerbated air pollution, especially in big cities in the previous years. Each year near winter, the government 'cracks down' against brick kilns, industries, and vehicles emitting excessive smoke by imposing hefty fines. However, this is often seen as an ineffective measure that fails to address the root cause of the issue. Oftentimes, many industry owners go undetected or continue emitting hazardous smoke after paying the fines. Furthermore, farmers lament the crop burning ban, a relatively cheaper method to clear the field as opposed to adopting expensive but more environment-friendly technologies. In a 2019 survey, almost 40% of the farmers opposed the ban simply because they were unable to afford alternative methods, arguing that they would welcome the ban if the government provided subsidies and support in acquiring and incorporating other environment-friendly technologies in agriculture practices. In 2017, the Environment Protection Department of the Punjab Government issued policies to control smog. First, the adoption of low Sulphur fuel which has proven to be more environmentally friendly was proposed. However, the government admitted that while this policy was first suggested in 2008, its implementation is annually postponed. On the part of the government, this means having to devise new contracts with international suppliers, such as Kuwaiti Petroleum, for supply for low sulphur fuel. Furthermore, the local oil refineries have shown reluctance in agreeing to switch from low to high sulphur fuel as this would require heavy investments to upgrade their existing facilities; a step seen as unfavorable due to economies of scale. This also requires the government to introduce better incentives to push oil refineries to make the shift. Second, efforts to ensure catalytic converters are operational in all vehicles were also proposed. However, this required the provincial government to liaise with the federal government to import required parts; a task subjected to administrative lags and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Third, revamping government efforts to effectively manage solid waste management, ban crop burning whilst introducing alternative, environment-friendly technologies, and fine industries and brick

kilns emanating excessive pollution. Among the broader. Among the broader aims were effective management of urban development to ensure industries are built away from residential areas and build government capacity to monitor air pollution. The government needs a National Action Plan with effective reforms to address the administrative and bureaucratic challenges that may impede effective implementation. Furthermore, the government needs to focus on establishing new cities despite metropolitan cities and new housing societies in metropolitan cities. There is also a need of long-term goals of building an effective and sustainable public transport system for all citizens to ease pressure off of the roads occupied by private vehicles. Similarly, the government needs to ensure that industries are not built alongside residential areas, and existing industries are either moved elsewhere in the long term or monitored to ensure that they effectively manage their air emissions. To achieve this, the government could also liaise with the industries to ensure they have access to the latest and environment-friendly technologies. In addition, the government also needs to revamp the agriculture sector of Pakistan which still relies on primitive farming methods, and provide the support required to introduce more environment-friendly technologies in the agricultural operations. In essence, the provincial government alone cannot be expected to achieve these long-term goals, and therefore, the federal government must also step in to play its part in controlling smog to ensure a better and healthier environment for its citizens. The relevant bodies need to actively handle the smog weather before its arrival and there is a need to create awareness in the general public because usually, people misunderstand smog as fog. Lesson learned and solutions provided by WHO which are adopted by various countries in order to combat air pollution include:

Investment in energy-efficient power generation. Improving domestic, industry, and municipal waste management and reducing agricultural waste incineration, forest fires, and certain agro-forestry activities are important. Making greener and more compact cities with energy-efficient buildings, and providing universal access to clean, affordable fuels and technologies for cooking, heating, and lighting are also very effective. By building safe and affordable public transport systems and cycle-friendly networks the success of resolving the issue is high. Additionally, there are also certain artificial yet technical measures to contest smog which are: Gas to liquid technology in fuel which is more environment friendly; Usage of hydrogen fuels additive which can reduce the emission of pollutants. By Stringent emissions regulations; Promoting clean energy and electric vehicles; Efficient public transportation systems; Green spaces and urban planning; Congestion management; Public awareness campaigns; and Collaboration between government, industries, and citizens. These countries demonstrate that a multi-faceted approach, combined with political will and public engagement, can effectively reduce smog and improve air quality. In the context of Lahore, similar strategies can be employed, such as: Implementing emission-reducing measures for industries and vehicles; Promoting clean energy sources like solar and wind power; Expanding green spaces and parks; Improving public transportation systems; Encouraging electric or hybrid vehicles; Conducting public awareness campaigns; and Collaborating with stakeholders to address the root causes of smog. By learning from these success stories and adapting strategies to Lahore and Pakistan specific needs, it is possible to mitigate smog and improve air quality in the city. In conclusion, as we stand at the precipice of a precarious future, it becomes imperative that we take collective action to combat the environmental issues that threaten the very fabric of our existence. Let us join hands in a resolute endeavor to save the planet, to save the future, and to ensure a brighter tomorrow for generations yet to come. By embracing environmental stewardship and addressing the challenges that lie ahead, we can create a sustainable tomorrow, where our children and grandchildren can thrive in harmony with nature. Let us rise to the occasion, with hope in our hearts and determination in our souls, to fight for the future and preserve the beauty and wonder of our planet for all eternity.



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By embracing environmental stewardship and addressing the challenges that lie ahead, we can create a sustainable tomorrow, where our children and grandchildren can thrive in harmony with nature.



National Reading Conference: Brain idea of Secretary Education

In a bid to prioritize education as the cornerstone of progress, Secretary of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT), Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary, launched the National Reading Conference, Book Fair & Pakistan Learning Festival in Islamabad. The three-day festival, themed 'Today's Readers, Tomorrow's Learners,' was a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training and the National Book Foundation. Addressing the opening ceremony, Minister Madad Ali Sindi emphasized that the key to Pakistan's progress lies in education. He underscored the importance of promoting a reading culture among the youth and expressed optimism that literary festivals would contribute to fostering a well-read and educated generation pivotal for leading Pakistan to prosperity. The focus of this year's event was on children, schools, and families, where leading education providers delivered short 'Lightning Talks' addressing innovative solutions to specific areas of foundational learning.



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Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry outlined his commitment to improving the quality of education and reducing the number of out-of-school children. The program includes discussions on key advancements in literacy and foundational learning. Secretary Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry said that the focus of this year's event was on children, schools, and families. These three days were packed with programs for kids curated carefully to promote foundational learning and reading habits among kids with the National Reading Conference. In order to make the event more interesting and impact-full various activities for the children have been organized on different days with activities include the Animated story of the books, Storytelling: Suno Kahani Meri Zubani, Dadi Gulabi Singing & Songwriting, Interactive performances, Creating Desi Characters, and the Art of bookmaking, so that children along with their families could amuse themselves with Poems, Screen Plays, Dance and Musical performances Dramas, etc. This comprehensive three-day program provided a learning platform for the youth of the society. Management is all about arranging and telling, whereas, leadership is about nurturing and enhancing. Pakistan is not a poor country, but poorly managed. Nature has blessed Pakistan with abundant resources, but unfortunately, wrong people on wrong job with bad policies and poorly managed plans let it down to the category of a Third World country. Understanding the dynamics of an unpredictable world is important especially as unilateral actions by big powers and populist leaders, which mark their policies, have implications for Pakistan. In evolving its policy strategy Pakistan has to match its goals to its human and economic resources and capital. No strategy is effective unless ends and means are aligned. So Pakistan needs leaders and leadership requires wisdom, understanding, out-of-box solutions, forbearance and accountability. Pakistan has to pursue its national goals in an unsettled global and regional environment marked by several key features. Pakistan has a constitutional commitment to deliver 'free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 5 to 16'. The government intends to go beyond it as Pakistan is committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 4 (SDG4) to provide 'lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Leadership is one of the most fundamental components of a successful organisation. An organisation with strong leadership is not only able to achieve its goals but also ensures that their success will be sustainable for a long period of time. The concept of leadership is not straightforward and people are often confused regarding what it means to be a leader. A boss typically is someone who uses their authority or power to control people to act in a particular way, whereas a leader seeks to influence others through their actions. A successful, three-day National Reading Conference, Book Fair, Learning Festival was a vision and brain idea of a visionary leader the Secretary Education Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary, who practically proved his leadership quality and experience.

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this eagerly awaited conference is delving into vital topics of Reading Conference Book Fair, Learning Festival for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and foundational learning. Since his appointment, Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary had to face major challenges for the educational situation of Pakistan. The right of the citizens of Pakistan is protected under Article 25-A of the constitution. After the 18th Constitutional Amendment the MoFE&PT is directly responsible for provision of education services only to the extent of Islamabad Capital Territory. The Secretary has a comprehensive action plan to transform Education and foundational learning. He worked on war footing and his efforts were highly appreciated globally and by the Government of Pakistan at the highest level. Through the vision of such a visionary leader Mr. Chaudhary, Pakistan could come closer to vision of an educated, confident Pakistani youth, supported from the moment they are born, and equipped with the foundational learning to achieve their dreams. The Secretary shared the Human Capital Review Report and shed light on how addressing learning poverty is crucial for socio-economic progress. Mr. Waseem also highlighted that a fund of Rs 25 billion had been established specifically for Out of School Children (OOSC) and added that a significant portion should be allocated for Early Childhood Education (ECE). He provided reassurance on behalf of the Prime Minister, affirming the government's unwavering commitment to ensuring that out-of-school children were enrolled in schools. He further added that through the flagship initiatives of MOFEPT which include Out-of-School Children enrolment drive, foundational literacy through ASPIRE, establishment of classrooms in primary schools & kindergarten important steps are being taken for transforming early childhood education. Furthermore, he focused combining both formal and informal education for the nation's progress. However, the Ministry under the leadership of Mr. Waseem is playing its role of coordination amongst the federating units. The Inter Provincial Education Ministers' Conference has been very actively playing its role in this regard. Overall, Mr. Waseem focused on key issues being faced in education, and out of box solutions by his visionary leadership by emphasizing innovation and enhanced practices, fostering idea exchange, and facilitating collaborative efforts to advance education in Pakistan. The MoFE&PT under the leadership of its Secretary Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary aligned all its programs to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The Government of Pakistan has formulated the first ever National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy 2015, which aims to cater to the needs of our industrial sector by adding value to human capital through imparting requisite training and skills. To ensure minimum National Standards in education, National Curriculum Council (NCC) has been formed with membership from all provinces. The initiatives of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training surely will improve the state of Education in the Country and will ensure holistic development and economic growth. No doubt, The Ministry is aggressively working to end the education apartheid which has plagued our country for many years. This can only be achieved if we raise the quality of education in the public sector institutions as well as those private in the public sector institutions as well as those private institutions which cater to the disadvantaged section of our society. Development of the Single National Curriculum is a major pillar of this strategy. Other initiatives include introduction of Ed-Tech and latest interventions in schools located in ICT, which would be a replicable model for the Provinces and Area Governments. It is indeed the primary responsibility of any civilized nation to provide its children with a balanced and well-rounded education, develop them to their full potential, and nurture them into good citizens.

Within a fortnight Tele-school and other interventions were launched in order to mitigate the learning losses suffered due to prolonged school closures. Now, it is high time that we re-shape our education service delivery and structure all initiatives that allow our learners to compete and thrive in the face of new realities. Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MoFE&PT) along with all its associated entities, provincial education and training departments, is striving to develop and implement effective educational plans and strategies for rectifying learning losses, sustainable student retention mechanisms to ensure no child is left behind. Few of the recent flagship initiatives include: Re-envisioning the 'Pakistan Education Policy 2021'; Public-Private Partnership; Developing 'Single National Curriculum' so that all children have fair and equal opportunity to receive high quality education; Introducing reforms in educational assessments by creating Relative Grading System at Federal Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education along with modernising the examination processing systems through digital technologies. Reorganisation of key departments of 'Higher Education Commission' to support further integrated and effective planning, promoting research and online education; Launching 'Hunarmand Pakistan' under the 'Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan National Youth Development Programme'; fostering skills' education in the country to reduce skill gap and unemployment; and Setting up of Pakistan Institute of Education, as a premier institution which would function as a think tank for future policy making and evidence based decision making. No doubt, the success of all the above mentioned Programs is a proof of the vision, brain idea and a visionary leadership of the Secretary Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary. Pakistan is a great country with tremendous resources regarding minerals, water resources, land, good industries, strong manpower, flourishing weather and all those blessings which any developed country can have, but unfortunately, wrong people on wrong job with bad policies and poorly managed plans let it down to the category of a Third World country. So, the country itself is not poor, it's all about the management that we are still facing off these challenges.

Pakistan needs more 200,000 schools and 25 million teachers till 2025 to cater over 25 million currently out-of-school children (OOSC). The Millions of children in flood-hit Pakistan are in dire need of help, school education is at risk for millions of students. All Pakistan Private Schools' Federation (APPSF), the only largest representative Federation for All Pakistan private schools included Punjab, Sindh, KPK, Baluchistan, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir with more than: 300 registered Associations; 207,000 private schools; 15,00,000 teachers and 26.9 million students presented Education Recommendations for Budget 2023-24. APPSF recommended to Federal & Provincial governments to allocate and spend minimum 5% of GDP on education and research for schools and higher education sector in the new budget keeping in view the effects of COVID-19, pandemic, recent devastated flood and high inflation rate. APPSF further recommended Government should announce tax amnesty and exemption for 10-year for investing in education sector, so that 200,000 new schools, colleges, universities, technical and vocational institutes can be established. No child must be deprived of education due to poverty or any other reason. Under the leadership of Secretary Education Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary, and through Public-Private Partnership the MoFE&PT aligned all its programs to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4). No strategy is effective unless ends and means are aligned. So Pakistan needs a team of leaders like Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary who can grow, achieve and boast the rate of education, economy and other national goals, with his expertise, experience, invaluable insights, inspiring ideas, and best practices, enriching the Ministry. Because before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself, but when you become a leader, success is all about growing others. Keeping in view all the above efforts, it could be said with full conviction that Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary is a person in Pakistan who practically proved his leadership quality and experience. Pakistan need only visionary and good leaders like Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary. No strategy is effective unless ends and means are aligned. Leaders and leadership requires wisdom, understanding out-of-box solutions, forbearance and accountability. No doubt, visionary leaders like Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary can change the world.



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G20 Summit: Biden's vision of IMEC to counter BRI, and Pakistan's Future!

The U.S., the EU, India, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and others launched Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the initiative to link railways, ports, electricity and data networks and hydrogen pipelines on the sidelines of the Group of 20 (G-20) summit in New Delhi, and announced a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) committing to work together to develop a new India-Middle East-Europe



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Economic Corridor (IMEC), a vast multinational rail and ports deal linking the Middle East and South Asia, boosting trade ties with potentially wide-ranging geopolitical implications. The corridor would help boost trade, deliver energy resources and improve digital connectivity. The network reflected Biden's vision for far-reaching investments that come from effective American leadership and a willingness to embrace other nations as partners. The enhanced infrastructure would boost economic growth, help bring countries in the Middle East together and establish that region as a hub for economic activity instead of as a source of challenge, conflict or crisis as it has been in recent history. The leaders did not lay out who would be paying for the project. A working group will lay out fuller plans over the next 60 days, including a timeline for building the infrastructure. The G-20, comprising 19 countries and the European Union, and now African Union, that was founded in 1999, is finally in Delhi, with all eyes on the New Delhi declaration issued at the end of the summit. Here are four key takeaways from the two-day summit: The G20 leading economies began the weekend's proceedings by welcoming the African Union (AU), the newest member of a bloc that already represented 85 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP). The AU at full strength has 55 members, but six military-ruled nations are currently suspended. It has a collective GDP of \$3 trillion with some 1.4 billion people; G20 leaders have been deeply riven over the Ukraine war since Moscow's War. Facing the prospect of a major diplomatic embarrassment, host India pressed members to agree on a common statement that watered down its earlier condemnation of the war. The G20 denounced the use of force for territorial gain, but refrained from direct criticism of Russia by name. Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Oleg Nikolenko criticised the statement, saying the G20 had nothing to be proud of; Leaders failed to agree on a phase-out of fossil fuels despite a United Nations report a day earlier deeming the drawdown indispensable to achieving net-zero emissions. G20 nations account for about 80 percent of global emissions and an inability to agree on the phase-out is a cloud over a key round of climate discussions to begin in November in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates; A broad alliance – including the United States and Saudi Arabia – unveiled ambitious plans to create a modern-day Spice Route linking Europe, the Middle East and India. The plans are also being touted as a means of helping to normalise relations between Israel and Gulf Arab states. A new debate has surfaced since the announcement, that the new corridor connecting Asia-Middle-East-Europe, aimed to target the well-established China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)—a multibillion-dollar project— part of the larger Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Enhancing connectivity with all regions has been a key priority, as connectivity is a means to not only increase mutual trade between different countries but also will cut trade time between India and Europe by 40 percent. The pact comes at a critical time as U.S. President Joe Biden seeks to counter China's Belt and Road push on global infrastructure by pitching Washington as an alternative partner and investor for developing countries at the G-20 grouping. Although heavily trade-focused, the scheme could have wide-ranging implications – including developing contacts between long-time foes Israel and Saudi Arabia. Signatories hope it can help integrate India's vast market of 1.4 billion people with countries to the west, offer a counter balance to Chinese infrastructure spending, boost Middle Eastern economies and help normalize relations between Israel and Gulf Arab states. Biden said it would bridge ports across two continents and lead to a more stable, more prosperous and integrated Middle East. It would unlock endless opportunities for clean energy, clean electricity, and laying cable to connect communities. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the so-called India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, or IMEC, was much more than just a railway or a cable. Whereas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Today, as we embark upon such a big connectivity initiative, we are sowing the seeds for future generations to dream bigger." IMEC is envisioned to consist of two separate corridors, with an east corridor connecting India to the Arabian Gulf and a northern corridor connecting the Arabian Gulf with Europe, according to the MoU. The deal will benefit low and middle-income countries in the region and enable a critical role for the Middle East in global commerce. Along the railway route, participants intend to lay cable for power and data lines, as well as a pipeline for hydrogen derived from renewable energy for use in power generation. One proposed project would link railway and port facilities across the Middle East – including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel – potentially speeding trade between India and Europe by up to 40%. A shipping container that today travels from Mumbai through the Suez Canal to Europe could in the future go by rail from Dubai to Haifa in Israel and on to Europe, saving both money and time. At present, the Suez Canal is a major bottleneck to world trade, handling roughly 10% of global maritime trade, but is often beset by disruptions. At the same time, the plan neatly aligns with several of Washington's goals in the Middle East, and officials say the United States is financing and the continued support in member countries through political headwinds like elections and change of governments. Much of this connectivity drive is aimed at containing China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the big idea first put on the table by Xi in 2013. Countries in Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and several African nations had signed on to the proposal that was funded mainly by China's government-owned banks. But many of the countries, including Sri Lanka, have got into a debt trap over their inability to pay back. The same has happened to some African countries. Moreover, the purpose of the infrastructure, apart from offering an alternative to BRI projects, still not clear either is expensive to ship oil and gas over land, so energy probably isn't the main game; or is it about Indian exports into the Middle East then? If IMEC takes off, it will give a massive fillip to both continents. But this is at the moment just on paper and getting it started a functioning will take a decade and more — provided all countries remain on board several years down the line. While everyone agrees that the signing of IMEC's MoU has tremendous potential, how it will finally turn out depends on many factors. For now, one can just wait and watch until more is known. The move came amid US efforts for a broader diplomatic deal in the Middle East that would have Saudi Arabia recognise Israel. It seems this is a clear plan to rival China's massive Belt and Road infrastructure initiative that was announced back in 2013, which is designed to connect Asia, Africa and Europe. So, it seems that this is really a counterweight plan. The plan could significantly respond to China's much-vaunted Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a step seen as a challenge to China's economic ambitions in the region. The BRI has spread Chinese influence, investments and commerce across Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. If finalized, it would be a game changer that strengthens connectivity between India and the Middle East and would aim to counter BRI. Indeed, Narendra Modi's sole aim is to make India a better Country, by this Strategy in near future, India would become the most powerful nation in the World, which will surprise even the USA, the United Kingdom, Russia and Japan. He uses all the developed countries of the world for his benefit. First he destroyed US ties with Pakistan and Afghanistan, and created an alliance with Vietnam, which damaged China's dream of Superpower, over a long-time dispute over oil extraction overseas between Vietnam and China which has benefited India. With India's support, Vietnam began producing Oil in China's Southern Seas. Vietnam now supplies major part of its Oil to India, the United States also has supported for this. He severely damaged Pakistan without going into a formal war. He brought the Port of Iran under his control, and also set up an Indian Military base on the border with Afghanistan which is very close to the border of Pakistan. In order to increase Indian trade, he has also built a route through Iran to Afghanistan by passing Pakistan. Modi abrogated and repealed Sections 370 and 35A, and now having eye on Azad Kashmir of Pakistan. Saudi Arabia and UAE are getting more closer to India by doing heavy Investment in India, both countries has brotherly relationship with Pakistan and considered as an trusted traditional ally. Now it depends on the suggested scale of IMEC's investment which is an indication of how seriously the Saudis and UAE take India and India's economic potential. In Asia, Modi is rooting out the space of China and the United States in a very Scientific manner, recently had canceled the SAARC Summit which has shown his power who has succeeded in maintaining India's superiority over Asia. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was launched in 2008 connecting China and Pakistan through railways, telecom, and technology infrastructure along with Special Economic Zones (SEZs), from Kashgar to Gwadar port city, to boost economic activity. Both countries are aggressively taking the CPEC to new heights as CPEC is one of the most innovative and strategically important projects in recent decades. President of China Xi Jinping termed the CPEC as friendship between China and Pakistan is based on trust and mutual support, and we have been devoted friends through both good and hard times. To build a China-Pakistan community of shared destiny is a strategic decision made by the two governments and peoples to create an even brighter future for China and Pakistan. For Pakistan, now it's a high time that we get our house in order and set our priorities straight by setting agendas and reforms. It's time for change and a renewed commitment to the values. Perhaps reassessing and questioning ourselves might bring about the change our Country's needs.

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European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the so-called India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, or IMEC, was much more than just a railway or a cable. Whereas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Today, as we embark upon such a big connectivity initiative, we are sowing the seeds for future generations to dream bigger." IMEC is envisioned to consist of two separate corridors, with an east corridor connecting India to the Arabian Gulf and a northern corridor connecting the Arabian Gulf with Europe, according to the MoU. The deal will benefit low and middle-income countries in the region and enable a critical role for the Middle East in global commerce. Along the railway route, participants intend to lay cable for power and data lines, as well as a pipeline for hydrogen derived from renewable energy for use in power generation. 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Biden seeks to counter China's Belt and Road push on global infrastructure IMEC by pitching Washington as an alternative partner and investor for developing countries at the G20 grouping. The State of Israel will be a central hub in this economic initiative by making this collaboration project the largest in the history. For Pakistan, it's high time that we get our house in order and set our priorities straight by setting agendas and reforms.

keen to see the projects take flight. Biden's administration is actively prodding Riyadh, a major oil producer and security partner, to normalize ties with Israel after decades of conflict and closed borders. Saudi Arabia has never officially recognized Israel. According to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the United States had approached Israel several months ago for this project, which will reshape the face of the Middle East. The State of Israel will be a central hub in this economic initiative by making this collaboration project the largest in the history. U.S. involvement could also help mend deeply damaged ties between Riyadh and Washington, which frayed after the U.S.-Iran nuclear deal and the 2018 murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi. It would also strengthen telecommunications and data transfers through a new undersea cable connecting the region. The economic corridor would develop infrastructure to enable the production and transport of green hydrogen. The pact offers opportunities for manufacturing, innovation and people. Moreover, all the projects could also help oil-soaked Middle Eastern states wean their economies off dependence on fossil fuels. Biden seeks to counter China's Belt and Road push on global infrastructure IMEC by pitching Washington as an alternative partner and investor for developing countries at the G20 grouping. China's powers and influence are increasing so rapidly that U.S. and EU feel the need to have alternatives. Italy, an important signatory of China's BRI, has just pulled out of the arrangement. But, the new project would not necessarily undermine China's global infrastructure project, which has its own independent existence. Due to the enmity with China, India was not part of the Belt and Road Initiative, so this initiative gives connectivity to India. On the other hand, IMEC poses direct challenge to China's BRI, can transform Intercontinental Trade, but how it will finally turn out depends on many factors, such as the working out of

financing and the continued support in member countries through political headwinds like elections and change of governments. Much of this connectivity drive is aimed at containing China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the big idea first put on the table by Xi in 2013. Countries in Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and several African nations had signed on to the proposal that was funded mainly by China's government-owned banks. But many of the countries, including Sri Lanka, have got into a debt trap over their inability to pay back. The same has happened to some African countries. Moreover, the purpose of the infrastructure, apart from offering an alternative to BRI projects, still not clear either is expensive to ship oil and gas over land, so energy probably isn't the main game; or is it about Indian exports into the Middle East then? If IMEC takes off, it will give a massive fillip to both continents. But this is at the moment just on paper and getting it started a functioning will take a decade and more — provided all countries remain on board several years down the line. While everyone agrees that the signing of IMEC's MoU has tremendous potential, how it will finally turn out depends on many factors. For now, one can just wait and watch until more is known. The move came amid US efforts for a broader diplomatic deal in the Middle East that would have Saudi Arabia recognise Israel. It seems this is a clear plan to rival China's massive Belt and Road infrastructure initiative that was announced back in 2013, which is designed to connect Asia, Africa and Europe. So, it seems that this is really a counterweight plan. The plan could significantly respond to China's much-vaunted Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a step seen as a challenge to China's economic ambitions in the region. The BRI has spread Chinese influence, investments and commerce across Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. If finalized, it would be a game changer that strengthens connectivity between India and the Middle East and would aim to counter BRI. Indeed, Narendra Modi's sole aim is to make India a better Country, by this Strategy in near future, India would become the most powerful nation in the World, which will surprise even the USA, the United Kingdom, Russia and Japan. He uses all the developed countries of the world for his benefit. First he destroyed US ties with Pakistan and Afghanistan, and created an alliance with Vietnam, which damaged China's dream of Superpower, over a long-time dispute over oil extraction overseas between Vietnam and China which has benefited India. With India's support, Vietnam began producing Oil in China's Southern Seas. Vietnam now supplies major part of its Oil to India, the United States also has supported for this. He severely damaged Pakistan without going into a formal war. He brought the Port of Iran under his control, and also set up an Indian Military base on the border with Afghanistan which is very close to the border of Pakistan. In order to increase Indian trade, he has also built a route through Iran to Afghanistan by passing Pakistan. Modi abrogated and repealed Sections 370 and 35A, and now having eye on Azad Kashmir of Pakistan. Saudi Arabia and UAE are getting more closer to India by doing heavy Investment in India, both countries has brotherly relationship with Pakistan and considered as an trusted traditional ally. Now it depends on the suggested scale of IMEC's investment which is an indication of how seriously the Saudis and UAE take India and India's economic potential. In Asia, Modi is rooting out the space of China and the United States in a very Scientific manner, recently had canceled the SAARC Summit which has shown his power who has succeeded in maintaining India's superiority over Asia. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was launched in 2008 connecting China and Pakistan through railways, telecom, and technology infrastructure along with Special Economic Zones (SEZs), from Kashgar to Gwadar port city, to boost economic activity. Both countries are aggressively taking the CPEC to new heights as CPEC is one of the most innovative and strategically important projects in recent decades. President of China Xi Jinping termed the CPEC as friendship between China and Pakistan is based on trust and mutual support, and we have been devoted friends through both good and hard times. To build a China-Pakistan community of shared destiny is a strategic decision made by the two governments and peoples to create an even brighter future for China and Pakistan. For Pakistan, now it's a high time that we get our house in order and set our priorities straight by setting agendas and reforms. It's time for change and a renewed commitment to the values. Perhaps reassessing and questioning ourselves might bring about the change our Country's needs.

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Gaza Genocide: Israel wants to seize Gaza's multibillion dollar gas field

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) military's brutal attacks in Gaza are the deadliest and most destructive criminal war in recent history, but Israelis look in vain for any sign of victory. The diplomatic hourglass is running out to reach a negotiated solution. As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expands its ground attacks in Gaza, Iran's threats of retaliation over the airstrikes that killed a senior military officer and continued criminal war attacks from Tehran-backed groups in the region are increasing the likelihood of an all-out war in the Middle East. Israel's decision to assassinate a high-ranking member of the Iranian military in Damascus is a huge provocation. Iran has stayed out of direct involvement so far, but if its commanders are being targeted, it will have trouble continuing along a path of restraint. Israel neither confirms nor denies involvement in Mousavi's death. If Israel is behind the killing, it's unclear whether it is doing so as a warning to Tehran or to trigger an Iranian response that would give Israel the pretext to enlarge the war. Tehran vowed retribution for what it called the assassination in Syria of Seyed Razi Mousavi, a senior adviser to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The U.S. did not respond whether Israel informed

Washington in advance of the airstrikes that killed Mousavi. Immediately after the Gaza war broke out, the United States moved military assets to the Middle East as a deterrent and messaged to Tehran and its proxies to stay out. Around the region, however, there are signs the conflict is spreading. The international community is calling for a cease-fire, but Israel vows to press ahead saying it wants to destroy Hamas. It is a risk U.S. President Joe Biden cannot afford as he heads into an election year in 2024, as most Americans disapproving of his handling on Gaza, but he is keen to avoid a cease-fire in Gaza war, resulting Israeli attacks, have been intensifying. "We are expanding the fight in the coming days," said Netanyahu in comments released by his Likud party. Since Christmas Eve, its airstrikes have killed hundreds of Palestinians, many of them in refugee camps. Since October 9, Israeli airstrikes and a ground brutal attacks have killed close to 22,000 people included more than 10,000 children in Gaza, according to health authorities there. The Hamas-run health ministry says more than 55,000 people have been injured since the start of the war. The World Health Organization (WHO) says only 13 out of Gaza's 36 hospitals are partially functioning. The nine hospitals in the south are operating at three times their capacity, while facing critical shortages of basic supplies and fuel for generators. UN agencies say 40% of Gazans - 576,600 people - have exhausted their food supplies and coping capacities and face catastrophic hunger and starvation. According to Unrwa, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, 1.9 million Gazan residents - about 85% of the population - have been displaced, and 1.4 million of them are sheltering in its facilities. Every day is a struggle for survival. No doubt, a cease-fire would end the attacks on U.S. troops, end the attacks on ships in the Red Sea and most likely also calm down the Lebanese Israeli border. In just over two months, these brutal attacks have wreaked more destruction than the razing of Syria's Aleppo between 2012 and 2016, Ukraine's Mariupol or, proportionally, the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II. It has killed more civilians than the U.S.-led coalition did in its three-year campaign against the Islamic State group. The Israeli military has said little about what kinds of bombs and artillery it is using in Gaza. But from blast fragments found on-site and analyses of strike footage, experts are confident that the vast majority of bombs dropped on the besieged enclave are U.S.-made. They say the weapons include 2,000-pound (900-kilogram) "bunker-busters" that have killed hundreds in densely populated areas. Which turns earth to liquid and pancakes entire buildings. The explosion of a 2,000-pound bomb in the open means instant death for

anyone within about 30 meters (100 feet). Lethal fragmentation can extend for up to 365 meters (1,200 feet). In another strike on the urban refugee camp of Jabaliya, a 2,000-pound bomb killed over 100 civilians. Experts have also identified fragments of SPICE (Smart, Precise Impact, Cost-Effective) 2000-pound bombs, which are fitted with a GPS guidance system to make targeting more precise. The Israeli military is also dropping unguided dumb bombs as well.

The Israeli strategy of brutal attacks seems not working, as Israel says it has two goals: destroy Hamas and rescue the 129 hostages still held by Hamas. Moreover, according to Middle East Monitoring's report that Hamas killed about 2,100 Israeli soldiers and the number of war wounded Israeli soldiers is likely to reach approximately 20,000. Whereas, as per the head of the Israeli Defence Ministry's Rehabilitation Department, 58 per cent of soldiers have sustained injuries to their limbs, including amputation. The Gaza-Genocide is not about the claims of Israel protecting itself, but, this is all about oil. Indeed, IDF's Gaza war is to get illegal possession and control on Palestinian gas, focused on the 1.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas discovered in 2000 off the Gaza coast, valued at \$524 billion to avert Israeli energy crisis. Given the billions of barrels worth of oil in Palestine, which believed that fossil fuels are influencing Israel's attacks. Both off the coast and beneath the occupied lands of Palestine, over 3 billion barrels of oil are estimated to exist, according to a 2019 U.N. report. These numbers don't even include the gas potential in Palestine, which is estimated to have some 1.7 billion barrels of oil while over 1.5 billion barrels are estimated to lie beneath the occupied West Bank area. Since the discovery of oil and gas in the Palestinian Territories, resource competition has increasingly been at the heart of the conflict, motivated largely by Israel's increasing domestic energy woes. In this context, the issue of forced illegal occupation over Gaza's gas fields is main aim of Israel. In 2014, the then Israeli defence minister and former Israeli Defence Force (IDF) chief of staff Moshe Ya'alon confirmed that military plans to uproot Hamas are about dominating Gaza's gas reserves, and announced that Operation Protective Edge marks the beginning of a protracted attacks on Hamas. Israel's strategy over Gaza has been designed to make Palestinian access to the Marine-1 and Marine-2 gas wells impossible. Israel's long-term goal besides preventing the Palestinians from their own resources, is to integrate the gas fields off Gaza into the adjacent Israeli offshore installations. For the Israeli government, Hamas continues to be the main obstacle to the finalisation of the gas deal. The only option for Israel, therefore, was yet another military operation to uproot Hamas. Israel says it has destroyed many Hamas sites and hundreds of tunnel shafts and has killed 7,000 Hamas fighters out of an estimated 30,000-40,000. Israeli leaders say intense military pressure is the only way to free more hostages. But families of hostages worried that the intense bombing endangered and killed their loved ones. Hostages released during a weeklong cease-fire last month recounted that their captors moved them from place to place to avoid Israeli bombardment. Hamas has claimed that several hostages died from Israeli bombs due to the high level of destruction. This strategy of intense bombardment of Israel seems failed, as major part of the Hamas' tunnels are still functional and protecting Hamas for advancing its ground forces to attack. Unfortunately, for the IDF brutal attacks uprooting Hamas means destroying the civilian support base - which is why Palestinian civilian casualties massively outweigh that of Israelis. This was confirmed in practice by the earlier report of UN fact-finding mission in Gaza which concluded that the IDF had pursued a deliberate policy of disproportionate force, to destroy the civilian population. Although, the Israel-Palestine conflict is clearly not all about resources, but in an age of expensive energy, competition to dominate regional fossil fuels are increasing by influencing the critical decisions that can inflame war. But Israel's strategy of brutality and capacity to inflict destruction is simply far greater devastate. Resultantly, the war is spreading now, Yemen's Houthis which also known as Ansar Allah, claimed responsibility for a mis sile attack on a container ship in the Red Sea.

in the Red Sea. It's the latest in a string of attacks on global shipping in recent weeks that has prompted Washington to set up a multinational naval forces coalition to patrol the waterways. Escalation is inescapable as Yemen's Houthis compete to show their support for Hamas. The Red Sea is the real concern for the west and Israel because the Yemen's Houthis are much harder to deter. Since 2022, Saudi Arabia and Houthi in Yemen have been negotiating a permanent cease-fire to end their eight-year war. Since the Gaza conflict began, Israel has engaged in fierce cross-border clashes with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The situation is really on the brink of war. Tens of thousands of Israelis have been evacuated from border towns in anticipation of an attack by Hezbollah. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant acknowledged the country is in a multifront war under attack in seven theaters, including Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Iran. On the other hand the Biden administration has quietly continued to supply arms to Israel. However, the President Joe Biden publicly acknowledged that Israel was losing international legitimacy due to indiscriminate bombing. Israel's brutal attacks have destroyed over two-thirds of all structures in northern Gaza and a quarter of buildings in the southern area of Khan Younis. That includes tens of thousands of homes as well as schools, hospitals, mosques and stores. U.N. monitors have said that about 70% of school buildings across Gaza have been damaged. At least 66 damaged schools served as shelters for displaced civilians. Israeli brutal strikes damaged 160 mosques and three churches, the monitors said. Gaza is now a different color from space with a different texture. By some measures, destruction in Gaza has outpaced Allied bombings of Germany during World War II. Between 1942 and 1945, the allies attacked 51 major German cities and towns, destroying about 40-50% of their urban areas. This amounted to 10% of buildings across Germany, compared to over 33% across Gaza, a densely populated territory of just 140 square miles (360 square kilometers). Gaza is now sits comfortably in the top quartile of the most devastating bombing campaigns ever. The U.S.-led coalition's 2017 attack to expel the Islamic State group from the Iraqi city of Mosul was considered one of the most intense attacks on a city in generations. That nine-month battle killed around 10,000 civilians, the coalition carried out nearly 15,000 strikes across the country, according to Airwars. By comparison, the Israeli military has conducted 22,000 strikes in Gaza and killed around 10,000 children with more than 22000 civilians, since October 7. Israel has also gone on to impose a siege of the territory, barring the entry of food, fuel and water to Gaza's 2.3 million residents, amid growing concerns of famine and the spread of disease, which is likely to exacerbate the death toll. Whereas, Washington's announcement that it -explosive artillery munitions to Israel, was a clear evidence of the American administration's full sponsorship of this criminal war. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, must institute proceedings against Israel on the Genocide of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip concerning its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the "Genocide Convention"). Israel, since 7 October 2023 in particular, has failed to prevent genocide and has failed to prosecute the direct and public incitement to genocide, and that Israel has engaged in, is engaging in and risks further engaging in genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The Court's jurisdiction on Article 36, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the Court and on Article IX of the Genocide Convention allow as provisional measures, pursuant to Article 41 of the Statute of the Court and Articles 73, 74 and 75 of the Rules of Court, the Court must take provisional measures in order to protect against further, severe and irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people under the Genocide Convention and to ensure Israel's compliance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention not to engage in genocide, and to prevent and to punish genocide which shall have priority over all other cases. Indeed, the acts and omissions by Israel are genocidal in character, as they are committed with the requisite specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza as a part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group, and that the conduct of Israel through its State organs, State agents, and other persons and entities acting on its instructions or under its direction, control or influence in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, is in violation of its obligations under the Genocide Convention.



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The writer is an economist, anchor, analyst and the President of All Pakistan Private Schools' Federation president@Pakistanprivateschools.com

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Palestinian Genocide: Israel wants to seize Gaza's multibillion-dollar gas field!



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The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) military's brutal attacks in Gaza are the deadliest and most destructive criminal war in recent history, but Israelis look in vain for any sign of victory. The diplomatic hourglass is running out to reach a negotiated solution. As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expands its ground attacks in Gaza, Iran's threats of retaliation over the airstrikes that killed a senior military officer and continued criminal war attacks from Tehran-backed groups in the region are increasing the likelihood of an all-out war in the Middle East. Israel's decision to assassinate a high-ranking member of the Iranian military in Damascus is a huge provocation. Iran has stayed out of direct involvement so far, but if its commanders are being targeted, it will have trouble continuing along a path of restraint. Israel neither confirms nor denies involvement in Mousavi's death. If Israel is behind the killing, it's unclear whether it is doing so as a warning to Tehran or to trigger an Iranian response that would give Israel the pretext to enlarge the war. Tehran vowed retribution for what it called the assassination in Syria of Seyed Razi Mousavi, a senior adviser to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The U.S. did not respond whether Israel informed Washington in advance of the airstrikes that killed Mousavi. Immediately after the Gaza war broke out, the United States moved military assets to the Middle East as a deterrence and messaged to Tehran and its proxies to stay out. Around the region, however, there are signs the conflict is spreading. The international community is calling for a cease-fire, but Israel vows to press ahead saying it wants to destroy Hamas. It is a risk U.S. President Joe Biden cannot afford as he heads into an election year in 2024, as most Americans disapproving of his handling on Gaza, but he is keen to avoid a cease-fire in Gaza war, resulting Israeli attacks, have been intensifying. "We are expanding the fight in the coming days," said Netanyahu in comments released by his Likud party. Since Christmas Eve, its airstrikes have killed hundreds of Palestinians, many of them in refugee camps. Since October 9, Israeli airstrikes and a ground brutal attacks have killed close to 22,000 people included more than 10,000 children in Gaza, according to health authorities there. The Hamas-run health ministry says more than 55,000 people have been injured since the start of the war. The World Health Organization (WHO) says only 13 out of Gaza's 36 hospitals are partially functioning. The nine hospitals in the south are operating at three times their capacity, while facing critical shortages of basic supplies and fuel for generators. UN agencies say 40% of Gazans - 576,600 people - have exhausted their food supplies and coping capacities and face catastrophic hunger and starvation. According to Unrwa, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, 1.9 million Gazan residents - about 85% of the population - have been displaced, and 1.4 million of them are sheltering in its facilities. Every day is a struggle for survival. No doubt, a cease-fire would end the attacks on U.S. troops, end the attacks on ships in the Red Sea and most likely also calm down the Lebanese Israeli border. In just over two months, these brutal attacks have wreaked more destruction than the razing of Syria's Aleppo between 2012 and 2016, Ukraine's Mariupol or, proportionally, the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II. It has killed more civilians than the U.S.-led coalition did in its three-year campaign against the Islamic State group. The Israeli military has said little about what kinds of bombs and artillery it is using in Gaza. But from blast fragments found on-site and analyses of strike footage, experts are confident that the vast majority of bombs dropped on the besieged enclave are U.S.-made. They say the weapons include 2,000-pound (900-kilogram) "bunker-busters" that have killed hundreds in densely populated areas. Which turns earth to liquid and pancakes entire buildings. The explosion of a 2,000-pound bomb in the open means instant death for anyone within about 30 meters (100 feet). Lethal fragmentation can extend for up to 365 meters (1,200 feet). In another strike on the urban refugee camp of Jabalya, a 2,000-pound bomb killed over 100 civilians. Experts have also identified fragments of SPICE (Smart, Precise Impact,

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Gen. Asim's one year: Vision of Development and Economic Prosperity!

General Syed Asim Munir successfully completed his one year as Army Chief, and during his successful tenure, he expressed his determination and assured to steer Pakistan out of the prevailing crises, stating, "We have decided to lead Pakistan out of the current crisis." Whenever the country faced difficult times, the

Pakistan Army responded with the hard work for the people. One year of his service has culminated at a record

breaking success stories. When the chief of the Pakistani army took the lead to save the country from the crisis, economy came out of the ventilator and started breathing. His new professional journey began at a time when there was political turmoil in the country; when the country was suffering from inflation, and there

were diplomatic challenges. Despite not being in the spotlight throughout his one-year tenure, Gen Munir's behind-the-scenes efforts have significantly contributed to the overall stability of the country. His robust support for the government and the active role of the army played a pivotal role in steering Pakistan away from financial and economic default. Under his leadership, foreign relations have seen a positive transformation, with strengthened ties with the United States, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and China. Gen Munir's adept backdoor diplomacy has played a crucial role in

fostering these relationships. In a short span of one year, Gen Asim Munir has left an indelible mark on Pakistan's economy and diplomatic relations. His tenure has been characterized by resilience, strategic vision, and a commitment to the nation's progress. On the special instructions of Army Chief General Asim Munir, the Pakistan Army in collaboration with the country's institutions launched a large-scale operation against all the illegal activities which worsen the economy like termites. Army Chief General Asim Munir made several important foreign visits during one year, including Britain, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Uzbekistan, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. In the war against terrorism, he made it clear that there will be no negotiations against terrorists and also ensured the implementation of the revised National Action Plan, participated in the central and provincial apex committee meetings and also supported the police for operations in the rural areas. Ensured the safety of foreign nationals working on CPEC and other projects, also played an important role in restoring peace in Afghanistan. A large-scale successful crackdown was carried out against the illegal migrants, and a deadline was given to the foreign illegal migrants to leave the country, and the success of credit goes to General Asim Munir. He praised the Pakistanis for their pride, self-respect, and competence, recognising the nation's potential to overcome challenges. Referring to the prevailing economic challenges, the army chief remarked, "All Pakistanis have collectively rejected the beggar's bowl." Grateful for the country's blessings, COAS Munir remarked, "Allah has bestowed Pakistan with numerous gifts. Drawing attention to Pakistan's potential for progress, the army chief asserted, "No external force can hinder our journey towards advancement." He reaffirmed his belief in the nation's capability to achieve greatness in all domains. Through strategic planning, innovative thinking, and a focus on inclusivity, Gen. Asim laid the foundation for a strong and resilient economy. The initiatives he championed in infrastructure, energy, agriculture, education, and technology have positively impacted various sectors, leading to increased investment, job creation, and improved living standards. Even General Asim Munir is also discussed in India for economic stability. On the special instructions of the Army Chief, the Pakistan Army along with the domestic agencies have

brought down the prices of petroleum and other goods and the public got great relief from the crackdown against the mafia. General Asim Munir also plays an important role in relations with friendly countries and foreign affairs. During the year, several important foreign routes were also completed, while the implementation of the National Action Plan was ensured. Under the leadership of General Asim, Pakistan inked several Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with different countries, paving the way for

multi-billion dollar investments in diverse initiatives outlined by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). The MoUs cover investment cooperation across various sectors, including energy, port operations, waste water treatment, food security, logistics, mining, aviation, and banking and financial services. These MoUs will unlock multi-billion dollars of investment into Pakistan and will help realize various initiatives envisioned under Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

The Chief of Army Staff, Gen Asim Munir, vowed to extend all out support to the Government of Pakistan for: 'Green Pakistan Initiative' and bringing about Agriculture reforms. Again the personal presence and speech by the COAS at the 'Dust to Development' summit also signalled that the dust is settling down and development is coming. The messages were very clear that we must never lose hope. General Asim Munir's Vision for Development and Economic Prosperity of Pakistan is based on our social responsibility to play our collective role in the country's economy. Munir is a former chief of Pakistan's powerful intelligence service, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and before that the head of the country's military intelligence. In nuclear-armed Pakistan, with the world's fifth largest military and a history of military rule, the army chief tends to be the most powerful leader — at times even perceived as the de facto leader due to significant influence over Pakistan's domestic and foreign policies. Gen. Munir took charge amid continued political and economic turmoil in Pakistan. Civil-military relations had been greatly tarnished under Bajwa's six-year tenure. Gen. Munir restored the military's image from criticism to praise and restored its public image. In the pursuit of a progressive and prosperous Pakistan, visionary leaders have always played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's destiny. One such influential figure is General Asim Munir, whose initiatives for development and economic growth have left a profound impact on the country. As a seasoned military leader and strategist, General Munir brought fresh perspectives to governance, emphasising the importance of a strong economy, innovation, and inclusive development. This article delves into the initiatives undertaken by General Asim Munir and their impact on Pakistan's journey towards economic prosperity. The COAS made four key points. First, the formation of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) to bring all stakeholders at one platform for investors was the result of collaboration between the government and state institutions. Secondly, the SIFC has laid down new rules for the ease of doing business. Thirdly, and importantly, what was not clear before has now been clarified. These rules are for domestic as well foreign investors. Any discrimination against domestic investors does not go well with the foreign investors. Fourthly, the investor-friendly system will provide easy terms and conditions for business.

Let it be clear that the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. General Asim Munir recognised the fundamental importance of well-developed infrastructure for the nation's growth and connectivity. Removing the hurdles into the progress of work of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was one of General Munir's landmark achievements. This game-changing initiative brought significant foreign investment, improving Pakistan's connectivity with China and Central Asia. The Gwadar Port, a vital component of the CPEC, has also emerged again as a strategic hub for international trade, opening up new avenues for economic growth and regional integration. This initiative not only reduced regional disparities but also facilitated the transportation of goods, boosting economic activity and trade across the country. Addressing Pakistan's chronic energy crisis was a top priority for General Munir. He spearheaded initiatives to diversify the energy mix by investing in renewable sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower. These efforts aimed to reduce the country's dependency on fossil fuels and enhance energy security while promoting sustainable development. General Munir took decisive action to address this challenge by promoting a diversified and sustainable energy mix. His support encouraged investment in renewable energy sources, leading to a surge in solar and wind power projects across the country. Through incentives and policy reforms, Pakistan witnessed a considerable increase in private sector participation in the energy sector, enhancing energy security and reducing dependency on costly fossil fu

els. Agriculture remains the backbone of Pakistan's economy, and General Munir recognised its significance in ensuring food security and alleviating poverty. Through 'Green Pakistan Initiative' and bringing about Agriculture reforms, his initiatives focused on modernising the agriculture sector by introducing advanced farming techniques, promoting research and development, and ensuring the efficient utilisation of water resources through better irrigation practices.

General Munir understood the vital role of human capital in the country's progress. To promote economic prosperity, he emphasised investing in education and skill development programs. This included revamping the education system, establishing technical and vocational training centers, and encouraging research and innovation. By nurturing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, General Munir aimed to drive economic growth and create a competitive advantage in the global market. He encouraged collaborations between academia and the private sector, leading to the emergence of research-driven industries and startups. General Munir recognised that embracing innovation and technology was crucial for Pakistan's economic development in the 21st century. General Asim Munir believed in building strong ties with the international community to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and boost trade opportunities. He worked towards creating a conducive business environment, simplifying regulations, and offering competitive incentives to attract multinational companies and foreign investors. Through increased global engagement, Pakistan gained access to new markets and technologies, fostering economic growth and job creation. He encouraged investor-friendly policies, making it easier for foreign companies to set up businesses in Pakistan. By establishing a transparent and business-friendly regulatory environment, General Munir aimed to boost investor confidence and increase FDI inflows. Under his leadership, Pakistan negotiated free trade agreements with various countries and regional blocs to enhance market access for Pakistani products and services. These agreements not only opened up the ways for new export opportunities but also encouraged foreign investment in export-oriented industries. In his pursuit of economic prosperity, General Munir did not overlook the importance of mineral development and environmental conservation and sustainable development. He actively promoted initiatives of mineral development, and to mitigate the impacts of climate change, preserve biodiversity, and protect natural resources. Emphasis was placed on adopting green technologies, promoting renewable energy, and implementing eco-friendly policies to ensure a sustainable and resilient economy for future generations. The action started by stopping the illegal movement of essential commodities from the country began to bear fruit, the dollar's value continued to decline, where the decline in the value of the dollar led to a decline in the prices of other commodities, the stock exchange broke upward records in the history of the country. Pakistan is passing through one of her most critical junctures and this requires the development of national consensus by all stakeholders to sail through the confronted challenges of economy and terrorism. Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir reiterated Pakistan has to progress and that no power in the world can stop the country from its journey on the road to progress, and to make Pakistan green again as Allah almighty has blessed the country with various resources. Longer term, the economy may prove to be the stiffer challenge because it is not so amenable to military control as politics and internal security. The difficulty is compounded by Pakistan's fraught foreign relations, as the government can no longer automatically count on largesse from its allies in the United States and the Middle East, who in the waning years of the Cold War and immediately afterward allowed the country to service its debt and stay afloat as a rentier state. Boosting exports could be a starter, Pakistan still hopes the U.S., China, and other international partners will step in to help it avoid defaulting on international loans. COAS Munir hailed the government's plans for uplift, expressing his confidence in the transformation of the different sectors in landscape of Pakistan. Under his leadership, Pakistan will witness a development and economic revolution. General Asim Munir called on all the stakeholders to develop a national consensus to confront challenges posed by the economy and terrorism. Pakistan Army takes pride in serving its nation,

with the dedication to the welfare of the people and the country. The army belonged to the people, and the people belonged to the army, emphasising the strong bond between the armed forces and the civilians. As Pakistan looks to the future, Gen Munir's contributions are poised to set a challenging target and leave a lasting legacy. General Asim Munir's initiatives for the development and economic prosperity of Pakistan have been instrumental in shaping the nation's path towards progress. As Pakistan continues to build upon the legacy of General Munir's vision, it moves towards a more prosperous and promising future.



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General Asim Munir's initiatives for the development and economic prosperity of Pakistan have been instrumental in shaping the nation's path towards progress.



Gen Asim's Visit to Turkey: A Diplomatic Mission of Utmost Significance

Army chief General Asim Munir called for enhancing defence collaboration and training cooperation between Pakistan and Turkey. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the chief of army staff (COAS) laid emphasis on the enhancement of defence ties during his meetings with the top Turkish leadership on an official trip to Turkey. The visit was a part of the high-level mutual visits by both the brotherly countries to enhance the historic diplomatic and military ties. During the visit, Gen Munir called

on Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, foreign and defence ministers, commander of Turkish general staff and commanders of Turkish land and air forces. Gen Munir appreciated the Turkish military's efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region and also praised the standards of operational readiness of Turkish armed forces. Later he visited the Turkish land forces headquarters, where on his arrival Gen Munir was presented with a guard of honour. The army chief

was conferred with the Legion of Merit by the Turkish Defence Minister and Commander Turkish Land Forces in recognition of his services towards promoting defence relations between the two countries. This high-profile visit has sparked significant interest, both nationally and internationally, as it carries implications for security and cooperation. This move reflects Pakistan's commitment to fostering stronger relationships with key allies in the global arena. Both nations share a common interest in strengthening their military capabilities and enhancing their defense preparedness. This visit aimed to explore opportunities for joint training exercises and the exchange of military expertise. Gen Asim's visit to Turkey is very important due

to the recent developments happened in G20, when Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan at G20 said that Turkey would be "proud" if a country like India becomes a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). But, Tayyip Erdoğan, president of Turkey, said after the G20 that "there can be no corridor without Turkey", adding "the most appropriate route for trade from east to west must pass through Turkey". Turkey is in intensive negotiations with regional partners over its alternative to the India-Middle East trade corridor plan that was agreed at this month's G20 summit, as the country seeks to bolster its historic role as a transport route for goods moving from Asia to Europe. Ankara has pushed back against the proposed India-Middle East route that would transport goods from the subcontinent through the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel to European markets. The mooted corridor, backed by the US and EU as they attempt to repel China's growing influence, would completely bypass Turkey. A trade route does not only mean meeting trade alone. It's also a reflection of geo strategic competition. On the other side, Armenia-Azerbaijan Crisis and tensions between these two neighbouring nations have escalated significantly in recent months, threatening to destabilise the South Caucasus region. Pakistan, with its historical ties to Azerbaijan, and Turkey, which has a strong partnership with Azerbaijan, find themselves in a unique position to play a constructive role in defusing the crisis.

General Munir's visit also offers an opportunity to strengthen Pakistan-Turkey bilateral relations. The two countries have historically shared strong military, economic, and cultural ties. This visit serves as a platform to further enhance these ties and explore avenues for future collaboration. Gen Munir's visit received widespread support from political circles within Pakistan. Moreover, General Asim Munir believed in building strong ties with the international community to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and boost trade opportunities. He worked towards creating a conducive business environment, simplifying regulations, and offering competitive incentives to attract multinational companies and foreign investors. Through increased global engagement, Pakistan gained access to new markets and technologies, fostering economic growth and job creation. To stimulate economic growth, General Munir sought to attract

foreign direct investment (FDI) and strengthen trade ties with international partners. He encouraged investor-friendly policies, making it easier for foreign companies to set up businesses in Pakistan. By establishing a transparent and business-friendly regulatory environment, General Munir aimed to boost investor confidence and increase FDI inflows. Under his leadership, Pakistan negotiated free trade agreements with various countries and regional blocs to enhance market access for Pakistani products and services. These agreements not only opened up the ways for new export opportunities but also encouraged foreign investment in export-oriented industries. General Asim Munir, has also announced his plans to attract massive foreign investment and had secured promises from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait to invest a total of \$75-100 billion in Pakistan, mainly in the farming industry. He also said he had asked the Saudi and UAE rulers to lend \$10 billion each to Pakistan to improve its foreign exchange reserves, which would be repaid in rupees. The military leadership presented an Economic Revival Plan, stated to be bigger than the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), to address the nation's continued struggles with growth. The plan is focused on harnessing the country's untapped potential in key sectors through local development and foreign investments mainly from gulf countries and expediting project implementation. There is an urgent need for export-oriented foreign direct investments (FDIs) while the army chief pledged full support of the military, recognising the plan's importance for the national prosperity. The plan envisages capitalising Pakistan's untapped potential in key sectors of defence production, agricultural, livestock, minerals and mining, information technology and energy, through indigenous development as well as investments from friendly countries. The investment will come from the gulf countries and the army will play a key role in the coordination of the projects. If this project is completed, by 2035, Pakistan could become a trillion-dollar economy, a game changer project. Under the SIFC, direct jobs opportunities would be provided to 15 to 20 million people and indirect job opportunities to another 75 to 100 million people in the next four to five years. Along with this, the SIFC project will generate exports of \$70 billion and import substitution of equal amount in the next four to five years. The security and economy were closely related to each other that's why the Pakistan Army will spend all its energy in the management, coordination and the success of the project. It was aimed at creating horizontal-vertical synergy between the federation and the provinces; facilitating timely decision-making; avoiding duplication of efforts; and ensuring swift project implementation. General Asim Munir recognised the fundamental importance of well-developed infrastructure for the nation's growth and connectivity. Removing the hurdles in the progress of work of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was one of General Munir's landmark achievements. This game-changing initiative brought significant foreign investment, improving Pakistan's connectivity with China and Central Asia. The Gwadar Port, a vital component of the CPEC, has also emerged again as a strategic hub for international trade, opening up new avenues for economic growth and regional integration. Through incentives and policy reforms, Pakistan will witness a considerable increase in private sector participation in the energy sector, enhancing energy security and reducing dependency on costly fossil fuels. Through 'Green Pakistan Initiative' and bringing about Agriculture reforms, his initiator resources through better irrigation practices.

atives focused on modernising the agriculture sector by introducing advanced farming techniques, promoting research and development, and ensuring the efficient utilisation of waGeneral Munir aimed to drive economic growth and create a competitive advantage in the global market. Pakistan and Turkey have strong brotherly relations which have always stood the test of time. Pakistan Army takes pride in serving its nation, with the dedication to the welfare of the people and the country. The army belonged to the people, and the people belonged to the army, emphasising the strong bond between the armed forces and the civilians. The Pakistan Army is always willing to extend full support to the Turkish Land Forces in multiple domains. Through strategic planning, innovative thinking, and a focus on inclusivity, Gen. Asim laid the foundation for a strong and resilient economy. The initiatives he championed in infrastructure, energy, agriculture, education, and technology have positively impacted various sectors, leading to increased investment, job creation, and improved living standards. COAS Munir hailed the government's plans for uplift, expressing his confidence in the transformation of the different sectors in landscape of Pakistan. Under his leadership, Pakistan will witness a development and economic revolution. General Asim Munir called on all the stakeholders to develop a national consensus to confront challenges posed by the economy and terrorism. General Asim Munir's initiatives for the development and economic prosperity of Pakistan have been instrumental in shaping the nation's path towards progress. As Pakistan continues to build upon the legacy of General Munir's vision, it moves towards a more prosperous and promising future. Pakistan has always stood with their Turkish brothers in times of calamity and moments of triumph and shall continue to strengthen the fraternal ties between the two nations. Pakistan Army is always willing to extend full support to the Turkish Land Forces in multiple domains. Pakistan and Turkiye have fostered strong military and trade relations over the years. When a devastating earthquake struck Turkiye in February this year, killing thousands, Pakistan sent plane loads of relief items to help the victims of the natural disaster. Turkish leaders acknowledged the efforts extended by Pakistan Army Engineers who worked along the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) teams during the unfortunate earthquake that hit Turkey in February this year. In times of calamity and success, Pakistan has always stood with its Turkish brothers, and it will continue to deepen the bonds of brotherhood between the two countries. In a significant development, General Asim Munir has embarked a crucial diplomatic mission to Turkey. General Munir's visit holds paramount importance and leaders from various political parties acknowledged the importance of such diplomatic endeavours in strengthening the nation's position on the global stage. Both Pakistan and Turkey are committed to regional stability. Their involvement in resolving the Armenia-Azerbaijan Crisis reflects their dedication to maintaining peace and security in the South Caucasus region. A peaceful resolution to the conflict would not only benefit Armenia and Azerbaijan but also the broader international community. General Munir's visit provides an opportunity to discuss other pressing regional and global issues. Pakistan and Turkey are both members of various international organizations, and their cooperation on the diplomatic front can have far-reaching implications. This unified stance reflects the nation's commitment to its foreign policy objectives. General Asim Munir's Vision for Development and Economic Prosperity of Pakistan is based on our social responsibility to play our collective role in the country's economy. General Asim Munir's visit to Turkey underscores the deep-rooted and longstanding diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Turkey. This strategic alliance has been characterised by mutual support in various international forums and a shared commitment to regional stability and security. General Munir's visit exemplifies the importance of diplomatic engagement and cooperation in addressing complex regional challenges and underscores the enduring bond between Pakistan and Turkey in their quest for peace and stability.



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General Asim Munir's visit to Turkey underscores the deep-rooted and historically shared strong military, economic, cultural and longstanding diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Turkey. The visit serves as a platform to further enhance these ties and explore avenues for future collaboration. This strategic alliance has been characterised by mutual support in various international forums and a shared commitment to regional stability and security.



Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the Turkey's



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Kashmir, an unfinished agenda of Pakistan!

against children in IOJK, calls for Security Council's intervention by holding India accountable for its grave breaches of international humanitarian law and war crimes in IOJK. According to the UN Secretary General's latest report, the overall number of grave violations remained alarmingly high at 26,425. These violations include the continued killing and maiming of children, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, sexual violence and abduction, attacks against schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. The report further revealed that during the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated difficulties in the protection of children affected by armed conflicts, with humanitarian agencies finding it hard to conduct their work safely. Despite persistent concerns raised by multiple Special Rapporteurs and Mandate Holders of the Human Rights Council and experts on Children and Armed Conflict, the human rights and humanitarian situations continue to deteriorate

fair, free and internationally supervised plebiscite that should be aimed to secure the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir. The current status shows both the positions on Kashmir, as, Pakistan is, in the favour of UN plebiscite as per the wishes of the Kashmiri people. Kashmiris in Indian occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK) are going through an ordeal, oppression due to massive human rights violations by Indian security forces. Kashmir is the most violent and volatile conflict zones between - India & Pakistan in South Asia. The conflict becomes more fragile when the stakeholders are nuclear-armed because it certainly risks regional and international peace. The continuing curfew in Indian held Kashmir in the backdrop of revoking Article 370 and 35(A) on 5th August 2019, heavy military presence, media blackout, kidnapping of young boys, brutal patterns of violence and suppression of masses' voices have ignited a wave of protest and condemnation from the

the Kashmir conflict in the right direction is essential, only defining structural ways does not seem enough for the resolution. Therefore, a certain framework needs to be made that must be mutually agreeable by the parties. It's evidently proved that Kashmiris are not satisfied with the Indian illegal control of Kashmir, therefore, causes frequent protests in the area. The abrogation of Article 370 and 35(a) has further worsened the situation in Kashmir and one can see strong reactions from the international community also. It is high time for India to look into its domestic policies vis-à-vis its minority especially the Muslims. The world community is not only showing criminal indifference to the humanitarian crisis in IOJK and the illegal Indian action to annex the territory but is also looking the other way on the anti-Muslim actions of the Modi regime within India. First it deprived 1.9 million Bengali Muslims who were residing in Assam for decades before partition and now through the new citizenship bill which denies Muslims the right of citizenship. The bill which has racist and xenophobic connotation has already triggered protests in several states of India.

Regrettably the UN is not in a position to play any positive role without the support of the pro-Indian powers enjoying veto power. February 5 symbolises Pakistan's deep-rooted relationship with Kashmir. Every year, this day revives the cultural, religious and the geographical proximity the valley enjoys with Pakistan. The pro-Pakistan sentiment in Kashmir is neither dead nor diminished, it's suppressed and the reasons are rooted in the conditions we are going through since the 1990. Our young generation should be educated about the importance of the Kashmir Day. On this day, all schools should remain open and school children should be taught that Kashmiris have been struggling hard to get their right to self-determination under the UN resolutions for the last seven decades. Because of its very weak case on the disputed valley, India terms it a bilateral dispute and avoids internationalizing the issue. Right from 1990, India says Kashmir is an issue of cross-border terrorism. No matter what, the Kashmir issue remains an international dispute today. The day reminds the Kashmiris that Pakistan has not left them at the mercy of circumstances. Thus talks with India have to be on equal terms without giving unilateral concessions to New Delhi. In view of these serious concerns, the UN Security Council must act immediately to stop India such practices and take preventive measures to protect Kashmiris especially children, including by ending the use of pellets against children in IOJK. Whatever the causes of modern-day brutality towards Kashmiris especially children, the time has come to call a halt. These acts must end, and perpetrators must be held to account. Pakistan for which Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of the partition will and must continue to persist with its moral, political and diplomatic support to the freedom struggle in IOJK as long as it does not succeed.

The world community is not only showing criminal indifference to the humanitarian crisis in IOJK and the illegal Indian action to annex the territory but is also looking the other way on the anti-Muslim actions of the Modi regime within India.

Kashmir Solidarity Day is on February 5, and this day is observed by the people in Pakistan and Kashmir who have been fighting for their freedom for more than 70 years. This day is also celebrated in honor of the Kashmiris who have lost their lives in the fight for freedom. It focuses on showing Pakistan's support and unity with the people of Indian-occupied Kashmir, their ongoing freedom struggle, and to pay homage to Kashmiri martyrs who lost their lives fighting for Kashmir's freedom. Pakistan urged the UN Security Council to act immediately to protect Kashmiris especially children in conflict zones, particularly in the India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) where Indian forces have been deliberately targeting children with pellet guns. UN Secretary General António Guterres also urged India to end the use of pellets against children in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and stop associating children with the security forces in any way. According to an analytical report, it said that the killing of 95,686 including 7,147 in custody from January 1, 1989 to September 30, 2020 speaks volumes about the goodwill gesture of the brutal Indian forces towards the Kashmiri people.

The report also mentioned the destruction of 110,367 civilian properties including houses and structures and gang-rape or molestation of 11,219 of women by the troop during the period to expose the reality of Indian Army's Sadbhavana like operations. During 2022, some of the worst atrocities and state terrorism took place in IOJK. More than 300 innocent Kashmiris, including women and children, were killed in fake encounters and staged cordon-and-search operations, and 750 Kashmiris were critically injured, while 2,770 innocent Kashmiris were arbitrarily detained, and 922 houses destroyed as part of collective punishment inflicted on the Kashmiri communities. Such inhuman actions are not only in violation of the UNSC resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict but are also in breach of the best interests of the child principle under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which India is a state party. The worsening situation and increased attacks

rate for the innocent children of IOJK since Aug 5, 2019. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is an unresolved agenda of Britain and a disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Both the parties acknowledged the disputed status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the UN Security Council resolutions of August 13, 1948, and to which on January 5, 1949, both the two countries are considered a party. UN resolutions is remained operative and cannot be unilaterally disregarded by either party. As agreed in the UN Security Council resolutions along peaceful and bilateral negotiations would be made between India and Pakistan over the future status of Jammu and Kashmir. It, therefore, entails a

global community, which is emphasising on a peaceful and sustainable resolution of long-standing Kashmir conflict.

Through cost-benefit-analysis one may get to know about the cost observes as what India and Pakistan are costing from their active engagement in conflict. Since 1947 a several proposals for Kashmir conflict are being offered by the analysts aiming to reach the resolution. Kashmir conflict needs a sustainable resolution. The international community is responsible for sustaining the world peace and resolving conflicts between and among the states, thus, succumbs to influence the parties, India and Pakistan for a peaceful resolution of Kashmir conflict. Nonetheless, to lead



LJCP Report: The severe under-representation of women in the judiciary



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Historically, the legal profession was not considered suitable for women. As time progressed, so did women and today women enter this profession of choice. However, there are still not enough women in the judiciary and certainly not enough women in the superior judiciary. In the process of administration of justice and writing judgments, judges have an important role, as judicial decisions have a wide and deep impact on social constructs, social order and systematic inequalities that prevail in the system. This paradigm must change and our judiciary must reflect the diversity of our society, ensuring that the voices and perspectives of women. Among the 230,879 lawyers registered in bar councils nationwide, a meager 17% are women. In a recent report released by the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan, startling statistics shed light on the representation of women in the country's judiciary. The report stated that among the 3,142 individuals serving as judges or law officers nationwide, a mere 18% are women, as revealed by the Commission's findings. This figure, although reflective of progress, falls short of adequately representing the diverse fabric of Pakistani society. Delving deeper into the hierarchical echelons of the judiciary, the report underscores a glaring disparity in higher courts. Out of 126 judges presiding over esteemed institutions such as the Supreme Court, the Federal Sharia Court, and the five High Courts, only 7 are women. This stark representation, constituting a mere 5.5%, underscores the uphill battle towards gender equity at the uppermost levels of legal adjudication. However, a glimmer of hope emerges within the district courts, where a slightly more encouraging

scenario unfolds. Of the 3,016 judicial officers serving across the nation's district courts, women constitute 19% of the total count. Women also lack any real representation in the bar councils with only 2.2% members being women out of a total of 205 members from the eight bar councils, including the Pakistan Bar Council. The number of female advocates in senior level positions or as heads of law firms also remains negligible. Women in Pakistan constitute 49% of the population and yet their representation in decision-making, policy and leadership roles is inconsequential. In the context of the justice sector and broader goals of gender equality, this means that few women are able to advance in the profession to a point where they are able to have both, a seat as well as a voice at the table to make an impact. One of the most significant implications of this glaring disparity in representation is that women's lived experiences, peculiar circumstances and differing needs and approaches often do not get reflected in the ensuing policies, judgments and operations of these institutions which have the capacity to impact not just the women in law, but also those litigants who approach the courts, especially women and children. As a result, the missing gender lens leads to the creation of an environment, laws and policies that are likely not based on holistic, participatory, enabling and inclusive measures and which perpetuate the existing disparities by reproducing the inequities in the system. While this figure hints at progress, it remains evident that further strides are necessary to achieve substantive gender parity within this segment of the judiciary. Beyond the bench, the legal profession itself reflects a similar pattern of gender imbalance. Although the first appointment of women judges in Pakistan dates back to 1974, the significant appointment of lady judges in the past decade has caused a jump in female representation in the judiciary to more than one third in family courts – a quiet move that sends a message of adherence to the principle of gender equality as per the international treaties to which Pakistan is signatory.

The Global Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum yearly, has placed Pakistan at the lowest ranks, especially for what concerns economic empowerment. According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) report published in 2021 under the title In Pursuit of Justice, South Asia

is behind Middle East and North Africa for what concerns women's representation in the judiciary. In addition, Pakistan does not have enough female representation at the supreme, constitutional, and regional courts. The tension between judiciary and the executive which has informed the rise and fall of the Lawyers Movement, also transpires in the protection of women's rights in Pakistan: whilst the Federal Shariat Court, which belongs to the judiciary, has substantially defended so far the appointment of female judges. Women judges in Pakistan express a keen wish for international acknowledgement that takes cultural specificities into account. Perhaps, from the point of view of the lady judges themselves, the most all-encompassing conclusion of this should be that the lady-judges of Pakistan are skillful and creative in combining culturally informed expectations with the needs of their profession. The leading example of such creativity is gender segregation reformulated as an indicator of accountability and a way for female judges to be accepted even by the most conventional strata of Pakistani society. Women judges' narratives develop in Pakistan also around themes that are significant at the global level: experiential teaching and problem-solving learning; childcare; softness as a controversial argument that has the potential to act as a plus and not as a minus; difficult execution of state-courts' decisions in a situation of de facto legal pluralism that exceed the state; and communication with peers and seniors. The struggle becomes therefore for the social scientist to adequately make sense of these socio-political and economic dynamics without becoming an instrument in their hands. As this has shown, context-informed analysis will benefit from taking into account the making and re-making of identity-processes that go beyond the narrow concept of nation in order to highlight the local implications of the global development agenda. The international trend is that the representation of women in the legal profession is crucial to a just decision-making process, and the lady judges of Pakistan are evidently filling the gap implied by quantitative data. The challenge lies in whether this change will be mainly a formal one or also one that leads to a consistent inclusion of women at all levels of the judiciary. As the inclusion of women in the judiciary should be considered an achievement regardless of the issue of whether a gender-balanced judiciary is indeed more accountable and just. Obnoxious arguments highlighting the obstacles to women's participation in social life a justification for their exclusion, have received credit for too long. This has also provided evidence of the facile manipulation of the global development agenda by both national and international actors: on one hand short-term gender representation for the sake of international image and on the other the international donors who appear to conveniently reformulate women's rights in order to avoid the cost related to childcare and security of employment. All this in the backdrop of a social activism that, in spite of its goodwill and good cause, too often lacks the expertise for appraising the complexity of social facts at the ground level. Hence, the gaps of information in the human rights reports, which this paper has filled by discussing the achievements as well as the failures of female judges' appointments. Such a complex social phenomenon also hints at for-profit strategies that intoxicate some of today's international aid. Eventually, this shows that women judges in Pakistan share similar preoccupation with the other women and men in the judiciary around the world regarding better working conditions, training, and the combination of family and profession. Yet, the sustainability of female representation in Pakistan might depend also

on whether or not their specific claims for a context appropriate professionalism will indeed strengthen their legitimacy within Pakistani judiciary as to break the glass ceiling on the longer term. It is important to highlight that the process of recruiting judges in the subordinate courts is significantly different than the nominations and appointments process of the higher courts, in that, at the subordinate level, it is based on a competitive examination and recruitments are made in accordance with Judicial Service Rules of the province. The regulators and concerned bodies must recognize the ground disparities and structural barriers that hinder women's access and advancement in the justice sector to take a leading role in introducing necessary reforms for a diverse and inclusive legal system that enhances the stature of the profession on the diversity and inclusion index. When judges interpret and implement the law, their reasons and opinions are a reflection of their thought process, an insight into their perceptions. These perceptions in the very least must be representative of both men and women on the bench so as to ensure a fair and adequate response through judicial decisions. It is important to note that including women in the judiciary is not simply about ensuring that her perception is relevant to resolving cases about women. It is much more than that. It is about integrating the gender perspective and giving equal visibility to women. Integration and visibility are important to help build the narrative which includes the gender perspective. Women in the judiciary bring with them the gender perspective. A different approach, a different thinking process, a different set of emphasis. All judges - male or female - decide cases as per the law in an effort to uphold the rule of law. In doing so, they may reach the same conclusion on a given set of facts, but for different reasons with different emphasis on the relevant facts. This is because they are influenced by their own life experiences, environment, and circumstances. This makes the gender perspective relevant because women judges bring a different set of experiences and influences which then shape their thinking and is reflected in their reasoning in the judgments. Bringing different perspectives and diverse reasoning on the bench creates greater public trust and confidence because it is more reflective of the composition of society. It integrates varied social contexts and experiences that need to be included, recognized and, most importantly, valued. Another aspect of building on the gender perspective for inclusivity and visibility is the use of a gender-neutral language, which is a language that is particularly conscious of gendered words and roles and of the depiction of women. The choice of words, or a lack thereof, is integral not just in everyday language, but especially in judgments as language can perpetuate a bias. For example, the constant use of the pronoun he can perpetuate the belief around the dominant role of men. Implicit or unconscious gender bias is generally hidden in language and possibly, without any realization, is entrenched in the system by relying on the same assumptions and presumptions, particularly those concerning women. However, while language can perpetuate these stereotypes, it can be equally impactful in bringing about positive and much needed change, systematic and timely. This is because language impacts the thought process of people and can be the catalyst of change. Therefore, gender-neutral language is necessary for inclusiveness and for increasing sensitivity. It is also needed because it can positively reinforce a more inclusive and respectful narrative of women and change the imbalance. Ultimately, language is a tool for communicating different perspectives, which makes way for a more balanced thinking and more inclusive reasoning. All this is possible when women are well represented on the bench.

The challenge in this scenario is whether this change will only be formal or whether it will also lead to substantial and accountable justice, additionally elucidate how the global developments impacts local expectations and conceptualisations No of rights within and beyond the state. Indeed, the Commission's report serves as a clarion call for stakeholders at all levels to champion the cause of gender equality within the judiciary. The under-representation of women in the judiciary must be addressed, as Pakistan marches towards a future anchored in principles of justice and equity, the imperative to harness the full potential of women within the legal domain stands as an indomitable mandate.

The regulators and concerned bodies must recognize the ground disparities and structural barriers that hinder women's access and advancement in the justice sector to take a leading role in introducing necessary reforms for a diverse and inclusive legal system that enhances the stature of the profession on the diversity and inclusion index.





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The level of civilization in society can be judged by entering their prisons. A true picture of the state of the justice system and the administration of justice will emerge from the functioning of the courts and the number of cases pending. Pakistan's post-colonial legal system is old-fashioned, facing modern challenges and failing to meet the country's growing needs for global integration, reliable trade transactions and justice for the common man. A framework for legal and judicial reforms urgently needed to ensure internal peace and harmony. A report by the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2021 shows that Pakistan is among the lowest-performing countries in terms of its adherence to the rule of law, ranked 130th out of 139. Even in South Asia, Pakistan's position is second only to last. Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh has all performed better than Pakistan in the rule of law while only Afghanistan is limited under Pakistan in the region. Fifty-three thousand cases are pending in the Supreme Court, about 300,000 cases in five high courts and about 2.2 million cases are pending in four provinces and the state capital, according to the Pakistan Law and Justice Commission.

Over the past five years, the number of cases pending in the Supreme Court has more than four times to reach the highest level in the last 25 years. In 2006, the number of pending cases was 13,724. There are currently 2,159,655 cases pending in Pakistani courts which are being heard or will be heard by 3,067 judges in the country. Out of these, in several cases, the parties to a case have passed away and their descendants are now seeking remedy from the courts. In district and high courts across the country, 1,048 posts of judges lie vacant waiting to be filled. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has to hear 53,138 pending cases with a total strength of 17 judges, of which one post is vacant. The Federal Shariat Court, on the other hand, has 178 pending cases only. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has only one vacancy for a judge left to be filled while the number of pending cases currently amount to 16,374. The district and sessions court of Islamabad have 51,849 pending cases with a sanctioned strength of 103 judges. Of these, 70 are working while 33 seats are vacant. As far as the provincial breakdown is concerned, the Lahore High Court (LHC) has a sanctioned strength of 60, but has only 50 judges with 193,030 pending cases. In Punjab district and sessions courts, 1,345,632 civil and family cases are pending. The Punjab district judiciary has a sanctioned strength of 2,364 judges, of which 1,616 judges have been appointed while 748 vacancies are yet to be filled. The Sindh High Court has a sanctioned strength of 40 judges out of which six posts are vacant. As many as 83,150 cases are still pending. In the district

Reforming Judicial System for Pending Cases!

judiciary of Sindh, out of 622 judges, 568 are performing their duties while there are 54 vacancies to be filled. The number of pending cases in the district judiciary amount to 115,296.

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) should have a total of 20 judges, but is five short from the sanctioned number. The court has 42,180 pending cases to hear. The number of cases pending in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa district and sessions courts have amounted to 240,436. The number of judges appointed in the district and sessions court is 596 while 124 seats are yet to be filled. The Baluchistan High Court (BHC) has a total number of 15 judges allowed, but is five judges short. The total number of pending cases in the high court are 4,663. The province's district judiciary have 208 judges while the sanctioned strength is 270. A total of 15,729 cases are pending. The result high court are 4,663. The province's district judiciary have 208 judges while the sanctioned strength is 270. A total of 15,729 cases are pending. The result is that 59439 people are currently being held in 21527 authorized detention centers, 32 in 32 Provincial Prisons. Prisoners under trial are four times the number of prisoners. The number of convicts is 69% and the number of convicted and convicted prisoners is 19.50% and 11.50%. It is clear that there is an urgent need of judicial reforms for pending cases, because the present justice system is ineffective, rampant and slippery and the current state of law and order in the country shows that people are losing faith in the ability to administer justice in order to

behavioural protocols and even the design of courthouses themselves all seem as if they were intentionally configured to put up barriers between judges and lawyers and, the rest of us. The most important stakeholders in the justice system are the citizens, and ensuring that they have access to justice is the most important challenge that needs to be overcome. In the status quo, I see that accessing justice in the first place is the problem. Subsequent governments and parliaments in the country have failed to enact legislation and take policy measures to ensure economic and social justice for the common man in the country. Unfortunately, the performance of our law enforcement authorities, accounting agencies, and law enforcement agencies, especially at the grass-

roots level, leaves much to be desired. In particular, the police need radical change in order to be more efficient and to accommodate the people in carrying out their law enforcement and criminal activities. Police and other law-enforcement agencies are seen as hostile, especially for the majority of the underprivileged population. For women, accessing justice is all the more challenging. Character shaming, incredulity, bribery are major challenges that citizens face when dealing with the law-enforcement and justice system. Perhaps technology can empower citizens to hold the law-enforcement system accountable. The legal system in Pakistan still heavily

relies on traditional methods of working and the major one is paperwork. Over the last few years, technology has increasingly been pitched as a solution to that problem. It is of utmost importance that the Court House

The World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2021 shows that Pakistan is among the lowest-performing countries in terms of its adherence to the rule of law, ranked 130th out of 139.



resolve their grievances. The magnitude and magnitude of the problems and these issues require in-depth research to take corrective action before the whole system collapses, chaos and chaos in the community. According to the UN Human Development Report, Pakistan is ranked 147th out of 188 countries, with a population development index of 0.550, less than India and Bangladesh and approximately 24.3% of the population lived below the poverty line, the huge inequality of income and wealth in Pakistan is also one of the cause of this dire news situation. Our justice system was not designed to make things easy for regular people. The problem of access to justice had already reached critical proportions with low-income receiving inadequate or no professional legal help for 96% of the civil legal problems they faced. The complex language, the

is made efficient, affordable, intelligent and smart through technology. The widespread accessibility of video conferencing has made it so that people do not necessarily have to take time off work to participate in a hearing or a trial, while the growth of alternative dispute resolution tools, e-filing and digital evidence platforms all have shown the potential to transform the courtroom. Technological and scientific developments are generating huge opportunities for tackling societal challenges. However, the benefits of technology and innovation are unequally distributed, and they tend to cause economic and political disruptions in our societies that widen inequalities. The introduction of e-courts by the Supreme Court of Pakistan where cases can be heard via video link is a welcome addition to the current setup where complainants and witnesses have to bear the

cost of travel and stay for hearings, something that otherwise deters them from using the justice system. Similar arrangements for recording witness statements via video will also help the cause of justice. Whereas technology can be an important enabler in accessing and dispensing justice, it is essential that the limitations of technology be kept in mind when glamorising it or relying on it too much. Whereas it would be helpful for judges, as announced by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, to use artificial intelligence to access previous precedents and case law on specific cases, letting them make a decision based on computed facts may be a bit of a stretch. In fact, the current system of governance in Pakistan is undoubtedly oppressive and exploitative. It is exploitative because it unjustly rewards the elite with excessive economic benefits by losing the poor contrary to Islamic law and social norms, which require the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. The leading theme of reforms has been the development of judicial efficiency and speed of justice. The love of 'speed' has also diverted attention to other important aspects of the judicial process, as well as the quality of judgment proclamations. It has therefore reduced the chances that the formal justice system will deal with conflict in the community, and the pursuit of greater distributional justice, fairness and equity through judicial interpretations of extant laws. It is very important to shift the focus of the discussion of the transformation of the justice system in Pakistan from technical and legal only to legal and social justice. There is a need for a renewed focus on reform of national and international innovation systems and R&D policies, in an attempt to create a new consensus on how public-private partnerships can contribute to a more open and sustainable use of technology. More open source access for technologies should be sought. It is essential to assure an open diffusion of knowledge, innovations and technologies in the design of development policies. Development policies should support redistributive systems and incentives for successful application of new technologies. Legal frameworks should be promoted to enable innovation and the use of new technologies. Improve the education of the left-behind countries through global schemes. Technological justice should be linked to the SDG Agenda. As a result, the timeframe for proposals should coincide with the 2030 horizon

The judiciary, the legal community and civil society have come together with a shared vision for a Digital Legal Pakistan. They say that justice delayed is justice denied, hopefully, with judicial reforms for pending cases along with the intervention of legal-tech, we will be able to change that. It is important that the laws are fair and respect fundamental constitutional rights, and that they provide sufficient protections to citizens rather than demonising their use of technology to exercise rights. Moreover, the laws must not be abused by the state against dissidents and whistleblowers. We are at a pivotal moment in the development of the court system; we have an opportunity to truly raise the game and modernize arcane processes that have been creating unnecessary barriers to justice for far too long. We are talking about the independence of the judiciary and the strengthening of the administration of justice in order to provide justice and freedom for citizens. Only an effective and efficient justice system can ensure the protection of fundamental constitutional rights of the citizens and the independence of the judiciary.



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The writer is an economist, anchor, analyst and the President of All Pakistan Lawyers' Federation

According to the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2020-21, Pakistan's worst score in the world, and worldwide is 130 out of 139. Unfortunately, there are many reasons for this performance but one of the most important reasons is the Pakistani Justice System for this long-standing trend. Fifty-three thousand cases are pending in the Supreme Court, about 300,000 pending cases are in the five high courts, and about 2.2 million cases are pending in the subordinate courts and judges in less than four provinces and the state capital, according to the Pakistan Law and Justice Commission. Our justice system was not designed to make things easy for regular people.

The complex language, the behavioral protocols and even the design of courthouses themselves all seem as if they were intentionally configured to put up barriers between judges and lawyers and the rest of us. The problem of access to justice had already reached critical proportions with low-income receiving inadequate or no professional legal help for 96% of the civil legal problems they faced. Over the last few years, technology has increasingly been pitched as a solution to that problem. The widespread accessibility of video conferencing has made it so that people do not necessarily have to take time off work to participate in a hearing or a trial, while the growth of alternative dispute resolution tools, e-filing and digital evidence platforms all have shown the potential to transform the courtroom. The most important stakeholders in the justice system are the citizens, and ensuring that they have access to justice is the most important challenge that needs to be overcome. In the status quo, we see that accessing justice in the first place is the problem. Police and other law-enforcement agencies are seen as hostile, especially for the majority of the underprivileged population. For women, accessing justice is all the more challenging. Character shaming, incredulity, bribery are major challenges that citizens face when dealing with the law-enforcement and justice system. Perhaps technology can empower citizens to hold the law-enforcement system accountable.

Technological transformation of the court system

The legal system in Pakistan still heavily relies on traditional methods of working and the major one is paperwork. It is of utmost importance that the Court House is made efficient, affordable, intelligent and smart through technology. Technological and scientific developments are generating huge opportunities for tackling societal challenges. However, the benefits of technology and innovation are unequally distributed, and they tend to cause economic and political disruptions in our societies that widen inequalities.

The introduction of e-courts by the Supreme Court of Pakistan where cases can be heard via video link is a welcome addition to the current setup where complainants and witnesses have to bear the cost of travel and stay for hearings, some-

thing that otherwise deters them from using the justice system. Similar arrangements for recording witness statements via video will also help the cause of justice. Whereas technology can be an important enabler in accessing and dispensing justice, it is essential that the limitations of technology be kept in mind when glamorising it or relying on it too much. Whereas it would be helpful for judges, as announced by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, to use artificial intelligence to access previous precedents and case law on specific cases, letting AI make a decision based on

computed facts may be a bit of a stretch. Mobile phone applications that connect lawyers with citizens in search of a lawyer were unveiled. However, it is important to consider how those who cannot read or write and spend money on lawyers can be connected to pro bono lawyers without being taken advantage of. This is what innovators should be spending most of their time thinking about. Another major issue that citizens in this country face is the inefficiency of state prosecutors and the court system. Using technology for the attendance record of public prosecutors will go a long way, as the absence of state prosecutors in cases that are cognisable and non-compoundable which requires the state to be a party causes delays. Digitisation of investigation files and court records is another important area in which the justice system can be made efficient through the use of technology. No citizen should have to endure so many struggles, especially if they are the aggrieved party. Further, setting

up of independent forensic laboratories for investigation of data is also very important, as the current high volume dealt by a just a handful of forensic labs causes unnecessary delays in the dispensation of justice. As technology outside the justice system continues to advance rapidly in use and availability, the need for change within the system is becoming unavoidable.

However, it took a pandemic for such technology to become commonplace. In the months following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, as courtrooms around the world shut their doors and already high case backlogs started growing even more rapidly, some pioneering court systems that had been experimenting with technology prior to the pandemic saw an opportunity to solve a problem

and modernize their courtrooms. Along the way, they have made significant progress on access to justice and learned a lot about how technology can be leveraged to make the justice system more equitable in the post-pandemic world. Throughout the pandemic and since, court systems that implemented digital solutions have made been able to make progress on their backlog of cases as judges, lawyers and litigants all started to interact more efficiently. The widespread technological transformation of the nation's court system is going to require a

concerted effort to develop technologies that are purpose-built for legal workflows; resilient enough to respond to endless combinations of use cases; and user-friendly enough for judges, clerks, attorneys and individuals to manage effectively.

To foster a technological convergence among countries, and to aspire to a smart world society, the G-20 should have a central role connecting the 2030 SDG goals which include innovation, technology, justice and equality. More specifically, the policies to apply in developing countries must pursue aims such as the open diffusion of knowledge, improving digital education, producing innovations for local consumption, the reduction of their energy deficits, and the technological empowerment of women. Implementing such policies in a context of international cooperation would make public-private partnerships a key instrument for funding infrastructures, joint ventures, incubators, start-ups and any other of entity with a significant capacity for technology

transfer. Major changes and challenges like automation, digitalization, 3D printing, Artificial Intelligence, retail through the web, etc. are currently underway and, in the years ahead, more change will come from technological and scientific developments. There is a dialectic relationship between technology and society: technology is both part of the solution to societal challenges and part of the problem, and this deepens social inequalities. The concept of technological justice can reconcile these two faces, connecting technology, a critical factor in human development, with our aspirations for social justice and greater equality between economies.

We propose to develop the concept of technological justice, along with relevant policies. The concept of technological justice requires a rethinking of how-both in the developing and the developed world-to encourage and nurture technological innovation that has social value and is environmentally sustainable. There is a need for a renewed focus on reform of national and international innovation systems and R&D policies, in an attempt to create a new consensus on how public-private partnerships can contribute to a more open and sustainable use of technology. More open source access for technologies should be sought. It is essential to assure an open diffusion of knowledge, innovations and technologies in the design of development policies. Development policies should support redistributive systems and incentives for successful application of new technologies. Legal frameworks should be promoted to enable innovation and the use of new technologies. Improve the education of the left-behind countries through global schemes. Technological justice should be linked to the SDG Agenda. As a result, the timeframe for proposals should coincide with the 2030 horizon.

The judiciary, the legal community and civil society have come together with a shared vision for a Digital Legal Pakistan. They say that justice delayed is justice denied, hopefully, with the intervention of legal-tech, we will be able to change that. It is important that the laws are fair and respect fundamental constitutional rights, and that they provide sufficient protections to citizens rather than demonising their use of technology to exercise rights. Moreover, the laws must not be abused by the state against dissidents and whistleblowers. We are at a pivotal moment in the development of the court system; we have an opportunity to truly raise the game and modernize arcane processes that have been creating unnecessary barriers to justice for far too long. We are talking about the independence of the judiciary and the strengthening of the administration of justice in order to provide justice and freedom for citizens. Only an effective and efficient justice system can ensure the enjoyment of basic rights by the average person.

“The concept of technological justice is important that the Court House is made efficient, affordable, intelligent and smart through technology. Technological and scientific developments are generating huge opportunities for tackling societal challenges.”

Israel-Gaza War: will the Red Sea crisis lead to WW3?



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Escalating Israel's attacks on Gaza are stoking fears that the Gaza conflict could engulf the Middle East into Third World War (WW3). As the number of Palestinians killed in Gaza by Israeli operations since October 7 now stands at more than 22,000 included 10,000 plus children, the strip's Hamas-run health ministry has said. It added that 56,697 Palestinians have injured during the same period. The World Health Organization (WHO) says only 13 out of Gaza's 36 hospitals are partially functioning. The nine hospitals in the south are operating at three times their capacity, while facing critical shortages of basic supplies and fuel for generators. UN agencies say 40% of Gazans - 576,600 people - have exhausted their food supplies and coping capacities and face catastrophic hunger and starvation. According to Unrwa, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, 1.9 million Gazan residents - about 85% of the population - have been displaced, and 1.4 million of them are sheltering in its facilities. Every day is a struggle for survival. Whereas, The U.S. task force, made up of several nations primarily in Europe and the Western world, under Operation Prosperity Guardian - though several partners have distanced themselves from the initiative, it's not clear if the task force will lower the intensity of the battling. US led coalition warned Houthis of consequences after Red Sea attacks. The Houthis have argued that their attacks on ship linked to Israel are an act of solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza. The U.S. task force, seeks to deter the Houthi threat by patrolling the Red Sea and defending merchant ships. While most countries have contributed only sailors, with just the UK and US sending ships, the aim is to make it harder for the Houthis to claim the attacks are focused solely on Israel and the US. Notably, Bahrain is the only Arab country to have joined publicly, with most seeing the economic impact as outweighed by the dangers of being seen as defending Israel. There have been at least 27 attacks on vessels the Houthis believe are linked to Israel or its allies, mostly with success. The US military killed 10 Houthi fighters and sank three of the Yemeni armed group's vessels after a clash in the Red Sea. This the Red Sea clash was the first major direct military engagement between the US military and Houthi fighters. Britain warned it will not hesitate in taking direct action against Houthis to prevent further attacks on shipping in the stretch. The Houthis are determined in a bid to pressure Israel to stop its devastating war and siege on the Gaza Strip that has killed almost 22,000 Palestinians included 10,000 plus children with 2.1 million people have been displaced. In the meantime, Iran's Alborz warship has entered the Red Sea, with the reports coming just hours after the US said it had sunk three ships, killing 10 Houthi fighters. Which made a serious threat of escalation because the US killed Houthi fighters, not only sank Houthi boats. Such confrontations are sparking fears of a regional escalation towards WW3.

A wider Middle East war drawing in the US and Iran. Indeed, the Gaza-Genocide is not about the claims of Israel protecting itself, but, this is all about oil. Indeed, IDF's Gaza war is to get illegal possession and control on Palestinian gas, focused on the 1.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas discovered in 2000 off the Gaza coast, valued at \$524 billion to avert Israeli energy crisis. The notorious overwhelming Israeli propaganda machinery has tried very hard to sell its official line but in vain. Israel's biggest failure was the attempt to make the world believe the claim that "Israel is committed to minimising civilian harm and abiding by international law". After unsuccessful attacks and heavy Israeli's military and economic damage and loss, now Israel has moved to withdraw and reduce its military presence in Gaza, bending to pressure after nearly three months of war. According to the Middle East Monitoring's report that Hamas killed about 2,100 Israeli soldiers and the number of war wounded Israeli soldiers is likely to reach approximately 20,000. Whereas, as per the head of the Israeli Defence Ministry's Rehabilitation Department, 58 per cent of soldiers have sustained injuries to their limbs, including amputation. Israelis do not see the tangible results of their sons', husbands' and brothers' deaths. The attitude towards losses is probably best demonstrated by the fact that the Golan Brigade, one of the army's oldest and most decorated units, was pulled from fighting after 172 of its soldiers died in combat. Israeli forces who claimed their overwhelming military and moral superiority, proved to lack either the capabilities or the willingness to decisively destroy the Hamas tunnel network. Some economists compare the war-shock to the Israeli economy to the corona virus pandemic in 2020, other say it might be worse. Gross domestic product will fall - from forecasts of 3 percent growth in 2023 to 1 percent in 2024, according to the Bank of Israel. Now, Policymakers and opinion leaders are now asking to Israel government how will the cost of the failure of war influence? It's estimated by economists that the war has cost the government about \$20 billion billion - or \$240 million a day. A war that lasts five to 10 more months could cost Israel as much as \$50 billion, according to the financial newspaper Calcalist. That would equal 10 percent of the country's GDP. Same during the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. leaders familiarized Americans with the concept of blood and treasure. But after events of the past few days, that risk appears to be becoming more serious. The centre of the danger is in the Red Sea, where Houthi forces based in Yemen have been attacking freighters with real or perceived links to Israel. The Houthis are a militia group that once ruled Yemen but was marginalised, since the 1962-70 civil war. They forced the government out in a 2014 coup, prompting a Saudi-led military intervention against them and a catastrophic civil war that the UN estimated to 377,000 deaths and displaced 4 million people by the end of 2021. The Houthis effectively won the war. An April 2022 ceasefire prompted a significant decline in violence, and fighting has largely remained in abeyance despite the official expiry of the truce in October. Most Yemenis now live in areas under the control, of Houthis now running most of the north of the country and in charge of its Red Sea coastline. The Houthis from Yemen have been targeting ships since November to show their support for Hamas. In response, many major shipping companies have stopped sending their ship through the Suez Canal. The canal is a crucial trade route between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, handling about 12% of world trade, but an increasing number of ships now takes the longer and more costly route around Africa's Cape of Good Hope. Seven of the world's 10 biggest shipping companies, including BP and the German company Hapag-Lloyd, have suspended use of the Suez Canal and the Red Sea as a result of the crisis. Together with German shipping company Hapag-Lloyd, Maersk operates almost a quarter of the world's shipping fleet. While others have resumed service after the US organised a naval coalition to protect the area, many container ships are still using alternative routes, with many vessels travelling from Asia to Europe around southern Africa instead - a journey that can take up to two weeks longer. Data released by Flexport, a global logistics company, found that half of container ships were avoiding the region,

representing about 18% of global container capacity. That is driving up costs - with a surcharge of about \$5,000 (£3,927) per 40ft container likely to push rates to triple what they were before the crisis began. This new route is longer and costlier. While these attacks have had a fairly limited impact on the oil market so far, but that prices could rise if the situation continues. The US has offered protection to shipping travelling through the region, assembling a multinational naval coalition to uphold the foundational principle of freedom of navigation. Now, as Tehran rejects calls from Washington and London to end its support for the Houthis, an Iranian destroyer has sailed into the Red Sea. Meanwhile, the UK and US, potentially with another European country, are considering a warning about strikes on military installations in Yemen. There have been at least 27 attacks on vessels the Houthis believe are linked to Israel or its allies, mostly without success. The safety of shipping in the Red Sea is important to the US and western economy because it is an important trade route linking Asia to Europe and the US. Thirty per cent of global container traffic passes through the region, and any significant threat to its safety could have knock-on consequences for oil prices and the availability in the west of items produced in Asia. Israel is also heavily dependent on Red Sea traffic, with the vast majority of imports and exports travelling by sea. Many Yemenis see the operations as a legitimate means of exerting pressure on Israel and its allies in defence of Palestinian civilians, and the Houthis' intervention has helped shore up their domestic support. The Houthis militia also believe attacks in the Red Sea can make them a more significant global player. Meanwhile, the Saudis are attempting to normalise relations with Iran, and finalise a peace deal that could recognise Houthi control of the north of Yemen - and are anxious about any response from the US that could complicate its effort to withdraw from the country. The US has meanwhile been constrained by Saudi Arabia's concerns about the impact of a big attack on the Houthis on its attempts to finalise a peace deal in Yemen. And there are fears in Washington that any escalation could bolster Iranian influence in the region. Resultant, the Middle East has been slipping towards the precipice of another world war. If the threat in the Red Sea continues, shipping companies already avoiding the area are likely to continue to do so, with more following their example. Global oil prices have not yet been affected significantly by the crisis, and because of a belief that the route was reopening. Any sense that the threat is growing again with no effective exit strategy in place could prompt that change. The Houthis have shown no sign of being deterred, saying that unless humanitarian aid is allowed into Gaza and Israel stops its attacks, they will not stop harassing shipping even if America succeeds in mobilising the entire world. The safety of shipping in the Red Sea is important to the Europe and the US economy because it is a major trade route linking Asia to Europe and the US. Thirty per cent of global container traffic passes through the region, and any significant threat to its safety could have knock-on consequences for oil prices and the availability in the west of items produced in Asia. Israel itself is also heavily dependent on Red Sea traffic, with the vast majority of imports and exports travelling by sea. The Houthis are effectively winning the war, and many Yemenis see the operations as a legitimate means of exerting pressure on Israel and its allies in defence of Palestinian civilians. The tensions in the Red Sea are already exacting a human and economic cost. If the U.S. attacks do not change that calculus, the U.S. may finally decide to attack targets in Yemen, heightening tensions with Iran, and creating a risk of the wider confrontation. The Red Sea is a vital thoroughfare for shipborne cargo and energy exports. Worsening violence in the strategic waterway that links Europe and Asia could have far-reaching repercussions. The tensions in the Red Sea are already exacting a human and economic cost.

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Israel's War: Year of Palestinians's Genocide and Humanitarian Crisis!



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Since the start of the genocide in Gaza, more than 50,000 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli army, including around 41,870 recorded by the Gaza Ministry of Health, the majority being women and children. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) said Israel Must Prevent Genocidal Acts in Gaza. The Court's jurisdiction on Article 36, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the Court and on Article IX of the Genocide Convention allow as provisional measures, pursuant to Article 41 of the Statute of the Court and Articles 73, 74 and 75 of the Rules of Court, the Court must take provisional measures in order to protect against further, severe and irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people under the Genocide Convention and to ensure Israel's compliance with its obligations. In the midst of unrelenting carnage, the Gaza war has expanded its reach, ensnaring additional facets of the region. For twelve consecutive months, the beleaguered enclave has borne witness to scenes of unmitigated horror, as Israel's campaign of war against civilians persists with unyielding ferocity. In the past year in the Gaza Strip, Israel has bombed more than 90,000 targets on civilians, as a result Israel died own soldiers numbered were 5679 with Injured troops of Israel numbered 14,576. The precipice towards which events in the Middle East are hurtling with alarming velocity inspires a sense of terror. The initial year of conflict in Gaza has wrought the forced displacement of a staggering 95% of the populace. The singular nature of this displacement is trifurcated: the objective of the war is expulsion; the purpose of this expulsion is expansion into the territory; and the expulsion is intended to be permanent, precluding any possibility of return. These three aspects have constituted a constant in the history of the Palestinian people since the creation of the state of Israel in

1948. The calamitous failure of international law, both in the humanitarian sphere and regarding asylum, is exemplified by Gaza. The relentless pace of expanding war, destruction, and death is both mind-bending and soul-crushing for anyone with a connection to the region or who cares about the wellbeing of its people. Meanwhile, a wider war that has increasingly ensnared Iran and Israel in direct war threatens to engulf the remainder of the Middle East. Targeting Hezbollah and Lebanon could precipitate a wider and more perilous war, as Hamas and Hezbollah vow to continue their fight. Amidst this maelstrom, the fact that Israel has waged total war against the entirety of the Gaza Strip and its population for one year now risks being overshadowed. On October 1, Israel initiated a ground offensive in southern Lebanon, a move redolent of a similar 1982 invasion of the country's south by Israeli forces, which led to an 18-year occupation and a month-long war fought against Hezbollah in 2006. Less than 24 hours later, Iran launched a massive ballistic missiles attack on Israel.

The protracted war in Gaza has resulted in a substantial humanitarian crisis, with a reported 41,870 Palestinian fatalities in the past year, including approximately 16,000 children. In March, the United Nations reported that Israel had caused more child casualties in Gaza in recent months than in the preceding four years of global conflicts combined. Despite international condemnation for its actions, Israel has expanded its military operations, targeting Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Furthermore, around 100,000 individuals have been wounded, and over 10,000 are presumed dead beneath the rubble, according to health authorities in the enclave. The war has led to the forced displacement of approximately 1.9 million people, accounting for 90% of the population, with many experiencing multiple displacements. Additionally, nearly half a million individuals face catastrophic food insecurity, exacerbating the crisis. Israel's invasion of Rafah on May 6, 2023, despite international opposition, has resulted in the prolonged bombardment

of the southern Gaza city, which previously served as a refuge for approximately 1.4 million Palestinians fleeing Israeli airstrikes. Israeli warplanes targeted displaced people's tents and a water distillation unit in an area that a Gaza civil defence spokesperson said Israel had designated a "safe zone". The healthcare system in Gaza has been severely impacted, with most hospitals no longer operational. The attack was one of many massacres Israel committed in Gaza in the last year. Others were: Killing more than 100 people at the al-Tabin School in Gaza City on August 10; Killing 274 Palestinians at the Nuseirat refugee camp on June 8; Killing 45 people on May 27 in a refugee camp in the al-Mawasi area of Rafah, an attack known as the "Tent Massacre"; Killing 400 people in its March 18 to April 1 siege on al-Shifa Medical Complex; and Killing 118 people standing in line waiting for humanitarian aid at Gaza City's Nabulsi Roundabout on February 29 in the "Flour Massacre". The International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an order for Israel to immediately halt its military assault on Rafah in May 2023, but this directive was not complied with, resulting in the deaths of at least 90 Palestinians and injuries to hundreds in attacks on al-Mawasi, west of Khan Younis. The extent of the devastation has prompted warnings from the UN and other monitoring groups, emphasizing that Israel's actions are rendering Gaza uninhabitable. Recent data from the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Health Organization, and Palestinian officials in Gaza indicate that the attacks have resulted in the destruction or damage of over half of Gaza's homes, 80% of its commercial facilities, and 85% of the territory's schools. The scarcity of food, drinking water, and temporary shelter materials has led to a reliance on international relief organizations for support. The humanitarian situation is further compounded by the fact that people in Gaza are limited to one meal every other day, with an estimated 50,000 children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years requiring urgent treatment for malnutrition. The United Nations reports that approximately 1 million Lebanese have fled their homes amid the Israeli airstrikes, while Israeli authorities indicate that around 63,000 Israelis remain displaced from the border area with Lebanon due to Hezbollah rocket fire. The Lancet has reported that deaths related to the conflict, including those due to malnutrition or lack of medical attention, are estimated to have reached 186,000 in June 2024. These figures suggest that 85% of Gaza's population have been forced to flee their homes, with 8% of the population, primarily women and children, believed to have perished during the offensive. The military campaign in Gaza has resulted in a higher daily death rate than any other 21st-century armed war, prompting the International Court of Justice to conclude that genocide charges against Israel cannot be population in Gaza, the actual number is presumed to be significantly higher. Thousands of individuals remain buried under the rubble of destroyed buildings or are unaccounted for, and numerous others are likely to succumb to the ongoing bombing and the dire conditions created by Israel's military campaign. Since October 8, 2023, Hezbollah publicly declared its support for the Gaza population and announced its entry into the conflict, stating that its involvement would cease upon the declaration of a

ceasefire. This resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of individuals on both sides of the border, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region. In a related development, the Houthis, allies of Hamas who control parts of Yemen, including the capital Sanaa, initiated their first attack in the Red Sea on November 19, 2023. They have since launched approximately 130 attacks Lebanon on vessels allegedly linked to Israel in a critical trade route. In response to these attacks, United States and British warplanes commenced bombing Yemen on January 12, 2024, resulting in the deaths of five fighters. However, these attacks failed to halt the Houthis' military activities against vessels in the Red Sea. The Houthis' vowed that their attacks are in support of the people of Gaza has garnered significant in Yemen, leading to the recruitment and training of approximately 200,000 new fighters since October 2023. The conflict expanded to Lebanon on September 17, 2024, when thousands of pagers and walkie-talkie radios exploded, marking a significant escalation of the war. On September 23, 2023, Israel launched a direct attack on Lebanon, targeting the southern region, the Bekaa Valley in the east, and the southern suburb of Dahiyeh in Beirut, resulting in at least 550 casualties. Subsequently, on September 27, 2023, Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, was assassinated in a substantial attack on Dahiyeh that demolished several apartment buildings. The attack involved approximately 80 bombs, claiming the lives of at least six individuals and injuring 90 others. Following Nasrallah's assassination, Israel promptly issued directives for the evacuation of extensive areas in Dahiyeh. According to Lebanon's Health Ministry, the conflict has resulted in over 2,000 fatalities in Lebanon since its inception. Notably, Israel's military operations in Gaza have claimed the lives of a greater number of women and children than in any other conflict in the past two decades.

The expulsion-expansion pairing has been a constant in the history of the Palestinian people since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Then, the Nakba led to the death of 15,000 people and the forced displacement of 800,000. In 1967, with the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, a further 300,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes. The expulsions have not stopped since. In the West Bank, they have been achieved through land seizures, the demolition of homes, the expansion of illegal settlements, and as a result of severe restrictions on movement within the territory. October 7th has only accelerated these processes, with a surge in attacks and murders perpetrated by settlers and punitive incursions on the part of the Israeli army. The history of the Palestinian people since 1948 shows that more expulsions of Palestinians spell further Israeli expansion. Given the circumstances, one might ask what the role of the United Nations has been as guarantor of the observance of international law and the protection of civilians. The convention on refugees Article 33, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Article 6 and 7 and the Convention Against Torture Article 3 all oblige states not to turn people away at their borders if returning them could pose a risk to their lives. Given the circumstances of extreme emergency in Gaza, there is no doubt that rejection at the border with Egypt

could well present such a case. If so, Egypt, as a signatory to the refugee convention, and by extension UNHCR, would be responsible. Yet neither Egypt nor UNHCR, which has barely commented on the issue of Palestinian refugees in Gaza, appears willing to acknowledge that responsibility. As they are expelled by the Israel and shunned by neighbouring states, the Palestinian refugee issue has become a key element of international relations. It is what we might define as the geopoliticisation of migration. We must return to international law and reconcile what is politically possible with what is acceptable and fair, or in other words, political equilibriums with legal principles. Like any forcibly displaced person, the Palestinian people have the right to rebuild their lives in a safe place and with dignity. Anything else, that is to say continuing to prioritise interests over rights, is unacceptable, essentially because renouncing our common humanity can only be synonymous with barbarism.



The Siege of Kashmir: A Reflection on Decades of Militarization and Human Rights Violations!

August 5th marks a sombre day in the history of Kashmir, a region that has endured decades of suffering and resilience in the face of Indian brutalities. Since 1947, Kashmir has been subjected to military occupation, human rights violations, and unspeakable atrocities. 5 Years of Military Siege in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) have completed. The abrogation of Article 370 by the Indian government on August 5, 2019, marked a new chapter in the Kashmir conflict. Article 370 granted special autonomy to the region, allowing it to have its own constitution and limited independence over matters except for foreign affairs, defence, finance, and communications. The revocation of this special status was met with widespread protests in Kashmir and condemnation from Pakistan. The Kashmir conflict, rooted in the violent partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, has been one of the most enduring and bloody conflicts in modern history. The region of Jammu and Kashmir, nestled between India and Pakistan, has witnessed over seven decades of political strife, military confrontations, and, most tragically, the relentless suffering of its people. Each year, Kashmir Siege Day is observed to remind the world of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the region—a crisis marked by widespread human rights abuses, including mass killings, disappearances, torture, and sexual violence. Since 1947, the Kashmir conflict has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people. According to various human rights organizations and local sources, more than 427,000 people have been killed in the conflict, with the majority of the casualties being civilians. The physical scars of the Kashmir conflict are visible in the thousands of people who have been injured or maimed over the years. According to local estimates, over 916,000 people have been injured in the conflict since 1947, many of them permanently disabled. The report also mentioned the destruction of 210,367 civilian properties including houses and structures and the gang-rape/molestation of 21,219 women by the troops during the period to expose the reality of the Indian Army's Sadbhavana-like operations. The



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conflict has seen various phases of violence, including three full-scale wars between India and Pakistan (1947-48, 1965, and 1971), numerous skirmishes, and a full-blown insurgency that began in the late 1980s. Unending hostility between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir dispute has been witnessed by the entire international community for the last seven decades. Kashmir is the most violent and volatile conflict zone between two nuclear rivals – India & Pakistan in South Asia. The conflict becomes more fragile when the stakeholders are nuclear-armed because it certainly risks regional and international peace. The continuing curfew in Indian-held Kashmir in the backdrop of revoking Article 370 and 35(A) on 5th August 2019, heavy military presence, media blackout, kidnapping of young boys, brutal patterns of violence and suppression of masses' voices have ignited a wave of protest and condemnation from the global community, which is emphasizing on a peaceful and sustainable resolution of long-standing Kashmir conflict. Since 5th August 2019, the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35(A) has given the Kashmir conflict a different dimension. It has not only changed the autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) but also compromised the safeguarding of the demographic status of J&K as a Muslim-majority state in India. Since 1947, India and Pakistan have been locked into continuous adverse relations due to the conflict in Kashmir and do not find a common ground to bring peace to the region. Therefore, peace is an urgent need to address and redress the grievances of Kashmiris. In the decades that followed, the death toll continued to rise. The insurgency led to a heavy militarization of the region, with Kashmir becoming one of the most militarized zones in the world. Reports from human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have documented numerous instances of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and summary executions by Indian security forces. The Indian government, while acknowledging some incidents of human rights abuses, has largely defended its actions as necessary to combat terrorism and maintain law and order in the region. The use of pellet guns by Indian security forces, particularly in response to protests, has drawn international condemnation. These weapons, intended to be non-lethal, have caused horrific injuries, with hundreds of people, including children, losing their eyesight or suffering severe facial injuries. The psychological trauma inflicted on the people of Kashmir is im-

measurable. The constant presence of security forces, the frequent imposition of curfews, and the pervasive atmosphere of fear and uncertainty have left deep mental scars on the population. Cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety are widespread, particularly among children who have grown up in the conflict zone. Sexual violence has been one of the most harrowing aspects of the Kashmir conflict. The use of rape as a weapon of war has been documented in several instances, with women and girls being subjected to brutal acts of violence by both state and non-state actors. One of the most infamous cases is the Kunan Poshpora incident of 1991, where soldiers from the Indian Army allegedly raped between 23 and 100 women in the twin villages of Kunan and Poshpora. Despite the outcry and the subsequent legal battles, justice has remained elusive for the victims, with the case still languishing in the courts decades later.

In the immediate aftermath of the abrogation, the Indian government imposed a strict lockdown in the region, cutting off all communication channels, including internet and mobile phone services. Thousands of additional troops were deployed to enforce the lockdown, leading to what has been described as the most severe siege in Kashmir's recent history. The lockdown had a devastating impact on the daily lives of Kashmiris. The communication blackout left the population isolated from the rest of the world, unable to contact family members or access essential services. The heavy military presence and the imposition of curfews severely restricted movement, making it difficult for people to access medical care, education, and even basic necessities like food and water. The lockdown also had a significant economic impact on the region, with businesses forced to close and tourism, a major source of income for many Kashmiris, coming to a standstill. The education of thousands of children was disrupted, with schools and colleges remaining closed for months. Despite the harsh measures, the Kashmiri people continued to resist, using whatever means were available to them. Protests erupted across the region, with people taking to the streets to express their anger and frustration. The Indian government's response was predictably harsh, with security forces using tear gas, pellet guns, and live ammunition to disperse the crowds. Reports of arbitrary arrests, beatings, and torture of protesters, including minors, further inflamed tensions. The resilience of the Kashmiri people in the face of decades of oppression is nothing short of remarkable. Despite the overwhelming odds, they have continued to resist the occupation and assert their right to self-determination. This resistance has taken many forms, from armed struggle to peaceful protests, from political activism to art and literature. The freedom of Kashmir that began in the late 1980s was driven by a sense of betrayal and disillusionment with the Indian state, which had promised autonomy and self-determination but failed to deliver. Many of them young men, took up arms against the Indian state, driven by a desire for independence or, in some cases, accession to Pakistan. The Indian government's response was brutal, with widespread human rights abuses committed by security forces in the name of counterinsurgency. In recent years, however, there has been a shift towards non-violent resistance. Civil society in Kashmir has played a crucial role in documenting human rights abuses, providing support to the victims, and keeping the struggle for justice alive. Human rights activists, journalists, and lawyers have worked tirelessly, often at great personal risk, to expose the reality of life in Kashmir and advocate for the rights of its people. Art and literature have also become powerful tools of resistance. Kashmiri poets, writers, and artists have used their work to express the pain, suffering, and resilience of their people. Their work serves not only as a form of resistance but also as a means of preserving the cultural heritage of Kashmir, which is under threat from the ongoing conflict. The international response to the Kashmir conflict has been a mix of condemnation, silence, and complicity. While some countries and international organizations have spoken out against the human rights abuses in Kashmir, many others have remained silent, either out of political expediency or fear of damaging relations with India, a rising global power. The

United Nations has passed several resolutions on Kashmir, calling for a plebiscite to determine the region's future and urging respect for human rights. However, these resolutions have been largely ignored, and the UN has been criticized for its failure to take concrete action to resolve the conflict. Human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Commission of Jurists, have documented numerous cases of human rights violations in Kashmir, calling for accountability and justice for the victims. These organizations have also highlighted the culture of impunity that exists in the region, with security forces rarely held accountable for their actions. However, despite these efforts, there has been little progress in addressing the human rights situation in Kashmir. The Indian government has dismissed many of these reports as biased and politically motivated and has continued to deny access to international observers and journalists. The role of the United States, the European Union, and other major powers has been particularly disappointing. While these countries have expressed concern over the situation in Kashmir, they have largely refrained from taking any meaningful action, preferring to maintain their strategic and economic ties with India. This has led to accusations of double standards, with critics pointing out that these same countries have been quick to condemn human rights abuses in other parts of the world.

Despite these unimaginable hardships, the people of Kashmir remain steadfast in their pursuit of freedom and self-determination. Their resilience is a testament to the human spirit's capacity for courage and hope. As we reflect on Kashmir Siege Day, we honour the memories of those who have suffered and continue to suffer. We also recommit ourselves to supporting the Kashmiri people's struggle for justice and human rights. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is an unresolved agenda of Britain and a disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Both parties acknowledged the disputed status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the UN Security Council resolutions of August 13, 1948, and on January 5, 1949, both the two countries were considered a party. UN resolutions remain operative and cannot be unilaterally disregarded by either party. As agreed in the UN Security Council resolutions peaceful and bilateral negotiations would be made between India and Pakistan over the future status of Jammu and Kashmir. It, therefore, entails a fair, free and internationally supervised plebiscite that should be aimed at securing the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir. The current status shows both positions on Kashmir, as Pakistan is, in favour of the UN plebiscite as per the wishes of the Kashmiri people. The future of Kashmir remains uncertain. The conflict shows no signs of resolution, with both India and Pakistan refusing to compromise on their respective positions. The people of Kashmir, caught in the middle of this geopolitical struggle, continue to suffer, with no end in sight to their ordeal. However, despite the bleak situation, there is still hope. The resilience and determination of the Kashmiri people, coupled with growing international awareness of their plight, offer a glimmer of hope for the future. The increasing global focus on human rights and justice, particularly in the wake of movements like Black Lives Matter and the global response to the Rohingya crisis, suggests that the world may finally be waking up to the suffering of the Kashmiri people. For any meaningful progress to be made, however, it is crucial that the international community takes a more active role in resolving the conflict. This includes not only holding India accountable for its human rights abuses but also addressing the underlying political issues that have fueled the conflict for decades. The people of Kashmir must be given the opportunity to determine their own future, free from external interference and coercion. As we reflect on Kashmir Siege Day, we are reminded of the immense suffering and resilience of the Kashmiri people. For over seven decades, they have endured unimaginable hardships, from mass killings and sexual violence to enforced disappearances and economic deprivation. Yet, despite these challenges, they have continued to resist, to fight for their rights, and to demand justice. The international community must not turn a blind eye to the plight of the Kashmiri people. It is our collective responsibility to stand with them in their struggle for freedom and dignity. Only by acknowledging the truth, holding the perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable, and working towards a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict can we hope to bring an end to the suffering of the Kashmiri people. As we observe Kashmir Siege Day, let us not only remember the victims of this long and brutal conflict but also renew our commitment to advocating for their rights and supporting their quest for justice. The people of Kashmir deserve nothing less. Regrettably, even the UN is not in a position to play any positive role without the support of the pro-Indian powers enjoying veto power. That is a stark reality. The international community and the UN, if they ever feel their obligation towards them as per the UN resolution that the Kashmir dispute could be resolved. Pakistan for which Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of the partition will and must continue to persist with its moral, political and diplomatic support to the freedom struggle in IOK as long as it does not succeed.

Despite these unimaginable hardships, the people of Kashmir remain steadfast in their pursuit of freedom and self-determination. Their resilience is a testament to the human spirit's capacity for courage and hope



Mission US: Gen. Asim's successful visit resets US-Pakistan relationship

General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), COAS called on key US Government and Military officials during his ongoing visit to US including, Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, General Lloyd J. Austin (Retired), Secretary of Defence, Victoria Nuland, Deputy Secretary of State, Jonathan Finer, Deputy National Security Adviser and General Charles Q. Brown, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, and secretary general of the United Nations during his visit. This was Munir's first visit to the US since being appointed army chief last year. General



Munir arrived in Washington on his first official visit to the US since he became Pakistan's army chief in November 2022. Pakistani military commanders have often visited the US during their tenures as Islamabad and Washington have for decades remained allies over issues ranging from regional stability particularly the war in Afghanistan. He was also accompanied by Director General Inter-Services Intelligence Lt. General Na-deem Anjum. The successful visit of the army

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chief would increase cooperation between the two countries in various fields. With the visit of Gen Munir, Pakistan's point of view on important issues is also effectively highlighted. Matters of bilateral interests, global and regional security issues, and ongoing conflicts were discussed during the meetings. Both sides agreed to continue engagement for exploring potential avenues of bilateral collaboration in pursuit of shared interests. During the meetings with defence officials, counter terrorism cooperation and defence collaboration were identified as core areas of cooperation. Both sides reiterated the intent to increase interaction and explore ways to expand the scope of mutually beneficial engagements. The meetings came amid Israel's ongoing strikes on Gaza, and after Indian top court's validation of New Delhi's

revocation of Indian-administered Kashmir's autonomy in 2019. COAS underscored the importance of understanding each other's perspectives on regional security issues and developments affecting strategic stability in South Asia," the ISPR said. COAS underscored the importance of understanding each other's perspectives on regional security issues and developments affecting strategic stability in South Asia. In this context, COAS especially highlighted the importance of resolving the Kashmir Issue in accordance with international law and relevant UNSC resolutions. During his ongoing visit to the US, General Asim Munir also called on António Guterres, the UN secretary general, at the UN Headquarters in New York. Guterres warmly welcomed the visit by the COAS and appreciated the contributions made by the Pakistan Army and contingents of law enforcement agencies that have remained committed to the peace and stability of the world. The COAS reaffirmed Pakistan's continuous support to the United Nations in all its earnest efforts. During his interaction, the army chief particularly highlighted the ongoing Kashmir and Gaza issues. He said that peace in South Asia would remain elusive until a peaceful solution to the longstanding Kashmir dispute was found in accordance with the UNSC resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Gen Munir also condemned the unilateral and illegal Indian efforts to change the status of Jammu and Kashmir as it was in violation of the UN Security Council Resolutions. COAS especially highlighted the importance of resolving the Kashmir Issue in accordance with international law and relevant UNSC (United Nations Security Council) resolutions. He reiterated Pakistan's stance on the Palestine issue and urged the UN secretary general to mobilize the international community for immediate cessation of hostilities in Gaza to prevent the unfolding human tragedy, and highlighted that an enduring solution to the issue lies in the two-state solution. The army chief particularly shared deep concerns over the plight of innocent civilians, who are being brutally targeted and not being provided with sufficient humanitarian relief. Guterres acknowledged the concerns and thanked General Asim Munir for his visit to the UN Headquarters. COAS also interacted with the Pakistani overseas community. In a reception hosted by Embassy of Pakistan, COAS met members of the Pakistani community and appreciated the positive role being played by Pakistani overseas community towards the country's progress and development. He also encouraged the diaspora to invest through SIFC which is already yielding success in various dimensions, and also highlighted that US is the largest export market for Pakistan constituting 21.5 % of our total exports.

Army Chief said that Pakistani diaspora anywhere around the world is held in high regard as they are ambassadors of Pakistan and contribute significantly to Pakistan in varying domains. Members of the Pakistani community expressed their pride in role and contributions of Pakistan Army towards well being of Pakistan. No doubt, Pakistani diaspora anywhere around the world is held in high regard as they are ambassadors of Pakistan and contribute significantly to Pakistan in varying domains.

Pakistani Army chief Asim Munir visited Washington at a time when the U.S.-Pakistan relationship was unsettled. Although bilateral ties were relatively stable and crisis-free, but the future is uncertain. Washington and Islamabad have struggled to find new anchors for their partnership since U.S. forces left Afghanistan in 2021. General Asim Munir's visit to U.S. underscores the deep-rooted and historically shared strong military, economic, cultural and longstanding diplomatic ties between Pakistan and U.S. The visit serves as a platform to further enhance these ties and explore avenues for future collaboration. This strategic alliance has been characterised by mutual support in various international forums and a shared commitment to regional stability and security. A visit from the leader of Pakistan's powerful military offers opportunities for a reset, but policy divergences may make that difficult. Gen. Munir is different from his immediate predecessors in the army chief role. However, Gen. Munir is a soldier to the core. He was born in Rawalpindi, home to Pakistan's military headquarters, and he quickly rose through the ranks. Like many previous Pakistani Army chiefs, he seeks friendly relations with Washington. In his nearly 13 months in the role, he has met twice in Rawalpindi with Michael Kurilla, the commander of U.S. Central Command, and has spoken twice by phone with U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. A legacy of education and training exchanges between the United States and Pakistan, officer-to-officer relations have long been warm—despite tensions over many issues. But Gen. Munir always has a practical approach especially when Pakistan's economy is in crisis, and the United States is its top export destination and a key source of aid. Gen. Munir also wants to tap into shared concerns about Afghanistan-based terrorist groups to help address a resurgence of militancy in Pakistan, led by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), especially an attack by a TTP affiliate killed 23 troops in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. However, the top U.S. security concern in Afghanistan is Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), and in recent months, U.S. officials acknowledged that Taliban operations have reduced the IS-K threat, suggesting the United States has less of an incentive to partner with Pakistan. After the success of Gen. Munir's visit, he and his U.S. interlocutors may find common ground on non-security issues in Afghanistan, such as the delivery of humanitarian aid. Another major U.S. concern is Pakistan's recent decision to expel 1.7 million undocumented Afghans. The Biden administration wants to ensure that those waiting for special immigration visas to the United States—including many people who worked with the U.S. military—won't end up back in Afghanistan. The Biden administration wants to shift the focus of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship away from Afghanistan and security issues and toward trade and investment. Because Pakistan's military chiefs exert influence over public policy, Munir may bring these issues up himself in economic recovery efforts. But for Washington, commercial cooperation won't be a realistic anchor for partnership until Islamabad's economy is more stable. The Biden administration would want to hear from Gen. Munir on Russia's war in Ukraine and as well as on the war in Gaza, as Pakistan backs the Palestinians and Gen. Munir, who once served in Saudi Arabia, also has close ties to the Persian Gulf states that are key to wartime diplomacy. Moreover, U.S. officials also wanted to discuss China, as Pakistan has recently signaled a desire to achieve more balance in its relations with the United States and China. As Pakistan looks to the future, Gen Munir's visits and contributions are poised to set a challenging target and leave a lasting legacy. No doubt, General

Asim Munir's visit to U.S. for the development, Strategic and economic prosperity of Pakistan have been instrumental in shaping the nation's path towards progress. As General Syed Asim Munir successfully completed his one year as Army Chief, and during his successful tenure, he expressed his determination and assured to steer Pakistan out of the prevailing crises. Whenever the country faced difficult times, the Pakistan Army responded with the hard work for the people.

One year of his service has culminated at a record breaking success stories. When the chief of the Pakistani army took the lead to save the country from the crisis, economy came out of the ventilator and started breathing. His new professional journey began at a time when there was political turmoil in the country; when the country was suffering from inflation, and there were diplomatic challenges. Despite not being in the spotlight throughout his one-year tenure, Gen Munir's behind-the-scenes efforts have significantly contributed to the overall stability of the country. His robust support for the government and the active role of the army played a pivotal role in steering Pakistan away from financial and economic default. Under his leadership, foreign relations have seen a positive transformation, with strengthened ties with the United States, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and China. Gen Munir's adept backdoor diplomacy has played a crucial role in fostering these relationships. In a short span of one year, Gen Asim Munir has left an indelible mark on Pakistan's economy and diplomatic relations. His tenure has been characterized by resilience, strategic vision, and a commitment to the nation's Pakistan out of the prevailing crises. Whenever the country faced difficult times, the Pakistan Army responded with the hard work for the people. One year of his service has culminated at a record breaking success stories. When the chief of the Pakistani army took the lead to save the country from the crisis, economy came out of the ventilator and started breathing. His new professional journey began at a time when there was political turmoil in the country; when the country was suffering from inflation, and there were diplomatic challenges. Despite not being in the spotlight throughout his one-year tenure, Gen Munir's behind-the-scenes efforts have significantly contributed to the overall stability of the country. His robust support for the government and the active role of the army played a pivotal role in steering Pakistan away from financial and economic default. Under his leadership, foreign relations have seen a positive transformation, with strengthened ties with the United States, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and China. Gen Munir's adept backdoor diplomacy has played a crucial role in fostering these relationships. In a short span of one year, Gen Asim Munir has left an indelible mark on Pakistan's economy and diplomatic relations. His tenure has been characterized by resilience, strategic vision, and a commitment to the nation's make Pakistan green again as Allah almighty has blessed the country with various resources. Longer term, the economy may prove to be the stiffer challenge because it is not so amenable to military control as politics and internal security. The difficulty is compounded by Pakistan's fraught foreign relations, as the government can no longer automatically count on largesse from its allies in the United States and the Middle East, who in the waning years of the Cold War and immediately afterward allowed the country to service its debt and stay afloat as a rentier state. Boosting exports could be a starter, Pakistan still hopes the U.S., China, and other international partners will step in to help it avoid defaulting on international loans. COAS Munir hailed the government's plans for uplift, expressing his confidence in the transformation of the different sectors in landscape of Pakistan. Under his leadership, Pakistan will witness a development and economic revolution. General Asim Munir called on all the stakeholders to develop a national consensus to confront challenges posed by the economy and terrorism. As

General Asim's visit to U.S. underscores the deep-rooted and historically shared strong military, economic, cultural and longstanding diplomatic ties between Pakistan and U.S. characterised by mutual support in various international forums for regional stability and security.



Pakistan continues to build upon the legacy of General Munir's vision, it moves towards a more prosperous and promising future. Pakistan Army takes pride in serving its nation, with the dedication to the welfare of the people and the country. The army belonged to the people, and the people belonged to the army, emphasising the strong bond between the armed forces and the civilians. General Asim Munir's vision for Development and Economic Prosperity of Pakistan is based on our social responsibility to play our collective role in the country's economy. The visit to U.S. underscores the deep-rooted and longstanding diplomatic ties between Pakistan and U.S. This strategic alliance has been characterised by mutual support in various international forums and a shared commitment to regional stability and security. General Munir's visit exemplifies the importance of diplomatic engagement and cooperation in addressing complex regional challenges and underscores the enduring relationship between Pakistan and U.S. in their quest for peace and stability.



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Lawyers Welfare and Protection Act, 2023 is enacted to provide welfare and protection of advocates through this legal framework and for the matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The Lawyers Welfare and Protection Act 2023 is a crucial legislation aimed at providing security and protection to advocates and legal professionals in Pakistan. The act was enacted in response to the rising incidents of violence against lawyers, which often undermine the fair, impartial, and fearless conduct of legal proceedings before courts, tribunals, and authorities. The profession of lawyers plays a pivotal role in the administration of justice, the defense of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. However, the recent incidents of assault, criminal force, intimidation and threats caused to advocates, while they discharge their professional duties, have reached alarming heights. The Act defines in detail the categories which fall within the four corners of 'act of violence' against an advocate. The offence of committing an act of violence against an advocate is punishable for a term of three years or a fine which may extend to One Lakh Rupees or both. This has also resulted in law and order situations and deficiencies in rendering professional services by advocates to their clients apart from causing a deep sense of fear in the minds of advocates. In order to protect advocates from the said assaults, criminal force, intimidation and threats, it is necessary to enact a legislation to protect advocates while discharging their professional duties. In this regards, a Bill namely "The Lawyers Welfare and Protection Bill, 2023" has been prepared and passed wherein, a mechanism has been devised to ensure that the advocates can render professional services without fear or external influence for the ultimate cause of the administration of justice and the rule of law. This law is also in consonance with the various UN General Assembly Resolutions and in line with the Eighth United Nations Congress held in September, 1990 at Havana, Cuba, where it has adopted the "Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers" which provides that the Governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference and where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities. If a person gets convicted under Lawyers Welfare and Protection Act, 2023 for the second time for a subsequent offence he may get imprisonment for a term of five years and a fine

Lawyers Welfare and Protection Act, 2023 and our Judicial System

of Two Lakhs Rupees. The act of violence against a lawyer is non-bailable. Special Courts are to be established under this Act for trying offences. The Lawyers Welfare and Protection Act, 2023 talks about welfare of advocates which includes the right of having legal advisory, legal remedy for facing any difficulty in obtaining the financial facility, shuhada package. The new law has triggered equivocal responses amongst the community. Chapter II of the law titled 'Offence and Punishments' relates to the same. An act of violence is defined under Section 2(1) (a) of the Act as: "Any act committed by any person against an advocate with the intent to prejudice, affect or derail the process of impartial, fair and fearless conduct of cases before any court, tribunal or authority by which such advocate is engaged and shall include (i) harassment, coercion, assault, criminal force... (ii) harm, injury, hurt either grievous or simple, or danger to the life of such advocate, either within the premises of the courts or otherwise... (iii) coercion by whatsoever means, by any person or authority to reveal or part with privileged communication or material which an advocate is bound...". Offences and punishments are governed by Section 3 of the Act. The language of the law states that any person committing the purported act/abetting the commission of the act of violence against an advocate shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or fine extending to Rs100,000 or with both. Repeat offenders of the same offence are also addressed in Section 3(2) with harsher fines and sentences. Over the past few decades, lawyers in Pakistan have been subjected to acts of mass terrorism, murder, attempted murder, assaults, harassment and intimidation, as well as judicial harassment and torture in detention, merely for engaging in their professional duties as lawyers. Section 3(4) additionally fortifies the protection of advocates by making the offences committed under the Act "non-bailable, compoundable with the permission of the court and deemed to be a cognizable offense...". Section 7 of the law provides a stipulated time frame within which trials are to be concluded within six months, alternatively where the stipulated time frame is not complied with, reasons shall be recorded by the court. Superficially, Section 9 of the Act distinguishes itself as the *creme de la creme*, 'Privileged communication of advocate'. Section 9(a) states that "no person, public servant or any authority shall have the power to arrest, detain, investigate any advocate under any law for the time being in force to obtain any document, material or any information pertaining to his professional duties". Section 9(b) further elaborates by making any violation of Section 9(a) an "act of violence" as defined by Section 2(1)(a) of the Act. Consequently, considering the ongoing turmoil in the country, Section 9 plays its part by providing a blanket immunity to advocates in possession of privileged communication. This, in turn, will empower advocates to ensure much smoother and streamlined dispensation of their duties without fear or external influence as the

upholders, maintainers and protectors of human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the constitution. Chapter III of the Act titled 'Welfare of Advocates' addresses a much-underrated aspect of the legal profession given the recent economic and financial slump. Section 10 of the Act requires every incorporated company having more than Rs20 million paid up share capital, autonomous body, corporation or statutory authority to engage at least one practicing advocate as its legal advisor on a retainer-ship basis. Section 13 provides an advocate who is the victim of any act of terrorism or other aggression faced while performing his/her professional duty and whose assailants are unknown entitlement to the 'shuhada' package as is admissible to gazetted officers in BPS-18 of the government. The provision of the shuhada package for advocates is laudable as we have witnessed time after time how lawyers became victims of heinous crimes in the line of duty. The federal government has the power to make rules in order to carry out the purposes of the Act. The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any law for the time being in force. The provisions of the Code, to the extent not inconsistent with anything contained in this Act, shall apply mutation mutants. The Lawyers Welfare and Protection Act 2023 is a significant milestone in ensuring the safety and security of advocates and legal professionals in Pakistan. By imposing strict punishments for acts of violence against lawyers and establishing a designated court, the act promotes a fair and just legal system. Its enactment creates an environment where legal professionals can carry out their duties without fear, guaranteeing an impartial, fair, and

“ A true picture of the state of the justice system and the administration of justice will emerge from the functioning of the courts and the number of cases pending. ”

fearless legal process in Pakistan. The law aims to make provisions for the welfare and protection of advocates. But, indeed, Lawyers are the essential agents of the administration of justice in any functioning society. Their cause and purpose include upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms recognised by national and international law. The profession of law is charged with the peaceful protection of every public right in the state, of every civil and religious right of the people in the state, and so the security and order of society. Life, liberty and property are in the ultimate safe-keeping of the legal profession. According to the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2022-23, which measures whether ordinary people can resolve their grievances through the social justice system, Pakistan's worst score in the world, and worldwide is 139. Unfortunately, in the Pakistani case, the performance of our judges has always been in demand. There are many reasons for this malpractice but one of the most important reasons is the Pakistani Justice System for this long-standing trend. Fifty-three thousand cases are pending in the Supreme Court, about 300,000 and five high courts and about 2.8 million cases in four

provinces and the state capital, according to the Pakistan Law and Justice Commission. Over the past five years, the number of cases pending in the Supreme Court has more than doubled to reach the highest level in the last 20 years. In 2006, the number of pending cases was 13,724. Today that has tripled. In 1873, the chief justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, Edward G Ryan described the function of the legal profession in a government of law in the following words: "Society has instituted and set apart a body of men, trained to the knowledge and practice of the law; learned in its principles and processes, to interpret the law to society, to guide the business of society under the law, to protect the legal rights of society and its members, to look to the intelligent and faithful course of judicial proceedings, and to stand charged with the holy office of the administration of God's justice among men." Throughout history, we have seen competent individuals who were both lawyers and civil rights activists and firmly believed in the notion of constitutional supremacy coupled with the dispensation of justice for all regardless of colour, caste or creed. Substantially, the language and intent of the law, in toto, seems to trump the administration of justice; however, two issues remain unsettled. First, unless rules are promulgated expeditiously, the practicality and objects of the Act seem inefficacious. Second, and more importantly, does the act serve as a double-bitted axe, further intending to sanction and accredit an already turbulent and defiant group of individuals? Or does it irrefutably serve as a touchstone for protection and welfare of advocates? Now it's a time, that Lawyers must focus on speedy trials. There are about three million cases pending with the courts currently. The legal community should focus on pursuing the cases effectively without making their clients wait for years and become the torch-bearers of justice. There is an urgent need of judicial reforms in the Judicial System of Pakistan for speedy trial and to eliminate backlog of the pending old cases in Pakistan. The current system of governance in Pakistan is exploitative because it unjustly rewards the elite with excessive economic benefits by losing the poor contrary to Islamic law and social norms, which require the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. It denies the justice of the weak against the crimes of the powerful in society. There is a need for an ideal social justice system and the urgent policy action to be taken and to ensure that Pakistan becomes a Muslim welfare state in its true sense when the legal, social and economic exploitation of the poor and weak ends, enabling them to lead a dignified, God-given talent, and see their potential. We are talking about the independence of the judiciary and the strengthening of the administration of justice in order to provide justice and freedom for citizens. Only an effective and efficient justice system can ensure the enjoyment of basic rights by the average person. The level of civilization in society can be judged by entering their prisons. A true picture of the state of the justice system and the administration of justice will emerge from the functioning of the courts and the number of cases pending. Pakistan's post-colonial legal system is old-fashioned, facing modern challenges and failing to meet the country's growing needs for global integration, reliable trade transactions and justice for the common man. A framework for legal and judicial reforms urgently needed for speedy trial and to eliminate backlog of pending cases to ensure internal peace and harmony.



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Modi US visit: US-India strategic partnership and Pakistan

most consequential in the world. Pre-empting criticism, Modi portrayed India as the mother of democracy, as he put it, using the word democracy at 17 times in an hourlong speech, without caring the repression of Muslims and other minorities. Among other things, the Indian prime minister said that his country has grown from the world's 10th largest economy when he last addressed Congress in 2016 to the fifth largest today, almost as if determined to force the United States to see India as a near equal, not just an emerging power, but a great and rising one. Despite his warm greeting in the chamber, several liberal Democrats in Congress boycotted Modi's speech. The hypocrite and skepticism policy of Biden's strategy, the ease with which the Biden administration cast aside its commitment to supporting democracy over autocracy was breathtaking in its eagerness to please Indian Prime Minister. If the U.S. expects that it can flatter Modi into security commitments in the Indo-Pacific that will translate into military support against China if Taiwan becomes a conflict zone, the U.S. is deluding itself and has failed to understand what drives

as the Cold War ended and China's economic rise became a preoccupation of US foreign policy, India — with its size and economic heft — started to be seen as a key regional ally. Despite its improved ties with the US, however, India has continued to resist what it sees as a false choice between the US and countries like President Vladimir Putin's Russia. But as Russia wages war in Ukraine and Washington seeks to isolate Moscow economically and diplomatically, that balancing act has become more difficult for India to maintain. While India has increased its purchase of weapons from countries such as France and the US and recently agreed on a roadmap to increase cooperation with the US defence industry, it remains the world's largest importer of Russian arms. India has also joined China in buying up Russian oil at discounted prices, while the US and the European Union angle to limit Russia's power in the global energy market. India's status as a central player in Washington's Asia strategy gives it significant leverage. Its ties to Russia are not likely to get in the way of its relationship with the US. Anyway, India

ment to designate India as a country of particular concern. But, the United States has set human rights issues aside in order to strengthen ties. To mark their ties, the two leaders rolled out a long list of joint initiatives on telecommunications, semiconductors, artificial intelligence and other areas. Modi agreed to sign the Artemis Accords, a set of principles governing peaceful exploration of the moon, Mars and other celestial bodies, and the two announced a joint mission to the International Space Station in 2024. The United States and India will open additional consulates in each other's country. Among the most concrete agreements was a deal between General Electric and the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to manufacture in India F414 engines used to power the Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet. The two sides also announced that India would proceed with a long-stalled \$3 billion purchase of MQ-9B Predator drones from General Atomics. The military hardware sales may help wean India off Russian arms suppliers. Biden administration officials suggested the meeting was just one step in an evolution of India's stance on the Ukraine war, part of what they characterized as bending the arc of India's engagement. But Modi again stressed the need for dialogue and diplomacy, without condemning Russia's attack of a neighboring country. The Indo-Pacific is where the US possibly needs India's influence more than anywhere else right now. The US has long viewed India as a counterbalance to China's growing influence in the region, but Delhi has never been fully comfortable with owning the tag. It may still be reluctant to do so but China continues to be one of the main catalysts driving India-US relations. But India has not shied away from taking decisions that irk China. It held a military drill with US forces last year in Uttarakhand state, which shares a Himalayan border with China. Delhi has also continued to actively participate in the Quad — which also includes the US, Australia and Japan — despite angry reactions from Beijing. Indian diplomacy has been getting more assertive about saying that this is the country's moment on the global stage. It has good reason — India is one of the few economic bright spots in the world right now. Geopolitics is also in its favour — most countries want a manufacturing alternative to China, and India also has a huge market with a burgeoning middle class. This makes it a good option for countries and global firms pursuing a China plus one policy. India relies on Moscow for nearly 50% of its defence needs. India is the world's biggest arms importer and Russia still accounts for a major chunk of it at 45%, which Moscow's share used to be 65% until 2016 — that's where the US sees an opportunity. Washington's share has grown but it's still just 11%, behind France's 29%. So some big-ticket defence deals are inevitable. The US is now India's top trading partner at \$130bn, but there is still huge untapped potential. The timing of the visit is also interesting as both countries will hold elections next year and the two leaders will be looking at sellable headlines for their domestic audiences.



President Biden emphasized common ground with Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India during a lavish state visit, publicly skirting points of friction over the government's crackdown on human rights in India and Russia's war in Ukraine in hopes of bolstering economic and geopolitical ties with the world's most populous nation. Whereas, in the joint U.S.-Indian statement said: Biden and Modi strongly condemned cross-border terrorism, the use of terrorist proxies and called on Pakistan to take immediate action to ensure that no territory under its control is used for launching terrorist attacks. Pakistan's foreign ministry said India was using the allegations of extremism against Islamabad to deflect from the situation in Kashmir and the treatment of minorities in India. Pakistan also said it was deeply concerned over the planned transfer of advanced military technologies to India, saying such steps would not prove helpful in achieving peace in South Asia.

The U.S. president treated Modi to a day of red-carpet pageantry and showered him with expansive flattery as he sought to draw India closer at a time when the United States finds itself locked in open conflict with Moscow and in an uneasy standoff with China. But even as the leaders announced a range of initiatives, they made no evident progress resolving the disagreements that have strained the relationship in recent months. Challenged on his record on human rights and religious freedom, Modi insisted that democracy is in India's DNA and denied that his government has fostered prejudice in serving its people. Modi added, even as demonstrators outside the White House gates protested the crackdown on dissent back in India. While Biden shied away from criticism of India's democratic backsliding, he stood by his characterization of President Xi Jinping of China as a dictator during a campaign fund-raiser earlier. The state visit for Modi was the latest move on the geopolitical chess board as Biden seeks more allies against increasingly aggressive governments in Moscow and Beijing. India, which remained staunchly nonaligned during the Cold War, has refused to join the American-led coalition aiding Ukraine in its war against invading Russian forces. And while India shares a certain enmity for China, it has not fully subscribed to Washington's strategy for restraining the Asian giant in the Indo-Pacific region or defending Taiwan against aggression. In cultivating Modi, who before becoming prime minister was denied a U.S. visa because of his role in a deadly religious riot in his home state, Biden put aside his language about democracy versus autocracy being the defining struggle of his time. Biden described the two countries as fellow democracies committed to universal values without directly mentioning the increasing suppression of minority groups and opposition voices in India. Biden pronounced America's partnership with India the

Indo-US relations. Mr. Biden celebrated India's rise with a display of pomp and circumstance on the South Lawn complete with marching bands, honor guards and a 21-gun salute. He wrapped up the day of meetings with a gala state dinner. Only the third of his presidency, in a pavilion behind the White House draped in green with saffron-colored flowers at every table, the colors of the Indian flag. Two great nations, two great friends and two great powers," Biden said in his toast. India, whose population recently surpassed China's to lead the world, represents perhaps the most important of the so-called Global South nations that Biden is pursuing, both for its economic potential as well as for its geopolitical position. And Modi, without directly referring to that in his remarks at the arrival ceremony, nonetheless alluded to India's growing power, mentioning its population of 1.4 billion three times in just a few minutes. During the Cold War, India's relations with the US were often frosty. The country had cultivated close ties with the USSR and helped spearhead the Non-Aligned Movement, an organisation of countries that rejected pressures to join either pro-US or pro-Soviet blocs. For its part, the US was a key ally of Pakistan. And by the early 1970s, the administration of US President Richard Nixon started to build a cooperative relationship with China, as an attempt, in part, to place pressure on the USSR. But

has played this quite well, playing Russia and the US off each other, and has benefitted in the process. A country like India, which has such a strong convergence with the US on China, can create major spaces where it will differ very strongly from the US and can ride that out.

“ US woos India's far-right PM Modi to help wage new cold war on China and Pakistan. ”

While US relations with allies such as Saudi Arabia and Israel have come under political scrutiny in recent years, Modi's trip to the US has been welcomed with bipartisan support. However, Modi's human rights record has not gone entirely unremarked. A group of more than 70 lawmakers from the US House and Senate penned a letter to the Biden urging him to discuss concerns about religious freedom and journalistic expression in his talks with Modi. Modi's high-profile reception in the US is a far cry from what he experienced before, Modi had been banned from entering the US due to allegations that he turned a blind eye to anti-Muslim violence in the western Indian state of Gujarat in 2002, when he was the province's chief minister. In an annual report on religious freedom in May, the US State Department expressed concern about the situation in India, noting that there were open calls for genocide against Muslims, and attacks on places of worship. In May, for the fourth year in a row, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom called on the State Depart

The impact of Indo-US strategic partnership on Pakistan's security suggests that any power transition in South Asia shall disturb the balance of power in the region and may lead to war. The analysis, therefore, supports balance of power hypothesis that if power balance is disturbed, it shall bring instability. It also suggests that by changing the balance of power in India's favour, Indo-US strategic partnership shall bring power transition in South Asia, and would therefore be perilous for Pakistan's security. The US government is trying to divide the BRICS bloc and recruit India for its new cold war on China. Biden doesn't care that far-right Prime Minister Modi is closely linked to fascistic Hindu-supremacist groups that violently oppress minorities. US woos India's far-right PM Modi to help wage new cold war on China and Pakistan.

Pakistan's Economic Roadmap FY24: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Growth

Pakistan has set a challenging tax revenue target of 13 trillion rupees (\$46.66 billion) for the year starting July 1, a near 40% jump from the current year, in its national budget that looked to strengthen the case for a new bailout deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The upcoming year's growth target has been set at 3.6% and inflation projected at 12%. The ambitious revenue targets for the fiscal year through June 2025,



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presented by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in parliament. Total spending was 18.87 trillion rupees (\$68 billion). The upcoming fiscal year include bringing the public debt-to-GDP ratio to sustainable levels and prioritising improvements in Pakistan's balance of payments position. Pakistan has projected a sharp drop in its fiscal deficit for the new financial year to 5.9% of GDP, from an upwardly revised estimate of 7.4% for the current year. Pakistan will look to widen the tax base Whereas, Pakistan's Economic Survey FY24, provides a detailed overview of the country's economic performance during the fiscal year 2023-24. The survey highlights the challenges faced by the economy and outlines the government's strategy to address them. The survey reports a real GDP growth rate of 2.38% for FY24, reversing the negative growth of FY23. This growth is attributed to prudent policy management, resumed inflows from partners, and recovery in

major trading partners. The growth momentum is expected to continue, with a target of 5.5% growth by FY27. Interestingly, The agriculture sector emerged as the key driver of economic growth, with a growth rate of 6.25% in FY24. The industrial sector grew by 1.21%, while the services sector experienced a moderate growth of 1.21%. The agriculture sector's performance is attributed to favorable weather conditions, improved crop yields, and increased investment in the sector. GDP at current market prices increased by 26.4% to PKR 106,045 billion in FY24, up from PKR 83,875 billion last year. This significant increase is attributed to improved economic activity, increased investment, and a stable exchange rate. Per capita income rose by USD 129 to USD 1,680, due to increased economic activity and exchange rate appreciation. This positive trend is expected to continue, with a target of increasing per capita income to USD 2,000 by FY27. Whereas, the investment-to-GDP ratio fell to 13.14% in FY24 from 14.13% in FY23, mainly due to contractionary macroeconomic policies and political uncertainty. A Focus on Revenue and Expenditure is equally important, as the budget proposals for FY25 focus on increasing revenue, reducing expenditure, and promoting economic growth. The budget has a significant increase in tax burden this year, because of the large informal segment of the economy, the burden will fall on the existing sectors and the tax burden will have an inflationary impact as well. The central bank warned of possible inflationary effects from the budget, saying limited progress in structural reforms to broaden the tax base meant increased revenue must come from hiking taxes. The bank, in a bid to boost growth, cut interest rates for the first time in four years, slashing them by 150 basis points, in the face of a sharp decline in inflation from a high of 38% last year to 11.8% in May. GDP would expand 2.4% in the current year, missing the budgeted target of 3.5%, the government said, despite revenues rising 30% on the year, and the fiscal and current account deficits being under control. However, the saving-to-GDP ratio remained stable at 13.0% in FY24, slightly down from 13.2% in FY23. Although, the government aims to stabilize the economy by prioritizing exports and investment, with a goal of achieving 5.5% growth by FY27. But the strategies need to include increasing trade and investment openness, controlling foreign exchange speculation, and implementing sector-spe-

cific reforms. However, challenges remain, including a high fiscal deficit, low tax revenues, and a large trade deficit. The proceeds from privatisation given the government's stated policy of pushing hard to sell loss-making enterprises, starting with its national airline. But privatisation proceeds were projected at a modest 30 billion rupees. Key proposals include: Increasing FBR taxes by 47.1% to PKR 13 trillion; Introducing a new tax regime for the agriculture sector; Imposing a 18% sales tax on mobile phones; and Increasing the federal excise duty on cement by PKR 1,000 per ton; Introducing a new tax regime for the real estate sector. One side, Pakistan's Economic Survey FY24 highlights the challenges faced by the economy and outlines the government's strategy to address them, and the other side budget proposals for FY25 aim to increase revenue, reduce expenditure, and promote economic growth. While the survey and budget proposals should provide a coordinated positive outlook, as their implementation remains a challenge. The reduction in policy rate by 150bps is a positive step towards promoting economic growth. The appreciation of PKR by 2.8% against the US dollar is also a positive sign. However, the current account deficit, though narrowed, remains a concern. The decline in remittances and the increase in the trade deficit are also worrisome. Overall, the survey and budget proposals provide a mixed bag of positives and negatives. While the government's efforts to promote economic growth are commendable, the challenges facing the economy cannot be ignored. The successful implementation of the budget proposals and the achievement of the economic growth targets remain a challenge. To address the challenges facing the economy, the government must: Implement policies to increase investment and savings; Improve tax revenues and reduce the fiscal deficit; Promote exports and reduce the trade deficit; Invest in human development and infrastructure; and Improve the business environment and reduce corruption. By implementing these policies, Pakistan can achieve sustainable economic growth, reduce poverty and inequality, and improve the standard of living for its citizens. Pakistan's Economic Survey FY24 provides a comprehensive overview of the country's economic performance and outlines the government's strategy to address the challenges facing the economy. The budget proposals for FY25 aim to increase revenue, reduce expenditure, and promote economic growth. While the survey and budget proposals provide a positive outlook, their implementation remains a challenge. Pakistan had to find ways to increase its revenues to reduce its fiscal deficit as part of reforms being discussed with the IMF. Pakistan is in talks with the lender for a loan of \$6 billion to \$8 billion, as it seeks to avert a default for an economy growing at the slowest pace in the region. The rise in the tax target is made up of a 48% increase in direct taxes and 35% hike in indirect taxes over revised estimates of the current year. Non-tax revenue, including petroleum levies, is seen increasing by a whopping 64%. The Concerns remain about the government's ability to pursue reform since it is vulnerable to the quirks of coalition politics in the face of rising public pressure against inflationary reform measures. The government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had to convince its largest ally, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), without whom it does not have a parliamentary majority, to attend the budget session.

Pakistan's public debt — both domestic and foreign — has soared like anything in recent years to Rs67.5 trillion on government borrowing needs to finance its surging budget deficit. The State Bank data for March shows that public debt is almost three quarters of the nation's economic output and just above 83 per cent of the total national debt of nearly

Rs81tr. The IMF's key demands include an increase in the tax revenue target, withdrawal of subsidies, taxes on the agriculture sector, increase in levy and taxes on power, gas and oil sectors, privatisation of sick government organisations and units and improving administration. It's expected that the budget would be in line with IMF requirements, however, the real problem will be adherence to fiscal austerity and prudence and containment of populism. The strong 6.25 per cent expansion in the agriculture sector to be the highest in 19 years — drove Pakistan's GDP growth by an expected 2.38pc in FY2024, recovering from a contraction of 0.21pc in the previous year. The fiscal discipline was maintained, with a fiscal deficit of 3.7pc of GDP and a primary surplus of 1.5pc of GDP. Total revenues, meanwhile, grew by 41pc, driven by non-tax revenues and improved tax collection. The major burden of debt payments is coming from domestic debt of Rs43.43tr. Domestic debt is almost two-thirds of the total public debt and accounts for nearly 85pc of the interest burden owing to the high interest rate environment in the country. We are in a debt trap, as our debt is already 80pc of the GDP, compelling the government to accumulate more debt to pay back the existing loans. The high degree of indebtedness has made Pakistan more vulnerable even to slightest of economic shocks and forced the government to reduce socio-economic development investments to alleviate poverty. The fiscal deficit and high indebtedness of a sovereign slow down economic growth and fuel inflation and unemployment. The cost of debt repayments is largely borne by citizens in the form of heavy indirect taxes, such as the taxes and levies on petrol. If Pakistan's debt is sustainable, it is only so at a huge human cost. This is not sustainable and we are getting deeper into the trap. The external debt has largely been used to support government consumption rather than expand public investment and boost productivity. Poor export performance over the decades too has weakened our capacity to service the debt through our own earnings despite significant growth in remittances. Then, foreign investors are also not prepared to venture in Pakistan due to economic conditions which constrain our capability to rake up non-debt creating international flows. On top of that, no one is ready now to give us more money so we can pay off our old debt as our capacity to leverage our geopolitical position has weakened. Privatisation of state-owned enterprises and withdrawal of subsidies will provide temporary relief, but our need for more debt will not go away without taking care of our tax and energy sector issues. The State Bank of Pakistan, meanwhile, kept a tight monetary policy, with a 22pc policy rate, helping to ease inflation to 26pc from 28.2pc last year. The current account deficit narrowed by 87.5pc to \$0.5 billion compared to \$4.1bn last year, and gross foreign exchange reserves increased to \$8.0bn. However, a decline in the investment-to-GDP ratio, sluggish large-scale manufacturing, and high public debt is also noted. The cash-strapped Pakistan witnessed the highest-ever single-year increase in tax exemptions or concessions, surging by 73.24pc compared to the previous year to dole out a record Rs3.879tr. There is a need for patience and extreme hard work, combined with homegrown corrective plans. The public must work together with institutions to achieve our economic goals, by stressing the importance of collaboration and sustained efforts. We must emphasise the need for Pakistan to transition from a government-controlled economy to a market-driven economy, aligned with global standards, to boost exports and foster a savings-and-investment-based economy. We must shift from a government-determined economy to a market-driven economy, aligning our economic system with global standards, increasing exports, and promoting a sav-

ings-and-investment-based economy over a consumption-based one by considering equity and inclusion when implementing economic reforms with bold measures to ensure a more equitable economic system. Introducing economic reforms, we cannot ignore equity and inclusion. Bold measures are necessary to create a more inclusive economic system. The government must undertake deep structural reforms, effectively control expenditure, mobilise tax resources, encourage private investment, and, last but not the least, avoid temptation to improve the economy at a fast pace. The government must implement policies to address the challenges facing the economy and promote sustainable economic growth.

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PAKISTAN FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING HUB: Building Learning On Strong Foundations

Education is the basic right of every child and a very important aspect for progress of any nation. In the modern era no nation can survive without quality education. Human Resource Development is the central pillar of the government policy, and education plays a fundamental role towards the formation of human social capital. The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) has aligned all its programs to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4). The Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub is an initiative of the MoFEPT tasked to drive systemic improvements in foundational learning in Pakistan, and launched the Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub. The Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub has been set up with the generous support of the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the World Bank. The Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub will become a keystone in Pakistan's Learning Movement, working with all partners to enable quality learning opportunities for all by providing evidence-based strategies and support to policymakers across Pakistan to make tangible improvements in foundational learning. The launch was attended by the Federal Minister of Education, Madad Ali Sindhi, Federal Secretary of Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry, UK High Commissioner Jane Marriott and a range of key educational leaders, including provincial Ministers and Secretaries of education, civil society and development partners. Foundational learning is the right of all children. No doubt, Federal Secretary of Education, Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry is committed to ensuring that all children will enjoy their right to a quality education, and under his leadership the Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub, within the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training will achieve this mission. Whereas, Mr. Madad Ali Sindhi, Federal Minister of Education, is also committed that The Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub will be a key contribution to this effort, working with all provinces and key partners to drive learning improvements across the country. British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms Jane Marriott ensured her commitment for this initiative of federal ministry, and British high Commissioner presented Letter of Support to Federal Minister in establishing the PFLHUB. The UK is proud to support the Foundational Learning Hub, helping children with basic literacy skills which we know makes them more likely to stay in education. On the other side in a message, President All Pakistan Private Schools Federation Mr. Kashif Mirza appreciated the launch of PFL HUB and showed his expectation for the betterment of quality of education in across the country, and assured, that APPSF is running STEAM Pakistan program and will support Ministry's initiatives to mainstream learning specially ensuring that each STEAM partner school commit to additional learning hours and support to provide technical resources to the private schools and Government to deliver on Education goals especially for girls education. Mr. Kashif Mirza further assured that APPSF will assist for technical assistance to the Hub to support the provinces to deliver and keep track of their commitments to Foundational Learning. It has been over a decade since the state made a promise to every child between the ages of five and 16 years of free and compulsory education. The compulsory range of school going age is stipulated as five to 16 years under article 25-A of the Constitution. But Pakistan is facing a serious challenge to ensure all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, attend, stay and learn in school. With an increasing population and a burgeoning youth cohort, Pakistan now has more than 75 million children between five and 16 years. Currently, Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) with an estimated 25 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 35 per cent of the total population in this age



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group. Of these, the public schooling system only caters to 24 million and private schooling system caters to 26 million, with over 25 million currently out-of-school-children (OOSC). Pakistan is facing a serious challenge to ensure all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, attend, stay and learn in school. While the percentage varies, this age-specific statistic provides an insight into what is needed to ensure that the over 50 per cent of five year olds who are not enrolled, or the 48 per cent of 16 year olds who have dropped out or never enrolled, are provided an appropriate educational platform. Almost 3.8 million children, with 2.5 million between 14 and 16 years, enrolled in an educational institution but dropped out. While enrollment and retention rates are improving, progress has been slow to improve education indicators in Pakistan. In the 5-9 age group, 5 million children are not enrolled in schools and after primary-school age, the number of OOSC doubles, with 11.4 million adolescents between the ages of 10-14 not receiving formal education. Disparities based on gender, socio-economic status, and geography are significant; in Sindh, 52 percent of the poorest children (58 percent girls) are out of school, and in Balochistan, 78 percent of girls are out of school. Nearly 10.7 million boys and 8.6 million girls are enrolled at the primary level and this drops to 3.6 million boys and 2.8 million girls at the lower secondary level. Gaps in service provision at all education levels is a major constraint to education access. Socio-cultural demand-side barriers combined with economic factors and supply-related issues, together hamper access and retention of certain marginalized groups, in particular adolescent girls. Putting in place a credible data system and monitoring measures to track retention and pre-



It is high time that we must re-shape our education service delivery and structure all initiatives that allow our learners to compete and thrive in the face of new realities. It is indeed the primary responsibility of any civilized nation to provide its children with a balanced and well-rounded education, develop them to their full potential, and nurture them into good citizens, conscious of their responsibilities to family, society and country.

vent drop-out of out-of-school children is still a challenge. At systems level, inadequate financing, limited enforcement of policy commitments and challenges in equitable implementation impede reaching the most disadvantaged. An discouraging decrease in recent education budgets has been observed in the total GDP, which is already well short of the 4 percent target. In order to accelerate progress and ensure the equitable expansion of quality education, Government of Pakistan's should do more efforts to significantly reduce the number of OOSC at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels. Pakistan education programme should focus on Early Childhood Education (ECE) to improve school readiness; expansion of equitable and quality alternative learning pathways (ALP) at basic education levels; and nurturing of school-community linkages to increase on-time enrolment, reduce drop-outs, and ensure completion and transition for all students. At systems levels, we should contribute more equity-focused provincial sector planning and budgeting; strengthening data and assessment systems; and evidence-based policy advocacy. Investment in quality early learning and pre-primary education is important that young children be ready for school has high positive impacts on primary school enrolment, survival and learning, and is cost-effective. Given the limited reach and inequities in the provision of pre-primary education, Pakistan is increasingly recognizing early learning as a policy priority, and several provinces have already developed ECCE policies, plans, and standards. While several models exist for ALPs, these are still scattered and limited in scale. Pakistan must address the issue of OOSC through studies, supporting provincial sector plan development, development or review of non-formal education policy and direct programme implementation. Socio-cultural demand-side barriers combined with economic fac-

tors together drive education deprivation for certain groups of children in Pakistan, particularly girls. These barriers are further exacerbated by a lack of parental awareness of early learning, importance of on-time enrolment, and lack of social protection schemes. However, there is ample room for improvement in large scale enrolment campaigns during early years. Like other provinces, the age group of nine and above is vulnerable to dropouts. Enrolment drives targeting younger OOSC should be complemented with strategies to improve retention towards the end and beyond primary school level. The necessary steps to address the situation include radical improvements in early years enrolments, and first time enrolments for fast track programmes for children between the ages of 10-16. Building on these the subsequent approach should be to target at-risk students in higher age groups to improve retention. There is a hope that under the leadership of its Secretary Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry the Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub will become a keystone in Pakistan's Learning Movement, working with all partners to enable quality learning opportunities for all by providing evidence-based strategies and support to policymakers across Pakistan to make tangible improvements to foundational learning. The Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub will establish a sustainable mechanism through which federal and provincial ministries are measurably improving foundational learning as a national priority. 3 out of 4 children in Pakistan cannot read a simple sentence by the age of 10. Learning poverty is counted at almost 79% in Pakistan, and it can only be fixed through stronger foundational learning movement in the country. The MoFEPT is committed to tackling the learning crisis in the country by launching the 'Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub' - a dedicated unit to drive improvements in foundational literacy and numeracy together with all the federating units. The Hub is initially supported by the FCDO and the World Bank. Its will endeavor to provide quality learning opportunities to marginalized sections of society particularly girls. Partnerships with UKaid, World Bank, and Government of Pakistan, Provincial Govts, All Pakistan Private Schools Federation (APPSF), civil society part underscore the collaborative effort towards this critical goal, and together committed to reshaping the future of education in Pakistan. Evidence-based strategies and support will empower policymakers across Pakistan, enabling tangible improvements to foundational learning. This initiative addresses a national priority, bridging gaps and ensuring a brighter future for our children. The PFLH establishes a sustainable mechanism for federal and provincial ministries to measurably enhance foundational learning. This is a game-changer, solidifying education as a top-tier national focus. Under the leadership of Federal Secretary Education, Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry the MoFE&PT along with all its associated entities, provincial education and training departments, is striving to develop and implement effective educational plans and strategies for rectifying learning losses, sustainable student retention mechanisms to ensure no child is left behind. Developing Pakistan as a progressive and prosperous country by providing all citizens a fair and equal opportunity to receive quality education and skills to achieve optimum potential, to develop human resources by ensuring equal access and educational excellence across Pakistan. It is indeed the primary responsibility of any civilized nation to provide its children with a balanced and well-rounded education, develop them to their full potential, and nurture them into good citizens, conscious of their responsibilities to family, society and country. This right of the citizens of Pakistan is protected under Article 25-A of the constitution. The Ministry is aggressively working to end the education apartheid which has plagued our country for many years. This can only be achieved if we raise the quality of education in the public sector institutions as well as those private institutions which cater to the disadvantaged section of our society. It is high time that we must re-shape our education service delivery and structure all initiatives that allow our learners to compete and thrive in the face of new realities.

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Pakistan Learning Conference 2023: BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

The two-day Pakistan Learning Conference 2023; Building Foundations organized by the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training held in Islamabad. Gathering global educators, policymakers, and experts, this eagerly awaited conference is delving into vital topics of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and foundational learning. Speaking at the Inaugural session, the Chief Guest for the occasion Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain said that Pakistan has a constitutional commitment to deliver 'free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 5 to 16'. The minister said that the government intends to go beyond it as Pakistan is committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 4 (SDG4) to provide 'lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Earlier, the Secretary Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary welcomed the participants and said that the gathering of passionate international and national level educators, policymakers and donors at the conference was a unique opportunity to collectively work towards transforming landscape of early childhood education and foundational learning. The secretary education informed the attendees about the Human Capital Review Report and shed light on how addressing learning poverty is crucial for socio-economic progress. Mr. Waseem shared with the participants that a fund of Rs 25 billion had been established specifically for Out of School Children (OOSC) and added that a significant portion should be allocated for Early Childhood Education (ECE). He provided reassurance on behalf of the Prime Minister, affirming the government's unwavering commitment to ensuring that out-of-school children were enrolled in schools. He further added that through the flagship initiatives of MOFEPT which include Out of School Children enrollment drive, foundational literacy through ASPIRE, establishment of classrooms in primary schools & kindergarten important steps are being taken for transforming early childhood education. Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary added that MOFEPT was looking forward to creating a Combined Action Plan in the Conference through synergies, collaborations and experience sharing that will positively impact the future of early childhood education in Pakistan. Secretary Education, Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary talked about carrying the spirit of this conference forward through fostering innovation, inclusivity, and equity in early childhood education. He spoke about translating the event into "Pakistan Learning Movement". The secretary said that with the movement, the education ministry could create an educational landscape to empower the children, equip them with essential skills, and nurture their curiosity and love for lifelong learning. He informed that MoFEPT would receive feedback and inputs for aggressively contributing towards the movement. He thanked all the international and national participants for their dedication to advancing early childhood education and foundational learning. He also appreciated them for their commitment to shape a brighter future for children. The two-day Pakistan Learning Conference 2023: Building Foundations organized by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training concluded with a comprehensive action plan to transform Early Childhood Education (ECE) and foundational learning. The diverse gathering of global educators, policymakers, and experts delved into crucial topics, fostering the de-

velopment of a bright future for children. Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal congratulated the Education Ministry for addressing the crucial topic of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and foundational learning. He emphasized that we were currently in an era of knowledge revolution, innovation, and creativity, and highlighted the significance of the first 1000 days of a child's life as the most productive period for skill development. Furthermore, he stressed the importance of combining both formal and informal education within ECE and the strong connection that existed between early education and the nation's progress. Featuring 9 international and 37 national speakers across diverse educational disciplines, the Conference offers a rich tapestry of perspectives. With their expertise and experience, the speakers are sharing invaluable insights, inspiring ideas, and global best practices, enriching the conference experience for all attendees. On both days, insightful panel discussions on Progress and Challenges: ECE as the learning foundation, Right to Education, Financing, Delivery at scale and technical sessions on enabling structures and PPP as delivery



models were carried out. Notable speakers included Rehmat Salam Khatam (KPK Minister), Kashif Mirza President All Pakistan Private Schools Federation, Saima Anwar Senior Education Advisor, Baela Raza Jamil (Idara-e-Taleem o Agahi), Abigail Barnett (Cambridge International Assessment), representatives of provinces, World Bank, FCDO, UNICEF, USAID, International donors & policy makers, educationists etc. The other notable speakers included Mark Hubert (British Council), Meredith McCormac (RTI), Toby Linden (World Bank Group), Mohiyuddin Wani (Chief Secretary-GB), representatives of provinces, educationists, policy makers etc. Innovative approaches were explored through interactive stalls by Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), PTCL, National Book Foundation (NBF) and Robotmea, fostering engagement and learning. These stalls provided the visitors an opportunity to see the novel methodologies and ideas in the early childhood education and foundational learning. Overall, Pakistan Learning Conference shed light on key issues being faced in childhood education by uniting renowned speakers and visionaries. Emphasizing innovation and enhanced practices, this event is sparking insightful discussions, fostering idea exchange, and facilitating collaborative efforts to advance education in Pakistan. Mr. Kashif Mirza President All Pakistan Private Schools Federation emphasized sharing knowledge and experience during the conference and pushing hard for these goals. He further said that through this event Pakistan could come closer to vision of an educated, confident Pakistani youth, supported from the moment they are born, and equipped with the foundational learning to achieve their dreams. The APPSF President highlighted that a country's future was reliant on the extent to which creativity and innovation were

integrated into the classroom and laboratory. He also emphasized the importance of fostering observational skills and critical thinking abilities in children. Kashif Mirza stressed that Pakistan needs more 200,000 schools and 25 million teachers till 2025 to cater over 25 million currently out-of-school-children (OOSC). The Millions of children in flood-hit Pakistan are in dire need of help, school education is at risk for millions of students. Before the closing session, Gailius Draugelis (World Bank Group), Jo Moir (FCDO), Salman Naveed Khan (PAMS) spoke about next steps and conference reflections. Their collective emphasis highlighted the importance of working together to address issues with regards to ECE and foundational learning. They stressed upon adopting the recommendations that were devised during the conference and incorporating them into approaches at national scale for taking meaningful strides towards ECE. Jo Moir said that Foundational learning could keep children in school and put them on a different learning. The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training under the leadership of its Secretary Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary aligned all its programs to achieve the targets of Sustainable

Development Goals (SDG-4). The Government of Pakistan has formulated the first ever National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy 2015, which aims to cater to the needs of our industrial sector by adding value to human capital through imparting requisite training and skills. To ensure minimum National Standards in education, National Curriculum Council (NCC) has been formed with membership from all provinces. The initiatives of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training surely will improve the state of Education in the Country and will ensure holistic development and economic growth. It is indeed the primary responsibility of any civilized nation to provide its children with a balanced and well-rounded education, develop them to their full potential, and nurture them into good citizens, conscious of their responsibilities to family, society and country. This right of the citizens of Pakistan is protected under Article 25-A of the constitution. After the 18th Constitutional Amendment the MoFE&PT is directly responsible for provision of education services only to the extent of Islamabad Capital Territory. However, the Ministry is playing its role of coordination amongst the federating units. The Inter Provincial Education Ministers' Conference has been very actively playing its role in this regard. This fact was amply demonstrated during the COVID 19 pandemic, in which the MoFE&PT played a leadership role and spearheaded the response. Within a fortnight Tele-school and other interventions were launched in order to mitigate the learning losses suffered due to prolonged school closures. No doubt, The Ministry is aggressively working to end the education apartheid which has plagued our country for many years. This can only be achieved if we raise the quality of education in the public sector institutions as well as those private institutions which cater to

the disadvantaged section of our society. Development of the Single National Curriculum is a major pillar of this strategy. Other initiatives include introduction of Ed Tech and latest interventions in schools located in ICT, which would be a replicable model for the Provinces and Area Governments. Now, It is high time that we re-shape our education service delivery and structure all initiatives that allow our learners to compete and thrive in the face of new realities. Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MoFE&PT) along with all its associated entities, provincial education and training departments, is striving to develop and implement effective educational plans and strategies for rectifying learning losses, sustainable student retention mechanisms to ensure no child is left behind. Few of the recent flagship initiatives include: Re-envisioning the 'Pakistan Education Policy 2021'; Developing 'Single National Curriculum' so that all children have fair and equal opportunity to receive high quality education; Introducing reforms in educational assessments by creating Relative Grading System at Federal Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education along with modernizing the examination processing system through digital technologies. Reorganization of key departments of 'Higher Education Commission' to support further integrated and effective planning, promoting research and online education; Launching 'Hunarmand Pakistan' under the 'Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan National Youth Development Programme'; fostering skills' education in the country to reduce skill gap and unemployment; and Setting up of Pakistan Institute of Education, as a premier institution which would function as a think tank for future policy making and evidence based decision making. Education is the basic right of every child and a very important aspect for progress of any nation. In the modern era no nation can survive without quality education. Human Resource Development is the central pillar of the government policy, and education plays a fundamental role towards the formation of human social capital. All Pakistan Private Schools' Federation (APPSF), the only largest representative Federation for All Pakistan private schools included Punjab, Sindh, KPK, Baluchistan, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir with more than: 300 registered Associations; 207,000 private schools; 15,00,000 teachers and 26.9 million students presented Education Recommendations for Budget 2023-24. APPSF recommended to Federal & Provincial governments to allocated and spend minimum 5% of GDP on education and research for schools and higher education sector in the new budget keeping in view the effects of COVID-19, pandemic, recent devastated flood and high inflation rate. That 25 percent of the education budget should go to higher education and rest 75 percent be spent on schools, colleges and technical education. APPSF further recommended Government should announce tax amnesty and exemption for 5-year for investing in education sector, so that 200,000 new schools, colleges, universities, technical and vocational institutes can be established. Unless steered with a purpose, the rapid advance of science and technology may widen inequities, exacerbate social fragmentation and accelerate resource depletion. The federal and provincial governments should include a separate statement with the budgetary documents, for the government policy for girls' education; policy measures to be taken for improving girls' education in terms of resource allocation and its effective utilization, detailed break-down of the current and development budgets allocated for girls' education, level-wise enrolment of girls in public schools and state of basic facilities in girls' schools. Our efforts must be that no child should be out of school. No child must be deprived of education due to poverty or any other reason. An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. I congratulate to Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal and especially the Secretary Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary, that the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training under their leadership aligned all its programs to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4). It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it, so I can say that education is the most powerful weapon which we can use to change the world. We should treat education as an honor and not as a burden.

“A fund of Rs 25 billion had been established specifically for Out of School Children (OOSC), a significant portion should be allocated for Early Childhood Education (ECE).”



Pakistan needs educational reforms for the knowledge economy

Pakistan's journey toward a knowledge economy through educational revitalization is a complex but necessary one. The steps taken today in revitalizing education for building the foundation for a Knowledge economy will determine the path Pakistan treads tomorrow. The progress of a country or a nation depends on better reforms for quality education. The knowledge economy is a construct of a neo-liberal imaginary that is linked closely to the promotion of educational technology use in schools. In the belief that educational technology can assist in the rapid development and modernisation of the education systems in Pakistan. Education, is, therefore, considered as a pre-requisite for combating poverty, raising productivity, improving living conditions, and making enlightened citizens. Education has always been the major concern of successive governments in Pakistan since its inception. But no successful headway has been made in the field of education as half-hearted attempts have been made in the past and the situation has assumed an alarming proportion, that why the mandate to implement the provision of Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan couldn't fulfil under which the state is obligated to provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 5 to 16 years in such a manner as determined by law. Article 25-A1 says that the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law. Whereas, Article 25-A, Article 37-B and Article 38-B are all give guarantee for the protection of educational rights. Under the 18th Constitutional Amendment, Education has been devolved to the provinces which are responsible for the award of education up to intermediate level. By fulfilling and implementing Articles 22 (1) and 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan on the right to education without discrimination, is a fundamental constitutional obligation and a pressing need for improving foundational literacy, and the quality of education. It is not possible to implement articles 20, 22 (1), and 25-A of the constitution in letter and spirit unless related laws and policies are made likewise. But, unfortunately, Pakistan is faced with the challenge of 25 million children out of school in the age group of 5-16 years and around 2 million children are estimated to be added every year. There are clear constitutional provisions: Article 25-A, 37-B and 38-B, our commitment to the MDG and SDG where our failures are palpable. While there is no dearth of excellent plans and proposals in the various national education policies since 1947 and provincial and area development plans, implementation is the weakest area. All Pakistan Education Conference was organised in November 1947, just three months after the creation of the country. Quid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah clearly asked for target-oriented interventions in the education sector. Quid Azam said we need to focus on scientific and technological education to compete on a global level and reap the benefits of modern economic structure. Policy reforms continued during the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and are still ongoing. In 1984, the government introduced a two-year comprehensive plan to increase the literacy rate in the country. Then, a series of education policy documents were introduced one after another, setting new targets and extending the previously-set dates. These policies included the 1970 Education Policy, the 1979 Education Policy, the 1998 Education Policy, the Framework of Action 2000, the Millennium Development Goals 2001, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003, the Medium-Term Development Framework 2005-2010 and the 2010, and 2021 Education Policies. Moreover, the projects like Education Sector Reforms Programs, Afternoon School, Iqra projects, Mosque projects, NGOs Volunteer Literacy Corps etc. Unfortunately, all these plans and policies could not revolutionise the education sector. Among other factors, one of the main reasons is the experimentation of the government with the education sector. The existing Primary Education scenario presents a dismal picture. As per latest population census, the total number of children in age group 5 to 16 has risen to 75.4 million out of which 25.36 million are out of school. All of these documents had set some major targets in terms of literacy, gender equality, teacher education, and qualitative improvements in education. Most of these targets have yet to be achieved. There are a number of factors that frustrate the proper implementation of policies. These factors have academic, political, social, and management dimensions. The major challenge is to enroll this large number of out of school children in age group 5 to 16. Related to this, there are challenges of availability of quality of teachers, school and basic facilities, quality curriculum and text books. The gaps of infrastructure, teachers, budget and quality education still persist.

Reforms in any sector always need consultations with different stakeholders to lead the way to ownership, which is an important condition for successful implementation. After 2010, the 18th amendment in the 1973 constitution of Pakistan the slogan of civilian governance compulsory education for the children from ages five to sixteen (free education for all). Here millions of children still have not registered in education to achieve the target. There are so many other flops like religious factors and sectarian violence. Through 18th Amendment the school education is the subject of provincial matter. Whole reforms and policies in the education sector since 1947 to 2023 on common point agenda that is to be formulated reforms and policies operationalize on Islamic Ideology of Pakistan. However, most education reforms in Pakistan are directly imported from abroad. These reforms aren't discussed with the stakeholders involved. Most of these reforms are conceived outside Pakistan by donors. Some examples of these schemes include pilot schools, comprehensive school initiatives, education sector reforms (ESR), and Daanish schools. Most of the educational reforms announced in Pakistan lack strong political will from decision-makers at the high level. The rulers make educational claims for self-projection to earn goodwill among voters. Some of these claims are ridiculously unrealistic. Indeed,



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the education budget allocations decreased over time and is now around 1.7 percent of GDP, due to the lack of priorities, improper planning, without a suitable roadmap of action, and lack of required resources to begin with. A very recent example is the devolution of education to the provinces after the 18th amendment in the constitution. Another important reason for making such claims and then forgetting about them is that there is no accountability system. Political leaders that they can make tall claims and get away with it. The discontinuation of policies from one government to another often leads to abortive endings for some useful initiatives. Instead of focusing on the effective implementation of existing education policies, every new government decides to come up with a brand new policy. Consequently, we find a number of official documents, policies, and plans in Pakistan with useful recommendations. Although, all main political parties claimed and promised for minimum 5% of the GDP to invest in the education sector, but failed to fulfil their election manifesto promises. ANP aimed to allocate at least 6% of the GDP to education, but failed to implement in its provincial tenure. MQM proposed to increase education expenditure from 2.2% to 5% of the GDP, but also failed to implement in its collusion governments tenures. Whereas, PPP committed for 4.5 per cent of GDP to education but always failed to implement. PML-N, PML-Q and PTI also committed for dramatically increase funding from 2.1 % to 5% funding, but couldn't spent more than 1.7 percentage of GDP. The educational reforms and policy of civil-military governance regimes 1999-2018 of Pakistan with a major focus education for all, introducing technical education and Madaris reforms to achieve 80% literacy rate. These education sector reforms did not fruitful due to involvement of bureaucrats for making policies and ignored educationist in the relevant field specialists. However, in the last 7-decade all governance stress to increase literacy and primary education compulsory. But it remained on file papers only. Only in the Gen. Zia ul Haq and Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf's tenures, we can say that educational policies and reforms achieved their set of targets. During Zia and Musharraf governments, the education schemes aims and objectives in Pakistan are to be educate the philosophy of sympathetic and background the path to attain its nationwide objectives. It is obvious that our education system needs structural reforms to ensure the quality of our graduates. Our education must be a part of knowledge economy based service industry and manufacturing sector. Industry based on knowledge economy with skills development and non formal education must be introduced at schools with the help of private sector. These forward and backward linkages in the skills market will ensure decent jobs, good remuneration and employment to educate youth. Situation which emerges from the gap analysis is alarming as Pakistan is faced with the challenge of 25 million out of school children in the age group of 5 to 16 years and around 2 million children are estimated to be added every year. Budget provision needs to be enhanced from present 1.7% of GDP to 5% of GDP. It would need to be ensured that funds are properly utilized and are not lapsed or allocated to other sectors. An annual increase of 25% in the existing budget of provinces and areas would be required to reach the targets. New 200,000 formal schools with 2.5 million teachers are required to meet the existing gap and future needs. Moreover, teachers need to be trained and equipped with latest teaching techniques on regular basis. Currently, artificial intelligence has surpassed human capacities. Given Pakistan's weak economy, the prevalence of poverty prevents a significant portion of its population from accessing schools and colleges. Therefore, efforts for reforms to promote a knowledge economy are the wisest decision of our time. It will also strengthen Pakistan's capability to innovate, adapt and create indigenous technology and design, develop and market new products; thereby providing the foundation for local growth. In addition, the knowledge and technology-based economy will complement and accelerate the change from an input-driven to a productivity-driven growth strategy, which is a major policy thrust initiated under the Plan. Six modern technologies are considered highly important such as computers, micro-electronics, human-made materials, telecommunications, biotechnology and robotics. These technologies will make paradigm shift in businesses throughout world. knowledge economy based on creating, evaluating, and trading knowledge. In a knowledge economy, labour costs become progressively less important and traditional economic concepts such as scarcity resources and economics of scale cease to apply. The four pillars for knowledge economy are: Economic and Institution management; Education and Skill; Information and Communication Infrastructure; and Innovative System i.e. Research. The knowledge economy focused on the production and management of knowledge in the frame of economic constraints, or to a knowledge-based economy. The government should arrange enough funds and improved syllabus with innovative ideas for the growth of knowledge economy for the young generation. In the fast-changing world of today, underdeveloped nations have no chance of joining the larger competitive mainstream. Teachers are the most important element in the whole education system, quality education can only be achieved through quality teachers. Basic facilities like school buildings, electricity, laboratories and drinking water are necessities for education. Curricula of school education do not fulfill the requirements of technological era. Teachers learn this curriculum only for degree, but not for knowledge. Our school curricula do not match and prepare for knowledge economy for the students for the market. Better quality text books at affordable prices are necessary for promoting Pakistan in knowledge based society. It needs to be ensured that teachers go and work in remote areas for teaching duty. Incentive to teachers be provided in the shape of promotions related to their performance. Basic facilities missing in the existing schools must be provided on a fast track so that all schools and buildings are fully functional. Incentives need to be provided to poor parents to send their children to school as one of the primary reasons for large number of students being out of school is that poor parents cannot afford to send their children to school and pay school fee and bear expenses to school books and uniform. The incentive programme may include waiver of school fee, provision of free text books and payment of stipends for poor students. All above measures require substantial increase in

expenditure on education. As formal school system is not in a position to cope with the growing demand of knowledge economy, skills development and non formal ways of education should also be adopted such as non formal schools, community schools and public private partnership. It is also critical that double shifts are introduced in all schools where sufficient numbers of students are available to ensure enrolment and education for each and every child. Its implementation would also require additional recruitment of teachers and staff with budget. A merit based management with enhanced funding 50 % annually is recommended to expand the network to meet the requirement. Among the long term measures, quality education is very important. A well thought out practical and doable intervention framework needs to be worked out to ensure quality education in the long run. The quality and standardization of curriculum for knowledge economy are important challenges which require our attention and Federal Government and the concerned Ministry along with provincial representatives should undertake immediate review and up-gradation measures in this regard. Therefore, there is an urgent need to declare education emergency, and award minimum 10-year amenity and tax exemptions for investing in education sector and for establishing new educational institutions. Under the housing laws, each housing society is under obligation to earmark amenity plots for community service but usually most of these plots are leased out to commercial purposes. It is recommended that directions may be issued to the housing societies to give these plots at subsidized rates for the establishment affordable schools. Since the numbers are so large, and the private sector is already involved on a major scale, the role of regulatory bodies needs to be made more effective with the positive approach by facilitating the private sector with integrity and merit. Government in consultation with the representatives of Deeni Madaris should devise a programme for imparting formal education. This would entail capacity building at the provincial and district level so that funds can be properly utilized and are not lapsed or allocated to other sectors.

As per All Pakistan Private Schools Federation's data and Pakistan Education Statistics 2020-21, private educational institutions are serving sizeable number of students (56%) with 26.9 million students, 1.5 million teachers and 207,000 private schools. While acknowledging the contribution of private schools in imparting education to large number of school going children, the Government should support and facilitate private schools to rationalize the fee structure and to enroll at best level. Knowledge economy based target-oriented interventions in the education sector required. We need to focus on scientific and technological education to compete on a global level and reap the benefits of modern economic structure. The youth must be focused on their education because it is a prerequisite for personal growth and nation-building, and should not forget that we have to compete with the world which is moving very fast in this direction. A big jump in the establishment of new schools in the private and public sector, recruitment, and training of large number of teachers, furniture, etc. is required. Ghost and non functional schools may be made functional. Basic facilities missing in the existing schools will have to be provided on a fast track. However the public schools may also facilitate the non formal schools in the evening. Best practices in community schools, non-formal schools, public private partnership, and voucher scheme can be shared by the provinces and expanded for enhanced targets. A minimum of 50% annual increase in number under these projects is essential to supplement private and gov't efforts. The private entrepreneurs and individuals should be encouraged and given incentives to open new schools and adopt schools for infrastructure development and provision of necessary facilities. The incentives could be in the shape of tax amenities and rebates or attribution of private schools for at least 10-year. In order to utilize the important sub-sector of education i.e. Deeni Madaris, the Government in consultation with their representatives should devise a programme for imparting formal education. The work of National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) and Basic Education Community School (BECS) for promoting literacy and enrolling out of school children has been noteworthy in the past. A merit based management with enhanced funding 50% annually should be expanded the network, to meet the requirement. Government should undertake immediate review and up-gradation measures. A special think tank can be constituted at the national level comprising experts and professionals and its performance reviewed on a regular basis. In order to prepare the students for gainful employment opportunities, the Government should introduce knowledge economy based skills education having avenues for profitable employment. In this regard NAVTCC, TEVTA and other skill development institutions may be asked to develop accredited vocational training courses to be imparted to larger members along with formal education - a manifold increase is needed. Therefore, emphasis should be given to the improvement of contents of training courses for enhancing teaching skills. Education must be deemed as a fundamental element of Investment, Human Resource (HR) development and the welfare of the people, to better structure educational institutes to achieve sustainable growth. The political parties must promise and honour their commitment of election manifestos to enhance education budget at least by 5% of GDP. Educational reforms must be to cultivate equitable learning environments, where every student can access quality education and excel, without any gender discrimination and class discrimination for the base of knowledge economy. Schools curricula and textbooks must focus on promoting inclusion, diversity, critical thinking, and learning outcomes. In any country education shows a key role for the promotion of economic, political stability and the desire for national identity. Education means to produce skilled youth force for the help of economic growth and for a prosperous country. It's also produced knowledge to committed people, that belief on nation building on the basis of ideological and developing through future generation. Public education must be centered on creating inclusive spaces that empower students to become valuable and participative members of society. By building on these principles, we must strive to drive meaningful changes and advancements in our education system. The steps taken today in revitalizing education for building the foundation for a Knowledge economy will determine the path Pakistan treads tomorrow. The vision is clear to empower its people with the tools of knowledge based economy and innovation, there by securing a prosperous and sustainable future.

The political parties must promise and honour their commitment of election manifestos to enhance education budget at least by 5% of GDP. Educational reforms must be to cultivate equitable learning environments, where every student can access quality education and excel, without any gender discrimination and class discrimination for the base of knowledge economy.

Pakistan Needs China's Model Governance System for Development!



Kashif Mirza

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Chinese's adopted the path of Socialism with Chinese characteristics, which brought the prosperity for Chinese citizens from 1978 onward. China's success story exhibit that a blind of system both in economy and governance, brought prosperity and development in country. It demonstrates that neither pure characteristics of free market nor socialism are the reason behind Chinese prosperity. Guided state policies by the Chinese Communist Party and the inclusion of free market attributes within the economic system has kept things going on for China. Moreover, the stable political system in One-Party system and its roots spreading to local administrative levels has seen the continuation of policies without any opposition. Inclusive decision making was key for successful results. There are certain variables which set Pakistan apart from China. The multi-party system, a different ideology and the presence of federating units differentiates the political and societal realities of the two states. Economic structure is also different, as Pakistan is a pure liberal economy as opposed to China's mixed economy. However, there are lessons that can be learnt from Chinese Development and can be proved beneficial for Pakistan's economy and society at large. The success of China's model teaches us that socio-economic policies must be developed by consensus without considering political preferences and ideologies. There should be a consensus Economic Agenda of Pakistan and it must be followed by all governments irrespective of their political identification. This will encourage result-oriented policies in future. Presently China has 34 provincial level governments, over 300 prefecture level governments, 3000 county level governments, and over 40,000 township level governments. Rise of China as a major political, economic and security player at global landscape keeps on inviting the interest of international community in governance system of China. The state once accused of having extractive political and economic institutions made a place in international arena due to unique governance system. governance system is entrenched in guidelines set under the overarching ideology. The ideology of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics entails leading and guiding role of Communist Party in running the government with the commitment to raise and sustain good living standards of people. Reforms were introduced by Communist Party to turn the idea into reality. Prominent feature of reforms was that it was a mix of communist and liberal ideas, practices and values. The apex role of Communist Party is backed by Constitution of China, thus reducing the role of other parties in governance. This enables the Party to legislate, introduce major reforms along with electing major officials of the state. It also gives the Party highest level of decision making authority; therefore China is also referred as a Party-State. For a unitary state like China, uniform implementation of policies becomes complicated task. However, it can be countered by having better communication and implementation of policies through a well-defined system of hierarchies. China has adopted this model by defining role and responsibilities of each tier. China implemented the hybrid model where party and government have their offices running parallel to one another at every administrative level. National People's Congress (NPC) being the only Legislature in center makes China a unitary state. It is the government equivalent to Party Congress of CPC and is responsible for legislation, electing the President of State, Prime Minister, Vice Prime Minister and the General Secretary of Standing Committee of NPC. It has 2,980 members, and meets for two weeks annually. Executive organ State Council, is also elected from the members of NPC and by the members of NPC, which is led by the Prime Minister. State Council is comprised of ministries, and different departments led by ministers and affiliated administrations. State Council ensure implementation of all policies in accordance with the vision of SC of Politburo. The affiliated administration is responsible for implementation of policies at administrative units and at levels. Five administrative levels characterize the governance system of China at province, prefectural, county, township, and village levels. The hierarchical system is based on traditional value giving greater authority and status to higher echelons, as it is always case in unitary system.

China, is highest unit of power in all terms, decision, execution and evaluation. It is comprised of seven members elected from the Politburo. It is the most powerful organ within party and State. It is vested with power take all types of decisions. It includes the General Secretary of Communist Party, which is most senior member of Party and enjoys maximum power. The General Secretary of Communist Party is also assume the crown of Presidency, Commander in Chief of Military and head of state. National Party Congress is the last tier of communist party at center level, which is composed of all members of CPC. The One-Party system in China assure the representation of CPC members in national legislature NPC therefore eliminating mismatch between the party policies and governments. Similar to national level, hierarchies system is also replicated at province, prefectural, town and county levels. It is considered fundamental for standardized policy development and implementation of the policies. The leading party authority below Center are called Committees. Like Politburo at Centre; Provincial Party Committee at Province, at Prefecture- Prefecture Party Committee and so on enjoy supreme power in decision making and implementation. Besides the fact that China is a unitary state but it also has Local People's Congresses and local legislatures at every administrative unit. That's why it is also termed as federation in unitary state. Since the Party organisation and Government hierarchy exist parallel to each other; they form a connection. The economic success of China is greatly attributed to continuous implementation of the Five-Year Plans which, contains the vision for next five years. The Five-year Plan is set of Economic and Social Policies that are implemented at every administrative unit. The role of Local People's Congress increased after the reforms in 1979 to decide on the matters related to economic issues of their localities. For the smooth implementation of the policies at administrative levels; the administrative units have their own Development and Reform Commissions (DRCs) which work with the local governments to draft policies. This led to the emergence of a phenomenon known as federation within unitary state. The reforms proved to be successful as they improved the economic and social conditions at local levels raising the prestige and credibility of the communist party. Economic wellbeing of the Chinese state owes a lot to reforms initiated in 1978. It became a stepping stone for citizens' wellbeing. It also hugely contribute for improving status and economic significance in the international power structure. Socialist system that was not fulfilling the needs of people at grass-root level led to the different peasantry movements which made decision makers to bring changes in the socialist system. Hence term Socialism with Chinese characteristics emerged. The economic reforms initiated in the 1970s were combination of socialist and the market economy characteristics. State maintained its control on most of matters; at the same time provided liberty to market forces. Initial reforms started from the agricultural sector later included modernising industry, opening Chinese economy, inclusion of advanced technologies, and promoting scientific education to meet the requirements of modernisation. Reform were introduced in a sequential manner and still the process if going on. In agricultural sector Household farming replaced the collectivised farming. Policy of collectivisation was based on accumulating gains equally among farmers therefore; farmers which worked hard did not get desired shares for their extra effort. The reform enabled the farmers to get fruits for extra labor. However, the state-maintained control over the pricing of major crops. Similarly, the dual pricing system was initiated. It is very interesting and unique system. First government make sure that national basic requirements are met by strict control over prices determined by government. After meeting the national requirements farmers were free to sell the commodities at market prices without any restriction or control of government. It gave incentives to farmers to increase productivity through better management and efforts. It is classical example of market and planned economy merger. On industrial side, State owned Enterprises (SoE), were given autonomy to produce commodity in surplus and

keep the generated revenue within the enterprise. Revenue could be utilised for buying advanced machinery for enhancing productivity and giving bonuses to its employees. Rather depending on the finances from state; State owned Enterprises started to invest retained earnings. SoEs also looked for loans from banks and independent sources. Similarly, the intervention of the party personnel in the State-Owned Enterprises was decreased and management was given freedom to run the enterprise. Government also encouraged international diaspora to invest back in country through these enterprises and other sectors. Chinese diaspora was given preferential treatment for encouraging investment in country. This led to substantial investment form Chinese across the world and it also paved way for foreign direct investment (FDI) in country. Furthermore, Special Economic Zones were created to attract the FDI by providing them basic facilities and preferential treatments. Reforms introduced in 1993 encouraged further economic liberalization, competition between the state owned and private enterprises and possible asset sale. The reforms also allowed different firms to use state assets with full authority but retaining state ownership of assets by State. Chinese industrial sector turn into a combination of state-owned enterprises and the private sector during the course of time. Now the industry is classified as, State owned Enterprises, hybrid state-private medium and small firms and foreign invested firms and industry. In late 1990s China decided to "Go Global" by opening up its policies. To encourage foreign competition in market, open-door policy was adopted. Meanwhile China also joined World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 for further enhancing its openness. The open-door policy and joining WTO led to the influx of Foreign Direct Investment in country which employed lot of Chinese labor thus raising standards of its people. Now China President Xi has given the third principal of "Inadequate and Unbalanced Growth". He is now focusing to shifting economy towards concepts of "Eco-Civilization" and making it more environment friendly. Furthermore, he is also trying make it more people oriented and uplift the living standards of people. China is also shifting its focus to consumer economy to sustain its growth. After these reforms, now China is dreaming to become moderately developed country in 2021 and developed country in 2049.

For Pakistan, a National Development and Reform Commission must be established for more comprehensive planning and execution. Ministry of Planning Development and Reforms, for Pakistan must be re-designed, empowered and strengthened. It must assume status of brain of country and provide economic and social development guidance to state. Pakistan already has a very good institutional arrangements of planning department and has planning wing at all levels of governance. Pakistan needs reforms and arrangements accordingly with slight changes in existing structure. The policy makers must come up with the idea of bringing Globe market competition even in the areas involving state enterprises. The private industry setup must be encouraged for healthy competition with the state-owned enterprises which will force them to enhance the productivity thus setting up a good platform for th promotions of the exports. The state must allocate key areas for investment which will play a major role in boosting the economy. Investment in technology and service is another avenue which will working on to sustain growth. Successful economic reforms are not possible without taking in considerations the world economy and integration at global level. Government must adopt export-oriented policies to enhance economic relevance at global level. It will help to improve trade, increase revenue and economic integration. It provides a base for economic growth, and the inclusion of the modern scientific technologies to boost efficiency in export sector. Local government participation must also be enhanced and made it compulsory for the development of any policy or plan. Pakistan must develop economic and investment policies with the objective to facilitate the business community and ensure competitiveness. It must be done in a sequential manners and step by step. Special Economic Zones must be provided with facility of One Roof Policy for all types

The success of China's model teaches us that socio-economic policies must be developed by consensus without considering political preferences and ideologies.

Standing Committee of Politburo of Communist Party of China, is highest unit of power in all terms, decision, execution and evaluation. It is comprised of seven mem administrative levels characterize the governance system of China at province, prefectural, county, township, and village levels. The hierarchical system is based on traditional value giving greater authority and status to higher echelons, as it is always case in unitary system. Standing Committee of Politburo of Communist Party



of registration, facilities and service delivery. Moreover, policies must also include environment compliance as much as possible. Policies must also encourage innovation by adopting new technologies and processes. Pakistan can achieve all this by strengthening local government system by giving them more authority on planning, execution and financing. Monitoring and evaluation of all interventions must be made sure on the basis of pre-identified goals and objectives, with autonomous status and must have authority to make decision and implementation of these decisions. It will ensure development and progress by strengthen and accountability mechanisms to fight and curb corruption.

Politics and Violence in the Name of Religion



**Prof. Dr. Hussain
Mohi-ud-Din Qadri**

**The writer is an
Deputy Chairman
BOG-MUL**

In an era marked by geopolitical tensions and societal divides often fueled by religious misinterpretations, Minhaj University Lahore has emerged as a beacon of hope and understanding. The university recently hosted an international conference titled “Politics and Violence in the Name of Religion,” attracting over 2,000 participants, including esteemed scholars, policymakers, and students from diverse backgrounds. This gathering aimed to promote peace, enhance cross-cultural understanding, and critically address the misinterpretations of religious texts that can incite conflict. The conference aimed to promote peace, cross-cultural understanding, and address misinterpretations of religious texts that can lead to conflict. In my keynote address, me Prof. Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri, emphasized the significance of contextual interpretation of religious texts to prevent conflict and foster peace. I highlighted how misinterpretations can stem from out-of-context readings, fueling extremism and leading to conflict, and stressed the critical role of religious scholars in ensuring accurate interpretations grounded in each religion’s foundational principles. The conference featured over 30 research papers and discussed core themes such as understanding misinterpretations in religious texts, key principles of Qur’anic exegesis, misinterpretations of jihad, and clarifying misapplications of Dar al-Harb. Prominent figures included former Maldivian President Dr. Muhammad Waheed Hassan and renowned counterterrorism expert Dr. Rohan Gunaratna. Dr. Qadri’s address called for sustained scholarly engagement to address nuanced aspects of religious texts and praised the conference’s role in advancing understanding across faiths. Minhaj University Lahore continues its mission to foster cross-cultural understanding and counter harmful misconceptions at both local and international levels. The conference explored the core themes and insights: Understanding Misinterpretations in Religious Texts: Religious scholars often adapt texts over time, leading to interpretations that differ from the original context, inadvertently fueling misunderstandings; Key Principles of Qur’anic Exegesis: Effective Qur’anic exegesis requires a deep understanding of historical, geographical, and psychological contexts; Misinterpretations of Jihad: Jihad in Islam signifies a spiritual and ethical struggle for justice and social reform, not violent warfare; Interpreting Controversial Qur’anic Terms and Concepts: Key phrases in the Qur’an are often misunderstood, and accurate interpretations are essential to prevent misapplications; Clarifying Misapplications of Dar al-Harb; Extremist misinterpretations of Dar al-Harb have led to misconceptions about its application, and traditional Islamic jurisprudence classifies regions based on peace and security rather than religious governance alone; and Rethinking the Concept of Khilafa. The conference reflects a growing recognition of the need to reassess and reinterpret religious texts to mitigate the risks of violence in the name of faith. The persistent misapplication of religious doctrines, particularly in relation to political violence, poses significant challenges to global peace. By creating a platform for

dialogue and scholarly engagement, Minhaj University seeks to counteract the narratives that often lead to extremism and violence.

I, Dr. Qadri, emphasized in my keynote, the importance of contextual interpretation of religious texts, warning against the dangers of out-of-context readings that can fuel extremism. I also argued that many violent interpretations of religious doctrine stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of the original texts, which can lead individuals to justify acts of violence under the guise of religious obligation. I further stressed religious scholars to take on a proactive role in ensuring that interpretations of religious texts are grounded in the foundational principles of their respective faiths, and advocated for sustained scholarly engagement to address the nuanced aspects of religious texts, fostering an environment where peace and understanding prevail over conflict. The conference encompassed a wide range of themes aimed at unraveling the complexities of religious misinterpretations. Over 30 research papers were presented, tackling issues such as the misinterpretations of jihad, the principles of Qur’anic exegesis, and the clarifications surrounding concepts like Dar al-Harb. One of the core themes of the conference was the understanding of misinterpretations in religious texts. Religious texts are often adapted over time, which can lead to interpretations that diverge significantly from their original meanings. This phenomenon has contributed to widespread misunderstandings, fostering divisions and conflict among different communities. Scholars stressed the need for a thorough historical and contextual understanding to accurately interpret these texts. Effective Qur’anic exegesis requires a comprehensive understanding of the historical, geographical, and psychological contexts in which the verses were revealed. Conference participants emphasized that a superficial reading of the Qur’an can lead to misinterpretations that fail to consider the socio-political conditions of the time. A robust exegetical framework is essential for deriving meaningful and relevant insights from the text, allowing for interpretations that align with contemporary values of justice and peace. One of the most contentious issues addressed at the conference was the misinterpretation of jihad. Traditionally, jihad is understood as a spiritual and ethical struggle for justice and social reform, rather than a mandate for violent warfare. The distortion of this concept has led to a dangerous narrative that equates jihad with terrorism. Scholars at the conference argued for a re-evaluation of this term to emphasize its original meanings, focusing on the inner struggle for righteousness and justice rather than its violent misapplications. Key phrases and concepts within the Qur’an are often subject to misinterpretation. The conference underscored the importance of accurate interpretations to prevent the misapplication of these terms in justifying acts of violence. Scholars presented various frameworks for interpreting controversial concepts, highlighting the need for rigorous scholarly debate and collaboration among religious leaders and academics. The concept of Dar al-Harb, which traditionally refers to territories not governed by Islamic law, has been subject to The concept of Dar al-Harb, which traditionally refers to territories not governed by Islamic law, has been subject to extremist misinterpretations. This misapplication has con-

tributed to a climate of fear and hostility towards those living in non-Islamic regions. Scholars pointed out that traditional Islamic jurisprudence classifies regions based on peace and security, rather than solely on religious governance. By clarifying these distinctions, the conference aimed to foster a more accurate understanding of international relations from an Islamic perspective. Finally, the conference called for a rethinking of the concept of Khilafa (caliphate) within the modern context. The notion of a caliphate has often been co-opted by extremist groups to legitimize their actions. However, scholars argued that the caliphate, in its original sense, was a system of governance focused on justice, welfare, and community, rather than a tool for political domination. By revisiting the foundational principles of Khilafa, religious leaders can offer a more peaceful and constructive vision of governance that aligns with contemporary democratic values. The conference featured a diverse array of speakers, including prominent figures such as former Maldivian President Dr. Muhammad Waheed Hassan and renowned counterterrorism expert Dr. Rohan Gunaratna. Their contributions enriched the discussions and underscored the global relevance of the conference’s themes. Dr. Waheed Hassan highlighted the importance of political leadership in promoting interfaith dialogue and reconciliation. He argued that leaders must take responsibility for fostering an environment of tolerance and understanding, rather than allowing political expediency to fuel religious extremism. Dr. Gunaratna provided insights into the strategies employed by extremist groups to manipulate religious sentiments for their agendas. He emphasized the need for a coordinated global response to combat these narratives, advocating for a collaborative approach involving scholars, policymakers, and civil society.

Minhaj University Lahore has long been committed to fostering cross-cultural understanding and combating harmful misconceptions about Islam and other faiths. The university’s initiative to host such a significant conference underscores its dedication to addressing the root causes of religious conflict and promoting peace at both local and international levels. The university’s efforts align with global trends emphasizing the importance of dialogue and understanding in an increasingly polarized world. By engaging scholars and leaders in constructive discussions, Minhaj University aims to cultivate an academic environment that promotes critical thinking and challenges harmful narratives. The international conference on “Politics and Violence in the Name of Religion” at Minhaj University Lahore marked a significant step towards fostering peace and understanding in a world often overshadowed by religious conflict. Through scholarly engagement, critical discussions, and a commitment to accurate interpretations of religious texts, the conference has contributed to a broader dialogue on the role of religion in society. As the global landscape continues to evolve, initiatives like this conference are essential in promoting a culture of peace, tolerance, and mutual respect. The insights gained from this gathering will undoubtedly serve as a foundation for ongoing efforts to address religious misinterpretations and build a more harmonious world. The collective commitment of scholars, religious leaders, and participants is crucial in ensuring that the dialogue initiated at Minhaj University continues to thrive, ultimately contributing to a future characterized by understanding and collaboration among diverse faith communities.



**Minhaj
University’s
Recent
Conference: A
Step Towards
Peace
and
Understanding**

Prosecutors Stand for Rule of Law: Challenged Legality of Unlawful Orders

An independent prosecution service department separate from the executive is essential for a fair and impartial justice system. A recent writ petition has raised significant concerns about the authority and legality of actions taken by the Secretary Public Prosecution Punjab. The petitioners, comprising senior prosecutors, have outlined their grievances and the legal basis for their challenge, who were appointed through the Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) under Section 8 of the Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service (Constitution, Functions and Powers) Act, 2006. Since their appointment, they have diligently performed their duties and participated in training programs conducted by the Centre of Professional Development of Public Prosecutors (CPD).



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On November 13, 2023, Secretary Public Prosecution Punjab issued a notification constituting a committee to update and revise the syllabus for written examinations conducted by the PPSC. On April 3, 2024, the committee recommended a revised syllabus. Surprisingly, Secretary Public Prosecution Punjab directed the Director CPD to arrange written tests and interviews as a test run of the new syllabus for each cadre of prosecutors. This directive aims to assess and grade already appointed prosecutors through written examinations by PPSC. Consequently, a schedule for these tests and interviews issued, emails were sent to all Punjab prosecutors to appear in the written examination as per the revised syllabus. The petitioners prosecutors have also raised several concerns about the legality and authority of certain actions taken by Secretary Public Prosecution. The petitioners, who hold various positions within the Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service, including Additional Prosecutor General, Deputy Prosecutor General, District Public Prosecutor, Deputy District Public Prosecutor, and Assistant District Public Prosecutor, have outlined their grievances and the legal basis for their challenge. The objection regarding the lack of legal authority is also raised by the petitioners who argued that the impugned orders lack legal legitimacy and are unsupported by law. The Prosecutor General of Punjab has unequivocally repudiated the unauthorized examination of prosecutors. The impugned actions undermine the independence and autonomy of the Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service, leaving the petitioners with no alternative but to invoke the extraordinary constitutional jurisdiction of the Honourable Court. There's also Violation of the Prosecution Service Act, 2006, through the impugned orders which violate specific provisions of the Prosecution Service Act, 2006. The petitioners have a strong prima facie case, with the balance of convenience in their favor, as the impugned orders are issued without legal authority and violate the established framework of the Prosecution Service Act, 2006.

As the Act establishes an independent prosecution service, separate from the executive, to ensure prosecutorial independence and effective coordination within the

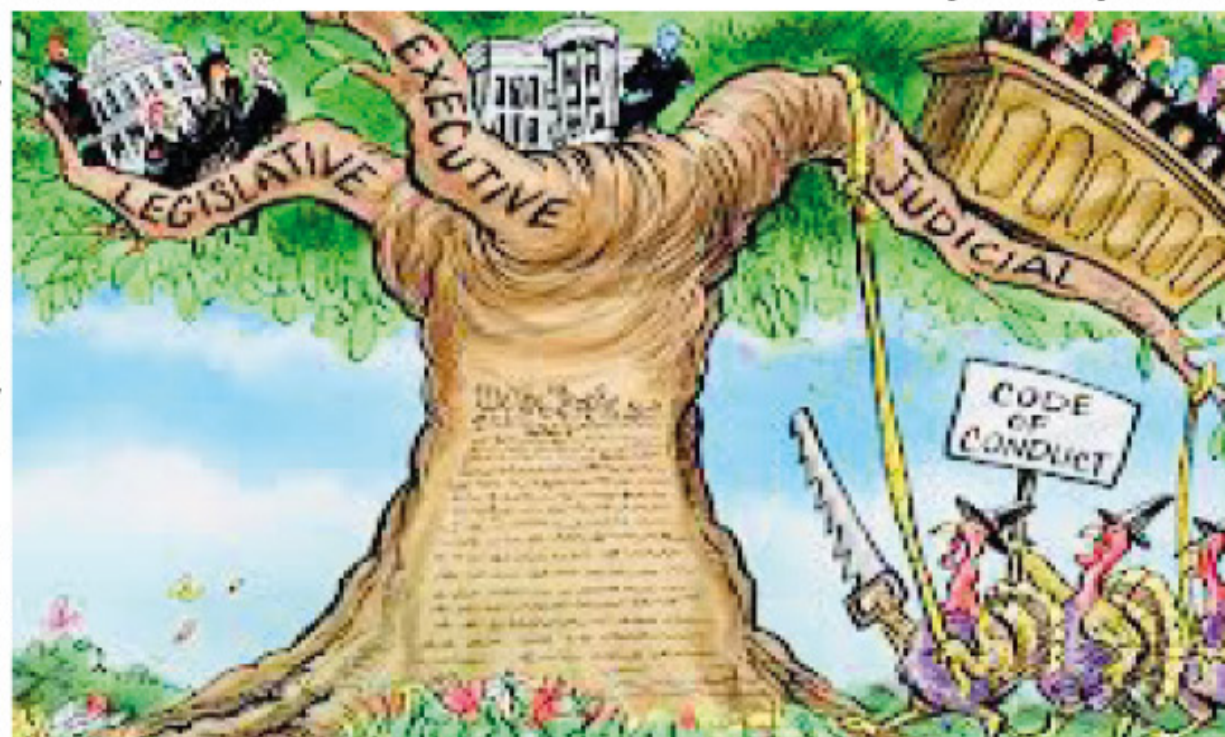
criminal justice system. According to Section 5(2) and Section 6 of the Act, the administration of the service vests in the Prosecutor General, not the Secretary Public Prosecution. Precedents Supporting Petitioners' Claims including a Supreme Court judgment in the case of "Province of Sindh through Chief Secretary Sindh and others VS Prosecutor General Sindh Etc." (2012 SCMR 307), which declared that the Prosecutor General is the competent authority over public prosecutors. The Secretary Public Prosecution has no authority to interfere in the administration of the prosecution service. This judgment is binding under Article 189 of the Constitution of Pakistan and was followed by the Honourable Court in W.P No. 5336/2020 titled "Umer Farooq Vs Government of the Punjab through Chief Secretary Etc". Interestingly, there's also inconsistency with Examination Requirements that Section 8 of the Punjab Prosecutors Act, read with the Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service (Conditions of Service) Rules, 2007, stipulates that written examinations are required only at the time of initial appointment or promotion. There is no legal requirement to assess or grade already appointed prosecutors, having been inducted through competitive examinations conducted by PPSC. The impugned orders lack legal legitimacy and are unsupported by law. Resultant, the Prosecutor General of Punjab has also repudiated the unauthorized examination of prosecutors, due to the lack of jurisdiction of the Secretary Public Prosecution which the petitioners duly referenced with previous judgments and orders, such as W.P. No. 22545/2022 and W.P. No. 51440/2020, where the Honourable Court assumed jurisdiction and suspended operations of similar orders passed by the Secretary Public Prosecution, underscoring the Secretary's lack of lawful authority in such matters. No doubt the petitioners, being public servants, lack alternative remedies, necessitating the invocation of constitutional jurisdiction to safeguard the independence and integrity of the Prosecution Service. As per law, the Prosecutor General is the competent authority over public prosecutors, and the Secretary Public Prosecution has no authority in this regard. It's also a violation of the Prosecution Service Act, 2006, which establishes an independent prosecution service separate from the executive.

An independent prosecution service department separate from the executive is a crucial component of a fair and impartial justice system. Globally, many countries have established such departments to ensure prosecutorial independence and autonomy. Benefits of an independent prosecution Service: Ensures impartiality and fairness in prosecutions; Prevents political interference and bias; Enhances public trust and confidence in the justice sys-

tem; Promotes accountability and transparency; and Encourages independent decision-making and autonomy. Whereas, the effects of an Independent Prosecution Service: Increased independence and autonomy for prosecutors; Improved public perception of the justice system; Enhanced credibility and legitimacy of prosecutions; Reduced political interference and bias; and strengthened rule of law and democratic governance. In contrast, Pakistan's prosecution service department faces challenges in asserting its independence, highlighting the need for reform and strengthening its autonomy. Most countries, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and South Africa, have an independent prosecution service department separate from the executive. These departments are headed by a Director of Public Prosecutions or an Attorney General, who is responsible for making independent decisions on prosecutions. In Pakistan, the prosecution service department is headed by the Secretary Public Prosecution, who is a bureaucrat and not a prosecutor, leading to a lack of autonomy and independence. The key difference between Pakistan and other countries is the level of independence and autonomy granted to the prosecution service department. In Pakistan, the prosecution service department is under the control of the executive, which can lead to political interference and bias in prosecutions. In contrast, countries with independent prosecution service departments have a clear separation of powers, ensuring that prosecutions are free from political influence and bias. If we analyse, we can see that these prosecutors were appointed through the Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) under Section 8 of this Act. Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service (Constitution, Functions and Powers) Act, 2006, which emphasizes the establishment of an independent prosecution service, separate from the executive, to ensure prosecutorial independence. These prosecutors already have participated in training programs conducted by Centre of Professional Development of Public Prosecutors (CPD). So, the impugned notification has no legal strength and unnecessary. Precedents also supporting petitioners' claims, the Supreme Court Judgment in the case of "Province of Sindh through Chief Secretary Sindh and others VS Prosecutor General Sindh Etc." (2012 SCMR 307), already declared that the Prosecutor General is the competent authority over public prosecutors, and the Secretary Public Prosecution has no authority in this regard. The Honourable Court followed the Supreme Court's judgment in W.P No. 5336/2020 titled "Umer Farooq Vs Government of the Punjab through Chief Secretary Etc." The Court's order in W.P. No. 22545/2022, and the pending W.P. No. 51440/2020, also affirm the Secretary Public Prosecution's lack of authority. Section 8 of the Punjab Prosecutors Act, read with the Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service (Conditions of Service) Rules, 2007, stipulates that written examinations are required only at the time of initial appointment or promotion. No doubt, Prosecutors stand for rule

of law and rightly challenged the legality of unlawful orders of the Secretary Public Prosecution, and indeed Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service Act, 2006, also emphasizes the establishment of an independent prosecution service, separate from the executive, to ensure prosecutorial independence. In conclusion, an independent prosecution service department separate from the executive is essential for a fair and impartial justice system. Pakistan can learn from global best practices and strengthen its prosecution service department's autonomy and independence to ensure impartiality and fairness in prosecutions.

An independent prosecution service department separate from the executive is essential for a fair and impartial justice system. Pakistan can learn from global best practices and strengthen its prosecution service department's autonomy and independence to ensure impartiality and fairness in prosecutions.





Pakistan needs educational reforms for the knowledge economy

Pakistan's journey toward a knowledge economy through educational revitalization is a complex but necessary one. The steps taken today in revitalizing education for building the foundation for a Knowledge economy will determine the path Pakistan treads tomorrow. The progress of a country or a nation depends on better reforms for quality education. The knowledge economy is a construct of a neo-liberal imaginary that is linked closely to the promotion of educational technology use in schools. In the belief that educational technology can assist in the rapid development and modernisation of the education systems in Pakistan. Education, is, therefore, considered as a pre-requisite for combating poverty, raising productivity, improving living conditions, and making enlightened citizens. Education has always been the major concern of successive governments in Pakistan since its inception. But no successful headway has been made in the field of education as half-hearted attempts have been made in the past and the situation has assumed an alarming proportion, that why the mandate to implement the provision of Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan couldn't fulfil under which the state is obligated to provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 5 to 16 years in such a manner as determined by law. Article 25-A1 says that the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law. Whereas, Article 25-A, Article 37-B and Article 38-B are all give guarantee for the protection of educational rights. Under the 18th Constitutional Amendment, Education has been devolved to the provinces which are responsible for the award of education up to intermediate level. By fulfilling and implementing Articles 22 (1) and 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan on the right to education without discrimination, is a fundamental constitutional obligation and a pressing need for improving foundational literacy, and the quality of education. It is not possible to implement articles 20, 22 (1), and 25-A of the constitution in letter and spirit unless related laws and policies are made likewise. But, unfortunately, Pakistan is faced with the challenge of 25 million children out of school in the age group of 5-16 years and around 2 million children are estimated to be added every year. There are clear constitutional provisions: Article 25-A, 37-B and 38-B, our commitment to the MDG and SDG where our failures are palpable. While there is no dearth of excellent plans and proposals in the various national education policies since 1947 and provincial and area development plans, implementation is the weakest area. All Pakistan Education Conference was organised in November 1947, just three months after the creation of the country. Quid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah clearly asked for target-oriented interventions in the education sector. Quid Azam said we need to focus on scientific and technological education to compete on a global level and reap the benefits of modern economic structure. Policy reforms continued during the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and are still ongoing. In 1984, the government introduced a two-year comprehensive plan to increase the literacy rate in the country. Then, a series of education policy documents were introduced one after another, setting new targets and extending the previously-set dates. These policies included the 1970 Education Policy, the 1979 Education Policy, the 1998 Education Policy, the Framework of Action 2000, the Millennium Development Goals 2001, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003, the Medium-Term Development Framework 2005-2010 and the 2010, and 2021 Education Policies. Moreover, the projects like Education Sector Reforms Programs, Afternoon School, Iqra projects, Mosque projects, NGOs Volunteer Literacy Corps etc. Unfortunately, all these plans and policies could not revolutionise the education sector. Among other factors, one of the main reasons is the experimentation of the government with the education sector. The existing Primary Education scenario presents a dismal picture. As per latest population census, the total number of children in age group 5 to 16 has risen to 75.4 million out of which 25.36 million are out of school. All of these documents had set some major targets in terms of literacy, gender equality, teacher education, and qualitative improvements in education. Most of these targets have yet to be achieved. There are a number of factors that frustrate the proper implementation of policies. These factors have academic, political, social, and management dimensions. The major challenge is to enroll this large number of out of school children in age group 5 to 16. Related to this, there are challenges of availability of quality of teachers, school and basic facilities, quality curriculum and text books. The gaps of infrastructure, teachers, budget and quality education still persist.

Reforms in any sector always need consultations with different stakeholders to lead the way to ownership, which is an important condition for successful implementation. After 2010, the 18th amendment in the 1973 constitution of Pakistan the slogan of civilian governance compulsory education for the children from ages five to sixteen (free education for all). Here millions of children still have not registered in education to achieve the target. There are so many other flops like religious factors and sectarian violence. Through 18th Amendment the school education is the subject of provincial matter. Whole reforms and policies in the education sector since 1947 to 2023 on common point agenda that is to be formulated reforms and policies operationalize on Islamic Ideology of Pakistan. However, most education reforms in Pakistan are directly imported from abroad. These reforms aren't discussed with the stakeholders involved. Most of these reforms are conceived outside Pakistan by donors. Some examples of these schemes include pilot schools, comprehensive school initiatives, education sector reforms (ESR), and Daanish schools. Most of the educational reforms announced in Pakistan lack strong political will from decision-makers at the high level. The rulers make educational claims for self-projection to earn goodwill among voters. Some of these claims are ridiculously unrealistic. Indeed,



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the education budget allocations decreased over time and is now around 1.7 percent of GDP, due to the lack of priorities, improper planning, without a suitable roadmap of action, and lack of required resources to begin with. A very recent example is the devolution of education to the provinces after the 18th amendment in the constitution. Another important reason for making such claims and then forgetting about them is that there is no accountability system. Political leaders that they can make tall claims and get away with it. The discontinuation of policies from one government to another often leads to abortive endings for some useful initiatives. Instead of focusing on the effective implementation of existing education policies, every new government decides to come up with a brand new policy. Consequently, we find a number of official documents, policies, and plans in Pakistan with useful recommendations. Although, all main political parties claimed and promised for minimum 5% of the GDP to invest in the education sector, but failed to fulfil their election manifesto promises. ANP aimed to allocate at least 6% of the GDP to education, but failed to implement in its provincial tenure. MQM proposed to increase education expenditure from 2.2% to 5% of the GDP, but also failed to implement in its collusion governments tenures. Whereas, PPP committed for 4.5 per cent of GDP to education but always failed to implement. PML-N, PML-Q and PTI also committed for dramatically increase funding from 2.1 % to 5% funding, but couldn't spent more than 1.7 percentage of GDP. The educational reforms and policy of civil-military governance regimes 1999-2018 of Pakistan with a major focus education for all, introducing technical education and Madaris reforms to achieve 80% literacy rate. These education sector reforms did not fruitful due to involvement of bureaucrats for making policies and ignored educationist in the relevant field specialists. However, in the last 7-decade all governance stress to increase literacy and primary education compulsory. But it remained on file papers only. Only in the Gen. Zia ul Haq and Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf's tenures, we can say that educational policies and reforms achieved their set of targets. During Zia and Musharraf governments, the education schemes aims and objectives in Pakistan are to be educate the philosophy of sympathetic and background the path to attain its nationwide objectives. It is obvious that our education system needs structural reforms to ensure the quality of our graduates. Our education must be a part of knowledge economy based service industry and manufacturing sector. Industry based on knowledge economy with skills development and non formal education must be introduced at schools with the help of private sector. These forward and backward linkages in the skills market will ensure decent jobs, good remuneration and employment to educate youth. Situation which emerges from the gap analysis is alarming as Pakistan is faced with the challenge of 25 million out of school children in the age group of 5 to 16 years and around 2 million children are estimated to be added every year. Budget provision needs to be enhanced from present 1.7% of GDP to 5% of GDP. It would need to be ensured that funds are properly utilized and are not lapsed or allocated to other sectors. An annual increase of 25% in the existing budget of provinces and areas would be required to reach the targets. New 200,000 formal schools with 2.5 million teachers are required to meet the existing gap and future needs. Moreover, teachers need to be trained and equipped with latest teaching techniques on regular basis. Currently, artificial intelligence has surpassed human capacities. Given Pakistan's weak economy, the prevalence of poverty prevents a significant portion of its population from accessing schools and colleges. Therefore, efforts for reforms to promote a knowledge economy are the wisest decision of our time. It will also strengthen Pakistan's capability to innovate, adapt and create indigenous technology and design, develop and market new products; thereby providing the foundation for local growth. In addition, the knowledge and technology-based economy will complement and accelerate the change from an input-driven to a productivity-driven growth strategy, which is a major policy thrust initiated under the Plan. Six modern technologies are considered highly important such as computers, micro-electronics, human-made materials, telecommunications, biotechnology and robotics. These technologies will make paradigm shift in businesses throughout world. knowledge economy based on creating, evaluating, and trading knowledge. In a knowledge economy, labour costs become progressively less important and traditional economic concepts such as scarcity resources and economics of scale cease to apply. The four pillars for knowledge economy are: Economic and Institution management; Education and Skill; Information and Communication Infrastructure; and Innovative System i.e. Research. The knowledge economy focused on the production and management of knowledge in the frame of economic constraints, or to a knowledge-based economy. The government should arrange enough funds and improved syllabus with innovative ideas for the growth of knowledge economy for the young generation. In the fast-changing world of today, underdeveloped nations have no chance of joining the larger competitive mainstream. Teachers are the most important element in the whole education system, quality education can only be achieved through quality teachers. Basic facilities like school buildings, electricity, laboratories and drinking water are necessities for education. Curricula of school education do not fulfill the requirements of technological era. Teachers learn this curriculum only for degree, but not for knowledge. Our school curricula do not match and prepare for knowledge economy for the students for the market. Better quality text books at affordable prices are necessary for promoting Pakistan in knowledge based society. It needs to be ensured that teachers go and work in remote areas for teaching duty. Incentive to teachers be provided in the shape of promotions related to their performance. Basic facilities missing in the existing schools must be provided on a fast track so that all schools and buildings are fully functional. Incentives need to be provided to poor parents to send their children to school as one of the primary reasons for large number of students being out of school is that poor parents cannot afford to send their children to school and pay school fee and bear expenses to school books and uniform. The incentive programme may include waiver of school fee, provision of free text books and payment of stipends for poor students. All above measures require substantial increase in

expenditure on education. As formal school system is not in a position to cope with the growing demand of knowledge economy, skills development and non formal ways of education should also be adopted such as non formal schools, community schools and public private partnership. It is also critical that double shifts are introduced in all schools where sufficient numbers of students are available to ensure enrolment and education for each and every child. Its implementation would also require additional recruitment of teachers and staff with budget. A merit based management with enhanced funding 50 % annually is recommended to expand the network to meet the requirement. Among the long term measures, quality education is very important. A well thought out practical and doable intervention framework needs to be worked out to ensure quality education in the long run. The quality and standardization of curriculum for knowledge economy are important challenges which require our attention and Federal Government and the concerned Ministry along with provincial representatives should undertake immediate review and up-gradation measures in this regard. Therefore, there is an urgent need to declare education emergency, and award minimum 10-year amenity and tax exemptions for investing in education sector and for establishing new educational institutions. Under the housing laws, each housing society is under obligation to earmark amenity plots for community service but usually most of these plots are leased out to commercial purposes. It is recommended that directions may be issued to the housing societies to give these plots at subsidized rates for the establishment affordable schools. Since the numbers are so large, and the private sector is already involved on a major scale, the role of regulatory bodies needs to be made more effective with the positive approach by facilitating the private sector with integrity and merit. Government in consultation with the representatives of Deeni Madaris should devise a programme for imparting formal education. This would entail capacity building at the provincial and district level so that funds can be properly utilized and are not lapsed or allocated to other sectors.

As per All Pakistan Private Schools Federation's data and Pakistan Education Statistics 2020-21, private educational institutions are serving sizeable number of students (56%) with 26.9 million students, 1.5 million teachers and 207,000 private schools. While acknowledging the contribution of private schools in imparting education to large number of school going children, the Government should support and facilitate private schools to rationalize the fee structure and to enroll at best level. Knowledge economy based target-oriented interventions in the education sector required. We need to focus on scientific and technological education to compete on a global level and reap the benefits of modern economic structure. The youth must be focused on their education because it is a prerequisite for personal growth and nation-building, and should not forget that we have to compete with the world which is moving very fast in this direction. A big jump in the establishment of new schools in the private and public sector, recruitment, and training of large number of teachers, furniture, etc. is required. Ghost and non functional schools may be made functional. Basic facilities missing in the existing schools will have to be provided on a fast track. However the public schools may also facilitate the non formal schools in the evening. Best practices in community schools, non-formal schools, public private partnership, and voucher scheme can be shared by the provinces and expanded for enhanced targets. A minimum of 50% annual increase in number under these projects is essential to supplement private and gov't efforts. The private entrepreneurs and individuals should be encouraged and given incentives to open new schools and adopt schools for infrastructure development and provision of necessary facilities. The incentives could be in the shape of tax amenities and rebates or attribution of private schools for at least 10-year. In order to utilize the important sub-sector of education i.e. Deeni Madaris, the Government in consultation with their representatives should devise a programme for imparting formal education. The work of National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) and Basic Education Community School (BECS) for promoting literacy and enrolling out of school children has been noteworthy in the past. A merit based management with enhanced funding 50% annually should be expanded the network, to meet the requirement. Government should undertake immediate review and up-gradation measures. A special think tank can be constituted at the national level comprising experts and professionals and its performance reviewed on a regular basis. In order to prepare the students for gainful employment opportunities, the Government should introduce knowledge economy based skills education having avenues for profitable employment. In this regard NAVTCC, TEVTA and other skill development institutions may be asked to develop accredited vocational training courses to be imparted to larger members along with formal education - a manifold increase is needed. Therefore, emphasis should be given to the improvement of contents of training courses for enhancing teaching skills. Education must be deemed as a fundamental element of Investment, Human Resource (HR) development and the welfare of the people, to better structure educational institutes to achieve sustainable growth. The political parties must promise and honour their commitment of election manifestos to enhance education budget at least by 5% of GDP. Educational reforms must be to cultivate equitable learning environments, where every student can access quality education and excel, without any gender discrimination and class discrimination for the base of knowledge economy. Schools curricula and textbooks must focus on promoting inclusion, diversity, critical thinking, and learning outcomes. In any country education shows a key role for the promotion of economic, political stability and the desire for national identity. Education means to produce skilled youth force for the help of economic growth and for a prosperous country. It's also produced knowledge to committed people, that belief on nation building on the basis of ideological and developing through future generation. Public education must be centered on creating inclusive spaces that empower students to become valuable and participative members of society. By building on these principles, we must strive to drive meaningful changes and advancements in our education system. The steps taken today in revitalizing education for building the foundation for a Knowledge economy will determine the path Pakistan treads tomorrow. The vision is clear to empower its people with the tools of knowledge based economy and innovation, there by securing a prosperous and sustainable future.

The political parties must promise and honour their commitment of election manifestos to enhance education budget at least by 5% of GDP. Educational reforms must be to cultivate equitable learning environments, where every student can access quality education and excel, without any gender discrimination and class discrimination for the base of knowledge economy.

Recommendations for Education Budget: Strategies for Inclusive and Quality Education for All



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The federal government in principle has decided to declare a four-year education emergency in the country to tackle out-of-school-children and other pressing issues in the sector. On the direction of PM of Pakistan, Secretary Education Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani is bringing improvement to the education sector which was main the agenda of the federal and provincial governments. The education ministries in collaboration with all stakeholders were taking steps to bring improvement.

Educational emergency aims to address the pressing issues of out-of-school children, learning poverty and to provide support to lagging districts across Pakistan. It's hi-time to devise strategies, initiatives to ensure inclusive, quality education for all children. Pakistan Education Statistics in its recent report for 2021-22 pointed out that there were 26.21 million OOSC in the country. The report stated that 39pc children in Pakistan were out of school: 11.73 million in Punjab, 7.63m in Sindh, 3.63m in KP, 3.13m in Balochistan and 0.08 million in Islamabad. Pakistan faces a severe education emergency, with: Besides the OOSC crisis, the country is also facing the low literacy rate of 62pc. Likewise, the government's dismal spending of 1.7pc of the Gross Domestic Product (GPD) in the education sector is a matter of concern. Similarly, disparity in the availability of essential facilities such as toilets, potable water and boundary walls in schools in different parts of the country is also a matter of concern. A large number of schools across the country, particularly in the peripheries, are without potable water and other basic facilities. With a commitment to leave no child behind, Education Emergency underscores Pakistan's dedication to building a more equitable and prosperous society through. There's an urgent need to devise effective strategies and initiatives to ensure inclusive and quality education for all children in Pakistan. Through targeted interventions and collective action, to pave the way for transformative change in the education sector, fostering a brighter future for the nation. The Article 25-A of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan safeguard the Right of Education of children age 5-16 years. After devolution under 18th Constitutional Amendment, the Provincial Assemblies also enacted the Article 25-A to ensure free and compulsory education to all children and approved Compulsory Education Acts. Pakistan is also signatory of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which reiterates Pakistan's pledge to mainstream out-of-school-children (OOSC) by the year 2030. OOSC are mainly divided into two broad categories i.e. never enrolled, and dropped out. This legal provision in the constitution of Pakistan and international commitment shows a strong determination to address the challenge of OOSC. As a pilot project at ICT may start which is home to around 52,796 OOSC. Upon success of addressing OOSC ICT model, may be shared with provinces for adopting success factors of the programme. There are several different reasons that keep children out of education. These barriers and bottlenecks can be grouped into economic; socio-cultural and supply and demand side barriers. To address this crisis, we must adopt an approach that prioritizes inclusive and quality education for all children by increase Funding: Allocate at least 5% of GDP towards education; Increase education budget by 20% annually for the next 5 years. Improve Access: Construct 100,000 new schools in rural and marginalized areas by 2025; Implement conditional cash transfers to encourage enrollment and retention e.g., BISP program. Teacher Training: Provide regular training for 100,000 teachers annually; Introduce a national teacher certification program. Curriculum Reform: Revise curriculum to emphasize critical thinking, creativity, and social skills; Incorporate inclusive education practices and diverse perspectives. Technology Integration: Provide digital resources and connectivity to 50% of schools by 2025; Launch a national online learning platform. Community Engagement: Establish at least 100,000 education hubs for community-based learning; Foster partnerships with local NGOs and private sector organisation. Inclusive Education: Launch a national program for children with disabilities; Implement gender-sensitive education practices. Monitoring and Accountability: Strengthen monitoring mechanisms and track progress; Hold stakeholders accountable for results. On the Initiatives side National Literacy Program must be launched: Launch a nationwide literacy drive targeting 5 million adults; Provide basic education to 2 million out-of-school children. School Adoption Program: Encourage corporate and community adoption of 50,000 schools; Provide resources and support for infrastructure and educational needs. Teacher Mentorship: Pair 100,000 experienced teachers with new recruits; Enhance teaching quality and retention. Education Hubs: Establish 50,000 community-based education hubs; Offer extracurricular activities, digital resources, and support services. Scholarships and Incentives: Offer 100,000 merit-based scholarships annually; Provide incentives for girls' education and marginalized groups. Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborate with private sector organizations to develop innovative education solutions; Share resources and enhance infrastructure. Education Emergency Fund: Establish a dedicated fund to respond to education-related crises. A joint concerted effort is required by formal and non-formal sector to address

stan in various educational and skill training initiatives so they can be mainstreamed and become productive individuals of society. We should utilise existing potential and optimise available educational infrastructure to provide right to education to OOSC by using various formal and non-formal education approaches including evening shift schooling, alternative and accelerated learning programmes, skills training and engaging private and non-profit sector actors in Pakistan. Government must mobilise local communities in formal and non-formal educational approaches for enhanced local ownership and sustainability of project interventions. Integration of digital technology, where possible, in both formal and non-formal delivery models would be helpful to enhance access, promote retention and improve learning outcomes of enrolled children. We should provide adequate professional development opportunities to teachers in formal and non-formal educational settings to improve delivery of contents and learning levels of learners.

With the better implementation of strategies it's that the expected project outputs at Pakistan for out-of-school children enrolled by using existing formal and non-formal educational infrastructure in Pakistan. By the help of Public Private Partnership (PPP), enrollment of OOSC in selected private schools would be very important. There is need to develop PPP criteria to select partners at per child cost, vouchers, ALP etc. as appropriate. Orientation to private schools, principals, teachers, educationists, service providers, Private Operators, NGOs etc on conducting enrollment campaigns and admitting OOSC would also be more important for the success to execute enrolment campaign in target areas and schools. These OOSC can be enrolled through evening shift schooling, alternative & accelerated learning programmes, construction of additional classrooms, and served through public private partnership strategies. With the help of special efforts, the community members of target localities may have enhanced interest in education of their children and would be ready to facilitate enrolment and learning continuity of OOSC. Resultant, teachers and instructors of existing and new formal and non-formal education schools and centers will get benefit of the programme in form of training and roles in campaigning for OOSC among local communities. Moreover, Teachers and instructors of schools and centers for formal and non-formal education, skills training, likely to engage in this initiative have access to online learning platforms for enhanced professional development prospects. So on the basis on micro household data already available OOSC should be mobilized in local areas for enrolment campaign and admissions to private and public schools, FDE, BECS, NER and CSO operated education and training provision platforms. The designing and printing of IEC materials for the promotional, awareness and advocacy materials would be helpful for awareness and advocacy. Moreover, development of enrolment records in education data bases for tracking and follow up must be implemented. Establishment of Evening Shift Schools will also help to enroll for more OOSC by coordinating with public and private schools where evening shifts classes will be offered. Enrolment campaigns should be conducted for the enrolment of OOSC in selected evening shift schools, and may successful by providing free textbooks and learning materials in selected evening shift schools of public and private sector, and by Initiating teaching and learning in selected evening shift schools, monitoring, supervision and support in selected schools and periodic learning assessment. Government should engage private schools, NGOs, BECS, NER, NFE Forum, NAVTTC, PEIMA schools, PEF schools etc in public-private partners for its NFE and ALP centers for OOSC through marking of target localities based on available date-hotspots have already been marked; and sign-up understanding with partner Private schools, NGOs, private providers and skills training centers to manage NFE and ALP-P centers, Skills training centers in selected localities in ICT. By signing contracts with selected private partners for enrollment, retention, completion and transition of targeted children Monitoring, supervision and academic support to targeted schools; Provide support in periodic assessment of learners for recognition of learning of learners and continuity of learning to mainstreaming and transition. Moreover, improvement may raise by conducting enrollment campaigns in target areas for enrollment of OOSC; and Initiating teaching and learning in targeted NFE and ALP centers, with monitoring, supervision and academic support to targeted NFE and ALP centers. Data management of NFE and ALP centers using NFEMIS (non-formal education management information system) for record keeping, analysis and tracking of children would be important. The e community members of the targetEd localities should be engaged in interest facilitation in enrolment of OOSC in ICT by providing orientation to parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in existing schools and centers on enrollment and retention of OOSC. Establishment of new PTAs or local education committees (LECs) in NFE and ALP centers or private schools would be beneficial to engage local people in school affairs. Use of social mobilization strategy to build capacity and training of local people and members of PTAs and LECs, would also be beneficial. There is a need to hold regular periodic meetings in targeted schools and centers and record minutes and decisions on regular basis; develop and implement school and center development plan to enroll and retain OOSC and develop target schools consistently; make sure that PTAs and LECs are positively engaged in identification of OOSC, their enrollment and retention as well as follow up in case children drop-out; provide training manuals for the teachers and instructors; hold training sessions execute classroom based academic monitoring, mentoring and support to improve quality of teaching

& learning; and use of classroom observation data and assessment of learners' data to make decision for inputs for teachers and tailor training manuals and academic support will be supportive and important. The priority must be given to engage Formal Educational Institutions (FEI) for further campaigning in nearby radius of schools for admitting OOSC in school age brackets and developing a student tracking system for timely enrolment of children to ensure not only admissions but their retention also to ensure significant reduction in drop out numbers. Expansion of Non-Formal Education and Skills Training system for enrolment of OOSC in over-age brackets. Under NFE, alternative and accelerated learning programs (ALPs) should be used to offer fast-track learning for coverage out of school children. A project coordination cell should be established at MoFEPT, all the provincial education ministries and PIE to coordinate, monitor and report the progress of implementation of the proposed intervention. The National Steering Committee should be constituted of MoFEPT and all the provincial education ministries, and shall comprise members from public, private, formal and non-formal supply side partners. The monitoring should ensure close coordination between the key players, which indicates that this initiative will describe its impact to reduce poverty and empower the vulnerable groups and some target groups such as youth, especially girls.

Government must be determined and focused on the targets of SDG-4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities. By 2030, to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations. Though some challenges like migrating and transitioning families will always remain there and keep moving the needle of OOSC counts. The OOSC challenge is aligned with supporting the Government efforts to ensure out-of-school children aged 5 to 16 years and over-age have access to formal and non-formal education and skills training by 2025. To avoid risk at management the strategies should be adopted to minimize the potential risks to mitigate them amicably. All federal and provincial governments should allocate sufficient budget for school education; the Development programme through PSDP should be allocated funds for construction of additional classrooms and provision of salaries for teachers to accommodate OOSC; the rate of influx in urban and rural areas is more than 15%, planning should be made to establish more schools as per population density; the student unique ID and tracking system should be developed to enroll the age group of students and retain them till completion of programme. An early warning system should be devised to check the drop out of students. Moreover, the refugees are residing in Kachi Abbadies and are lacking IDs and difficult to enroll them, The UNHCR is consultation with District Administration should create a unique ID for their enrolment. Although the overall risks are low but current availability of connectivity and Education Technology may assist further in adopting an ALP path for learners coming from weaker or no learning backgrounds as well as limited time capacity to attend such facilities. Social mobilization is crucial to strengthen and further form and strengthen parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and Local Education Committees (LECs). Existing PTAs operating in FDE run formal schools should be given orientation to gain their support in enrollment and retention. At the same time, new PTAs or LECs should be formed in new NFE, ALP and Skills centers to be managed by NFE providers, NGOs, NCHD, BECS and NER. The members of these LECs should be trained using social mobilization manual to gain their support in enrollment, retention and learning of OOSC. Recruitment and training of teachers and instructors for NFE, ALP, Skills centers in particular, while existing teachers of FDE and other stakeholders should be given orientation on enrollment and retention of OOSC. Newly recruited teachers should be trained through induction trainings and contents, while the same teachers should receive follow up trainings. Monitoring, mentoring and classroom-based support during the process of teaching & learning should be carried out using structured tools and checklists by the trained field staff, monitors and mentors. Data generated through monitoring and mentoring activities should be analyzed periodically and be used to design and supply inputs to improve administration and quality of teaching & learning. Data management in formal public and private schools and non-formal education centers (ALPs) should be equally focused through updating formal schools. Data of all target learners should be regularly and periodically entered, updated and analyzed and periodic reports should be generated and be used in decision making of the project activities. Whereas, assessment, certification and learning continuity of learners enrolled in targeted schools and centers should be carried out systematically. Assessments formative and summative should be carried out periodically and be used to improve teaching & learning and promote learners in vertical grades, followed by certification, so as the learners could seek admissions in case they are transferred and mainstreamed in other schools. In addition, learners who will complete basic education cycle primary or middle, should be transitioned to next levels of education. Ensure continuity of learning by implementing these strategies and initiatives, Pakistan can address its education emergency, ensuring inclusive and quality education for all children. This will have a transformative impact on the country's socio-economic development, fostering a more educated, tolerant, and prosperous society for future generations.

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Unbreakable Bond: PM and COAS's China-Visit Reinforces Time-Tested Ties

In a world of shifting geopolitical alignments and economic interdependence, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif along with Army Chief General Asim Munir's recent visit to China is a landmark moment in Pakistan-China's long-standing relationship. Army Chief General Asim Munir is a visionary leader and the main member of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), a body created to attract foreign investment to Pakistan. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid his first official visit to China after taking office for a second term. China's President Xi Jinping met Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Beijing, days before Pakistan presents its annual budget and applies for a new International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan.



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More than the technicalities, China's investment in Pakistan is driven by considerations of strategy. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) symbolises this relationship. Moreover, Pakistan has fully endorsed the Chinese position on Taiwan, and China has confined itself to repeating its old position on the maintenance of peace and stability in South Asia.

This includes the joint opposition to unilateral changes in the region – a veiled reference to India's deletion of article Article 370. Pakistan's location on the Arabian Sea gives it strategic importance for China, providing an overland route out towards the Gulf of Aden and onto the Suez Canal, and enabling Chinese ships to avoid the potential chokepoint of the Malacca Strait. China, as always, firmly support Pakistan and safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity and the two countries' all-weather strategic partnership had broad development prospects. Beijing is willing to work with Islamabad to build an upgraded version of an economic corridor linking the two countries, China's leader Xi Jinping told visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Pakistan is in the middle of a debt crisis. As such, Sharif's government is expected to seek at least \$6 billion under a new IMF programme after it presents its annual budget. And the \$27 billion or so that Pakistan owes China, according to World Bank data, is central to this next round of discussions with the fund. Xi also said that China would also help Pakistan with its economic and social development. The IMF in May opened discussions on the new loan after Islamabad completed a short-term \$3 billion programme, which helped stave off a sovereign debt default last summer. Pakistan owes China almost 13% of its total debt, which was taken on to pay for infrastructure projects over the years and other types of spending. Beijing has lent Islamabad almost twice as much as its second- and third-ranked multilateral lenders, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, to which Pakistan owes \$16.2 billion and \$13.7 billion respectively. Chinese firms have also invested a further \$14 billion in Pakistan since a new economic corridor connecting their countries was announced in the summer of 2013 as part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's flagship Belt and Road Initiative, data from the American Enterprise Institute think tank shows. Most of that investment was made by Chinese state-owned energy companies financing fossil-fuel and nuclear power plants, as well as logistics routes under construction connecting Gwadar Port in the Arabian Sea with the Xinjiang region in China's northwest. Xi told Sharif that their two countries should focus on promoting the joint construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and Chinese and Pakistani firms 31 memoranda of understanding covering technology agriculture, trade, energy, coal and gasification, according to Pakistan's commerce ministry.

But the Chinese leader, also called on his guest to step up efforts to ensure the security of Chinese projects in the country. PM Sharif pledged to ensure the safety of Chinese workers in Pakistan. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor includes building and improving roads and rail systems to link western China's Xinjiang region to Pakistan's Gwadar port on the Arabian sea. It is part of Xi's Belt and Road Initiative to increase trade by building infrastructure around the world. Beijing is willing to work with Islamabad to build an upgraded version of an economic corridor linking the

around the world. Beijing is willing to work with Islamabad to build an upgraded version of an economic corridor linking the two countries. China has emerged as Pakistan's largest lender with a credit of \$27 billion to the country. The World Bank comes a distant second with \$14 billion, while ADB has lent \$13 billion. There is a link between IMF lending and Chinese credit.

The IMF wants to be sure that the fresh money it injects into Pakistan's economy is not simply used to clear up China's dues. This requires a Chinese commitment to roll over existing debt payments. The IMF wants this to be done not simply till the year's end, but until the end of the 3-year credit facility Pakistan is seeking. Pakistan's current year budget is based on a growth projection of 3.5%. The country follows a July-to-June budget cycle. Borrowing is needed not simply to cover the balance of payments gap, but to finance the budget. The prospect of launching the second phase of the CPEC. The first phase was touted to bring \$46 billion. Instead, the net inflow was \$25 billion. Pakistan would like China to finance a second phase for the upgrading of the CPEC. CPEC deals with long-term programs and projects. This is not a panacea for Pakistan's economic problems which require budget support and balance of payment in the short run. Most of CPEC funding is in the form of credit, not investment. This generates more debt payments. Whereas, China extracted major concessions from Pakistan on issues of core interest to it. Pakistani support for the Chinese position on Taiwan has been part of the previous statements as well. Both sides stressed that the authority of the UN General Assembly Resolution 2,758 brooks no dispute or challenge. This resolution, asserting the One China position, was adopted by the world body in 1971, when China joined the United Nations. As China steps up military pressure on Taiwan, it is looking for allies to buttress its diplomatic position. Pakistan has been recently elected to the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for two years – from January 1, 2025 until December 31, 2026. This will give Pakistan new opportunities to encash its position in the UNSC for shoring up its collapsing economy. This will also expose it to conflicting pressures from its all-weather friend and the US, which has a veto on IMF approval of any new package for Pakistan. In a series of trips over the past three months, Pakistan has tried to convince the debt-strapped country's three closest allies – China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – to invest in the nation, as its precariously positioned economy looks for green shoots. In June last year, under the leadership and vision of Army Chief General Asim Munir, the government formed a Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), a high-powered body comprising Pakistani civilian and military leaders, to promote investment in Pakistan. Following the tours to Beijing, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, the government is pointing towards a raft of memorandums of understanding signed on those trips as indicators of potential investment coming to Pakistan. However, the attempts to get foreign direct investment (FDI) will work only in a stable political landscape and bring structural reforms to its economy. After taking office in March for the secondtime, PM paid two visits to Saudi Arabia in April. In his two meetings with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in April, Sharif discussed opportunities to enhance economic cooperation between the two countries and explored the possibility of a \$5bn investment package. Both the countries have identified areas of cooperation, both at the government-to-government and business-to-business levels, and that has been clearly identified. Pakistan had laid out possibilities for Saudi investment in six different fields, including an oil refinery project, agriculture, mining, power sector, technology and aviation. There is no question that Pakistan needs investment. Just 18 or so months ago, we were on the verge of default, but because of these dialogues and engagement with

friendly countries, we are letting them know what we can offer, and has hope that Riyadh would invest from its Public Investment Fund (PIF), the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund with estimated assets of more than \$900bn. They are obviously seeking investment opportunities. PM Sharif followed up his Saudi visits by making a one-day visit in late May to the UAE, another long-term partner for the country, during which he met President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Following the meeting between the leaders, the Pakistan Prime Minister's Office announced that the UAE had committed to \$10bn in investment in Pakistan in various fields. The UAE Ministry of Investment confirmed the pledge. The last 10 years have seen Pakistan's reliance on China growing significantly, as the relationship, which was once centred on military ties, has expanded into the economic arena in a big way: Pakistan owes China nearly \$30bn out of its total foreign debt obligations of nearly \$130bn. The country's economic managers have emphasised that unless there is significant foreign investment, Pakistan will not be able to meet its ambitious 3.6 percent growth rate, which the country has targeted for the next fiscal year. Both Chinese and Pakistani governments also issued statements about increased focus on security, as well as forging an upgraded version of CPEC to better help Pakistan's economic and social development. Ever since the creation of the SIFC last June, the government has credited the organisation with helping facilitate investment opportunities from outside the country. The latest available central bank data reveals that from July to April this year, Pakistan received \$1.45bn in investments, an increase of a paltry 8.1 percent from last year. However, the three recent visits showed Pakistan's desperation to attain financial support, whether in the form of bank deposits or investment projects, the failure to realise the projects substantially was due to Pakistan's volatile landscape.

The fundamental issue for Pakistan remains the question of the broader environment within the country. At a time when domestic businesses are hesitant to invest in the economy, foreign capital will be even more conservative. For Pakistan to attract capital flows, it must embark on holistic reforms and provide a credible roadmap that excites domestic and foreign investors. The increasing attacks on law enforcement officials in the last 18 months have added another layer of challenge to the country's overstretched military, which has to man both its eastern border with archrival India and its western border with Afghanistan. Pakistan evidently working in concert for a wider investment plan in the country. Pakistan is talked about as a country with Saudi software coming on Chinese hardware, and now the connections are becoming clearer, however, the three countries Sharif visited also happen to be the largest bilateral creditors to Pakistan. The state should be focused on finding a way to make large government-to-government deals happen. The problem is, Pakistan need cash support at this time, and these deals, even if they come, will not bring much cash. The best way out of the current economic difficulty for Pakistan is domestic reforms, along with foreign support. Realistically, Pakistan should try to manage its external debt profile rather than seek more cash-based support from its bilateral creditors. The foreign visits have developed a political aspect where the optics are used by the Pakistani governments as signs of international trust and support but some focus on domestic investors must be paid to revive the economy. FDI certainly remains an important component of economic expansion and growth; however, the government could have started with facilitating local investors and businesses to develop a roadmap that could then be offered to foreign investors. In such conditions, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif along with Army Chief General Asim Munir's visit to China demonstrates the long-standing strength and vigour of the China-Pakistan relationship. It emphasises the mutual trust, strategic alignment, and shared vision that has defined this cooperation for decades. As both countries face the challenges of the twenty-first century, their commitment to expanding collaboration and creating a shared future is strong. The visit has paved the way for the next phase of China-Pakistan ties, which will include increased economic cooperation, strategic coordination, and a shared commitment to regional and global stability. With the second phase of CPEC on the horizon and new collaboration opportunities emerging, the future seems bright for an all-weather strategic cooperative relationship. Indeed, China-Pakistan Friendship is a Rock-Solid partnership endures as leadership strengthens bilateral bonds, and a legacy of trust which Celebrates unwavering cooperation and mutual support for each other.

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The Alarming Rise of Female Criminality in Pakistan: A Call to Action



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Pakistan has witnessed a disturbing increase in female criminality, with a significant rise in violent crimes committed by women. According to the most recent data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2022 estimates), the population of Pakistan stands at approximately 229.5 million (229,488,994), comprising a male population of roughly 117.6 million (117,644,051) and a female population of approximately 111.9 million (111,844,943). This yields a sex ratio of 951 females per 1,000 males and a female population percentage of 48.7%. Furthermore, an analysis of the National Crime Data Portal (2022) reveals a disturbing trend: a 35% increase in female offenders over the past three years, culminating in 12,321 reported cases in 2022 alone. Historical data on female criminality in Pakistan reveals a stark contrast. In 1986, a study found only 70 female criminals in the entire country. By 1990, this number had marginally increased to 125 in the province of Punjab, according to police records. However, by 2018, women prisoners constituted 1.8% of the total prison population in Pakistan, as reported by the World Prison Brief. In Pakistan's penal system, female inmates constitute a relatively modest proportion, approximately 1.6%, which is lower than the global average. However, a notable escalation of 20% has been observed in the female prisoner population over the past decade. As of 2021, the total number of female prisoners in Pakistan stands at 1,399, with Punjab housing the majority, at 920 prisoners. Research indicates a startling escalation in the female prison population over the past decade. More recent data from the Pakistan Prisons Report (2020) shows a further increase, with 205 women prisoners in Punjab 927; Sindh 166; KPK 20; Baluchistan, and 3 in

GB. These statistics unequivocally demonstrate the alarming rise in women's involvement in criminal activities. A key factor contributing to this surge in female criminality is the perceived leniency in sentencing, which often results in reduced punishments for female offenders. Additionally, the jail management's approach towards female prisoners is often more benevolent than the traditional stereotype of harsh treatment, likely due to the prolonged duration of their incarceration. Moreover, the judicial system and legal framework tend to exhibit a more lenient attitude towards female criminals, influenced by the cultural and religious emphasis on respecting femininity. This phenomenon aligns with Otto Pollak's theory of female criminality (1950), which posits that females are treated more mildly by the criminal justice system compared to their male counterparts. This uptick can be attributed to a complex interplay of factors, including socioeconomic deprivation, limited educational opportunities, and entrenched social inequalities. Moreover, the perpetuation of patriarchal norms and gender biases within Pakistan's legal framework contributes to the growing phenomenon of female criminality. In response to this pressing issue, the Pakistani government has enacted various legislative measures and initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of female criminality. These include the following: The Constitution of Pakistan (1973) enshrines the fundamental rights to security of person and dignity under Articles 9 and 14, respectively. The primary legislative framework governing prison systems in Pakistan is the Prisons Act (1894), inherited from the British Empire and India in 1947, which remains authoritative to this day. Additionally, the Prisoners Act (1900) was enacted to consolidate the rules governing the treatment of prisoners by law enforcement authorities. To operationalise these Acts, the Pakistan Prison Rules (PPR) (1978) were developed as the core jail manual, delineating the obligations and prohibitions on prison authorities. Furthermore, Article 10(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) mandates that all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for their inherent dignity. Pakistan is also a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979), which underscores the importance of gender-sensitive treatment. Notably, Article 12(2) of CEDAW extends the right to "appropriate services" for women, including healthcare during pregnancy, confinement, and the post-natal period, with a guarantee of free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation. The Women Protection Act 2006; Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection Act) 2012; Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act 2011; Criminal Law Amendment Act (2015); The National Action Plan for Women's Empowerment (2019); The Women's Protection Act (2020); The Criminal Law Amendment Act (2020); The Protection of Women from Harassment at the Workplace Act (2020); and the National Action Plan for Women's Empowerment (2022) to ensure the protection of women's rights.

In 2012, The Nation News cited research by the Punjab Police Department, revealing that at least 4,000 women were implicated. In 2012, The Nation News cited research by the Punjab Police Department, revealing that at least 4,000 women were implicated in various criminal activities, including

theft, kidnapping, and detention. A comprehensive report by the UNODC in 2011 on women prisoners in Pakistan provided further insights. According to the report, a significant proportion of female inmates (40%) were convicted of murder, while others were incarcerated for kidnapping (13%), drug-related offences (24%), theft (7%), commercial sex work (12%), and other crimes (4%). Globally, female criminality has emerged as a pressing social concern. Women's economic, legal, and physical vulnerabilities render them disproportionately susceptible to exploitation and marginalization. The increasing involvement of women in criminal activities is a novel phenomenon in developing countries, warranting attention. Since the beginning, women have been considered the foundation stone of the family. In Pakistan, women are considered the preserver of customs, traditions, morality, social norms, and family cohesiveness. Since the inception of civilization, women have been considered nurturing icons. The world has become more developed, and technology has reached horizons. In the era of technology and development, the role of women cannot be denied. Across the world, women are contributing to each and every sphere of life at an equal pace with men. This is the bright side of society and the story. At the same time, the other side of the story is dark, where women's involvement in crimes is also at its peak. In Pakistan, the role of women in criminology is not less common. The social norms are strictly followed in Pakistan, but women's involvement in criminality is a vast field that encompasses Pakistan's intellectual, financial, police, social, and opinionated milieu. The cultural and socio-economic factors, including illiteracy, poverty, low level of education, and economic dependence on the male and patriarchal system, are considered dragging factors that force women to commit crimes in Pakistan. In Pakistan, women's involvement in crime is increasing daily, becoming an alarming situation. The differences in cultures stem from variations in roles and behaviour patterns of these two units. Women have been considered as nurturing icons since the inception of civilization. Particularly in Pakistan, a female is observed as a symbol of family cohesiveness and a maintainer of customs, morality, communal norms, and way of life. But, the involvement of women in criminal acts and crimes is a new phenomenon in the cultures and societies of developing countries. The social norms are strictly followed in Pakistan, but women's involvement in criminality is a vast field that encompasses Pakistan's intellectual, financial, police, social, and opinionated milieu. In Pakistan, women are deprived of their basic fundamental rights, right to mate selection, ingratitude, isolation, helplessness, desperation, and external sexual relations, which are the social factors and elements which indulge women in crimes and criminality. This involvement has reached a frightening stage that is the prime cause of female crimes that has led to a tremendous increase in statistics of violence by women. In Pakistan, the role of women in criminology is not less common. Moreover, women are deprived of the right of mate selection, isolation, ingratitude, helplessness; desperation and extra sexual relation are those social elements which are indulged women in Pakistan to ward crimes. Therefore, women's criminality has been drastically increasing in Punjab, Pakistan hence requiring an in-depth analysis into the cause-and-effect relationship. The notion of women's criminality is a hidden cultural issue in Pakistan that has been dumped at the hands of male dominance and stereotypes attached to the Pakistani culture. In Pakistan, law enforcement agencies often fail to adequately address women's complaints, despite the country's obligations under international conventions and treaties protecting women's rights. These include the UN Charter, UN UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, ICSPCA, and ICEAFRD, which Pakistan has signed and ratified. However, the practical situation regarding women's rights in Pakistan remains subpar. International human rights law affirms woman remains subpar. International human rights law affirms women's entitlement to equal human rights and fundamental freedoms as men.

The UNO, established in 1945, aims to promote non-discrimination and equality principles globally. The UN Charter, the most widely ratified international agreement, emphasizes the equal rights of men and women. Subsequent conventions, such as the UDHR, ICCPR, and CEDAW, reinforce this principle, condemning discrimination against women and promoting equal rights. Despite these international protections, gender-based discrimination persists in Pakistan, par-

ticularly in rural areas where women lack access to education, economic opportunities, and fundamental rights. Socioeconomic factors like poverty, illiteracy, and economic dependence on men, coupled with cultural practices and discrimination, contribute to women's involvement in criminal activities. The socio-economic and cultural marginalization of women renders them vulnerable to exploitation and crime. Thus, the low status of women in Pakistani society perpetuates their criminalization, highlighting the need for effective implementation of international conventions and national laws to protect women's rights and promote gender equality. Criminologists and sociologists attribute the surge in female criminality to the consequences of women's liberation, which has led to increased financial struggles and urban disorganization. Deception and fake marriages are additional factors contributing to women's involvement in crime. In Punjab, women's participation in criminal activities has escalated dramatically. Pakistan's patriarchal society restricts women's access to fundamental human rights and economic opportunities, perpetuating gender-based discrimination. In rural areas, women are denied basic rights, and practices like Quraan, Sawara, Karo Kari, Wani, and Watta Satta perpetuate male dominance. Honour killings and sexual violence are prevalent, with women subjected to acid attacks, mutilation, and emotional exploitation. Women's dependence on men and subordinate status in society contribute to their involvement in crimes. Security agencies often fail to hold women accountable, and courts display a lenient attitude towards female offenders. Urbanization has led to increased poverty, cultural crises, unemployment, and reduced social norms, further contributing to women's criminal involvement. In developing countries like Pakistan, women face deprivation of basic rights, lack education, and are economically dependent on men. Factors like illiteracy, broken marriages, early-age marriages, family pressure, and betrayal drive women to engage in criminal activities. Poverty and financial hardship lead women to resort to drug trafficking, child kidnapping, prostitution, and robbery to fulfil basic necessities. Women in Pakistan face significant barriers to accessing justice due to social, structural, cultural, economic, and political factors. When their fundamental rights are violated, and justice is denied, women may turn to criminal activities. Law enforcement agencies fail to protect women's rights, leading them to take the law into their own hands and perpetuate crimes. To effectively mitigate women's involvement in criminal activities, it is imperative that law enforcement agencies and police authorities fulfil their duties and responsibilities, maintaining law and order, protecting women's rights, and providing victim support. This proactive approach will significantly reduce and prevent women's criminal involvement. Moreover, government authorities must prioritize the needs of victimized women, ensuring their rights are protected and justice is served. This support will lead to a decrease in their involvement in criminal activities. Families, particularly husbands, play a crucial role in preventing criminal behaviour. By fulfilling their wives' basic needs, fostering cooperation, and promoting mutual understanding, women can assume positive roles in society, reducing their likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. Additionally, government authorities and law enforcement agencies must provide adequate attention to incarcerated women, offering training in various skills to facilitate social and economic reintegration upon release. This support will enable them to become economically independent, reducing their reliance on criminal activities to fulfil basic needs. Furthermore, establishing a link between prisoner women and their families will aid in post-release reintegration, allowing them to readjust to society and lead respectable lives. Lastly, the government must prioritize women's rights, including access to education, equality, and non-discrimination. By ensuring free education, women can avoid illegal activities, engage in positive social endeavours, and assume constructive roles in society. The socioeconomic factors of residing in a low-class area, poverty, lack of education, and meagre social status are emblematic of Social Disorganization, which posits that women's criminal behaviour is largely a consequence of environmental and social forces. The primary motivations for women's criminal activities are poverty, lack of education, early marriage, and undesirable relationships. Additional factors contributing to criminal behaviour include extra-marital affairs, partner betrayal, bride exchange, and frustration stemming from peer pressure. This indicates that the process of committing crimes is remarkably similar, with most aggressors targeting individuals with whom they have a personal connection, employing readily available objects such as rocks, billhooks, sticks, blocks, and hatchets to inflict harm. In conclusion, the escalating trend of female criminality in Pakistan is a pressing concern that warrants immediate attention and collective action. The factors contributing

to this phenomenon are multifaceted and deeply ingrained in societal, economic, and cultural dynamics. It is imperative that we address these underlying causes and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society that provides opportunities for education, employment, and empowerment for all individuals, regardless of gender. We must recognize that the rise in female criminality is not merely a law and order issue but a symptom of deeper systemic problems. Therefore, a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach is necessary to address this challenge. This includes reforming the criminal justice system, improving access to education and economic opportunities, and challenging societal attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender inequality. The time for action is now.

“The National Crime Data Portal (2022) reveals a disturbing trend: a 35% increase in female offenders over the past three years, culminating in 12,321 reported cases in 2022 alone. A key factor contributing to this surge in female criminality is the perceived leniency in sentencing, which often results in reduced punishments for female offenders.”



Strengthening Pakistan's Animal Protection Laws for Compassionate Reforms!

Animal welfare in Pakistan has not been prioritized either by the state or by the majority of the population. The mistreatment of animals is rampant, and issues such as habitat destruction, illegal poaching, and the overexploitation of animals for food are pushing many species to the brink of extinction. Globally, animal welfare is in crisis. Each year, more than 70 billion animals are raised and killed for food, many of them in industrial factory farms where conditions are abhorrent.



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The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has reported that intensive farming methods, which prioritize profit over animal welfare, lead to animals being crammed into small, unsanitary spaces where they cannot exhibit natural behaviors. This not only causes physical suffering but also leads to the spread of diseases. The massive scale of this industry highlights the need for countries like Pakistan to reevaluate their reliance on meat production as a central part of the economy and culture. Animals used in research also suffer. According to the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), approximately 30% of animals used in scientific experiments are small mammals such as mice and rats. However, more alarming is the fact that about 7% of animals used in these studies are non-human primates, like monkeys, which are subjected to painful procedures that often cause immense psychological distress. Animal testing is still widely accepted in many countries, including Pakistan, where regulations on the ethical treatment of laboratory animals are insufficient. While scientific advancement is important, the ethical cost of these experiments raises questions about the moral limits of such research. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has further highlighted that over 50% of the world's wildlife populations have vanished since the 1970s, a period during which industrialization and urbanization have drastically expanded. This loss of biodiversity is not just a matter of environmental degradation; it also poses a direct threat to human life, as healthy ecosystems are vital for clean air, water, and food security.



By recognizing the intrinsic value of non-human life and taking concrete steps to protect animals, Pakistan can lead the way in creating a more compassionate and just society.

In Pakistan, the situation mirrors the global crisis but is exacerbated by additional local challenges. Pakistan slaughters over 100 million animals annually for food, with many of these animals being raised in poor conditions and subjected to inhumane slaughter practices. The livestock sector is a significant part of Pakistan's agricultural economy, contributing over 60% of agricultural GDP, yet the welfare of these animals is often overlooked. Conditions in slaughterhouses, transportation, and farms are rarely regulated, and there is little public awareness about the suffering these animals endure. Wildlife in Pakistan is also under immense pressure. Pakistan is home to 174 endangered species, including iconic animals such as the snow leopard, Indus river dolphin, and the houbara bustard. Yet, despite the existence of wildlife protection laws, enforcement remains weak. Poaching for profit, illegal hunting, and the destruction of natural habitats have contributed to the extinction or near-extinction of many species. The WWF estimates that 60% of Pakistan's wildlife has disappeared in the last decade alone due to these factors. The illegal trade in wildlife, driven by demand for exotic pets, fur, and other animal products, continues to flourish in Pakistan, largely unchecked by the authorities. Public attitudes towards animals also reflect a lack of concern for their welfare. A 2022 survey revealed that only 10% of Pakistanis consider animal welfare an important issue. This statistic is indicative of a cultural disconnect between the value placed on animals as sentient beings capable of suffering and the utilitarian view that animals exist solely for human use. This mindset, deeply embedded in societal norms, must be challenged if any meaningful change is to occur.

A critical part of addressing the animal welfare crisis in Pakistan is the legal framework. Internationally, animal rights have gained increasing recognition over the last few decades. One of the most signif-

icant international efforts is the Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW), which calls for the humane treatment of animals and urges governments to adopt legislation protecting their welfare. While many countries have made strides in improving animal welfare laws, Pakistan has yet to formally adopt this declaration or implement any comprehensive modern laws that address animal rights. Pakistan's primary piece of legislation regarding animal welfare is the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA) of 1890. This law, passed during British colonial rule, is outdated and lacks the scope to address contemporary issues such as factory farming, animal testing, and wildlife conservation. While the PCA does prohibit certain forms of cruelty—such as beating, torturing, or overloading animals—the penalties are insufficient, with fines as low as Rs. 200 (around \$1.30) and imprisonment for a maximum of six months. These minimal penalties do little to deter individuals from mistreating animals, and enforcement is sporadic at best. In contrast, other countries have made significant progress in enacting and enforcing strong animal welfare laws. In the European Union, animal welfare is protected under a range of legislative measures that regulate everything from farming practices to animal testing. The EU's Directive 2010/63/EU specifically addresses the use of animals in scientific research, requiring that alternatives to animal testing be used whenever possible and that animals in laboratories be treated with care. These measures are backed by rigorous enforcement mechanisms and penalties that far exceed those found in Pakistan's outdated legal framework.

In Pakistan, habitat destruction is one of the main drivers of wildlife decline. The country's forests, which cover less than 5% of its total land area, are disappearing at an alarming rate due to deforestation, illegal logging, and land conversion for agriculture. The destruction of mangrove forests along Pakistan's coastline is another pressing issue. These ecosystems are vital for protecting coastal areas from storm surges and erosion, but they are being destroyed at a rapid pace due to overharvesting, pollution, and development projects. Conservation efforts must go beyond tree planting and include stronger legal protections for wildlife habitats, better enforcement of anti-poaching laws, and incentives for sustainable land use practices. Wildlife trafficking is a significant issue in Pakistan, where animals are captured or killed for their body parts, fur, and as exotic pets. The Wildlife (Protection, Preservation, Conservation, and Management) Act of 1975 provides some legal protection for endangered species in Pakistan, but enforcement is weak, and the penalties for poaching are often inadequate. Pakistan's porous borders and lack of resources for monitoring wildlife trafficking make it a hotspot for illegal activity. Moreover, the lack of awareness among law enforcement officials and the general public contributes to the continued exploitation of wildlife. To combat wildlife trafficking, Pakistan must strengthen its collaboration with international organizations such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which regulates the trade of endangered species. By working with global partners, Pakistan can enhance its capacity to track and prosecute wildlife traffickers and develop more robust monitoring systems to prevent illegal trade. Around 70% of animals used in research in Pakistan are rodents, while approximately 10% are non-human primates. These animals are subjected to invasive procedures, often without adequate anesthesia or

pain relief, and many die as a result of experimentation. The absence of comprehensive regulations governing the use of animals in research means that there are few safeguards in place to ensure their humane treatment. In many developed countries, alternatives to animal testing are increasingly being used in scientific research. Pakistan's scientific community must invest in these alternatives and work towards reducing its reliance on animal testing. By adopting international best practices, Pakistan can improve its standing in the global research community while also promoting ethical standards in science. One of the most effective ways to reduce animal suffering and mitigate environmental damage is to promote plant-based diets. In Pakistan, where meat consumption is deeply embedded in cultural and religious traditions, promoting plant-based diets may seem like a daunting task. However, there are growing movements around the world advocating for a shift towards more sustainable and ethical food choices. Organizations such as the Plant-Based Health Professionals UK and the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine have shown that plant-based diets can improve health outcomes, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and lessen the environmental burden of food production. Public awareness campaigns promoting the benefits of plant-based diets, along with government incentives for sustainable agriculture, could help shift consumer behavior in Pakistan. Encouraging people to reduce their meat consumption, even by a small amount, could have a significant impact on animal welfare and the environment. Education is a powerful tool for changing attitudes towards animal welfare. In Pakistan, there is a need for widespread public awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of treating animals with compassion and respect. Schools, universities, and religious institutions should incorporate animal welfare into their curricula, teaching students about the ethical treatment of animals and the role that humans play in protecting the environment. The media also has a crucial role to play in promoting animal welfare. Television programs, documentaries, and social media campaigns can help raise awareness about the suffering of animals and the importance of conservation efforts. By educating the public about the intrinsic value of non-human life, Pakistan can begin to foster a culture of empathy and compassion towards animals.

There's an urgent need that The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA) 1890 must be updated and enforced with stricter penalties for those who violate animal welfare laws. Every province in Pakistan should have animal welfare organizations and shelters to care for injured, abandoned, and mistreated animals. Public awareness campaigns should be launched to educate people about the importance of animal welfare. Schools, religious institutions, and the media can help foster a culture of empathy and compassion towards animals. Protecting natural habitats and preserving biodiversity should be a national priority. The government must increase efforts to combat deforestation, wildlife trafficking, and illegal hunting. Reducing meat consumption is one of the most effective ways to alleviate animal suffering and environmental destruction. Campaigns promoting plant-based diets should be launched to encourage healthier and more sustainable food choices. The scientific community in Pakistan should invest in research and development of alternatives to animal testing, such as in vitro methods and computer modeling. Pakistan should work closely with international organizations and participate in global efforts to combat wildlife trafficking, protect endangered species, and promote animal welfare. Scientific institutions should adopt and promote alternative methods to animal testing, which can be more effective and ethical. The government should prioritize conservation efforts to protect endangered species and their habitats from destruction and exploitation. Pakistan must update its outdated animal protection laws and ensure strict enforcement, with severe penalties for those who harm or exploit animals. Pakistan stands at a crossroads when it comes to animal welfare. The current situation is dire, but there is still hope for positive change. By recognizing the intrinsic value of non-human life and taking concrete steps to protect animals, Pakistan can lead the way in creating a more compassionate and just society.



Revolutionizing Justice through Technology and Reforms!

Pakistan's judicial system has long been plagued by delays, inefficiencies, and a massive backlog of cases. The need for judicial reforms is pressing, and technology and artificial intelligence (AI) can play a pivotal role in revolutionizing the justice system. This article explores the challenges facing Pakistan's judiciary, the benefits of technology and AI integration, and potential solutions for speedy trials and efficient justice delivery. Pakistan's Judiciary system is facing many challenges due to overwhelming Cases Backlog with over 2.1 million pending cases, Pakistan's courts are grappling with an unprecedented backlog. This leads to prolonged trials, delayed justice, and frustrated litigants. One of the main reasons is inefficient Case Management System due to manual case management systems result in lost files, misplaced documents, and unnecessary adjournments. Limited Judicial Resources; Insufficient judges; inadequate infrastructure and the lack of modern tools hinder the judiciary's ability to efficiently dispose of cases. Corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement also undermine public trust in the justice system.



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Automated Case Management Technology can streamline case management, reducing errors and delays. By Implementing Electronic Case Management Systems (ECMS) can help streamline case management, reduce errors, and increase efficiency. Pakistan's Lahore High Court has already implemented an ECMS, which has shown promising results. Virtual courts can also increase accessibility, reduce travel time, and enhance transparency. Pakistan's Sindh High Court has established a virtual court system, which has improved case disposal rates. Through Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Legal Research tools can also assist and aid judges and lawyers in legal research, saving time and improving accuracy. Pakistan's Supreme Court has already started

using AI-assisted legal research tools, but there is an urgent need to extend its area of scope and budget. Predictive analytics can help identify patterns and predict case outcomes, enhancing judicial decision-making. Pakistan's Punjab Police has already started using predictive analytics to improve crime prevention and investigation. By ensuring the security and integrity of digital data and online platforms is crucial. Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency also has established a cybersecurity wing to tackle cybercrime. Virtual Courts Online platforms can facilitate remote hearings, reducing travel time and increasing accessibility. AI-Assisted Legal Research through artificial intelligence can aid judges and lawyers in legal research, saving time and improving accuracy. Predictive Analytics through AI algorithms can analyze case data, predicting outcomes and identifying patterns to enhance judicial decision-making. For better transparency and accountability technology can promote transparency, reducing corruption and mismanagement. There are many potential solutions for revolutionizing justice through technology and artificial intelligence. By Implement Electronic Case Management Systems (ECMS): Digitize case files, automate workflows, and enable online access; Establish Virtual Courts and create online platforms for remote hearings, reducing travel time and increasing accessibility; Leverage AI-Assisted Legal Research Tools and provide judges and lawyers with AI-powered research tools to enhance efficiency and accuracy; Develop Predictive Analytics Models by utilize AI algorithms to analyze case data, predicting outcomes and identifying patterns; Enhance Judicial Education and Training and provide judges and court staff with training on technology and AI applications; Strengthen Cybersecurity Measures and ensure the security and integrity of digital data and online platforms. Moreover, there is also a need to establish a National Judicial Technology Committee to oversee the implementation of technology and AI in the judiciary, and also provide regular training and education for judges, law

yers, and court staff on technology and AI applications.

Pakistan's judicial system faces numerous challenges, including delays, backlogs, and inefficiencies. Digitalization can revolutionize the system, enhancing speed, transparency, and accessibility. The need for reforms to implement digitalization in Pakistan's judicial system, highlighting benefits, challenges, and recommendations for effective implementation. There is an urgent need of Reforms for Digitalization in the Judicial System of Pakistan. Pakistan's judicial system is plagued by delays, inefficiencies, and a massive backlog of cases. Digitalization can transform the system, improving speed, transparency, and accessibility. Need for Digitalization is crucial to resolve: Delays and backlogs: Digitalization can streamline processes, reducing delays and backlogs; Inefficiencies: Digitalization can automate routine tasks, freeing up resources for complex cases. Accessibility: Digitalization can provide remote access to courts, especially for marginalized communities. Transparency: Digitalization can ensure transparent proceedings and judgments. Resultant, there would be lots of benefits included: Improved efficiency, enhanced transparency, increased accessibility, reduced costs and faster dispute resolution. But there is also another side of challenges which include: Infrastructure limitations, technophobia among judges and lawyers, security and privacy concern, high implementation costs and resistance to change. These challenges can be addressed with Infrastructure development (hardware, software, and internet connectivity); Training and capacity-building for judges, lawyers, and staff; Implementation of digital case management systems; Electronic filing and service of documents; Video conferencing for remote court proceedings; Digital payment systems; Cybersecurity measures; and gradual implementation and monitoring. Reforms are also need of the time to develop a comprehensive cybersecurity policy for the judiciary. There must increase in funding for judicial technology and AI initiatives, and collaborations with international organizations and countries to learn from their experiences in judicial technology and AI. The recommendations for the need for judicial reforms in Pakistan for speedy trials using technology and artificial intelligence are: Electronic Case Management Systems (ECMS), Implement a comprehensive ECMS that covers all aspects of case management, including filing, scheduling, and document management: Ensure the ECMS is user-friendly, secure, and accessible to all stakeholders, including judges, lawyers, and court staff: Automate case assignment, scheduling, and notification processes to reduce manual errors and delays: Integrate the ECMS with existing court systems, such as the Pakistan Case Law Database, to enhance efficiency and accuracy: Provide regular training and support to judges, lawyers, and court staff to ensure effective use of the ECMS. For the establishment of Virtual Courts: Establish virtual courts in all provinces and territories to increase accessibility and reduce travel time: Implement video conferencing technology to enable remote hearings and testimony: Develop a secure and reliable virtual court platform that ensures confidentiality and integrity of proceedings: Ensure virtual courts are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and those in remote areas: Develop guidelines and protocols for virtual court proceedings to ensure consistency and fairness.

The policy for the Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Legal Research must be adopted. For the purpose: Implement AI-assisted legal research tools to aid judges and lawyers in legal research and analysis: Develop a comprehensive legal database that includes Pakistani case law, legislation, and regulations: Ensure the AI-assisted legal research tools are regularly updated and maintained to reflect changes in the law: Provide training and support to judges and lawyers on the effective use of AI-assisted

legal research tools: Establish a committee to oversee the development and implementation of AI-assisted legal research tools. For the Predictive Analytics there is urgent need to: Implement predictive analytics tools to identify trends and patterns in case data: Develop a data analytics platform that integrates with the ECMS and other court systems: Ensure predictive analytics tools are regularly updated and maintained to reflect changes in case data: Provide training and support to judges and court staff on the effective use of predictive analytics tools: and establish a committee to oversee the development and implementation of predictive analytics tools. Moreover, for cybersecurity: Develop a comprehensive cybersecurity policy that ensures the security and integrity of digital data and online platforms: Implement robust security measures, including firewalls, encryption, and access controls: Ensure regular software updates and patches are applied to prevent vulnerabilities: Provide training and awareness programs for judges, lawyers, and court staff on cybersecurity best practices: and establish a cybersecurity incident response plan to address any security breaches or incidents. Without Digital Literacy we can't resolve the issue, so for Digital Literacy: Develop a digital literacy program for judges, lawyers, and court staff to enhance their understanding of technology and AI: Provide training and support on the effective use of digital tools and platforms: Ensure digital literacy training is regularly updated and maintained to reflect changes in technology and AI: Establish a digital literacy committee to oversee the development and implementation of digital literacy programs: and encourage the use of digital tools and platforms in court proceedings to enhance efficiency and accuracy. For all the above recommendations there must be an enough funding and resources available. Therefore, there is also need to: Allocate sufficient funding for judicial technology and AI initiatives: Ensure adequate resources, including hardware, software, and personnel, are provided to support judicial technology and AI initiatives: Establish a dedicated budget for judicial technology and AI initiatives: Encourage international cooperation and funding for judicial technology and AI initiatives: and establish a committee to oversee the allocation of funding and resources for judicial technology and AI initiatives. Moreover, International Cooperation may also be adopted through: Collaboration with international organizations, such as the United Nations, to learn from their experiences in judicial technology and AI: Participation in international conferences and workshops on judicial technology and AI: Establishment of partnerships with other countries to share knowledge and best practices in judicial technology and AI: Encourage international funding and support for judicial technology and AI initiatives: Establish a committee to oversee international cooperation and collaboration on judicial technology and AI initiatives. Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of judicial technology and AI initiatives. Conduct regular assessments and evaluations of judicial technology and AI initiatives. Ensure monitoring and evaluation results are used to improve and enhance judicial technology and AI initiatives. Establish a committee to oversee monitoring and evaluation of judicial technology and AI initiatives. Encourage transparency and accountability in monitoring and evaluation processes. Digitalization is crucial for Pakistan's judicial system to address delays, inefficiencies, and accessibility issues. Reforms are necessary to implement digitalization effectively, addressing infrastructure limitations, technophobia, security concerns, and resistance to change. With gradual implementation and monitoring, digitalization can revolutionize Pakistan's judicial system, enhancing justice delivery and promoting a more efficient and transparent system. Pakistan's judiciary urgently needs reforms to address the overwhelming case backlog, inefficiencies, and corruption.

Technology and AI integration can revolutionize the justice system, enhancing speed, efficiency, and transparency. By implementing electronic case management systems, virtual courts, AI-assisted legal research tools, predictive analytics models, and enhancing judicial education and training, Pakistan can transform its judiciary and ensure swift and effective justice for all. Embracing technology and AI is crucial for a modern, efficient, and just judicial system. Implementing judicial technology and AI initiatives requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. By following these recommendations, Pakistan can enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and accessibility of its judicial system, ensuring speedy trials and justice for all.

Pakistan's judiciary urgently needs reforms to address the overwhelming case backlog, inefficiencies, and corruption. Technology and AI integration can revolutionize the justice system, enhancing speed, efficiency, and transparency.



The Conservative Party's Downfall: Lesson from a Historic Defeat in UK Election

Britain elected its first Labour prime minister in 14 years, with a landslide victory for the opposition party during the July 4 elections. PM Keir Starmer takes the country's top job from Rishi Sunak with projections suggesting his left-of-center party could have a majority of around 170 seats. Sir Keir Starmer, leader of the Labour Party, is the prime minister after Labour won the 2024 general election. In his first speech at Downing Street, he said he wanted to form "a government of service". Starmer has had a rapid political ascent after entering the U.K. Parliament less than a decade ago. But many Britons still know little about the man who has positioned himself as the country's change candidate. After postgraduate studies at the University of Oxford, Starmer began working as a barrister. Starmer also served as a human rights advisor



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during former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair's landmark Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement. Starmer was knighted in 2014 for his services to criminal justice and was elected to Parliament the following year, serving as immigration minister and Brexit minister for the opposition. In 2020, he was appointed Labour leader and instigated a major overhaul of the party after the resignation of Jeremy Corbyn, who led the faction to a record loss in the 2019 election. In his 2024 election campaign, Starmer touted a "decade of national renewal" for the country following what Labour has described as years of spending cuts and falling living standards under the Tories. The UK general election is a pivotal moment for Britain after 14 years of Conservative Party government. Polls suggest that the centre-left Labour Party is set to return to power in what would be a fundamental realignment of British politics. With all of the 650 seats declared, Keir Starmer has taken office as the new prime minister with a large Labour majority. Millions of voters in 650 constituencies are voting for candidates to represent them as members of Parliament.

The political party that wins the most seats usually forms Britain's next government, and that party's leader also becomes prime minister. To win an overall majority, a party must secure 326 seats. If the top party falls short of that, it can try to form a government with backing from others. UK new prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer's Labour Party won a landslide election victory, while the Conservative Party, which had held power for 14 years, suffered its worst-ever defeat. And outside 10 Downing Street, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak offered an apology. The House of Commons is the main lawmaking body for the United Kingdom, the other being the unelected House of Lords. It consists of 650 members, each of whom is elected by a geographical constituency of roughly equal population. In each constituency, the candidate with the largest number of votes wins. There is no need to win 50% of the vote, and votes for other candidates are in effect lost. This is known as first-past-the-post voting. The Commons also chooses the prime minister. By convention, the monarch invites the leader of the largest party to form a government. The prospective prime minister needs to have the support of the majority of MPs. This is possible if they lead a party with an overall majority or have the backing of other parties. A majority technically requires 326 MPs (half of all seats plus one), but a small number of MPs - including the speaker, his deputies and the members of Sinn Féin - do not usually vote. This means a working majority can be achieved with just under 50% of seats. Under Mr Sunak, the Conservatives have suffered stinging losses in parliamentary special elections and elections for mayors and local councils. Defenders of Mr. Sunak, say he is a victim of the global economic headwinds coming out of the coronavirus pandemic, and argue that he deserves credit for steadying the markets. But he never followed that up with a convincing strategy to recharge growth. Nor did he fulfil two other promises: to cut waiting times in the National Health Service and to stop the small boats carrying asylum seekers across the Eng-

land since Gordon Brown left office in 2010. A Labour government would operate under strict financial constraints, which has raised questions about whether Mr Starmer would have to raise taxes to pay for promised investments in the N.H.S. and other public services. While he has issued a blanket promise not to raise taxes on "working people," Labour is expected to raise taxes on oil and gas companies, private equity firms and high-income foreigners who live in Britain. A small anti-immigration party, Reform has risen in the polls in recent months, and Conservative officials fear it could siphon away supporters from their candidates. That has shaken up the race and could help Labour by dividing the right-wing vote. The Liberal Democrats, a small centrist party, are well placed to win seats in affluent areas like Surrey, where right-leaning voters find the party more palatable than Labour. The Lib Dems made health and social care major priorities of their campaign and were helped by Mr. Davey, 58, who spoke movingly about his personal struggles, including caring for his disabled teenage son. He also subjected himself to publicity stunts, including bungee jumping and paddle boarding, trying to draw attention away from the party's bigger rivals. In Scotland, the once-dominant Scottish National Party has been weakened by a funding scandal and the departure of Nicola Sturgeon as first minister, giving Labour a chance of picking up more seats there and easing Mr Starmer's path to becoming prime minister. The Green Party made sizable gains in local elections in early May, and pre-election polling suggested that it was picking up support among left-wing voters, especially 18- to 24-year-olds, alienated by Labour's move to the centre. In May 2011, there was a UK-wide referendum on whether to bring in an alternative voting (AV) system instead of first-past-the-post. It was known as the AV referendum. However, only 42 per cent of voters turned out to vote in the referendum, and nearly 68 per cent were against introducing AV. A number of more things happened. First of all, it's important to remember that the Conservative Party had been in office for 14 years.

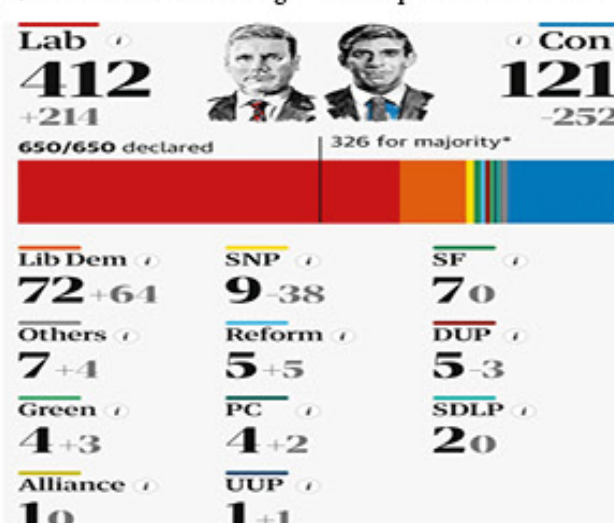
The Conservative Party in the United Kingdom suffered its worst-ever defeat in the recent elections, losing to the Labour Party, led by Sir Keir Starmer. The British party system may be fragmenting but voters delivered a coherent message. Several factors contributed to this loss, including Long tenure; The Conservative Party had been in power for 14 years, making it difficult for them to secure a fifth consecutive election victory; Divisive policies: The party implemented austerity measures, navigated the divisive Brexit, and faced challenges during the pandemic and the Ukraine war. Unpopular leadership; Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and Liz Truss made unpopular decisions that alienated voters. Johnson's staff held lockdown parties during the pandemic, and Truss's mini-budget was seen as disastrous; Split on the right: The emergence of the Reform Party, led by Nigel Farage, split the right-wing vote and took 14% of the vote, damaging the Conservative Party; Anti-incumbency sentiment: Across Europe, there is an anti-incumbency trend, vote, damaging the Conservative Party; Anti-incumbency sentiment: Across Europe, there is an anti-incumbency trend, which affected the Conservative Party as the incumbent party in the UK. Some more reasons that contributed to the Conservative Party's loss in the UK general election; The Conservative Party's handling of Brexit led to rising living costs, shrinking household budgets and skyrocketing accommodation prices, which lost them support; The Conservative Party's confusing and ineffective immigration policies lost them support among their voters; The Conservative government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the initial strategy and the handling of lockdowns, was heavily criticized; The deterioration of the UK's National Health Service (NHS) under the Conservative Party's rule was seen as a broken promise; The Conservative Party's handling of the economy and the rising cost of living was criticized for favoring the wealthy and not doing enough for the broader population; Liz Truss's mini-budget caused financial turmoil and damaged public trust in the Conservative Party; Rishi Sunak's perceived wealth and lack of political charisma made him seem out of touch with

ordinary people and unable to make strong, decisive decisions; No British political party has ever won a fifth successive term in office, and voters were ready for a change; British politics tends to work in cycles, with the two main parties usually getting a run of between 10 to 15 years before the public votes in the opposition. No British government has ever won five consecutive election victories on the bounce. So the odds were stacked against them. On top of which, they'd been very difficult years, and had a period of austerity, which saw big cuts to public services. The UK had Brexit, which was obviously terribly divisive. And then, in the wake of the pandemic and the Ukraine war, had bad inflation, the cost of living crisis and further strain on public services. On top of that, the UK had two prime ministers, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, who alienated the public. Boris Johnson by holding - his Downing Street staff holding lockdown parties during the COVID pandemic, having set a rule for everybody else - his people didn't obey themselves. And then Liz Truss, who was very briefly prime minister, held a disastrous mini-budget, which shattered the Conservatives' reputation for economic confidence. So all of those things together meant that the country was just fundamentally sick of them. It certainly didn't help that you had this split on the right, which ate terribly into their vote.

Historically, in Britain, there has only really been one important party of the right, and that's the Conservatives. Whereas, the parties of the left have been split between the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats in particular. Well, this time, there was a major party of the right, which took 14% of the vote and did untold damage to the Conservative Party across the country. The question that's not entirely clear and we'll only begin to understand in the months ahead is whether that's a permanent feature now or whether that was simply a manifestation of the anger felt by former conservatives, and those people might over time be coaxed back. The point is that there's been an anti-incumbency element to what's going on across Europe, and obviously, the incumbents in Britain were the Conservatives. Therefore, the natural alternative historically has always been the Labour Party. The question now is whether Britain's Conservative Party, which has been a broad coalition of right-wing groups or sort of moderate right moving rightwards - whether that now becomes more like some of the parties that you're seeing in the European Union or, indeed, in the Republican Party in America, whether they move towards being that more nationalistic radical right grouping or whether they attempt to stay as a sort of broad coalition. There will be a big debate now that the Conservative Party has lost a lot of leaders in this election. So a lot of people who might have been potential leadership contenders have lost their seats. There will be a big debate as to the real causes of their defeat. Those on the right will argue that they lost because they opened up space for Nigel Farage. They betrayed conservative principles, and they needed to get back to them and take his votes from him. Others in the mainstream will say they essentially lost because they lost their reputation for competence, for governing well and because people in Britain were not feeling better off. That's the debate that's got to be had. And, of course, there's a bit of truth in both. Fundamentally, they lost because the country thought they were doing a very bad job and was fed up with them. But that debate will focus on which way they go in terms of their future leadership and, obviously, their future direction more generally. The UK's Conservative Party's worst-ever defeat offers several lessons that long tenure in power can lead to arrogance and disconnect from voters' concerns; Polarizing decisions like Brexit and austerity measures can alienate significant voter segments; Unpopular leaders can harm the party's image and electoral chances; Failure to address economic woes and inequality can erode voter trust; Scandals and perceived corruption can significantly damage a party's reputation; Failing to acknowledge and address voter dissatisfaction can lead to electoral defeat; Parties must evolve and respond to changing public sentiments and needs to remain relevant; Infighting and ideological splits can weaken a party's electoral prospects; A strong and united opposition can capitalize on the ruling party's weaknesses and win elections; and voters can

punish parties that become too comfortable or out of touch, ensuring accountability and fresh perspectives in government. This highlights the significance of the event, emphasizes the lessons that can be learned from it, and invites readers to explore the insights and implications of the Conservative Party's historic defeat in the UK election. The Conservative Party's landslide defeat teaches us that the Conservative Party's worst-ever defeat is indeed Britain's Political Earthquake which takes away from power to the opposition.

The Conservative Party's landslide defeat teach us that Conservative Party worst-ever defeat indeed Britain's Political Earthquake which takes away from power to opposition.





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According to the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2020-21, Pakistan's worst score in the world, and worldwide is 130 out of 139. Unfortunately, there are many reasons for this performance but one of the most important reasons is the Pakistani Justice System for this long-standing trend. Fifty-three thousand cases are pending in the Supreme Court, about 300,000 pending cases are in the five high courts, and about 2.2 million cases are pending in the subordinate courts and judges in less than four provinces and the state capital, according to the Pakistan Law and Justice Commission. Our justice system was not designed to make things easy for regular people.

The complex language, the behavioral protocols and even the design of courthouses themselves all seem as if they were intentionally configured to put up barriers between judges and lawyers and the rest of us. The problem of access to justice had already reached critical proportions with low-income receiving inadequate or no professional legal help for 96% of the civil legal problems they faced. Over the last few years, technology has increasingly been pitched as a solution to that problem. The widespread accessibility of video conferencing has made it so that people do not necessarily have to take time off work to participate in a hearing or a trial, while the growth of alternative dispute resolution tools, e-filing and digital evidence platforms all have shown the potential to transform the courtroom. The most important stakeholders in the justice system are the citizens, and ensuring that they have access to justice is the most important challenge that needs to be overcome. In the status quo, we see that accessing justice in the first place is the problem. Police and other law-enforcement agencies are seen as hostile, especially for the majority of the underprivileged population. For women, accessing justice is all the more challenging. Character shaming, incredulity, bribery are major challenges that citizens face when dealing with the law-enforcement and justice system. Perhaps technology can empower citizens to hold the law-enforcement system accountable.

Technological transformation of the court system

The legal system in Pakistan still heavily relies on traditional methods of working and the major one is paperwork. It is of utmost importance that the Court House is made efficient, affordable, intelligent and smart through technology. Technological and scientific developments are generating huge opportunities for tackling societal challenges. However, the benefits of technology and innovation are unequally distributed, and they tend to cause economic and political disruptions in our societies that widen inequalities.

The introduction of e-courts by the Supreme Court of Pakistan where cases can be heard via video link is a welcome addition to the current setup where complainants and witnesses have to bear the cost of travel and stay for hearings, some-

thing that otherwise deters them from using the justice system. Similar arrangements for recording witness statements via video will also help the cause of justice. Whereas technology can be an important enabler in accessing and dispensing justice, it is essential that the limitations of technology be kept in mind when glamorising it or relying on it too much. Whereas it would be helpful for judges, as announced by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, to use artificial intelligence to access previous precedents and case law on specific cases, letting AI make a decision based on computed facts may be a bit of a stretch.

Mobile phone applications that connect lawyers with citizens in search of a lawyer were unveiled. However, it is important to consider how those who cannot read or write and spend money on lawyers can be connected to pro bono lawyers without being taken advantage of. This is what innovators should be spending most of their time thinking about. Another major issue that citizens in this country face is the inefficiency of state prosecutors and the court system. Using technology for the attendance record of public prosecutors will go a long way, as the absence of state prosecutors in cases that are cognisable and non-compoundable which requires the state to be a party causes delays. Digitisation of investigation files and court records is another important area in which the justice system can be made efficient through the use of technology. No citizen should have to endure so many struggles, especially if they are the aggrieved party. Further, setting

up of independent forensic laboratories for investigation of data is also very important, as the current high volume dealt by a just a handful of forensic labs causes unnecessary delays in the dispensation of justice. As technology outside the justice system continues to advance rapidly in use and availability, the need for change within the system is becoming unavoidable.

However, it took a pandemic for such technology to become commonplace. In the months following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, as courtrooms around the world shut their doors and already high case backlogs started growing even more rapidly, some pioneering court systems that had been experimenting with technology prior to the pandemic saw an opportunity to solve a problem

“The concept of technological justice is important that the Court House is made efficient, affordable, intelligent and smart through technology. Technological and scientific developments are generating huge opportunities for tackling societal challenges.”

and modernize their courtrooms. Along the way, they have made significant progress on access to justice and learned a lot about how technology can be leveraged to make the justice system more equitable in the post-pandemic world. Throughout the pandemic and since, court systems that implemented digital solutions have made been able to make progress on their backlog of cases as judges, lawyers and litigants all started to interact more efficiently. The widespread technological transformation of the nation's court system is going to require a

concerted effort to develop technologies that are purpose-built for legal workflows; resilient enough to respond to endless combinations of use cases; and user-friendly enough for judges, clerks, attorneys and individuals to manage effectively.

To foster a technological convergence among countries, and to aspire to a smart world society, the G-20 should have a central role connecting the 2030 SDG goals which include innovation, technology, justice and equality. More specifically, the policies to apply in developing countries must pursue aims such as the open diffusion of knowledge, improving digital education, producing innovations for local consumption, the reduction of their energy deficits, and the technological empowerment of women. Implementing such policies in a context of international cooperation would make public-private partnerships a key instrument for funding infrastructures, joint ventures, incubators, start-ups and any other of entity with a significant capacity for technology

transfer. Major changes and challenges like automation, digitalization, 3D printing, Artificial Intelligence, retail through the web, etc. are currently underway and, in the years ahead, more change will come from technological and scientific developments. There is a dialectic relationship between technology and society: technology is both part of the solution to societal challenges and part of the problem, and this deepens social inequalities. The concept of technological justice can reconcile these two faces, connecting technology, a critical factor in human development, with our aspirations for social justice and greater equality between economies.

We propose to develop the concept of technological justice, along with relevant policies. The concept of technological justice requires a rethinking of how-both in the developing and the developed world-to encourage and nurture technological innovation that has social value and is environmentally sustainable. There is a need for a renewed focus on reform of national and international innovation systems and R&D policies, in an attempt to create a new consensus on how public-private partnerships can contribute to a more open and sustainable use of technology. More open source access for technologies should be sought. It is essential to assure an open diffusion of knowledge, innovations and technologies in the design of development policies. Development policies should support redistributive systems and incentives for successful application of new technologies. Legal frameworks should be promoted to enable innovation and the use of new technologies. Improve the education of the left-behind countries through global schemes. Technological justice should be linked to the SDG Agenda. As a result, the timeframe for proposals should coincide with the 2030 horizon.

The judiciary, the legal community and civil society have come together with a shared vision for a Digital Legal Pakistan. They say that justice delayed is justice denied, hopefully, with the intervention of legal-tech, we will be able to change that. It is important that the laws are fair and respect fundamental constitutional rights, and that they provide sufficient protections to citizens rather than demonising their use of technology to exercise rights. Moreover, the laws must not be abused by the state against dissidents and whistleblowers. We are at a pivotal moment in the development of the court system; we have an opportunity to truly raise the game and modernize arcane processes that have been creating unnecessary barriers to justice for far too long. We are talking about the independence of the judiciary and the strengthening of the administration of justice in order to provide justice and freedom for citizens. Only an effective and efficient justice system can ensure the enjoyment of basic rights by the average person.

The Middle East Situation: How Should Pakistan Respond?



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Pakistan is watching with deep concern the ongoing developments in the Middle East. For months, Pakistan has underlined the necessity of international efforts to prevent the expansion of hostilities in the region and for a ceasefire in Gaza. Pakistan's foreign office expressed deep concern over the escalation of hostilities in the Middle East following Iran's retaliatory strikes against Israel, urging all parties to exercise utmost restraint and work toward de-escalation of tensions. The statement comes in response to Iran launching a swarm of explosive drones and firing missiles at Israel in its first-ever direct attack on Israeli territory, risking a major escalation in the Middle East. Israel's military said more than 100 drones were launched from Iran, with security sources in Iraq and Jordan reporting dozens seen flying overhead and US officials saying the American military had shot some down. Iran launched the missiles and drone attacks against Israel for what it said was a retaliatory attack against an Israeli strike on its Damascus consulate on April 1 that killed seven Revolutionary Guards officers, including two senior commanders. These incidents also underline the grave implications in cases where the UN Security Council is unable to fulfil its responsibilities of maintaining international peace and security. The Gaza war between Israel and Hamas, now in its seventh month, has driven up tensions in the region, spreading to fronts with Lebanon and Syria and drawing long-range fire at Israeli targets from as far away as Yemen and Iraq. Pakistan, which does not accept Israel as a sovereign state and also doesn't have diplomatic relations with Israel, has urged the international community to intervene and impose a ceasefire in the Middle East. For decades, Pakistan has called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, based on internationally agreed parameters. Although Pakistan took a cautious approach to the Israel-Gaza War, Islamabad has consistently demanded a separate homeland for the Palestinians by their wishes, with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital. It is now critically urgent to stabilize the situation and restore peace. But for Pakistan, this situation calls for reforms in its internal as well as external policies to be able to effectively respond to the challenges engendered by the crisis in the Middle East. These reforms are much needed as the crisis in the Middle East is unlikely to abate in the near future. Political instability will continue to evade the region. The GAZA war is likely to turn into protracted conflicts, with increasingly catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Iran and GCC states will continue to support opposing camps in various theatres of conflict in the region, which would keep their relations estranged or even hostile. As is obvious, much of Pakistan's predicament stems from its economic problems. Though lately Pakistan's economy has shown some signs of improvement, it is still not out of the woods. One of the major structural problems afflicting Pakistan's economy is its heavy dependence on external sources especially on U.S. – foreign aid and remittances. The economy thus remains vulnerable to external shocks, and Pakistani policymakers are too well aware of this fact. The present crisis should bring home the message for Pakistani policymakers that with too heavy economic dependence on other states or multilateral institutions, the country will always find it challenging to adopt an independent course of action in its foreign relations, particularly when doing so could run afoul of the interests of its donors or more wealthy and powerful partners. A strong and vibrant economy is the basis of independent foreign policy for any nation, and Pakistan is no exception to it. All efforts must therefore be directed towards the goal of a strong economy. Pakistan

needs to give special policy attention to the issue of the Middle East with the change in the geo-political and geo-economic situation. Pakistan also needs to rethink the basis of its relations with states, including the Muslim states. The Middle East has been in flux ever since the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Things deteriorated further in the wake of the Arab Spring. Both of these developments were hoped to usher in an era of democratic openness in the Middle East. They have, however, brought in their wake only political instability and war, though they did succeed in toppling some deeply entrenched dictatorships. The fallout of the crisis in the Middle East has spawned several policy challenges for Pakistan vis-à-vis its relations with the Middle East: the growing threat of sectarianism, violent extremism and terror, domestic polarization and threats to its economic development. Tackling these challenges necessitates the country revisit its foreign as well as domestic policies. The crisis in the Middle East has only added to the problems of the Palestinians. As the entire Middle Eastern region was caught in political mayhem, violence and sectarian tensions, the international community's attention deviated away from the plight of Palestinians and towards the crisis in other parts of the oil-rich region. The Arab regimes, which had historically been championing the Palestinian cause, became entangled in their own problems, practically leaving the Palestinians on their own in the face of Israeli atrocities. This situation poses a serious challenge for Pakistan where the people have always held the Palestinian cause close to their heart. Any large-scale Israeli atrocities against innocent Palestinians, which seem all the more likely given the Arab regimes' apathy towards the Palestine issue, can further radicalise Pakistani Muslims. Since the early 1970s, religion has become the basis of Pakistan's relations with the Muslim world, particularly the oil-rich GCC states. And, no doubt, the strategy yielded considerable dividends in the form of jobs for millions of Pakistanis, billions of dollars of remittances, huge financial aid and diplomatic support at international fora. But the strategy had its downside as well: sectarian violence and radicalisation are largely the upshot of the same strategy. Pakistan's own success in building and maintaining exemplary ties with China and Russia – can serve as another good example of friendly and mutually beneficial bilateral ties between two states having different religious and cultural values, but shared strategic and economic interests.

Pakistan should not be a part of any cold war and should also have a candid dialogue with friendly Muslim states, especially Iran and Saudi Arabia, over the issue. Pakistan should also support a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia so that Muslim states' resources are utilised for the betterment of their masses instead of financing their mutual wars. In the present Strategic Studies and geo-strategic environment, it would serve Pakistan's interests well if it focused also on building and capitalising on its internal strengths such as the competitiveness of its economy and skilled workforce. It can learn from India's success in improving its relations with several Muslim states, including the GCC members. And, last but not least, Pakistan should also focus on building capacities of its internal security apparatus to enable them to deal with an increasing array of threats challenging its do-

mestic security. It should use the recent economic window of opportunity afforded by the remittances bonanza, CPEC-related investment and overall economic progress to better train and equip organisations dealing with internal security challenges. The country should aggressively explore new foreign markets for its workers to enhance and diversify its remittance portfolio. This should also help cushion against the negative effects of a drastic decrease in remittances from a particular region due to political instability or economic slowdown. Domestically, Pakistan should develop transparent mechanisms to provide overseas Pakistanis with investment opportunities so that they have something to bank on if they have to return. This is particularly crucial for Pakistani workers in the GCC countries who, unlike their counterparts in North America and Western Europe, cannot acquire citizenship of the host countries, and thus have to return to Pakistan at some point in time.

Israel's war on Gaza on the pretext of annihilating Hamas has not only led to the massacre of thousands of ordinary Palestinians, it has also (expectedly) generated ripples in the geostrategic continuum. What was planned as a localised 'war of attrition' has, knowingly or otherwise, graduated to a phenomenon that plays out on a regional theatre level involving multiple countries. The Israel-Palestine conflict has effectively divided the world into two camps, leaving little room for alternative choices. This situation essentially rekindles the geopolitical map reminiscent of the Cold War era, with most nations adhering to their traditional positions on the Israel-Palestine issue. Since there are significant interests at stake with major international players involved in the conflict, Pakistan's decision-makers have chosen a more diplomatic approach, realizing the potential consequences of using inflammatory rhetoric or acting hastily. For Pakistan, the spectrum of possibilities appeared such: as balancing ties between China and the United States, seeking guidance from the Kingdom's Middle East policy; taking a clear stand on the Ukraine and Gaza wars, and also aligning with the US and the West. These courses of action held the potential to assist Pakistan in addressing its economic challenges and securing a comfortable position among major regional and global powers. Arguably, Pakistani decision-makers do not want to see Pakistan end up in a situation similar to that in the Russia-Ukraine war. However, recent events in the Middle East have significantly altered these options. It is crucial to note that the Pakistani population continues to oppose the idea of normalizing relations with Israel. Pakistan maintained a balance to ensure the security of its broader political and diplomatic interests. Economic crisis and long-term foreign policy goals are seen keeping Islamabad cautious. As much of Pakistan's predicament stems from its economic problems. Though lately Pakistan's economy has shown some signs of improvement, it is still not out of the woods. One of the major structural problems afflicting Pakistan's economy is its heavy dependence on external sources – foreign aid and remittances. The economy thus remains vulnerable to external shocks, and Pakistani policymakers are too well aware of this fact. The present crisis should bring home the message for Pakistani policymakers that with too heavy economic dependence on other states or multilateral institutions, the country will always find it challenging to adopt an independent course of action in its foreign relations, particularly when doing so could run afoul of the interests of its donors or more wealthy and powerful partners. A strong and vibrant economy

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The genocide case against Israel at the ICJ

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) began hearing arguments in genocide case against Israel filed by South Africa, setting off the most significant international challenge yet to Israel's war in Gaza. South Africa says Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians in its war in Gaza. It is also asking the court to order Israel to cease its military activity. The ICJ is the United Nations' highest court. South Africa brought this case at the ICJ against Israel under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, also



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known as the Genocide Convention, of which both states are parties. The Genocide Convention defines genocide as specific "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." Some of the acts against members of the targeted group include killings, serious physical or mental harm, measures designed to prevent future births, or conditions purposefully designed to physically destroy the group or part of the group. The Genocide Convention allows any state party to bring a case against another state party to the ICJ on issues including responsibility for genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, or attempt to commit genocide. The International Court of Justice, established after World War II in 1945 by the United Nations Charter to settle disputes between countries. The U.N. General Assembly and Security Council elect the court's 15 judges to nine-year terms. The current elected judges are from the following countries: Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Jamaica, Japan, Lebanon, Morocco, Russia, Slovakia, Somalia, Uganda, and the United States. In February 2024, four judges from Jamaica, Morocco, Russia, and the United States will finish their terms and be replaced by incoming judges from Mexico, Romania, South Africa, and the United States. It is the main judicial body of the United

Nations (UN) and all member states can bring cases before it under treaties, by agreement, or another form of consent. Certain organisations can also ask the court to issue a non-binding advisory opinion on a legal question. The ICJ rules on questions of state responsibility—that is, on when a state has violated a rule of international law or an international legal obligation. It is not a criminal court and does not decide on individual criminal responsibility. A different, unrelated court in The Hague, the International Criminal Court, serves this function, and South Africa, with other like-minded states, has already referred the situation in Gaza to it for investigation. Under international law, genocide is defined as committing one or more acts with the intention to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Those acts are: killing or causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. The Court's jurisdiction on Article 36, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the Court and on Article IX of the Genocide Convention allow as provisional measures, pursuant to Article 41 of the Statute of the Court and Articles 73, 74 and 75 of the Rules of Court, the Court must take provisional measures in order to protect against further, severe and irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people under the Genocide Convention and to ensure Israel's compliance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention not to engage in genocide, and to prevent and to punish genocide, which shall have priority over all other cases. Indeed, the acts and omissions by Israel are genocidal in character, as they are committed with the requisite specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza as a part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group, and that the conduct of Israel through its State organs, State agents, and other persons and entities acting on its instructions or under its direction, control or influence in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, is in violation of its obligations under the Genocide Convention.

Genocides are never declared in advance, all the Israeli's actions are enough proof of genocidal intent. Mass killings of Palestinians is the first genocidal act in Gaza. As

the number of Palestinians killed in Gaza by Israeli operations since October 7 now stands at more than 24,000 included 11,000 plus children, the strip's Hamas-run health ministry has said. It added that 60,697 Palestinians have injured during the same period. The World Health Organization (WHO) says only 12 out of Gaza's 36 hospitals are partially functioning. The nine hospitals in the south are operating at three times their capacity, while facing critical shortages of basic supplies and fuel for generators. UN agencies say 40% of Gazans - 576,600 people - have exhausted their food supplies and coping capacities and face catastrophic hunger and starvation. According to Unrwa, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, 1.9 million Gazan residents - about 85% of the population - have been displaced, and 1.4 million of them are sheltering in its facilities. Every day is a struggle for survival. Israel has deployed highly destructive 2000-pound bombs in parts of Gaza that it has itself declared safe. More than 1,800 families have lost multiple family members, while some families do not have any survivors left, even no one has been spared, not babies, and especially not children. Indeed, the Gaza-Genocide is not about the claims of Israel protecting itself, but, this is all about oil. Indeed, IDF's Gaza war is to get illegal possession and control on Palestinian gas, focused on the 1.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas discovered in 2000 off the Gaza coast, valued at \$524 billion to avert Israeli energy crisis. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) military's brutal attacks in Gaza are the deadliest and most destructive criminal war in recent history, but Israelis look in vain for any sign of victory. Moreover, Israel also arrested a large numbers of Palestinians, including children, who were undressed and loaded onto trucks going to unknown locations. The suffering of the Palestinian people, physical and mental, is undeniable. By forced displacement and food blockade, Israel has deliberately imposed conditions that cannot sustain life and that are calculated to bring about the destruction of Gaza through its forced displacement of most of the population. Thousands of families have been displaced multiple times, with a million now having no homes to return to. Israel gave entire hospitals orders to evacuate within 24 hours with no assistance in moving the injured or in moving medical supplies. It did the same with large parts of northern Gaza, where more than one million people were asked to move at short notice, that order itself was genocidal. Israel has also blockaded food and water from the Strip, causing widespread hunger and that it has removed the ability to distribute what is available by restricting the movement of aid workers. Israel has also deliberately imposed conditions denying Palestinians in Gaza adequate shelter, clothes, bedding and other critical non-food items. There's no safe water to drink, clean and cook, and that disease cases, including diarrhoea, are soaring. Palestinians may die from hunger and disease, yet the siege continues. The fourth genocidal action is Israel's military assault on Gaza's healthcare system that renders life there unsustainable. Gaza's healthcare was already crippled by years of attack by Israel, and now, it is simply unable to cope with the sheer number of injured people who need life-saving treatment. Preventing Palestinian births is fifth genocidal action of Israel, who is blocking life-saving treatment needed to deliver babies. This, amounts to preventing births in Gaza, and is an act of genocide. Moreover, the reproductive violence inflicted by Israel on Palestinian women, newborn babies, infants and children qualified as

The Israeli officials' statements are further proof of intent. In particular, PM Netanyahu's comments on October 28 when the prime minister urged troops preparing to enter Gaza to "remember what Amalek has done to you," - a biblical command from God to entirely destroy a group. The destruction of Palestinian life is articulated state policy. During its oral argument, Israel vehemently denied all allegations that it was responsible for genocide, and argued that its actions were in self-defence, following Hamas's October 7 attacks. Israel framed its actions under the right of self-defence in the war against Hamas, but acknowledged that Hamas's actions do not absolve Israel of its legal obligations. Israeli officials have railed against the South Africa suit. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said South Africa presented hypocrisy and lies at the court. Many Muslim, non-Muslim countries, and international organisations included UN and OIC have rallied behind South Africa in its case. Whereas, Israel has seen backing from the United States, its main weapons supplier and diplomatic patron.

South Africa's ruling African National Congress has long shown its support for Palestinians and backed their right to self-determination, considering them to be subject to a long-standing regime of apartheid, like South Africa was. With the genocide case against Israel, South Africa Challenged Western-led Order. After arguing its genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, South Africa won praise for standing up for Palestinians under Israeli bombardment in Gaza. The case on genocide against Israel, South Africa states in its application to institute proceedings that no armed attack on a State's territory no matter how serious—even an attack involving atrocity crimes—can, however, provide any possible justification for violations of the Genocide Convention. The case itself will likely take many years to conclude. Prior cases under the Genocide Convention at the ICJ against Serbia, for example, took more than a decade before a final decision was issued. Due to the urgency of provisional measures and the risk of irreparable harm, this phase takes priority over all others and must be resolved in a days. Importantly, the court will not be ruling on whether Israel has committed genocide at this phase—it will only rule on provisional measures. Right now, however, the court is addressing South Africa's request for provisional measures. Provisional measures are emergency measures the court can order the parties to take to prevent irreversible damage to a right directly linked to the case at issue. South Africa requested the ICJ to order Israel, among other things, to suspend its military operations, take all measures necessary to prevent genocide, and to refrain from killing, injuring, or committing other acts constituting genocide against Palestinians. Orders from the court, including on provisional measures, are binding on the parties but the court does not have its own enforcement mechanism. For a situation to constitute genocide, therefore, both the specific acts and the specific intent to destroy a group must be proven, and the intention by the responsible actors to destroy a group, completely or in part, must be demonstrated. To drive its arguments home, the South African legal team not only proved that the indiscriminate mass killings genocide are indeed happening, but also proved that there is an intent to commit these acts by Israel. No doubt, Israel has committed and failed to prevent genocidal acts, including mass killings, serious bodily and mental harm, and imposing conditions intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group, that being the part of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip. Israel has failed to prevent or punish the direct and public incitement to genocide by senior Israeli officials and others. Indeed, Israel has violated its obligations under the Genocide Convention; that it must stop any genocidal acts; ensure that people committing or inciting genocide are punished; collect and preserve or allow for the collection and preservation of evidence of genocidal acts against Palestinians in Gaza; and issue reparations, including allowing displaced Palestinians to return to their homes, reconstruct what it destroyed in Gaza, and ensure respect for the human rights of Palestinians in Gaza, among others.

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The Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-22: A Much-Awaited Report!

The significance of education in shaping the future of Pakistan is undeniable. As a cornerstone for national development, it demands a prominent place in policy discussions and decisions. Education policies should not only reflect current needs but also anticipate future challenges, shaping a system that is resilient, inclusive, and forward-thinking. Education bears a fundamental position with regards to human, social and economic development. The credible information, an important part of which is data-centered evidence, enables the understanding of the education system's landscape in Pakistan, its key characteristics, and forms a basis for formulation of future policy-related actions. The Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-22 is a much-awaited publication as it shall be an authentic source of information in post-COVID scenario. Undoubtedly, the leadership of Mr. Waseem Ajmal Choudhary, Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT), and under the supervision of Dr. Muhammad Shahid Soroya, Director General PIE and his team during the whole process was exemplary. The personal interest taken by him was remarkable in improving the report. The data released through this report not only provides an account of current state of education system across the country but also displays the insights about the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector. The findings of the report refresh the commitment of the MoFE&PT for fulfilment of its obligations enshrined in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan under Article 25-A – Right to Education. The report is also offering insights about investment in education made by the federal and provincial governments. The Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-22 report examines the Education Landscape in Pakistan and offers a comprehensive view of Pakistan's education sector. It covers a network of 313,418 education institutions, catering to 54,870,964 students with the support of 2,139,631 educators. Within this network, 227,506 institutions, accounting for 73%, are formal schools ranging from primary to higher secondary levels. Additionally, the report includes 43,613 religious schools or deeni madaris, making up 14% of the total, and 8% (25,106) are non-formal basic education institutes. The remaining institutions comprise 3% (10,087), that are schools of the education foundations, 1% (4,182) technical & vocational institutes, and another 1% (2,487) degree colleges. The education landscape is further enriched with 220 universities and 217 teacher training institutes across Pakistan. The school education system encompasses 227,506 institutions, serving 42,576,130 students and employing 1,625,747 teachers. There is a total of 313,418 both public and private schools including 2,088 other public category across all levels in the school education system in Pakistan. This distribution is also reflected in the enrollment figures, where a significant 53.5% (29,359,376) of students are educated in public schools (including other public category enrolment), predominantly primary level institutions (78%), followed by middle (11%), high (10%), and higher secondary (2%). In contrast, 46.5% (25,511,588) of students are enrolled in private sector schools. Whereas, according to the latest report of All Pakistan Private Schools Federation (APPSF) regarding the Pakistan Private Education Statistics 2022-23 report, 53.1% (299,110,980) of students are enrolled in private sector schools. Moreover, as per APPSF Report 2021-22 private schools employ 61% of these teachers (1,549,746), this date is very close to the PIE's Report 2021-223, in which public schools show employ the remaining 42% (889,885), underlining the critical role both sectors play in shaping Pakistan's academic landscape. Complementing this division, the education workforce consists of a total of 2,139,631 teachers. Additionally, public-private partnerships (PPPs) play a significant role. In the sphere of Non-Formal Education, the public sector emerges as the primary service provider, encompassing 86% of the student population in this segment and employing 78% of the teaching workforce. The Technical and Vocational Education & Training (TVET) enrolls 65% male students and employs 74% male teachers, exhibiting stark gender imbalances. The education landscape is further marked by a significant presence of religious schools, or Deeni Madaris, totaling 43,613. These institutions are managed by religious seminaries, contributing to the country's diverse educational system. Pakistan has a total of 220 universities and higher education institutions, of which 38% are managed by the private sector. This sector demonstrates a strong female presence, with women accounting for 45% of the total enrollment of 2,226,251 students, underscoring the growing inclusivity of women in tertiary education in Pakistan. Pakistan grapples with one of the world's most significant challenges of out-of-school children (OOSC). Pakistan comes in after Nigeria and India where the number of OOSC is the highest in the world. According to the report's findings, Punjab tops the list with 10.11 million children lacking access to education, followed by Sindh with seven million, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa with 3.6 million, and Balochistan with 3.1 million. Additionally, the federal capital, Islamabad, has 80,000 children who are not attending school. The report highlights that 39% of these children are not attending school for various reasons, with Balochistan having the highest percentage of 65% of OOSC. Despite recent progress in reducing the percentage of OOSC from 44% in 2016-17 to 39% in 2021-22, the absolute number has risen from 22.02 million excluding AJK and GB to 26.21 million, largely attributed to population growth. This increase underscores the persistent and pressing issue of education access and retention in the country. The proportion of OOSC is alarmingly high across various education levels. In primary education, 36% (10.77 million) of children are out of school. This issue extends into middle school with 30% (4.94 million) OOSC, and is even more pronounced in high school and higher secondary levels, with 44% (4.55 million) and 60% (5.95 million) respectively. Punjab and Sindh report the highest numbers of OOSC, with 11.73 million and 7.63 million respectively. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) faces 3.63 million cases of OOSC, while Balochistan reports 3.13 million. The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) has the lowest figure, with 0.08 million OOSC. A notable gender disparity persists, with a higher percentage of female students being out of school compared to their male counterparts at all education levels. Moreover, economic factors play a significant role in this issue. A staggering 51% of children from the poorest quintile are not attending primary school, and this pattern continues in middle education, with 55% OOSC in the same economic bracket. The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on education systems worldwide, with Pakistan being no exception. The closure of schools, done as a preventive measure to curb virus, disrupted the regular learning routines of millions of students. Moreover, the economic repercussions of the pandemic have had a direct bearing on education access and participation across the country. Families grappling with job losses, income reductions, and overall financial instability may prioritize immediate economic needs over educational expenses. This could result in increased dropout rates, particularly among vulnerable populations. In this challenging context, policymakers and stakeholders in Pakistan face the critical task of implementing strategies to mitigate the long-term impact of COVID-19 on education and ensure equitable access for all students. The disparity becomes even more pronounced at higher education levels, where the poorest quintile accounts for 75% of OOSC. The Pupil-School ratio across Pakistan averages at 162, suggesting that each school accommodates about 162 students. On the other hand, the Teacher-School ratio stands at an average of 5, implying that each school has around five teachers. The Pupil-Classroom ratio, which reflects the average number of students in each classroom, is observed to be 37 for primary, 33 for middle, 45 for high, and 52 for higher secondary levels. There is a notable disparity in the availability of essential facilities across different regions of Pakistan. The ICT, Punjab, and KP exhibit relatively better conditions in this regard. However, other provinces, particularly Balochistan, face significant challenges. In Balochistan, only 23% of primary schools have access to safe drinking water, the lowest among all provinces, followed by Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) at 31%, Sindh at 61%, and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) at 63%. The situation is not much better in middle schools, with 40% in Balochistan and 52% in AJ&K having access to safe drinking water facilities. Similarly, toilet facilities are scarce in primary schools, with only 33% in Balochistan, 42% in AJ&K, and 57% in Sindh having access. Moreover, boundary walls, crucial for school security, are present in only 59% of Sindh's schools, 39% in Balochistan, 31% in AJ&K, and 61% in GB. Electricity availability shows significant regional discrepancies. While Punjab and ICT have managed to provide electricity to all primary schools, the figures are starkly lower in other provinces and regions: only 15% in Balochistan, 21% in AJ&K, 38% in Sindh, and 44% in Gilgit-Baltistan. Between 2016-17 and 2021-22, there has been some progress in enhancing these facilities. Schools with electricity increased slightly from 67% to 70%, and those with toilet facilities from 76% to 79%. Similarly, schools equipped with boundary walls rose from 77% to 79%, and those with access to drinking water improved from 76-78%. Traditionally, Pakistan has been allocating around 2% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) towards education. However, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21 brought a significant reduction in this allocation, decreasing the education spending to 1.4% of GDP. There has been a slight improvement in the following year, as reported by the Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-23, with education spending recovering to 1.7% of GDP in 2021-22. The results from key assessments conducted by the Pakistan Institute of Education's (PIE) National Assessment Wing's two primary testing activities, specifically the Trends in International Mathematics & Science Study (TIMSS) and the National Achievement Test (NAT), highlight the urgent need to improve learning outcomes among students. According to the TIMSS 2019, only a quarter (27%) of students at the end of primary school in Pakistan reach at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics. This statistic is a stark indicator of the challenges in achieving adequate proficiency in fundamental subjects. The NAT 2019 results show that just 60% of primary students attain mean score in reading. A review of gross enrollment ratio figures from primary through secondary education in Pakistan indicates a discernible gender gap. This disparity extends to the Adjusted Net Enrollment Rates, where 65% of male students are enrolled in primary to secondary education, compared to 57% of their female counterparts. In terms of the Survival Rate, which measures the percentage of students who continue their education at a given level, there is relative parity between genders. The rate is 77% for male students and marginally higher at 78% for female students. However, gender differences become more apparent in the Effective Transition Rates. This report shall serve as a valuable resource for policy and decision makers, academicians, scholars, CSOs, and other actors of the education system. The report shall truly contribute in shaping the education policies, sectoral plans, and priorities of the Government for efficient use of resources to increase access in education while improving the quality and governance dimensions. Data collection and analysis serves a dual purpose: firstly, it illuminates key areas that require improvement, guiding policymakers in addressing these challenges effectively, secondly, it aids in formulating strategic educational plans that can bring about transformative changes. Moreover, this data plays a critical role in highlighting the sector's progress and accomplishments, providing a factual basis for celebrating successes and understanding shortcomings. The policy-makers and planners had to make difficult decisions regarding budget allocations to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. During and after the peak of the pandemic, there was a pressing need to divert funds towards healthcare infrastructure, vaccine procurement, and social protection measures to support the most vulnerable segments of the population. The unprecedented nature of the pandemic and its wide-ranging impacts compelled governments to prioritize immediate and urgent needs, often at the expense of other sectors, including education. This could explain the decline in the number of schools with basic facilities from 2016-17 to 2021-22, as there have been insufficient budgetary allocations (1.4% of GDP) for the repair, maintenance, and upgrading of educational infrastructure. Balancing competing priorities in resource allocation remains a complex challenge for governments. There is imminent need for strategic planning and sustainable investment in critical sectors like education to build resilient and inclusive societies.



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Landscape in Pakistan and offers a comprehensive view of Pakistan's education sector. It covers a network of 313,418 education institutions, catering to 54,870,964 students with the support of 2,139,631 educators. Within this network, 227,506 institutions, accounting for 73%, are formal schools ranging from primary to higher secondary levels. Additionally, the report includes 43,613 religious schools or deeni madaris, making up 14% of the total, and 8% (25,106) are non-formal basic education institutes. The remaining institutions comprise 3% (10,087), that are schools of the education foundations, 1% (4,182) technical & vocational institutes, and another 1% (2,487) degree colleges. The education landscape is further enriched with 220 universities and 217 teacher training institutes across Pakistan. The school education system encompasses 227,506 institutions, serving 42,576,130 students and employing 1,625,747 teachers. There is a total of 313,418 both public and private schools including 2,088 other public category across all levels in the school education system in Pakistan. This distribution is also reflected in the enrollment figures, where a significant 53.5% (29,359,376) of students are educated in public schools (including other public category enrolment), predominantly primary level institutions (78%), followed by middle (11%), high (10%), and higher secondary (2%). In contrast, 46.5% (25,511,588) of students are enrolled in private sector schools. Whereas, according to the latest report of All Pakistan Private Schools Federation (APPSF) regarding the Pakistan Private Education Statistics 2022-23 report, 53.1% (299,110,980) of students are enrolled in private sector schools. Moreover, as per APPSF Report 2021-22 private schools employ 61% of these teachers (1,549,746), this date is very close to the PIE's Report 2021-223, in which public schools show employ the remaining 42% (889,885), underlining the critical role both sectors play in shaping Pakistan's academic landscape. Complementing this division, the education workforce consists of a total of 2,139,631 teachers. Additionally, public-private partnerships (PPPs) play a significant role. In the sphere of Non-Formal Education, the public sector emerges as the primary service provider, encompassing 86% of the student population in this segment and employing 78% of the teaching workforce. The Technical and Vocational Education & Training (TVET) enrolls 65% male students and employs 74% male teachers, exhibiting stark gender imbalances. The education landscape is further marked by a significant presence of religious schools, or Deeni Madaris, totaling 43,613. These institutions are managed by religious seminaries, contributing to the country's diverse educational system. Pakistan has a total of 220 universities and higher education institutions, of which 38% are managed by the private sector. This sector demonstrates a strong female presence, with women accounting for 45% of the total enrollment of 2,226,251 students, underscoring the growing inclusivity of women in tertiary education in Pakistan. Pakistan grapples with one of the world's most significant challenges of out-of-school children (OOSC). Pakistan comes in after Nigeria and India where the number of OOSC is the highest in the world. According to the report's findings, Punjab tops the list with 10.11 million children lacking access to education, followed by Sindh with seven million, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa with 3.6 million, and Balochistan with 3.1 million. Additionally, the federal capital, Islamabad, has 80,000 children who are not attending school. The report highlights that 39% of these children are not attending school for various reasons, with Balochistan having the highest percentage of 65% of OOSC. Despite recent progress in reducing the percentage of OOSC from 44% in 2016-17 to 39% in 2021-22, the absolute number has risen from 22.02 million excluding AJK and GB to 26.21 million, largely attributed to population growth. This increase underscores the persistent and pressing issue of education access and retention in the country. The proportion of OOSC is alarmingly high across various education levels. In primary education, 36% (10.77 million) of children are out of school. This issue extends into middle school with 30% (4.94 million) OOSC, and is even more pronounced in high school and higher secondary levels, with 44% (4.55 million) and 60% (5.95 million) respectively. Punjab and Sindh report the highest numbers of OOSC, with 11.73 million and 7.63 million respectively. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) faces 3.63 million cases of OOSC, while Balochistan reports 3.13 million. The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) has the lowest figure, with 0.08 million OOSC. A notable gender disparity persists, with a higher percentage of female students being out of school compared to their male counterparts at all education levels. Moreover, economic factors play a significant role in this issue. A staggering 51% of children from the poorest quintile are not attending primary school, and this pattern continues in middle education, with 55% OOSC in the same economic bracket. The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on education systems worldwide, with Pakistan being no exception. The closure of schools, done as a preventive measure to curb virus, disrupted the regular learning routines of millions of students. Moreover, the economic repercussions of the pandemic have had a direct bearing on education access and participation across the country. Families grappling with job losses, income reductions, and overall financial instability may prioritize immediate economic needs over educational expenses. This could result in increased dropout rates, particularly among vulnerable populations. In this challenging context, policymakers and stakeholders in Pakistan face the critical task of implementing strategies to mitigate the long-term impact of COVID-19 on education and ensure equitable access for all students. The disparity becomes even more pronounced at higher education levels, where the poorest quintile accounts for 75% of OOSC. The Pupil-School ratio across Pakistan averages at 162, suggesting that each school accommodates about 162 students. On the other hand, the Teacher-School ratio stands at an average of 5, implying that each school has around five teachers. The Pupil-Classroom ratio, which reflects the average number of students in each classroom, is observed to be 37 for primary, 33 for middle, 45 for high, and 52 for higher secondary levels. There is a notable disparity in the availability of essential facilities across different regions of Pakistan. The ICT, Punjab, and KP exhibit relatively better conditions in this regard. However, other provinces, particularly Balochistan, face significant challenges. In Balochistan, only 23% of primary schools have access to safe drinking water, the lowest among all provinces, followed by Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) at 31%, Sindh at 61%, and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) at 63%. The situation is not much

Time for Pakistan to raise its judicial standards!

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the special committee concerned to formulate a package of legal and constitutional reforms to bring in judicial reforms in Pakistan. Despite significant legislative and judicial reforms, the current legal system in Pakistan has failed to provide victims of crimes with prompt and equitable justice, and severe inadequacies continue to damage Pakistani citizens' lives and has not been able to provide speedy and equitable justice to the victims of crime, and serious shortcomings continue to affect the lives of the people of Pakistan.

"The people before you were destroyed because they used to inflict legal punishments on the poor and forgive the rich"—Hadith by Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW), Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 81, Number 778. Pakistan's judiciary, known until recently for judicial activism, was ranked among bottom performing countries at 130th out of 142th on the Rule of Law Index ranking 2023 by the WJP Report. Regionally, Pakistan ranks 5th out of 6 countries in South Asia. The region's top performer is Nepal, ranked 71st out of 142 globally, followed by Sri Lanka and India. According to the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the judicial system operates independent of the Executive. The backlog of cases is especially detrimental to criminal cases since roughly two-thirds of jail inmates are under-trial prisoners, this inevitably contributes to overcrowding in prisons. In June 2023, it was revealed that 54,387 cases were pending before the Supreme Court, this number escalated to 57,766 cases in December. The number of overall pending cases to be disposed of by Pakistan's judicial system was calculated to be 2,260,000. However, past and recent events corroborate the perception that the establishment has a degree of influence over the Judiciary, which has been

hand in glove in most extra-constitutional steps taken in the last 76 years. Our jurisprudence and legal system should have taken this path of light in its pursuit of dispensation of justice. The courts and honourable judges are entrusted with one of the most sacred responsibilities. With a stroke of the pen, they can impact the present and future of individuals as well as the state. Judiciary represents the only forum where people can seek justice. An effective justice system is vital to ensure rule of law, and provide a mechanism to address grievances arising from offences against individuals and society. The justice system should operate in a way that people can resolve their disputes peacefully and efficiently. Litmus tests for good judicial systems include accessibility, affordability and freedom from discrimination and influence of the powerful elite. Unfortunately, the current system in Pakistan fails on these yardsticks. Independence of the judiciary is important for the rule of law, subject to accountability, but the current legal system in Pakistan was brought about by British colonisation and is extremely difficult for locals to understand. Several problems and difficulties have tainted it for a long time. Political parties also have not taken any serious steps to reform the situation even after Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif signed the Charter of Democracy, agreeing to bring about judicial reforms. Though they had agreed on various points, including the appointment of judges these were not incorporated in the 18th Amendment to the constitution. Also, no independent mechanism was provided for maintaining transparency and accountability in the judiciary. Although the Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa assured the Pakistan Bar Council and the Supreme Court Bar Association that the Supreme Court will develop a comprehensive policy on the fixation of pending cases and setting up of benches that will outlast his tenure, but still awaiting. Devising a speedy justice system is a daunting challenge in Pakistan due to the large pendency, frivolous cases where filers go unpunished, frequent adjournments, administrative highhandedness forcing people to go to courts, outdated procedures and paucity of judges. The existing inefficient and outdated judicial system is exploited by money power that hires crafty lawyers to get justice, delayed, destroyed or maneuvered.

The criminal justice system in Pakistan has a long history of poor governance, inflexibility, maladministration, corruption, lack of resources, and misuse of power. Accountability issues and a lack of cooperation between the inves-

tigation and prosecution wings in Pakistan's criminal justice system allow accused persons to flee. The government and the legal profession are responsible for CRPC, PPC, and Qanoon-i-Shahadat reforms to improve efficiency and deliver justice. Although, a set of amendments introduced by the Federal Ministry for law and justice embodies an evolution from the archaic and outdated laws that were inherited by Pakistan from the colonial era. These amendments mark a progressive change towards protecting the rights of vulnerable groups in the society, at the root of all these amendments is consideration of human rights. Formerly, the then government proposed nearly 700 amendments pertaining to the criminal justice system, but still facing the challenges of the implementation in true spirit. In the proposed framework, the Ministry of Law and Justice suggested amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), the Qanoon-i-Shahadat, 1984 (QSO), Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and other relevant laws in a bid to improve efficiency and delivery of justice, and emphasized that these amendments will ensure justice is accessible to vulnerable sections of the society, particularly women, children, and those suffering from mental illnesses. Amendments introduced in procedural law should aim to dispense speedy justice by reducing the backlog of pending cases before the country's judiciary. As reflected, the amendments also hope to sensitize law for vulnerable groups of society in addition to providing them with adequate safeguards. The amendments have also been proposed in consideration of changing times, this is encapsulated in provisions permitting the admissibility of evidence obtained via modern devices. Court intervention to deter absconders from justice has also been introduced to prevent miscarriages of justice. Fairly new concepts such as plea bargain should have also been made part of the law to discourage lengthy litigation. The reforms and amendments should be welcomed with enthusiasm since Courts in Pakistan are plagued with endless delays, lengthy rounds of litigation, and increasing financial burdens on citizens. Where difficulties hinder the timely conclusion of a trial, the High Court will require the Provincial or Federal Government to remove obstacles. Moreover, section 344 of CrPC must be implemented in true spirit, which contains the power to postpone or adjourn proceedings has also been amended to reflect that no criminal trial is to be adjourned for more than three days, unless in cases determined exceptional by the trial Court. It is hoped that these provisions would solve Pakistan's long-standing problem of judicial overburden. Among the most salient features of the proposed amendments is the nine-month deadline for the completion of criminal trials. In case of failure of meeting this deadline, the trial Court should be required to provide an explanation and if accepted, fresh timelines will be provided by the High Court. As per international human rights instruments, detainees possess the right to have a trial within a reasonable time or to be released while the trial is pending. This is mainly because confining an accused person without trial interferes with their fundamental right to liberty. In an attempt to prevent unnecessary litigation, Section 250 of the CrPC has been amended to increase fines payable for false, frivolous, or vexatious accusations from twenty-five thousand rupees to five hundred thousand rupees. This hefty sum is proposed to reduce the judicial overburden by ensuring only necessary suits are instituted before Courts. Admissibility of evidence obtained through Modern Devices is inevitable. To further expedite justice, audio and video recordings of testimonies should have been made admissible in situations where it is not possible for a witness to attend Court in person. Where it is not possible to record evidence via audio and video recordings, the police officer must document reasons in writing. Amendments have also been made to Article 164 of the QSO to allow evidence that is obtained or becomes available through modern devices. Prior to this amendment, Article 164 reflected archaic provisions by restricting the admissibility of evidence obtained through modern devices and placing significant reliance on ocular testimonies which often proved to be unreliable or were simply not available. The amendment is especially helpful in the present era of technology since videos made on mobile phones and circulated on social media serve as the primary proof of a crime. A new chapter XXIIB has been inserted in the CrPC which introduces the concept of a plea bargain. This arrangement entails that an accused may file an application for a plea bargain at the trial Court, the Court upon receiving this notice shall issue notice to the public prosecutor in addition to the accused and the complainant. This arrangement prevents a lengthy trial, and it may allow the defendant to avoid a more serious penalty. The concept of plea bargain is fairly common in UK, USA and Canada. Existing provisions have been tweaked to provide for the stricter

treatment of absconders from justice. Section 88 of CrPC which deals with attachment of property of a person absconding has been amended to empower the Court to block Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs), and other identity and travel documents belonging to the proclaimed person. If a proclaimed offender appears before the Court, the Court shall order de-blocking of the aforementioned documents.

Constant interference in the Executive's working by the Judiciary has paralysed the functional efficiency of government. Although the constitution is very clear about separation of powers in determining functions and boundaries of each organ of the state to avoid any conflict, some of the judges have been using suo motu powers in an conflict, some of the judges have been using suo motu powers in an irresponsible way as noted by the incumbent chief justice. This interference in Executive's affairs seems to have started after the Lawyers' Movement for the restoration of superior judiciary. Checks on use of such powers were weak and there was no certainty of accountability. Even the Supreme Judicial Council's role raised questions about its credibility. Each organ of the state must operate within its boundaries. Independence of the judiciary is important for the rule of law, subject to accountability. The honourable judges of the superior courts should review their performance, conduct and the quality of justice being dispensed. Their appointments and removal should be through open-merit and public hearings policy. There should also be a supervisory board of retired judges of unimpeachable repute to monitor the performance of each judge in terms of their conduct and judgments. True democracy and rule of law cannot be ensured without such effective reforms. We cannot restore people's confidence in our judicial system without establishing strict accountability procedures. Civilised nations ensure that judges are not biased and uphold the Constitution. Ethical principles for judges, should disqualify themselves in any case in which they believe that a reasonable, fair-minded and informed person would have a reasoned suspicion of conflict between a judge's interest and a judge's duty. The global ethical principles about conduct and impartiality of judges are very clear. We need to take inspiration from such references. Our honourable judges need to ponder over the amortising public trust level and bring about reforms in their institutions. Justice is an indispensable pillar of the society. Judicial reforms should not be ignored. An independent and impartial judicial system is essential, in fact sine qua non, for the rule of law and democratic dispensation in any society. Therefore, the judges have to pass through a strict scrutiny process and all information about them is made public. Such scrutiny is conspicuous by its absence in Pakistan. The United States, in a recent Judicial Conference, adopted various measures to enhance transparency. A report by Denmark Domstole, titled, A close look at the courts of Denmark, shows that in Denmark between 2018 to 2020 on an average 800,000 cases per year were decided. The independence of Norway's judicial system is exemplary as well. They have opted for the best prison reforms, following Sweden's example, and offer free legal assistance in civil suits. However, the supervisory Judicial Committee, an independent disciplinary board, monitors the judges' professional conduct. Similarly, Finland follows strict laws to ensure transparency and accountability in its judicial system. Chapter 40 of the Finnish Criminal Code, which deals with offences in the office, is equally applicable to judges. These included automating the release of judges' financial disclosure reports, as well as an amended conflict screening policy that requires judges to sign a model conflict certification statement twice a year. Besides, the judicial conference requires consistency of approved model plan by each circuit council with the implementation of the mandatory conflict screening. It is time for Pakistan to raise its judicial standards. Our judicial system should uphold basic human rights. Pakistan is one of the countries where the people have paid a huge price for the independence of judiciary. It may be noted that although judicial systems in these countries are independent and public acceptance level is greater than in underdeveloped country, they believe in ensuring transparency and adopt strict accountability mechanisms for their judges. No wonder, people in these countries trust their judicial system more than any other public office. It is the need of the hour to bring about sweeping reforms in criminal and civil laws and an administrative system to ensure justice is available to all segments of society and assure the people that all rank and file are equal in the eyes of the law. The imminent need for these reforms and amendments can be judged from the fact that the justice system is being reformed in Pakistan's history by attempting to counter structural issues that have hindered justice.



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It is the need of the hour to bring about sweeping reforms in criminal and civil laws and an administrative system to ensure justice is available to all segments of society and assure the people that all rank and file are equal in the eyes of the law.

Absence of govt writ is the worst governance!



By **KASHIF MIRZA**

Bad governance is the root cause of all ills in Pakistan. Absence of government writ is the worst kind of governance. Bad governance is the breeding ground for corruption, which damages a country's development, and is highly regressive and inequitable. Pakistan, is facing numerous challenges and issues since long, so the Covid-infected world lurches into 2021, with a mix of hope and concern.

The solution lies in two things: establishment of the local governments in conformity with Article 140A, and changing the way we elect our representatives.

Pakistan is not a unique case. A number of countries have encountered broadly similar economic challenges, implemented appropriate policies, and have restored self-sustaining rapid growth with internal and external stability over the medium term after appropriate policies were implemented. Pakistan cannot get out of the current economic malaise and resume sustainable growth without excessive dependence on external handouts. The Pakistani authorities struggled to develop a coherent adjustment program; policy implementation has also remained inadequate. Critical differences between Pakistan and countries that have recently adjust successfully – such as Chile, Brazil and Turkey – lies in Pakistan's inability to grasp the seriousness of the economic crisis and lack of commitment to the needed policy d

Article 140A of the Constitution says each province shall, by law establish a local government system and devolve political, administrative and financial responsibility and authority to the elected representatives of the local governments.

commitment to the needed policy reform, that is, poor governance. The deterioration of Pakistan's economy over the past three decades can be attributed to the continuation of inappropriate macroeconomic policies that focused on credit-financed consumption demand and imports to promote growth as external resource pressures were eased by debt relief and increased foreign aid. Pakistan is encountering two inter-related problems; macroeconomic imbalances and inflationary pressures which reflect an expansionary and dysfunctional fiscal policy supported by a compliant monetary policy; and low domestic savings which, given the increasing strains on external debt sustainability and a poor outlook for private capital inflows, are inadequate to sustain investment that is needed for a higher growth rate. Even if energy shortages were to be addressed and the fiscal position is less onerous than at present, there is a high risk that the economy may permanently fall below the potential growth path, estimated at about 6-7 per cent per annum. The obvious fallout would be increased unemployment pressures which, in turn, will spur political instability and militancy. The vicious circle would grow more intractable. A new strategy is needed that will not only change the sources of growth but also alter the mode of implementing policies. The economy should be rebalanced toward higher investment and exports and away from consumption, particularly of the public sector. This will call for not only correcting the macroeconomic imbalances, but – more importantly – significantly increasing domestic savings in a sustainable fashion, reducing dependence on uncertain and addictive foreign assistance and shifting investment to export-oriented activities. There is also an increasing recognition that the deteriorating official capacity to formulate and implement policy reforms – worsening governance – has become a primary impediment which is building on itself. The current adjustment pro

gramme that is supported by an IMF stand-by arrangement is essentially tentative and needs to be better integrated with a longer term growth strategy. A sustained increase in domestic savings to serve as the primary source of investment is central to self-sustaining growth and adjustment. Good governance implies not only absence of corruption, but also – and more importantly – not leaning against market forces unless there is an explicit case of market failure. Regulation, including of the financial sector, should aim at improving resource allocation, not turning the state as allocator of resources.

was initially divided and subdued has now grown defiant and is even planning to overthrow the government. Dialogue is the only way forward. The nation can't afford mistakes of the past year repeated. Article 140A of the Constitution says each province shall, by law establish a local government system and devolve political, administrative and financial responsibility and authority to the elected representatives of the local governments. The real issue is of good governance. The successive governments have failed to deliver to the people because of the perpetuation of the archaic colonial system

the elitist classes and feudal lords on the political power by changing the present system of election. The prevalent system strengthens the hold of the feudal lords or the elitist classes belonging to the urban areas which have a common interest in perpetuating the archaic colonial system of governance. The PTI's regime has failed on three most important accounts: governance; economy; and foreign policy. Transparency International says corruption has increased manifold in Pakistan since PTI came into power. The UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) Report, Pakistan's ranking became worse under the PTI's government. The ADB has projected that Pakistan's economic growth will be one of the lowest, with highest inflation in the region in the coming years – dropping from near six percent in 2017-18. The country has been loaded with non-productive Rs11 trillion debt in just two years. Moreover, Pakistan has one of the highest rates of food inflation compared to other countries in the region – and for the first time the country will be importing wheat, sugar and cotton. Due to incompetence and corruption, hundreds of billions have been lost in scandals like the LNG, sugar and wheat crises, BRT Peshawar etc. Pakistan's relation with its allies and brotherly countries have become uneasy due to the PTI's foreign policy; Pakistan has faced an unimaginable diplomatic fiasco in the case of Occupied J&K by India. History has shown repeatedly that no single institution enjoys absolute power nor can it run the state alone. Pakistan's geo-strategic and security needs, the establishment has an important role to play which must be acknowledged. Indeed, all institutions must operate in harmony. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born. We as a nation need to learn one lesson from the success of our friend China: economic development is the only way forward, and it requires political stability, social solidarity and certainty. The interest of Pakistan has to be put supreme.

Bad governance is the breeding ground for corruption, which damages a country's development, and is highly regressive and inequitable. History has shown repeatedly that no single institution enjoys absolute power nor can it run the state alone. Pakistan's geo-strategic and security needs, the establishment has an important role to play which must be acknowledged.

Foreign financing requirements are increasing at a time when availability of such financing is shrinking for Pakistan. The lack of leadership at the political as well as at the technocratic levels might let the moment slip if urgent action is not taken to meet the challenges with a firm determination. So the new year throws the same old challenges at us – apart from Covid, of course. Unfortunately, these challenges have grown even more serious during the two and a half years of the incumbent government. The hostility between the government and the opposition has peaked. It is the lack of performance on the part of the government that the opposition that

of governance which has in built avenues of graft and entitlement. The solution lies in two things: establishment of the local governments in conformity with Article 140A, and changing the way we elect our representatives. As far as providing justice to the people at their doorsteps or near their homes goes through the implementation of reforms in CPC, and separating the judiciary from the administration in line with Article 175(3). One big lesson from the political and economic history of Pakistan is that ad-hoc and inorganic political arrangements are destined to fail sooner or later. It is also imperative to break the hold of



Covid has damaged our small businesses. Now Brexit might finish them off



By **JOHN HARRIS**

If you had to design a scenario guaranteed to fatten up big business while squashing the rest of the economy, it would probably resemble what Britain is living through. Thousands of independent businesses are shuttered up. Amazon and the big supermarkets, boosted by the suspension of anything other than "essential" retail but gleefully selling a huge range of stuff, have carved up consumer spending between them. And the economic impact of Covid-19 is now fusing with an issue that will endure even as lockdown

dire effects of Brexit on smaller companies are eventually eased: the panics staring into the future with a mixture of fear and bafflement. Amid the pandemic, there is not much room for this story to intrude. But week by week, things are starting to become clear. Figures to be published today in the latest Manufacturing Barometer survey of small and medium-sized firms show that two-thirds of such companies have seen negative price changes in their supply chains since leaving the EU. A majority, meanwhile, have seen post-Brexit "complications" with both exporting and importing. Roughly a week ago, it was reported that exports going from the UK to EU countries via British ports were down 68% year on year. By summer, the burgeoning crisis that all of this highlights may have burst into the political foreground. Last week, I talked to people who make their living in the UK's fashion and clothing industry. Their trade is reckoned to be worth around £35bn a year to the UK economy, and is routinely at the forefront of British

trade missions and export drives. But with the once-simple business of selling into Europe now a matter of huge complexity, small companies that were already having to deal with Covid restrictions are facing a set of impossible obstacles. After three days of trying to comprehensively understand the new rules governing UK-EU trade, I can safely say that it

,but small businesses are mired in no end of problems. Some have been forced to put up the prices offered to customers in EU countries by as much as 30%; others have put up notices online bluntly telling people that they are "unable to fulfil orders to Europe". Ben Taylor, 29, is the co-founder of the knitwear company Country of Origin – a proudly

but they've declined rapidly." He reckoned that every one of a few hundred European orders since the new year had fallen victim to some issue or other involving customers having to pay eye-watering extra charges. One punter in the Netherlands, for example, had recently bought a sweater, only to be billed €100 (£88) for "government fees". So as not to alienate people, his company was reimbursing anyone hit with these extra charges, but that clearly cannot go on indefinitely. "There's absolutely no benefit right now in us trading with Europe," he said. "Which is ridiculous." Half an hour later after talking to him, I was on a Zoom call to Anna Foster, the creator of a trailblazing, two-person company called ELV (it stands for East London Vintage) that makes high-end jeans using recycled denim. The pandemic, she said, meant that conversations in early 2020 about stocking her clothes with big British retailers had been put on hold; Brexit had now ensured that the same had happened with potentially promising trading partners in Europe.

Multinationals can just about cope with the new UK-EU trading rules, but independent businesses are mired in problems

gives you the mother of all headaches. Among the most basic changes are "import VAT" now being payable in the countries where exports are delivered, some goods being subject to customs duties, and even the most basic transactions suddenly being synonymous with onerous paperwork, "disbursement charges" and hiked courier fees. Multinationals can just about cope with these things,

ethical firm that directly employs four other people and has a stake in a factory in Leicestershire, where around 15 others work. Around a third of the company's turnover, he told me, came from trade with people in EU countries, many of whom are individual customers buying sweaters online. "It's been absolutely disastrous since Brexit," he said. "We'd been doing quite big numbers,



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It has been over a decade since the state made a promise to every child between the ages of five and 16 years of free and compulsory education. The compulsory range of school going age is stipulated as five to 16 years under article 25-A of the Constitution. But Pakistan is facing a serious challenge to ensure all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, attend, stay and learn in school. With an increasing population and a burgeoning youth cohort, Pakistan now has more than 75 million children between five and 16 years. Currently, Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) with an estimated 25 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 35 per cent of the total population in this age group.

Of these, the public schooling system only caters to 24 million and private schooling system caters to 26 million, with over 25 million currently out-of-school-children (OOSC). Pakistan is facing a serious challenge to ensure all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, attend, stay and learn in school. While the percentage varies, this age-specific statistic provides an insight into what is needed to ensure that the over 50 per cent of five year olds who are not enrolled, or the 48 per cent of 16 year olds who have dropped out or never enrolled, are provided an appropriate educational platform. Almost 3.8 million children, with 2.5 million between 14 and 16 years, enrolled in an educational institution but dropped out. While enrollment and retention rates are improving, progress has been slow to improve education indicators in Pakistan. In the 5-9 age group, 5 million children are not enrolled in schools and after primary-school age, the number of OOSC doubles, with 11.4 million adolescents between the ages of 10-14 not receiving formal education. Disparities based on gender, socio-economic status, and geography are significant; in Sindh, 52 percent of the poorest children (58 percent girls) are out of school, and in Balochistan, 78 percent of girls are out of school. Nearly 10.7 million boys and 8.6 million girls are enrolled at the primary level and this drops to 3.6 million boys and 2.8 million girls at the lower secondary level. Gaps in service provision at all education levels is a major constraint to education access. Socio-cultural demand-side barriers combined with economic factors and supply-related issues, together hamper access and retention of certain marginalized groups, in particular adolescent girls. Putting in place a credible data system and monitoring measures to track retention and prevent drop-out of out-of-school children is still a challenge.

Who's responsible for 25-Million Out of School Children?

There are two types of OOSC: Children who have never attended school and Children who have attended school in the past but have dropped out. Each type corresponds to a different set of factors and policy implications, some of which are discussed subsequently. Out of all children in Pakistan between the ages of five to 16 years, 35 per cent, i.e. one third, are out of school. This amounts to an estimated total of over 25 million. Balochistan has the highest proportion of OOSC at 47 per cent followed by Sindh at 44 per cent. In absolute terms, Punjab has the largest total population of OOSC roughly estimated at 8.7 million followed by Sindh at 7.5 million. Proportion of OOSC varies considerably among and within provinces. District level data from all provinces identifies the enormity of the challenge facing provincial and district education

apparatuses. Gender disparity in education has remained a persistent challenge. Among the out of school children, 54 per cent are girls and 46 per cent are boys. This translates to 11.8 million girls and 10.2 million boys not going to schools across the country. Rural areas of the country account for 15.4 million of the total OOSC, with 4.6 million of the children not going to school residing in urban areas. The rural majority of Pakistan's OOSC is a factor that remains uniform in many districts across the four provinces. Of all children between the ages of 5-16, the highest enrolment rate is observed among nine years olds (82 per cent) followed by 11 year olds (81 per cent). The same trend is observed for boys and girls virtually across the range of five to 16 years. The only difference is percentage of enrolment of each age group is higher for boys than girls. The dropout ratio rises steadily with age. However, the proportion of children who have never attended school remains overwhelming at all age levels. First time access to school is poorer in Balochistan than in any other province. The government needs to radically improve first time enrolments at early age groups and first time enrolments in accelerated programmes for children between the ages of 10-16 years. Subsequently, it needs to build on the gains in enrolment to target at-risk students in higher age groups. Fifty-three per cent of all out of school 16 year olds in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have never been to school. The dropout ratio rises steadily with age. Early years access needs to be enhanced through aggressive targeting of pockets of OOSC pop

ulation that has never been to school. At systems level, inadequate financing, limited enforcement of policy commitments and challenges in equitable implementation impede reaching the most disadvantaged. An discouraging decrease in recent education budgets has been observed in the total GDP, which is already well short of the 4 percent target. In order to accelerate progress and ensure the equitable expansion of quality education, Government of Pakistan's should do more efforts to significantly reduce the number of OOSC at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels. Pakistan education programme should focus on Early Childhood Education (ECE) to improve school readiness; expansion of equitable and quality alternative learning pathways (ALP) at basic education levels; and nurturing of school-community linkages to

increase on-time enrolment, reduce drop-outs, and ensure completion and transition for all students. At systems levels, we should contribute more equity-focused provincial sector planning and budgeting; strengthening data and assessment systems; and evidence-based policy advocacy. Investment in quality early learning and pre-primary education is important that young children be ready for school has high positive impacts on primary school enrolment, survival and learning, and is cost-effective. Given the limited reach and inequities in the provision of pre-primary education, Pakistan is increasingly recognizing early

learning as a policy priority, and several provinces have already developed ECCE policies, plans, and standards. While several models exist for ALPs, these are still scattered and limited in scale. Pakistan must address the issue of OOSC through studies, supporting provincial sector plan development, development or review of non-formal education policy and direct programme implementation. Socio-cultural demand-side barriers combined with economic factors together drive education deprivation for certain groups of children in Pakistan, particularly girls. These barriers are further exacerbated by a lack of parental awareness of early learning, importance of on-time enrolment, and lack of social protection schemes. However, there is ample room for improvement in large scale enrolment campaigns during early years. Like other provinces, the age group of nine and above is vulnerable to dropouts. Enrolment drives targeting younger OOSC should be complemented with strategies

to improve retention towards the end and beyond primary school level. The necessary steps to address the situation include radical improvements in early years enrolments, and first time enrolments for fast track programmes for children between the ages of 10-16. Building on these the subsequent approach should be to target at-risk students in higher age groups to improve retention. It is important to understand the reasons behind children being out of school. Eighty-seven per cent of the children who have not been to school reported it as too expensive while 13 per cent gave other reasons for not enrolling in a school. Thirty-one per cent of the students who dropped out from school were not willing to continue attending school, while 19 per cent reported it as too expensive. Thirteen per cent dropped out in order to help at home or help with work. Eleven per cent of the students dropped out of school because parents and elders did not allow and six per cent stopped attending school because of long distance between school and home. A deeper analysis of the reason of students dropping out from school at provincial level shows that distance between home and school contributes significantly to children dropping out of school. The children's willingness and educational expenses are cited as the major reasons for dropping out of school. On the equity front, the state needs to ensure that the right to education for girls in rural areas and children with disabilities across the country is provided for. The literacy rate among persons with disabilities in 15 years or older is 31.5 per cent, or almost half of the national average. Challenges in major urban centres and those in rural areas are vastly different. So will be their solutions. Building high schools or upgrading existing primary and middle schools will solve only a part of the problem.

Unless the state responds to the reasons why children are not in school in specific localities and regions, a one-size fits all educational service provision model will continue to see a third of Pakistani children never having the educational and economic opportunities that should be their right. Serious efforts need to be made to ensure that Pakistan has a large population of literate and educated girls and women, only building schools will not suffice. Therefore, Pakistan must focus more closely on the obstacles to on-time enrolment, retention, completion and transition. Equity-based investments by government should continue to ensure education systems include the most disadvantaged girls and boys. Considering insufficient and ineffective allocation of budgets, strategically engages in sector planning, to capitalise on opportunities to influence decision-making on equity issues. With growing technical capacity and focus on assessment of learning, and international expertise also provides an opportunity to add value to Pakistan's efforts to improve assessment systems. System reforms help in improving accountability and evidence-based decision making. We must support healthy dialogue on education budgeting and public financing, to highlight areas of improvement for better planning and improvement in the education sector. A deeper understanding of the equity challenge for these 25 million out-of-school-children especially girls, between the ages of five and 16 years is needed, it's their constitutional right and our duty.

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