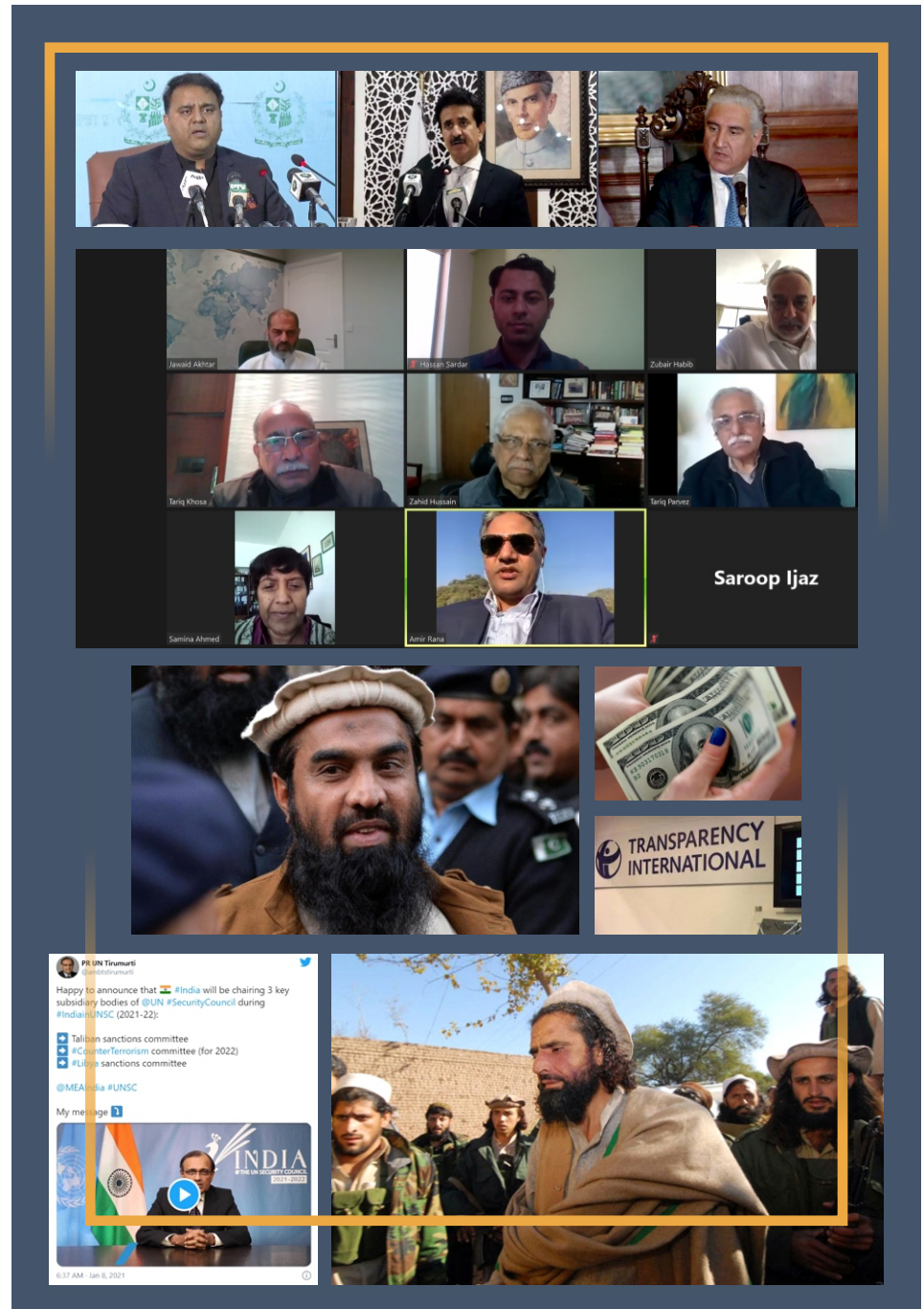


In This Issue

- Minutes of the NIOC 15th Advisory board meeting
- Year of pain
- LeT leader Lakhvi arrested from Lahore on terrorism financing charge: CTD
- A vicious attack
- Anarchy in America
- Of a lesser God
- Why is Pakistan's money laundering problem so persistent?
- Negotiating with the weak
- Strong data protection law under study, says minister
- Pakistan holds India responsible for delay in Mumbai case
- Global dynamics in 2021
- PM's visit to Quetta
- Broadsheet judgement
- Unequal justice
- Roots of extremism
- Preventing Cybercrime
- The NROs that matter
- NAB not impartial
- Corruption situation in Pakistan worsened in 2020: Transparency International
- Qureshi hopeful country will get out of FATF grey list next month
- Blast in Afghanistan kills Mangal Bagh
- The impact on police morale
- Property difference



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NIOC's 15th Advisory Board Meeting

NIOC's 15th Advisory Board (AB) meeting was held virtually on Friday 01 January 2021. The following AB Members attended: Tariq Parvez, Zahid Hussain, Samina Ahmed, Zubair Habib and Jawaid Akhtar. Fasi Zaka could not participate. NIOC Directorate was represented by Tariq Khosa, Amir Rana, Ali Nekokara and Hassan Sardar. Consultants Kashif Noon and Saroop Ijaz also participated. Ammar Jaffri being in the US could not attend.

Director Tariq Khosa informed that NIOC/PIPS would be signing a contract with GI Resilience Fund for January to June 2021.

Director also apprised the Board about progress of the BHC Project on CE laws in Pakistan. The project started in the last week of October 2020 had completed three phases and was on track for completion in early March 2021.

Director PIPS and Secretary NIOC Amir Rana was asked to write a Paper on Terrorism in Pakistan during Covid-19 from March to December 2020.

Draft National Strategy against Organized Crime was discussed at length. President AB Mr. Tariq Parvez was requested to review the final draft before launching the strategy in Feb 2021.

NIOC Annual Report for 2020 would be released in the last week of January 2021.



Year of pain

AS the sun rises on New Year's Day, there is hope that some semblance of normality will return to the global order. In 2020, the international system was upended by Covid-19, with the coronavirus destroying routines and enforcing a 'new normal' on billions. Though the infection was first identified in December 2019, its full, deadly impact was felt in 2020, when it was declared a pandemic. Recovery will take time; a second wave is tearing through nations across the world. While a number of vaccines have been readied to fight the disease, raising hopes that the tide may soon turn, the emergence of variants of the virus in the UK and South Africa pose fresh challenges to the global health community.

Indeed, there have been several significant developments in 2020. But momentous events such as the defeat of the Trump White House, the Brexit deal, and the shifting sands of the Middle East where a number of Arab-speaking countries have embraced Israel have been overshadowed by the death and economic devastation inflicted by the pandemic. While hundreds of millions across the world continue to be threatened by war and poverty on a daily basis, the coronavirus has shown that healthcare cannot be ignored by global policymakers. Once mighty economies have been brought crashing down as thousands queue outside food banks. Whole sectors are enduring extreme turbulence, millions of jobs are at risk, or have already been lost. Countless children across the world have had their education and exams disrupted, with those without access to technology missing out on online learning. But these are all by-products of the pandemic. At its heart, it has shaken the global health system to its core, from advanced countries all the way down to the developing world. At the time of writing, the global caseload was 82.8m, while nearly 2m people had succumbed to the virus or post-Covid complications.

Looking ahead, the international community must firm up its resolve to fight this pandemic, which does not recognise borders and jurisdictions. Richer states must not be allowed to procure all available vaccines; poorer states should be given equal access. Front-line health workers and individuals at high risk must be prioritised everywhere. Crucially, it is time that the movers and shakers of the global order realised that healthcare is essential, as diseases can devastate the international social and political order. As for

Pakistan, thanks to an effective strategy and good fortune during the first wave of the pandemic the country escaped the worst. However, the second wave is proving lethal and the state cannot afford to let its guard down. People must be reminded that the danger has not passed, and that social distancing and good hygiene practices remain the best weapons to fight Covid-19, while wild conspiracy theories should be countered with facts.

PUBLISHED IN DAWN, JANUARY 1ST, 2021

LeT leader Lakhvi arrested from Lahore on terrorism financing charge: CTD

BY IMRAN GABOL



Security personnel escort Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi from a courthouse after a hearing in Islamabad, on January 1, 2015 - AFP

The Punjab Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Saturday arrested Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, leader of proscribed organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), in an intelligence-based operation from Lahore, a spokesperson for the CTD said in a statement.

Lakhvi was running a medical dispensary to collect and disburse funds for financing terrorism, it added.

"He & others also collected funds from this dispensary and used these funds for further terrorism financing. He also used these funds for personal expenses," the statement read.

A case of terrorism financing was registered against Lakhvi by the Punjab CTD at its Lahore station, it said, adding that his trial would be held before an anti-terrorism court in Lahore.

As leader of the banned militant group, Lakhvi is blamed by the United States and India for the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

A UN Security Council sanctions committee says Lakhvi is LeT's chief of operations and accuses him of being involved in militant activity in a number of other regions and countries, including Chechnya, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Indian authorities said the lone surviving gunman in the 2008 Mumbai siege, in which 166 people were killed, had told interrogators before his execution that the assailants were in touch with Lakhvi.

India has long called on Pakistan to bring Lakhvi to trial, but Islamabad says Delhi has not provided concrete evidence to try the LeT leader. He was first arrested in 2008 but was later released on bail.

Imran Gill, Lakhvi's lawyer, confirmed the arrest and told Reuters his case would be heard next week. He did not respond to further questions.

Another man that India says was the mastermind of the Mumbai siege, Hafiz Saeed, was arrested after being convicted by an anti-terrorism court on two charges of terrorism financing last year. Saeed denies involvement in the Mumbai attacks.

PUBLISHED IN DAWN, JANUARY 02, 2021

A vicious attack

Killing of miners is a manifestation of the absence of govt writ and of the country's worsening security environment

BY RUSTAM SHAH MOHMAND

In a senseless targeting of innocent citizens, a group of terrorists attacked and killed 11 coal miners and injured four in Mach, Balochistan, on January 3. The poor miners were picked up, taken away with their hands tied and were slaughtered in the nearby mountains. All belonged to the minority Hazara tribe — who mostly belong to the Shia sect. The killing sent shockwaves of fear and anger across the country. The militant group, Islamic State, has accepted responsibility but details are awaited.

This grave and tragic incident has not happened for the first time and sadly there are no signs of visible improvement in the future. Minorities in Pakistan, including Hindus and Sikhs, have never felt comfortable because of weak government institutions and absence of institutionalised accountability. Reports have been pouring in from parts of Sindh of forced conversions of Hindus. In recent weeks, scores of Hindu girls were forcibly married and converted to Islam. No wonder thousands of Hindu families have left the country in the past several years and are seeking new abodes, mostly in India.

The killing of miners is a manifestation of the absence of the government writ and an evidence of the country's worsening security environment. At its root is the feeling of getting away with horrendous crimes, given the weak law enforcement system. The lack of fear of being convicted has created conditions for such daring acts of ruthless killing of innocent people.

The government in Islamabad is not really focused on institution-building and delivery of speedy justice. The focus instead has been on vendetta and humiliating political opponents. Pursuing an agenda of political victimisation has been the sole major preoccupation. This has generated adequate space for terrorists, militants and criminals to launch attacks in an atmosphere of 'relative safety'.

Balochistan is becoming an epicentre of terrorism for several reasons. The Baloch majority have been complaining of lack of access to resources. There's a palpable feeling of alienation because the Baloch accuse Islamabad of not giving them a fair share of revenues that accrue from resources such as gas extracted from the province. CPEC is a multi-billion-dollar project that aims to connect the port of Gwadar to China and create infrastructure to boost trade and create employment. The Baloch believe they are being excluded from participation in this enterprise. Then there is the Indian factor — many would point out the involvement of Indian agents in attacks on government forces, etc — all aimed at destabilising a geo-strategic region.

CPEC, its success and its impact on the economy has not been welcomed by Pakistan's adversaries. Islamabad's closeness to China is not liked by many. There appears to be an effort to cause obstacles in the smooth execution of CPEC projects and the best way to do that is by creating panic and instability.

Islamabad will have to address the grievances of Baloch and other ethnicities to create a harmonious environment for socio-economic emancipation of its impoverished people. The attack on workers from an ethnic minority has caused distress in the country. A few days ago, a Hindu shrine in Karak was vandalised and set on fire. The pervasive feeling of insecurity amongst ethnic minorities does not augur well for peace and progress. There is a need for course correction and introspection.

Providing protection and security to its citizens is a state's fundamental responsibility. Failure to safeguard the minorities is a system failure. One sure way of transforming the systems is to strengthen institutions so people have faith in the integrity of the systems. Strong institutions would ensure the guilty are punished in proportion to the crime they commit. Such institutions would operate without any political interference which sadly is a norm in Pakistan and has not been addressed despite tall claims to the contrary.

PUBLISHED IN THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, JANUARY 6TH, 2021.

Anarchy in America

IT was a side of America few could have imagined. As lawmakers were meeting in the Capitol — the seat of US democracy — to formally endorse the victory of President-elect Joe Biden, supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the building, broke into the premises, vandalised offices, and briefly occupied the main floor of the house itself. Shockingly, the police stood by and abstained from using force to block the assailants from gaining entry into the building.

America was aghast. So was the world. Live images beamed across the planet showed the unruly mob scaling walls, breaking down barriers, and even occupying the chair of the speaker. Many commentators on American television described the attack as an attempted coup — an unthinkable episode for a democracy as grounded and established as America's. Yet the unthinkable was unfolding live on TV and there was little the world's oldest democracy could do to protect itself from itself. Anarchy had come to America.

In the end the coup did not happen. However, America stands damaged. The images from this fateful day — delirious, abusive and aggressive men and women wrapped in stars and stripes with some donning horned Viking helmets — will remain seared in the collective American conscience for a very long time. They will remind Americans that in the arena of democratic values and beliefs, they too are mere mortals and can be felled by one swing of their own sword. These images will also haunt Americans every time they imagine themselves perched on a 'shining city on the hill' looking down upon a messy world that is unable, unwilling or unworthy to carry the burden of democracy. Today this burden weighs heavy on America's shoulders.

Equally significantly, America will now struggle to wield the moral authority it has always used in order to weaponise its foreign policy. How will American leaders now lecture the world on high-minded values wrapped in holier-than-thou rhetoric and how will the world keep a straight face while enduring such lectures? Americans may want to prepare themselves for the sneers that will keep coming their way for a very long time.

Beyond these impending agonies lies a deeper wound that is now festering inside America's body politic; a wound that bled out the hate, vitriol and anger on display at the Capitol this Wednesday. America will need to heal itself before it attempts to heal the planet. United States today is a troubled society afflicted with a social, political and cultural sickness that has seeped deep into its folds during the last four Trump years. The new president will need to acknowledge it, diagnose it and then start to heal it. It will take a long time, but the world will wait because for all its ailments and psychological problems, America still matters to the world. Just a bit less so now.

PUBLISHED IN DAWN, JANUARY 8TH, 2021

Of a lesser God

BY AASIM SAJJAD AKHTAR

BALUCHISTAN bleeds again. Yet another episode of gruesome brutality against Hazaras — coal miners no less — has brought yet another protest movement into existence. Yesterday it was the death of a Baloch daughter of the soil on foreign shores, tomorrow it will be a Pashtun man falling prey to the Taliban or their makers.

Khurram Husain reminded us yesterday that the Hazaras have been brutalised many times before, with the current prime minister mimicking the elected leaders he called out in 2013 for failing to show respect to the dead and those who mourn them by making a trip to Quetta.

There was of course another Hazara sit-in in 2018 which was only called off when the army chief went personally to the protestors and assured them that responsible officials would be punished, their killers identified, and their future security guaranteed.

Truth be told, even if PM Imran Khan finally relents and meets the protestors, he does not call the shots. The establishment and its ideologues have already set the tone in the aftermath of the Mach attack with the standard sloganeering about the ‘enemy’ fomenting ‘terrorism’ on our shores, and the fact that Pakistan’s ‘sovereignty’ will never be compromised.

Who cares that these slogans are like rubbing salt in the Hazaras’ and Baluchistan’s other ethnic nations’ wounds, most of which have already bled dry? When the ‘sovereign’ state does not ask for sacrifice in blood, it takes copper from Saindak, gold from Reko Diq, Gwadar’s coastline, gas from Sui, coal and innumerable more minerals, not to mention virgin lands for real estate bonanzas.

Baloch resistance to all of this has always rendered them ‘suspicious’, the Pashtuns a little higher up the official loyalty ladder. The mood of those on the streets of Quetta this time suggests a deepening consciousness amongst Hazaras too that they are but citizens in name.

The ill-fated miners were undoubtedly targeted on the basis of their Shia faith and butchered to death under the pretext of being children of a lesser God. But the placard-bearing protestors know that their suffering has in the past been used to give mandate to indiscriminate military force. There is a growing sense that the Hazaras now perceive themselves to be in the same boat as the ‘Sunni’ Baloch and Pakhtun peoples that they might otherwise be goaded into blaming.

What about the ‘conspirators’ operating from Afghanistan and India presumably responsible for these attacks? It is not rocket science that there are Muslims aplenty in both of those countries; Hazaras have in fact been regularly butchered in Afghanistan by the very same Taliban that our state champions as ‘allies’.

What our powers that be refer to as ‘strategic interests’ has little to do with what might genuinely be called the public interest, and especially those segments of the Pakistani public that have been left behind economically, or deliberately suppressed.

Hazaras are pawns in a bloody game that instrumentalises brutalised Baloch and Pashtun populations too. Step outside Balochistan and sectarianism is fanned time and again in Gilgit-Baltistan too, especially when the Shia, Sunni and Ismaili masses unite to demand that they stop being treated as colonial subjects. Don’t forget Kurram agency where two decades of the so-called ‘war on terror’ hasn’t generated peace for the majority Shia or minority Sunni innocents alike.

Even where the machinations of the establishment are not as prominent, children of a lesser God can be found. In the Punjabi heartland, both Christians and low caste-Muslims, begging children on the streets, daily wage workers and katchi abadi dwellers are all considered scarcely human.

Across what is drilled into our head as ‘enemy lines’ in Afghanistan and India, one finds innumerable killing fields. In the former, almost daily bomb blasts can take the lives of Tajiks and Uzbeks (many of them Shia) as well as Pashtuns (mostly Sunni).

Meanwhile, in Modi’s India, a special place in hell is reserved for Muslims, but Dalits, tribals, ethnic nations like the Assamese and Nagas, not to mention hundreds of millions of working people across religious, ethnic and caste lines, are certainly also children of a lesser God.

But forget other countries and rulers. Let's come back to the land of the pure. The current PM can certainly demonstrate some urgency by going to Quetta, just like opposition leaders have been forced to do after considerable coaxing.

But the very fact that the ruling party and the PDM have been slow to react suggests that they have no answer to the question: who are the 'namaloom afraad' (unnamed persons) that continue to wreak havoc against the Hazaras, their ethnic brethren in Balochistan, and so many others across this long-suffering land?

There remains no will to make these brutalised subjects into equal citizens. The plan is to keep them in their place, divided and ruled.

PUBLISHED IN DAWN, JANUARY 8TH, 2021

Why is Pakistan's money laundering problem so persistent?

BY SANA FAROOQ KHAN



The Islamic Republic of Pakistan was created to protect Muslim people and Islamic interests in 1947. Since its foundation, the country and its people have both experienced a number of highlights and endured a number of low points, with one relatively recent low point (which is attracting international media interest) being the money laundering practices of senior government officials.

How is religion an integral element of a legal discussion? It's simple; as a country that prides itself on Islam being a cornerstone of Pakistani life, it is surprising that there is a lack of initiative and investment in the country's money laundering laws and regulations.

The concept of and reference to money laundering within Islam has existed since the revelation of the Holy Quran and is also mentioned in Sunnah. For example, verse 188 of Surat Al Baqarah makes clear the prohibition of illegal earning of money such as bribery and theft. Verse 29 of Surat Al Nisa promotes the generation of wealth through lawful business means and speaks against the unjust consumption of wealth belonging to another person.

Meanwhile, Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) foretold of corrupt consciousness and immorality caused by people caring little about whether the source of money and wealth is halal or haram.

What is money laundering?

Looking at the American and European definition of the term, it is referred to as the act of disguising the source of money obtained from illegal means. Put simply, it is the act of hiding money (this money is casually referred to as “dirty” money) resulting in it appearing to be from legitimate financial and business transactions.

The term is said to have come about from the activity of the famous Chicago crime boss Al Capone during the 1920s who owned a number of laundromats (laundrettes) to disguise the origin of money made from illegal alcohol sales. As a cash-intensive business, laundromats give scope for the comingling of legitimate business income and illegal source of funds.

Clearly, the act (and associated acts) of money laundering are contrary to the ethics and human values expected according to the Quran and Sunnah. In addition to Shariah law, money laundering has for some time been an identified criminal offence under man-made law.

As a conduit for legitimising ill-gotten gains arising from theft, smuggling, drug dealing, prostitution, counterfeiting, corruption, bribery and blackmail, anti-money laundering legislation has a pivotal role to play against world crime and maintaining integrity in the financial system.

Money laundering and Pakistan

On the global stage, Pakistan is currently viewed quite negatively when it comes to anti-corruption, anti-bribery, anti-money laundering and countering of terrorist financing

initiatives. For example, Pakistan fell three spots in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2020. On a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), Pakistan was assigned a score of just 32, well below the global average of 43. Corruption begets other crimes including money laundering and bribery.

Rather than Pakistan developing, improving and maturing its anti-money laundering and anti-corruption capabilities over time, we continue to see the dwindling of Pakistan's credibility and reputation with respect to its efforts to tackle money laundering and corruption issues in the country.

This has not gone unnoticed abroad, with a number of metrics similar to the Corruption Perception's Index identifying Pakistan as a highly corrupt jurisdiction with a money laundering problem.

This results in Pakistan being viewed as an unattractive location to do business in South Asia. The same cannot be said for our neighbour India which continues to display progress which is very much welcomed by its international trading partners.

This is not just an anecdotal perspective. The global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), has publicised the shortcomings of the Pakistan anti-money laundering regime. As an international inter-governmental body established to set international standards that aim to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing, FATF works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.

FATF country evaluations are unbiased, systematic and carry a lot of weight. According to its most recent mutual evaluation of Pakistan, it viewed the country as falling short in meeting international legal and regulatory standards when it comes to combating money laundering and terrorist financing resulting in Pakistan's economy, business and financial sectors being more vulnerable to money laundering and its associated crimes, leading to the reluctance of foreign direct businesses investing in the country.

India, on the other hand, has been in receipt of more positive evaluations from FATF and this has certainly assisted it in attracting foreign direct investment and greatly helped India become a bigger and more influential global economic player with each passing year. When looking at the Pakistani situation, this is both surprising and disappointing given that both countries share a lot of the same history and traditions.

Dulled perceptions

While working as a barrister, I am often mistaken for being Indian which is understandable as my name, Khan, is both an Indian and Pakistani name, but when I clarify that I am of Pakistani heritage, you can tell instantly that the perception held of Pakistan is very different to the perception held of India.

This perception has nothing to do with culture or geography. It is rooted in the international reputation that Pakistan currently has as a country with corrupt officials and widespread money laundering practices.

Through working in Western Europe and in the area of international anti-money laundering, counter terrorist financing and sanctions compliance over a number of years, I have seen the good, the bad and the ugly of money laundering, corrupt practices and high-risk jurisdictions. Based on this experience, for Pakistan to progress to its next stage of growth, we need to improve our reputation through enhanced anti-money laundering and anti-corruption laws and enforcement.

Only through this can we see the type of foreign direct investment (and reputation) that India enjoys. However, also from experience, it takes a long time for a country to shake off a negative reputation of corruption and money laundering.

Pakistan's international trade story can be more than just about sending bright and hardworking Pakistanis abroad to better the economies of their newfound lands. In a similar way to what happens in India, we need these expat Pakistanis to come back to Pakistan and to use what they have learnt back for Pakistan's betterment. This is what happened with India where Indian direct business opportunities, key contacts and foreign direct investment to their native country, thereby creating employment and improving the domestic economy.

This is trend that cannot begin or improve without help. There needs to be reputable law and order, particularly when it comes to the prevention of financial crime like money laundering, so as to give confidence to overseas investors and business people for this type of investment to take place. This is where Pakistan continually falls short.

The loopholes cannot remain

But why does Pakistan, as an open and proud Muslim country, have a legal and regulatory regime falls short in the areas of money laundering, bribery and corruption? This is a difficult question to answer.

Tune in to Pakistani news and you will no doubt see the daily soap opera and theatrics of political parties arguing and pointing blame at each other about the shortcomings of our money laundering and corruption laws. The spectacular failings of the legal and enforcement system has gained unwanted international fame and now serves as a warning for other countries on the result of an ineffective anti-money laundering and anti-corruption regime.

Despite the court cases and regular news reports giving money laundering and corruption unprecedented attention in Pakistan, this will amount to a missed opportunity where there is no follow up and improvement in the country's anti-money laundering and anti-corruption regime.

The legal deficiencies that existed for convicted government officials and others to exploit cannot remain. It should not be that the time where we see the required changes in our anti-money laundering compliance regime is when Pakistan is put under the global microscope by international bodies such as FATF, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Our own shortcomings highlighted domestically should be more than enough to prompt the required change. If not, other countries will use it to their advantage.

For example, India was one of a few countries that lobbied FATF to put Pakistan on its grey list (a naughty list which highlights countries that have poor anti-money laundering laws and record). FATF duly obliged and placed Pakistan on the grey list during June 2018 and asked Islamabad to implement a plan of action to curb money laundering and terror financing by the end of 2019. This the deadline was extended for a variety of reasons including the coronavirus pandemic.

In a recent statement, FATF urged Pakistan to complete an internationally agreed action plan before February 2021. The reputation of being on the grey list has aided the international perception of Pakistan as being corrupt, unstable and high risk to continue. To progress, we need to leverage globalisation that goes beyond taking out of expensive loans from Internationally Monetary Fund/World Bank and being dictated on how the Pakistani economy is to be managed.

Whatever side of the political spectrum you support, robust anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing measures need to be a strategic part of Pakistan's future with a very high pay-off.

Valuable time is being currently spent on political accusations and counter accusations regarding the perpetrators of money laundering and corruption crimes already committed. The blame game will only gain so much credibility and is not winning any admirers overseas.

This political gesturing needs to be replaced with constructive steps to strengthen our legal and regulatory system to ably combat money laundering and corruption in a meaningful and demonstrable way so that its practice can lead to national trust and international credibility.

Only then can Pakistan attract foreign direct investment through new legitimate channels and become a real party to the benefits of globalisation rather than its people being a high value commodity as the exploits of international trade and finance.

PUBLISHED ON BRECORDER.COM, DECEMBER 18, 2020

Negotiating with the weak

BY MUHAMMAD AMIR RANA

MOVING into the new year, two incidents have once again highlighted the state's chronic inability to protect its marginalised and vulnerable people. The vandalism of a Hindu Samadhi in Karak on Dec 30 illustrates how the majority still fears and treats the minorities. Similarly, the reluctance of Prime Minister Imran Khan to visit Quetta to condole with the families of slain Shia Hazara miners adds to the perception that the country's power elites have little empathy for the people or a sense of responsibility towards them.

However, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has tried to heal the wounds of the country's non-Muslim citizens by taking suo motu notice of the Hindu temple's vandalism. Apparently, the last hope for the religious minorities, Pakistan's superior courts are trying their best to protect the former's constitutional rights. As majoritarian and less tolerant thinking increasingly comes to prevail in society, the power elites not only share the same mindset but also tolerate and even protect the collaborators of hatred and violence.

The government and its institutions, including the civilian law-enforcement agencies, hesitate to proactively tackle cases of religious hatred. They may have multiple excuses for this, but their indifferent and irresponsible attitude has been intensifying the scourge of religious hatred in society.

A review of the academic work that has been done to understand the power dynamics in Pakistan from political and socio-economic perspectives, suggests that the 'mindset' that controls the levers of power here has limited skills of negotiating with the people at the margins. The security institutions have effectively dealt with religiously motivated terrorist groups and severely damaged their strongholds inside the country. During the peak years of the war against terrorism, state institutions had brokered several deals with the terrorist groups. However, none of the deals survived for long and as a last resort the terrorists were countered with full kinetic force. These deals were different and part of the political strategy to blunt the destructive edge of the terrorist groups.

However, state institutions are still struggling to negotiate with the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement. The same can be said for Balochistan where political dialogue has not moved forward during decades of conflict.

It is easy for state institutions to use a coercive approach in negotiation. If the other side is aggressive and supports violence, it becomes much easier for the state to deal with them. However, the Indian subcontinent also has a tradition of non-violent movements, which continue to reincarnate themselves in the form of political movements and socio-religious movements. But power also has an ego, which prevents it from negotiating with the weak, but it also fears that the process will empower the weak and make them equal to the stakeholder.

It is obvious that the weak party has no option except to remain submissive and follow the dictates of the strong majority. However, the awareness of rights and the dream of an egalitarian state never dies in communities, especially among more educated and politically awakened ones like the Hazaras in Quetta. The power elites feel uncomfortable whenever the Hazaras protest against the murder of members of their community. The protests grab the attention of local and international media, and the state, which is trying hard to improve its international image. The government tries to pacify them, but it does not heal their wounds.

The improving security statistics offer the country an encouraging outlook as terrorist incidents have been declining for the last many years. However, though terrorist violence in the year 2020 declined over 36 per cent from the year before, the militants were successful in carrying out at least 146 terrorist attacks across Pakistan, including three suicide blasts. Secondly, the statistical decline in incidents of terrorism does not mean that the challenge of religious extremism has also been addressed. Extremism has its roots in power relationships in Pakistan, but it also shows the inability of the state to manage diversity.

One can argue that the whole of South Asia, specifically India, has been struggling to manage religious and ethnic diversity. The saffron radicalism in India has disturbed the social and political equilibrium of society. While the Indian case appears relatively more severe, a few parallels can also be drawn between the 'mindsets' in action in India and Pakistan. For one, the majoritarian mindset acts in a similar way all across the world and hates diversity. The reason is obvious; managing diversity does not mean only to be tolerant

towards other faiths or celebrate their religious festivals, cultures, and ethnicities, but also to acknowledge their share in the economy and political power.

This is a critical and tricky part of the equation, which is linked with the society's collective identity, socio-political coherence and acceptance. It is natural that people of the same faith, race, tribe, culture, and class have developed an affinity and common interests. If the pie of economic resources is big, they don't object to inclusive sharing, but if the pie is small, the majority finds an excuse to not share power and resources with others.

The majoritarian mindset also has supremacist tendencies, and the worst superiority complex is ideological, which can trigger massive hate, violence, disorder, chaos, and geographical divisions. Its manifestation is at full tilt in India; Pakistan also has similar tendencies but at a lower level because it has certain compulsions which keep its superiority sentiments suppressed. The geopolitical compulsions present an interesting case as Pakistan is located between two major Asian countries and has complex relations with Shia and Sunni states in the Gulf. It cannot afford to allow the Sunni majority to enjoy full superiority, but it somehow sympathises with their cause. The geo-economic engagement with China and with the West also keeps pressure on the power elites not to play with the superiority sentiments to the extent that they can cause chaos and security problems.

Eventually, Pakistan will have to initiate negotiations with the weak. It will not hurt the ego of the power elites; rather it will pave the way for national coherence.

PUBLISHED IN DAWN, JANUARY 10TH, 2021

Strong data protection law under study, says minister

BY JAMAL SHAHID



In this file photo, Fawad Chaudhry addresses a press conference in Islamabad. — Dawn NewsTV

ISLAMABAD: With cyber security a major concern, Minister for Science and Technology Chaudhry Fawad Hussain has said his ministry is considering introducing a strong data protection law to protect citizens' privacy.

His comments came on Sunday in response to the new WhatsApp privacy policy that allows sharing of consumers' sensitive information. The new policy requires users to share personal data such as location, IP addresses, operating systems, information on how

subscribers interacted with each other and even mobile network and mobile device information such as IMEI number.

The new terms of service which are set to take effect a month from now, on Feb 8, come with the condition that if the users refuse to share data with Facebook, they would have to quit WhatsApp.

WhatsApp started rolling out its app-update notifications earlier this week claiming there had been a change in its Terms of Services and Privacy Policy. The users were informed that the application was going to be handling their data rather differently owing to its new partnership with Facebook.

“And it is particularly disturbing that these new conditions do not apply to subscribers in the USA, UK and Europe,” the federal minister for science and technology told Dawn describing the new policy ‘discriminatory’.

Mr Hussain said cyber security was a major concern and his ministry was taking initiatives to protect personal data of subscribers.

He argued that instead of adopting a ‘unilateral’ approach, such policy changes should have been made after wider consultation.

“WhatsApp may have claimed that they would allow other sister organisations such as Facebook to access certain users’ information for advertisement purposes. But once encryption is removed, WhatsApp’s sister companies will have access to every information of subscribers,” the minister explained.

According to a senior official of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), users will likely see advertisements in the future like they do while watching videos on YouTube and on other social media platforms.

However, he said, it was too soon for the PTA to respond, which was still assessing the new policy and how it would affect users.

According to the official, most of the information WhatsApp will allow other organisations to have access to is “sensitive data and thus alarming”.

“None of the information of users, which WhatsApp now wants to pass on to other businesses, were not allowed in its previous privacy policy,” he said, elaborating that the social media platform Facebook bought WhatsApp in 2014.

While responding to wide criticism from experts in the information technology field that their privacy and personal information would be compromised, WhatsApp maintained that personal chats would remain end-to-end encrypted and no third party would be able to read them. It said the update did not change WhatsApp data sharing practices with Facebook and did not impact how people communicated privately with friends or family.

Internet activist Nighat Dad, who runs a non-profit organisation Digital Rights Foundation, shared concerns of the federal minister. “It’s worrisome that the new conditions will not apply to the EU countries,” she said.

“Facebook already has access to a lot of our personal information but that is OK because it was an informed decision. But what about all those across the world who do not use Facebook and only WhatsApp due to privacy reasons or for whatever reason. It makes us wonder why WhatsApp needs information such as the model of our handsets, our local phone numbers, and our location to mention some major data that they are now going to ask for under the new conditions,” she said.

She also feared that in future Pakistan would come up with its own laws to protect consumers’ data that could be, what she called as draconian as the Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), which compromises personal data of users.

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Pakistan holds India responsible for delay in Mumbai case

BY IFTIKHAR A. KHAN



The Foreign Office emphasised Pakistan's commitment to its international obligations and advised the US to focus on "execution of terrorist activities by India". — Photo courtesy Radio Pakistan/File

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Sunday observed that India's reluctance to send witnesses had stalled progress in the Mumbai attack case.

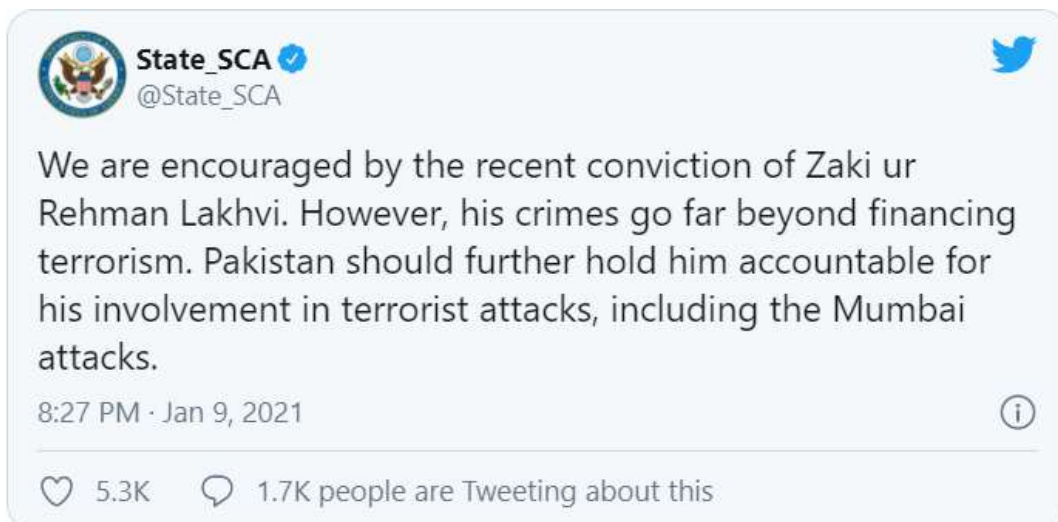
A Foreign Office spokesman in a statement issued here on Sunday said that Pakistan was fully abiding by its own statutes and fulfilling international obligations in the case, and India was responsible for the delay.

“The investigations, prosecutions and subsequent convictions, through due process, are a reflection of effectiveness of Pakistan’s legal system, which operates independent of any extraneous factors or influences,” the FO spokesperson said.

The statement came following a US State Department’s response to the recent conviction of Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi saying they were encouraged on the development; however, his crime was far beyond financing terrorism.

In a statement, the State Department urged Pakistan to further hold him accountable for his involvement in terrorist attacks, including the Mumbai attacks.

“The State Department is encouraged to reserve its concern for the active aiding, abetting, planning, promoting, financing & execution of terrorist activities by India for which sufficient irrefutable evidence has already been provided,” the spokesperson said.



He said that the legal process in the Mumbai case had remained stalled due to reluctance by Indian side to send witnesses for cross-examination by the Pakistani court.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has voiced its concern over India getting chairmanship of three key panels of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) including the Taliban sanctions and counterterrorism committees.

Foreign Office spokesman Zahid Hafeez Chaudhry while reacting to the development said it was important that members of the Security Council ensured that India was not allowed to abuse its position as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.

About Indian assumption of the UNSC as non-permanent member, he said it was ironic that India was able to sit on a UN body whose resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir had been persistently and defiantly flouted by it for the last 70 years.

“India’s negative role in maintenance of international peace and security - the prime mandate of the UNSC - is well known,” the spokesperson remarked.

He said India’s state-sponsorship of terrorism in Pakistan and its elaborate schemes and global network for spreading disinformation about Pakistan had also been fully exposed with irrefutable evidence.

He regretted that India continued to oppress Kashmiris and deny their inalienable right to self-determination that was guaranteed to them under numerous resolutions of the UN Security Council.

“India’s bellicose rhetoric and belligerent actions pose a threat to peace and security in the region and beyond”.

He said that ceasefire violations by India across the Line of Control and the Working Boundary, targeting innocent civilians and populated areas, had become a matter of routine.

The spokesman regretted that India continued to impede access of Security Council-mandated UN Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) to hide these violations.

“The international community is well aware of India’s standing today as a state sponsor and perpetrator of terrorism, and as a massive violator of human rights,” he said.

“We are confident that other responsible members of the Security Council will remain mindful of these facts and not allow India to abuse its position as a non-permanent member of UNSC,” he observed.

The spokesperson said that India would not be able to evade responsibility and accountability for its widespread violations of international law in IIOJK and beyond by virtue of its membership of the UN Security Council.

India has been asked to chair three important committees of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Ambassador of India to UN TS Tirumurti said on Friday.

“Happy to announce that Flag of India #India will be chairing 3 key subsidiary bodies of @UN #SecurityCouncil during #IndianUNSC (2021-22): Taliban sanctions committee, #CounterTerrorism committee (for 2022), #Libya sanctions committee,” TS Tirumurti tweeted.



Tirumurti said the Taliban Sanctions Committee has always been a high priority for India. Chairing this Committee at this juncture will help keep the focus on the presence of terrorists and their sponsors, threatening the peace process in Afghanistan, he added. It is also called the 1988 Sanctions Committee.

The Libya Sanctions Committee is a very important subsidiary body of the council, which implements the sanctions regime, including a two-way arms embargo on Libya, an asset freeze, a travel ban, measures on illicit export of petroleum. “We will be assuming the Chair of this Committee at a critical juncture when there is an international focus on Libya and on their peace process,” Tirumurti said in a video message.

On January 4, India began its eighth term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.

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Global dynamics in 2021

BY MALEEHA LODHI

AT this time of the year many reports and assessments are published looking at the year ahead, identifying global dynamics and forecasting geopolitical shifts. They usually offer a big picture view of trends as well as global risks.

There is little doubt that the coronavirus pandemic that dominated 2020 will continue to be the overwhelming challenge across the world. Managing its economic fallout will preoccupy and test governments everywhere. Several dynamics are in play at the start of the year — another surge in Covid-19 cases in many countries and rollout of vaccines that offers the promise of eventually ending the pandemic. But mass inoculation will take time while vaccine distribution will be uneven with richer countries having greater access to supplies while poorer states will have to wait.

WHO officials have repeatedly urged that the vaccine be equitably shared. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has made similar entreaties saying vaccines should be viewed as a ‘global public good’. Despite such calls to make vaccines available to people everywhere, ‘vaccine nationalism’ will be more in play in 2021. Tom Standage, editor of The Economist’s ‘World in 2021’, named this as the year’s top trend, predicting “fights over vaccines...within and between countries over who should get them and when”.

A striking aspect of the pandemic has been the lack of international solidarity that was needed to deal with the common challenge. While global cooperation is essential to negotiate the pandemic’s economic and social consequences, will the trend continue of countries turning inwards and acting on their own? “Insularity” is posited as the defining feature of 2021 by Geopolitical Futures’ (GPF) annual forecast, with countries “consumed” by their own problems. The annual survey of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) describes this trend in a wider sense, as not only a national approach to the pandemic, but also a national impulse in geopolitics. It sees “strategic self-determination” driving more efforts by states to “develop their own strategic identity rather than have this shaped for them by regional or institutional affiliations.”

This raises the much-debated question about the future of multilateralism at a time of growing multipolarity. The retreat from multilateralism emerged as a dominant trend in the last decade with the rise of hyper nationalism and right-wing populism. Major powers and regional ‘strongmen’ have been pursuing unilateralist policies in defiance of international law, which has eroded a rules-based international order. The advent of the Biden administration in the US has however raised hopes that the trend away from multilateral cooperation will be gradually reversed. President-elect Biden has already declared his intention to rejoin the Paris Climate agreement, return to WHO and re-enter the Iran nuclear deal. 2021 will certainly offer an opportunity to strengthen multilateralism although Stratfor’s 2021 Forecast sees a “constrained return to multilateralism” by Biden.

Most assessments agree that the greatest geopolitical risk of 2021 concerns relations between two global powers, the US and China — the world’s most pivotal relationship with global impact. Some see Biden trying to mend ties with China while others predict intensifying tensions between them. The US-based Atlantic Council says relations could reach a denouement over Taiwan. GPF predicts a freeze in relations. Still others think the relationship will stabilise. It may not be as “overtly confrontational” as it was under President Trump according to the Eurasia Group’s report on Top Risks for 2021. This asserts that “both sides will seek some breathing space”. But it also says that the desire for stability will be offset by other factors to rule out détente. Many assessments suggest an intensification of both trade tensions and the tech war. The Economist report says that fragmentation of the digital world and its supply chain into two parts, “one Chinese-dominated and the other American-led”, will continue. The IISS survey also cites the prospect of “digital spheres of influence.”

Many Western analysts see a fundamental difference between Trump and Biden in engaging allies to pursue the competition with China. The Economist argues that Biden will seek cooperative ties with allies to “more effectively” wage the trade war with Beijing. Most annual reports however failed to anticipate the diplomatic skill and speed with which China has moved to forge deals with US allies — an investment treaty with the EU and a trade deal (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) with 14 Asia-Pacific states. This has begun to limit US options to enlist allies in this regard and has been described as a “strategic win” for China by The Financial Times.

Economic recovery will be the main preoccupation for all countries in 2021. Varied prospects are forecast for a global financial rebound from the impact of the pandemic. There seems agreement that this will be patchy as the virus will take time to contain and continue to induce a deep recession and job losses. Developing countries will face tougher challenges. Despite some debt relief initiatives by richer states, debt liabilities have risen to record levels for them. The World Bank forecasts that millions more will be pushed into extreme poverty. Contraction in growth will greatly inhibit job creation and set back poverty alleviation efforts in developing countries. The overall outlook is for an increase in inequality within and between nations. This obviously has implications for social stability.

The IMF in its outlook says the crisis is likely to leave “deep and unequal scars” with “uncertainty and risks exceptionally high”. Financial market turbulence can be expected to continue for much of 2021. The speed and extent of recovery in countries will depend on several factors especially on how effectively they get the virus under control and effects of their economic stimulus policies. Only China’s economic growth is expected to be robust.

Although many other risks are identified by several annual assessments, the one that finds common emphasis is cyber security. This will continue to loom large as a concern for governments and businesses. The Eurasia report calls 2021 “the year that cyber conflict will create unprecedented technological and geopolitical risk”.

Thus 2021 will present both risks and opportunities but at a time when global leadership will continue to be in short supply.

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PM's visit to Quetta

AFTER nearly a week of sitting by the roadside in sub-zero temperatures with the bodies of their loved ones so cruelly murdered on Jan 3, the Shia Hazara protestors in Quetta finally laid them to rest. And, as he had promised, Prime Minister Imran Khan came to condole with them only after the burials took place on Saturday.

The government has, he said, given them written guarantees about their security and promised to address their other demands. The grieving community could do little but receive him with good grace, and hope that this time the state follows through. However, what transpired since the day the bodies of the Hazara coal miners were discovered with their throats slit and when Mr Khan visited Quetta cannot be papered over or dismissed as a 'misunderstanding'.

First the prime minister displayed an inexplicable reluctance to go to the provincial capital when the mourners said they would not bury their dead until he came to meet them in person. But worse was to come. At an event in Islamabad, Mr Khan, in a shocking display of callousness, told the persecuted community not to "blackmail" him. And he went further still, saying that a "band of crooks", referring to the opposition leaders, had "also" been blackmailing him for two-and-a-half years. Even as he spoke, the Hazara men, women and children he was addressing were spending the sixth straight day out in the freezing cold amidst the coffins, each bearing a photograph of the young man lying within.

By his thoughtless words, for which he offered no apology, the prime minister rubbed salt into the Hazaras' wounds. The community has contended with years of sectarian violence, and although the latest attack came after a lull, it was a grisly reminder that despite the state's claims of having triumphed over militancy, Shias are still being targeted for their faith. The Hazaras, with their distinctive features, are particularly vulnerable.

Some PTI leaders denounced Maryam Nawaz and Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari for 'doing politics' on the community's pain by going to condole with them in person. Those with an iota of political sense, not to mention empathy, know that was absolutely the need of the hour. Be

that as it may, Mr Khan now has a chance to make good on his words. Armed escorts and better-secured enclaves only address the symptoms of militancy; they are not the cure.

Going by the premier's own words, behind these attacks is a group of only about 40 individuals, former Lashkar-e-Jhangvi operatives now allied with the militant Islamic State group. The government must order the security forces to hunt down these violent extremists, who can apparently still strike at will in Balochistan, and bring them to trial. As long as they are free, they pose a threat to minorities across the country.

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Broadsheet judgement

THE PTI government has taken a welcome step in making public the judgement of arbitration between Broadsheet and Pakistan/National Accountability Bureau that was handed down in 2016. Kaveh Moussavi, the head of Broadsheet, an asset recovery company, had been saying on public forums that he was giving permission to the government of Pakistan to make the document public and that the judgement would clarify confusion about the issue at hand.

On Monday, the prime minister's accountability adviser Shahzad Akbar said in a press conference that the government had received written permission from Mr Moussavi to make the judgement public and that Prime Minister Imran Khan had ordered that it be shared with the people of Pakistan without delay. The adviser said that the judgement clearly showed the cost that Pakistan had to pay for giving an NRO to those who had indulged in corrupt practices.

The judgement by Sir Anthony Evans spells out in great detail the follies committed since 2000 by NAB and its lawyers. It shows clearly how shoddy contracts and shady decision-making led to Pakistan cutting a sorry figure in court. This incompetence laced with political expediency has cost the Pakistani taxpayer \$28m in addition to a loss of face.

According to the judgement, the contract that NAB signed with Broadsheet in 2000 included a clause that allowed Broadsheet to claim a 20pc commission on all NAB recoveries outside Pakistan and also domestically, including such cases that Broadsheet may not have been involved in. At the hearing, a former NAB chairman has been quoted as saying that he thought the contract was only for Broadsheet work outside of Pakistan. Such was the level of incompetence.

This trend continued and later it transpired, as listed in the judgement, that Pakistan agreed to settle with Broadsheet but ended up giving \$1.5m to the wrong person. The judgement says the fault was clearly that of NAB and its lawyers who should have known that the person they were making the payment to was not the legal recipient of the money.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has done well to constitute a committee to recommend a line of action on the findings of the judgement, including those pertaining to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. Those who are responsible for decisions and actions that have cost Pakistan dearly must be identified, investigated and taken to task.

At the same time, this committee should also look into the disclosures made by Mr Moussavi after the judgement, including the allegation that some people during this government's stint had asked him for bribes. There are plenty of skeletons in the Broadsheet cupboard and they must be brought out into the open. The PTI government must ensure full transparency in the matter so that no facts are allowed to be obscured at the altar of political expediency.

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Unequal justice

It seems no one wants to testify against former SSP Malir, Rao Anwar. At least five prosecution witnesses, all police officers, have retracted their statements in the Naqeebullah Mehsud murder case in which the retired police official is standing trial. Even the prosecution, which represents the state, scarcely seems interested in pursuing the case. Little wonder then, that the slain man's family, their lawyer and a PTI MNA on Sunday expressed their fear that a path is being cleared for Rao Anwar to be acquitted. The proceedings in the case are a chilling case study of the impunity enjoyed by some extremely powerful individuals in this country. So unaccountable are they that even the vicissitudes of politics do not affect them; the pomp and circumstance that accompanies them remains intact.

Naqeebullah, a 27-year-old aspiring model, was gunned down on Jan 13, 2018, along with three others in a fake encounter, allegedly on the orders of Rao Anwar, infamously known as an 'encounter specialist'. The record of the Karachi police itself implicates the senior official in no less than 444 deaths in such operations. No action had been taken against him for this gruesome run of murders until the death of Naqeebullah, who was described by Rao Anwar as a terrorist. Perhaps it was the young man's presence on social media and his obviously harmless preoccupations that struck a chord in civil society. A police inquiry also soon established that neither he nor the others killed with him even had criminal records, let alone terrorist profiles. Protests broke out demanding that Rao Anwar be brought to book. At this point, the state had a golden opportunity to turn the page on police brutality and extrajudicial killings, and demonstrate that no one, absolutely no one, is above the law. Instead, for five months the former SSP successfully evaded the law — with assistance from state elements — until he was finally arrested. Even that was a mere inconvenience; his Karachi residence was declared a sub-jail, from the comfort of which he could appear for his court hearings. When he did so, it was without handcuffs, surrounded by police officers treating him with deference, and sporting the demeanour of a man who knew he had nothing to fear. It was a mockery of justice in every sense of the word, an affront to the most basic civic values. Impunity on this scale destroys nations from within.

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Roots of extremism

BY ANJUM ALTAF

DOES the left hand know what the right one is doing? I was forced to ask this question on being updated on recent measures to counter terrorism in the country.

I learnt that the government has set up a commission “for implementation of national narrative and development of structures against violent extremism and radicalisation” one of whose objectives is “establishing a centre of excellence to conduct degree and diploma courses in CVE [countering violent extremism] and CT [countering terrorism]”. Another objective is “promoting awareness [of extremism and terrorism] through print and electronic media, publications, seminars, conferences, etc”.

This reminded me of the bizarre state of modern medicine. If you go to a doctor with a general malaise, he/she would, if you are lucky, have your blood pressure measured and, if it turns out high, would prescribe you a pill to take every day to keep it under control. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the physician would not bother to discover why your blood pressure is raised and so you will be on a lifelong medication whose dosage would be progressively increased as you grow older. Ditto for cholesterol, uric acid or anything else that might be above the prescribed range. You will never be cured and meanwhile the drugs would wreak all sorts of unknown damage on your body.

Now we will be establishing centres of excellence to conduct degree and diploma courses in CVE and CT which will be progressively upgraded to HEC-approved universities with their own vice chancellors, provosts, registrars, etc all of whom would have official residences, vehicles, POL and telephone allowances. Meanwhile, friends and relatives would be wined and dined at international conferences and study tours would be arranged to countries that have successfully done what we have now so admirably set out to do.

Also, there will not be a single word in the print and electronic media, publications, seminars, conferences, etc about how we got saddled with the extremism and terrorism that we have now set out to eradicate. Did they just drop out of the sky? Or were they

always with us ever since Aug 14, 1947? Or are they a test that some divine power has devised for its followers who have to pass it by fire to prove their worthiness?

As long as there is no honest discussion of how we got this sickness, there will be little hope for a cure. We won't even know if we are serious in undoing the causes of extremism and terrorism or if we are just going through the motions to tick off a box on some checklist that has been handed down to us to regain good standing in the international financial system of banking transactions.

I also learnt that Nacta (National Counter Terrorism Authority) had drafted detailed CVE policy guidelines in 2018 in which extremism was broadly defined as “having absolute belief in one's truth with an ingrained sense of self-righteousness” which mindset was “likely to be accompanied with violence” to impose one's belief system.

Given this definition of extremism, how do we square the setting up of a centre of excellence to conduct degree and diploma courses in CVE and CT with the curriculum that is intended at the school level to inject an absolute belief in one's truth with an ingrained sense of self-righteousness which, to repeat the Nacta prognosis, is likely to be accompanied with violence to impose one's belief system?

To go back to when and how extremism and then violence entered our society, can we not discern a connection to the parallel attempt to impose a uniformity in our thinking from early childhood with a heavy dose of an absolute belief in one's truth with an ingrained sense of self-righteousness — in other words to the cradle-to-grave imposition of Pakistan Studies and some other subjects in our educational institutions? And can we not put two and two together to see that this was done to create the national narrative that would endorse and support the conscious nurturing of extremism for equally admirable geopolitical objectives?

The objective conditions in Pakistan today are giving rise to broad trends of conformity, rigid thinking, and loss of imagination that incline societies towards extremism and violence. Everyone being made to learn and think the same truth on pain of being declared anti-national can only yield an unreflecting mass and a submissive society which is what authoritarian rulers drool over in their dreams.

Thus, we see the paradox of a centre of excellence at the tertiary level to undo the damage inflicted at the elementary level. The only question of interest is whether the left hand knows what the right one is doing or whether both are clapping to the same tune?

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Preventing Cybercrime

There has been an unprecedented rise in the number of cybercrime complaints to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Over 10,000 cybercrimes were reported in Karachi in 2020 which is 20 percent more than last year. An estimated 50 percent increase has been recorded in complaints about online financial crimes, harassment, women harassment, and child pornography in 2020 than in 2019.

There are a number of factors behind this rise. The pandemic has led to an increase in online activity, accounting for the rise of cybercrime complaints. However, perhaps the most compelling reason for the hike in complaints is simply that more sensitive cases, concerning harassment of women and children, are being reported.

This is a good thing—it indicates more citizen trust in the FIA. Previously cases like these simply went unreported due to stigma, social taboos and a lack of trust in the government employees itself. There was a fear of victim-blaming, lack of accountability against the culprits and insensitive investigation officers, which prevented victims from reporting crimes. The past year has seen some publicised arrests—which might have led to more trust and thus more complaints.

However, even with more reports, it is indisputable that with the natural rise of technology and cyberspace, crime will increase. The government thus needs to invest more to protect citizens in the digital world. The authorities need to construct stronger safety barriers and stress the importance of cyber safety to government organisations. While action on accountability for culprits must be a priority, the government also needs to focus on prevention and spreading awareness to organisations and citizens to take steps to protect themselves too. A larger nation-wide campaign, in collaboration with NGOs and government organisations, delineating steps on protection and prevention of cybercrime needs to be carried out to bring down cybercrime in 2021.

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The NROs that matter

BY ARIFA NOOR

IN other parts of the world, there is a flavour of the month or the restaurant which shines bright for a couple of months before falling by the wayside but here in Pakistan, our months are defined by conspiracies or scandals. There is a new one every few weeks, to our never-ending shock and horror. The negative growth rate or the mess-up in the LNG orders or the fake accounts — even so we never tire of our hand-wringing over past messes and what they cost us.

These days it is the Broadsheet saga. Musharraf and his generals in their crusade to rid Pakistan of corruption and recover looted money had signed a deal with a seemingly shady company. And later, the general and his men were forced to call off the crusade for the same reason politicians don't pursue them ie political expediency. But poorly signed contracts and poor decision-making meant Broadsheet took the country to the cleaners by approaching the courts (outside Pakistan) and winning compensation.

And now, one of those behind this shady company is giving interviews here and there, making outrageous claims which are being taken rather seriously, as hours are being devoted to thrashing out the issue. How did we hire such a company? Why did we sign such a weak contract? Why did we dish out the award? What does it say about our flawed accountability process? So much money has been lost.

In some ways, it's such a familiar story. But even more familiar is this chest-beating about money lost and poor decision-making that is now long past.

Why do we obsess so much over what has passed? Is it because it's easier to dissect and criticise? Or is it because large sums of money with multiple zeros make for good shock-and-horror moments in discussions?

Perhaps it is a bit of both.

For we rarely ever expend our energies on accountability issues which are not done and dusted or don't involve money, regardless of the fact that there are many such cases in which, seemingly, 'NROs' are being given.

One such story has been ongoing in the courts for months.

Three years after the brutal extrajudicial killing of Naqeebullah Mehsud, those accused of his murder seem to be close to freedom. And this in a case that was once headline news and deemed important enough for a Supreme Court intervention.

Naqeebullah, a young man in his 20s, was killed in mid-January 2018 along with three others. The police had claimed then that the four were militants but within days it was clear that the deaths had happened in a 'fake encounter'.

Widespread protests (which ended up as the movement-that-cannot-be-named) forced the state and courts to take notice. A flurry of activities resulted in inquiries, investigations and suo motus and the main suspect, Rao Anwar, was arrested.

But three years later, as interest has waned, the case in court is going another way. Five of the key witnesses have resiled from their statements. In July of last year, sub-inspector Rana Asif and head constable Shahzada Jahangir took a U-turn. The sub-inspector had earlier stated that he had witnessed Naqeeb and the other three in police custody before the encounter. The constable had stated that he had witnessed the staged encounter. But as we coped with the first wave of the coronavirus, these two men had a change of memory in court and took back their statements.

On Oct 30, 2020, it was reported that another witness (yet another police officer) went back on his earlier statement. A month later, newspapers told us once more that police investigations of the telephone data of Rao Anwar revealed he was not in the vicinity of the area where the encounter had taken place.

Small stories, published on the inside pages of newspapers, they barely got noticed. And rightly so. There are no big sums involved, no zeros. Just four unimportant young men who would have lived lives of quiet desperation if they hadn't run into Rao Anwar. No wonder then that all these proceedings have almost passed unnoticed.

Around 10 days ago, another effort was made to draw attention to this sleight of justice. Naqeebullah's family and the lawyers helping them held a press conference on his third

death anniversary and highlighted what was happening. His brother said the family was losing hope.

Jibran Nasir, a lawyer who is helping with the case, also spoke and pointed out that five policemen, whose testimonies formed the basis of the prosecution's case, had retracted their statements. He added that though all of them were state employees, neither the government nor the police had taken any disciplinary action against them.

In television interviews, Nasir has also pointed out that the government has not made life easy for the policeman who has been the investigator of this case while those going back on their statements have faced no consequences so far.

It's not hard to guess which way this story is headed. But no one seems bothered. We would rather make a hue and cry over spilt milk — the money 'lost' or the cost to the Pakistani taxpayer. We will never stop regretting incompetence or ill intentions in financial matters which goes unpunished. For money in our cash-strapped state matters far more than human lives.

And this is why Broadsheet gets the headlines and the airtime but not a court case in an anti-terrorism court.

Or is it because the entire ruling class understands the benefits of a police force addicted to extrajudicial killings? Everyone is a beneficiary and no one gains from discouraging this practice — except the poor citizens who are never a priority. And one can keep adding the zeros here, to the numbers of those killed but it just never becomes sexy enough or dramatic enough. The state knows what needs to be protected.

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NAB not impartial

NAB CHAIRMAN retired justice Javed Iqbal has claimed that his organisation is an unbiased anti white-collar-crime agency and maintains a balance between cases involving the government and the opposition. He mentioned the money-laundering cases involving members of the opposition and the sugar and wheat crises linked to the government as proof of his organisation's even-handedness. The chairman may have been prompted to issue such a statement in an effort to dispel the impression that NAB has become a tool for the government to persecute the opposition. This perception, unfortunately, reflects the unmistakable reality prevailing in the country. The key problem manifests itself in the genesis of NAB. The organisation was birthed by the former military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf to go after the opposition with the primary aim of discrediting them in front of the population. If ever NAB had any pretensions about being a genuine anti white-collar-crime agency, they were put to rest when it stopped pursuing those politicians who were needed to support the Musharraf government. With its foundation weakened by expediency and flawed by compromise, NAB was fated to fall short of its mandate. Through the years therefore, NAB could never shed this image of being a convenient handmaiden for the government of the day.

The Broadsheet scandal has erased any doubts, if ever they existed, that NAB suffers not just from a compromised DNA, but also an incompetent one. The shoddy drafting of the Broadsheet contract, the shady hiring of a dubious company and the inept handling of the legal contest with this company, all reflect very poorly on NAB. In the last few years, the organisation's imbalance has become even more acute. The way that NAB has gone after opposition leaders while ignoring the shady doings inside the government has contributed tremendously towards further tarnishing the image and credibility of the organisation. At the same time, its performance record also stays true to its DNA, with weak investigation and prosecution becoming its hallmark. Even the Supreme Court of Pakistan has admonished NAB for its unenviable track record. So the NAB chairman is on a weak wicket when he claims that his organisation is impartial. No, it is not. NAB is a deeply flawed entity functioning on the basis of an equally flawed law. The only way to reform it is to review its entire legal and political mandate and cleanse not just its body, but its soul.

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Corruption situation in Pakistan worsened in 2020: Transparency International



Transparency International on Thursday has released its annual report, showing that the corruption situation in Pakistan has worsened in 2020.

The annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2020 has revealed that persistent corruption is undermining health care systems and contributing to democratic backsliding amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Countries that perform well on the index invest more in health care, are better able to provide universal health coverage and are less likely to violate democratic norms and institutions or the rule of law.

Chairman Transparency International Pakistan Chapter Sohail Muzaffar told that Pakistan has been ranked on 124th position out of 180 countries in the 2020 CPI. “Pakistan’s score has lowered to 31/100 this year from 32/100 in 2019,” he stated.

Chair of Transparency International Delia Ferreira Rubio said, “The past year has tested governments like no other in memory, and those with higher levels of corruption have been less able to meet the challenge. But even those at the top of the CPI must urgently address their role in perpetuating corruption at home and abroad.”

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Qureshi hopeful country will get out of FATF grey list next month

BY BAQIR SAJJAD SYED



Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Thursday expressed the hope that the Financial Action Task Force would delist Pakistan from its grey list at its next plenary meeting. — DawnNewsTV/File

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Thursday expressed the hope that the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global illicit financing watchdog, would delist Pakistan from its grey list at its next plenary meeting.

The meeting is scheduled to take place virtually from Feb 22 to 25.

Briefing the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, the foreign minister said he was optimistic that no politically motivated decision would be taken by the FATF.

The meeting was chaired by Chairman of Senate Foreign Affairs Committee Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed.

Pakistan has been on the FATF's 'grey list' for deficiencies in its counter-terror financing and anti-money laundering regimes since 2018.

In its last meeting held in October last year, the watchdog had decided to retain Pakistan on the list of 'jurisdiction under enhanced monitoring' till the review in February 2021 when the status of its compliance with recommendations would be assessed again.

Pakistan has so far fully complied with 21 of the 27 actions recommended by FATF. It was, however, deemed to have crucially fallen short on action against the organisations linked to the terror groups listed by the UN Security Council; and prosecution and conviction of banned individuals. Similarly, it was said to have done little to tackle terror financing through narcotics and smuggling of precious stones.

Mr Qureshi said he expected a positive decision would be made in Pakistan's case as "substantial progress" had been made on the remaining six items.

OIC CFM

Foreign Minister Qureshi said that Pakistan would host the next meeting of Organisation of Islamic Co-operation's (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) later this year.

He said Pakistan would keep the focus of the meeting on the situation in India-occupied Kashmir. The government, he said, would ensure that human rights and the issue of Kashmiri political prisoners remained at the forefront.

Pakistan had after the annexation of occupied Kashmir in Aug 2019 tried to convene a special meeting of the OIC CFM, but could not get the support of Arab countries, which hold a virtual veto on the 57-member bloc of Muslim countries.

OIC foreign ministers had at their last meeting held in Niamey (Niger) in November 2020 reiterated their support for the Kashmir cause.

"We reiterate the OIC's principled position on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute for a peaceful settlement in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions," the foreign ministers said in the Niamey Declaration.

Mr Qureshi also briefed the committee on the progress on CPEC. He said CPEC was now in the second phase in which relocation of Chinese industry, job creation and the activation of two new Joint Working Groups (JWGs) on agriculture and international cooperation, respectively, will be a force-multiplier for the project.

The foreign minister later presented the dossier on “Indian state sponsorship of terrorism and destabilisation in Pakistan” to Senator Mushahid Sayed.

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Blast in Afghanistan kills Mangal Bagh

BY IBRAHIM SHINWARI



Photo of Mangal Bagh, the leader of militant outfit Lashkar-i-Islam (LI) based in Khyber tribal agency's Bara region. — AFP/File

KHYBER: Chief of one of Khyber district's most dreaded and banned organisations, Lashkar-i-Islam (LI), Mangal Bagh was killed in a mine explosion in Nangarhar province of Afghanistan on Thursday.

Confirming the news of the militant leader's death, Nangarhar's Governor Zia-ul-Haq Amarkhel wrote on his Twitter account: "Mangal Bagh, also known as Mangal Bagh Afridi, the leader of Lashkar-i-Islam, a militant organisation operating in (erstwhile) Khyber Agency, has been killed in a roadside explosion in Achin district along with three others."

Earlier, some Afghan media organisations ran 'breaking news' about Bagh's death, saying that some unidentified persons planted landmines at the doorstep of his house and he was instantly killed when he stepped on them, along with some of his family members. The names of the other slain persons could not be immediately ascertained.

News reports of his killing in drone attacks or clashes with rival groups spread in the past as well, but he himself used to deny them through statements aired by his illegal FM radio station that he operated wherever he travelled.

There was no immediate comment from official circles in Khyber, both administrative and security ones, as they too were awaiting 'confirmed reports' from across the border from authentic sources.

In his mid-50s now, Mangal Bagh shot to prominence after he was elevated to the top position of LI when the-then political administration orchestrated the unceremonious ouster of Mufti Munir Shakir through a jirga verdict. Mufti Shakir was a controversial cleric and mentor of Bagh.

The militant group was formed by Mufti Shakir in the middle of 2004 after he took allegiance from his armed supporters that they would help him in forcibly expelling Pir Saifur Rehman from Bara.

Sources in Bara said that Bagh used to wash cars at a taxi stand in Peshawar's Cantonment area during his youth when he was ideologically affiliated with the Awami National Party.

He then became a conductor of a bus operating between Bara and Peshawar and later became its driver, sources said and added that he was not very educated as he attended only primary school in his native Sipah area of Bara.

His elevation to the top position of LI in late 2004 took many by surprise, even within the group's ranks as he was not only junior to many of the organisation's diehard activists but temperamentally too he was not considered fit for the 'top job'.

He was extremely ruthless towards his opponents and adopted extremely cruel methods for their public execution in Bara, Bazaar Zakhakhel and Tirah valley.

He would make the local residents look straight at the victims and not turn their faces away during public executions at the Spin Qabar chowk of Sipah, a local resident told Dawn while requesting anonymity.

Sources in Bara said that his funeral was offered in Achin, with only a few of his close associates in attendance.

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The impact on police morale

BY AFZAL ALI SHIGRI

RECENTLY, Islamabad witnessed a serious crime wave preceding the tragic death of a young man in firing by police personnel on duty. The indiscriminate use of deadly force by police drew vociferous criticism from the media and civil society.

Crime control and the operational duties of police are the direct responsibility of senior commanders under the IGP, and as immediate supervisors of their subordinates, they are answerable for any lapses resulting from weak monitoring. In a case of excessive use of force, the normal procedure involves a magisterial inquiry to ascertain the facts of the incident, determine the role of the police officers concerned, and, if neglect or any other motive is established, fix responsibility for criminal action. Under intense pressure, the police made the request for a judicial inquiry and registered a criminal case under the anti-terrorism law without awaiting the outcome of the former; the nominated policemen were immediately arrested.

To further soften the criticism, in a knee-jerk reaction the police chief of the capital city was unceremoniously transferred and made an OSD. Worse, an impression was created that the officer had been transferred prematurely due to his incompetence. This decision was made only to deflect criticism of the government for its failure to introduce the promised reforms that would check the wanton use of force by police.

The transferred police official had performed his duties efficiently for more than two years and focused his attention on his primary responsibilities as chief. He maintained order and controlled crime despite the endemic shortage of resources of manpower, equipment and transport. These difficulties did not deter him from accepting the numerous challenges that tested his nerve and competence to the limit. He addressed key issues for bringing lasting improvement in the ranks of the capital police.

There was no fresh recruitment for almost 10 years in the police. He initiated recruitment of police at various levels through a transparent process. He also cleared the backlog of promotions of members of the force at various levels, thus restoring confidence of the

police in their leadership. He took over the Safe City project which was in the initial stages of gestation and faced glitches and maintenance problems. He made the project fully functional and was also able to complete a purpose-built office for the central police headquarters that was earlier housed in constabulary barracks.

For operational duties, he was, however, hamstrung by an archaic police law of 1857 which, despite the legal requirement that it be replaced with the new police law of 2002 with the induction of local government, remains in force. Under this law, he lacked operational and administrative autonomy and his officers at senior and mid-command levels were posted by the interior ministry or the local chief commissioner.

Even within this compromised arrangement, he did a good job in dealing with numerous crises that required deft handling due to the continuous media focus on the capital city. Under his guidance, the situation was never allowed to get out of hand. Despite an overall good track record, the government suddenly transferred a good officer under external pressure. Governments should learn to act with grace. Similar whimsical transfers of senior officers in other provinces and now in Islamabad leave lasting scars on the collective psyche of these law-enforcement institutions.

It must be understood that police personnel comprising armed uniformed manpower are exposed daily to high-risk operations and tend to form an emotional bonding with their commanders as comrades in arms. The maltreatment of their commanders puts the entire force under stress with a long-term negative impact on their performance and exposes the fragility of the entire set-up that is then perceived as being vulnerable to quirky political decisions.

If the head of the force is held responsible for an individual case of indiscipline or poor performance, thereby ignoring his exemplary record of two years and projecting him as a failure, it is likely that the men he has led will not accept the decision and lose all confidence in the sagacity of the government. This attenuates the morale of the force, thus preventing it from functioning effectively and facing the daily challenge of highly volatile and violent situations due to the existing challenges of extremism and terrorism confronted by these men.

Disgracing the police chief is not reform. If the government has any interest in reforming our police, it should immediately notify the application of Police Order 2002 and set up all

the institutional structures of civilian oversight and independent police complaint authorities, thus letting the institutional arrangement hold the police accountable for all its actions. Taking important decisions such as the transfer of police chiefs on the basis of anecdotal evidence negates the claims of institution-building.

Without waiting for the promised reform, a decision that can be taken quickly (which would make an immediate difference to the situation) is the posting of a competent police officer after due diligence. Such an officer should be selected purely on merit with a fixed tenure so that any transfer that is made prematurely takes place through a neutral and transparent process already defined by the law. With merit-based selection and an assured tenure, he will be able to work in peace instead of worrying about his survival and turning into a darbari when he should be serving the people.

One good professional officer commanding a disciplined, armed force will make a huge difference and give relief to a large population with a salutary impact on overall governance.

Lastly, if a transfer is necessary out of political considerations then at least the dignity of the office of police chief should be protected and the change should be made gracefully without any kind of stigmatisation. It is unfortunate that this government and previous dispensations have paid only lip service to police reform, yet they try singularly to change the police for the worse and outdo their predecessors to ruin an already weakened institutional arrangement.

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Property difference

BY FAMIYA MASOOD

IN Pakistan, intellectual property is viewed with the same lens as tangible property that includes land or physical assets. This should not be the case as intellectual property is hardly a tangible form of property.

Conventional property law aims to offer property owners protection for life, whereas intellectual property law offers limited rights to inventors so that the latter can capture the value of their invention for a specific period of time.

One of the main reasons behind the existence of conventional property rights can be traced to what is known as the ‘tragedy of the commons’. Finite natural resources were being overused because there was no mechanism in place to allocate them efficiently unless they were handed out in the form of property. To apply this idea to intellectual property is fundamentally flawed.

Information, for one, cannot be depleted. It is a public good, which makes its consumption non-rivalrous and non-excludable. For example, my use of information does not impose any direct cost on anyone and it is not something from which others can easily be excluded, the exception being trade secrets.

Intellectual property, then, is not a response to scarcity, as conventional property law is. In practical terms, it is a conscious decision to create scarcity of the property invented or authored by someone in order to artificially boost the economic returns on it and incentivise inventors or authors. In fact, intellectual property falls somewhere in the basket of the ‘tragedy of the anti-commons’ which is the result of excessive property rights. The protectionist view of traditional property rights, therefore, cannot be applied to intellectual property. The intangible ‘thing’ that is being protected by intellectual property rights is information of which patents, trade secrets and copyrights, as well as reputation, are the subject. According to this principle, information is taken out of the public domain and placed into the hands of the creator solely because of what the latter has added to the information. That means that inventors share information concerning their inventions

with the public but prevent others from making, using or selling it on the basis of their contribution.

Ultimately, intellectual property rights are separate from tangible assets and unlike traditional property laws where your claim is restricted to the property being trespassed upon. The separation between protection and infringement is important because it means that where intellectual property is concerned, an inventor cannot infringe on tangible goods. By way of example, an author who claims that a fundamental character of her book series has been copied and reproduced in a film is not saying that the original, physical copies of her 'books' have been stolen but that her expression of an idea has been taken away from her without her consent, thus redefining the concept of property.

This is, perhaps, an extension of the principle of conventional property rights that "whoever owns the soil, it is theirs all the way up to Heaven and down to Hell". However, even within the domain of property rights, this view is beginning to lose its impact and is being abandoned but the same is not happening with intellectual property rights. In fact, this principle exposes the fundamental flaw in treating intellectual and tangible property in the same way.

A better way of understanding it would be to see intellectual property in the light of unfair competition or unjust enrichment. Take the example of copyrights that protect literary and artistic works. Legally, I should not be permitted to write a book that has a similar character to Harry Potter, a character who is an orphan wizard who attends Hogwarts and fights against an evil wizard who intends to become immortal. Writing such a book would mean that (a) I don't possess the innovation required to write something that is different from something already present in the market; (b) if I include such a character and if it becomes a success, I am cashing in on someone else's creation of a character that has taken years to form; or (c) I am causing confusion amongst those reading my book who might think that either the author has allowed me to use the traits of the character or that my work is an extension of her story. In all three cases, it is a free ride for me on someone else's work and competing with them which constitutes unfair competition with the original creator.

These examples and many more present a fitting scenario of why the treatment of intellectual property rights should be different from that of conventional property rights.

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