

## In This Issue

- Minutes of the NIOC 21st Advisory Board meeting
- Global model to tackle violence against women
- Extremism persists
- Draconian rules
- Police app to centralize child abuse monitoring
- EU launches drive to promote justice
- Senate passes bill 'criminalizing' torture, custodial deaths
- Criminalizing torture
- Towards implementing Paigham-e-Pakistan
- Expeditious justice and ADR
- Noor murder case
- Can an Digital Pakistan become a Reality?
- Two soldiers martyred in Waziristan attacks



## ADVISORY BOARD

## NIOC DIRECTORATE

## CONSULTANTS

### **Tariq Parvez**

**President Advisory Board, NIOC:**  
Former Director General  
Federal Investigation Agency

### **Zahid Hussain**

**Member NIOC AB:**  
Eminent journalist particularly  
specializing in countering terrorism

### **Samina Ahmed**

**Member NIOC AB:**  
Senior Adviser Asia and Project Director,  
South Asia for the International Crisis Group

### **Zubair Habib**

**Chairman CPLC Karachi, Member  
NIOC AB:**  
For community outreach.

### **Jawaid Akhtar QPM**

**Member NIOC AB:**  
Police Officer. retired as the Deputy Chief  
Constable of West Yorkshire Police

### **Dr Manzoor Ahmad**

**Member NIOC AB:**  
International Trade and Customs Expert

### **Tariq Khosa**

**Director**

### **Syed Ejaz Hussain**

**Deputy Director**

### **Muhammad Ali Nekokara**

**Governance Expert**

### **Hassan Sardar**

**Manager Administration and Finance**

### **Ammar Hussain Jaffri**

**Communication Strategist**

### **Kashif Akram Noon**

**Lead Researcher**

### **Saroop Ijaz**

**Legal Expert**

# NIOC's 21st Advisory Board Meeting- July 2021

---



**T**HE 21st Advisory Board Meeting of NIOC was held virtually on 02 July 2021. The following participated: Tariq Parvez, Zahid Hussain, Samina Ahmed, Jawaid Akhtar, Zubair Habib, Tariq Khosa, Ejaz Hussain, Kashif Noon, Ali Nekokara, Saroop Ijaz, Ammar Jaffri and Hassan Sardar.

Director NIOC Tariq Khosa informed the Board that NIOC as a project has its own platform of Centre for Governance Research (CGR) with effect from 01 July 2021 and would no longer operate from PIPS platform. He expressed his gratitude to Director PIPS Amir Rana for the support provided to launch NIOC in November 2019 and sustain it till June 2021. CGR and PIPS will continue professional collaboration on issues of mutual professional interest.

Director Khosa informed the Board that GI Resilience Fund-approved study on Serious and Organized Crime in Pakistan was launched from 1 July and will continue till 31 December 2021. Timelines for the study were shared with the board. Following members of team were nominated to lead different categories of OC: Tariq Khosa: Illicit Finance: Money Laundering and Terror Financing; Ejaz Hussain: Drug Trafficking and Illicit Weapons; Kashif Noon: Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking; Ammar Jaffri: Cyber Crimes and Online Child Abuse. Saroop Ijaz will examine laws dealing with all the categories of OCs under study and prepare case studies while

also identifying any gaps in the laws. Tariq Parvez will give strategic advice to the team for the study.

Team Leader Ejaz Hussain heading a 3-month study on Connectivity and Criminality apprised about the project progress. Initial two phases in May and June 2021 stood completed and the study had entered the final phase in July 2021.

Monthly OC Watch for June 2021 was submitted by Amir Rana, Director PIPS. This completed his assigned task from January to June 2021.

Monthly CE Watch for June 2021 was issued by DD NIOC Ejaz Hussain.

Monthly NIOC Newsletter for June 2021 was issued by the Director and Manager Administration.

Director Khosa suggested carrying out a key interview every month with a known personality or a professional of national or international standing from the platform of NIOC-CGR.

# Global model to tackle violence against women

---

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, UN SECRETARY GENERAL

**A**S the world grapples unevenly with the effects of Covid-19, a parallel and equally horrific pandemic has threatened half the world's population. In the early months of the pandemic, the United Nations projected that quarantines and lockdowns could lead to a shocking 15 million additional cases of gender-based violence every three months. Sadly, those predictions appear to be coming true.

This week, world leaders and others will gather at the Generation Equality Forum in Paris and online in a massive push for gender equality. At that meeting, I will call on states, companies and individuals to join in a global initiative, with proven results, to end the fear and insecurity that threaten the health, rights, dignity and lives of so many women and girls.

From domestic violence to sexual exploitation, trafficking, child marriage, female genital mutilation and online harassment, violent misogyny has thrived in the shadow of the pandemic.

Full data will take time to collect and assess, but the trends are clear. In 12 countries tracked by the UN, the number of cases of violence against women and girls reported to various institutions increased 83% from 2019 to 2020, and cases reported to the police grew by 64%.

In the first months of the pandemic, calls to helplines increased by an average of 60% across the European Union. Calls to Peru's sexual violence hotline almost doubled in 2020 compared to 2019. In Thailand, the number of clients visiting domestic violence crisis units in hospitals in April 2020, was more than double the number from the same time period of the previous year.

Such statistics and stories span the world, adding to an existing epidemic of violence against women and girls. Before the pandemic, the World Health Organization estimated that one in three women would experience male violence in their lifetime.

Just over a year ago, I raised the alarm. Echoing my call for a global ceasefire, I appealed for peace in the home — an end to all violence everywhere, from war zones to people's homes — to allow us to face the pandemic, humankind's common enemy, with solidarity and unity.

More than 140 countries expressed support. Some 800 measures have been adopted in 149 countries, the majority focused on shelter, legal assistance and other services and support.

But, in many cases, these actions have been limited and short-lived. Worse, other countries are retreating, rolling back legal protections and standing by as violence is used to target women, including human rights defenders protesting these reversals.

The pervasiveness of violence against women and girls has led to acquiescence that it is somehow inevitable or impossible to end. This is as outrageous and self-defeating as it is plain wrong. Despite the challenges of the past year, the UN, with significant funding from and partnership with the EU, has demonstrated that change is possible.

Over the course of 2020, the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls has delivered notable results in 25 countries. Eighty-four laws and policies to protect women and girls were adopted or strengthened. Prosecution of perpetrators increased 22%. Some 650,000 women and girls received services despite lockdowns and mobility restrictions. Close to 900,000 men and boys – including traditional leaders, heads of religious institutions, male taxi drivers and young gamers – were engaged to be allies in finding solutions. And across these countries, national budget allocations for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls increased by 32%, a clear indication of future sustainability.

By coming together, in Paris, around a proven model, we can begin to ensure that the next generation of girls will not be expected to live with fear simply because we didn't act. In time, there will be many lessons learned about what the world got right and wrong in handling this pandemic. One of the first must be to ensure that this disgraceful hidden pandemic facing half our population ends now.

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, JULY 1, 2021.**

# Extremism persists

---

DURDANA NAJAM

A visit to Punjab University has rarely been a joy. The event manager of the function that I attended at the university told me that he had been strictly forbidden to play music other than just one or two verses of any national song. It was not necessary to ask what made the administration arrive at this unhealthy decision. At the university, every boy and girl are suspected of having illicit relations. Since it is almost possible for every girl and boy to form promiscuous relations, the self-appointed moral police of the Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT) see that anything they deem as a sexual stimulant is kept out of the campus. Music is one of them. The IJT has assumed the role of society modifier with the jurisdiction to use violence to get their agenda of morality established in academic institutions. Last week, it had a scuffle with a group of students of the Government Science College, Wahdat Road, Lahore, on their alleged involvement in using drugs. During the chaos, a student fell from the roof of the college, sustaining severe injuries.

It is not only IJT that resorts to intimidation and violence in dealing with their opponents. Even lawyers, doctors, teachers, and students take the law into their hands. The lawmakers in parliament get violent when responding to the opposition. We have learned to defend our lives, this country, our moralities, and our individual interpretations of Islam through brick and mortars.

Violence was not the language we used in the first three decades after the creation of Pakistan. People were way calmer and mature to handle things through discussion. Respect for others' opinions prevailed. Moral values were sublimely followed; nobody had to force them down others' throats. However, with the coming apart of East Pakistan, a new sense of [in]security grew, making it imperative for us to become more vital to keep the remaining Pakistan from falling into the hands of the enemies. Instead of looking inward to find the cause of the breakup, the urge to pass the buck on the enemies looked more relevant. The fear of getting scooped, lest we lower our guards, was required to shift the strategy from being militarily lean to building a large arsenal. It had also become clear that nationalism lacked the vigour to motivate a Pakistani to fend for the country. The ignition to fight for Pakistan had to come from somewhere else. So, we borrowed the spark from religion and made Pakistan Islam's fortress. Bhutto went so far as to declare Pakistan a socialist Islamic country.

Though Pakistan has decided to replace the security paradigm with geo-economics, the buyers of this commitment abroad are few and far between. That explains why the FATF's albatross is refusing to leave Pakistan.

Since 2018, all the FATF plenaries have retained Pakistan in the grey list. On the latest plenaries on June 25, 2021, Pakistan showed progress on 26 out of 27 action points. Hopes were raised that the margin of one point would not stand between FATF's decision to remove Pakistan from the grey list. However, it was not to be. Marcus Player, the FATF president, said at a virtual press conference, "One action plan still needs to be completed. It concerns investigation and prosecution of senior leaders and commanders of UN-designated terror groups." He also said that the risk of money laundering remains high, which can fuel corruption and organised crime. In addition, Pakistan will also have to deliver on the six-point action plan delineated by the FATF's regional outlet, the Asia Pacific Group.

The action plan demands of Pakistan to investigate, prosecute and punish the terrorists designated as global threats.

Pakistan has made strides in this regard, but there is the problem of distrust. Whenever Pakistanis ransack their cities or institutions to establish their version of the blasphemy law or principles of morality, the international community becomes alert. Remember, our G+ status with the European Union was on the verge of collapse when the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan stalwarts sieged Lahore for three days and killed three police officers.

The question is: despite getting almost 99% marks and having tightened the noose around terror financing, what is it that Pakistan is not doing?

It seems the case of three glitches. One is about the technical flaw in the financial sector that still allows money laundering. Second concerns the structural flaws of the legal system. The third has the normative angle to it, which stems from the rising extremism in our country. Although Pakistan may have won the war against terrorism, it has yet to overcome extremism, which is more poisonous.

The route to return to our calmer self is the same we took to arrive at this state of affairs. First, we would have to reform our education system and make it inclusive and more democratic. The first step would be to remove violent forces like the IJT from academic institutions and letting higher education take its direction instead of anchoring it with some ideology.

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, JULY 1, 2021.**

## Draconian rules

---

THE Asia Internet Coalition has once again struck back against Pakistan's Removal of Unlawful Online Content Rules, 2021, describing the latest version (published last month by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication) as containing all the same "problematic provisions" as previous drafts, with only "minor changes". Echoing concerns of local rights advocates and digital experts, the association of major technology firms also noted with alarm that these rules go far beyond the scope of its parent act, the draconian Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016. The rules are also currently being challenged in the Islamabad High Court on the grounds of being unconstitutional, a development which had at least led to the attorney general conceding the need for more stakeholder consultation. That was in April. Some months later, given the absence of any substantive feedback being incorporated into the rules, it is apparent that despite sustained attempts to engage with lawmakers in good faith, human rights defenders' concerns continue to fall on deaf ears, validating their worst fears regarding the state's intentions for digital governance.

The centrepiece of an explicit and relentless drive to monitor and control virtually all aspects of our lives, the rules are impractical, oppressive and guaranteed to cause immense social and economic harm. There is no imaginable outcome in which they will lead to progress and growth – rather, they are designed to afford the state even more excessive and arbitrary powers, with little to no oversight and accountability. The cost of this campaign to forcefully promote a statist monoculture will be paid for by citizens for decades to come, as every avenue for creativity and innovation is stifled. Since the rules were first floated, the government has led stakeholders down a meandering path of insincere dialogue. But unless it wishes to plunge the country into a digital dark age, there is only one course of action it must undertake: denotify the rules and commit to a comprehensive overhaul of PECA.

**SOURCE: DAWN, JULY 3, 2021**

# Police app to centralise child abuse monitoring

---



**A**FTER failing to achieve any substantial progress on Amber Alert System by the federal government, the Punjab Police decided to launch its own app to monitor incidents of missing, disappeared or abducted children.

The issue of child abuse in Pakistan was highlighted globally after the Zainab rape-cum-murder case. The government had decided to launch Zainab Alert, a local version of Amber Alert, a coordinated, centralised system to disseminate information about missing children and their recovery.

Zainab Alert Response and Recovery Act 2019 was also passed by the government. Under the bill, a body Zainab Alert Response and Recovery Agency (ZARRA) was to be established on the pattern of Amber Alert to inform public and enforcement agencies and recover a missing child through one window operations.

Even after the Zainab murder case, a large number of children had gone missing but the ZARRA is yet to be launched and the police decided to fill the gap through its own app.

The decision has been taken during a high-level meeting chaired by the Inspector General of Punjab Police (IGP) Inam Ghani at his office.

The meeting was attended by Additional IG Operations Sahibzada Shehzad Sultan, DIG IT Waqas Nazir, DIG R&D Shahid Javed, DIG Crimes and Investigation Punjab, Ahmad Nawaz Cheema along with other officers. The IGP said child disappearance or abduction complaints should be automatically updated in the app through Pukaar 15 calls at the police station and service centres.

He also said a digital app for close monitoring of missing, abducted or abused children across the province should be developed. In the app, missing or abducted child requests received from all sources including 15 calls, police stations and service centres will automatically be updated.

It will help ensure effective mutual coordination for the safe return of children of their parents without delay.

He further said in view of child protection, the new app should be developed as soon as possible and be made available to the general public on Google Play Store so that parents and heirs of missing children could register themselves on the app and easily reach the police with a single click.

He further said supervisory officers should focus on immediate action and co-operation for the safe return of a child on the report of missing or abducted on the app as the delay in police action in cases of missing, abducted, tortured and abused children is not tolerated at any cost.

He said co-operation and close liaison of the police across Punjab was key for the safe recovery of missing, sexually abused and abducted children, therefore, the supervisory officers in the above-mentioned cases especially should take benefit from modern forensic science and information technology so that the process of bringing the accused involved in these crimes to justice could be expedited.

The IG Punjab while further sharing the features and functions of the app said through the new app, the report of missing, disappeared or abducted children in any district of the province will be sent to all the police stations and field formations of Punjab at the same time which will help in taking immediate steps for the safe return of these children.

IGP added that if a missing child from Lahore or any other district goes to another district or is abducted, the local police will not only be alerted but also mobilised for the recovery of the children as well as bringing those responsible to book. While speaking to The Express Tribune, Child Protection and Welfare Bureau Chairperson Sarah said protection of children was a collective responsibility and all departments concerned must work together in liaison.

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, JULY 3, 2021.**

## EU launches drive to promote justice

---



**T**HE European Union and its partners launched a programme that aims to promote the rule of law and enhance the criminal justice system in Pakistan, with a specific focus on the provinces of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and Balochistan.

Anchored in the vision that an enhanced and reformed justice sector is the only sustainable solution for addressing critical and systematic weaknesses in justice delivery, the programme spans from 2021 till 2025, and it is financed with 20 million euros.

The programme is jointly implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

It aims to support reform processes to ensure delivery of people-centered justice, enhance access to justice for all, particularly women and less privileged or marginalized groups and improve service delivery of the security sector in line with constitutional safeguards and international standards.

The project will provide technical assistance to legal reforms and the rule of law roadmaps in K-P and Balochistan.

Special focus will be set on access to justice through free legal aid and alternative dispute resolution as well as legal literacy for citizens. On the institutional side, the project will assist in upgrading facilities and processes to enhance citizen friendly service delivery.

An event for launching the programme was held with key stakeholders who attended it virtually. Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Gulzar Ahmed graced the occasion as chief guest. Other key attendees included EU Ambassador to Pakistan Androulla Kaminara and representatives of the three UN agencies.

The chief justice thanked the EU and UN agencies for their support and expressed confidence in the programme. "I am certain that together we will be able to enhance access to justice for all, particularly, women, less privileged and the marginalized groups, and improve service delivery," he said, adding the government would extend support to the programme, enabling it to achieve its goal.

The EU ambassador to Pakistan also thanked the UN agencies, provincial and federal government and other key stakeholders for their support in strengthening the rule of law in Pakistan. "Inclusive access to justice for all is an important prerequisite for a peaceful and just society. Today's programme builds on the long-term commitment of the EU to improving the rule of law and access to justice for all in Pakistan. The new programme is part of the priorities of the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan 2019 and financed under the EU Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2014-2020," she said, adding both strategic documents supported the implementation of the vision 2025 in the focal areas, including rural development, education, good governance, human rights and rule of law.

UNDP Resident Representative Knut Ostby said the programme provided the agency the opportunity to work closely with the UN WOMEN, UNODC and other key government counterparts.

"This will help us to contribute to the effective functioning of the District Legal Empowerment Committees, women's access to justice, in particular on domestic violence, child marriage and inheritance and property rights and gender-responsiveness among other important areas," Ostby said.

Addressing the event, UN Women Pakistan Country Representative Sharmeela Rassool said, "In Pakistan, women constitute of almost 50% of the entire population. Yet they are not represented proportionately in receiving or delivering of basic and critical services including effective service delivery in the justice sector. UN Women is committed to deepening our efforts to ensure inclusion of women in formal justice delivery mechanisms in K-P and Balochistan to ensure their rights are safeguarded for promotion of a fair, efficient, gender-responsive and inclusive society."

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, JULY 3, 2021.**

## Senate passes bill 'criminalising' torture, custodial deaths



**T**HE Senate passed The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Bill, 2021, less than a month after the opposition expressed alarm over its key human rights bills disappearing in a black hole.

The bill, which was presented by PPP Senator Sherry Rehman and supported by Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari, states that any public servant involved in torture would face up to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs2 million.

If a public servant, whose duty it is to prevent torture, either intentionally or negligently fails to prevent it, he/she will face up to five years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs1m, it adds.

"Whoever commits, abets or conspires to commit the offence of custodial death or custodial sexual violence, shall be punished with imprisonment for life and with fine, which may extend to Rs3m," it further states.

In addition, if a public servant, whose duty it is to prevent custodial death and custodial sexual violence either intentionally or negligently fails to do so, he/she will be punished with at least seven years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs1m.

The fine will be paid to the victim or their legal heirs, according to the bill. If the fine is not paid, the public servant involved would face additional imprisonment of up to three years and five years, respectively, the bill states.

Regarding detention, the bill states that no one may be taken into custody to "extract information regarding the whereabouts of a person accused of any offence or to extract evidence", adding that women may only be taken into custody by a female official.

A statement extracted through torture would be inadmissible in court, it states.

"Every offence punishable under this Act shall be non-compoundable and non-bailable," the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Bill, 2021 states.

The bill also lays out the procedure for filing a complaint in case of custodial torture. The court, which receives a complaint, would record the person's statement and direct that a medical and psychological examination be conducted, the result of which would have to be presented to the court within 24 hours.

If evidence is found that torture may have occurred, the court concerned will then refer the matter to a sessions court for further action. The sessions court, in turn, will direct for an investigation to be conducted and the report submitted within 15 days. The sessions court will hear the complaint on a daily basis and announce a verdict within 60 days, the bill states.

Reacting to the bill's approval, Senator Rehman said Pakistan was "finally on [the] way to criminalising torture".

She said she was "jubilant" that the bill was passed. Rehman also thanked all senators, the human rights minister and former chairman of the Senate committee on human rights, Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, for the "work they put into this bill with me in the committee".

**SOURCE: DAWN, JULY 12, 2021**

# Criminalising torture

---

ONE can hope that individuals in custody will no longer emerge from detention with their bodies and spirits broken, often having confessed to crimes they did not commit simply to make the pain stop. That is, of course, if they emerge alive at all. For, after years of delay, Pakistan has finally hewed towards a more civilised approach in law enforcement.

On Monday, the Senate passed The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Bill 2021, which will now go to the Lower House for assent and then be signed into law by the president. The remaining process must be completed as soon as possible; the government has dragged its feet on the matter for far too long. It has been 11 years since Pakistan ratified the UN Convention Against Torture and four years since it committed to enacting legislation criminalising torture during its state review under the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. Sherry Rehman introduced the bill in the Upper House in February 2020, and it has been a year since the Senate human rights committee approved it.

The bill lays out a procedure for filing complaints of torture, custodial sexual violence and custodial death so that an investigation can be launched, which must be completed within 15 days after being ordered by a sessions court. Any public servant involved in torture can be sentenced for up to 10 years in prison and fined up to Rs2m. If a public servant, whose duty it is to prevent torture, either intentionally or negligently fails to prevent it, he/she will face up to five years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs1m. Anyone found guilty of committing, abetting or conspiring in an act of custodial death or custodial sexual violence, will be liable to imprisonment for life and with a fine of up to Rs3m. The bill affords few loopholes to anyone attempting to evade responsibility for committing these non-compoundable and non-bailable crimes.

Torture is symptomatic of a brutalised society where class divisions are pronounced and discrimination against certain groups is tolerated. Under-resourced police in such an environment – where some lives are expendable – finds it simpler to ‘show results’ through forced confessions than to get to the root of the crime. Ending the impunity with which torture is routinely practiced will be a major step towards bringing in more effective ways of investigating crime.

Law-enforcement officials must be imparted training in forensic evidence gathering techniques and in alternative methods of interrogation. This legislative change requires nothing less than a cognitive shift in how policing is viewed. Barbaric practices undermine the rule of the law, rather than strengthening it. Equally important, when the legislation against torture and custodial death is on the statute books, it must be implemented strictly without regard to rank or connections.

SOURCE: DAWN, JULY 14, 2021

# Towards implementing Paigham-e-Pakistan

---

DURDANA NAJAM

**A**FGHANISTAN is on the cusp of Taliban rule. Pakistan's prime minister has shown the inclination to have a morally stringent system where women are modest and men their defenders. The Punjab textbook board has refused to accommodate Malala as one of the heroes of Pakistan while also mandating illegal using, for learning purposes, the images of reproductive organs of both human beings and animals. Universities have been sublet to religious parties for the fulfilment of their agendas. Every illustration in this broad canvas is a depiction of society at God's side. Richard Nixon, then the vice-president of the US, had said about the US that it was at God's side when the former had almost made Vietnam a killing field and had chalked a plan to strangle communism with whatever price it may demand. We saw it happening exactly that way. Terrorism was born from the womb of that struggle. We ended up having more phobias than the world had to deal with during the Marxist-Leninist-dominated world. We have had more people killed in the war against terrorism than in both world wars combined.

Terrorism visited Pakistan like a roaring fire after 9/11. Indeed, joining ranks with the US in its Afghan war in a retaliatory action to square the 9/11 assaults was detrimental to us. However, what wrecked our home was the policy of creating the buckets of good and bad Taliban – a metaphor used to determine who we had to hand over to the US as terrorists and who we would keep under our wings as assets. Thus, at the time we had become both the defenders and the creators of terrorism. The taste of this medicine wasn't felt until we crusaded against Lal Masjid. That was a turning point. From 2007 to 2014 December, Pakistan became a killing field. Not a single city of Pakistan was spared of bomb blasts and violence. Fortunately, that ugly phase is now behind us. In seven years since the massacre of the Army Public School Peshawar in December 2014, we have defeated terrorism to a large extent. The traces of violence as we see now in Balochistan are less because of the policy of violence that the state had adopted to crush dissenters than the policy of alienation the state is stuck with. Nationalism becomes intense when it is not acknowledged. It becomes brutal when it is crushed. And it becomes insane when taken for granted. We have done it all in Balochistan. We refused to acknowledge the rights of the Baloch to their resources, crushed them when they demanded to be treated on a par with citizens of other provinces and took them for granted when they claimed a participatory role in the development of their region. We may have defeated terrorism, but we have yet to deal with extremism, the bane of which could take its toll even if we had decided to move away from the

geostrategic paradigm to geo-economic. Suppressing nationalism with underdevelopment has backfired and will continue to do so. Instead, alienation has proved to be a fertile ground in nurturing extremism.

Although extremism is not entirely a religious issue, it had been legitimised in Pakistan mostly through religious decrees. While the state focused its attention on bridging the socio-economic disparity to address extremism, a parallel effort to tune religious discourse has also been in the calling. During the last PML-N government, a platform with the name of Paigham-e-Pakistan was created in this regard. Developed by the Research Centre of the International Islamic University, the project's mandate was to make illegal all types of extremist behaviour originating from inter-religious disharmony, sectarian discord, misuse of blasphemy laws, and misunderstanding about Jihad. Maulana Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, the prime minister's special representative on religious harmony, has taken ownership of the Paigham-e-Pakistan project, which had the backing of almost every religious school of thought in Pakistan and was signed by 1,829 religious scholars. Ashrafi's Pakistan Ulema Council is the principal carrier of Paigham-e-Pakistan.

According to Ashrafi, inter-religious and inter-sect tolerance and harmony have been successfully practised in Pakistan during the last eight months. There had been no reported killing incidents on religious grounds in the country in the same period. Moreover, the Pakistan Ulema Board is on board with Ashrafi to reinforce the atmosphere of tolerance in the country.

That said and done, there is a dire and urgent need to take the message of Paigham-e-Pakistan to the academic institutions as well, especially the Punjab University, where the student body of Jamaat-e-Islami, the Jamiat, has wrought havoc with its violent policies.

Last but not the least, we may support the Taliban for a peaceful region; however, any replication of their culture in Pakistan may prove disastrous, as the import of Saudi culture proved previously. We need to build a Pakistani culture to respect ourselves as a nation.

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, JULY 15, 2021.**

# Expeditious justice and ADR

---

DR SYED KALEEM IMAM

**M**Y fathers' aunt migrated from India in 1947, and got a small house in Rawalpindi against the claim for the property left in Uttar Pradesh. In sheer affection, she also accommodated her sister in the same house. But for the next thirty years, she and her heirs paid heavily for the price of that love by visiting the courts.

The sister had gone to the court to lay her claim for the same house where she was welcomed as a guest and continued to live in for the next three decades. The system's delay and apathy resulted in any family affection getting lost in the process.

If you are unlucky to visit the courts, sayings like 'justice delayed is justice denied' and 'justice hurried is justice buried' will resonate very frequently. But the fact is that with millions of cases pending over extended periods, the system makes a mockery of helpless victims merely seeking justice. On the other hand, our police and legal fraternity perhaps yield the best crop out of the situation.

A friend of mine narrated that he was shocked when once, before the arrival of the honorable judge, a court clerk announced, "those seeking the next date should come forward" – and 50 percent of the learned councils proceeded in haste. Maybe, the other 50 percent would have also followed, had they not been accompanied by their clients.

There are depressing tales of deprivations. Should we continue with the prevailing criminal justice system's (CJS) procedures and structures, wishing it shall overcome stockpiles while moving at a snail's pace, or should we look for Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) for expeditious disposal of cases? If only reforming the CJS was the first goal of the National Action Plan (NAP), rather than the 'last but not the least as 20th agenda item to be done.

I had a chance to visit the Gilgit-Baltistan Judicial Academy, courtesy the Law and Justice Commission, where I interacted, in a training session, with judicial officers and later had informal chats with police officers regarding ADR. To my pleasant surprise, it was heartening to know that the Ismaili Community was running dispute resolution through their arbitration council. They do not go to the police or the courts and instead settle disagreements through this council which has the trust of the people.

The GB success story reminds me of an uncle known for his pristine lifestyle, who also had the trust of his extended family. Once a year he would visit from abroad, and most of the indisposed cranky issues of this large family would be resolved. His attributes were fairness, swift rapprochement, impartiality, good judgment, topping it all up with empathy. And it worked.

And that's what mattered to the family. The family constantly yearned for this kind uncle to visit more often.

Sadly, results of organizations responding to complaints and claims are not forthcoming. Recompense and settlements are still a far cry. No doubt, the CJS – police, courts and prison – depends on efficacious functioning and immaculate coordination. However, all three tiers continue to decry lack of resources, capacity, extraneous interference etc. But the fact is that lack of will, diligence, and dedication of stakeholders is what they should be lamenting.

Analysis reveals that a total of 1970 police stations functioning all over the country register around over 700,000 First Information reports (FIRs) every year. Given the underreporting, not recording etc, realistically this number can swell to 20,00,000 if every felony is registered.

Inexplicably solving a case is one thing; proving it in a court of law another. Detection of cases (around 60 percent), recovery of property (around 50 percent) and conviction rate (around 18 percent) have never been very satisfactory – though major cases get spotlighted and are mostly traced. The system still looks for ocular testimony though forensics, and collaborative evidence is handy to determine the truth.

False registration and perjury are not seriously rebuked, resulting in more concocted and baseless allegations, upsurge in the resubmission of fake claims. Not accounted for are other thousands of non-cognizable cases being reported directly to the police stations, revenue offices and courts.

Of course, many disputes are settled through jirgas, panchayats, courts, police stations and in the lawyers' chambers. If ADR is doable at a smaller scale here, why not make it a norm at every stage as an obligatory tier of the CJS?

I have served in three UN peacekeeping missions where the belief is that dialogue is still the best way of managing disagreement. The dispensation of justice has been mandated under Article 37 of the constitution to “ensure in-expensive and expeditious justice” to the people of Pakistan.

The people are looking for fair, smooth, and speedy trials. The courts are endeavoring for completion of the due process for a fair verdict. The police, as the first responders, are looking to investigate and ensure completion of legal formalities to prosecute the wrongdoers. The procedure, though simple, is often stretched to favor the favorites.

A few years back, the Police Reform Committee (PRC) formed to reform the police system, established complaint cells under the supervision of the SP all over Pakistan; this reduced the burden of the bulging applications of 22-A and 22-B by 27 percent. Fortunately, many disputes were disposed of at the initial stage. I suggest that these complaint cells can serve as mediation centers.

Advocacy for ADR entails that it is inexpensive, swift, non-antagonistic, accommodating, durable and keeps confidentiality. There are seven types of ADR presently in vogue, though less intensely

enforced: Arbitration, Negotiations, Mediation, Conciliation, Adjudication, Expert determination, Ombudsman.

Common inherent risks attached with ADR are power disparity, unwilling adversaries and lack of models and ruling edicts. But, despite some inherent challenges, many countries have introduced reforms and have adopted ADR techniques, in responding to the challenges of an ever-increasing workload on police stations, revenue offices, and courts. The UK, Australia, China, Japan, India, Sri Lanka are some of the countries effectively using these ADR techniques with impressive results. ADR in Sri Lanka has exceptional status where a person cannot file a suit unless s/he has obtained a permit from the Mediation Board.

It is reassuring that Pakistan is now cultivating an interest in out-of-court procedures of dispute resolution. With economic changes and especially the Covid-19 crisis, the number of new legal disputes has increased significantly. Encouragingly, almost all prevailing laws acknowledge the resolution of a dispute through arbitration. The Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance: Section 89-A authorizes the courts to secure expeditious disposal of a case by adopting ADR methods, including mediation and conciliation, with the consent of the parties, wherever deemed necessary.

It is promising that the Alternate Dispute Resolution Act, 2017 can provide a system of alternative dispute resolution of civil, criminal, and commercial disputes. Provincial governments have also made legislations accordingly. For instance, Punjab has enacted the Punjab Alternative Disputes Resolution Act 2019, Sindh has presented Code of Civil procedure (Sindh Amendment) Act 2018 on 89-A, addition to section 2 in definition and Order X Rule I, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has the Alternate Dispute Resolution Act, 2020 (Composition of Saliseen Selection Committee) and the Balochistan Local Government Act 2010 provides the same.

The ADR report of Punjab from June 1, 2017 to April 30, 2021 shows that ADR centers dealt with 24,906 cases. The overall mediation success rate was 56 percent. In KP, in 24 districts, 44,137 ADR cases were brought up, of which 35,745 ended in compromise. Legal actions were initiated for 7,213 complaints and 1,179 cases are under process for adjudication.

Isn't it time we strengthened ADR as it can give people their dues reasonably and promptly? Everyone – lawyers, judges, police officers, relevant stakeholders, and even prison staff – should be oriented to develop the ability to settle issues no matter what the stage is. Justice should be inexpensive and swift, and not taken as mere business or a routine chore. So why not let ADR be the first line of action between contesting parties in all disputes?

At the moment, justice, unfortunately, is the comfort of the rich. It is time to change this ground reality. Relief must be given to those who are stuck in police stations and courts for years and years. It is imperative to resolve and restore peace between warring parties before there is nothing else to be lost among them.

**SOURCE: THE NEWS, JULY 16, 2021**

## Noor murder case

---

**I**T would not be an exaggeration to describe Pakistan as no country for women. This truth was underscored yet again earlier this week when the discovery of the bloodied, headless corpse of Noor Muqaddam shook the nation to the core.

The brutality of the murder, and society's utter shock, notwithstanding, it is likely that this tragedy, like countless other anti-women crimes, will become just another statistic in a long list of patriarchal sins. Indeed, Noor's case will be a test for the authorities in more ways than one. It is not simply about ensuring a strong prosecution team, foolproof evidence and a fair trial with a conviction and exemplary sentence being handed down to the perpetrator — something that is sorely missing in our criminal justice system. It will also be a test for prosecutors, investigators and witnesses to withstand the lure of money or the fear of clout that those who want a safe way out for the perpetrator may wield.

Meanwhile, the greatest test for society itself will be to look inwards and ask how we arrived at this point. How did the family of the suspected murderer, Zahir Jaffer, who has a possible criminal history that is said to have led to his deportation from the UK, not keep a vigilant eye on him, especially if he was mentally unsound as is being claimed? Indeed, it is dumbfounding that the suspect reportedly worked as a mental health counsellor at one controversial therapy clinic, where he received treatment. Was there complacency that his wealth and social standing would rescue him from any situation? Even one as horrifying as this? We have seen this sense of entitlement before in the Shahzeb Khan murder case some years ago. More recently, we have seen it in the early release of the man who stabbed Khadija Siddiqui 23 times in broad daylight in 2016.

Unfortunately, it is the second-class citizens who suffer most — and women in this country define that description. The fact that they are allowed to 'exist' at all may be some kind of a miracle given that practically every gender comparison shows the immense gap that exists between males and females. And the socioeconomic indicators are only the practical manifestations of a national opinion that sees women as unequal, sometimes as chattel, not important enough to be protected but fit enough to be blamed for all the atrocities they attract towards themselves.

**SOURCE: DAWN, JULY 25, 2021**

# CAN 'DIGITAL PAKISTAN' BECOME A REALITY?

---

KHURRAM ZIA KHAN



**T**HERE is a tone that many of us experienced growing up. A wave of white noise familiar to those who have lived through the dial-up internet era. We remember hearing it when trying to go online using internet cards. And we also remember hearing it if we accidentally picked up the landline phone while someone else at home was online — this would usually result in the internet getting disconnected and was, often, followed by some yelling.

If we go back further, even having a home landline was a rarity. At a press conference during the early 2000s, Former Finance Minister Abdul Hafeez Sheikh narrated an incident that took place at a wedding ceremony he was attending. He recalled that, at the wedding, there was suddenly some commotion and the family started congratulating one another. Sheikh assumed that the baraat must have arrived. But, upon inquiring, he learnt that another long-awaited party had made an appearance. Staff from the telephone department had finally come to install a landline phone for the family.

Technology has made many strides since then. Today, the landline sits idly in many households. According to DataReportal, an online platform that collects digital insights from around the world, Pakistan had over 173 million mobile connections in January 2021. The number of mobile

connections in the country increased by 6.9 million (an increase of 4.2 percent) between January 2020 and January 2021.

Internet access used to be a rarity in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but, thankfully, this is also no longer the case. As per DataReportal's statistics, Pakistan had over 61 million internet users in January 2021. The number of internet users in the country rose by 11 million (or 21 percent) between 2020 and 2021.

Pakistan's digital footprint is rapidly increasing. And with the country's large young population, it is only going to get bigger.

The ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), which often positions itself as the party of the youth, recognised this opportunity early on and has been talking about a 'Digital Pakistan' for a couple of years now. But while the government celebrates its forward-looking vision, many critics argue that the progress towards making this dream a reality has been slow and will require a rethink.

## AN EXCITING FUTURE?

"I understand the excitement [around a 'Digital Pakistan']," Jehan Ara, who recently received an award for her 'Outstanding Lifetime Contribution to the Digital Industry' at the Pakistan Digital Awards 2021, tells Eos. The excitement is justified, she continues, "because with the young population that Pakistan has, the number of mobile phone users in the country and the potential that we possess as a country, going digital is the only answer to our administrative problems, our economic woes and social issues like education and healthcare access.

"So then why has the excitement not translated into actual results?" she asks, adding that we are in this situation because we do not know who is in charge. "I don't think we have that ownership, that plan or the resources identified to make it all happen."

But Jehan Ara is still hopeful that the change will come. "It isn't workshops, task forces, grand schemes, large glamorous events and speeches that promise the earth that are the answer," she says. "Make one person or ministry responsible. Give them the resources and make them answerable."

In the recent past, different departments and individuals have spoken about making the dream of 'Digital Pakistan' a reality. But there has, clearly, been confusion about who does what and who will usher Pakistan towards realising its digital ambitions.

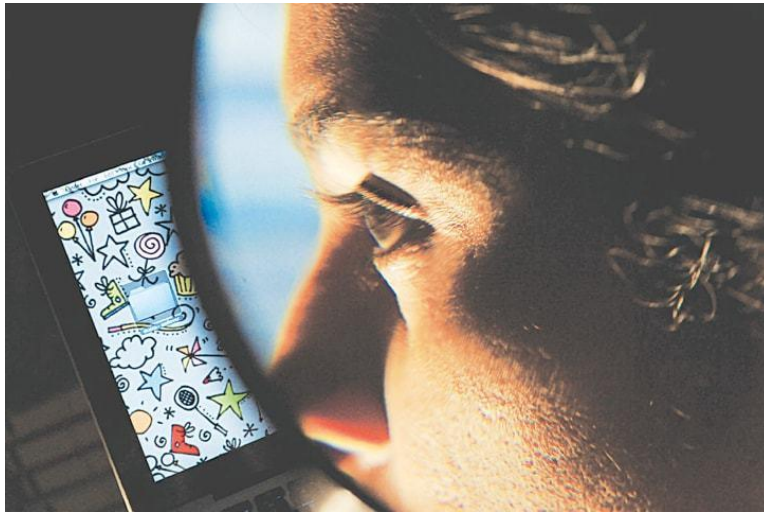
President Arif Alvi recently provided some clarity on the matter during a signing ceremony of a contract for the installation of fibre optic cable in Naushahro Feroze, Shaheed Benazirabad and Khairpur. At the event, President Alvi said that Syed Aminul Haq, the Information Technology (IT) minister, had been given the responsibility for the development of the IT sector.

IT Minister Haq said at the event that internet connectivity was the first pillar of the Digital Pakistan initiative. This is a sentiment all stakeholders would agree with, and an aim we should make quick progress towards.

Earlier this year, the IT ministry and the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) had also signed two other agreements for laying down fibre optic cable which would enable provision of fast internet in different parts of Sindh.

These are welcome steps which would benefit millions. There is no denying that access is one of the biggest prerequisites for achieving the dream of a 'Digital Pakistan'.

## CONNECTIVITY IS KEY



White Star

'Going digital' is often presented as a solution for most of Pakistan's problems. As per the Digital Pakistan Policy, put together by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT), the government of Pakistan "strives to improve its citizens' quality of life and economic well-being by ensuring availability of accessible, affordable, reliable, universal and high-quality ICT [Information Communication Technology] services."

The government, the policy document adds, "strongly believes in the mass adoption of emerging digital technologies and innovative applications to enable cross-sector socio-economic development and transformation of economic activities, governance models, social interaction and achievement of sustainable development goals."

There is little arguing with the fact that going digital can truly transform Pakistan. But, as the IT ministry's own policy states, this is only possible if there is "mass adoption" of these technologies and solutions.

Farieha Aziz, co-founder of Bolo Bhi, an advocacy forum for digital rights, says that going digital cannot result in poverty eradication "if digital Pakistan remains beyond the reach of most Pakistanis." She adds that, if even those who have access are subjected to poor quality of service and frequent disruptions caused by regulatory decisions, the progress will be slow.

“Connectivity is a necessity in this day and age, and it should not be treated as a luxury,” says Telenor Pakistan’s chief executive officer, Irfan Wahab Khan. “We continue to work with the government and policymakers to facilitate the expansion of networks and services on our journey towards a digital society,” he adds.

Khan says that there have been many welcome recent developments from the government. These include the right of way policy (which was approved earlier this year, clearing a large number of hurdles faced by telcos – telecommunications companies – and internet service providers in the installation and maintenance of their telecommunication equipment and expansion of systems across the country), federal excise duty and withholding tax relief for the telecom sector, and the sector being granted industry status. The steps, says Khan, will impact the penetration and uptake of digital services, once implemented.

“However, at the same time,” he adds, “a recent tax imposition on mobile calls over five minutes is going to act as a major deterrent in Pakistan’s journey towards digitalisation. It is essential to create an environment that enables connectivity, instead of one that squeezes the average citizen’s ability to connect.”

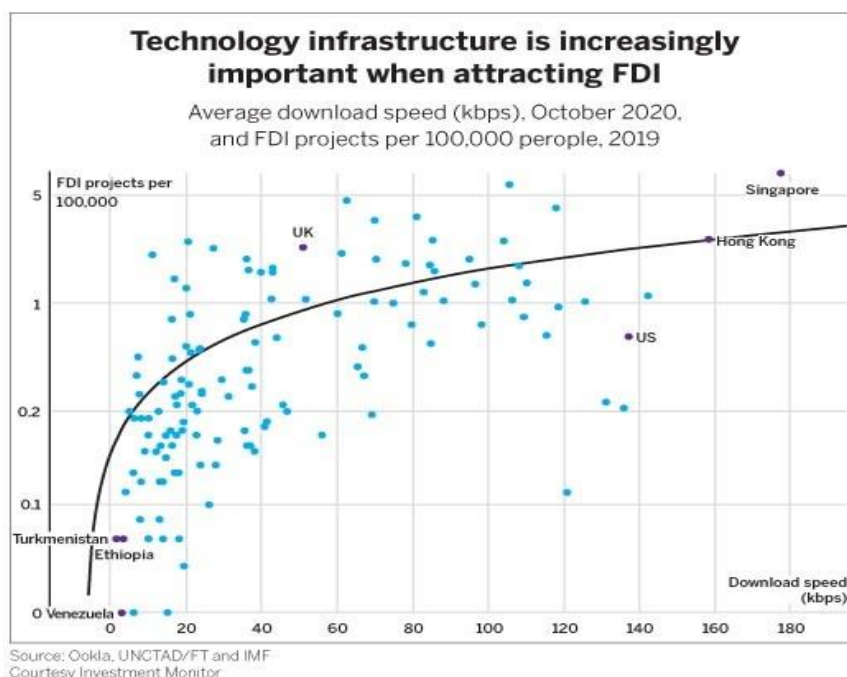
Aamir Ibrahim, chief executive officer of Jazz, also urges the government not to create “further roadblocks”, referring to the recent tariff revisions. “Likewise, they increased duty structure on high-end smartphones,” he says. Ibrahim adds that smartphones should be made more affordable. He says that it is critical to provide “robust, affordable, good quality internet to all Pakistanis everywhere.”

In a previous interview with Dawn, Ibrahim had stressed the need for making newer 4G compatible smartphones more accessible. Saying that we “need to accept the lack of good mobile phone sets is one of the key barriers to growth of the internet in the country,” Ibrahim had added that, before 5G can be introduced in the country, at least 60 percent of consumers need to be using 4G.

“We need to make smartphones accessible and affordable for the common citizen, so there is true equality of access,” Telenor Pakistan’s Khan agrees. “Smartphones are the missing link when it comes to unleashing the potential of Pakistan as a truly digitally inclusive society. Smartphone penetration is greatly impacted by the affordability barrier, which has increased due to the recent taxation and fees associated with owning smartphones.”

Reducing mobile-specific taxes and duties would help to increase mobile ownership, Khan says. By working together, the operators and government can go much further in providing the people of Pakistan ease, access to quality services and opportunities to thrive, he added.

## THE BAN WAGON



Bringing people online is only one part of the equation (albeit, a very important one). But the other issues that must be addressed deal with policy, censorship and surveillance online.

One pressing issue is the frequent bans of social media platforms. While Pakistan has banned various applications over the years, the focus these days seems to be on TikTok, which has been banned thrice in the recent past. TikTok has millions of users in Pakistan and the government has itself recognised the influence of the creators on the social media app. Government representatives met with TikTok creators multiple times since the pandemic started, to ask them to help stop the spread of Covid-19 by encouraging people to follow standard operating procedures (SOPs).

And yet, TikTok has found itself banned, time and again, for 'spreading vulgarity'. The most recent ban, in June this year, invited the ire of Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry, who tweeted that his "head is spinning" reading about the ban. The ban was later lifted.

This kind of back and forth makes it difficult to imagine the Digital Pakistan goals coming to fruition.

"Blocking access has always been a bad idea," says Jehan Ara. "The internet and social media are just mediums. Content is created by people. The kind of content that we, as individuals or companies, put out there is our responsibility.

"The diversity of content depends on the diverse interests of users," she adds. "Admittedly, some of this content tends to be vulgar. That is why all social media platforms have policies that restrict

content in different geographies depending on the culture and laws prevalent in those countries. Many use moderators — both human and AI [Artificial Intelligence] to ensure that the policies are followed.”

Jehan Ara believes that the way to tackle content concerns is to work closely with social media companies and local stakeholders, and to educate users. “This is the primary responsibility of educators and parents,” she says. “The government should not try to play the role of ‘parent’.”

Jehan Ara points out that, with the speed at which content is being produced globally, it would be impossible to control “what is being uploaded every second.”

By blocking social media platforms, she says, “we actually end up shooting ourselves in the foot.” She says that, while most in Pakistan use social media for personal interactions and sharing content, there are also a lot of people who use these platforms to market their businesses — especially start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises — and also expand their global network.

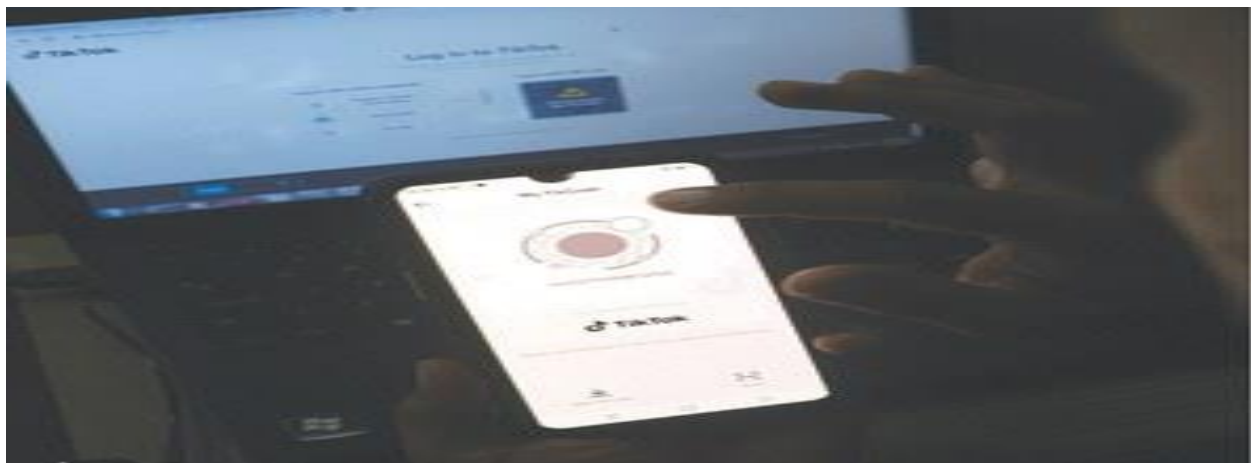
“When our government blocks any site, it not only impedes the business growth of these small businesses,” she says, “...it also makes investors and business partners nervous and, hence, they are resistant to investing as much as they would otherwise be prone to do.”

Consistent, forward-looking and pro-growth policies are essential for a positive image of Pakistan on the global business map, Jehan Ara adds.

Another persistent digital rights issue in the country has been online surveillance and a lack of digital privacy. According to a recent report by Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (Irada), internet freedom declined in Pakistan in 2020. The report also noted that there was a rise in “censorship, hate speech, digital surveillance and breach of privacy and disinformation and misinformation online.”

These matters must be addressed urgently if we want to see a truly Digital Pakistan.

## GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS



Advancements in technology have, undoubtedly, attracted business and investment. The tech sector alone has transformed tremendously over the past few years. With ride-hailing and food delivery apps already being popular in cities, other services, from ones offering to send a plumber to your home to those delivering your groceries, are becoming increasingly common.

“In 2014, with the advent of 3G and 4G technology in Pakistan, we witnessed our society become more globally and digitally aware like never before,” says Telenor Pakistan’s Khan. “We were finally on the connectivity map and new opportunities began to present themselves. From ride-booking services such as Uber and Careem, to e-commerce players and food delivery apps such as FoodPanda, all began seeing Pakistan as a hub of investment.”

Accelerating digitalisation also leads to increased digital literacy and skills development, making the citizens of Pakistan more employable to digital companies, Khan adds. He points out that the Pakistani start-up ecosystem has strengthened over the years because of digitalisation. “Only in the first half of 2021, local start-ups were able to raise a record-breaking 120 million dollars in funding,” he says.

We cannot deny that the future is digital and for any economy to prosper, it will need to shift gears towards creating an environment in which digital companies can thrive, he says. “The chart below (sourced from Investment Monitor) shows a strong correlation between the average download speed of certain countries and the level of FDI [foreign direct investment] projects that they manage to attract,” he says in an email.

Khan says that, in order to attract more foreign investment, we need to ensure a conducive business environment for foreign and local companies, and focus on forward-looking policies that boost innovation and foster a sustainable digital ecosystem.

## NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY



Khan points out that digitalisation of government and non-government services results in “unprecedented transparency”, which is “a key factor in curtailing corruption in society”. “A

combination of all these factors make a country a lucrative destination for long-term investment,” he points out.

Transparency is also one of the key features highlighted by different government bodies when talking about a Digital Pakistan. Shabahat Ali Shah, chief executive officer of the National Information Technology Board (NITB) says, “PTI’s government is following its objective of inducing transparency, accountability and ‘ease of doing business’ for the citizens by transforming the landscape of manual government processes into digital processes.”

According to Shah, big changes are being discussed which will enable more investment and business opportunities — changes such as lowering the taxes on smartphones, increasing the inbound limit on foreign transactions, opening up inbound/ outbound dollar transfer to facilitate foreign direct investment, and improving processes to make registering companies easier.

Syed Veqarul Islam, chief executive officer of Jaffer Business Systems, an IT company, welcomes the move to digital. “Formal businesses have no choice, but to move in the direction and do the transformation,” he says. “Businesses which are not documented or want to avoid documentation continue to be evasive about the transformation. However, as the world moves forward, as technology takes control of everything in our personal and professional lives, businesses will also realise that they have no choice but to move in the direction.”

If they do not do it themselves, the system will force them to, Islam says. “There is no escape from this. It is not a question of if, but when.”

Islam calls technology “a great leveller.” To his point, technology and the shift to digital has allowed many women to start small businesses right from home — something that was unimaginable for many of them a mere few years ago.

## INCLUDING THE WOMEN

While going digital has opened up opportunities for big business, it has also transformed the lives of many women who are now able to work from home. Numerous small businesses have opened up on platforms such as Instagram, with ‘mompreneurs’ selling sarees and young women becoming in-demand bakers and chefs.

These businesses often take orders online, the payments are transferred to the vendors’ accounts or are made through cash on delivery, and the orders are delivered by riders called from online delivery services.

This has changed many women’s lives.

One of the goals of the government’s Digital Pakistan policy is to empower the youth, women and girls using IT. The policy’s ‘Vision and Goals’ chapter points out that the youth and women represent roughly 60 percent and 49 percent of the population, respectively. “Ensuring women and girls have equal access to ICTs will help reduce inequalities and support gender equality,” it says.

But to ensure 49 percent of the population benefits from a Digital Pakistan, the online space also needs to be made safer for women. One issue that women continually face online (and, unfortunately, offline) is harassment. Bolo Bhi's Farieha Aziz points out that online harassment drives many women off various platforms or makes them reduce their participation, self-censor, and limit their accounts and who they interact with.

Last year, a group of women journalists and commentators issued a statement saying that, under the current government, "coordinated" campaigns against women journalists had become the norm. They had sought protection against "vicious attacks" that routinely targeted them.

"Women in the media are not only targeted for their work, but also their gender," the journalists said. But while promises were made to take note of this when the statement came out, little has changed for these women since.

"Targeting, attacks and harassment also take a psychological toll," Aziz points out. "[Women] are not allowed equal participation."

In a pre-smartphone world, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of this nation, had stated, "No nation can rise to the heights of glory unless your women are side by side with you." Surely, his words ring true today. The dream of a Digital Pakistan cannot become a reality, unless Pakistan's women are side by side, as equals online.

## NOW CONNECTING

In 2019, when launching the 'Digital Pakistan' initiative, aimed at introducing the latest technology for public welfare, Prime Minister Imran Khan had said, "Our government will put all our efforts to promote Digital Pakistan. The future of Pakistan is very exciting."

A couple of years later, NITB's Shah gleefully declares that from 2019-2021, five times more progress has been made towards digitalisation than was made between 2009-2019.

Still, a lot of work remains.

"We all know what needs to be done. It has been documented more than once over the years," Jehan Ara says. "Let me spell it out. Fast and affordable, uninterrupted access to connectivity across the country is key. Digitise all government services — inter-ministerial and government to citizen. Complete access to our digital identity for personal and business use — this means Nadra has to be more effective. The right policies to ensure that citizen data that is collected is secure and is owned, controlled and updated by the citizen. And the ability to make digital payments in a simple, affordable and simple manner.

"That is it!" she says. "It is as simple or as complicated as that. Now let us go do it!"

The Covid-19 lockdowns showed just how quickly the world can change and how important going digital is. "Easypaisa daily transactions increased by 17 percent during lockdowns, we saw a 35 percent increase in new activations and a 184 percent increase in bank transfers via

Easypaisa,” says Telenor Pakistan’s Khan. “Similarly, about 25 percent of our customers used to digitally top-up their mobile balances – this has jumped to 36 percent after Covid-19.”

Khan says that the pandemic has undoubtedly been a catalyst for digital transformation and adoption worldwide. “Now is the time for sustaining the acceleration we’ve seen and taking our journey as a digital society forward.”

**SOURCE: DAWN, EOS, JULY 25, 2021**

## Two soldiers martyred in Waziristan attacks

---



Two soldiers were martyred and nine others wounded in attacks by militants on security forces in different areas of South and North Waziristan tribal districts.

**O**FFICIALS said that terrorists attacked security forces in the Shawal area of North Waziristan district near the Afghan border on Saturday. One soldier embraced martyrdom and two others suffered injuries.

The injured soldiers were shifted to a hospital in Miramshah.

Sources said that an improvised explosive device went off in the area when security forces were carrying out a search operation. The personnel taking part in the operation remained safe.

Besides, security forces came under attack in two areas of South Waziristan district in which one soldier was martyred and seven others got injuries.

According to reports, an IED exploded near a vehicle in the Osse Pass area of Ladha sub-division, injuring two soldiers.

Meanwhile, the militants opened fire at a check-post in Ladha, but no loss of life was reported.

Officials said that militants attacked a check-post in Tiarza, some 30km north of Wana, the headquarters of South Waziristan, on Friday night. They said militants fired a barrage of rockets at the check-post.

District Police Officer Shaukat Ali confirmed the attack in Tiarza. He said one soldier was martyred and five others suffered injuries in the attack.

Officials said that security forces had increased movement along the border to prevent fallout of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 1, 2021**