

# The Business

Chief Editor

Irfan Athar Qazi

E-mail: editorthebusiness@yahoo.com  
thebusinesslhr@gmail.com

Tijarat House, 14-Davis Road, Lahore  
0423-6312280, 6312480, 6312429, 6312462  
Cell # 0321-4598258  
Fax: 042-36362767

1st Floor Ahmed Plaza near Zong Office  
Susan Road, Faisalabad, Ph: 041-8555582  
Cell: 0307-6000375, 0321-4598258

ISLAMABAD / RAWALPINDI  
N-125 Circular Road, Ph: 051-5551654,  
5532761, Cell # 0300-8567331  
KARACHI  
3rd Floor Kehkashan Mall 172-I Block II PECHS  
Opp Rehmania Masjid Main Tariq Road  
Ph: 021-34524550, Cell # 0300-8251534

## IP gas pipeline

The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline has been pending for the last many years because of the sanctions imposed by the US-backed West. Despite these sanctions Iran has been fighting for its survival thanks for the national unity the only Muslim country has. This type of unity is an ideal example for other Muslim countries to follow it, others are divided in various groups due to the fact that they are playing in the hands of foreign countries or secretly their agents. Now after waiting for a long time for the implementation of the IP project, Pakistan has asked Iran to clarify its interpretation of the plethora of international sanctions it is slapped with so that a way forward could be found for the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline. Completion of the supply line has been delayed for ages due to shifting international policies towards Iran. Recent reports suggest that Iran has told Pakistan that various sanctions, as they stand, do not apply to the gas pipeline project involving them both, but Pakistan is not so sure. Pakistan is already in America's bad books, and it would appear that Pakistan is uninterested in being accused of sanctions-busting in collaboration with Iran.

It has also been reported that Iran is willing to provide its reasoning for why this would not be the case and that if Pakistan finds Iran's arguments acceptable, it will move ahead with the project, which is already three years past its completion date that was proposed initially. Although things appeared to have been ironed out during the tail end of the Obama's presidency, especially after the Iran nuclear deal, the Trump administration's violation of the deal and subsequent imposition of further sanctions threw a fresh spanner in the works.

The pipeline is just one of the many Iranian agreements that have been affected by the return of necons to Washington. The failed Bush-era policies of John Bolton and Co have seen a revival under a president who knows little about the region and seems even less interested in learning more about it. It is also no coincidence that the incumbent US administration is very close to Iran's regional rivals in Saudi Arabia. The administration claimed, among other things, that violations of the nuclear deal were to blame, but could not pinpoint anything, while other signatories were quick to point out Iran's compliance. Unfortunately, the head of the administration had long been faulting the deal on the basis of biased personal opinions, and not facts, and since his election, he has been taking disastrous decisions with global impact on the same basis.



## A hallway of heroes

KAMILA HYAT

What do Mahathir Muhammad, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Lee Kuan Yew and Lula da Silva have in common? They are all leaders or former leaders of their countries, and each one has played an instrumental role in changing his country in one way or the other. They are also all men with an authoritarian tendency.

Mahathir Muhammad, again elected president of Malaysia in 2018 at the age of 90, may indeed have set up infrastructure projects and helped develop the economy of his country. But he was also ruthless in his crackdown against dissidents, opponents and politicians who opposed him. Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore built a country where virtually nothing existed – but he also favoured corporal punishment, even for relatively minor offences, putting 43 crimes on the list for which people should be flogged. These included illegal immigration.

Lula da Silva of Brazil, certainly one of the most populist leaders of his era in Latin America, is currently in jail for corruption and Erdogan has been noted for his fierce crackdown on anyone opposing his views, including those in the media and others, notably since the attempted military coup in Turkey in 2016.

What is also common amongst these leaders is that they have all been praised in public by Imran Khan as leaders he admires for their policies. Perhaps some of these policies are worth admiring. But there are many others which are not. Locking up civil society activists is definitely an undemocratic trend. So are attempts to crack down on press freedoms and the other basic rights of people. Almost all on Imran's list are guilty of this.

Lula da Silva, the maverick leader and former labour union activist who engineered social change in Brazil is something of an anomaly. Lula, as he is universally known, was initially seen as a socialist, though this changed along the way through his long years in power. The fact that he has been found guilty of corruption by courts in his country makes it particularly ironic that he should be on Imran's list.

The prime minister of Pakistan would do well to read a little more deeply and with a little more attention to detail. Certainly, in our country – or for that matter in any other country – repression almost inevitably creates upheaval and increased frustration

amongst people. We need a true disposition towards democracy and a genuine desire to bring change. This change should focus not simply on drives against corruption and other practices which could be interpreted by some in the country as being openly vindictive, but instead look towards the future and make a genuine attempt to alter the lives of the people who live in desperate misery.

For this purpose, the PTI government and its leadership could look at the clear-cut policies outlined by Mexico's new president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, almost universally known by his initials AMLO, who was elected last year in the same month as Imran. The left-oriented but moderate leader clearly has policies which he is able to put forward articulately and which focus on dealing with corruption, crime, drugs and the economy in Mexico. His party has planned carefully and intelligently. The issues of Mexico are very similar to those faced by Pakistan. Obrador has however promised that there will be no vendettas and no action against opposition politicians even when they are charged with corruption. Instead, he hopes to lead by personal example, take a 'softer' approach to governance in a country where unrest is not uncommon, and work essentially to uplift the lives of the most impoverished people in a nation of 129 million.

Going further and when he finds time, Imran Khan, in between his other duties, would perhaps also benefit from studying the policies adopted by Evo Morales in Bolivia, which have created economic change in the South American nation. There are other examples too from nations such as Rwanda, which under President Paul Kagame, who won a new election last year with over 90 percent of the popular vote. Kagame has over a period of nearly a decade rebuilt his country's economy, made it a tourist destination, resurrected it within the African continent and pushed aside the ugly shadows of the Rwandan civil war of the early 1990s which killed over 800,000 as rival tribes massacred each other in one of the most brutal genocides seen in recent history.

While naming a list of leaders best known for their stern rule of their nation, it is somewhat alarming that Imran does not list Nelson Mandela, who held together his country at a time when it could so easily have fallen into disarray and bitter strife through his actions. Mandela's sense of humanity prevented him from launching a vendetta against

leaders of the apartheid regime which had for so many years kept him in jail, killed many others and imposed hugely discriminatory laws against the country's black majority.

Justin Trudeau, the young president of Canada, is also a reformer the PTI could learn from. His emphasis on encouraging social change, ensuring equality for women and minorities, multiculturalism, inter-faith harmony and in many ways altering the image of heads of state through his informal interactions with people is encouraging in this age.

Of course, all these individuals have their weaknesses, faults and critics. But they all bring with them the kind of open approaches and liberalism that Pakistan could so greatly benefit from. It is unfortunate then that they have gained no mention in the press conferences from our own prime minister or by others in his party.

There is a basic problem for Pakistan. As a delicately balanced federation, care has been taken not to create further friction between provinces or units. There is also a need to build harmony and ensure that the trust of people in government can be restored. The uncertain start taken by the PTI, with ambiguity over whether it will follow IMF-dictated demands in full, or precisely what economic path it intends to follow, is disturbing.

Certainly, other leaders in other nations seem surer of their strategies – even though not all will succeed entirely in meeting all their promises and pledges. We do however know that even the sometimes flawed attempts to do so by men like the late Hugo Chavez of Venezuela brought huge change to his country, even if that change sadly collapsed with the early death of Chavez himself. Dedication to the rights and liberties of people needs then to be the first priority of leaders.

People also need to see that this is the case. Focus on taking revenge or on promoting a cult-like mentality will only do harm. Our wounded country cannot afford further injury. PM Imran has every right to choose the people he considers his heroes. But perhaps he should think deeper and consider multiple factors before making his lists.

Leaders all over the world have different strengths and different weaknesses. Looking at those who follow varying patterns and differing ideologies can only bring strength to the PTI's own attempts at governance, and in the longer run benefit all the people of the country.

## Minorities' long wait

IA REHMAN

Indications that the government is planning to act proactively in addressing the grievances of the minority communities can only be welcomed.

Fortunately, no time-consuming inquiry is needed to ascertain the nature and extent of minorities' plight; much that should be done to ameliorate their lot is known. For several years, minorities in Pakistan have been agitating for the implementation of former chief justice of Pakistan Tasadduq Husain Jilani's judgment of June 2014. In the judgment he authored, the apex court issued eight directions that called for (i) creation of a taskforce to develop a strategy for promoting religious tolerance; (ii) curricula reform for fostering religious and social tolerance; (iii) steps to discourage hate speech in the media and action against offenders; (iv) creation of a national council for minorities; (v) training of a special police force to protect minorities' places of worship; (vi) implementation of the 5 per cent job quota for minorities; (vii) registration of cases for violation of minorities' rights or desecration of their places of worship; and (viii) creation of a three-member bench of the Supreme Court to ensure compliance with the directions and to entertain complaints of violations of minorities' fundamental rights.

Some of these directions (such as the creation of a taskforce on religious tolerance, formation of a national council for minorities, implementation of the job quota, and registration of cases of violations of rights and desecration of places of worship) could be promptly implemented, while curricula reform and training of a special police force were bound to take time. A special bench of the Supreme Court started working soon after the judgment was delivered, and it did ask the government a few times for reports, but the heavy workload perhaps affected the pace of its work. The government's failure to act upon the court's directions caused considerable frustration among the minority communities. That the task of ensuring compliance was assigned to a bench of the Supreme Court is one of the significant features of the verdict. Secondly, it has been accepted by the minority communities as a charter of their rights, at least for the time being. Aggrieved by the administration's habitual tardiness, three civil society organisations approached the Supreme Court last year to persuade the government to fulfil its obligations, and the chief justice of Pakistan appointed Dr Shoaib Suddle as a one-man commission to report compliance priorities. The commission's work has been hampered by lack of facilities. This week on Tuesday, the Supreme Court declared it would soon issue an order, which will hopefully be implemented forthwith. A Bishop's testimony Meanwhile, the minorities' case for their rightful place in Pakistan has been ably argued by Bishop Emeritus of Lahore Dr Alexander John Malik in his recently pub-

lished book, My Pakistan: The Story of a Bishop.

The author uses the expression 'my Pakistan' because he has opted to live in this country by a deliberate choice. In 1972, he gave up his PhD studies in Canada in response to a call from the church to return home. He defied family pressure to stay on in Canada by declaring: "Pakistan is my country. I need to be there both for my Lord and for Pakistan."

In this memoir, he devotes only a few pages to the story of his life, his election as the bishop of Lahore in 1980 while still a few days short of his 39th birthday, and his 32 years in that office. The rest of the book is a chronicle of what Pakistan's minorities have done for their country, and how they have suffered because of the state's deviation from its ideal as defined by the Quaid-i-Azam.

While describing the Christian community's role in the establishment of Pakistan, he does not confine himself to their vote in favour of bringing Punjab into Pakistan, he offers the evidence collected by a number of writers to show Christian solidarity with Punjab's Muslims during the 1920s and 1930s, their opposition to the partition of Punjab, and their plea before the Boundary Commission to be counted with the Muslims. He then recalls the Christian community's services to Pakistan in the field of education and defence, and claims: "Proportionally, the number of Christian martyrs outnumbered all others in the defence of Pakistan." As against the services rendered by minorities, he notes: "In 70 years of Pakistan's history, due to the inclusion of Islamic clauses in the constitution – especially during Zia's era – the status of minorities as citizens has drastically changed from what the father of the nation had envisaged." After referring to discrimination against minorities in the Constitution, in admission to educational institutions and services, and the tribulations caused by the blasphemy law, the author gives an account of violence against minorities from 1997 to 2012.

Bishop Malik argues that, despite curtailment of minorities' rights, "their love for and their commitment to serving Pakistan have in no way diminished". He recalls the Parsi community's contribution to the economy and culture, and the Christian community's contribution in the fields of education, health and defence. It was not easy for the bishop to avoid a conflict between his service to his Lord and his pledge to serve Pakistan. When over a dozen worshippers were massacred in a Bahawalpur church in 2001, he curbed the urge to blame the government or the people for the outrage by describing the loss of Christian lives as a sacrifice for their faith. His efforts to build the St Thomas Church in Islamabad and the St Denys' High School in Murree – after it had been burnt down twice – are in sharp contrast with our failure to quickly rebuild the girls' schools destroyed by extremists. There is a lesson in this for Muslim Pakistanis who need to maintain a balance in their duties to the faith and to the state.

## Real education reform

JAMILA RAZZAQ

On listening to the federal minister for education in meetings and at events, one gets the sense that he understands the fundamental issues facing the education system in Pakistan. His team in the ministry is also very experienced and committed to setting a policy direction and delivering on an education improvement plan for the country.

Individuals and organisations working towards educational development in Pakistan hope a positive outcome from the education policy roadmap of the current government. However, they are also aware that governments in the past have not failed on giving good policy documents. For instance, Pakistan outperformed other nations in presenting roadmaps for MDGs in 2000 and SDGs in 2015. But as far as successful implementation for achieving these global and national goals is concerned, it has been a valley of death for different policy frameworks and action plans. The four pillars of the new policy framework: out-of-school children, quality education, skill development and uniform standards across the country respond well to the

fundamentals of system improvement. After chalking out policy roadmaps and designing detailed implementation strategies with budgeted action plans, the government's education team will have to accelerate progress that reflects in better learning outcomes of all students. People who hope for change want to see solid actions and positive results.

One undeniable fact regarding the improvement of the education system in Pakistan is the enormity of the task. The large number of reported out-of-school children and the dismal learning outcomes of in-school children need equal and urgent attention. The education minister's team will need to avoid a sporadic, disjointed and reactive response. They will have to think beyond quick fixes and devise comprehensive, efficient and effective solutions that work in different parts of the country and with different groups of children. Before diving off the ledge, a serious review of previous policy roadmaps is crucial to identify promising initiatives and to fix the missing links. Otherwise, the translation of vision into reality may face the same fate as that of other well-intended efforts in the past. New policy roadmaps should not mean discrediting everything

from the past. The new roadmap should rather build upon what has already worked well. One such positive example is the ongoing education sector reform programmes of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments, in partnership with the government of the United Kingdom. Significant budgetary and technical support for system improvement has been utilised for comprehensive system reform programmes. Some miles have already been covered through establishing independent school monitoring systems in both provinces, improved infrastructure and facilities in Punjab and the teacher induction programme in KP. Attention and effort are required to accelerate progress on these and other similarly effective programmes. Equal attention is also needed to identify ineffective programmes and energise or discontinue them – depending upon their significance, need and relevance to the quality of learning at the school level. The government's education team can move the needle in a positive direction only by ensuring the basic elements of quality of learning in schools. In 2016, the federal government developed the Minimum Standards for Quality Education (MSQE). However,

mere development and dissemination of standards is not enough, especially in the absence of accessible pathways with clear milestones and proactive control by all stakeholders.

One clearly missing element in the MSQE is any consideration for quality in governance. The administrative heads of education departments at national and provincial levels get placed on these positions without tenure postings, and mostly for very short durations. They may also come to lead this specialised work of developing future generations of the country with a rather general background and experience, sometimes as irrelevant as that of leading the livestock or forest departments. For any serious effort to improve the quality of education, the new policy framework should prioritise governance reforms. These reforms should create the possibility for the best and brightest from within the education sector to take up the top managerial responsibilities in education departments with a clearly laid-out accountability structure and for a minimum tenure.

Similarly, mechanisms for reforms should not be confined to in-country or foreign exposure visits and lucrative

training programmes for middle and senior managers in education departments. Unfortunately, these two features top the list of education governance reform initiatives designed with indigenous or foreign funds. These universally attractive but generally fruitless solutions for governance should be given more thought for the relevance of the proposed activity and the accountability of participants for some tangible outcome. Governance reforms will need attention and time from policy and decision makers at the national and provincial levels. For a really consultative reform process, staff in management and administration positions of education departments will also need to be closely involved. Those of us who work with the education departments of different governments in Pakistan observe the way ministers, secretaries and their secretarial staff are under excessive demand to appear in events and meetings of foreign aid programmes and in educational institutions. This situation can be avoided and improved with better utilisation of the precious time of government functionaries. Development partners and education departments should coordinate and hold joint the-

matic events instead of parallel events happening in different 3-5 star hotels or even different halls of the same hotels. Through an administrative order, one immediate step should be taken: all launch, close-out, dissemination of achievements, findings or policy seminars of education projects should be held in public colleges and schools of the respective cities in the afternoons or evenings. Identification of venue should be done in consultation with the relevant education office and rotated among different institutions, prioritising those requiring attention of authorities.

In this way, the minister and the donors will get to see the real schools they are working for and money will also be saved which can be donated to the school.

This small step may have symbolic significance for grounding policy frameworks, quality standards and development initiatives into the reality of schools. This exposure may also be unique for local politicians and bureaucrats whose children study in private schools. Above all, it will demonstrate the government's priority for bringing schools to the centre of the education reform and improvement effort.