

With the head hung in shame



ATTA-UR-RAHMAN

As a Pakistani I hang my head in shame that that a man has been convicted who did so much for this nation. Even more shameful is the fact that many ministers who praised him to the skies when he was in power, and who have been part of subsequent governments, have not said a word at this travesty of justice.

Pakistan's economy was in shambles when Musharraf came into power in October 1999, with foreign exchange reserves of \$ 0.5 billion, sufficient for only six weeks. During the period 2000 to 2008, there was an average GDP growth rate of about seven percent, far better than that of most economies of the world. The GDP rose from \$63 billion to \$170 billion, and by 2008, Pakistan was included in the N-11 (Next 11) nations of the world that were predicted to join the most powerful world economies.

Per capita income increased in this period from \$430 to about \$1000. Foreign exchange reserves grew sharply from 0.5 billion to \$16.5 billion by the year 2008. Similarly the revenue generation grew from Rs308 billion in 1999 to about Rs1 trillion in 2008.

The debt-to-GDP ratio improved from 102 percent to 53 percent. Exports grew sharply from \$7.8 billion to \$17.5 billion. Foreign Direct Investment increased from \$400 million to \$8.4 billion. The Karachi Stock Exchange Index shot up from about 950 points to 16,500 points. The annual development budget increased from Rs90 billion in 1999 to Rs520 billion in 2008, while poverty was reduced from 34 percent to 17 percent.

The annual rate of industrial growth was in double figures throughout the nine-year period 2000 to 2008. The dollar value was

maintained at about Rs60, thereby controlling the rate of inflation. These are hard facts that no one can deny. There was never any charge of corruption against Musharraf, and his family. Yet we still convicted him to death. A true revolution occurred in the telecommunication sector. The number of mobile phones increased from about five lakhs in the year 2000 to over seven crores in 2006, making it the hottest growing sector of the economy. Tele-density was increased from 2.9 percent to over 70 percent, with millions of jobs being created in the telecom sector.

The IT sector also saw phenomenal growth with internet connectivity spreading rapidly, particularly during 2000-2003 from 40 cities to over 2000 towns of Pakistan. Fiber optic connectivity increased from 30 cities to about 2,000 towns of Pakistan in this period. Pakistan's first satellite PakSat 1 was placed in space, thereby securing the last slot left in space. I led this transformation. But Musharraf must die — what a shame.

A revolution was brought about in the higher education sector with the establishment of the Higher Education Commission. The rapid transformation deeply perturbed India. A detailed presentation was given to the Indian prime minister on July 22 about the dramatic progress in Pakistan which was published in the Hindustan Times on July 23, 2006 in an article entitled 'Pak Threat to Indian Science' by Neha Mehta.

The budget for higher education was increased from only Rs500 million in the year 2000 to Rs28 billion in 2008, thereby laying the foundations of the development of a strong knowledge economy. The student enrolment in universities increased from 270,000 to 900,000 and the number of universities and degree awarding institutes increased from 57 in the year 2000 to 137 by the year 2008. But Musharraf must die, they say — shame on us.

The communication infrastructure involving roads, highways and airports also saw vast improvements. About 2900 MW of electricity was added to the national generation capacity. The new energy projects initiated included the Ghazi Barotha hydro electricity project — 1600MW. Over six thermal electricity plants were set up. The Neelum-Jhelum hydro-electricity project was initiated — 1800 MWs. The Chashma II nu-

clear electricity plant — 300MW. The Satpara Power project in Skardu. And the Naltar power project in Gilgit. But Musharraf must still die, as we are a nation of thieves and dacoits, and this is the fate of those that try to serve this nation honestly and selflessly — shame on us.

In the agricultural sector a number of important irrigation projects were initiated. The Diamer-Basha Dam was launched that will store 5 maf water and produce 4000 MW electricity. The Mangla Dam was raised by 30 feet increasing 2.9 maf water storage capacity and 100MW electricity. A number of new dams and canals were built (Mirani Dam for Balochistan, Subukzai Dam for Balochistan and Gomal Zam Dam for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; Kachi Canal from Taunsa to Dera Bugti and Jhal Magsi (Balochistan) (over 500 kms) to irrigate 713,000 acres of barren cotton producing land, Thal Canal for Punjab, Raineer Canal for Sindh, brick lining of all the 86,000 water channels in all provinces of Pakistan).

Overall, three million acres of barren land were brought under cultivation. The Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD) was constructed through Sindh, thereby saving Indus River and Manchar Lake (Sind) from pollution. But Musharraf must still die, they say, as he should not have intervened and allowed the country to go to hell in October 1999.

Democracy was strengthened. A large number of new TV channels were allowed and the press given full freedom. The local government system was launched to empower the people through a third tier of government. The political empowerment of women was done by giving them reserved seats at all tiers of government.

In the field of defence too there were many stellar achievements. The production of Al Khalid tanks for the army and JF 17 Thunder Fighter jets for the PAF was achieved. AWAC Surveillance aircraft for PAF and frigates and P3C Surveillance aircraft for the navy were acquired. Missile systems were developed with nuclear capability. The nuclear arsenal was strengthened and protected through an impenetrable Command and Control system. The Army Strategic Force Command was created to protect these important strategic assets. I hang my head in shame for our courts convicting our former army chief, a national hero and not a traitor, to death.

Repeating the past

ROBERT FANTINA



It is difficult today to look at many, many situations in the world and not see some of the worst events in history being repeated, especially as they relate to racism and genocide.

Has the world forgotten Nazi atrocities against Jews, Gypsies, intellectuals and others? Do we not remember the horrific US bombing of two Japanese cities? Are Churchill's colonial atrocities no longer worth considering?

ISRAEL: This racist, apartheid state, which, for over 70 years has brutally oppressed the Palestinian people, this year declared itself the nation-state of the Jewish people, and only the Jewish people. Yet 25 percent of people who live within the borders of the Zionist entity are not Jewish. And despite marginalizing fully one-quarter of its residents, and relegating them to second-class citizen status, government spokespeople have the nerve to proclaim Israel as a democracy.

And what international outrage does this bring? Despite flagrant and constant violations of international law, not to mention common human decency, most of the countries of the

world either ignore it all, or issue gentle rebukes, at best. And the world's media seldom reports on it.

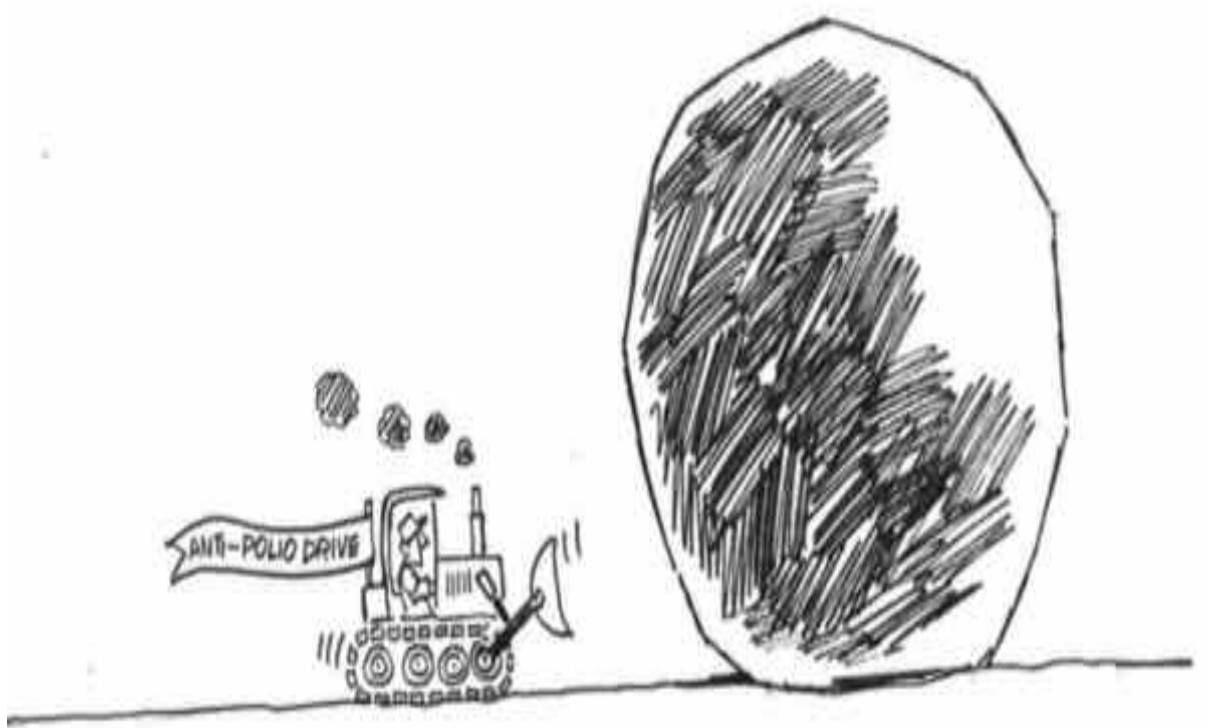
MYANMAR: For several years now, the repression and expulsion of the Rohingya people has been ongoing government policy. A UN study of August 2018 found evidence of widespread violations of human rights. As of that date, nearly three-quarters of a million Rohingya people have had to flee their homeland due to the brutal persecution they have experienced. The UN study stated that military abuses of the Rohingyas "undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under in-

ternational law." Yet, like Israel's brutal oppression of the Palestinians, this gets little press in North America.

INDIA: Earlier this year, the government of India revoked Article 370 in the constitution that allowed occupied Kashmir some limited autonomy. Since that time, tens of thousands of Indian troops have stormed into Kashmir, communications with the outside world have been cut, and news media personal are forbidden from entering. The death toll from this recent repression is unknown. Government officials have publicly announced plans to colonize Kashmir using the same model of land confiscation and illegal settlement construction that Israel has used for decades against Palestine. Again, one listens in vain for international opposition to these crimes against humanity.

Additionally, India has now passed a law easing the path for citizenship for many refugees, but making immigration by Muslims more difficult. This has caused widespread protest demonstration throughout India, which are being met with police violence.

Excerpted from: 'The Forgotten Past Will Always be Repeated'. Counterpunch.org



Towards a digital future?



ATHER NAQVI

The 'Digital Pakistan Vision' launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan recently has the potential to considerably help improve our socio-economic outlook. True. But there is many a slip between the cup and the lip.

A project that promises "a digitally progressive and inclusive

Pakistan" should not end up confined to high-sounding statements and dust-gathering official files; something that explains the proverbial culture of our officialdom. There is agreement among policymakers around the world that digital technology is the future. Understandably, digitalisation has brought about a revolution in how economies and societies work today and how planning is done and implemented. While it is making a huge impact in the rest of the world, we have a lukewarm response to digitalisation. Until very recently, we seemed to be completely unaware of what digitalisation means and why it was so important to adopt. We have seen people still hesitating to use their mobile devices to pay utility bills and transfer funds.

A World Economic Forum report, 'Understanding the Impact

of Digitalisation on Society', makes a profound analysis: "Digital transformation is generating a fierce debate among policymakers, economists and industry leaders about its societal impact. As digitalisation disrupts society ever more profoundly, concern is growing about how it is affecting issues, such as jobs, wages, inequality, health, resource efficiency and security."

In our part of the world, the last few decades seem to have made some difference. For instance, it was simply unimaginable for us in our childhood, or even a little later, to have a mobile phone, play games on it, download favourite cartoons, or search a poem. Today, my three-and-a-half year old can do all these things with ease whenever she gets hold of my phone. Gadgets like mobile phones or laptops do not surprise them the way they

did us. These gadgets invite them to explore and tread uncharted territories. Of course, we are embracing digital technology bit by bit but do we intend to make full use of it?

So, let's take a broader picture. Where do we stand when it comes to entering the much talked about fourth industrial revolution, a term used by policymakers and industry to point to technological advancements like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, 3D printing and the internet of things? In our own way, we have leaptfrogged from a society largely rooted in an agrarian culture to a society that has welcomed and adopted some technological advancements during the last couple of decades or so. But at the same time, it seems we are about to miss the train and are generations away from actually entering the phase where we

have access to latest technologies as and when they are made available in the world elsewhere. Still, it is interesting to see if and how these technologies are changing the way we live, work and interact with each other. And if they are, are these changes sustainable in any way? How do we relate to the rest of the world when it comes to digitalisation? Where do we stand in terms of what we have achieved or missed in becoming a digital society? And, most importantly, why is it so important to become a digital society for our economic and social development? Is it an option or a process?

While there are not many avenues taking up these questions, these and many such critical issues were raised and discussed at length at the Sustainable Development Institute's 22nd Sustainable Development Conference

(SDC) 2019 titled 'Sustainable Development in a Digital Society'. It was heart-warming to see experts from about 18 countries share their knowledge and experiences in 35 sessions scattered over three days. The fundamental question and resolve of the panelists and participants was how to not just adopt digital technology but how to bridge the digital divide between and within regional countries for the best possible dividends. How women entrepreneurs can make the most of digital technology in a competitive environment was also an interesting discussion.

So we now know that the main digital transformations can be in the sphere of human capacity, consumption, energy, food, water and smart cities, among others. But that is not possible until policymakers, researchers, and the civil society add to their resolve

and actions to understand and explain effects of digital change on a society. In this day and age, digital disruption, on the other hand, can add to a number of economic, societal, and cultural challenges. Smooth functioning of the digital economy, for instance, can be a huge step towards achieving sustainable development. Since many big businesses in Pakistan have monopoly and can influence policy decisions and markets, digitalisation can work to change the status quo. Digitalisation of economy can also help improve revenue generation and documentation of the economy.

It would be wonderful if we can create a digital ecosystem. If we don't, young talent, such as Tania Aidrus who is stated to have opted for this challenge over a lucrative post at Google, will not accept a challenge for this country in the future.

Letters to the Editor

Transportation problem

Through your esteemed newspaper, I want to draw the attention of the concerned authorities to the problems of overloading and overcharging of fares in the public transport system. According to a rough estimate, more than two million people in Lahore use public transport per day. These commuters face the problems of overloading and overcharging whilst travelling.

There is no system to regulate public transport and the drivers follow their own schedules and timetables. There are no means by which to check overloading and the overcharging of fares. The government officials appointed to check these problems are corrupt. The number of buses falls short of the transport needs of the city. This factor is responsible for the overloading of passengers. It is impossible to catch a bus during rush hours, which is a great inconvenience for the passengers. A few days ago, a friend of mine fell from bus 22 because he was hanging from its door and more serious accidents can take place because of overloading.

There should a system to regulate the movement of buses in the city and more buses should be brought in to fulfil the traveling needs of the people. The government should appoint honest employees to check overload-

ing and overcharging of fares. I hope that the concerned authorities will pay attention to this problem and take steps to improve the situation.

Syed Waleed-ul-Hassan
Student BS (MC), UMT, LAHORE

Unjustified price hikes

Why are the present authorities bent upon making the life of common citizens miserable? Why are they listening to the demands of gas companies? They should instead ask the gas companies to control their own affairs. These gas companies are making their losses good by increasing gas prices. People are already suffering due to the exorbitant prices of day-to-day items. With the increase of gas price, the price of fertilizers will go up, the price of roti and naan will go up and the prices of all vegetables will go up. Gas losses must be controlled by the gas companies, failing which these companies should be held responsible and all officers / officials not controlling the losses should be fired. The prime minister is requested to take action and not leave this to the ministry concerned. It has been proved in the last 16 months that the ministry and all related persons have no sympathy with the plight of common people in the country.

Lt-Col (r) Arshad N Qureshi
ISLAMABAD

Qateel Shifai

Born as Muhammad Aurangzeb on December 24, 1919, the legendary poet used the pseudonym Qateel Shifai. Shifai penned more than 25,000 songs for films and most of these songs were hit. A contemporary of Tanveer Naqvi, another super-famous song-writer, Qateel battled for the rights of poets; enhancement of their remuneration, announcement of poet's name while playing songs on radio etc. Qateel Shifai was a friend of Sahir Ludhianvi, Ibn e Insha and A Hameed. All three had huge contribution to Urdu prose and poetry. Qateel remained a low-profile person throughout his life but mentored number of poets who rose to fame including Riazur Rehman Saghir. He breathed his last on July 11, 2001.

Ifikhar Mirza
ISLAMABAD

Ugly incident

This refers to the editorial, 'Ugly images.' The editorial has rightly condemned the ugly behaviour of lawyers storming the PIC. Lawyers did not spare even critical patients under treatment. The state writ was torn into

pieces without any fear. Let this incident also not die the way we have witnessed in the past. The question that arises is: how come lawyers were equipped with firearms? The failure of the Punjab government to control this carnage leaves behind many questions as well. In view of sufficient evidence, the cases should be tried summarily and disposed of within 15 days; dragging these cases as per past practice will be the death of law in Pakistan.

Mukhtar Ahmed
KARACHI

All of Lahore went into deep shock and sadness as the self-claimed custodians of law vandalised the only state-of-the-art facility which provides treatment to cardiac patients coming from all parts of Punjab. It is reported that a loss of Rs70 million occurred as precious cardiac medical infrastructure was ruthlessly damaged by the lawyers; five patients also lost their lives due to this vandalism. The root cause of this ruthless behaviour is the circumstances when this community of lawyers became prominent during the lawyers movement. Since then, it has become the norm for them to misbehave with judges of both lower and superior courts, police, traffic wardens and every office visited by them. The mushroom emergence in this profession is also due to of the plethora of spu-

rious law colleges which have been minting money for the last two decades and which have issued law degrees to persons who lack in ethics and legal norms of the profession. It is time the state established its writ and by using technology identified each and every culprit and canceled their licence for life. The issuance and renewal of practice licence be immediately taken from bar councils and given to the high courts so that such culprits can be taken to task immediately.

Zafar Iqbal FCA
LAHORE

On strike

A lawyer was murdered in Manshehra and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar called for a strike. Doctors and lawyers had a fight in Lahore and the KP Bar called for a strike. Explosive material exploded in a rickshaw outside the PHC and the KP Bar called for strike. ISPR gave a press statement against the Musharraf death penalty and the KP Bar again called for strike by lawyers. I pray that the PHC declares such strike calls by lawyers and their respective bars illegal and unconstitutional.

Engr Shahryar Khan Baseer
PESHAWAR