

SCENARIO 243

TOUGH AGENDA AHEAD FOR PTI

As the 1st priority, the new PTI government was required to ensure China stay committed to its planned \$62bn investment in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor [CPEC] which was expected to develop direly needed infrastructure for the 220-million-strong country.

Highlighting Pakistan's **FOREIGN POLICY** in his first address of 26th July 2018, Imran Khan said that:

"Afghanistan is a country that has seen the most of the war on terror. The people there have endured the highest levels of pain. Additionally, peace in Afghanistan means peace in Pakistan."

"Since the United States [US] is involved in Afghanistan, we would want to have a mutually beneficial, balanced relationship with it."

"Saudi Arabia is a friend that stands with Pakistan in the hour of need every time. We hope to maintain that."

"The Indian media portrayed me in a way that I seemed like a bolly-wood villain ready to destroy their country. On the contrary, I am the Pakistani who thinks that if our relationship with each other is healthy and trade is expanded, it would benefit the entire subcontinent and especially the poverty problem we face."

I say this with conviction that it is in the interest of the subcontinent that India and Pakistan get along. Take one step towards us, we will take two steps towards you. We need to have a dialogue to settle our issues.

I am hopeful that we can sit at the table and get done with the issue of Kashmir once and for all."

"We will strengthen and improve our relations with China. We want to work towards success of CPEC. We also want to send teams to learn poverty alleviation and how they curbed corruption".

Imran Khan was going to face some **MAJOR CHALLENGES** including the **DEBT CRISIS** being at the top. His immediate priority was to correct imbalances in the country's economics. Last year's current-account deficit of 5.7% of GDP was very difficult to handle as there was no guarantee that an 18% drop in the rupee value would fill the gap. **From December 2017 till the Election Day, the rupee was devalued in four rounds by the State Bank of Pakistan by around 21% to stimulate exports**, which could only grow by 14% to \$23.228 billion during fiscal year 2017-18.

The Pak-rupee's nearly 21% slump had put it among the 11 worst-performing currencies of the world that year. Foreign exchange reserves had plunged to a four-year low and as of 13th July 2018, State Bank reserves were recorded at \$9,063.6 million only. More devastating fact was that the imports skyrocketed to a record high of \$60.898 billion, growing 15.1% and contributing to the trade deficit reaching \$37.670 billion in FY2017-18 ending on 30th June 2018.

The economic mismanagement of the previous PMLN government, rising external and domestic debt, the balance of payments problem challenges was there to create severe headache for PTI. Although, the

economy grew at 5.8% during FY2017-18, the highest in a decade but **Fitch** in its advisory earlier that month had warned that after general elections, the next government would have limited time to address its debt problems which were bound to accelerate in 2019. An economist opined that:

"The previous govt's window dressing has left the real economy in shambles while the informal economy has flourished due to lack of checks and balances. Shifting resources from informal to formal channels will be a painful process and many toes will be stepped on."

"On the economy front, besides the moon-shot of some significant angel financing from friendly countries, we likely have no choice but to go to the IMF and one can expect them to turn the screws tight this time given the lax compliance from the previous bailout."

Thus, as the PTI was going to take hold, it was **severely restricted on the FINANCIAL** front, an immediate request to the IMF for bailout was the only option left and the global trend of rising interest rates and increasing oil prices were two more obstructions. On **WATER & POWER** Front Pakistan was on the verge of an ecological disaster due to looming water shortages. As well as combating **extremism** and managing delicate **civil-military relations**, Pakistan's new govt was in need to re-define its parameters.

There is virtually no public education on water conservation in Pakistan. Shortage of dams has been depriving the country of low-cost electricity and a viable alternative to coal-based power production. Despite being on cards, **the construction of dams had been pushed down to the bottom due to political machinations in and out of the parliament; apparently amidst intellectual and financial corruption.**

Pakistan's primary & principal problem is the **POPULATION GROWTH**; means the conservative Pakistan since decades. With its limited family planning, the country has the highest birth rates in Asia at around three children per woman; the World Bank and state statistics are referred. Pakistan has had a fivefold increase in population since 1960; the figure was touching 207 million; 2017's draft results from census are there to ponder upon. Discussing contraception in public is a serious taboo in Pakistan. The fact remains that all development plans are negated and hard-won economic and social progress go paralysed with such growth rate of population.

Like other rulers, Imran Khan also inherited that problem in 2018. Analysts say unless more is done to slow growth, the country's natural resources — particularly drinking water — would not be enough to support the population. The PTI would have to formulate long-term policies to address the population boom and issues correlated to population issues especially the housing, sewerage, drinking water, education, health and employment.

Under duress, Imran Khan had to address the issue of **TERRORISM FINANCING** especially in the context of Financial Action Task Force [FATF] observations which had put Pakistan on the grey-list. The caretaker government in early 2018 missed the deadline to address the concerns raised by the forum. The PTI government had to struggle to keep Pakistan off the 'black-list' or the country could have faced worst sanctions.

PTI ON THE LITMUS TEST 2018:

Keeping aside the usual outrages of the defeated political parties in news conferences, the new prime minister had to focus on implementing his wide-ranging reform agenda that prioritised the economy. Pakistan's external deficit was mounting, its foreign exchange reserves dwindling and the value of its currency depreciating. The opposition parties didn't opt to challenge the results so the PTI was not harassed and distracted by the expected turmoil that could follow. Here the military's support to the new elected government was needed which was, of course, available to Imran Khan.

Imran Khan proceeded to form the coalition government with members of the MQM and the PMLQ. The day after the election, despite reservations over the results, the PMLN conceded defeat more because their own selected Pakistan's Election Commission had rejected reports of alleged rigging.

The new government's litmus test was as to how it would deal with the extremist outfits which was an on-going threat to the national security. Imran had once attracted controversy for describing top *Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan* [TTP] commander Waliur Rehman as 'pro-peace' when he was killed by US forces in 2013. He **once advocated for opening a Taliban office in Pakistan**, arguing that if the US could open offices for the Afghan Taliban in Qatar, the Pakistani Taliban should also be permitted to do the same. He had also termed the killing of Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud by the US in a drone strike '*deliberate targeting of peace process*'.

Feeling Khan's loud voice behind them, the TTP nominated Imran Khan to represent them in mediation talks which Mr Khan had eventually refused. Similarly, the PTI government in Khyber PK gave a grant worth Rs:550 million to Madrasa of Maulana Samiul Haq in Akora-Khatak. Ahead of the polls of 2018, PTI had joined hands with Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil, who was on the US terror watch list then.

During the whole elections period, the Western media continuously attacked on the military establishment in Pakistan just on the basis of sponsored reports of pseudo-NGOs and organisations. Some foreign think-tanks opined that there could be imminent political turbulence in Pakistan around elections. Some were genuinely worried that how the military would respond if Pakistan landed in crisis amidst elections. Controversies were, of course, there that the country was still being threatened by the Pakistani Taliban [TTP] and the Islamic State like insurgents.

The reality was that Pakistan's that election [of 2018] alarmed the two major international powers most interested in this geographic area: the United States and China. The Trump administration's South Asia policy was critically depending on Pakistani support. The US government had struggled to elicit much in terms of strategic cooperation during the earlier two corrupt ruling regimes. In 2018's scenario the onset of a new political regime in Pakistan could make such cooperation more unlikely to continue.

The Chinese, on the other hand, were worried how the Pakistani new political arena would affect the One Belt / Road projects passing through Pakistan. The Chinese wanted a strong government that would focus on the completion of these projects right away. Measuring the nervousness involved, China was in much stronger position than the US policy makers.

Referring to an article titled as '**The Rise, Fall and Rise Again of Imran Khan**' in **The New York Times** [NYT] dated 26th July 2018:

"Imran Khan, who has fiercely criticized American counterterrorism policy in a region plagued by extremism, appeared composed on the election-day (25th July 2018) to become Pakistan's next prime minister. He said he would fight corruption at the highest levels, improve relations with

*China, seek a **mutually beneficial relationship** with the United States and create a just welfare state along the lines of what the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did centuries ago.*

'We're going to run Pakistan in a way it's never been run before,' he said; **he would never live in the prime minister's mansion. In a country of so many poor people, I would be embarrassed to stay in such a big house.'**

For years, Mr. Khan had tried but failed to take the reins of the government, which struggled with poverty, economic stagnation and instability and which was increasingly torn between its two biggest allies: China and the US. But this time around, he found a powerful ally in Pakistan's military.

In those months, army and intelligence officers **pressured, threatened and blackmailed politicians** from rival parties steadily thinning out Mr Khan's competition. Members of rival parties accused election officers of fraud, saying many ballots had been counted in secret, guarded by soldiers. **'The way this stage has been set, it would have been a surprise if he didn't win,'** the critics held.

Friends and foes describe Mr Khan, 65, as relentless, charming, swaggering and highly unpredictable. In 1992, Mr Khan captained Pakistan's cricket team to a World Cup victory over England; a moment of immense Pakistani pride. Later, he turned to Islam and the Sufi sect, which he said helped lend purpose to his life. Then he entered politics. Pakistan in the late 1990s was a mess: Its Machiavellian spy services were working with the United States and, at the same time, supporting the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. The country was poor, troubled and divided — probably, still the same today. Mr Khan seized the elections on a single issue: governance; see a glimpse of an interview (2018) to the NYT:

"In Pakistan, the main problem is not extremism, we are a governance failure. And in any third world country, the moment the governance collapses, mafias appear."

Imran Khan had a focus on corruption - repeatedly urged that a few political dynasties had shamelessly enriched themselves while governance weakened and the country grew poorer. But Khan's shouts for reform were not taken seriously at first. The Justice Movement he founded in 1996, he could win only one seat (in 2002) in Parliament — of his own. However, he seemed adept at not letting the gossip pages distract him, and he kept hammering on about corruption. At last, **'the Panama Papers'** helped him in 2016-17. Evidence began to build that Mr Sharif had stolen millions of dollars from public coffers in Pakistan to buy expensive apartments in London, in the names of his children.

Mr Khan capitalized on this and called for Nawaz Sharif to resign. The Supreme Court removed Mr Sharif from the PM office, and just two weeks before the election, Nawaz Sharif and his daughter were sentenced by the court and imprisoned. Few would disagree that corruption is still out of control in Pakistan. Many observers saw the same thing in Sharif's downfall but a bit more selective, possibly more threatening and disturbing.

[By taking away crippled Nawaz Sharif from political field, the superior judiciary cleared path for Imran Khan to take over. BUT, on the other side Nawaz Sharif had also clashed with the army chiefs, even some of those he had chosen time and again; then he was taken as thorn in military's palm.]

Imran Khan, on the other hand, was someone the military bosses seemed they could work with. In the run-up to the election, the military pushed even harder for Mr Khan. Human rights groups, academics and members of other political parties said security officers threatened politicians to defect to Khan's side -

several did, in fact. ***Even otherwise, Mr Khan was genuinely popular;*** especially amongst youngsters who lionized him as a sports hero. As elections loomed, Khan's wave swept Pakistan. His face was everywhere — on banners, lamp-posts and torn flags flying from the sputtering rickshaws that flit in and out of traffic. His supporters were the most energized and confident with his PTI's symbol: a cricket bat.

Even during tabulations on the election-day, Khan's PTI was far ahead, though still falling short of an outright majority in Parliament. According to results on state television (PTV), Khan's party had 120 seats - **BUT for Khan it was not ideal:** Domestically, the challenges were overwhelming. Pakistan's electricity grid was disintegrated, its infant mortality rate was among the most distressing in Asia, its currency was sliding, and its debt — especially to China — was ballooning. So many Pakistanis were unable to find jobs that every year, countless young men set off on a desperate exodus to the Middle East to work as street cleaners, luggage handlers - and anything alike.

Internationally, Pakistan was in a pinch. China had extended it billions to build roads and other infrastructure, which at (that time) current growth rate was impossible to repay. At the same time, President Trump had cut hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid. **"They have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools,"** Mr Trump said of Pakistan in a tweet in January that year. **"They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!"**

Khan deeply disagreed and replied in an interview with **TIME** magazine:

"To blame Pakistan for that disaster is extremely unfair. The moment the US went into Afghanistan; everyone knew what was going to happen. It was the history of Afghanistan (citing the defeat of occupying Soviet troops in the 1980s). ***Just as with the Soviets - the longer the Americans stayed, the more resistance would grow. Pakistan has borne the brunt of the war on terror."***

[To know more about America's departure from Afghanistan, see

History of A Disgraceful Surrender [2021] by Inam R Sehri, published by GPH Surrey (UK) in 2022; pages-356]

In Khan's view, it was a misguided strategy that killed thousands of people in his country and deprived Pakistan of billions of dollars in lost business. For years, he remained a particularly vocal critic of American drone strikes. Magically, all those positions played well with many Pakistanis. So did Khan's then support for the country's strict blasphemy laws; Pakistan was socially conservative, no doubt.

Mr. Khan had successfully rebranded himself as a populist alternative to Pakistan's political elite, whom voters seemed more than ready to discard and abandon. But his life, in many ways, was not different from that of most Pakistanis. His attendance record as an elected member of the National Assembly, Pakistan's Parliament, was not exemplary. Media analysts wondered how long Mr Khan's friendship with the military would last – as 'he is known to have erratic behavior and a very unpredictable personality.'

100 DAYS PLAN ANNOUNCED:

The first 100 days of Imran Khan's premiership had taken a symbolic significance after his party, *Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf* [PTI], announced a '**100-day Agenda**' months before the July-2018's general election in Pakistan.

The said First 100-days plan included:

- The creation of a **new province in Southern Punjab**, with complete autonomy, making it an agricultural hub and accompanied by an economic package; young people would be provided with job opportunities by setting up food processing industries.
- Reconciliation with **alienated Baloch leadership** for renewed development of the province including; also, implementation of job quota reserved for Baluchistan.
- **Development of Karachi** - to make it a mega-city with suitable Package with 6-point agenda which included improving law and order, strengthening of local government, operations against extortionists and 'China cutting mafia', a housing infrastructure plan, setup of a public transport system, and culmination of militant sections of political parties.
- **Poverty alleviation** with creation of 10 million jobs with other suitable steps.
- Betterment of the overall economy; the **manufacturing sector would be revived**, small and medium-sized businesses would be developed fast, and the private sector would be assisted in **building five million houses**.
- Jumbo development **package for FATA**; other provinces to contribute 3% of their share.
- Reformation of **tax administration**, development of **progressive tourism**, the transformation of **state-owned enterprises**, and overcoming of the energy challenges.
- Improvement of the **agriculture sector** through increasing profitability and access to finance for farmers; would also be provided value-added incentives, **livestock sector**, and produce-markets.
- Improvement of **National Water Policy** with prompt actions.
- Revamping of the **National Security Plan** by creation of four National Security Organizations.

All national and foreign media & newspapers dated 18-21st August 2018 are referred for more details on above points.

That before-election MANIFESTO was considered a benchmark to predict the early success of Mr Khan's government. He won the elections on 25th July 2018, was sworn in on 18th August 2018 as the 22nd Prime Minister of Pakistan – just a day after getting the parliament's vote of confidence.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF PM KHAN:

On 19th August 2018, PM Khan addressed the nation formally on television in which he laid out the basis of his POLICIES & AGENDA for his government. In that address, he announced many austerity measures which included reduction of PM house employees and bullet-proof vehicles, conversion of PM house into a university, conversion of governor houses into public benefit buildings, cut-down on foreign visits of the PM & ministers, malnutrition of children and reduced spending on state-luxuries.

Most points were reiterated as an explanation of the 100-Days Agenda which was told to the general populace before the Elections-2018. More new points were added as extended program for Pakistan as a welfare state and prosperous economic giant in the region. See the details here:

- PM Khan announced that he would not live in Prime Minister House and would **cut down the staff of PM House** from 524 people to 2 only; also, that he would **only keep two vehicles** out of the current 80 vehicles available for use by Prime Minister and the rest would be sent to Auctioneers; also, that he would not own any business while in office of the premiership.

- He promised to **reinforce the Zakat System** in whole of Pakistan.
- PM Khan announced that his government would take **measures to increase exports**; also, that he would feel ashamed to ask for monetary help from other nations and global financial organizations; rather would adopt austerity measures to get rid of the debt.
- PM Khan announced to **strengthen the tax collection system**.
- PM Khan requested overseas Pakistanis to help Pakistan in that time of great need by keeping money in Pakistani banks and by sending money via banks instead of remittances through illegal *hundi-means*.
- PM Khan announced to keep interior ministry to himself to keep Federal Investigation Agency [FIA] directly under his control so he would oversee the efforts to curtail money laundering; also, to create a task force to bring laundered money back to Pakistan.
- PM Khan offered National Accountability Bureau [NAB], the help of the federal government to curtail the corruption.
- PM Khan announced to form a task force to **improve government hospitals** so poor people of the country could get the same high-quality care as rich within Pakistan.
- PM Khan felt the crisis of water in major cities and promised to work on **completing Diamer-Bhasha Dam**, and also to help farmers on methods to save water during irrigation.
- PM Khan announced that we would not invite people from other countries to take care of **Pakistan's sanitation needs** rather would create our own sanitation system – citing that in the state of Medina how educated prisoners of war were given incentives upon teaching the uneducated people.
- PM Khan reiterated to **convert PM House** into a world-class research university; also, to **improve the government school system** so the people would not have to opt for private schools to give quality education to their children; also, to bring the **madrassah system at par** with the rest of the education system so it would produce quality citizens.
- PM Khan announced in his inaugural address to the nation that Pakistan wanted peace with all the nations in the world including India.
- PM Khan announced that his government would create initiatives **to plant a billion trees** to combat global warming and heat-waves; parks and playgrounds would be built additionally.
- PM Khan promised to build **four tourism sites every year** for the development of tourism; also promised to develop **international standard beaches**.
- PM Khan said that he specifically tasked his human rights ministry to work towards **ending sexual abuse towards children**.
- PM Khan stressed on the creation of a **new province in Southern Punjab**. Giving an example of Khyber PK's former government, he announced that the police system would be reformed in Punjab and Baluchistan in a similar manner and they would request the Sindh government to do the same.
- PM Khan said that he would have a meeting with Chief Justice of Pakistan [CJP] and together they would **reform the judicial system** so that every case would be decided in less than one-year time.
- PM Khan urged civil service to provide services to the common man with due respect & dignity.
- PM Khan announced to **create a new local government system** and not to provide development funds to members of parliament.
- PM Khan announced to appoint a former IGP Nasir Durrani as an advisor in Punjab Government so that he could bring same **reforms in Punjab Police** as he did in Khyber PK as Inspector General of Khyber PK Police during 2013-18.

CABINETS & POLICIES ANNOUNCED:

To carry on the above functions, PM Khan announced most of his team at national and provincial levels before he took oath as prime minister except a few. On 18th

August 2018, after taking oath as prime minister of Pakistan, Khan announced his 21-member federal cabinet with their portfolios, one Azam Khan as his secretary and nominated Arif Alvi, a PTI MNA from Karachi, for office of the President of Pakistan.

On 19th August 2018; his nominee, **Usman Buzdar**, a new political figure on the arena, having no experience except belonging to the far remote area of Dera Ghazi Khan, was elected as Punjab's Chief Minister despite criticism. Odd voices surfaced mainly due to his less prominent background and allegations of a criminal case against him in 1998. Mr Khan justified Buzdar's selection, stating that Buzdar belonged to a poor district with '**no water, electricity or hospital**' and that he would be **well acquainted with how people live in those areas.**

On 20th August 2018; CM Buzdar's cabinet took the oath of office. PM Khan appointed former official of NAB Mirza Shehzad Akbar as his special assistant for accountability. On the same day PM Khan nominated one Ehsan Mani [*his old buddy from London and an Accountant by profession*] as Chairman of Pakistan Cricket Board after conveying Najam Sethi to resign. Five days later, Mr Khan nominated Ehsan Mani and Asad Ali Khan as members of the Board of Governors of Pakistan Cricket Board.

Same day, PM Khan ordered his finance minister Asad Umar to bring back the laundered money from overseas. He gave 2-weeks deadline to the task force which was created to bring back the country's stolen wealth from overseas and to come up with a detailed plan. This high-powered task-force comprised of FIA officers under the command of Spl Assistant Shehzad Akbar.

[Later, on 5th September 2018, it was decided in a cabinet meeting that efforts would be made to recover money illegally stashed abroad by Pakistanis, mainly due to corruption. Khan was in the process of ratifying a treaty with Swiss authorities to exchange information of Pakistani-owned bank accounts there. A whistle-blower law was to be enacted whereby individuals and firms who helped in trailing and recovering illegal money abroad would be awarded 20% of the recovered amount.

Financial Action Task Force [FATF] was a high-powered task force comprised officials of the Federal Investigation Agency [FIA], National Accountability Bureau [NAB] as well as intelligence agencies.]

Asad Umar also said that workers of Pakistan International Airlines [PIA] and Pakistan Steel Mills [PSM] would not be sacked.

On the same day, as part of the anti-corruption measures, Mr Khan's cabinet decided to put Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz on Exit Control List [ECL] barring them to leave the country. The cabinet also issued a directive to bring back Ishaq Dar, Hussain Nawaz and Hassan Nawaz - to face the court proceedings in pending cases against them.

On that day, Mr Khan also instructed his ministers to discontinue the overseas medical facilities which used to be funded by the government treasury. It was also decided to auction the bulletproof and extravagant vehicles belonging to the prime minister house. The decision was made to avoid unnecessary tours by government officials including the prime minister. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi was asked to attend the annual UN's General Assembly session in September 2018 instead of PM Khan.

On 21 August 2018: After reviewing a ten-year report of Capital Development Authority [CDA], PM Khan announced to end corruption in CDA; he also issued directive to solve water crisis in Islamabad. Furthermore:

- *The cabinet decided to eliminate discretionary funds for members of parliament including ministers and the prime minister.*

- *The cabinet also decided that no announcements of projects of public benefit would be made during public rallies like previous prime ministers used to do.*
- *Also directed that no tea or coffee (not even water bottles) would be presented to attendees during official meetings whatsoever.*
- *PM Khan would not use a special plane for international visits and the benefit of travel via first-class would be taken away from ministers, the prime minister, the president, and the chief justice of Pakistan; all would travel via economy or club class for their official tours, inland & abroad.*

Next day, two new special assistants to prime minister were inducted including Iftikhar Durrani on media affairs and Naeemul Haque on political affairs. Meanwhile, PM Khan's government launched a probe to audit all **metro bus projects** initiated by the previous PMLN government, including the established metros in Lahore, Islamabad and Multan, the upcoming **Green Line of Karachi**, and the **Orange Line Train of Lahore**; the objective was to evaluate the levels of transparency of the projects during the contracts made and how the funds were spent.

Same day, the cabinet decided to commence a major tree plantation project. A task force was created to launch a cleanliness drive in the country. The cabinet was informed about the first phase **launch of 10-million tree tsunami drive**, and that 1.5 million saplings were to be planted on 2nd September instant. That day, PM Khan arrived in Haripur and planted a sapling to commence the '**Plant for Pakistan drive**'; his aim was to bring Pakistan at par with Europe in terms of cleanliness during his term.

During the next two days, the PM gave his consent for the nomination of Ameer Khan Jogeza as Governor of Baluchistan; Shibli Faraz was nominated leader of the house for the Senate of Pakistan; approved the appointment of Anwar Mansoor Khan as Attorney General of Pakistan. **BUT, just a day after, PM Khan took back his decision of making Ameer M Khan Jogeza as governor of Baluchistan.** However; a 23-member Punjab cabinet and a 15-member Khyber PK cabinet was formed under guidance and approval of Mr Khan on the same day. PM Khan also appointed the FM Asad Umar as the boss of forthcoming Economic Coordination Committee [ECC].

On 28th August 2018; PM Khan decided to appoint Shehryar Khan Afridi as minister of the state for interior; appointed M Suleman Khan as Director General Intelligence Bureau [DG IB]; appointed Jahanzeb Khan as Chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue [FBR] and Mehr Khaliq Dad Lak was appointed as DG National Counter Terrorism Authority [NCTA].

During those days, **an extensive media controversy** had erupted regarding PM Khan not following his own announced austerity measures by using a helicopter for his daily travel between prime minister house and his Bani Gala residence. Also, over the FM Asad Umar's statement that the government was weighing its options regarding a fresh bailout package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF); Pakistan had gone to the IMF 12 times previously. Point to be remembered here that Imran Khan had announced at numerous occasions in open public gatherings that '**Pakistan will NOT go to the IMF any more**'.

Meanwhile, PM Khan's government announced its first reduction in petroleum prices. While going ahead with austerity measures, the **PM House set date for auction of 102 luxury vehicles including 27 bullet-proof ones.**

In the next move, PM Khan formed an **18-member Economic Advisory Council** [EAC] to advise on matters of economic policymaking. The council included financial experts associated with international universities such as Atif Mian from Woodrow Wilson School of Princeton University, Asim Ijaz Khwaja from John F. Kennedy School, and Imran Rasul from University College London. However, on 7th September 2018, the government asked Atif Mian to step down being an Ahmadi after bowing before a vicious campaign in social media. In solidarity with Mian, two other overseas-based economists in the EAC, Asim Khwaja and Imran Rasul, also announced they were resigning from the committee.

[An article in **daily DAWN** dated 10th September 2018 stated the actual reason behind Mian's removal lay in 'internal dissent' from religious parties who had threatened nationwide sit-ins against the appointment; while on the same day Chinese and Saudi dignitaries were to arrive in Islamabad. The government was compelled to take the decision to avoid an 'ugly' situation during the foreign dignitaries' visits, as well as due to political pressure from some opposition parties. Overall, it was termed 'unfortunate' and some cabinet members felt 'depressed' after the EAC lost three of its top thinkers.]

During the 1st week of September 2018, the federal government deployed nine senior officers of the civil service to Baluchistan on long-term assignments, where they were to expedite works being carried out under the **China Pakistan Economic Corridor** [CPEC] projects. Next day, Mr Khan directed the concerned government departments to take proactive measures in preventing money laundering through illegal methods such as *hawala & hundi*. A committee was constituted to make existing financial laws stronger, and propose amendments to these laws where required.

Suddenly then, PM Khan approved a 46% increase in natural gas rates as advised by Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority [OGRA] considering it necessary given the pressure faced by the government over existing subsidies to the gas sector. The government also announced the end of the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme and other loss-bearing schemes of the previous government. ***The cabinet also gave its final approval to end discretionary funds for ministries and their divisions.***

It was in a federal cabinet meeting held on 5th September 2018, where such policy decisions were made with PM Khan in the chair. The meeting decided to abolish discretionary funds of all ministries estimating that with this move, over Rs:80 billion would become available to the national kitty.

Meanwhile, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Accountability Shehzad Akbar held a press conference after the cabinet meeting and said:

"Initially we will target 100 big fish to retrieve their ill-gotten wealth stashed in foreign countries. The whistle-blower law would be enforced immediately through an ordinance offering a reward worth 20 per cent of the recovered amount The names of informants would be kept confidential. Another ordinance on mutual legal assistance would be promulgated which would help remove bottlenecks in the way of seeking information regarding illegal wealth from foreign countries."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MoFA] was asked to send a high-powered delegation to Switzerland to expedite ratification of a treaty on exchange of information on bank accounts. The treaty had been dumped in files since 2012 intentionally by the previous rulers, instead of being ratified. The prime minister issued directives to immediately ratify the treaty so that the government could get information regarding transfer of corruption money from Swiss banks to Pakistan.

Initially, PM Khan himself monitored the progress of that task force and other relevant departments in this regard **but the whole plan went THUSS...** because the Special Assistant in-charge of this plan, Shehzad Akbar, himself joined hands with Sharifs and Zardaris and turned the whole exercise at 180-angle while allegedly remaining special guest of the Sharifs in London.

- Still there is no dearth of *Mir Jaffers & Mir Sadiqs* in Pakistan.

During the same week, FM Asad Umar chaired a meeting of the **National Executive Committee**, which was formed to monitor the country's anti-money laundering measures and countering of finances to terrorist organisations, as mandated by the Financial Action Task Force [FATF] which had grey-listed

Pakistan months earlier. Umar said implementation of the relevant measures would ensure Pakistan would successfully meet international standards under the FATF action plan.

Another week after, the PTI's Punjab government inducted nine more ministers, three extra advisers and five special assistants; the federal government also announced to expand the cabinet adding four more ministers - Omar Ayub Khan (with energy portfolio), Ali Zaidi (with maritime affairs portfolio), Muhammad Mian Soomro (with Privatisation Commission portfolio) and Murad Saeed, whose post was then undetermined but later he got the most important portfolio – Communication. This brought the number of total federal cabinet members to 24 till then.

On 17th September 2018: In all, 102 luxury and surplus vehicles parked on the lawns of PM House Islamabad were put to open auction, out of which 61 were sold off during the daylong activity as part of PM Imran Khan's austerity drive; the auction brought Rs:200 million to the national kitty. Out of 102s auction-lot, six bulletproof vehicles and 55 other vehicles were sold during the daylong exercise; 20 low-priced vehicles were not included in that day's auction because of low bids, while 21 armoured vehicles could not attract buyers' attention due to their high prices. The auction of these 21 most expensive luxury cars was to be held after correction of custom & taxes anomalies. ***After that day; no auction news about state cars ever surfaced during PM Khan's tenure.***

... ABOUT MORE REFORMS & INITIATIVES:

Elaborating the media policy, the information minister Fawad Chaudhry announced on 21st August 2018 that government was ending political censorship from state-run media outlets such as **Pakistan Television Corporation [PTV] and Radio Pakistan** so they could produce content with complete freedom instead of just singing praise for the government. The PTI government also proposed to merge the **Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority [PEMRA]** and Press Council of Pakistan into one top body called as the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority [PMRA]. There was also a plan to strengthen the cyber laws under the aegis of the Federal Investigation Agency [FIA]; two days later, a committee was formed to complete this assignment.

On 27th August 2018; the government directed FIA **to banish the VIP** protocol at airports which used to be usually given to elites including military officials, judges, senior bureaucrats, journalists, legislators, and politicians. ***All previous governments decided about this measure but could never implement it – and astonishingly, the PTI govt also failed to get the directive implemented during its whole tenure of 3+ years.***

Next day, the cabinet gave ninety days to the task forces to come up with plans to fulfil their assigned obligations; the prime minister was to review their performance every fifteen days. It was also decided that the government would work with the opposition parties to bring about a consensus on the **creation of South Punjab province** so that a constitutional amendment could be tabled after ensuring two-thirds majority support in the parliament. The advisor Arbab Shehzad was also asked to work on speeding the process of the remainder of tasks for the **merger of Federally Administered Tribal Areas [FATA] into Khyber PK.** On 6 September 2018; task forces were set up separately to oversee the ongoing merger process which ultimately met success – FATA was merged into Khyber PK.

Aleem Khan announced that he would present a recommendation for a new local government system in Punjab to the prime minister on 1st September 2018, under this new system, local governments would get more financial and administrative powers.

Meanwhile, talking about election mismanagement, PTI's MNA Azam Khan Swati revealed that the government had decided to investigate allegations related to election mismanagement; he blamed NADRA for the failure of RTS on election day and exonerated Election Commission of Pakistan [ECP]. MNA Swati made the **appointment of the Chairman NADRA controversial** and recommended for his termination.

Immediately thereafter, Prime minister directed the Punjab government to take action against groups and mafias involved in encroachment and occupation of public properties. During a high-level meeting, he ordered to revamp local body system effectively, reform police system, reform the civil services and federal bureaucracy in line with a proposed government programme, remove barricades from Lahore city, and audit ongoing and completed projects for comprehensive transparency – **HOWEVER, none of those directives could be turned into reality or effectiveness during the PTI's government in saddles.**

During the next federal cabinet meeting held on 5th September 2018; the PTI cabinet discussed policies relating to health, education, and water supply at the federal level. A task force on education, led by education minister Shafqat Mehmood, was set up to explore how to bring out-of-school children into education – **BUT the federal minister miserably failed to take any step towards this foremost necessity. Not a single school could be added afresh by the PTI under this sector and the Literacy Rate of Pakistan remained stagnant throughout PTI's tenure.**

Same day, PM Khan ordered not to terminate any government employee or contractor except by a court order. Also, the federal cabinet indicated to abolish the National Commission on Government Reforms [NCGR], and replacing it with a newly-appointed task force which could bring about reforms in the government structure and civil service. An **Institutional Reforms Cell** was set up in the Prime Minister's office to serve as base of the task force, and the task force was desired to put forth its proposals on reforms in 90 days. Issues pertaining to provincial matters were to be placed before the Council of Common Interests (CCI).

[Till the ending of PTI govt on 10th April 2022, no report or proposal from the Institutional Reforms Cell had been surfaced on media pages; NOR any sort of reforms or change or improvement in government structure was seen. Not known if the proposals were drafted in this respect or placed before the Council of Common Interests (CCI) and if done so – then what remained their fate.]

Same day, Governor of Sindh, Imran Ismail decided that Governor House Karachi would be open every day for the educational tours of students to show them the objects and artcrafts used by Father Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

On 8th September 2018; first phase of the anti-encroachment drive was implemented in Islamabad through the Capital Development Authority [CDA]; properties constructed on nearly two kilometres of illegally occupied lands were demolished and taken down. Similar drives were being expanded into Karachi and Lahore, under the directives of the local governments there. Same day, Railway minister announced a train service between Rawalpindi and Mianwali, the ancestral city of PM Khan, the service successfully commenced within a week.

Same day, the opposition (PMLN) threatened to launch mass protests against the government if it sought to abolish the existing local government system. Next day, Governor of Punjab, Ch Mohammad Sarwar also opened the Governor Houses at Lahore and Murree for the public on every Sunday (10 am to 6 pm). Later, on 1st October 2018, the Governor of Khyber PK, Shah Farman also opened the Governor House Peshawar for the public.

On 10th October 2018; PM Khan launched the **Naya Pakistan Housing Program** under which the government intended to construct five million affordable houses for homeless people, and provide those

homes within five years. Also announced that a ***National Financial Regulatory Body*** would be set up within 60 days to assist with the program's financial model and help arrange finances for the project. The law ministry had to remove all legal hurdles being faced by the construction industry. At the same time, a housing colony was announced for federal government employees known as the ***Federal Government Employees Scheme*** – in coordination with the Punjab government; details of which were not provided to the media then.