

# The Review by Daily Times 2017



**Rs29bn metro bus project launched in Multan**

**Zubair appointed Sindh governor**  
By Syed Irfan Plaza & Hassan Mansoor

**Trump pledges to unite world against radical 'Islamic terrorism'**  
• Sworn in as 45th US president • Promises to put 'America First'

**OIC invites world to accept East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital**

**Pakistan to seek red warrant for**

**WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS**

**ISLAMABAD / KARACHI: The federal government on Monday appointed Muhammad Zubair, a leader of the ruling Pakistan**



**Senators term proposed petroleum law a bid to deprive provinces of due rights**

**By Moshir A. Khan**

**JuD's Hafiz Saeed placed under house arrest**

**Army brokers dharna deal**



**Waziristan return from Af**

**Yet another**

**Operation**

**Get Afghanistan in order first, US told**

**Nine killed in church suicide**



**Waziristan return from Af**

**Yet another**

**Operation**

**PIA aircraft hits parked plane**

**Operation halted**



**Operation halted**

**Operation halted**

**Operation halted**

**NAB decides to bring Ishaq Dar back through Interpol**

**Freedom isn't free, it costs sons of the soil: COAS**



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**Outrage after US accepts Jerusalem as Israel's capital**

**NA condemns US for recognising Jerusalem as new capital of Israel**



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**Due process denied to Sharifs in Hudaibya case: SC**



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**Damning Najafi report puts Punjab govt in a tight spot**



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**Jadhav 'real face' of Indian terrorism: FO**



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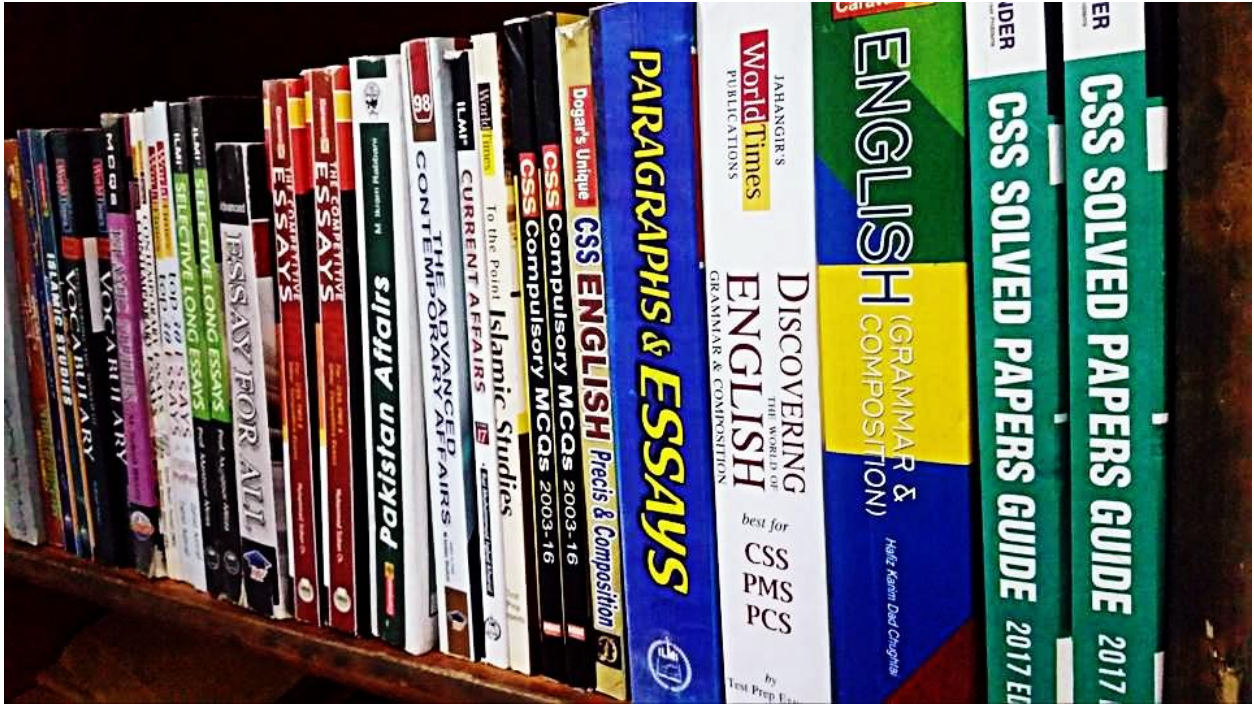
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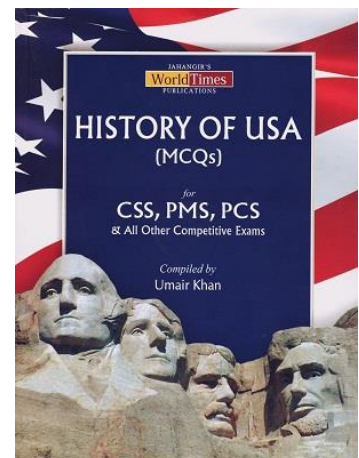
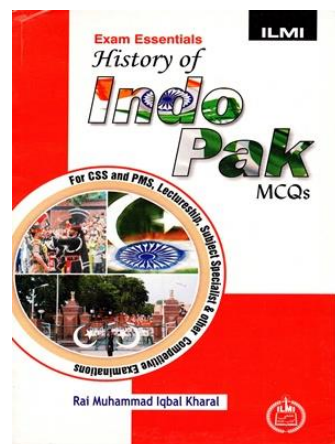
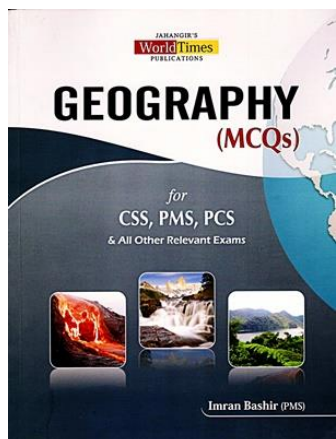
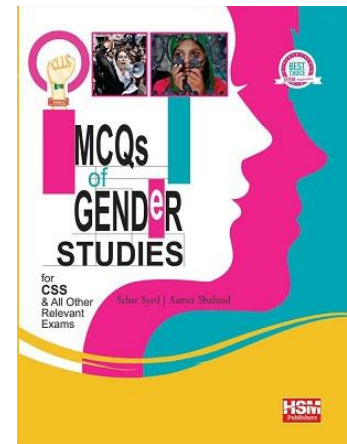
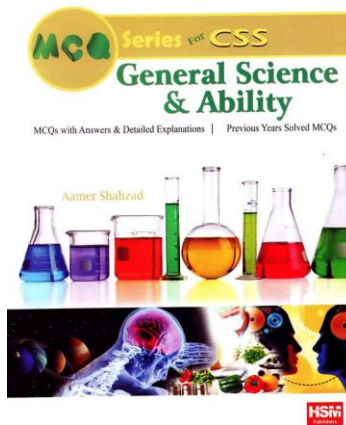
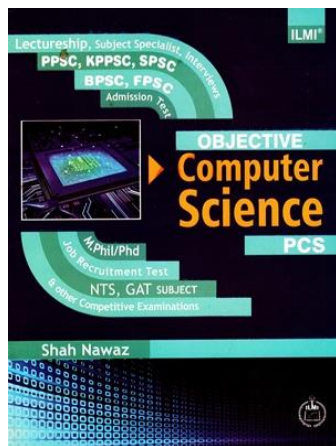
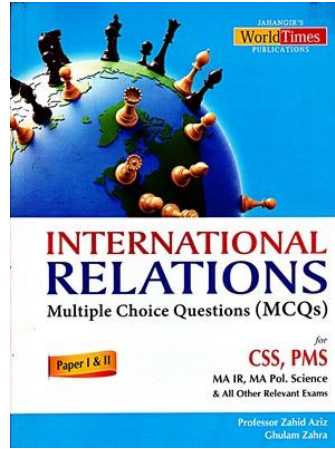
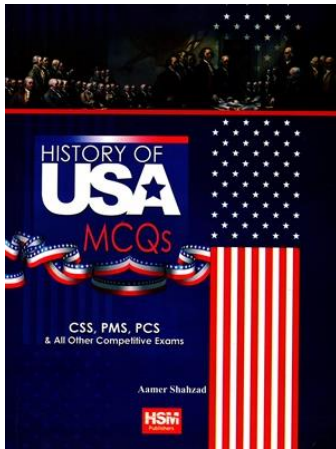
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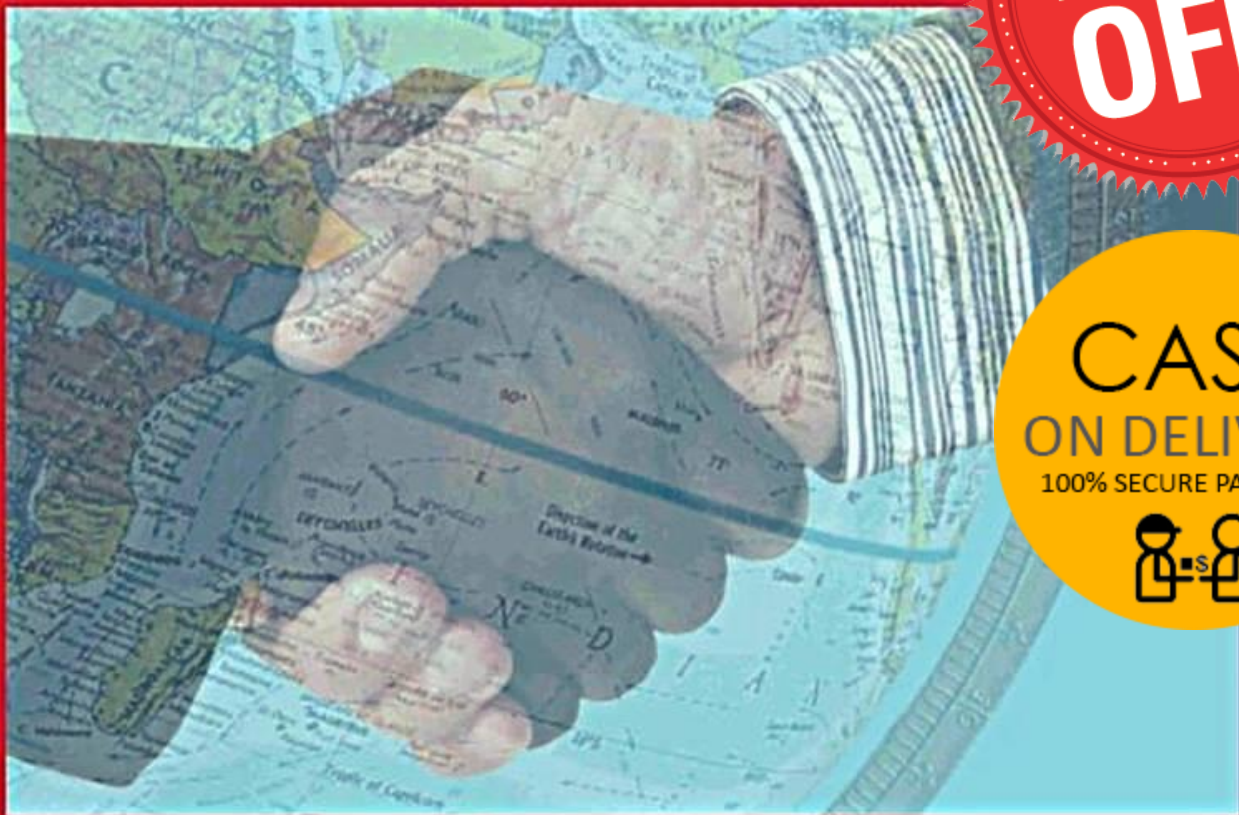




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**RAZA RUMI**  
EDITOR

# A year of **change**

**"The only security of  
all is in a free press."**

**—Jefferson**

**T**he year 2017 was turbulent to say the least. Pakistan entered into a new phase of political instability, our foreign policy remained in doldrums and the national action plan against terrorism was subverted time and again. The November siege of Islamabad by radical clerics was an ominous sign and visibly reversed some of the gains that the country made in its fight against extremism. At the end of the year, Pakistanis were unsure about the direction of the country.

Sadly, 2017 was also problematic in terms of media freedoms. The state institutions reinforced the well-known red lines and many in the industry continued practicing the subtle art of self-censorship that has become 'normal' with the passage of years. The worst affected were digital freedoms as online expression was confronted with new controls. Several bloggers and activists were abducted and vicious campaigns were launched to declare them as blasphemers. This is a dangerous trend as decrees of blasphemy and 'treason' have turned into convenient instruments to suppress dissent in the country. This is where the media outlets need to unite and redraw their relationship with the state and society.

The good news is that 2017 was a year of renewal at Daily Times with a new editorial team that intends to revive the newspaper's mission of fearless and citizen-oriented journalism. DT recruited dozens of new writers, reporters, and bloggers to inform and educate the public. Within the newspaper, we vastly restructured our pages. DT has a new section for arts and culture. And in addition to the earlier op-ed pages, we have two

new pages that present commentaries and perspectives from younger writers. Our aim has been to give space to Pakistan's young voices. Given that the youth is the largest segment of our population, this change was much needed. We are pleased with the response, as many young students, professionals and engaged citizens have become a part of DT family.

Online readers may have noticed that we have a new website, constructed and launched during 2017 after many trials. We have a new section for multimedia features and our social media engagement expanded manifold during the year. Our digital operations are increasing and in 2018 our readers and supporters will notice further changes. For this we will need your continued support, contributions and engagement.

Independent journalism is vital for a healthy, democratic society and we remain committed to upholding truth and seeking transparency in every walk of life. It is an uphill task given the financial constraints on print media; and the overall uncertain political environment. But we remain steadfast to the ideals of a free press, an open and equitable society and remind Pakistan's authorities what Quaid e Azam Mohamed Ali Jinnah said decades ago: "... I say, protect the innocent, protect those journalists who are doing their duty and who are serving both the public and the government by criticising the government freely, independently, honestly, which is an education for any government."





# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

2017 was a year of familiar environmental neglect, meaning that the country remains ill-equipped to confront climate change

By Humaira Saeed

**P**akistan currently has one of the highest deforestation rates in Asia and currently only has 4 percent forest cover. The water table in Punjab is decreasing at an alarming rate and very little is being done to resuscitate it. Furthermore, air pollution has caused accidents and health risk to hundreds of people across Pakistan's most populated province. The level of environmental degradation is best illustrated by the Thar desert drought which has caused widespread malnourishment and deaths of children due to lack of nutrition.

A brief look back on the state of the environment in 2017 entails the following:

## 1. Glacial melt and CPEC

Unchecked development initiatives, brought to fruition through alliances with neighbouring countries are being accepted without any discernment of their environmental, societal and

economic impacts.

It has been three years since CPEC began and the amount of tarmac in Pakistan has increased exponentially. The Karakoram Highway (KKM) which once only supported a handful of trucks along its narrow route, is expected to carry up to 100 trucks a day when CPEC reaches its full swing.

Today, the highest paved international surface in the world, has more than a dozen diesel semi-trailer trucks chugging along it every day. Their notorious dark fumes stand out in striking contrast to the pristine environs alongside the KKM.

impacts of these trucks. There are many economical methods to reduce the dark fumes which eventually settle on glaciers, causing them to melt and form lakes. There needs to be a strong political concern and willingness to do development sustainably. Pakistan's future generations are going to look back at CPEC and think to themselves of the thoughtless actions taken for the sake of economic progress - a soon to be obsolete aim.

The government should realise that the effects of reckless development are challenging to recover. The plans that it implements today have the potential to destroy Pakistan tomorrow.

## 2. Water Contamination

Pakistan made headlines when a report by Sciences Advances journal

Today, the highest paved international surface in the world has more than a dozen diesel semi-trailer trucks chugging along it every day. Their notorious dark fumes stand out in striking contrast to the pristine environs of the KKM

Installing catalytic converters and fume mitigating technology would reduce the adverse environmental

outlined areas in Pakistan that are exposed to alarming levels of arsenic in the water. The report points at some



of the most populated regions where arsenic levels in the water are up to five times higher than the accepted WHO standard. The report is an indicator of the effect of agricultural and industrial waste on water systems. As most of Pakistan relies on ground water for drinking and household use, the report is a wakeup call for agencies responsible for its provision.

The main reasons for the high level of arsenic in water includes irrigation and industrial waste. The study found a strong correlation between high soil pH levels and arsenic concentrations. The areas of high arsenic concentrations and those of agricultural activity correspond, indicating the detrimental effect of current agricultural practices. With no foreseeable changes towards environmentally sustainable farming practices, Pakistan is likely to be exposed to further arsenic contamination.

The unregulated use of ground water is the main cause behind arsenic levels increasing in the water table. Arsenic usually stays above the ground and does not sink into the water table unless ground water boring has reached unsustainable levels. This, along with unregulated urbanisation and spasmodic monitoring of ground water quality, has led to a distressing situation.

The Sciences Advances report points at a lack of water quality monitoring and the pressing issue is a lack of information about water quality. The report is based on statistics with significance level testing to determine trends in water quality. While the report has been received as conclusive on the quality of water in Pakistan, it suggests further testing may ascertain

the extent of the problem.

The current situation needs to be taken seriously to determine the causes of arsenic contamination in each specific area. This may be done by averting the contaminated sources and rehabilitating the water quality in tandem. Reverse osmosis is the only method through which arsenic may be removed from water; however it too has implications, which need to be assessed. Treatment of waste water and reformed agricultural practices are preventative methods that may curb further contamination.

### 3. Smog

Smog engulfed Lahore and large parts of Punjab in the early part of November when visibility became extremely low and led to multiple accidents and collisions across many roads in Lahore and in cities across Punjab.

The emergency situation was experienced by city dwellers first hand

as they suffered from eye infections, and throat and respiratory problems. Hospitals had seen an influx of patients suffering from symptoms caused by the excessively polluted air engulfing Lahore since late October.

The smog worsened in Punjab due to a persistent dry spell, and low visibility cost the lives of dozens of people in the early morning and evening. The pollution measure was more than 800 micrograms per cubic metre. While the safe limit is around 200 micrograms per cubic metre.

### 4. 1 billion tree tsunami

The KP Government took up the Bonn Challenge - a global effort to restore 150 million hectares of the world's degraded and deforested lands by 2020 and a further 350 million by 2030. The KP government has been recognised for meeting this challenge and planting 1 billion trees across the province. In effect, this 'tree tsunami' has helped prevent land degradation and loss in the mountains of KP.

The KP government set a target of December 2017 to meet the requirements when it began the drive in 2015. It has now met the challenge in less than 2 years.





# 2017

## The year when NAP was buried

The agreement signed between the government and Tehreek-e-Labbaik was a literal surrender before extremists, and indicated that the NAP was all but dead

By Ailia Zehra

Pakistan observed the third anniversary of the horrific APS attack in 2017. The country's civil and military leadership had unanimously chalked out a 20-point National Action Plan following the APS carnage in 2014 detailing steps needed to eradicate the menace of terrorism. Three years on, the NAP remains unimplemented because of an apparent lack of will on the part of the government and the deep state's failure to do away with the long-standing flaws in the security policy.

In 2017, several developments in Pakistan took place that made a mockery of the NAP and sent out a message that the document is no longer being followed by those responsible for its implementation. An increase in the political activities of religious extremist groups was witnessed. Extremist cleric Khadim Hussain Rizvi led a sit-in in Islamabad in November against a 'clerical error' that amended the Khatam-e-Nabuwwat clause from the Election Bill. The protesters of Tehreek-e-Labbaik, Sunni Tehreek continued their protest for over 20 days and their leaders engaged in blatant hate speech against the minorities, government, media and even the country's judiciary at Faizabad Interchange in Islamabad. The main demand of the protesters i.e.



resignation of Law Minister Zahid Hamid who they termed responsible for the initial deletion of the Khatam-e-Nabuwwat clause, was eventually accepted and the minister tendered his resignation. It was disappointing to witness how the government gave in to all the demands of the protesting group whose leaders had been inciting violence against minorities during the violent sit-in. The agreement signed between government and Tehreek-e-Labbaik was literally a surrender before extremists, and indicated that the NAP was virtually dead.

The dialogue between the

government and the protestors was allegedly facilitated by the military, which made the situation all the more worrying. The first sentence of the agreement declared Tehreek-e-Labbaik

**The Faizabad episode served to create an impression that the policy of patronage of religious extremist groups had not ended, and that the 'shift' in policy we heard about post-APS was actually a shift from Deobandi to Barelvi extremists**

a 'peaceful party', ignoring how its workers had beaten up policemen resulting in death of one and injuries to several others. Workers of the said religious groups in other parts of the country had also started violent protests and pelted stones at ordinary citizens while

police mostly acted as silent spectators. Despite the display of sheer hooliganism, the government gave a clean chit to Tehreek-e-Labbaik. The Faizabad episode served to create





an impression that the policy of patronage of religious extremist groups had not ended, and that the 'shift' in policy we heard about post-APS was actually a shift from Deobandi to Barelvi extremists. The military's role in the Faizabad saga was confirmed by Chief of Army Staff QamarJavedBajwa who told the Senate that the agreement was brokered by the military to prevent the situation from getting worse.

Moreover, action against hate speech was one of the basic aims of the NAP. The protesters at Faizabad practiced hate speech for 22 days and also glorified convicted murderer MumtazQadri during their election campaign for NA 120 by-election, but not once did the NAP come into action.

That the protest took place despite the restoration of the original oath in the new draft of the Election Act was a clear indication that it was the said Barelvi religious group's attempt to get relevance and legitimacy as representative of its sect under the garb of 'protecting finality of Prophethood'. The government's helplessness and military's initial reluctance to act against the violent protesters calling them 'our own people' was a sad reminder of the power and impunity extremist groups enjoy in Pakistan. Many analysts were of the opinion that the same sentiments are hardly ever expressed by the military when it comes to action against protesters belonging to ethnic minority communities and peasants of Okara who have often been at the receiving end of state's brutality. To add insult to the injury, a video of DG Sindh Rangers distributing cash among the protesters after end of the sit-in

went viral on social media.

However, the military's seemingly tolerant attitude towards Tehreek-e-Labbaik protesters was unsurprising given that DG ISPR Asif Ghafoor had in October confirmed that a plan to bring religious extremist groups into 'mainstream' was underway.

Furthermore, politicians' hateful statements following the debate about deletion of Khatam-e-Nabuwat clause from the Election

Bill was also worrying. The deletion was termed by the government as 'clerical error' and the officials also began appeasement of the extremist groups. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's

son-in-law and PML-N MNA Captan (ret'd) Safdar made a bigoted speech on the floor of National Assembly against the Ahmadi community and demanded they be barred from joining the armed forces. The remarks by a number of other politicians during the debate also suggested the political leadership was hell-bent on cozying up to the religious extremists and distance themselves from the initial removal of the Khatam-e-Nabuwat oath. Thus, the normalisation of bigotry and hate speech against minorities particularly the Ahmadi community was a cause of concern in 2017.

NAP also states that print and electronic media would not be allowed to give space to terrorists. None other than the state itself

violated this goal of NAP when former Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan was presented before media in April this year after he reportedly surrendered to the military. It appeared as if the deep state was trying to present him as someone who was misled into doing what he had been doing and that he was a reformed person now. 3 years ago, we were promised that APS incident would be 'avenged', but Ehsanullah Ehsan's return on TV and the glorification he received from certain segments was an insult to the blood of countless victims of terror attacks.

Another point of the NAP was about countering sectarian violence by prosecuting those involved in spreading sectarianism. But in 2017, political leaders whose politics is based on sectarianism remained politically active. MasroorJhangvi, the son of anti-Shia militant organisation Sipah Sahaba Pakistan (now Lashkar-e-Jhangvi)'s founder Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, contested a by-election from Jhang and won the provincial assembly seat in December 2016. In

November 2017, his name was taken off the fourth schedule of anti-terrorism act. Jhangvi is the member of Punjab Assembly now, which can indeed be termed as the revival of sectarian politics that had long

dominated the province. This is something the country's leadership had promised to work against under NAP, yet it also remained a distant dream.

If the developments related to activities of extremist groups and the complete inaction on the government's part are anything to go by, it is obvious that the religion card will be used heavily in the upcoming elections and the political leaders' act of using blasphemy allegations as a tool against each other will likely increase in the days to come. This would serve to legitimise the extremist mindset, which we pledged to fight in 2014. Thus, it is safe to say that we are quite literally back to square one in terms of action against terror and extremism.

**If developments related to activities of extremist groups along with the complete inaction of the state are anything to go by — it is obvious that the religion card will be strongly used in the upcoming elections**





# State of PAKISTAN'S ECONOMY 2017

Pakistan has faced chronic shortages of energy and quality infrastructure throughout its history, with investment to GDP ratios consistently lagging at less than 15 percent. Thus, reliance on imports to fuel growth is inevitable.

By Safiya Aftab

In some sense, 2017 typifies Pakistan's boom and bust economic history. The first half of the year, or the close of fiscal year 2016-17 was fairly upbeat, but as the calendar year has progressed, a sense of dread has overtaken economic actors and macro indicators are beginning to seem distinctly out of whack. A return to the IMF is practically a foregone conclusion at this point. But let's recap.

In June 2017, the government jubilantly announced that Pakistan's annual GDP growth rate had hit the highest point of ten years, at almost 5.3%. Both the commodity producing sectors were supposed to have done well, with agriculture in

particular showing a remarkable recovery after almost a decade of slow growth. The growth in manufacturing was led by the sugar industry, the second largest agro-based industry after textiles, which continued to capitalize on bumper sugarcane production. Textiles remained in the dumps with growth of less than 1%, but with sugar and some other sectors (including automobiles and iron and steel) doing well, large scale manufacturing posted a respectable growth rate of about 5%.

But clouds were beginning to show on the horizon. While the sectoral growth rates dominated the headlines, the small print showed that the current account deficit had swelled to 3% of GDP, on the back of increased imports of capital goods

and fuel. This should not have been particularly surprising - the much vaunted GDP growth obviously required a good injection of energy and capital, neither of which are produced domestically in sufficient quantities. Pakistan has faced chronic shortages of energy and quality infrastructure throughout its history, with investment to GDP ratios consistently lagging at less than 15%. The reliance on imports to fuel growth is thus inevitable.

What is not inevitable, but now constitutes a trap that the country cannot break out of, is the continued reliance on commodity, or commodity-based exports, which are characterized by swings in international prices. Thus even in years when export volumes increase, as they did in 2017, depressed prices



can translate into lower export receipts, again as has been the case in recent years. Once again, Pakistan finds itself in a classic bind which has occurred before. Growth is dependent on capital and fuel exports, and while these do spur on the GDP growth rates on occasion, they put pressure on the balance of payments. This was evident from the fact that in early July the State Bank let the exchange rate deteriorate in inter-bank transactions, and in fact let the rupee fall to Rs. 108 to a dollar instead of the Rs. 105 on which it had remained pegged for two

was sent that it was business as usual. Except that it was not. As the year progressed, the fundamental imbalances in the economy began to manifest themselves ever more obviously. By October, the Finance Minister was gone (his removal was unrelated to the currency crisis, but has had wide-ranging ramifications for the same); the new guard had

November.

It was finally the exit of Mr. Ishaq Dar which has created some sort of space for a change of policy tack. In early December, the State Bank allowed the rupee to slide to Rs. 110 to a dollar, making future debt payment more expensive, but potentially allowing for some correction in the balance of trade.

**Any new dispensation, whether it consists of the same ruling party or another, will almost certainly end up having to go back to the IFIs and negotiate a balance of payments support package; with all the attendant policy conditionalities. Thus the cycle will repeat itself.**

Although Pakistan remains within the IMF's post program monitoring regime, the Fund has strenuously denied having anything to do with the devaluation. It would be surprising though, if some discreet prodding had not taken place.



years.

The Finance Minister's reaction was swift and frankly inappropriate. Instead of acknowledging the problem, he launched into a diatribe against the State Bank and then went on to insinuate that the whole depreciation event had happened at the behest of hidden forces out to discredit Pakistan's image. This was ridiculous in and of itself, but was followed up by a change of guard at the highest levels in the State Bank. There was no doubt as to why this change had been made. Predictably, the value of the rupee was once again pegged at the old level and the signal

belatedly slapped import duties on 250 items, the fiscal and current account deficits were widening and foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank had declined to \$13 billion or so. While export growth is actually estimated at 6 to 7 percent compared to the previous year, the gains from this are being eroded by the rise in import payments. An over-valued exchange rate was not helping matters. With few options available to shore up international reserves, the country has once again turned to international bond markets to raise capital, launching bonds worth \$2.5 billion in the end of

What is likely to happen in 2018?

This particular regime will want to complete its tenure without taking any difficult policy decisions, and is likely to muddle along with short term adjustments through to the next elections. That's essentially another six months or so if all is according to schedule. Any new dispensation, whether it consists of the same ruling party or another, will almost certainly end up having to go back to the IFIs and negotiating a balance of payments support package, with all the attendant policy conditionalities. Thus the cycle will repeat itself. Plus ca change.





## Pakistan Economy: A LOOK BACK on 2017

As we now move in to an election year, it is important that all political parties reach consensus on Pakistan's economic reform priorities

By Dr Vaqar Ahmed

**A**t the very start of 2017, the government seemed upbeat about the newfound stability in the economy. The managers at Ministry of Finance felt confident that Pakistan will achieve a 6 percent growth rate by the end of the ongoing fiscal year. The narrative is slightly changing now and we understand that growth projections are being revised downwards.

While the government missed its own target of fiscal and current account deficits for 2016-17, the first five months of the current fiscal year 2017-18 do give some reasons to celebrate. We observe that the government's tax revenues show a 19.5 percent growth which may help

in bringing down the budget deficit to some extent. Similarly after a four year decline, merchandise exports in the first five months of this fiscal year have grown by 11.8 percent. During the same period remittances have also shown 1.3 percent growth. The recent weakening of rupee against major world currencies may further encourage remittances from abroad.

However this celebration is short lived as one looks at the factors which continue to weaken fiscal discipline. For example, the government's expenditure has fast grown and in November this year the government crossed its own limit set for the circular debt, which now stands at over PKR 421 billion. Such discretionary expenditures which are increasing at the cost of energy sector system inefficiencies are bound to increase as we approach the election year where more and more voters would need to be appeased.

The government has also remained successful in avoiding yet another IMF bailout (at least for the time being) as a result of USD 2.5 billion raised through Sukuk and Eurobonds. However, we understand that given the growing financing gap, this may not be enough and there are voices from within the Ministry of Finance informing that in order to arrange for debt servicing and import payments, the government will consider another bond issue in the upcoming months. Perhaps procuring further debt will become imminent given the pace at which imports are projected to grow- as per Planning Commission's Annual Plan. The July - October data shows a 26 percent growth over the previous corresponding period.

The year 2017 was also a year of missed reform opportunities. It became more difficult for businesses particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to do business in Pakistan. The doing business index rank fell to 147 out of 190 countries. The critical factors responsible for fall in Pakistan's rank were difficulties in getting credit (particularly by SMEs) and growing complexity of



Pakistan's tax regime. The uncertainty of tariff policy and related taxes on trade have also hurt business plans of long term investors. The most recent example is the arbitrary imposition of regulatory duties, several of which are now being rolled back on pressure from the private sector and consumer groups. The need to consolidate Pakistan's tax regime across federal and provincial domains and to harmonize the tax system across the country also remained a pipeline dream.

The Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) meeting of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) also ended in a reality check for the government as several key infrastructure development projects were dropped by China on account of weak preparedness of Pakistan side. The most notable loss is the reduction in the number of special economic zones (SEZs) on the priority list. The province which needed the SEZ the most i.e. Balochistan remained unable to prepare the feasibility for presentation to the Chinese.

This year also saw the government weakening the capacity of regulatory bodies and in case of few of these entities even curtailing their autonomy through amendments in the law. Organizations such as Securities and Exchange Commission and Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) greatly suffered. In the case of the former, organization's reputation got tainted when the top brass was dubbed by several quarters (including the courts) as the handymen for the former Finance Minister. In the case of latter, the government for a very long time kept CCP weak by not filling up the vacant positions of members. The commission remained understaffed for most of 2017.

The Council of Common Interests (CCI) has also tried this year to clip the powers of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA)

so that the regulatory body loses its right to independently set end tariff faced by consumers. The government would also not be under any compulsion to seek review of tariffs levied. Similar moves to clip powers of other regulators including Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority, Public Procurement Regulatory Authority, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, Frequency Allocation Board were also seen.

economic reform priorities of Pakistan. One hopes that mainstream parties will release their economic manifestos well before elections so that these can be debated by the constituents and stakeholders. As the early harvest projects under CPEC come to a completion, political parties need to think how best Pakistan can offer the benefits of CPEC to its neighbors and in turn negotiate deeper regional trade and investment integration.

This is particularly important for improving Pakistan's economic ties with Afghanistan, Iran, India and central Asia. Second, to increase the competitiveness of local enterprise, the cost of energy will need to be drastically lowered. This is important as currently our export-oriented industries face a much higher energy cost in comparison to the competitor economies. Finally, in order to encourage



formalization of businesses, the current and future governments must commit themselves to a fast-track reform of taxation regime. In doing so, Pakistan's tax authorities will need to ensure that distortions in taxes should not stifle production activity

In July of 2017, the State Bank of Pakistan allowed the currency movements to be determined by the market. Such independence was not liked by the Ministry of Finance and in haste the government appointed a new Governor at the Central Bank.

**The year 2017 was also a year of missed reform opportunities. It became more difficult for businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to do business in Pakistan. Our ease of doing business index ranking fell to 147 out of 190 countries. The critical factors responsible for this were difficulties in getting credit (particularly by SMEs) and the growing complexity of Pakistan's tax regime**

The candidature of the new Governor (who is still incumbent) was challenged in the Islamabad High Court by 23 senators who informed the court that the due process of recruitment of Governor was not completed.

As we now move in to the election year, it is important that all political parties have a consensus on

and all taxes should be designed or amended in a manner that the fairness principle i.e. rich paying a larger share relative to the poor is fully observed.

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# Opportunities for PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC MANAGERS

**A** ccording to the Asian Development Outlook for 2017 update and forecast, Pakistan's GDP growth was 5.3 percent in 2017 and is expected to rise to 5.5 percent in 2018. The country is now included in the list of economies that have a size of over \$300 billion. Out of 20 key growth indicators, 11 have hit the targeted growth rates while nine, primarily related to the industrial sector, couldn't meet expectations.

However, 3.5 percent is the highest growth rate the country had managed to attain in the last decade. It's also pertinent to mention here the latest IMF report on Pakistan shows the country's external debt at \$79.2 billion by June 2017.

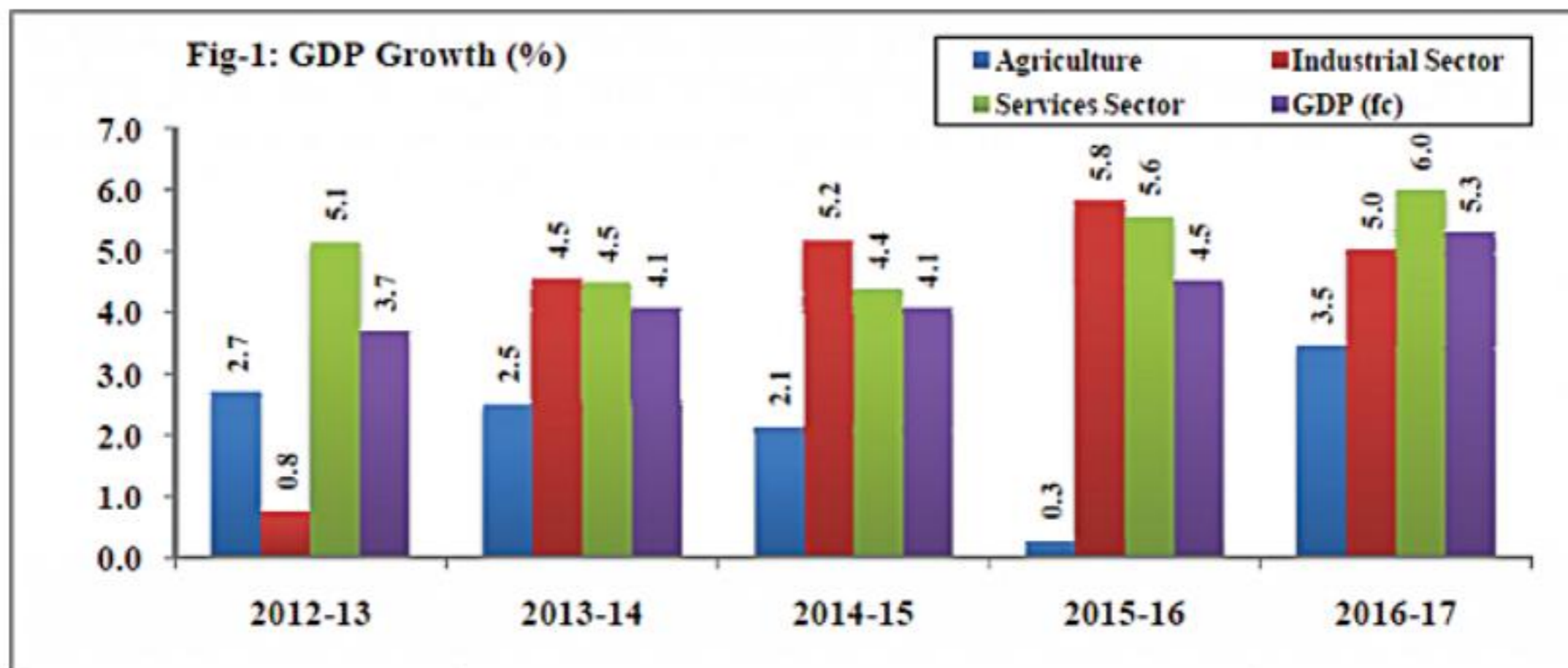
Thus, we're set to enter the election year with an expected 5.5 percent and targeted six percent GDP growth rates for 2018, and borrowing of \$10 billion as fresh foreign loans in a single year.

As 2017 has come to an end, keeping the above-mentioned economic trends and the upcoming election in view, there are at least five economic opportunities that must be utilised till they are available.

The first relates to low oil prices. Reduction in international oil prices has been a big relief for the Government of Pakistan, providing it much needed fiscal space. However, oil prices may soon rise again;







so, this opportunity must not be missed, and tax revenue should be increased in the meanwhile by expanding tax base. So far, the government has succeeded to some extent in bringing more individuals under the tax net, but not much success has been witnessed in increasing tax revenue.

The second big improvement in the country that must not be lost is the improvement in the security situation, particularly in Karachi. Better security conditions can be observed in the wake of the Karachi operation. No matter which party or coalition forms the new government, the gains made so far must not be reversed. With regards to Karachi, the factor that can singlehandedly make a significant difference in this regard is merit-based recruitments in the police department. Recently, the briefing of the army chief to the Senate has sent a positive signal about improvements in coordination among different organs of the state that can lead to better strategies to deal with security threats.

Thirdly, energy supply has substantially improved which is highly commendable; but in 2017, electricity generation and distribution yielded only 3.4 percent against a target of 12.5 percent. Moreover, Pakistan did significantly well in services sector and agriculture; but couldn't meet the set targets in industrial sector where output stood at five percent against a target of 7.7 percent. Energy supply is essential for accelerating the growth of industry. As the country benefits from a wave of Chinese

investment of nearly \$50 billion in transportation and energy infrastructure; it is important to utilise the investment and further improve the energy supply for the development of industrial and manufacturing units.

Fourthly, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as it unfolds, has been called a game-changer in terms of heavy investments in Pakistan's energy, road and transport projects. Pakistan is hoping to get a big boost from the investment in CPEC that envisages \$46 billion investment in infrastructure projects. In its recent review of Pakistan's economy under a three-year fund facility, the IMF praised Pakistan's robust growth, helped by

cannot create additional two million jobs per annum in the next 38 years required for Pakistan's young population. It is encouraging to note that the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) had initiated a youth technical and vocational programme to train 50,000 individuals last year. However, it is still unclear how far the graduates of this and such programmes will be able to secure jobs nationally and internationally. Easier said than done, but the commission must actively engage in outreach activities searching potential employers inside and outside the country. In addition, the commission may develop

partnerships with credit institutions that can provide requisite finance and advice to graduates interested in initiating their own micro-businesses. Such fine tuning and outreach with the demand side has been generally

missing in public-sector initiatives aimed at providing employment. Hardly based on sound studies showing job market trends and needs, such programmes have been loosely planned and implemented, resulting in waste of money and time of the state and the youth. This mismatch needs to be corrected now.

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**We're set to enter the election year with an expected 5.5 percent and targeted six percent GDP growth rate for 2018. We will also be borrowing \$10 billion as fresh foreign loans in a single year**

investment in CPEC as well as lower global oil prices. While a lot of things - such as its environmental and distributional aspects - need to be examined, corridor projects will, nonetheless, provide a tremendous regional-economic integration opportunity to Pakistan. Pakistan's economy is ranked 144 out of 190 economies in terms of the ease of doing business ranking prepared by the World Bank. In this regard, the government must pay immediate attention to set up a fair and quick dispensation mechanism for businesses. With internationalisation of business, a speedy dispute resolution mechanism is a must.

Last but not the least is the need for job creation. Public sector alone





# 2017: Instability manufactured crises and surrender

The most worrying developments of 2017 were related to a reversal on the state's commitment to fight extremism

By Raza Rumi

**T**he foregoing year was tumultuous to say the least. Pakistan's ruling elites - elected and unelected - reinforced old patterns of governance. After ten years of democratic transition, it seems that the gains made by the parliament have been partially reversed. At the end of 2017, we witness a resurgence of the judiciary-military combine as they continue to 'fix' the 'political' arena.

The first half of the year was consumed by the Panama case and two verdicts of the Supreme Court

resulted in the ouster of (former) Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The latter was disqualified on a mere technicality and the corruption cases were referred to accountability courts. The apex court by setting questionable precedents only repeated its past behaviour. In short, the law of necessity invoked since the 1950s, rhetorically shunned time and again, continues to be used by other names.

The decision to disqualify a sitting prime minister exposed the inherent weaknesses of Pakistan's democratic project. That Nawaz Sharif had fallen out with the establishment was an

open secret, but the manner in which his third dismissal occurred was alarming for it opens the doors for judicial coups in the future. It was hoped that after Musharraf's exit, the military had decided to take a backseat. Events of 2017 belie this theory; and it is clear that the military remains in charge not just of the security and foreign policies but also of the overall political direction of the country.

Sharif's ouster makes the future of his party and dynasty uncertain. Even though there are indications that the establishment prefers his younger brother, it is unclear how would



Nawaz factor disappear from the political field? Unless of course there is another exile planned for the former PM.

The year was not good for Pakistan's beleaguered civil society especially for digital freedoms. The year started with the mysterious abduction of social media activists who were released after weeks of detention and had chilling tales to narrate. Their main fault was the criticism of the military but they were painted as blasphemers in the mainstream media so as to justify the entire sordid episode. The year closes with another missing activist from Lahore whose main crime has been to advocate Pakistan-India peace. The shutdown of dozens of international nongovernmental organisations in 2017 is a gloomy sign. Some of the aid groups have not been clean in the past but how can the third sector be collectively punished?

While the judiciary and the military did what they have been doing, the worst perhaps was the conduct of political elites themselves. Nawaz Sharif suddenly remembered the supremacy of the parliament after his judicial ouster. During his third tenure, Sharif rarely attended the parliamentary sessions and his indifference to the imperative of building larger political coalitions resulted in political polarisation. At the end of 2017, he has a few allies, as Imran Khan and Zardari are willing to participate in the new engineering project that will open up spaces especially in the Punjab for them in the next election.

On the external front, 2017 was more of the same with regular shouting matches with Afghanistan, India and the United States. These crucial relationships remain strained largely due to lack of political and diplomatic input in the conduct of foreign policy. The silver lining is growing economic cooperation with China, which will help Pakistan in the long run. However, there were many voices of dissent about the terms and details of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). National debate on CPEC remains one-sided and largely ill-informed with little or no input from the Parliament.

On the positive side, the national census was completed after two decades. Similarly, the health authorities successfully fought the poliovirus and marginal improvements in education enrolment were

recorded. The best news from the year was that other than the stock markets fluctuating downwards, Nawaz Sharif's succession by his loyal associate ensured policy continuity. But the political instability of 2017 and beyond would cast its shadow over the economy. This is one lesson that the



permanent establishment of the country is yet to learn.

The most worrying developments of 2017 were related to a reversal on the state's commitment to fight extremism. Throughout the year, blasphemy was used as a brazen instrument to crush dissenters. The brutal lynching of Mashal Khan happened amid this charged environment and the state cannot absolve its responsibility in aiding and abetting violent religious sentiments. Later in the year, blasphemy was used as a tool to pressurise the government. An ugly display of extremism on the streets of Islamabad for three weeks made a mockery of the so-called National Action Plan (NAP) against terrorism. The year 2017 will be remembered for the de facto burial of NAP. As if establishment's patronage to Barelvi groups was not enough, the 'good' jihadists were successfully inducted into electoral politics. Without disarming violent groups, their mainstreaming is suicidal; and yet this

seems to be the future course.

Notwithstanding the brave individual journalists and their contributions in Pakistan, the overall conduct of media industry remained questionable. Many television anchors aided the manufacturing of multiple crises, promoted one-sided

narratives, and their abandonment of ethics was disturbing to say the least. The removal of PEMRA chairman by a court order in December was another ominous sign for the former was trying to regulate some of the

errant TV channels. At the end of the day, the corporate media backed by powers-that-be, won.

The year ahead presents a variety of challenges. Foremost among these is securing a peaceful transition of power from one elected government to another after 2018

election. Transparent and fair electoral process is a key requirement to facilitate the third, rule-based transfer of power in a decade. To achieve that, the political elites will have to reconsider their tunnel-vision politics, shun the establishment-led engineering, and unite against extra-constitutional steps such as a government of technocrats.

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**On the positive side, the national census was completed after two decades. Similarly, the health authorities successfully fought the polio virus and marginal improvements in education enrolment were recorded**



# Year roundup



## In 2017, civilian authority eroded further, and this time we know it for sure

By Umair Rasheed

**P**akistan started the year 2017 with the shadows of Dawn leaks looming large on its political landscape. The story broken by daily Dawn's staffer had exposed the existence of differences between civilians and the military establishment on the way the country was to wage its existential battle against extremism.

At the heart of the matter, according to the report, were three militant outfits whose heads have served strategic purposes of the Pakistani deep state since the Afghan war. The report claimed that in the face of mounting international pressure and concerns about isolation, civilians had wanted action against the Haqqani Network, Jaish-e-Muhammad of Masood Azhar and Jamaatud Dawa of Hafiz Saeed.

The story had been dismissed by

the civil and the military leadership, yet Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid was asked to step down and a probe was announced into the 'leak'. The outcome of the probe was shared with the public in the form of a notification issued by the Prime Minister's Office on April 29. If the leak itself had just exposed differences within the civil and military leadership, the military's

of its constitutional role as an executive agency under the command of the Ministry of Defence, the armed forces' spokesperson rejected that the PM's notification as incomplete in a tweet. It took till the 10th of the next month to restore some semblance of order as the ISPR withdrew the tweet following a meeting between then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Chief

**We begin 2018 where we started in 2017, albeit with more certainty and less doubt about erosion of civilians' constitutional authority to direct foreign and internal security policies of the country**

initial reaction to the outcome of the probe confirmed that the civilians' [constitutional] authority to dictate their point of view had in practice eroded significantly.

In what was clearly a transgression

of the Army Staff (COAS) Qamar Javed Bajwa.

When the dust settled on the Dawn leaks, the civilians had lost an information minister, an advisor to the PM on foreign affairs, and the principal



information officer.

In the subsequent months, a legal battle concerning the money trial for his family's London properties culminated in Nawaz Sharif's disqualification over unclaimed receivables from a Gulf-based company owned by one of his sons. Though, Sharif lost the premiership, he managed to regain his party's chairmanship with an amendment in the relevant law.

Meanwhile, the new cabinet sworn into office in the wake of the Panama Papers verdict saw Sharif loyalists in all important positions. Ahsan Iqbal replaced Chaudhary Nisar as the interior minister, Khawaja Asif assumed the charge of the foreign ministry, and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi became the new PM.

Both Asif and Iqbal had their moments in days to come.

Speaking at a session with Asia Society on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly's session in New York, the foreign minister admitted the need for the country to put its house in order.

Asif's statement was in line with the position associated with the civilians in daily Dawn's report. That is, civilians wanted to act against Haqqanis, Saeed's JuD and all other liabilities. Asif also reminded the United States that these liabilities were once serving its strategic interests in the region as well.

When Asif was making these policy statements at international capitals, back home some of those liabilities were well on their way to enter the mainstream electoral process. In the NA-120 by-poll, a candidate fielded by the JuD's political wing and another by an upstart barelvi extremist group, Tehrik Labbaik Rasoolullah, managed to secure around 10 percent of the vote polled.

A Reuters report published around the same time in September held that the mainstreaming plan had been proposed in 2016 by the military leadership to then PM Nawaz Sharif who rejected it.

At a press briefing in the first week of October, ISPR director general admitted the existence of the plan without commenting on either the army's role or the former PM's disapproval.

Come November, the 10-month-long house arrest of JuD chief Hafiz Saeed came to an end on Lahore High Court directives. Meanwhile, the other extremist outfit that appeared on the electoral map in NA-120 by-poll, TLR, led a 21-day-long sit-in at a major thoroughfare leading into the federal capital, paralysing life in the twin cities.

Following court directives, an operation was launched by civilian law enforcement agencies, however, it ended in failure for reasons yet to be clarified. Subsequently, the government

matter should be resolved peacefully.

Eventually, the sit-in ended with an agreement between the civilians and the protesters brokered by the COAS whose representative, a serving major general, was among the signatories.

The agreement and the COAS's role in it was subsequently questioned by the Islamabad High Court. But thanks to the hearing at IHC in another matter, the claims made in the Reuters report about civilian leadership's disapproval of the mainstreaming plan were subsequently confirmed. During the hearing, the Interior Ministry stated that it considered MML as an extension of the JuD and opposed its registration as a political party with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

If at the beginning 2017, there were just leaks and rumours about differences between the civilians and the military over the approach towards extremism, the year has ended on a much more certain note.

In a press briefing just a couple of days before the year's end, the ISPR director general held that Pakistan has done what is needed to be done against

extremist outfits within its borders.

At a time when JuD and Jaish-e-Muhammad chiefs reside comfortably within our borders and the elusive Haqqani Network remains operational, such a claim by the ISPR amounts to a vote of confidence in these groups' credentials. This is quite contrary to Asif's admission made earlier in the year in the US and is clearly not in line with the military high command's reported assurances to the Senate in a remarkable in-camera session earlier in December.

So we begin 2018 where we started in 2017, albeit with more certainty and less doubt about erosion of civilians' constitutional authority to direct foreign and internal security policies of the country.



requisitioned army's assistance under Article 245 of the constitution. Instead of following the directive, the army expressed reservations over use of force in the matter and sought clarifications on whether the police were used to their full capacity; written instructions were issued to the Rangers, and, the exact role required from the troops.

In media reports, legal experts held that the armed forces were well within their constitutional domain to seek clarifications, but they could neither delay nor deny execution of such orders. Earlier during the sit-in, in what was the second controversial tweet by the ISPR director general in 2017, he had conveyed the COAS's desire to the government that the





# Shrinking press freedom in 2017

The year started with the news of enforced disappearance of five bloggers and social media activists including university professor Salman Haider

By Jawad Zulfiqar

In the World Press Freedom Index released in 2017 by the media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Pakistan was ranked at the 139th spot. The ranking itself indicates that media are not free in Pakistan.

Press freedom and freedom of expression run parallel. In countries where freedom of expression is limited, the media is restricted from publishing and broadcasting the truth or dissenting opinions.

There were multiple such cases in the country in 2017.

The year started with the news of enforced disappearance of five bloggers and social media activists including a university professor, Salman Haider.

Subsequently, a malicious campaign went underway, spearheaded by some news channels and social media accounts accusing these men of publishing blasphemous material on social media and running anti-state pages. Four of these men were released after weeks of protests and

demonstrations. The fifth remains disappeared.

Then there was the recovery of BBC journalist Zeenat Shehzaadi apparently from a remote area in Baluchistan. However, no one has since heard from her as she remains inaccessible to media persons.

The News reporter Ahmad Noorani was assaulted in Islamabad during the days of the Panama Papers trial. Three unidentified men on a motorcycle intercepted his car in the federal capital. They were joined by another three men on a motorcycle



who then assaulted the journalist with iron rods. They fled away on their motorcycles soon after the incident.

The condition of press censorship worsened in the conflict-ridden province of Baluchistan. Distribution of newspapers, that happen to be the only source of information in remote areas where there is little Internet connectivity, remains suspended under threats from insurgents.

According to RSF, hostile conditions and restrictions in which journalists operate in the country is the reason why the collective state of press freedom in Pakistan remains poor.

"Restrictive laws including ones that penalize defamation and blasphemy; threats directed at journalists from a variety of actors, including the military and intelligence agencies and militant groups; and the threat of violence contribute to a hostile operating environment for Pakistan's journalists," RSF report said. RSF also reported that journalists are pressurised to provide

positive coverage of the military and its activities. One such example is the way the media was under pressure to cover the Zarb-e-Azb operation in a positive light.

"Pakistan's journalists, who already face severe obstacles in covering activities of the armed forces, in 2016 came under acute pressure to disseminate positive coverage of military operations, with some sources reporting that the military figures issue explicit

this happens, the freedom to publish alternative opinions is affected.

A law that has paved way for this state of affairs was the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Bill (PECB) which was passed in September 2016. It allowed the authorities to censor the content published online and act against anyone whose online speech was not compatible with the state's policy. Another law in Pakistan that stops people from expressing their alternative opinion on religion,

military, judiciary and Constitution is the Official Secrets Act. This law allows the state to act against anyone whose speech is deemed to be in contempt of these institutions.

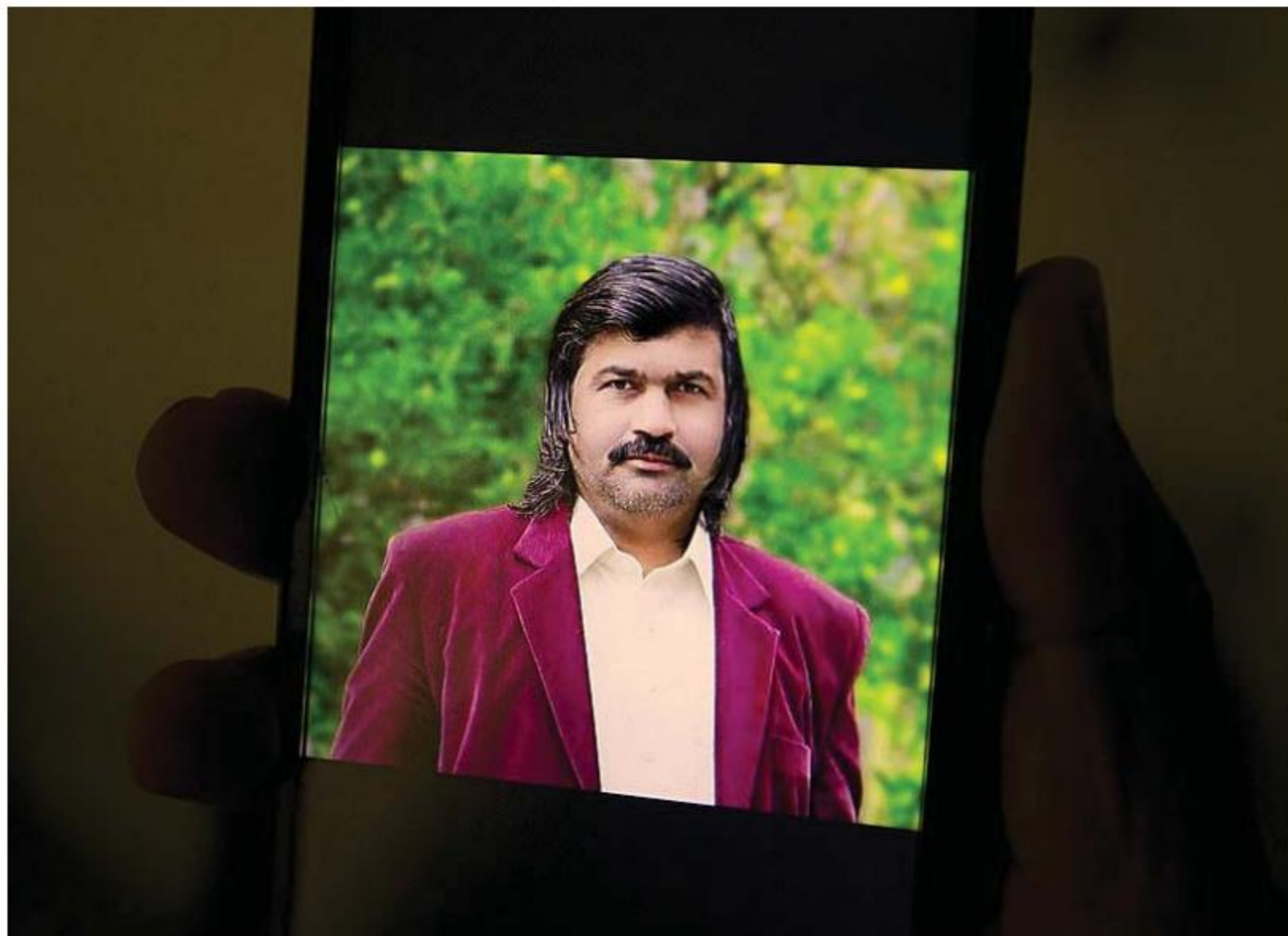
Reportedly, the state also engages in online surveillance. This leads to self-censorship. The public no longer feels

free to express their opinion on their blogs or social media pages. The constant threat of being arrested for speaking against the government or the military stops them from expressing their opinion altogether.

These factors collectively led to the shrinking press freedom in 2017.

**Journalists in Pakistan live in constant threat and it is due to this that they are afraid to cover sensitive issues. Public opinion in favour of bloggers who were arrested earlier this year was censored and the narrative on the incident was dictated by the authorities. When this happens, the freedom to publish alternative opinions is lost**

directives for coverage," RSF report added. Journalists in Pakistan live in constant threat and it is due to this that they are afraid to cover sensitive issues. Public opinion in favour of bloggers who were arrested earlier this year was censored and the narrative on the incident was dictated by the authorities. When





# Sports 2017



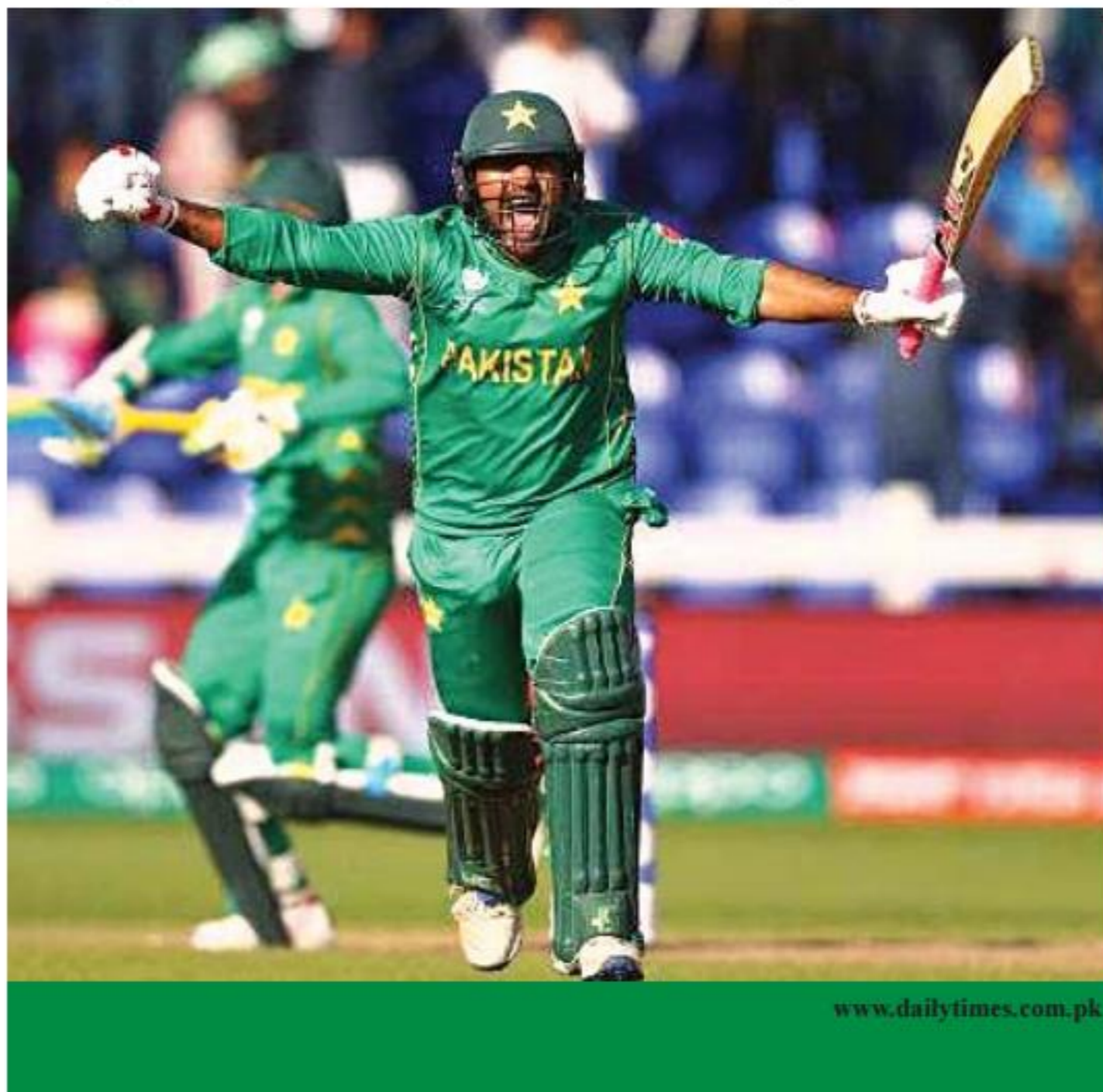
2017 was a mixed year for Pakistan's sports scene. While the pinnacle of Pakistan's sporting achievements in 2017 was inarguably the ICC Champions Trophy win in England, the country fared poorly in other sports. Following are some of the highs and lows of Pakistan in sports in 2017.

## HIGHS:

### **Pakistan Women Team's first-ever win against New Zealand**

After a debacle in ICC Women's World Cup in England, where Pakistan's women's team failed to win a single game, Pakistan and New Zealand squared off in the ICC Women's Championship series with divergent expectations. Pakistan's veteran captain, Sana Mir, was openly criticised by the management and replaced with their powerhouse all-rounder, BismahMaroof.

While New Zealand won the ODI series 2-1, Pakistan walk away with a spring in their step after they won the third and last match. Prior to the series, Pakistan and New Zealand had faced each other in a total of 10 ODIs, but the green shirts had never ended on the winning side.





### Ronaldinho and Friends

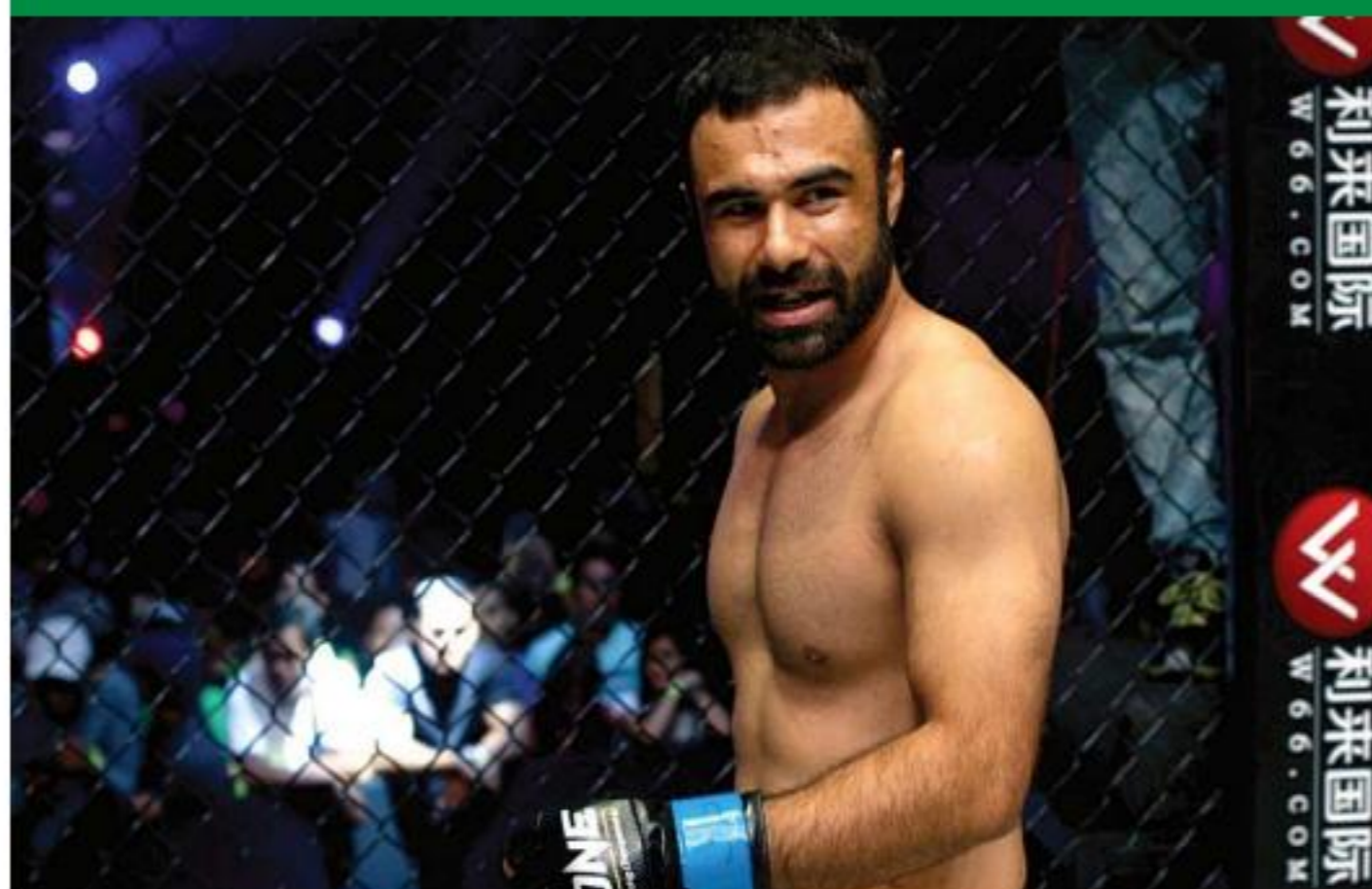
Following cricket's return to Pakistan came the news of a football event featuring the football greats Ronaldinho and Ryan Giggs. The development came at a time when Pakistan's football is perhaps going through its worst face. The five international players accompanying Ronaldinho and Giggs were Dutch star George Boateng, former England goalkeeper David James, former French players Robert Pires and Nicolas Anelka, and Portugal's Luis Boa Morte.

Two seven-a-side games were played which included Pakistan national players including Kaleemullah and Hassan Bashir among others in Karachi and Lahore. The successful conduct of the games also helped boost the confidence of international sports fraternity towards visiting Pakistan.

### Bashir Ahmed - the MMA star

Pakistan's MMA Star, Bashir Ahmad won a gold medal in the 85kg weight in the expert division at the Bangkok Jujitsu Championships in Thailand.

Ahmad is known as the "Godfather of Pakistani MMA." He was born in Pakistan and left for the United States as a child. He served in the United States Army and did a tour of Iraq in 2004-2005 where he began studying martial arts. In 2009 he moved to Pakistan to promote the sport of Mixed Martial Arts through his organization (PAKMMA). Bashir Ahmad is the first person to represent Pakistan in international MMA competitions.



### LOWS:

#### Another disastrous year for hockey

After missing out on Hockey World Cup and last year's Olympics in Brazil, the national side didn't show any major improvement this year either. Pakistan fared badly in Hockey World League earlier this year and followed it up with terrible displays in both Asia Cup and four nation series in Australia.

Head coach Farhat Khan also stepped down recently after less than six months in the position following national team's poor performance under him. Rumors suggest that the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) is looking to hire a foreign coach to change their fortunes in country's national sport.

Pakistani football hits rock-bottom as PFF suspended

Since 2015 and the controversial third election of Makhdoom Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat, the PFF has been

going through an internal feud that blocked the local and national teams to partake to any international event. It's been three years since the last edition of Pakistan Premier Football League happened and some of the departmental teams have disbanded their football sides all together.

Despite FIFA's continuous warnings, the government continued to interfere in PFF affairs. In July 2017, the FIFA threatened to suspend the PFF's membership if it kept refusing to hand football affairs to its president-elect Faisal Saleh Hayat. Former head coach Nasir Ismail asked FIFA to hold fresh elections for the PFF's presidency but of no use. Eventually on 11 October 2017, FFAFA decided to suspend PFF with immediate effect until it puts its house in order. Since then, no headway has been made in this regards and the government authorities look least interested.





# Af-Pak ties

## hope for the future



By Wasay Ibrahim

**T**he year 2017 didn't get off to a good start in terms of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Not when an IMF report released in January estimated that this country was planning, over the next 18 months, to forcibly return some 2.5 million Afghan refugees; translating into a 10-percent-increase to the national population for one of the world's poorest nations that has also endured more than a decade-and-a-half of conflict since 9/11. This, said the report, was in addition to the 700,000 refugees that had been 'expelled' back in 2016.

Underscoring the fragile security situation in Afghanistan, a twin-suicide attack struck near the Afghan parliament on January 10. Following

these blasts, an Afghan government spokesperson said that terrorists were able to strike because of the safe-havens afforded to them by this country. Later that same week, crowds gathered outside the Pakistan embassy in Kabul, chanting anti-ISI slogans, to protest Islamabad's alleged support of terrorists. Five days later, COAS Gen Qamar Bajwa telephoned Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to condole over the incident and the loss of lives. He also emphasised that bilateral cooperation was crucial in preventing terrorist attacks, particularly when it came to border security.

January 30 brought with it more bilateral tension when suspected terrorists on the Afghan side of Khyber Agency fired at a Pakistani check-post, critically wounding a Sepoy. The ISPR released a statement following the

incident, saying that Afghanistan needed to do a better job at managing security on its side of the border.

Yet by February 9, things appeared to be looking up. Pakistan granted scholarships to 3,000 Afghan students. But the Sehwan Sharif attack in Pakistan one week later put paid to this goodwill gesture. At least 90 people were killed and some 300 injured, leading Islamabad to seal the Chaman border. In addition, Pakistani security forces received shoot-on-sight orders to target anyone trying to enter the country illegally from the Afghan side. Following this, Islamabad handed over to the Ghani government a list of 76 Pakistani terrorists that had found shelter in its country. Promptly responding in kind, Kabul presented this country with the names of 85 members belonging to both the Afghan



Taliban and Haqqani Network that it said had found sanctuary within Pakistan's borders. Moreover, Kabul warned that it would seek international sanctions against terrorist outfits as well as their supporters. DG ISPR Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor was unimpressed. At the end of the month, in an interview with a local television channel, he said that the time had come for Afghanistan to abandon the status quo and its "anti-Pakistan" lens.

Af-Pak ties took an upward turn on March 17, when Britain hosted talks to resolve the ongoing border issue. The interaction was described as "positive, productive and cordial". Border crossings finally opened after a month on March 21.

Again, this was not to last. Indeed,

about the military operation. The Army, however, refuted these claims; saying that this had been shared with Kabul both verbally and in writing.

Then came US Donald Trump's strategic vision for South Asia, which he unveiled on August 20. His public confirmation that this would see India having an expanded role in Afghanistan naturally didn't go down well here in Pakistan. It was the same when it came to such comments as, "we are not nation building, we are killing terrorists". From where Islamabad was sitting this more than suggested that the situation across the border was about to escalate; thereby making it extremely distrustful of both Washington and Kabul.

On October 16, the Afghan

statement and with Pakistan blaming the US for the Taliban no-show.

The next month brought music, as it were, to Pakistan's ears. For, Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah acknowledged that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) had formed a stronghold in his country. This was the first time that anyone from the Ghani government had formally recognised that anti-Pakistan elements (other than ISIS) had a base there. However, Abdullah also pointed out that the reason that the TTP was able to gain a foothold in the first place in Afghanistan was because of the chaos created by the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network on our side of the border. Nevertheless, his statement still represented a positive development for the bilateral relationship.

On December 2, President Ghani announced willingness to hold government-to-government talks with all countries in the region - including Pakistan - with a view to expanding anti-terrorism cooperation. Some two weeks later, on December 17, lawmakers here stressed the need to strengthen ties between the two sides. MNA Shazia Marri said that it would be impossible for Islamabad to secure any measure of stability as long as Afghanistan remained embroiled in conflict.

Despite the year's end bringing with it a certain thawing of ties - the Af-Pak relationship remains a fragile one. In other words, it can disintegrate in a heartbeat if a major terrorist attack is carried out on either side. Indeed, it is already under undue stress due to the Trump administration's regional interference. Thus both Kabul and Islamabad must do their utmost to refrain from knee-jerk and poorly thought out reactions in the aftermath of terror. But sadly, the blame-game has become a convenient substitute policy. To sum up, therefore, it is crucial that both states follow through on the shared rhetoric of increased cooperation on the counter-terrorism front, including, above all, intelligence sharing. Russia and China, both of whom are being increasingly drawn into the ongoing Afghan conflict, have a positive role to play in getting the Taliban to the negotiating table and to ease lingering Af-Pak tensions; as well as countering unnecessary Indian involvement. The US, too, has a major role to play here, provided it puts regional interests above its own.



bilateral relations hit an all-time low in May when nine people were killed and 40 injured as Afghan soldiers opened fire on our security forces that had been guarding a census team here on this side of the border. Among the dead were five children, three women and four Frontier Constabulary (FC) personnel. Pakistan didn't hold back and responded with its own round of cross-border aggression; claiming to have killed some 50 Afghan soldiers. Kabul downplayed this number, saying that the accurate figure was just three dead. Later that month, on May 13, a round of military-to-military talks was held with a view to trust-building.

Once more, this was to be an unlasting 'peace'. For when the Pakistan Army launched in July the Khyber IV phase of Radd-ul-Fassad against both ISIS and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar - the Ghani government slammed Pakistan for failing to share with it information

Taliban were a no-show at peace talks in Oman despite both Kabul and Islamabad urging them to attend. The four-nation Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QGC), comprising Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US had scheduled the powwow to try and pave the way for direct talks between the Afghan government and the 'militants'; with an eventual view towards a power-sharing agreement of sorts. While the Afghan Taliban said that no one had invited them to the moot - Islamabad stressed that their absence underscored how it had no leverage over them. The Afghan Taliban had attended previous rounds of QGC talks but had said they were no longer interested after a US drone strike took out the group's leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansur, in Balochistan back in July 2016. Thus the latest QGC meeting ended with no joint





# The state of youth in Pakistan

By Eeshah Omer

Our education system and public narratives shun skepticism, free thought, a critical mindset, analytical reasoning, multi-dimensional pursuit of knowledge and methodical research. Instead they promote traditionalism, unquestioning conservatism and suffocating uniformity

**T**he youth in any country is considered as a barometer of its future potential. Few countries can match the youth bulge of Pakistan. Pakistan's population growth has made it the world's sixth most populated country. The largest segment of this population is the youth. This so-called youth bulge is both an asset and a liability for the country.

The youth cohort makes up over 60 percent of the population providing Pakistan an opportunity to take advantage of its strategic position in order to enhance the country's economic growth. But we are lagging in terms of investing into the human resources of this segment of our population. Much has been written about the spread of extremism and fundamentalism among the youth of Pakistan. But they should not to be

blamed. The state sponsored fundamentalist and pro-extremist narratives artificially manufactured since 1979 to serve political ends have permeated the society and have become central to mindsets of children who grew up during the last three decades.

These were the decades when as 'state policy', the curriculum in our educational institutions right from primary to secondary and colleges to universities was twisted to include literalist interpretations of Islam. The mindset of our youth was shaped in favour of Wahhabi ideas which are alien to the land of Sufis and antagonistic to a socio cultural milieu which over the centuries evolved to encourage diversity and peaceful coexistence.

At the same time, an isolationist worldview was also inculcated. Amartya Sen argues that fundamentalism and all puritan ideologies encourage cultivation of singular ideologies. One becomes only religious in terms of professing a singular ideology with the exclusion of every other identity. When such a state is reached in the development of a personality, he or she shuns all other identities and considers all other influences as "false identities." One is neither a Pakistani nor a musician, Punjabi or a poet, a cricket player as well as a mountaineer and a government servant. A person only adopts one identity, a fundamentalist



narrow minded interpretation of a doctrine which strictly forbids any other ideology to become part of our personality. This self-righteous singular dispensation is prone to violence, bigotry and hypocrisy. In turn, this becomes part and parcel of a stigma that encourages a macho paternalistic idea of man's domination of the society and culture, thus leading to such ingrained concepts of treating women folk with not only indifference but also an attitude of contempt which borders on the realms of inhumanity and psychopathic behaviours.

Such violent behavioural patterns form the very foundation and basis of our traditional feudal and misogynist mindset which in spite of a certain level of either educational or foreign exposure or influence, fails to transform the inner soul of our so-called "educated" and "liberal" youth that boasts of being enlightened but finds itself unable to shed this enormous burden and baggage.

Our education system and public narratives shun skepticism, free thought, a critical mindset, analytical reasoning and multi-dimensional pursuit of knowledge and methodical research. Instead they promote traditionalism, unquestioning conservatism and suffocating uniformity.

Many of our youth are in a complete state of limbo as well as confusion. They are directionless, unsure and defensive about their relevance in the society and place in the community of nations.

The majority of our youth do not possess the skills to engage in meaningful employment; thus, adding

comparatively more educated and lives in bigger cities are more connected with the world and indulge in social media engagement. But the intellectual curiosity and technical know-how needed to enable young men and women to build new startups and enterprises are missing as it is not encouraged by our education system.

In 2017, scores of social media activists took to their respective micro-blogging platforms to express grief over the three-week-long sit-in at the Faizabad Interchange, which had paralysed normal life in and around the federal capital. 25-year-old Jasmine Afridi penned the following on Imran Khan's antics during the shutdown, "This pathetic and repulsive troll is still asking for resignations. The

outdated and has not been implemented to its full potential. On the whole, Pakistan's economy is lagging almost 20-years behind the regional counterparts. Improving access to finance and promoting networks to enable innovation can catalyse the youth's transition to leadership positions, ultimately allowing greater access to economy and breaking through the growth ceiling.

Societal evils like drugs, guns, alcohol, petty street crimes have found fertile ground in the presence of ignorance and illiteracy amongst the youth of our country. Following the alleged death of a LUMS student due to drug intoxication, several drug abusers and peddlers were caught



**The intellectual curiosity and technical know-how needed to enable young men and women to build new startups and enterprises are missing as they are not encouraged by our education system**

millions to the unemployed. Some fall prey to forces of terrorism and extremism. In the rural areas of Pakistan, in small and medium-sized towns across the country, the majority of youth are unemployed. Others fill the different tiers of our service sector employed in menial and low paid jobs or get employed in unproductive and inefficient farm related businesses.

The segment of the youth that is

amount of hate for himself this megalomaniac idiot has generated in hearts of people like me is unprecedented and he shall witness it in 2018 General election." Such is the pressure of conformity that when Imaan Mazaricriticised the role of the Pakistan Army, she had to later apologise for her "choice of words" and harsh narrative against the armed forces of the country on Facebook.

The youth policy in Pakistan is

from Quaid-e-Azam University, Iqra University, NUST, COMSATS and Roots school. Similarly, the death of Mashal Khan in the premises of the Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan on 13 April 2017 over fake allegations of posting blasphemous content online shows the nihilism that has gripped even those who are 'educated' among the millions of semi-literate youth.

What is urgently needed is to fix our education system, skill-development opportunities and have a national consensus on a meaningful youth policy.





# Judiciary — The New Establishment?

One would hope that the judiciary keeps the track and continues to act independently - free of fear of reprisals by the elite and unfazed by monetary incentives

By Imtiaz Gul

**T**he year 2017 will be remembered for judicial ruling that threw a third-time prime minister out of the office. An ascendant and assertive Supreme Court - the constitutional apex court - found Nawaz Sharif in violation of his oath, disqualified him for being dishonest and also ordered his trial on financial corruption charges.

Nawaz Sharif's disqualification was the culmination of an episode that began in March 2016 with the dumping in media of the 11.5m files called the Panama Papers dumped in

the media by the world's fourth biggest offshore law firm, Mossack Fonseca. It also included information on four London prime properties that Sharif's own.

It unleashed a dynamic that galvanized the entire nation.

Beyond doubt, Panama Papers was the single largest subject that consumed thousands of minutes of TV debate and occupied considerable space in the print media as it involved a sitting prime minister. The court ruled that the Sharif family failed to explain the source and mode of transaction of some 40 million dollars out of Pakistan. Little explanation as to

whether the family had paid taxes on this among.

Many Pakistanis hailed the July 28 ruling as a big step forward in the country's struggle for prioritizing accountability of the ruling elites as an unavoidable necessity of a functional democracy.

Sharif and his loyalists, however, decried the Supreme Court for what they think was a legally weak ground for his disqualification. Frustrated over the "nexus between the judiciary and the military" and embittered by the loss of power with the next election only a few months away, Sharif and his confidants kept pouring scorn on the



judiciary, implying it acted on the behest of the mighty military establishment.

Little do they realize, it seems, that with the passage of time - and largely thanks to the new service rules former chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry introduced to considerably improve the financial lot of the judges - most senior judges have apparently acted with unprecedented fearless discretion.

This has certainly catapulted the judiciary into Pakistan's new establishment, however controversial it may appear in the eyes of Nawaz Sharif and his companions, who have all reacted to the July 28 ruling that disqualified the prime minister, with princely vengeance - as if they were law onto themselves.

Former Finance Minister Ishaq Dar offers an instructive example of this mindset; although indicted in cases about assets that are disproportionate to his known sources of income, he continued to look after the ministry, and eventually left for London on the pretext of medical treatment.

In December, the accountability court declared him absconder too but Dar remained the finance minister on leave.

Despite drawing flak from the Nawaz camp, the senior judiciary also tried to balance its adjudication when it absolved Imran Khan of any wrongdoing under Article 61/62 but disqualified his second-in-command, Jehangir Tareen for not declaring before authorities' assets that his family owns in the UK.

But this balancing act did not satisfy Sharif, who continued blowing hot and cold, alluding to an invisible nexus between the judiciary and the General Headquarters (GHQ). He also threatened anti-judiciary mass-mobilization.

But the question arising out of this is whether these threats will brow-beat the judiciary and whether Sharif and co are doing a service to the nation and democratic evolution by raising questions on its integrity. Also, will political brinkmanship and intimidation cow down the new establishment i.e. judiciary, which has been asking questions that directly



relate to rule of law, respect for it and good governance in the country. These belong to the fundamentals of democratic societies and as such

remembered for its activism rooted in the quest for accountability and the rule of law. During this year, the judiciary indeed emerged as the new

**All through the year, controversies accompanied the raging debate around the independence and the conduct of the judiciary vis a vis Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan. This makes it imperative for the apex court to proactively work to rub off perceptions of partiality - mostly coming from the Sharif camp. Its strength lies in absolute impartiality and strict adherence to fundamentals of jurisprudence**

power centre, the new establishment which became the centre of attention for both the civilians and the GHQ. This way it also became subject of negative aspersions and was accused of being politicized or unnecessary intrusion into administrative matters.

That is why all through the year,

should be the concern of all stakeholders including people at large and state institutions.

One would, however, hope that judiciary keeps the track and continues to act independently - free of fear of reprisals by the elites and unfazed by potential monetary incentives offered.

Regardless of what course the Supreme Court takes in the 2018, the year 2017 will most probably be

controversies accompanied the raging debate around the independence and the conduct of the judiciary vis a vis Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan. This makes it imperative for the apex court to proactively work for rubbing off perceptions of partiality - mostly coming from the Sharif camp. Its strength lies in brute impartiality and strict adherence to fundamentals of jurisprudence.





# SC emerges as most powerful institution in 2017

By Masood Rehman

**ISLAMABAD:** Although all the three pillars of the state (executive, legislature and judiciary) have their separate role in the trichotomy of powers system in Pakistan, the Supreme Court of Pakistan emerged as the most power pillar of the state during the year 2017.

Owing to Panama Papers case, which led to disqualification of thrice elected prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the court remained the centre of attention of the masses and a focused point in year 2017 both at the national and international level.

The court heard thousands of cases during the year and disposed of over 16600 cases. However, despite inheriting a political nature, the Panama Papers case had been on rise on the judicial horizon throughout the year and it created ripples on the political horizon, that is still echoing at every nook and corner of the country.

It was said that not the judges, but their judgments speak. But this time, the judges were seen speaking more than their judgments, once again.

In their observations the judges,

The superior judiciary, apex court as well as high courts, exercised full judicial activism in the year 2017

particularly Justice Asif Saeed Khosa, who headed the five-member larger bench which heard the Panama case termed the ousted premier as 'Godfather' and 'Sicilian mafia'.

The judges even stated, "whether the sky falls or land bursts, we will deliver the verdict in accordance with the law and the constitution".

In its July 28, 2017 verdict in the Panama case, the Supreme Court not only disqualified Nawaz Sharif as prime minister, but also directed the anti-corruption watchdog to file three graft references against him and his family members in the accountability court within six weeks. The trial court wrapped up the proceedings within six-months.

The verdict resulted in the former prime minister asking "MujhayKeyunNikala?" (Why was I ousted?), a statement that became quite famous in the country.

In its detailed order on the review

petition of Mr Sharif against the Panama verdict, the apex court held that the ousted prime minister tried to fool the court and people, both inside and outside the parliament, and never came up before the court with the whole truth.

"Nawaz Sharif even tried to fool the apex court without realizing, 'You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time'," the verdict maintained.

Justifying the dismissal of the review plea, the verdict ruled that the court could not have shut its eyes when an asset of Mr Sharif arising out of Iqama (work permit) having surfaced during the investigation of the case and admitted by him to be his in no uncertain terms, was not found to have been disclosed in the election nomination papers.

It further said since the country's



prime minister was thought to be the ethos personified of the nation and he represented at the national and international level, denying an asset established or defending a trust deed written in 2006 in a font becoming commercial in 2007 was below the dignity and decorum of the office he holds.

The parliamentarians and cabinet members of ruling PML-N were seen more in the apex court than the parliament during the months' long proceedings of the Panama case.

In another high profile political case filed by a PML-N legislator HanifAbbasi seeking disqualification of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and secretary general Jahangir Tareen for having undeclared offshore companies and recipients of prohibited foreign funding, a three-member bench of the top court headed by chief justice of Pakistan MianSaqibNisar on December 15, 2017, gave a clean chit to Imran Khan. However disqualified Jahangir Tareen, referred the matter pertaining to alleged foreign funding of the PTI to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for probe. The court held that ECP could check the foreign funding of any political entity.

Mr Abbasi's petition was termed a counterblast of Panama case by the PTI. However, the court dispelled this impression in its verdict. The same day, another three-member bench of the apex court dismissed National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) appeal seeking to re-open Hudaibiya Paper Mills case involving Rs 1.2 billion corruption against the Sharif family.

Most of the lawyers, politicians and general public viewed that the court maintained the balance in the Panama case and the Imran- Tareen disqualification case, by disqualifying Mr Sharif and Mr Tareen, from each side.

The court also took notice of Faizabad sit-in by a religious party, which kept the citizens of Islamabad and Rawalpindi paralysed about 23 consecutive days. The court ordered the federal government to peacefully end the sit-in.

During 2017, the court also directed the federal government to

remove the name of PPP's former federal minister for petroleum Dr Asim Hussain from Exit Control List (ECL) and allowed him twice to move abroad for medical check-up.

In a case involving former financial adviser of Balochistan Khalid Langoo accused of corruption, the court ruled that the discretionary power of NAB chairman about plea bargain was not legitimate and it could not be allowed. In another case pertaining to illegal appointments in NAB, the court ordered removal of Directors General (DG) NAB in Karachi, Lahore and Balochistan.

In various cases of political nature, the chief justice of Pakistan MianSaqibNisar remarked that political dirt should not be washed in the



**According to senior lawyers, there is vast room for improvement in our judicial system and institutions should work in their constitutional domain so the democratic system of the country can be strengthened**

judicial laundry. But political cases are still coming to the court.

After the Panama case verdict, Nawaz Sharif and leaders of PML-N as well as leaders of some other political parties and some sections of media started criticising the court, which forced the CJP to a clarification that decisions were being made in accordance with the law and the constitution and the court was neither under pressure of any quarters nor it would bear any pressure.

He said the court was not being dictated by any one, and that the episode of baseless allegations should be end, adding that the patience of the court should not be gauged further. He said the court was being targeted and maligned even though it was exercising extreme judicial restraint.

During the year 2017, due to the

lengthy hearings of high profile political cases, the cases of ordinary litigants remained shelved.

The hearing of Imran, Tareen disqualification remained in progress for about a whole year. The court conducted 50 hearings spanning over 101 hours. About 7000 documents were submitted in the court about the case.

On an appeal of the Punjab government against the Lahore High Court (LHC) verdict, the court dismissed the LHC order and allowed to continue Orange Line Metro Train Project. The court also took a suomotu notice against the deteriorated condition of historic Katas Raj Temple and drying up of its water pond in Chakwal and directed the

Bestway cement factory to fill the pond with water. The court also restrained all the subordinate courts from hearing cases involving Katas Raj.

In addition, the court took 34 suomotu notices against various human rights violations under Article 184 (3) of the Constitution. The proceedings of these notices also took a lot of time of the apex court, affecting the proceedings of other pending cases.

The lengthy proceedings of high profile matters of public importance during the year swelled the backlog to

38,350 cases. In January 2017, about 31,000 cases were pending adjudication before the apex court. However, the pendency of cases has now increased to 38,350.

About 23, 600 cases were instituted in 2017, out of which 16600 cases were disposed of. In December 2016, about 31, 000 cases were pending before the apex court. In 2011, there was a backlog of 19,000 cases before the top court, which has doubled in 2017.

Superior judiciary, the apex court as well as high courts, exercised full judicial activism in the year 2017.

According to senior lawyers, there is a vast room for improvement in our judicial system and the institutions should work in their constitutional domain so the democratic system of the country can be strengthened.





# Digital freedom

## — not much to celebrate

By Farhan Janjua

It is with an apprehensive, if not heavy, heart that many of us have bid farewell to the year 2017. Not because we will miss it. But, rather, due to the rude awakening it brought with it: digital freedom only exists in our minds. And as we fight back against this - the little breathing space that we have will simply become reduced to the point of suffocation. Thus this year will stand out as representing the tipping point as far as net neutrality is concerned.

The year kicked off here in Pakistan, as in other parts of the world, with netizens subjected to increased state surveillance. Indeed, the state apparatus rang in the New Year by picking up five bloggers who had dared to use their online presence for progressive social activism. All the men were known to be vocal critics of extremism and terrorism; not to mention the civil-military leadership over its failure to fully implement the National Action Plan (NAP). It is therefore believed that all five were picked up by the country's security agencies under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) - commonly referred to as the cyber crime law. Given that the establishment has always denied claims of abduction it is hard to say what the actual charges against the five were.

Fast-forward 11 months, however

### The year 2017 saw dissent feature as the major 'offence' to warrant online censorship

and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) appearing before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) admitted that it had not found any evidence against the 'accused'. Their disappearance had initially sparked a wave of public outrage. But then some on the religious right began bandying about the word 'blasphemy'; including baseless allegations involving the running of some of the most controversial pages that Facebook has to offer. And almost overnight, threats against social media users increased across the board. Those targeted were mostly the liberal and secular voices that tend to use digital spaces to critique both government and policy; while sharing concerns over particular developments.

A petition against the five bloggers was filed before the IHC by private citizen Salman Shahid; who happens to be the son-in-law of the controversial Lal Masjid cleric, Abdul Aziz. While hearing the case, the court's Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui compared the publishing of blasphemous material on

social media as tantamount to terrorism. He also said that if the government failed to stop such content reaching the citizenry then the result would be more Mumtaz Qadris. Justice Siddiqui was one of the co-authors of the verdict which convicted the latter over the murder of Punjab governor Salaman Taseer. Upon the court's directives, the then Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar and then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif wasted no time in doing the needful.

Elsewhere, we saw the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) running campaigns warning netizens to refrain from sharing 'objectionable' content online, including maligning the image of Pakistan's national institutions and hate speech.; though it left the latter rather open-ended. The PTA also took it upon itself to remind anyone and everyone that blasphemy remains an offence punishable by death. Towards this end, it took to texting the citizenry and advising them not to take action over this. Instead, the people of Pakistan were to snoop on each other and report to it any would-be blasphemers.

Needless to say, this resulted in yet further shrinking of the digital space in the country. Meaning that anyone raising their voice to demand the recovery of all missing persons or else those already targeted over so-called political dissent would be vulnerable to



attack. In fact, we saw over the year thousands of dubious Twitter accounts springing up all gung-ho to (falsely) accuse such activists of blasphemy.

Things would soon get out of hand. In April, student Mashal Khan was lynched to death in broad daylight at his university in Mardan. The bloodthirsty mob was prompted into action over rumours that Mashal had committed blasphemy. It later transpired that he was attacked over regularly speaking out against mismanagement by the university administration. This therefore underscores the extent to which charges of blasphemy remain a violent rallying cry in modern day Pakistan. The lynching lasted hours while the university authorities and, later, the police showed their impotence in bringing the situation under control. This sent shockwaves throughout the country. The premeditated murder of Mashal Khan brought together civil society, while also reviving the blasphemy debate on both social as well as mainstream media.

Meanwhile, the fallout of the DawnLeaks saga, which disclosed cracks in the civil-military relationship, was that the FIA continued to keep itself busy hunting down social media users and journalists daring to criticise the Pakistan Army; as well as the more mundane charge of posting 'objectionable' content. In May, the FIA drew up a list of up to 200 activists and journalists whom it wanted to take in for questioning. Among those on the list was journalist Taha Siddiqui; who later fought back by filing

a petition before the IHC over alleged harassment at the hands of the FIA. Next came the detention of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Taliban (PTI) social media team member Salar Kakar. And although the former Information secretary of the Balochistan chapter was released the following day, it is significant to note that he was picked up the day after the PMLN warned that the Centre would act against anyone badmouthing the then Prime Minister and his family. To demonstrate that the FIA is an equal opportunity offender - it also picked up Dr Faisal Ranjha, a member of the ruling party, over anti-

Army posts. The PMLN responded by disowning him.

October brings us to a physical attack on prominent journalist Ahmad Noorani by unidentified men riding on two motorbikes bearing no licence plates. Noorani's report, back in the summer and which was later retracted, detailed how the Supreme Court's Joint Investigation Team would not find Nawaz Sharif guilty of corruption. That this story was filed on the eve of the JIT findings being made public resulted in the SC issuing Noorani and the newspaper organisation where he works contempt of court notices. He deleted his Twitter account some months later; around the week before he suffered the violent assault.

Keeping up with its busy schedule, the FIA, also in October, arrested yet another PMLN social media activist Anwar Adil Tanoli. In addition an FIR was registered



**The PTA directed the people of Pakistan to snoop on each other and report any would-be blasphemers. Meanwhile the FIA, in the aftermath of the Dawn Leaks saga, drew up a list of up to 200 activists and journalists whom it wanted to take in for questioning; primarily for maligning state institutions**

against him on the grounds of uploading "incendiary material against the state institutions". Another man was wanted in connection with this 'offence' but he is said to have managed to flee the country. The same month, two women activists were allegedly harassed by FIA officials on similar anti-state charges.

Just as 2017 was drawing to a close, the digital rights group Bytes for All (Pakistan) published its end of year digital freedom review. In collaboration with the Open Observatory for Network Interference (OONI) - a global

network aiming to empower decentralised efforts when it comes to increasing transparency of internet censorship around the world - found that Pakistan had blocked at least 210 websites; mainly over pornographic, blasphemous and anti-state content.

Over in the so-called free world, the situation was not much better. On December 14, the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) repealed existing net neutrality legislation. This paved the way for broadband and internet service providers to block content while charging above market rates for certain services and platforms. It is a move that has been slammed by digital activists and commentators alike. Indeed, international non-profit digital rights group Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) has taken on the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) for 'deceiving' the FCC over the question of net neutrality.

"The FCC is going down a dangerous path, risking future Internet expression and innovation, and the big ISPs are encouraging the Commission every step of the way", according to EFF Intellectual Property Director Corynne McSherry. "Will the FCC respond to the pleas of more than a million Internet users and do its part to protect net neutrality? Or will it open the door to a tiered Internet, with ISPs serving as gatekeepers for their subscribers?"

The concept of net neutrality is also heavily debated here in Pakistan by digital rights groups advocating the people's right to an open Internet. This deliberation only served to intensify when the country's telecom giants collaborated with mega companies like Facebook to launch 'free' internet services, such as internet.org. Yet this is only sounds good on paper. In reality, such initiatives offer access to around 20 select websites; thereby effectively controlling online traffic.

Thus, it is safe to say that in 2017 the digital space in Pakistan was encroached upon by the usual suspects: namely, state institutions, PECA as well as cyber-bullies. And it is unlikely that any of this will change in the coming year. Rather, it appears that dissent will remain the major 'offence' to warrant online censorship.





## Pak-US ties

# Don't look back in ANGER

Pakistan's relationship with the superpower remained fractured through 2017. But it may not be beyond repair

Miranda Husain

It might not have started with a kiss. But it did begin with the F-word. Fantastic.

At least this is how Pakistan likes to tell it when recounting the first ever long-distance Trump call. In which the unquiet American president is said to have told the now deposed Nawaz Sharif that this was a fantastic country full of, well, fantastic people. Awesome.

And for a while, it really did seem that from the moment the political leadership woke up, before it put on its make-up, Pakistan would say a little prayer for Donald Trump. For it was hoped that he could really be The One. In fact, so enamoured were they by the off-the-cuff talking president that this country rang in the New Year by having Hafiz Saeed put under house

arrest. Yet the first cut is always the deepest, or so they say. Indeed, the knife-twisting came just two months later when the US Congress tabled the Pakistan State Sponsor of Terrorism Designation Act of 2017. A veritable slap in the civilians' face, for sure. Nevertheless, the latter decided to

Arabia at the beginning of the summer. Long gone was the shared intimacy whereby murmurings over the phone assured us that Mr President was ready and willing. To play any role that this country wanted. When it came to addressing and finding solutions to outstanding problems. Yet there at the

The US president exposed himself as a man of Trump and circumstance; a gentleman wholly consumed by this regional vision or that national security strategy. By contrast, those at the helm in Pakistan preferred to show off their camouflaged-men-of-action credentials

give the most powerful man in the world another chance; for they, too, would come to understand the limitations of being beholden to the democratic process.

The second blow was dealt in Saudi

Riyadh moot, right there in front of the whole world that was so intently watching through its third-eye-blind-shutter-vision-voyeurism - the showman president had all but forgotten Pakistan's name. Indeed, that



was when he chose to go public to reaffirm his vow of commitment to the glamorously democratic India, with her much bigger market. How he pushed on through with steeled resolve when he spoke of her having endured the unspeakable horrors of terrorism. And, oh, how we waited for our name to leave his lips. But it did not.

By the end of the summer, we had accepted that it was all over. Donald Trump had moved on. No longer was he interested in grabbing us by our - ahem - partnership potential. Then, as now, it was all about the A-word: Afghanistan. Even though he had promised just about everyone he wasn't interested; that he would be pulling out and dumping Kabul. And then we heard it from someone else. He would be treating her to a temporary troop surge; that oft tried-and-failed measure which hardly takes the bogeyman by surprise. In fact, it rather gives the latter something to hang around for over the weekend. But he didn't even stop there. We, Pakistan, the cuckolded nation, were asked to unilaterally secure the US exit strategy from the Afghan quagmire of its own making. And that hurt. For it appeared that our fleetingly-most-beloved was deliberately taunting us; setting us up for failure. Because surely the Commander-in-Chief of the world's most sophisticated military knows that he alone has got the moves like Jagger. The only difference being that only one is a real 'mother bomber'.

Nevertheless, we fought back and for a time it was nice to see the civvies and the khakis on the same page. United against American calls for Pakistan to do more, more, more to flush out Afghan militant group safe-havens that Washington still insists are on our side of the border. But that was Trump Town's biggest misstep. For, no,

**And so the year ends in much the same way that it started: with Hafiz Saeed centre stage. The only difference being that now he is livin' it large in Lahore; free to come and go as he pleases and free to contest next summer's general elections**

Scaramouche, Pakistan will never do the fandango; not when this risks the very reputation of the military establishment. And so it was that the apprentice-president, less than a year before this country goes ballot-boxing, effectively pushed the Army centre

stage; though the latter was wise enough not to shut the barracks door after it had bolted.

Pakistan's security apparatus has never favoured impromptu performances. Thus what followed

**During his UN visit, PM Abbasi cautioned from the top: the only safe-havens that existed lay on the Afghan side . . . right under the nose of the seemingly powerful US military with all its modern gadgets and big boy toys of remote-controlled warfare**

was a carefully crafted script. This, after all, was no Fringe Festival. And, here, audiences had to pay for their cheap seats.

Disparities between Washington and Islamabad were evident for all to see. The US president exposed himself as a man of Trump and circumstance; a gentleman wholly consumed by this regional vision or that national security strategy. By contrast, those at the helm in Pakistan preferred to show off their camouflaged-men-of-action credentials. And given that here in this hard country timing is everything and everything counts in large amounts - it was no coincidence the way events unfolded in the run-up to and in the aftermath of the UN General Assembly annual powwow.

Just days before, reports began to emerge of a formidable project. One that involved the security apparatus, which was said to have spent more than a year working quietly behind-the-scenes on a plan that would see militants down arms in favour of electoral tickets. The only sticking point being that Nawaz, the then sitting PM, wasn't ready to play ball; punctured or otherwise. Indeed, he may or may not have been irked that this controversial 'mainstreaming' project was aimed at cutting into his

party's voter base. Though as a wise man once sang: "just because you're paranoid don't mean they're not after you."

With the latter having been done away with, politically speaking, the path was now clear for the military

establishment to show Trump Town just with whom it was dealing. For a mere day or so after this orchestrated leak and a day or so before the US Senate voted to render Pakistan's military reimbursements conditional

upon us going after Hafiz Saeed's Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) as well as the Haqqani Network (HN), a new political party hit the town. The Milli Muslim League (MML), formed within weeks of Nawaz's ouster, contested his old Lahore hood of NA-120. And the punch line was this: the MML is the political wing of the LeT. Meaning that the former PM might or might not have been right when he boo-hoed about how the men in khaki moved to have him stoned and dethroned.

But more than that, this was a veritable slap in the face for Washington. After all, LeT has long been described by US think tankers as the most lethal terrorist group in South Asia after Al Qaeda. Not least because of its ideological and financial linkages to the late Osama Bin Laden, who is said to have partly financed its start-up. And over the decades these ties only went from strength to strength. From 1998 - the same year that the latter issued a fatwa declaring war on the US, the West and Israel - LeT members took to the streets in Pakistan vowing to kill Americans to avenge its own cadres killed in a US cruise missile hit on an Al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan. To reportedly affording safe-havens to Bin Laden's fighters and strategic planners as well as their former hosts, namely the Afghan Taliban, following the US invasion of that country. Indeed, by the end of 2001, Washington had already designated Hafiz Saeed and LeT as a globally designated terrorist and foreign terrorist organisation, respectively. Yet it was only in the wake of the Mumbai attacks of 2008 that his head-on-a-stick became worth a cool \$10 million. This was perhaps an eternity ring of sorts, binding India forever to the American sphere of strategic interest. After all, just has there has never been such a thing as a free lunch - so, too, are there no free



terrorist designations.

During his New York visit in September, PM Shahid Khaqan Abbasi let India know how scorned we felt at her burgeoning relationship with the new man in town. But more than that, he cautioned from the top: the only safe-havens that existed lay on the Afghan side. In other words, the overwhelming majority of cross-border attacks were launched by anti-Pakistan elements from over there to here. Thus it was not Islamabad who was providing sanctuaries "to agents of chaos, violence and terror". This was being done right under the nose of the seemingly powerful US military with all its modern gadgets and big boy toys of remote-controlled warfare.

All of which reset the narrative coming out of Pakistan. With Nawaz deposed, all the remaining King's men were seemingly ordered into line if they wanted to see the assemblies finish their term. In addition to the premier's tough talk at the UN, he also signalled out India when he called for the Security Council to revisit the Kashmir issue. This was double insubordination aimed at the US by a man who can; as long as he has establishment backing. The message to Trump Town was that Pakistan would no longer be scape-goated for the ongoing mess across our western border. Meaning it was about time that Washington got a grip, either with or without the clip, while waking up and smelling the coffee. For as the occupying military force, it alone is responsible for the Afghan security situation. And towards that end, only a unilateral withdrawal would do. Furthermore, this would conveniently do away with the need for an expanded Indian role in that country. A prolonged military presence, after all, would simply mean a no-exit strategy. Indeed, the US had already used its overwhelming combative might to overthrow the Taliban regime only find itself now threatening the same in a bid to force the latter into the Afghan political process and ultimately to a power-sharing agreement of sorts.

Yet perhaps wishing to see out the New Year with a bang - though not in a nugget-of-pure-advertising-gold-kind-of-way that urges tourists to come to Pakistan and have a blast - this country saved the best until last. Thus did the security establishment show its steady hand to both the civvies here at home as well as to the unquiet American president. And there



was even a little something for India; the most hurtful of Trump's many infidelities.

Less than a month later, there seemed nothing much left to play for. Not when the Pentagon stepped in to interfere in the National Defence Authorisation Act 2018 to ostensibly de-link LeT from reimbursement conditions. If nothing else, this should serve as a timely warning to New Delhi; an indication of what Trump Town's America First policy looks like. For it does exactly what it says on the can. And now India will have to live with LeT being put on the backburner for now; as the US ups the pressure on Pakistan to concentrate solely on the Haqqani network, Washington's one-time political bedfellow. Simply put, Trump Town has understood that while civilian regimes may come and go - there is one institution that is here to stay. And it is not one that cannot be browbeaten with threats of expanded drone programmes and revoking our major non-NATO ally (MNNA) status. Though we will have to wait and see how this might play out in the future given recent moves by Pakistani lawmakers to seek Alliance compensation for civilian victims of American drones.

Be that as it may, within a week of the Pentagon shuffle Hafiz Saeed was a free man. Despite the political leadership's pleas to have it otherwise. It seems that the White House at least has some understanding of what Pakistan's realities are. For as it called out this country for not playing fair - it singled out the state apparatus as opposed to the judiciary, suggesting it is familiar with the identity of the puppet master. But by trying to sacrifice justice for the many victims of

Hafiz Saeed and his cohorts, both here and elsewhere, in favour of its divergent strategic interests, Washington has effectively sold its soul to the devil. Whereas it should know it is the latter who always keeps a hold of the detail. Which may or may not explain why Pakistan reportedly failed to hand over an HN operative picked up by our security agencies as they rescued a Canadian-American family held captive by militants in Afghanistan. Yet the showman president seemingly read not the small print. Or he would have known that the handshake seals the contract and from the contract there is no turning back. Instead, he has returned to the beginning and is once more threatening to un-splash the cash in terms of our military dues.

And so the year ends in much the same way that it started: with Hafiz Saeed centre stage. The only difference being that now he is livin' it large in Lahore; free to come and go as he pleases. Indeed, he chose Christmas time, that season of goodwill to all men, to go for the jugular. When next summer's general elections roll around he will be contesting these from the MML platform. In fact, by now he has opened up party offices in the NA-120 area. A message more deafening he and those who may or may not be backing him could not deliver to the ruling party. Alot of the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't put Nawaz Sharif or anyone else back together again. Trump Town be warned.

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# 2017 brings unexpected high and lows for Pakistan cricket

Pakistan has been quietly rising as far as Test cricket is concerned

By Usman Faridi

**P**akistani cricket has always been unpredictable. This has been both a blessing and a malediction in equal measure. Some aspects, however, have been a constant, even when it came to this country's national obsession.

Those constants have been chewed up and spit out over the course of the preceding 12 months. What we thought we knew was that Pakistan has been quietly rising as far as Test cricket is concerned. This can be contributed to Misbah-ul-Haq's pragmatic, prosaic approach to leadership that brought with it a sense of good old fashioned honesty. At the same time, Pakistan entered 2017 playing limited over cricket more reminiscent of 1992, and were getting the results to prove it. Lack of power

hitters, aggressive fielding and bowling plans, and a failure to keep with modern nuances since the evolution of the T20 format meant Pakistan had been languishing near the bottom of the ODI and T20 rankings.

This year, however, that traditional wisdom has been flipped on its head. As we head towards 2018, Pakistan are on an 8-game ODI winning streak, and have lost just two T20s all year. They entered the Champions Trophy as the lowest ranked side, and played like it in the opening game against India, getting a deserved wallop. However, they bounced back in a manner even the most ardent Pakistan fan couldn't foresee, beating South Africa and Sri Lanka to qualify for the semi-finals. There, they dismantled hosts and tournament favourites England, cruising to the final by eight wickets.

It is that afternoon at the Oval, however, that will rank among the greatest moments of Pakistan cricket history, and the single best moment for Pakistan on a global stage. In a performance that was scarcely believable, they humiliated a surging Indian side, thrashing them by a massive 180 runs. Everything they weren't supposed to do, they did. In Fakhar Zaman, they found a power hitter to match the best of them, Azhar Ali proved useful in a limited-overs game, Mohammad Hafeez was terrific as a overs hitter, and the bowlers rendered a powerful Indian batting side toothless and impotent. It was a game Pakistanis couldn't have dreamed of; it would begin to sound too unrealistic.

On the contrary, the Test side had slipped into an alarming decline, exacerbated by the retirements of stalwarts Misbah-ul-Haq and Younis Khan. They have now lost 9 of the last 11 matches, unable to justify, or indeed dignify their position as the number



one ranked Test side in the world, which - remember - they were just 15 months ago. Now, they languish at seventh, ahead only of West Indies, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. They have lost their unbeaten record at the UAE, having lost their first series earlier this year. That came at the hands of fellow strugglers Sri Lanka, who whitewashed Pakistan 2-0. To put that in context, Sri Lanka's only other Test wins all year came in the form of a scrappy four-wicket win over Zimbabwe, and one against Bangladesh in a series that ended 1-1.

The year began with the completion of a formality, the third Test in an away series against Australia. They duly lost it to be whitewashed 3-0, before going on to lose the ODI series 4-1. The only positive as far as Test cricket was concerned came in the West Indies, in what was perhaps the Test match of the year. With the series square at 1-1 and time ticking on yet another opportunity to claim a first Test series win in the West Indies, Yasir Shah got rid of Shannon Gabriel with six balls remaining in the Test, sealing a 2-1 series win, and sparking wild celebrations to sign off Misbah and Younis's careers.

Another encouraging aspect this year has been the gradual return of international cricket to Pakistan's shores. The process has been slow and at times clumsy, as it was with the PSL final, which was lopsided because Quetta Gladiators' foreign contingent







didn't come to Pakistan, while Peshawar Zalmi's did. But that was followed up by a three-match T20 series against an ICC-sanctioned World XI in Lahore. That featured some of the biggest names in the cricketing world at the moment, with Hashim Amla, Morne Morkel and Imran Tahir all playing.

That Pakistan won that series 2-1 was simply an added bonus. For the moment, the international cricket that gets played in Pakistan is never completely about the competition; it is

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more about the inherent pleasure in the game happening at all. There was still time for a poignant moment in Sri

Lanka's cricket team also returning to Pakistan since the horrific attack that got the country into this embarrassing mess in the first place, reminding Pakistan that they have a lot to thank the islanders for over the last two decades.

Despite the worrying form of the Test side, however, there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic about 2018. The limited-overs sides, led by Sarfraz, is on a high, and that bodes well for the 2019 World Cup. The team spirit - another element that can never quite be taken for granted in Pakistan - is as good as could be hoped, the transition from Misbah to Sarfraz having been reasonably competently managed. There is the prospect of more international cricket in Pakistan, with West Indies due a visit in March 2018, and the PSL final in Karachi is expected to reconnect the country's largest city with cricket once more. There is no point making predictions however, given that element of unpredictability. Only a fool would attempt to predict whether in 2018 that turns out to be a blessing or a curse.







Faiz Festival

# 'To counter extremism pick up a guitar and claim an audience'

By Eeshah Omer & By Haider Ali

**T**he simple act of picking up a guitar and claiming an audience through it is enough to counter the extremist narrative. It is rebellious enough to knock down extremist propaganda, veteran journalist Nadeem F Parachi said on Saturday.

He was responding to a question at The Evolution of Pakistani Pop Music: Koi Naghma Koi Khushboo session at the Faiz International Festival.

Paracha agreed with the questioner's concern that state institutions' role in perpetuation of an anti-music ideology but he said that music had been used by the state to spread its ideology as well, through patriotic and religious songs. Nonetheless, he stressed that music must be seen as a rebellious activity in its own right.

The session was hosted by music composer Arshad Mehmood and it also featured an upcoming pop singer Ahmed Jilani, the lead vocalist at Pepsi Battle of the Bands' runner-up

'Badnaam'.

Before the session started, a short documentary highlighting the salient breakthrough moments of the history of Pakistani pop music was played.

Later, Mehmood recalled that his earliest encounter with pop music was through a song his father used to sing to him when he was a child whose

lyrics were 'Yeh raatain, yeh mausam, yeh hassna hassaana, phir mujhay bhool jaana.

Paracha countered the perception that pop music in the country dated back just to the 90s. He said the earliest Pakistani pop song was produced by Ahmed Rushdi (O ko

korina). Roona Laila, Alamgir, Muhammad Ali Sheiki, and Nazia and Zohaib Hasan were all pop icons of their times, he said.

Ahmed Jilani chipped in by shedding light on what inspired him to make music. He equated the creation of music as a process of self-actualisation. "I see it as a condition of

**"Paracha agreed with the questioner's concern about state institutions' role in perpetuation of an anti-music ideology but he said that music was also used by the state to spread its own ideology, through patriotic and religious songs. Nonetheless, he stressed that music must be seen as a rebellious activity in its own right"**

unrequited love which until and unless expressed can burst at the seams of the soul," he said.

As the discussion moved towards the question of the state's patronage (or lack thereof), Paracha highlighted that state institutions like the Radio and Television channels had taken the



leading role in promotion of musical arts. Mehmood quoted his own example when he was encouraged to enter the field by Shoaib Hashmi. He said the ghazal maestro Mehdi Hassan had also got his first break in 1959 through the radio when he sang Faiz Ahmed Faiz's famous ghazal 'gullonmein rang bharray'.

Jilani criticised successive governments for creating space for the extremist narrative to nurture which, he said, was not only anti-music but also discouraged moderation and liberalism. He emphasised that unlike those state officials who were responsible for promoting the extremist narrative, the people of Pakistan were moderate and encouraged music as a cultural form.

Mehmood went as far as to place music and musicians at the very apex of the cultural renaissance and progress, and termed that the musical community and artists symbolised and epitomised the very best which a culture and civilisation had to offer. "Artists are a unique species that need not only to be nurtured but also respected and compensated well for their effort," he said.

Jilani concluded the session with a passionate appeal to the audience to ensure that music could become a unifying force in Pakistan. "Arts plays a focal role. The state doesn't give it enough attention. Music, of any form, has a healing effect. As a society, we need to realise the importance of arts," he said.

Young writers urged to seek inspiration from their cities: The session titled Faiz Shanasai was held at Adbi Baithak. It was moderated by Dr Ali Madeeh Hashmi and panellists were Dr Imran Zafar from Government Post Graduate College Jhang and Dr Safia Kausar from Government Viqar-un-Nisa Post Graduate College for Women, Rawalpindi.

The panellists said that Faiz Ahmed Faiz had started his career as a teacher and adopted different professions from time to time. Dr Zafar said Faiz had started writing poetry in class 7th or 8th but it was in college when he first became known as a poet. He said Faiz wrote around 80 ghazals but the bulk of his poetry was in the nazm format.

The academic said that it would not have been difficult for Faiz to do poetry in Punjabi language, but then his audience would have been limited. Urdu language allowed him to reach out to a much bigger audience across



the world.

The panellists said that Noon Meem Rashid, Majeed Amjad and Meeraji had all been known as great poets by the time Faiz entered the profession. With his style of writing, he was soon able to make a name for himself.

Dr Kausar said that Faiz's poetry was revolutionary as he wrote on the most pressing social issues of all times. Faiz tried to shake people's conscience through his progressive poetry.

On the occasion, Dr Zafar read out Faiz's last ghazal 'Bahut Mila Na Mila Zindagi Se Gham Kya Hai'. Dr Kausar also shared a couple of poems with the audience.

In Cities in Literature session, travel writer Mustansar Hussain Tarar said that all famous novelists and writers had mentioned cities where they grew up and spent their lives in their works. He said poets, writers and novelists could bring to life ruins through their work.

He said almost all great fiction writers belonging to the Punjab had written extensively about their cities in their novels. He said the three greatest writers of the contemporary era - Albania's Ismail Kadare and Turkish writers Orhan Pamuk and Yashar Kemal - had all mentioned their cities and town in their novels.

Tarrar also shared with the audience the story of his meeting with Qurratulain Hyder during her visit to Pakistan. He said Hyder was the undisputed queen of fiction writing. Tarar said he had met her in the Walled City of Lahore. "Apa said to me that street's names and appearance in the Walled City was similar to that of streets in Lakhano (a city in India). In response, I said that Lakhano had been dead but Lahore was still alive," he said.

Tarrar further said that sometimes fiction writers took help from the environment of their cities to build new stories and characters. "The inspiration also enabled them to challenge the society's conscience," he said. Meanwhile, he said, fiction writers built new cities through their stories as well. He said the ambience of Lahore could help new writers to produce great novels. "They should explore the city and seek inspiration for their works," he said.

The session was moderated by Amna Mufti.

The second day of the Faiz International Festival 2017 featured speakers from different backgrounds. There were sessions on the poetry and life of Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

The festival has been underway since 2015. After its first edition, the festival moved to the Alhamra Art Council on The Mall. It is meant to pay tribute to Faiz for his contributions in literature, journalism and to the nation in general.

On the second day, a large number of intellectuals, youngsters, poets, students, poets, scholars, writers, artists and people from different walks of life visited 24 indoor sessions.

The day also featured a debate competition and performances by Lok Virsa. Activities were also arranged for children. These included a Children's Literature Festival, a Theatre Workshop and a Science Workshop.

Exhibitions featured photos of Faiz from the Murree Museum Artist Residency.

Four activities held outdoors included performances like theatre play titled Nukar Natak by Sangat production, an Alhamra Music Class, a Young Singers Sing Faiz event and The Little Art.





# Over 50 plays

by actors from across the country under  
one roof in the span of one month

By Munir Ahmed

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's largest National Theatre Festival concluded on November 30th with the staging of its 53rd play 'Manto Mera Dost', a production by well-known artiste and activist Sheema Kirmani from Karachi, at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). The 12th National Theatre Festival was organised to mark the 70th anniversary of the Pakistan's Independence and 45th anniversary of the PNCA.

The largest ever theatre festival in the 70-year history of Pakistan continued for 31 days despite the notorious sit-in for 28 days that had blocked the main entry points to the capital city. While routine life was stuck up, the capital city rolled on with the only cultural activity at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA).

Theatre groups emerged from every nook and corner of the country to Islamabad, where a very efficient PNCA team under the supervision of the Director General took care of their safety and smooth performance.

The 12th National Theatre Festival has been a big feather in the PNCA crown that started on October 30th with the play *Dekh Tamasha*, a short story adaptation of one of the classic Urdu fiction writers Krishan Chandar, directed by A.D. Baloch from Quetta.

The largest ever theatre festival in the 70-year history of Pakistan continued for 31 days despite the notorious sit-in for 28 days that had blocked the main entry points to the capital city. While routine life was disturbed, the capital city rolled on with the only cultural activity at the PNCA

The staging of the last play of the festival was followed by a closing ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, PNCA Director General Syed Jamal Shah said, "Theatre is a very strong medium and has played a vital role in social change. The history of theatre is as old as human life. The short comings and dark side of societies have always been reflected through theatre. Theatre has always been a source of social change and the writers, directors and actors have used this medium for the betterment and uplift of the society."

"PNCA is striving hard for the promotion of art and is providing opportunities to artists of different genres to showcase their talent on a national platform. The theatre festival is part of these cherished goals, and theatre groups from all over Pakistan were invited to

present their plays. Participation in the festival is encouraging, as groups from far-flung and backward areas took part in the festival and presented their plays," he added.

About fifty plays played their part and the drama lovers experienced a variety of themes and topics during this period. The aim of the festival was to promote serious theatre and help artists in the field nourish their talent and get the encouragement they deserved for their future endeavours.

The National Theatre Festival shined with every colour and theme that our society has experienced over the years or is likely to experience. Here are the briefs of some of the plays:

**Dekh Tamasha:** The 12th National Theatre Festival kicked off with the staging of 'Dekh Tamasha', a play adopted by A.D. Baloch from a short story by renowned



fiction writer Krishan Chandar. The play was performed by the drama artistes of the Sangat Theatre Group from Quetta.

The play revolves around the misery of a person stuck beneath a tree-log when a tree falls down on him during a rainstorm. Every department shifts the responsibility of cutting the tree and rescuing the victim on the other department. Finally, a drug addict helps the victim escape his fate. The play well depicted the declining human values and insensitivity in society towards helping others while they are in an untoward situation.

The cast of the play included Sadaqaut Baloch, Aurangzeb Zebi, Maqsood Qureshi, Manzoor Sabir, Asif Sahar, Ibrahim Raaz, Zulfiqar Chaudhary, Savera Shahzadi and Samreen Rana. They performed different characters in the play with just the right amount of expressions.

**The NAPA plays:** The National Theatre Festival pulled a large audience, as the students of the Karachi-based National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) staged two plays, 'Guriya Ghar' and 'Yahudi Ki Larki.' Both plays rightfully entertained the audience with a classical flair of theatrical performances. 'Guriya Ghar' is an adaptation of the classical play 'A Doll's House' written by Henrik Ibsen in 1879 in Danish language. The actual characters included Nora, Torvald Helmer, Krogstad, Mrs. Linde, Dr. Rank and two children Anne-Marie and Helene. The play premiered on 21st December 1879 at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The thematic play revolves around the awakening of a middle-class wife and mother about their roles in the socio-cultural context. Through different untoward situations in the play, the female characters contest in favour of women to give them voice in the general essence of their struggle that will lead to their positive role in societal development.

'Yahudi Ki Larki' on the other hand, is an Urdu classical play written by Agha Hashar, belonging to the Parsi tradition of theatre. Parsi theatre is a generic term for an influential theatre tradition, staged by Parsis and theatre companies largely owned by the Parsi business community which flourished between 1850 and the 1930s.

'Yahudi Ki Larki', directed by Khalid Ahmed, is a symbolic play that reflects the diverse connotations of oppression and aggression in society. The play suggests that actualities could differ from what we may usually presume about people based on conventional notions about them. Some Jews could be better human beings than Romans and justice values could be different for people living in different tiers of society. The play also reflects the undue influence of religion on the justice system.

The cast of the play included Kashif Hussain, Kulsoom Aftab Ahmed Khan, Maria Sa'ad Faridi, Samhan Ghazi, Harris Khan, Akbar Islam, Nazar ul Hassan, Mahjabeen Rehman, Aamir Naqvi, Farhan

Alam, Zarqa Naz, Muhammad Farazchotani, Usman Mazhar, Hammad Khan and Aisha Hassan.

The play was enriched by classical music played by a group of students including Mahjabeen Rehman, Hammad Khan, Asia Alam, Raheel Ahmed and Zarqa Naz. The tabla and harmonium were played by Saagar and Julian Qaiser respectively. Jamil Afridi designed the sets while dances were choreographed by Mohsin Babar with the costumes designed and prepared by Maha Ali and Pervaiz Iqbal.

**Kaun Hae Ye Gustakh:** The lifelong struggle of the great Urdu fiction writer Manto was staged with the play 'Kaun Hae Ye Gustakh', written by Shahid Mahmood Nadeem and directed by Madiha Gohar. The play was presented by the very well-known Lahore based Ajoka Theatre. The

a Communist lackey. Manto was a mild-mannered person, but he was an impudent gustakh writer indeed. He never minced words when it came to calling a spade a spade. At a time when eminent writers were hiding behind ideologies or use of flowery language, Manto broke the taboos, tore through barriers and exposed them.

**Likhay Jo Khat Tujhay:** Sania Saeed went on to the dramatic reading of letters written by legendary writers Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Josh Malihabadi, Col Muhammad Khan, Amrita Pretam, Majeed Amjad, Fikr Taunsvi, Safia Jan Nisar and Shafiq ur Rehman. The performance attracted a huge crowd at a time when the security situation caused by the Islamabad sit-in had the roads blocked.

Co-starring with Tajdar Zaidi, Sania Saeed turned to be the centre of



cast included Usman Raj, Kamran Mujahid, Nayab Faiz, Anam Zaheer, Suhail Tariq, Muhammad Qasim Khan, Muzammil Shabbir, Ali Haider, Frhad Hashmi, Kamran Khokhar, Usman Chaudhary and Usman Zia.

The play turned to be a source of great joy and inspiration for the audience as all performers did justice to their characters skilfully knitted in the script. The play deals with Manto's struggle with his detractors and an increasingly conservative and intolerant Pakistan which he foresees in his writing and amazing prescience. Manto had migrated because of family pressures (his wife and her relatives had already gone to Pakistan) and his disillusionment at the Hindu Muslim tensions in Bombay which had adversely affected the atmosphere of the Bombay film industry. What Pakistan has become today was well predicted by Manto with great vision in his short-stories.

The play included enacted extracts from Manto's short stories, essays and court cases on charges of pornography. The enactment of scenes from these writings is followed by the hostile reception Manto got from both the rigid Left and the intolerant Right as well as a conservative establishment. Manto was denounced by the leftists as a reactionary enemy of the people while the rightists accused him of being a pornographer and

attraction and admiration for the right amount of emotional flow. The specially designed lights on stage created a mysterious and mystic environment for the performers who went all out to take advantage of it. The versatility of rendering expressions is Sania Saeed's core potential and it was at high node. The spellbound audience applauded every other moment to appreciate their favourite artiste who had especially flown from Karachi to take part in the festival.

**La'hu aur Qaleen:** A classic short story by Meerza Adeb entitled 'La'hu aur Qaleen' was staged by the Batin Farooqi Production House. Directed by Batin Farooqi, the cast of the play included Farooqi himself and Sabir Khan in the main roles. The supporting artists included Nasir Walliam, Imtaiz Ali Kashif, Mishal, Sobia, Imran Rushdi, Shahzad Pappu, Mona, Javed Chaudhary, Karim Khan, and Seema Jatt.

The play is a story of a marginalised painter Akhtar who cannot make any paintings when he is adopted by a rich person, Tajammal. Another poor artist, Niazi, helps Akhtar by making art on his behalf that earns them sufficient money for two. At the drop scene, Akhtar tells the rich man that all the paintings were made by Niazi who has now committed suicide after hearing news that Akhtar won



the prestigious award on his artwork.

**Kafan:** Another marvellous play was 'Kafan', staged by the Lahore-based Mass Foundation. The play was an adaptation from the classic short story by renowned Urdu fiction writer Munshi Premchand. The play was directed by Aamir Nawaz, while the cast included Dr Zoya Qazi, Safina Malik, Muhammad Zaheer Taj, Afzaal Nabi, Aamir Ali, Tanvir Khalid, Ahmed Ali and Mujtaba Sheikh.

**Shah Hussain - The Weaver:** The devoted artistes of Lahore based Azad Theatre Group left the audience spellbound with their performance on the poetry of Shah Hussain that reflected social insensitivities. The play 'Hussain - The Weaver' reflected the ironic social and religious differences based on discriminatory practices by the influential.

Written by Shabir Ji and directed by Malik Aslam, the play was a production of all the right ingredients of a perfect theatre performance. Sufi singer and actor Sarfaraz Ansari played the role of Shah Hussain in a very realistic manner shedding light on the great message of social harmony and peace. He also composed the music of the play that turned to be the backbone of the story. Folk singer Faiz Ali Chishti mesmerised the audience with his singing potential. The rest of the cast included Zohaib Haider (Dullah Bhatti), Naina Baloch (Ladhi), Waseem Ali (Akbar Badshah), Nadeem Abbas (Bahlool Dayai) and Aliya Abbasi as Raavi, the narrator of the story. The versatile Nadeem Abbas designed the costumes, choreographed the dances and also performed a dance number as well.

**Akhiyan Waleo:** Social insensitivities were also highlighted in the play 'Akhiyan Waleo'. Written and directed by Walliam Pervaiz, 'Akhiyan Waleo' reflected the miseries of the general public caused by the insensitivity of the so-called political and religious leadership towards solving common and pity problems.

Enriched with the guiding philosophical poetry of great Sufi Bulleh Shah, the play showed the other side of societal behaviour - pretending to be good while there's always some vested interest that's running their good deeds. Moving a stone from the centre of a road turned out to be a key conflict among the social and religious leaders. Everyone wanted to be given credit for removing the stone in order to receive political mileage and not actually benefit the people. Finally, the stone was removed by three blind people.

The play also highlighted the marginalised role of women in domestic and social affairs. It suggested that while women are equal partners in life it was a shame that they could not be part of the decision making at home and at community level.

The cast included Batin Farooqi, Faqeer Hussain, Zabir sarhadi, Javed Ali Sajid, Shahzad Mughal, Ali Shan, Waqar

Wikki, Shahzad Pappu, Rizwana Khan, Reeha Yousaf and Sajid Sajju Baba.

**Mein, Tum aur Hum:** Written and directed by Yaar Muhammad, 'Mein, Tum aur Hum' was another routine play based on the theme of terrorism, it reflected how the lives of people get disturbed when they lose their dear ones. Starring in the play were Masood Khawaja, Jhalak Ali, Sapna Shah, Hameed Babar, Shagufta Qureshi, Anjum Abbasi, Ali Zeb, Saeed Anwar and Dildar Khan.

**Ghar To Aakhir Apna Hae:** 'Ghar To Aakhir Apna Hae' (at least the home is ours), written by Nisar Razmi and directed by Tahir Siddiqi was staged on a Thursday evening. Starring in the play were Afzaal Latifi, Batin Farooqi, Arshad Minhas, Saeed Anwar, Faqeer Hussain, Lubna Shahzadi, Zeenat Abbasi, Rana Kashif, Nasir Walliam and Tahir Siddiqi. The play was presented by The Islamabad Art Production.

The story of the play was about the sensitivities of social ailments that prevail in our society that the people usually don't care about. Different sequences of events knitted in a story made the audience realise that we need to check our social behaviours, not only to improve our own civilised role in the grooming of our society but also show ourselves as a role model for others.

Mian Ji (Batin Farooqi), comedian Nasir Walliam and the charming young lady Lubna Shahzadi were able to attract the audience in the formula stage play with an exaggerated tone of their characters. The old film music played in the backdrop of a few moving scenes added the extra flair too.

**Aik Boon Zindgi:** 'Aik Boon Zindgi' (one drop life), written by Arshad Chehaal and directed by Sabir Khan, was staged by Super Vision Production. The cast included Mahboob Ilyas, Zeshan Khan, Lubna Shahzadi, Shagufta Khan, Mushatq Nadeem, Areeba Khan and Saleem Shah. Naeem Tota, who enacted a servant's role in the play, remained an attraction for his overplayed comedy and timely reactions in different situations. Areeba also inspired the audience by playing the moving role of a sister at the scene of her brother's dead body. Lubna Shahzadi as a larking girl also registered herself quite well in an overdone play comprising ordinary Punjabi film music.

**Umar Maarui:** Bhattai Art Council Hyderabad presented on a Sunday evening a popular Sindhi folk tale in the Sindhi language play 'Umar Maarui', highlighting women's struggle in the contemporary context. It was a rare opportunity of sight for a large number of Sindhi speaking audience living in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The jam-packed house every weekend reflected the increasing interest of common people in traditional theatre in a city where quality cultural events are not a frequent deal. The live depiction of one of the most famous folk stories of Sindh was

written by Shahnawaz Bhatti and directed by Rafique Essani. The play is about a woman's fight for her self-respect and honour and how she deals with everything she faces with courage and valour.

The cast of the play included Israr Leghari, Murk Shah, Ghazala Ali, Sidra Sheikh, Ayesha Mehak, Parri Mughal, Noor Memon, Akaash Ansari, Mushtaq Chandio, Firdous, Aashiq Hussain and Allah Bukhsh Otho.

**Sheh Mureed:** The Quetta-based and highly motivated theatre enthusiasts of the Al-Faiz Theatre Group presented the great love tale from Balochistan, Hani Shah Mureed. Directed by Ghafoor Shaheen and Riaz Ahmed Saghir, the play was well performed by the young cast from Quetta.

A beloved epic ballad of Balochi folklore has the same importance for Balochistan as Romeo and Juliet has for English-speaking lands. The story mirrors the life of Baloch heroes, their emotions and philosophical ideas (God, Evil, and Predestination). The hero of the story Sheh Mureed (or Shaih Moreed) and the heroine, Hani, are symbols of pure and tragic love. The story dates back to the 15th century which is considered to be the heroic age of Balochistan and the classical period of Balochi literature.

**Shama Aur Parwana:** 'Shama Aur Parwana', written and directed by Ishtiaq Ahmed Atish, presented the youthful and soft emotions and feelings in the backdrop of struggle for freedom. The story of the play also has the reflection a folk tale from Kashmir, but feelings of the young woman in the play are more conditional for her lover as she will only continue with him if he joins the army in the struggle for the freedom of Indian occupied Kashmir.

The performers included MD Lone, Altaf Nadeem, Akhlaq Bokhari, Waqas Awan, Naila Shahzaman, Invesha Raja, Shabana Shahzaman, Komal Raja and four young men from the army.

Plays on women exploitation

The marginalisation and exploitation of women in our society was the main theme of the two plays, 'Har Gharri Mera Imtehan Liya' and 'Raees Khana'.

Written by Z.A. Zulfi and directed by Asma Butt, the play 'Har Gharri Mera Imtehan Liya' was a realistic depiction of the apathy of a woman having no male support and shelter after her divorce. Played by an experienced local artiste Shagufta Khan, the divorcee goes through a series of rape incidents, first at the ad agency when she goes for an employment opportunity, then at the police station when she wants to have an FIR registered of the incident. She is also raped by the newspaper owner who is to support her in her voice for justice. Finally, she kills the rapist and herself and seeks justice from God after she reaches her final destination.

Undoubtedly, Shagufta Khan plays her character very well with the right amount



of expressions, postures and dialogue delivery. Meanwhile, Asma Butt described her play as a reflection of society's inappropriate behaviours. She said that the play was more relevant today than it was when it was written some two decades back.

The rest of the cast included Salman Sunny, Ghayyas Mastana, Shahid Bholi, Ali Shan, Arshad Khan and a few others.

'Raees Khana', adapted by William Pervaiz from a short story by renowned fiction writer Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi and directed by Zabir Sarhadi, was a story of a poor family living in a hilly resort as caretakers. Having a paid guest was very rare for them while the nearby official residence was always fully occupied, this made the servants of the government facility earn comparatively much more.

A rich man living in the government's guest house relocates himself to the 'Raees Khana' - the private lodging that makes the caretaker family very happy. However, he demands a woman's company every night to chat with about his late wife. One night, the caretaker of the Raees Khana sends his wife to the guest for lust of some money, only to find out that she has been raped and the guest has fled away.

Another talented actress Lubna Shahzadi played the character with precise margins against an experienced artiste Sabir Khan. The other performers included Zabir Sarhadi, Arif Bhatti, Seema Javed, Rizwana Khan and Zain ul Abedien Khan.

**Pagalpur:** The Lahore-based curtain call staged 'Pagalpur', a meaningful experimental play with young artistes from different universities. The young team of dramatists quite successfully unfolded the people's madness for money, power and discrimination, as well as violation of the basic rights of the marginalised. Written and directed by Muhammad Anis and Aziz Zulfiqar, the play turned to be one of the best in terms of performance and content, it also depicted the 'the haves and the have nots'. Starring in the play were Muhammad Amin, Muhammad Nadeem, Muhammad Ahmed and Asad Asif.

The story revolves around the five inhabitants of a mental hospital who reflect upon the crazy behaviours of the people living outside the room in the open world. Symbolically, the play highlights the contrary notions about the people that are making the society hypocritical and insane.

**Satroo Nakhan:** Another play 'Satroo Nakhan' was a grassroots level story reflecting the passion and love for its motherland. Directed by Sabir Khan and adapted from a folk tale by Shabbir Hussain, the play promoted the traditional values and ethnic identity of Gilgit-Balistan through different situations, costumes and music. The play concluded with the recitation of the national anthem, reflecting the people's association with the

land.

**Sarisht:** Written by Imran Khan and Muhammad Ali Farooqi, the play 'Sarisht' (nature) reflected the insensitivity of people towards restoring the respect and honour of girls forced to live in a compromised environment, as society girls or whores. The story of the play is spread over the miseries of forced compromises of three generations - a



young woman, her mother and her grandmother who was kidnapped and sold for prostitution during the partition of the Indian subcontinent. The young lady wants to get rid of her unwanted living but the man she is in love with refuses to take her out because of social pressure.

Key roles were well-played by Maria Zainab and Muhammad Ali Farooqi. The rest of the cast included Sidra Ansaar, Qudsia Mahboob, Muhammad Esa, Sanaullah Jamal, Qudratullah, Raheel Asghar, Maida, Sohaib Ahmed, Ammara syed, Mahreen Elahi, Mahwish Ali, Javeria Mushtaq, Tahira, Muzammil Hussain, Junaid Iqbal, Kainat Riaz, Kashoon Liza, Farhan Munir, Fahim and Sidra Sarfaraz.

**Lao To Qatnama Mera:** 'Lao To Qatnama Mera', was an adaptation from an English play and a production by Rauf Afridi, a former student of the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA), Karachi.

The lively performance with the embedded situational comedy turned out to be a source of profound amusement for the entire audience during the timespan of the play. The story revolves around the 'suicide' of a detained person in a police station who is assumed to be killed by the police during investigation. Apparently, a mentally disturbed person comes to the police station as an inquiry judge where different humorous situations occur. The play reflects the typical behaviour of the high ranks and the dual faces of society towards common citizens and those in need of special attention and care.

The main cast included Ahmar Hussain, Nadir Hussain and Maham Ali, while Uzma Sabeen provided the play with the technical support.

**Meray Samnay Wali Khirki:** Adapted

from a Niel Simon play and directed by Uzma Sabeen, 'Meray Samnay Wali Khirki' was a production of the Karachi-based Rang Manj Production. Based on only three characters: two male friends/co-workers and a female neighbour, the play left no stone unturned with their excellent performance to enthral the audience. The energy, perfect reaction timing and dialogue delivery developed a marvellous

chemistry between all the characters, performed by Ahmar Hussain, Owais Mubashir and Irum Bashir.

**Naqal Makani:** 'Naqal Makani', a play adapted from a short story by renowned Urdu fiction writer Rajindar Singh Bedi, was directed by Khalid Khattak and presented by a Peshawar-based KK Theatre Group. The story reflected the unexpected situations that occurred when a couple started living in a house where a dancing girl used to live. The play suggested that stigmas are associated with places as well and people act according to such presumed notions. The cast included Sabir Khan, Lubna Shahzadi, Nadeem Malik, Zarish Khan and Khalid Khattak.

**Other plays:** The Brahi language comedy-play 'Orsay Maskhrasay', written and directed by Riaz Ahmed Saghir, was a production of the Bolan Theatre, Quetta, staged at the PNCA open air theatre. All the artistes took the audience to ultimate joy and entertainment.

'Shatranj Kay Khiladi' (the chess players) staged by the Roshni Theatre, Rawalpindi, was an adaptation from renowned Urdu fiction writer Munshi Premchand. The story revolved around the causes of the fall of states in the united subcontinent and how all the rulers were engaged in wasting time on social curses, while the British army grabbed everything and arrested all the state lords. Directed by Fazia Akhtar, starring in the play were Anjum Malik, Reeha Yousaf, Shabana Kanwal, Naima Wilson, Babar Abbas and Rao Tariq Jameel.

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# Pride of Pakistan

# MALALA YOUSAFZAI

By Saira Agha

**Tell us about your foray into the field of activism? How did it all begin for you and why did you feel so strongly about education?**

Like many people, I became an activist because I saw injustice in my community. I was only 11 when the Taliban banned girls' education in Swat Valley and I had to speak out because I could not accept my future without education. When girls like me cannot go to school, I have to speak out for them. I feel so strongly about education because it is the key not only to girls fulfilling their own potential, but also for peaceful, stable communities and countries.

**You are the youngest Nobel Prize laureate. Did you ever aspire to win all these accolades during your early campaign for education?**

No, I did not aspire to win awards or praise from anyone. I spoke out because I wanted girls to have the same rights and the same education as their brothers. Most of the times, I forget that I have won the Nobel Peace Prize because I am focused on working to ensure all children can go to school, and then I can celebrate all my achievements with pride.

**What according to you has been your biggest achievement so far?**

As I have said many times, I tell my story not because it is unique, but because it is the story of many girls. I am proud that, through the Malala Fund and through my travels, many more people around the world now know about the challenges 130 million girls face in getting an education. So I would consider highlighting girls' education on global platforms as one of my biggest achievements.

**You are a native of Swat. Tell us about the prevalence of human and women rights in your hometown.**

We see a positive change in children's schooling in Swat and all over Pakistan. More and more are sending their sons and

daughters to school and women participation is increasing in different fields. However, Pakistan, after Nigeria, has the second highest number of children out of school, which is

around 25 million. It is important for all leaders and politicians of all political parties to unite for the cause of education.

**Why do you think your oppressors were so against women studying and how do you think that mindset can be changed?**

Oppressors always prey on people who they think are weaker than them. It is how they build up their power. When women, or men for that matter, are educated, they can think for themselves. They understand

their rights and can defend them. And that is a threat to extremists. Also, they have misinterpreted the message of Islam and they need to study it in detail. Islam delivers the message of education for all men and women.

**Other than education, human and women rights, what other causes do you feel the most strongly about?**

I care strongly about the environment and want that we all opt for recycling, don't waste water, reuse things and take care of greenery. We should also join campaigns that raises environmental awareness and promotes projects linked to that.

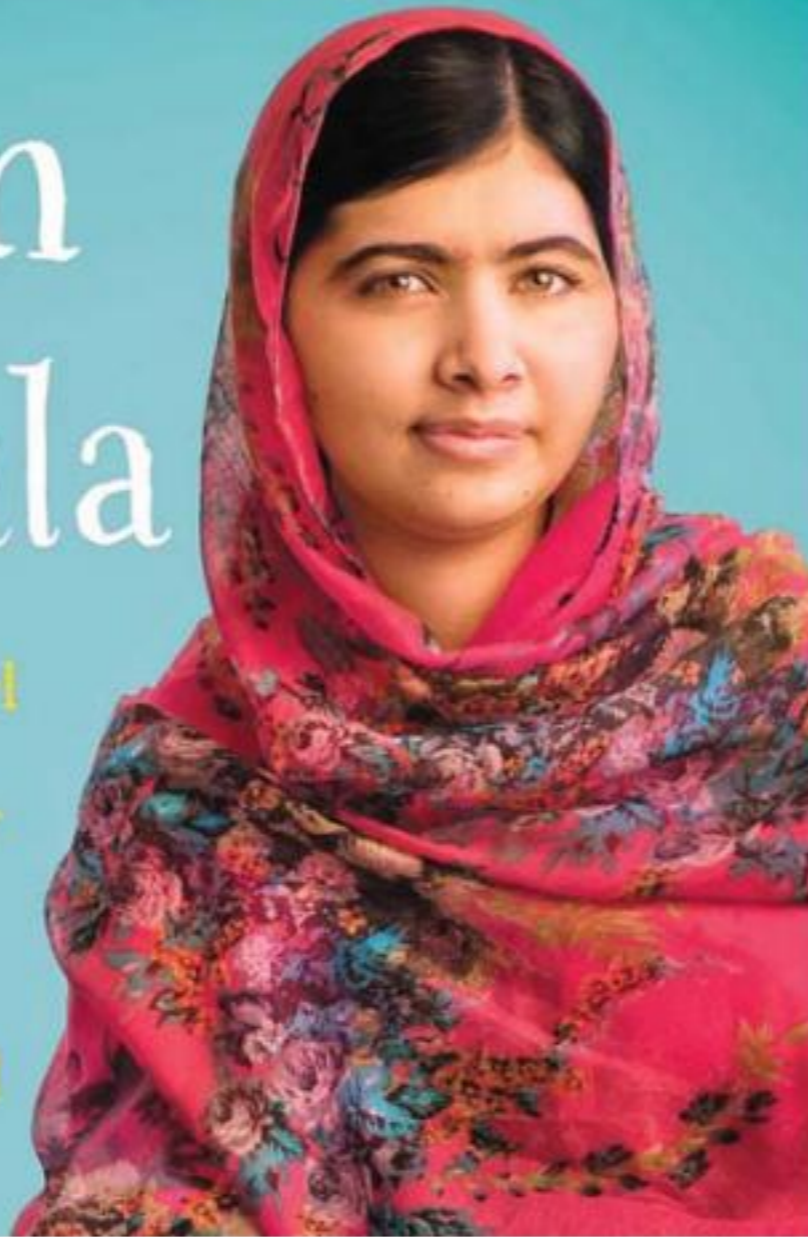
In view of Independence Day on August 14, all of August, the Daily Times will highlight individuals who continue to make Pakistan proud. Our 31st and last interview is with the award-winning activist and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate  
—Malala Yousafzai





# I Am Malala

How One Girl  
Stood Up for  
Education  
and Changed  
the World



## ACHIEVEMENTS

### **STRONG ADVOCATE FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION & HUMAN RIGHTS**

The legendary Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. She is known for human rights advocacy, especially education of women in her native Swat Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, northwest Pakistan, where the local Taliban had at times banned girls from attending school. Her advocacy has grown into an international movement.

### **DRIVEN & AMBITIOUS SINCE CHILDHOOD**

Considering Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Benazir Bhutto as her role models, Malala Yousafzai was particularly inspired by her father's thoughts and humanitarian work. When she was 11-12, she wrote a blog under a pseudonym for BBC Urdu, detailing her life during the Taliban occupation of Swat. The following summer, journalist Adam B Ellick made a New York Times documentary about her life. She rose in prominence, giving interviews in print and on television and she was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize by activist Desmond Tutu. Deutsche Welle wrote in January 2013, that she might have become "the most famous teenager in the world".

### **AN INTERNATIONAL STAR**

Malala founded the Malala Fund, a non-profit organisation, and co-authored I Am Malala, an international bestseller. In 2015, she was a subject of the Oscar-shortlisted documentary 'He Named Me Malala'. The 2013, 2014 and 2015 issues of Time magazine featured her as One Of The Most Influential People Globally.

### **HONOURED FOR HER PURSUITS**

In 2012, Malala was the recipient of Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize and the 2013 Sakharov Prize. In 2014, she was announced as the co-recipient of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize, along with Kailash Satyarthi, for her struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education. Aged 17 at the time, she became the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. In 2017, she was awarded honorary Canadian citizenship and became the youngest person to address the House of Commons of Canada.

### **What are you currently working on?**

This year I've been travelling to many countries to talk to girls about the challenges they face in going to school and tell their stories to presidents, prime ministers and everyone who will and should listen. I met refugee girls from many countries in the United States and Canada. In July, I visited Iraq and met girls displaced by conflict. Then I went to Nigeria and met girls who have no schools to attend because their government has not invested enough money in education. Soon I will make my first visit to Latin America, the only region in the world where child marriage is increasing rather than decreasing. The Malala Fund is also supporting projects for girls' education in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Lebanon, Turkey and other regions. Other than that, I am getting ready to start university in autumn.

### **What is your vision for Pakistan and what does it mean to be Pakistani for you?**

I am proud to be a Pakistani. Pakistan is rich in diversity with different cultures and languages for instance I am a Pashtun. Diversity is the beauty of Pakistan and its people are united for peace and progress.

### **What motivates you to excel no matter what?**

I cannot talk about the importance of education around the world if I am not prioritising my own schoolwork. I study hard - and I don't take my education for granted because I know not every girl has the same opportunities as I do.

### **We, at Daily Times, consider you one of our national heroes. Who are some of yours?**

Abdul Sattar Edhi and Bilquis Edhi are my heroes for their selfless dedication to the most vulnerable people in Pakistan. But also many others like Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Maria Toorpakai Wazir, Shehzad Roy, Arfa Karim, Aitzaz Ahsan, Tahira Qazi, Iqbal Masih and Mariam Mukhtiar. I know I would have missed out the names of many heroes but there are countless inspiring heroes of our nation that I could end up talking about for hours.

*A special thank you to Vox Vision CEO & filmmaker Zaid Aziz for helping arrange Malala Yousafzai's interview with us*





setting the stage for some  
**TRENDY  
 NAIL ART**

**LAHORE:** Women look for three things while shopping for cosmetics - durability, affordability, quality and distinctiveness.

The makeup items truly need to stand out with a virtual tag attached that says, "You have got to buy me," in order for women to purchase them. However, sadly,

there is always one feature or two compromised; either the durability is lacking or the quality is really bad, among a myriad of other flaws that I'll try not to mention.

Also, for women like me, who have had a bad experience with the purchase of nail polishes as some turn out to be dry, some have already been used, whereas, others are mind-numbingly expensive and over priced, we resort to getting our nails done from salons rather than purchasing a colour and then regretting it.

This has resulted in many women having a lot of other makeup items, but there definitely is a dearth of nail polishes and nail colours on our dressing tables owing to the aforementioned reasons. Having said that, it definitely takes one brand, one product and one experience to change it around for all of us and that is exactly what happened to me.

So I went to try out Stageline cosmetics with their small set-up at Emporium Mall's second floor. For those of you who are not familiar with the brand, let me briefly introduce it to you.

Stageline Makeup is a Spanish cosmetic brand that's been in the business of professional makeup since 1936 with its head quarters in Barcelona. Laurendor is the parent company manufacturing Stageline.

**STRENGTHS:** Among other products on offer by the brand, which I tried, I particularly liked

their nail products as for me the product ticks all the boxes women look for. The brand puts forth shades, which are normally hard to find, for instance a statement nude shade, a sparkly summery green, etc.

The nail colours are slick, and fresh and not over dried like our

experience has been before with other brands' products. They stay on for two weeks!

The brand's lip colours are the other items that tried and I would like to give a special mention to their stay-on lip-glosses, which are waterproof and last even after meals!

The kohl eyeliner doesn't smudge and is just the right kind of black shade desis opt for.

I like the availability of the brand which encompasses cities like Multan, Mirpur, Arifwala, DG Khan, Kohat, Faisalabad, Peshawar, Bahawalpur, Sadiqabad, Burewala, Swat, Jamshoro, Jhang, Khanewal, Rahimyar Khan, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Hyderabad, Haripur, Kasur, Sargodha, Hafizabad, Okara, Sahiwal and Vehari, along with Lahore which is their base.

The brand is available in over 70 stores in Karachi and 20 in Islamabad.

**WEAKNESSES:** I feel like Stageline should have a variety of different nail colours rather than a standout shade of one hue.

They need to expand their presence in terms of space, whether it's a standalone outlet or brief stocking at a mall.

That said, Stageline is a fresh addition to the local and international cosmetic availability in Pakistan as their products are competitive in quality. Beauty conscious people, take note!



# top five looks of the **STUNNING FASHIONISTA**



## **IN AMMARA KHAN**

Shaniera Akram looked radiant in this all-white ensemble by Lahore-based designer Ammara Khan. We have seldom seen this beauty queen in white, and want her to wear more of it. Pearl white is Shaniera's colour! We love how she has completed her look with minimal accessories and pulled her hair back in a neat ponytail. Her make-up is also natural and spot on!



## **IN KHAADI**

it's like what they say, "While in Rome, do what the Romans do." This traditional look by the fashionista stole our hearts the moment we laid eyes on her. The gorgeous diva proves she can carry any look with grace and aplomb. We love the sky blue Khaadi kurta and the plain white trouser pants. Shaniera's choice of flip-flops perfectly complemented her look along with the sling bag that she carried. Khaadi could not have asked for a better ambassador!

## **IN DEEPAK PERWANI**

it's true that Shaniera can pull off any colour and make it her own. This particular blue outfit, designed by one of her favourites, Deepak Perwani, seems custom made for her. We love the blue skirt, and the chiffon and silk kaftan top. Once again, she completed her look with minimal accessories and a statement clutch.

## **IN MADIHA KHURRAM**

last but not the least, this recent look of the blond bombshell made heads turn as soon as it went viral. Following the trends, Shaniera owned this embellished belted organza and net top by Madiha Khurram with cotton boot-cut pants. Her choice of pearl white accessories accentuates this look and sets trends!



## **IN LSM LAWN T**

this traditional look is from the Lakhany Silk Mills lawn from their spring/summer 2015 collection, however it stayed with us the whole time. Shaniera carried the look with a large tote bag and flip-flops along with dangly earrings. We loved how she owned this embroidered lawn suit and carried the duppata on her back and shoulders. Very elegant indeed! along with the sling bag that she carried. Khaadi could not have asked for a better ambassador!



# Strike a pose!

# FASHION AND BEAUTY

I LIST DOWN SOME OF THE MOST GROUNDBREAKING TRENDS THAT PAKISTANI'S EMBRACED THIS YEAR, ALONG WITH STATEMENT BEAUTY LOOKS PUT FORTH BY INTERNATIONAL SALON LAUNCHES

By Saira Agha

If you look back, the year 2017 has been iconic, with reference to fashion statements and trends that made heads turn and enabled women to feel comfortable yet fashionable at the same time.



## OMBRE SHIRTS

This was one of the most happening trends the whole year round. Just like the name says, the print was plain with a slight embellishment on the front neckline. The colours transitioned from dark to light in three ways with a half circled border.

There were tens of thousands of brands that launched in the country, each set out to introduce the newest trends, cuts, layers and colours for both men and women, in their attempt to make their presence felt in a market saturated with designers and high end fashion labels.

Other than these, an international salon also launched in the country, all set to put forth global beauty and hair looks for the Pakistani market to follow.

And so amidst all these latest trends and new fashion and beauty statements and looks, there were some that truly stood out and defined fashion for the year 2017. Following are some of them.

## MAN BUN

A trend that began in 2016 made its way to 2017 as well, with men and women opting for it. A partial Chinese look, made everyone who embraced it, uber chic and very stylish. Some even went with a double topknot with hair flowing below.



## FADE HAIRCUT

Even the oldies looked suave and modern in this one. It was a unisex haircut that added volume to one side and accentuated one's looks to the fullest. Shortly after cricketer Ahmed Shahzad went for this look, our very own Quratulain Baloch was also channelling this hairstyle in her music video.



## OXBLOOD LIPS

This was a keeper for sure. Mostly for nighttime parties and events, it made your look appear bold, dark and alluring.



## SIDE BOWS FOR PANTS

There was a sudden surge in the number of designers and fashion houses opting for this trend, and women truly stood out with this one. Some opted for cotton bows that ran on the outer side of your trousers, all the way down to the border. One could also add more glamour and appeal to the look by including light tassels below the border. If one avoided skin show, one could have ensured that the bows had enough cloth covering the inside of the leg space.





## NO MAKEUP LOOK

The Summer season called for it and the women opted for Nabila's Zero Makeup palette that made their face appear fresh but not cakey at the same time.

## SHARARA PANTS

It was hard to know which brand spearheaded this trend as it was stunningly unique and brought back a plethora of style memories of our mothers and grandmothers. The sharara pants were light to carry around during the summer season, truly breezy and very distinct in their look.



## TASSLES

Not just for clothes, but this one also went with earrings. This was one trend which instantly took the fashion industry by storm. We saw them double up and triple down; in fact, we saw them everywhere. Be it on the borders of a duppata or shirt borders or even pant borders, tassels added to the glamour of the whole outfit. But when some overdid them on sleeve borders, we could have guessed it might have gotten difficult to carry this trend around.



## NOSE RING

The nathni came back in 2017. Where new bridal trends made the old and the traditional go away, including wearing red on the wedding day, the nathni (nose ring) silently made its way on the faces of the brides. We loved it.

## OFF SHOULDER TOPS

This trend proved you could bare some skin without looking vulgar. The trend looked as stylish as it possibly could. Without revealing a lot of skin, if you wore the off shoulder trend with a scarf or a light duppata around your neck, you could flaunt it on any formal occasion and enjoy a great day, and will definitely have all eyes on your impeccable styling sense too!



## VELVET

A highly sophisticated trend in the winter, this also made its way into 2017, embraced by all, be it on shawls, bridals, tops or anything else.



## GLITTER NAILS

No, I'm not talking about all glittered nails, as it is quite old where a simple glitter nail polish does the trick. I'm talking about simple nails for the remaining fingers but only the ring finger's nail laden with actual glitters.



## DARK CHERRY RED HAIR

Where golden and yellow hair that women opted for looked cringe worthy in the Lahori summer, this sophisticated shade of dark cherry red made every woman appear classy and unique.





A very stylish affair!

## READ OUR IN-DEPTH REPORT AND ANALYSIS OF HUM TV'S MOST FASHIONABLE NIGHT

**KARACHI:** The second QMobile Hum Style Awards were held at Karachi's Expo Centre on Saturday, hosted by singer Farhan Saeed and acclaimed actress Saba Qamar. The night honoured Pakistan's most stylish and talented celebrities. The creative team behind Take 2 handled the PR and media for the event. Here's my roundup of the awards night.

### STRENGTHS

Saba Qamar began the night entertaining and enthralling all with her well-rehearsed and thoroughly chalked out dance performance on an Urdu version of Cher's "Bang bang". Qamar's dance moves, facial expressions and chemistry with the audience struck a chord with all, reminding everyone of her skill, prowess and mettle. The song talked about the irony of being called a "star", where the artists are but human at the end of the day. Their complexes, inner struggles and the different masks that they wear every day. Qamar's performance was impactful, energetic and spellbinding.

Model Sahifa Jabbar won the award for Best Rising Female Star and I would wholly agree with the jury's decision. Sahifa Jabbar is unique, sets trends and is a vision on the ramp. A very emotional Jabbar got on stage and gave a very moving speech about her struggles and dedication towards her work. The award was presented to her by veteran supermodel Vaneeza Ahmed and socialite Shaniera Akram.

Actress Syra Shahroz and singer Asim Azhar danced the night away to electrifying beats and fast numbers and had the audience swaying to their perfectly coordinated moves. Truly, one of the highlights of the night! I sure didn't know Asim Azhar could dance that well. I had been his fan since his appearance at 'Coke Studio' with "Nawazishay karam" but on Saturday, Azhar proved he was a performer par excellence.

Farhan Saeed got into the audience and made everyone connect by randomly requesting some of our industry's biggest stars to hold the mic and sing a few lines for everybody. The best moment was when veteran actress Bushra

Ansari got up on Saeed's insistence and totally wowed the audience with her powerful vocals and melodious voice. I always knew she was a great singer especially after I had heard her sing the OST for "Kuch dil ne kaha". However, on Saturday, when she crooned a line or two from some of her drama serials, I, for one, was spellbound. What talent! Take a bow, Bushra Ansari! Saeed went on roping in actress Sajal Ali and then his wife Urwa Hocane to sing a few lines and they surely did not disappoint. But indeed, another highlight of this round was when Saeed approached former cricketer Shoaib Akhtar, who was one of the front rowers at the event, and requested him to sing for everyone. Saeed insisted that he had heard Shoaib Akhtar sing before, but Akhtar politely declined the offer.

The event was attended in full by almost every Pakistani celebrity belonging to film, fashion and television. There were a few absentees, but 90 percent of the industry showed up to lend their support to Hum TV's second style awards.





## WINNERS

Most Stylish Female Model - Sadaf Kanwal  
 Most Stylish Male Model - Salman Riaz  
 Hair & Makeup Artist Of The Year - Shoaib Khan  
 Rising Star Female - Sahifa Jabbar  
 Rising Star Male - MHM  
 Fashion Photographer Of The Year - Ashna Khan  
 Fashion Publication Of The Year - Diva  
 Designer Of The Year Lawn - Sana Safinaz  
 Designer Of The Year Demi Couture - Zaheer Abbas  
 Designer Of The Year Bridal - Shehla Chatoor  
 Designer Of The Year Menswear - Ismail Farid  
 Most Stylish Actor Television - Feroz Khan  
 Most Stylish Actress Television - Ayesha Omar  
 Most Stylish Performer Male - Farhad Humayun  
 Most Stylish Performer Female - Meesha Shafi  
 Most Stylish Television Host -  
 Hamza Ali Abbasi & HSY  
 Most Stylish Sports Personality - Shoaib Malik  
 Most Stylish Film Actor - Osman Khalid Butt  
 Most Stylish Film Actress - Sanam Saeed  
 Best Retail Brand - Generation  
 Outstanding Achievement In Brand  
 Development - Khaadi  
 Outstanding Achievement & Contribution To Social  
 Service - Ronak Lakhani  
 Q Mobile Style Icon - Atif Aslam  
 Best Jewellery Designer - Rema Taseer  
 Jewellery, fashion and beauty product mogul Rema  
 Taseer won the Hum Style Award for Best Jewellery  
 Designer and I couldn't be happier for the immensely  
 talented girl. Rema Taseer, has in a short span of time,  
 created a niche for herself and is now the go-to  
 designer for every celebrity when it comes to  
 jewellery and clothes. Her designs are distinct, unique  
 and stand out for their statement pieces. After  
 Saheefa, a truly well deserved award for Taseer.  
 Other well deserved awards of the night, which I  
 truly feel were handed out to the most worthy ones  
 and feel Hum did them justice were Sana Safinaz,  
 Ismail Farid, Farah Humayun, Meesha Shafi, HSY and  
 Osman Khalid Butt.

## WEAKNESSES

The absence of some celebrities surely does not mean that there should be offensive "jokes" targeted at them. I, for one, couldn't understand why there was a need to casually mention the fact that Qamar's 'Hindi Medium' had done more business at the box office than singer-turned-actor Fawad Khan's 'Khoobsurat'.

The most important thing to note here is the time at which the award show began which was 10:45pm and so the function ended at 3:15am! The guests were made to believe that 7pm was the time for the red carpet and that the event would begin by 9pm, however that surely wasn't the case at all. Many had to leave by 1am maximum and was a shame that they missed out on exciting performances by Atif Aslam, Quratulain Baloch and Ahsan Khan.

The focus should be on the content and the quantity. A few unfunny skits just to cover the duration were yawn-worthy and had the audience looking here and there, for instance the part where Qamar poses to be an uber chic, super cool model taking her dog Johnny to her designer's appointment. It was a good effort but turned out to be unfunny, dull and very boring. Actress Ayesha Omar's dance performance on veteran singer and actress Salma Agha's "Jhoom jhoom jhoom Baba" was unnecessary, unenthusiastic and unimpactful.

One awkward moment at the event was when model Salman Riaz was announced Most Stylish Male Model, and as soon as he got on stage to receive his trophy, model Hasnain Lehri, also nominated in the same category, got up immediately and walked out in front of everyone, not to return.

