**Working for the right leader**

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It is good to have friends in high places one can occasionally send complaints to. Imran Khan has one such friend in Arif Alvi sitting in the Presidency in Islamabad, and wants him to investigate the shenanigans of a certain Gen Bajwa. I don’t know if the same can be said about poor old Rana Sanaullah, a man who knows how to be party to the most vicious animosities but as federal minister has been reduced to sending an appeal to the chief justice of Pakistan.

Both men are looking for political mileage instead of pushing for any real legal intervention here. Both may have reason on their side yet as a tribute to the power of public perception, one of these complainants is so unlikely to have the ‘right kind’ of impact than the other.

This disparity between what Imran Khan states and what his opponents allege has been proven again, whatever be the causes behind this divide. Commentators upon learned commentators have tried to point out all that is wrong with Imran Khan. Personal innuendo, proof of political inadequacies, all kinds of ugly trivia have been piled upon the PTI but all this has been remarkably defied by the man and his lieutenants – among them his journalist corps.

Rana Sahab is desperate though and not in a mood to give up. He now wants a probe into the latest leak in a season where it has been raining secretly-recorded audio ( and video) tapes. There have been so many of them in recent times that it is actually no secret now. In another country with a less acrimonious political culture any such tendency could have drawn a chorus of protests from the worst victims, the politicians. In Pakistan, the belief perhaps still is that those pointing out the revealing parts in a secret recording will be spared the ignominy of being the subjects of similar exposure themselves in future.

The audio clip particularly bothering the worthy interior minister at the moment purportedly has the ‘born-again’ Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi asking for favours from the higher judiciary. According to a news story, Rana Sana maintains that this disastrous event in the history of the very peaceful homeland of his could have been avoided only if the villains thrown up by the leaks of the past been efficiently dealt with.

To be fair to the Shehbaz Sharif government, the evidence does call for inquiries of kind. However, given the current direction of the wind, Rana Sahab’s logical call is in danger of being drowned by the opposite side. Even for many of those who consider it worthy of some thought, the allegations may be fresh proof of how active and relevant Imran Khan’s company has turned Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi into.

It has been a real Midas touch. The Gujrati practitioner of politics stands truly revitalized ever since his son apparently prevailed upon him to shed allies such as his cousin longstanding partner-in-crime Shujaat Hussain and Asif Zardari to join forces closely with Imran Khan. Indeed there has in recent times been talk that Pervaiz Elahi was ‘on the verge’ of merging his party into the PTI and even when that has not yet happened, we have come to a stage where it has become impossible to doubt his loyalty to Khan.

This is a rejuvenating change for a politician who had come to be regarded as more of a pliable arm-chair politician finding it increasingly tough to retain his reputation as a maker of alliances for some limited power gains. Now Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi at his age is an energetic and important fellow traveller of Imran Khan ready to play a front-of-the-stage role rather than be content with working in the shadows.

Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi stands redeemed and any refrain by the government which projects him as working for Imran Khan’s interests will enhance his reputation as a reawakened politician with a genuine claim in sharing power with his chosen leader in the future. The shot fired by Rana Sana as such is unlikely to have the desired effect. It could achieve little, bar adding another story to the legend of the old diehard warrior who went down with his moustache twitched upwards.

Much bigger political gains await the PTI a level above where the Rana Sanaullahs and Pervaiz Elahis of our national politics operate to ensure the interests of their leaders – I almost said their parties. The Imran vs Gen Bajwa fight has had the PTI chief travelling in circles from Rawalpindi-Islamabad to Washington and back.

To his worst detractors, Khan’s version of it could have – in fact, should have – cost him a huge capital, if not his career, but nothing of the sort seems to be happening so far as indicators of public opinion at the moment are concerned. As strange as it may sound, from amongst a long line of them, this particular insider is poised to prove his masters’ worst nightmare.

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