**Pakistan Struggles to Regain Lost Stability**

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Without political stability, there can be no prosperity. Continuity of the political system without any interruption ensures political stability. Economic prosperity improves the living standards of people. The PML-N government had given its last budget without taking any loan from IMF in 2017, which was a great success for the party. In 2017, the pace of Pakistan’s progress was very good, as claimed by economists. After the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was established in 2018, the economic situation in the country started declining due to incompetent and victimising policies. The media was victimized by cutting down financial channels. Imran Khan completely failed to concentrate on improving the economic conditions and public welfare, which resulted in rising inflation and deteriorating the living standards of the masses. Pakistan’s Gross Domestic Product reduced from nearly six per cent to one per cent. The foreign investors stopped their investments while the local investors stopped their investments in the country. It caused a huge loss of capital and foreign exchange to Pakistan, which reduced the growth rate further. The democratic institutions became feeble while the personalities became more powerful that increasing the corruption as absolute power corrupts absolutely. Corruption in the former government could be seen using the lens of Transparency International’s latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI 2021). In January 2022, Pakistan’s rank had fallen 16 places to 140 from 124 out of 180 countries, Transparency International’s report showed. In CPI 2021, Pakistan scored 28 out of 100.

TI Pakistan Vice-Chair Justice (retd) Nasira Iqbal had said, “The absence of Rule of Law and ‘State Capture’ has resulted in a substantial low CPI 2021 score of Pakistan compared to CPI 2020, from 31/100 to 28/100 and rank from 124/180 to 140/180.” Delia Ferreira Rubio, Chair of Transparency International said, “Human rights are not simply a nice-to-have in the fight against corruption. Ensuring people can speak freely and work collectively to hold power to account is the only sustainable route to a corruption-free society.”

Pakistan economically suffered as the former prime minister had violated an agreement with the IMF. According to media reports, on May 25, 2022, the IMF mission chief said the previous Pakistani government had violated the mutual agreement by giving subsidies on fuel. The subsidy given by the previous government was a violation of this agreement. When the PML-N government approached the IMF for loans after coming to power again, it was refused at the first stage and the IMF seemed very reluctant to facilitate Pakistan.

The IMF had made the instalment conditional on increasing the prices of electricity, petrol, diesel, gas and GST, on which the PML-N-led federal government showed reluctance. But the two sides agreed to talk further and not stop negotiations. IMF talked to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. After that, the Chief of Army Staff had to play a role, as he talked to the US to play their role so that Pakistan could secure a loan from the IMF. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif had said many times that the IMF was not ready to trust Pakistan as Imran Khan had violated the terms of the IMF agreement many times. “The IMF was adamant to fulfill all the terms of the agreement and we do not trust Pakistan,” said PM Sharif, reported by the media. According to Shahbaz Sharif, “They [Khan Government] agreed to those terms, signed off on them and then destroyed it. So now, the IMF is saying to us, ‘How can we trust you, you’re also the Pakistan government’.” It was a very difficult time for Pakistan, the country could default. To save the economy of Pakistan, the incumbent government took difficult decisions and they paid a heavy price for it too.

Imran Khan had been supported by all institutions and the majority of the nation, but he went on to damage Pakistan’s economy, politics, foreign policy, social fabric, and moral values. Imran Khan had silenced the media and victimized the opposition as well. Cases were made against Jahangir Tareen and Aleem Khan as well, despite them being considered close aides of Imran Khan. He also spoke negatively about the establishment. The country was on the verge of default. Pakistan had become isolated in the world during the era of Imran Khan. Shahbaz Sharif and Bilawal Bhutto ended the loneliness of Pakistan. Bilawal Bhutto and Shahbaz visited the countries that are Pakistan’s friends. Pakistan’s incumbent government opened a diplomatic front and succeeded in grabbing the attention of international personalities. During the recent disastrous flood in Pakistan, UN General Secretary António Guterres and Hollywood star Angelina Jolie visited Pakistan. As these two personalities visited the country, Pakistan got the attention of the whole world. It was a success for Pakistan that the UN Secretary-General endorsed the problems and difficulties caused by flood catastrophes at the global level. He sensitised the whole world about the worst havoc of flood in the country’s history, which was caused due to climate change as a result of the illegal industrial activities by the developed countries.

Now, Pakistan has to make a long struggle in the coming years on both foreign and domestic fronts to regain its lost economic stability and diplomatic status among the world countries.

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