**[Change is in the air](https://nation.com.pk/10-Feb-2020/c-ome-february-and-one-starts-feeling-the-change-from-the-cold-dark-harsh-and-shivering-winter-to-a-subtle-a-breezy-slightly-sunny-and-pleasant-transformation-into-spring-it-s-that-time-of-the-year-which-heralds-the-exuviation-of-pale-robes-of" \t "_new)**

Gharidah Farooqi February 10, 2020

Come February and one starts feeling the change from the cold, dark, harsh and shivering winter to a subtle a breezy, slightly sunny and pleasant transformation into spring. It’s that time of the year which heralds the exuviation of pale robes of nature and stepping into fresh, renewing ones. Winters have been extremely harsh this year around; hence everyone one meets around this time feels happy and rejuvenated.

Well, neither the geographical climate change nor the biological sentimental shift is at discussion today but the underlying seismic shifts on the Pakistani political plateau. The shift is happening quite subtly, yet one can discern what is in the offing.

Rok Saku to rok lo…. Or in the other more dramatic, filmy, typical Asian manner … catch me if you can! Word in the capital tis that Maryam Nawaz is going abroad -- going sooner than later. No wonder the bench hearing petition of Maryam Nawaz name to be pulled out of ECL and passport be returned was re-constituted just recently. It now has an honourable judge who also granted relief to Nawaz Sharif last November by allowing him to go abroad for medical treatment for four weeks. Since then, Nawaz Sharif is in London and now seeks his beloved, daughter beside him to undergo complex medical treatment. One may argue the veracity of such claim by the Sharif clan, but it’s a writing on the wall by now that change is in the air.

Let’s call it PACT 2.O (For the word deal in itself has been amply calumniated by PML-N through its political behaviour). Now the question is, what will the PTI government do if the court grants relief to Maryam Nawaz? Well, the best it would and could do would be to oppose it vehemently -- either in words or action or both. Verbally they would, for it has the best team for that without any doubt. But whether the government would oppose any such relief in action is another thing and has its doubts cast upon.

Chances are that Maryam goes abroad; comes Shahbaz back in. Those tweets by the game-changer, deal- broker brother followed by a systematic, patterned paroxysm instead with the sentimental inducement of humanitarian grounds’ say it all.

Only Maryam Nawaz getting out of Pakistan would not be damaging enough. For the political narrative of accountability led PTI government, the return of Shahbaz Sharif along with bail of Hamza Shahbaz – with the looming gloomy economic scenario to shaky and shady allies in Punjab – would pose a significant challenge to its stability. The political land is fertile for the opposition to reap in the changing season. In the past three months – specifically and especially since the leave of Nawaz Sharif, the bigger Sharif claim has earned somewhat the trust where it lacked. Not that the fault lines have been thoroughly mended but for the time being things seem getting little better.

Now with the return of Shahbaz Sharif would it mean danger for Imran Khan? Partially yes, partially no. Yes, if the great Khan does not get the economy back on track before the upcoming budget. No, if he does. Now that’s a Herculean task; it’s no secret. Even the changed, renewed, polished current economic team of Imran is not delivering. So what does he do? Another change? Not feasible.

Wait till the yearly budget and try to lower the inflation and/or provide public relief via providing rations or through utility stores. And if nothing works, call another meeting, rolling few heads widely perceived to be behind the current wheat and sugar crisis could be an excellent remedy.

But the cost is too high politically. This is a classic case of a government caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. Damned if you do. Damned if you don’t. Nonetheless, there is a change in the air. Spring comes slowly and subtly. Still, the rising temperature catches one rapidly and somewhat unanticipated.

Time is slipping with some six to seven months in hand till the budget, which also would mark completion of two-year tenure of the PTI-led government. Excuses beyond would matter none as the game of survival begins. Bringing in a mini-budget before that would close in the deal and open up a new one. Sniff the change in the air before it’s too late.

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