**Curious case of the KP video**

BY FA H D H U S A I N 2021-02-13

THEY say wrestling in the mud can be a great equaliser.

Consider the curious case of the video from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This secretly shot video is from 2018 and shows members of the KP Assembly receiving thick wads of money to sell their votes for the Senate elections. Here`s what the official PTI version says: the video is proof of corruption in Senate elections and strengthens the party narrative that the use of secret ballot should be done away with. Fine.

Here`s the problem with this official version: it refuses to hold up to scrutiny.

The first point of scrutiny, of course, is the sudden appearance of the video three years after it was recorded. It was almost as if someone had God forbid leaked it. Someone who, possibly, felt the video would help his/her cause and inject rocketfuelinto a pardcular narradve. Strange it was, therefore, when momentarily after the video was aired, a galaxy of PTI ministers took to the cameras and said something like `see, we told you so`. Technically, the PTI ministers may have also seen the video when it went on air, and not God forbid when it was made three years ago, and technically, they were taking advantage of the f act that the video, very conveniently, was an affirmation of their stance on the Senate elections.

Possible. Coincidences timed to perfection are known to happen.

Except when things are too good to be true, they usually are. Whoever decided to leak the video was clearly not the smartest cookie in the jar. Had this person thought his/her actions through, he/she may have realised that the video could, in f act, turn into friendly fire, or an `own goal`. Which, unsurprisingly, it is in the process of becoming. Quite a wondrous spectacle to see PTI mandarins tying themselves up in knots while trying to untie their self-tied contradictions.

Like so: if PTI knew of the existence of the video Imran Khan had referred to it three years ago why did it not bring it into public? Ah, say clever PTI people, because they did not have the video?You see, these clever PTI people say that they had seen the video and informed Imran Khan who had then, without having seen the video himself, apparently, accepted it as proof and used it as evidence to throw 20 of his party people out. Interesting.

`Someone` recorded the video (PTI has no idea who), in some place in Peshawar full of people (PTI has no idea which place), then showed it to some PTI people (apparently insisting he/she would not share with PTI people), and then took the video and walked away into the KP sunset never to be heard of, or referred to, again for the next threeyears. Interesting.

The contradictions are just getting warmed up.

As the video erupts on to the scene like a volcano spewing a convenient narrative, and gleeful PTI people scoop up the lava to hurl at the opposition, someone within the party ranks realises, belatedly, that one of the men taking money in the video is PTI government`s law minister in the KP. Rather inconvenient. Now smart PTI people are confronted with the obvious question: when you saw the video in 2018, and then used the video as evidence to name and shame people in the video, and throw them out of the party, how come one of those people is today`s law minister? Smart PTI people grimaced, and then came up with a gem: well since the prime minister had not personally seen the video, you see, so he did not know that his law minister was one of those people in the video, and therefore, obviously, he could not have known.

Right? So the moment he saw the video (now) he ordered the law minister thrown under the bus.But wait. Why did those smart PTI people, who saw the video three years ago, not raise the alarm about one of the men seen in the video taking money being appointed the PTI government`s law minister in KP? There is no dispute that some very important PTI people were among those who saw the video in 2018. The fact that they were able to convince the prime minister of the genuineness of the video (obviously he trusted them, so they must be close to him), means if they had alerted him to the fact that a purportedly corrupt man was being appointed as law minister, the prime minister would have thrown him in jail. So either they did not tell the prime minister and hid from him the fact that a known corrupt person was occupying the of fice of their law minister (will they be charged for wilful abetment?), or they did tell the prime minister but he took no action (because he did not believe them, which raises the question why did he believe them three years ago?). The plot thickens.

Like so: if this video was the evidence of corruption, why did smart PTI people not send it to NAB so that people in the video could be investigated? Ah, say smart PTI people, how could we send the video to NAB when we did not have it? But then these smart PTI people knew the person who had shown it to them unless, of course, he was wearing a Salvador Dali mask from the Netflix series Money Heist. So why did they not find him and get the video from him in order to prosecute the corrupt people? Unless many smart people are, for some strange reason, trying to be economical with the truth.

Is someone in the PTI God forbid trying to hide something? The prime minister has constituted a committee of three people to investigate the video issue and it is meeting today. Good luck with untying these knots Fawad Chaudhry, Dr Shireen Mazari and Shahzad Akbar. There`s more on the line than smart people in PTI would want to acknowledge.  The writer is Dawn`s resident editor in Islamabad.

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