**Wishing them the best**

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A new government has been sworn in. The outgoing one tried all the tricks in the bag to stay in power, but the voters could not be fooled this time. The new setup has quite a few experienced and educated people in it – Asad Umar, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Dr Arif Alvi, Dr Farogh Naseem, Dr Shirin Mazari, Shafqat Mahmood, Barrister Fawad Chaudhry, Anwar Mansoor Khan etc.

There is no reason that this team will not be able to deliver as promised. However, a leader must lead from the front, take bold decisions and always keep in view national interests and the country’s pride. Striking compromises with foreign countries will surely result in the leader becoming disgraced, like the ones before him.

Those surrounding the PM must be giving him a lot of advice – much more than he needs. Some of it will definitely be based on personal motivations. But the PM and his advisers should always keep in mind that no action should cause inconvenience and/or problems to the masses. The previous government was made up of sycophants, corrupt and incompetent people. We all now know what that resulted in. The PM will have to be extra careful to not fall into the same trap and take decisions and make judgements on the whims of his cronies.

In one of my previous columns, I mentioned some reservations about the priorities that the new government has set. Here are some more: observing austerity by making the PM and ministers fly business class will cause all sorts of troubles, inconvenience and harassment to other passengers. It will also likely lead to cancellation of already reserved seats.

Furthermore, the prime minister and his colleagues will not be able to discuss anything confidential during the flight. Zulfikar Bhutto used a Falcon jet with hardly 20 seats for foreign travel. He usually took no more than 10 relevant people with him. It was Gen Zia who started taking an Airbus and Boeing 747, with hundreds of people accompanying him. Nawaz Sharif went a step further and started using an Airbus and Boeing 777. The PPP also had a big piece of the cake.

There is also a problem with not using the PM House. If not used, the furniture and fixtures will deteriorate and become unusable. Also, the place is not suitable for a university. The latter requires a purpose-built structure. The students will turn the PM House into a mess within weeks.

The President House, Prime Minister House and houses of chief ministers and governors are state-owned properties; one cannot simply convert them for other purposes. The houses of commissioners, DCs, ACs and police officers are usually very large. Those officers can be given two or three kanal residences, while larger properties can be auctioned and sold. This will bring in large sums of money in no time.

Many schools, colleges, hospitals and district health units are in a bad shape, not to talk of the many ghost schools that exist. The chief ministers should order district commissioners to rehabilitate these institutions and uplift them (install boundary walls, bathrooms, electricity and furniture) within three months. Regular inspection of these buildings should then be carried out. This can be done with the money saved from the discretionary development funds, previously given to MNAs and MPAs. These measures will give immediate relief to the common man and will earn the government a lot of goodwill.

This country needs a top-class university along the lines of the GIK Institute, which I was instrumental in setting up, and which was an institution par excellence at the time. What a shame it is that so many people in the past spent billions of rupees but could not produce a single university that could find a place within the world’s top 500 rankings. We are at the top for corruption, cheating and lying and enjoy a high standing in performing Hajj and donating to charities, but nepotism, favouritism and wrong policies have destroyed our education system.

Another important task is controlling and storing rain/floodwater. There are quite a few water experts in the country who can help with this. The job calls for proper planning, and not some haphazardly carried out projects. Unemployment and inflation are a cancer in this country. Solutions are needed on a war footing. Such major issues cannot be addressed within a few months, but a single step in the right direction can help a lot.

One thing we should all beware of is expecting miracles from any government that inherits the many problems that our country is facing. We should give them a chance. The opposition should not start criticising everything from day one without coming up with some constructive suggestions of its own. On the other hand, the government should not make wild promises thereby raising hopes which cannot be realised.

My very best wishes go to the new government, the PM and his team. May they succeed in their dream and lead the country out of this quagmire. May God be with you.

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