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**The day that was not to be**

Much had been trumpeted about the pivotal importance of December 8, the day a meeting of the heads of the parties forming the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was to be held.

It was referred to as the ‘aar ya paar’ meeting where some drastic steps were to be announced to force the PTI government out. At the end of it all, a number of options were placed on the table for further deliberation by the constituent parties in another meeting to be held the next day, December 9

Even after the second moot, no concrete plan was announced that would lead to the ouster of Prime Minister Imran Khan except that the members of the national and provincial legislatures belonging to the parties comprising the PDM were instructed to deposit their resignations with their respective party heads by December 31.

The uncertainties plaguing any definitive decision-making are many and deeply-rooted among the constituent parties. The PPP stands at one extreme, rather reluctant to join the resignation band as it doesn’t want to sacrifice the government in Sindh. The parties in the forefront of brandishing the resignation weapon are the PML-N and the JUI-F which feel that this can be a decisive trick to help the PDM see the back of the PTI government. The paradox is that the leaders of the two parties, Maryam Safdar and Fazlur Rehman, are not even part of the assemblies, which demonstrates their lack of respect for the elected members.

In spite of no clear direction to pursue and the fear of failure lurking, why is a no-holds-barred desperation gripping the minds of the PDM leadership, more particularly the two who are out of parliament, one through judicial conviction and the other having lost in both constituencies from where he fought the last elections? Fazlur Rehman is consumed with the ‘belief’ that no government can survive without him being part of it. This is based on a number of key positions that he cunningly manoeuvred to hold in various governments in spite of having a miserly few seats to flaunt.

In the case of the PML-N lady it is the sheer hatred of the man, Imran Khan, which is driving her into unchartered territory. Her animus is further poisoned by her father, the convict-absconder Nawaz Sharif, who is at the losing end of a battle that has deprived him of what he considered to be his exclusive fiefdom with an inherent right to rule as he may. The combination of hubris and hatred is absolutely lethal which may even convince people to contrive lopsided plans with a potent self-destructive ingredient which comes into play sooner than most may anticipate.

There is also another factor which may be contributing to the opposition’s palpable inability to evaluate the situation correctly. That factor is the person of Imran Khan, a leader who is no traditional politician by any stretch of imagination. He is playing the game by his own yardsticks. He is well within his right to do so because he is not only different, he has succeeded in doing things differently all his life. Leading a team to victory that was virtually out of the 1992 World Cup during the initial phase, or building a state-of-the-art cancer hospital when everyone scoffed at him, or setting up the Namal University in one of the most backward areas of the country and helping it win international recognition – these are no ordinary achievements. They speak of the grit, character and conviction of a person who deeply believes that absolutely nothing is beyond human reach if you have faith in your dreams.

His entry into politics was likened to that of Air Marshal Asghar Khan who, in spite of his stellar character and career as the builder of the Pakistan Air Force, failed in the political domain. Not Imran Khan. A man of deep conviction, he also chisels his tools and plans his strategies intelligently. He won an election in a deeply adversarial environment where everyone wished him to lose. He knew it, too. He cherished the challenge and emerged the winner.

His traditional rivals thought that his pre-election rhetoric was just that – rhetoric. They were wrong. His convictions run deep and his victory was not aimed at filling up his personal coffers, but salvaging the people from the ravages of exploitation and misery. That is what he is doing now and, in spite of impediments, he remains determined that no provocations will force him into a compromise.

His adversaries are reading him wrong again. He knows that he is playing the most important innings of his life, and the only option he has is to play it well. For the opposition, Dec 8 was not to be, neither was Dec 9. For Prime Minister Khan, it is his deep-set faith in his dream that will take him through.

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