**What Next?**

**As a doer, the hallmark of Shehbaz Sharif, the govern-ment must not waste any time in embarking What next?**

[Murtaza Solangi](https://www.nation.com.pk/reporter/murtaza-solangi)

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Pakistan celebrated Republic Day on Saturday with a big display of military prowess - with the Saudi Defence Minister as the chief guest and the newly elected President Asif Zardari awarding civil awards to distinguished personalities, mostly Pakistanis and a few for­eigners - the questions about the longevity of the current politi­cal setup continue. Will the current minority government in Is­lamabad continue or will it be replaced? Will there be an early election? Will Shia then and Sunni now PTI continue protest­ing? Will PTI led government in Peshawar continue a combat­ive style or will it learn to fight another day? Questions galore.

With jailed Imran Khan hell-bent on hitting the establish­ment leadership hard daily using his overseas clout and organ­isational structure, he has almost guaranteed that the establish­ment continues supporting the present set which is its constitutional obligation. With that flank covered, the Shehbaz government can and must focus on the main challenges facing the country without worrying about its longevity. Shehbaz government’s “constitutional partner” PPP led by young Bilawal Bhutto is more interested in “After-Noon” rather than joining the Noon to emerge as the future alternative to the current dispensation. This way, the PPP thinks, they could replace the PTI from emerging as the future government. It is not in the interest of the PPP to destabilize the Shehbaz government or force early elections.

[Around the world in culture](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2024/around-the-world-in-culture)

This creates a window of opportunity for the Shehbaz government to take the major challenges head-on and prove its mettle. The national, re­gional, and international environment for its success couldn’t be better than it is now. Regardless of its longevity, it will be judged by the quantity and the quality of actions it takes to tackle the main challenges the coun­try faces today. The only report card that matters is the one earned by its team during its tenure. The most pressing challenge undoubtedly is eco­nomic viability as the country faces a perennial balance of payment crisis, debt un-sustainability, low growth, narrow tax base with huge sectors of untaxed parking lots, massive energy sector losses, chronic state-owned enterprise losses, broken tax system, elite privileges, and subsidies, low­est investments in the human potential with low expenditures on educa­tion, skill development, and health. A lot of spade work has already been done during the last PDM government and the caretaker government on the economic revitalization but it now needs to be put on a faster pace.

[Promise and responsibility](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2024/promise-and-responsibility)

As a doer, the hallmark of Shehbaz Sharif, the government must not waste any time in embarking upon the path of economic revitalization unleased by the SIFC. The work on privatization, public-private partner­ship, and creating a conducive environment for direct foreign investment must pick up speed now with the positive factors at home and the favour­able international climate. The main challenge in economic revitalization today is three-fold. The rise of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, the persisting culture of intolerance and bigotry and the instability induced by the social media propelled alternate political economy of lies, slander, chaos, and uncertainty dovetailing with the anarchist horde of PTI.

No investment in any sector can flourish without taking the above chal­lenges head-on. No foreign investor will invest in a country where a wom­an wearing Arabic calligraphy may face death threats. Without inculcat­ing a culture of tolerance, and respect for cultures and religious practices of all kinds through laws, cultural renaissance, and awareness and edu­cation, the country will have no future. For the thumb-nail-driven click­bait slanderous social media, the parliament must legislate and create ef­fective libel-defamation laws and special courts with competent judges assisted by real experts. The social media platforms have become major conduits of disinformation and conveyors of chaos and instability.

[BBC admits possible 'mistake' in coverage of genocide case against Israel](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2024/bbc-admits-possible-mistake-in-coverage-of-genocide-case-against-israel)

Now even mainstream media is hopping on the bandwagon of this so­cial media-driven slander and fake news as it has created an alternate source of revenue for them at the expense of truth, facts, and the coun­try. Today both the state and the private media are facing huge crises in­cluding the crisis of public trust. With the advent of new technologies, the newspaper industry is on the verge of death with several hundred dum­my newspapers proliferating and siphoning off public money in the form of public advertisements. The state media suffers from credibility and public trust because of the tight control of the executive branch and poor skilled workforce, thanks to successive governments’ interference in hu­man resource management. Only a model like BBC with professional boards answerable to parliament, not the Ministry of information can ad­dress the problem. Also at the private media level, the editorial influence of the tycoons owning the media houses must be controlled through the regulator PEMRA by strengthening and empowering the editorial staff at the media houses besides protecting the rights of the workers.

[Police continue crackdown on profiteers](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2024/police-continue-crackdown-on-profiteers)

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif should consult national and interna­tional media experts, engage the stakeholders, and constitute a task force to initiate major media reforms aimed at reforming both the state and the private media before it is too late.upon the path of economic re­vitalization unleased by the SIFC.

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