**Pond Frogs and Tutti Frutti Cocktail**

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An oh-so-very-secret document has been inked between the TLP and the pond frogs; creating a tutti-frutti cocktail. However, not before the death of four policemen with TLP demanding the release of their leader in a rally. But then, have we not heard of collateral damage? Let the dead rest in peace and move on. The guarantors of the agreement were Mufti Munib, Bashir Qadri, Maulana Adil, Rafique Pardesi and Aqeel Dhedi. Despite both parties having their lips sealed, a leak here, a leak there, a loose word spoken here and another boast there is shaping up a picture. Mind you, not a pretty one, dear readers.

Mufti Munib announced that details of the contract would be announced at an “appropriate time.” However, some others were too excited to stay mum. Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Mohammad Khan, contradicting the retraction by TLP that they never demanded the expulsion of the French Ambassador, reportedly stated that the TLP had not taken back the demand of the French Ambassador’s expulsion, but that this issue would be raised in the National Assembly, talking to a current affairs talk show.

Take out your bag of popcorn. If the trailer was sensational, the movie is scintillating, sizzling and ready to burn the frogs right out their ponds with the future of this country. More than 860 supporters of the party were released [let us forget the dead policemen please, they were just doing their duty]. No cases will be instituted against them. The cherry on the topping is the government rearing to withdraw the appeal against the release of Saad Rizvi.

‘Meanwhile, talking to a private channel, Saylani Welfare Trust Chairman Maulana Bashir Farooqui, who was present during negotiations between the TLP and the government, stated, that the agreement’s ‘contents “do not go against the national interest”. [Daily Times]

Seriously…

The blood of four policemen flowing in vain is in favour of national interest Demanding the French Ambassador’s expulsion is in favour of national interest There is no French Ambassador in Pakistan. Maybe, the TLP got its source wrong. Maybe, Google did not upgrade the status of the French Ambassador. Marc Barety, the last Ambassador posted in Pakistan, was transferred to Egypt. There is no Ambassador for France serving in Pakistan. A message to the pond frogs, TLP and Affairs Ali Mohammad Khan: Pakistan owes an $11.547b debt to Paris Club! That’s right. Out of this amount, the bilateral loan of France alone stands at $1.748 billion. The Club has France as the second-largest donor after Japan. Ooops. One tends to forget. You may not know what the Paris Club is! Dear brothers in arms, it is a group of creditors, a loosely formed organisation that looks at finding solutions, which are workable, for payments made by debtor countries.

As for you, my readers, if you have run out of popcorn, grab another bag.

If the trailer was sensational, the movie is scintillating, sizzling and ready to burn the frogs right out their ponds with the future of this country.

In April 2021, the ECP disallowed TLP candidates to contest in elections with the party’s symbol [NA-249]. What led to this sudden change of heart? The sprouting of love and friendship unappareled? The government seems to have accepted the demand of TLP to operate as a political party.

Why was this agreed upon? In a hush-hush call by a die heard cynic who whispered in my ear in a hushed tone that after the dismal failure of the government at every level possible, playing the religious card is the only option. It will also break through the PML N vote bank, in Punjab. No love lost for PML-N. One can only disregard such conspiracy theories. Who can possibly act against the national interests in this worst manner possible.

In a tweet, Yasir Hafeez states along with a picture of participants to the agreement: “Grand Mufti of Pakistan Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman and Maulana Bashir Ahmad Farooqi discussed the current national and political situation with Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa. I hope we will respect the nation by removing the ambassador.

This news was not officially rebutted.

Irrespective of these and other details, which are “not in the national interests” to be disclosed yet, the potpourri of the ruling elite literally abdicated its writ to check their coming out in streets. History will remember only the head of the country, Prime Minister Khan as the architect of the compromise that unleashed havoc upon this country both internationally and within the borders. It’s worth understanding how.

Pakistan has been repeatedly accused of harbouring, nay, exporting terrorism. What message does this “strategy” send internationally? You are smart enough to know the answer. Let us not forget that IMF has already refused us this tranche of the loan. It will do well to remember that the IMF Managing Director and that of World Bank meet “regularly to consult on major issues.” Both their staffs also collaborate very closely on policy matters and country assistance. In FATF, the US, the UK and France are prominent members. Will the FATF finally graduate us in the black listed league Probably. Can this also lead to sanctions on Pakistan.

Will China be happy? You must be kidding. The friendship that is sweeter than honey and higher than the Himalayas can take a real hit here. China will be interested in investing in Afghanistan to strengthen regional influence. China will not want the Taliban’s interference in the Xinjiang region; sharing a part of the border with Afghanistan. How will it react to the Taliban partnering with the Pakistani government? It may not react immediately. However, this can be a double-edged sword. Will the Taliban start taking to the streets despite being in government? For example, demanding women to stay home after secondary school education Will the pond frogs capitulate at every step Indications certainly seem to suggest so. A nation blackmailed can never be a good investment ground. How, above all, will China react if the security of its personnel is threatened? Earlier in 2021, the “all-weather ally” of Pakistan, demanded USD 38 million compensation for the dead engineers at the Dasu Dam Project. Citing a local newspaper, an Indian publication reported on October 16, 2021, “On July 14, 2021, thirteen people, including nine Chinese engineers, two locals and two personnel of the Frontier Constabulary (FC) died and over two dozen other people sustained injuries when a bus carrying the team working on the project fell into a ravine after it was hit by a car laden with explosives. According to Secretary Water Resources, Dr Shahzeb Khan Bangash, the civil work in the project has been stalled since the attack on Chinese engineers in July.”

In short, one can make a shrewd calculation that China’s fallout with Pakistan may be sooner than later. Did I write before that the “partnership” with the Taliban is a double-edged sword.

“Mairay piyaray hamwatanoan, laikin aap nay ghabrana nahi hay.” (My dear countrymen, you must not get floundered.)

*The writer is a lawyer, academic and political analyst. She has authored a book titled ‘A Comparative Analysis of Media & Media Laws in Pakistan.’ She can be contacted at yasmeenali62@gmail.com and tweets @yasmeen\_9*