**Goodbye, 2022**

Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani

Friday, Dec 30, 2022

In a few days, the sun of New Year 2023 will rise with new hope and determination. On the eve of the new year, it is my habit to figure out what was lost and gained during the passing year.

On November 1 this year, I celebrated my golden jubilee birthday. At this landmark milestone, I pledged to dedicate my remaining life in contributing to the Prem Nagar project, an initiative launched last year in the loving memory of my elder brother Dr Prem Kumar Vankwani.

The year 2021 caused irreparable loss to the Vankwani family when my beloved brother passed away in April 2021. On this occasion, the Vankwani family decided to keep the name of Dr Prem Kumar alive by establishing Prem Nagar on 110 acres of land in our native town Islamkot, Tharparkar at our own expense. In the short span of just one year, the project is moving forward in the right direction to establish a world-class old-age home, centre for disabled persons, orphanage and public school for children. Special thanks to the Sindh government and people/well-wishers who pray for its success.

This year, the Pakistan Hindu Council (PHC) celebrated the festival of lights, Diwali, in the open sea of Karachi. The ancient Manora Temple, submerged in darkness for 75 years, was lit up with colourful lights and fireworks. The Pakistan Hindu Council, in order to identify the holy places of worship belonging to non-Muslims, has announced a nationwide ‘All Pakistan Minorities Heritage Photo Contest’; the deadline to apply is January 31, 2023. This year, the PHC organized the 15th annual ceremony of mass marriages in the early days of January. The next annual ceremony is scheduled on January 8, 2023.

The year 2022 also saw some of the most shocking news. Russia’s attack on Ukraine, the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the controversial visit of US Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan made headlines in world media. In Pakistan, on the political front, for the first time in 75 years of our national history, the process of power transfer took place in parliament through a no-confidence motion. Unfortunately, the year 2022 can be termed the toughest one for the Pakistani people since the inflation rate has been completely uncontrollable.

This year, the Bangladeshi taka and Afghanistan’s currency afghani performed much better than the Pakistani rupee. At the start of this year, the price of one US dollar was Rs176. Now, during the last month of the year, the value of the dollar is stable around Rs225 in the interbank. However, the dollar is not available in the open market even at Rs260. In view of the current market situation, it seems that the value of the dollar will not decrease in the new year, but will remain above Rs250 in the interbank as well.

The government’s ban on imports has also adversely affected the import-export sectors, and the foreign exchange reserves with the State Bank have been reduced to only $6 billion. Reportedly, many companies in Pakistan have started to shut down their plants and halt production. The uncertainty throughout the year has also resulted in shaking the confidence of foreign investors and forcing the local business community to explore opportunities outside the country.

On the arrival of the new year, let’s pray that it may bring peace, prosperity and stability to Pakistan and that our national leadership understand the importance of dialogue for resolving differences. Otherwise, I am afraid that next year — whether elections are held or not — irresponsibility and childish behaviour shown by some political parties may take Pakistan further backward.

We must keep in our mind that Pakistan comes first and our priorities should be to serve national interests at any cost. Goodbye, 2022!

The writer is a member of the

National Assembly and patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council.

He tweets @RVankwani