



PM puts Alvi ‘in his place’ in biting rejoinder

- Shehbaz says president’s reference to meaningful consultations ‘out of place’
- Calls out president for being ‘blatantly partisan’, peddling ‘anti-govt’ narrative

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: Hopes for a dialogue between the government and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) faded after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a strongly-worded letter accused President Arif Alvi of being “biased and partisan”.

The premier in his letter to the president lambasted Mr Alvi for sending a letter to him [PM] in which he had asked the PM to assist all relevant institutions in holding elections in Punjab on April 30 as ordered by the Supreme Court.

On Friday, the president had asked the PM to direct federal and provincial authorities to assist the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in holding the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections in accordance with the orders of the Supreme Court to “avoid further complications”.

Before this exchange of letters, both sides had expressed intentions for talks to discuss issues of national importance, mainly to overcome the current political tussle and economic meltdown.

‘Blatantly partisan’

In the five-page strongly-worded letter to President Alvi, the PM called the president “blatantly partisan” and said the president openly espoused one-sided, anti-government, notwithstanding his constitutional oath of the president.

The premier said on many occasions the president had “violated his oath including the order of the dissolution of the National Assembly on April 3 and failure to discharge his constitutional duty” upon Shehbaz Sharif’s election as the prime minister.

“Despite the foregoing and several other instances, where you actively worked towards undermining a constitutionally elected government, I have

made all-out efforts to maintain a good working relationship with you. However, the contents of your letter, its tone, and language have compelled me to respond to it,” the premier said in his letter.

PM Sharif in his rejoinder said the due process under Article 4 (right of individuals to be dealt with in accordance with law, etc) and 10A (Right to a fair trial) of the Constitution was being

Imran seeking help of ‘judicial establishment’, says Maryam: Page 3

afforded to everyone. All the actions taken by the law enforcement agencies, he added, were being taken in accordance with the law.

Complete disregard for law

“Regrettably and ostensibly due to your party allegiance, you have failed to note the sheer isolation of laws, contumacious disregard of court orders, attacking the law enforcement agencies, damaging public property, attempts to create chaos, civil and political unrest, and in short, to bring the country to the brink of economic default and civil war by the PTI.

“Mr President, what has really ‘tarnished the image of Pakistan in the international community and is casting negative repercussions on the future of democracy and state of human rights in Pakistan is the complete disregard of the laws and the Constitution by the PTI,” the PM said.

He contended that the president had not once said anything regarding the conduct of former prime minister Imran Khan for his “aggressive, rather

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Sana links peace with Imran’s ouster from politics

- Warns PML-N won’t consider democratic norms if cornered again
- Blames PTI chief for anarchy-like situation
- Marriyum chides 10-point agenda of ex-PM

By Amjad Mahmood

LAHORE: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan has said that former premier Imran Khan has steered his political rivalry to a point of enmity where “either we will maintain our existence or he”, fearing that the PTI chairman could lead the nation and the country towards some tragedy if people didn’t oust him from the politics through their power of vote.

In an interview with a private TV channel, the minister who is a senior leader of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz termed the ex-PM ‘incorrigible’ and ‘incurable’ and said peace could not be guaranteed until Mr Khan was there in the political arena.

He also made it clear that if they (his party)

found that they were being eliminated (from the politics), they would go to any extent to save themselves, without thinking about the merits and demerits of their steps, whether these were democratic or undemocratic, principled or unprincipled.

“Now either he will be eliminated from the political arena or us. Only Imran is to be blamed for bringing us to this stage,” the interior minister said, adding that Mr Khan was responsible for the anarchy-like situation in the country. He told the interviewer they had been considering him (Imran) a political rival, but the PTI chairman took them as arch-enemy.

Mr Khan “even blamed me, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and an army officer for plotting to kill him,” Mr Sanaullah

said, apprehending that the PTI chief’s narrative was creating bad blood among followers of both parties and either he or they could be killed (by followers of each other’s party).

Responding to a query, the minister said when Mr Khan was in power he planned to recruit through president’s powers such retired judges of the subordinate judiciary as presiding officers of special courts such as anti-narcotics courts who would hand down “capital punishment or life term to political rivals”.

Also, the differences between Mr Khan and former army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa had developed on the issue of “eliminating the then opposition” by hook or crook, the PML-N leader

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HYDERABAD: A cop stands alert in a police vehicle as voters crowd a polling station amid intermittent clashes between supporters of rival parties, on Sunday. Re-polling in violence-hit polling stations of several union councils of Sindh was held to complete the process of the Jan 15 local government elections in the province.—PPI Report on Page 15

PTI to inform international community of crackdown

Fawad says paper on rights violations to be launched tomorrow

By Atika Rehman

LONDON: As members of the embattled Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf face a slew of cases, late-night arrests and even alleged enforced disappearances, representatives of the party in the United Kingdom and Europe have sprung into action by tagging protests, writing to MPs and speaking with human rights organisations to inform them about the crackdown against the party at the hands of the PDM government.

PTI’s focal person for UK and Europe Sahibzada ‘Chico’ Jahangir said the party doesn’t want anything from the international community, but it is certainly calling upon the Pakistan government to hold free and fair elections.

Talking to *Dawn*, PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry said the party is launching a report on Tuesday (tomorrow) which summarises “all the human rights violations against PTI from May 25 till now”.

The protests and demonstrations overseas took place shortly before senior PTI leaders Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Asad Umar in Islamabad met diplomats and ambassadors from the European Union.

Though no one from the party is commenting on the details of these meetings with diplomats, a source familiar with the matter said the crackdown against PTI, and the details of specific inci-

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Hassaan handed over to Punjab police after Quetta bail: Page 12

dents have been communicated to these diplomats.

“The European countries specially are very pro-democracy and pro-human rights,” the source said, adding that though “it is obvious no intervention is expected, they are keen to know our point of view regarding what’s going on”.

The source added that the PTI decided to work on this outreach as the diplomats engage with the government and are already aware of the govern-

ment’s point of view.

“Now our perspective has been given to them, regarding what happened in Zaman Park and the [Federal] Judicial Complex.”

Separately, PTI member and former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser approached the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), a global organisation of national parliaments, about the “political victimisation, assassination attempts and attacks on PTI”.

Mr Qaiser wrote a letter to the IPU, which has 179 members, in which he criticised the PDM government as being “fascist” and accused it of “illegal policies and severe violations” of human rights.

Mr Qaiser hoped the forum would take notice of the situation and play its role in protecting the people of Pakistan.

Protests in UK, Europe

In the last week, large PTI protests have been held in London outside Parliament House and 10 Downing Street, as well as a sizeable demonstration in Brussels outside the European Parliament.

At each of these protests, chants in favour of Imran Khan and against PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif were heard. PTI supporters

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Pakistan hopes to attend US-led summit without ‘irking’ China

Washington invited Islamabad to participate in virtual moot on democracy

By Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: This week’s democracy summit in Washington would be a test for Pakistan’s diplomacy as it’d look to rekindle ties with the US without irking its longtime ally China.

The virtual summit, led by the US, will begin on Tuesday (tomorrow).

Like the first democracy summit in 2021, both India and Pakistan have been invited to the summit. India attended the last meeting and may do so this year as well. Pakistan had opted out of the first summit, reportedly on back of the Biden administration’s refusal to reach out to the then prime minister Imran Khan.

For the cash-starved Pakistan, the summit could be a major opportunity to win over US support for raising funds from international lenders and

bilateral donors.

But Pakistan’s long-standing ally and ‘all-weather friend’ China would be closely monitoring these overtures as the US has already annoyed Beijing by inviting Taiwan, China’s longstanding nemesis.

Beijing would want Pakistan to opt out of the ‘controversial’ moot but doing so will send negative signals to the US at a time when Islamabad wants Washington to be on its side to help secure a deal with the IMF.

The decision to keep Türkiye out of the summit was another cause of concern for Pakistan.

“One would expect Pakistan to pass again, assuming Taiwan is there, in deference to China,” said Michael Kugelman, a scholar of South Asian affairs at the Wilson Center, Washington.

“While very unlikely, I wouldn’t completely rule out Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari making an appearance,” Mr Kugelman said. “He’s been a very frequent visitor to the US lately.”

When contacted, officials at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington told *Dawn* they had not heard anything from Islamabad yet.

“Since it’s mostly a virtual meeting, Pakistan still

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Joint session of parliament to discuss critical issues today

ISLAMABAD: A joint sitting of parliament and a separate National Assembly meeting are set to take place on Monday (today) to discuss important issues, including the respect of state institutions.

The National Assembly will meet at noon while the joint sitting is scheduled for 3pm. PTI senators have also announced that they would attend the joint session.

According to an eight-point agenda issued for the joint sitting, debate on a resolution, moved by the parliamentary affairs minister in the last session, will continue. A debate on the law and order situation will also take place.

The issue of vilification of state institutions and personalities associated with them is also on the agenda. The economic situation of the country, Kashmir, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and foreign policy will also be discussed.

Climate change and population growth are also part of the joint session’s agenda.

The agenda of the National Assembly comprises a call-attention notice on human trafficking and another notice on rising violent incidents against women in Islamabad.

Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb will present bills to amend the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act; and the Press, News, Publications and Books Registration Ordinance.— Staff Reporter

ON OTHER PAGES



Women take to the streets in Gwadar

Gwadar has seen a surprising development of late: burqa-clad women marching on the streets. They are demanding the release of incarcerated Haq Do Tehreek chief Maulana Hidayatur Rehman and for the right of local fishermen to venture out to the deep sea. *Dawn* speaks to some of the women activists about their grievances and aspirations. **Page 3**



‘Be vigilant amid banking turmoil’

International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva warns that risks to financial stability have increased and stresses “the need for vigilance” following the recent turmoil in the banking sector. She expects 2023 “to be another challenging year”, with global growth slowing to below three per cent due to the war in Ukraine, monetary tightening and “scarring” from the pandemic. **Page 12**

Plus... BUSINESS & FINANCE

Centre asks GB to rationalise wheat price

Region has already exhausted its Rs8bn annual subsidy as flour sells for Rs12.5 per kg

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: Amid criticism over the distribution of free wheat flour in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the federal government has called upon the Gilgit-Baltistan administration to urgently rationalise the cost of subsidised wheat for citizens in a phased, targeted manner and charge the affluent people market rates to ensure a sustainable supply.

The GB’s elected government has recently made a commitment to increase flour prices, which are more than ten times lower in the mountainous region than those in the rest

of the country.

About Rs8 billion wheat subsidy earmarked for Gilgit-Baltistan in this year’s federal budget has already been exhausted against the supply of about 90,000 tonnes early this year, as prices went up amid expensive imports.

The finance ministry has been critical of the huge price gap and rising subsidy account amid fiscal reviews with the International Monetary Fund. The ministry has been trying to either clip or contain subsidies while the political government tends to appease the population ahead of general elections.

The finance ministry last week conceded at a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet to provide Rs2.9bn additional subsidy to cover the supply cost of 25,000 tonnes to Gilgit-Baltistan for only two months — March and April — to avoid any difficulties to the region’s people during Ramazan because of supply shortages.

The committee, however, set a condition that the GB government and the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan must reach a consensus on rationalising wheat prices within a month.

Wheat supply to GB on subsidised rates has been going on since the 1970s. This was necessitated due to exorbitant prices of wheat flour in the area as the staple was sparsely cultivated in the region and transportation was too costly due to underdeveloped infrastructure.

However, the difference between the prices of GB’s subsidised wheat and the unsubsidised one sold in the rest of the country has substantially widened over time, as the flour sale price in Gilgit-Baltistan has not been enhanced for quite some time.

A record seen by *Dawn* shows that flour currently sells for Rs12.5 per kg in Gilgit-Baltistan against Rs140 or more across the country.

The federal government provides Gilgit-Baltistan with about 160,000

tonnes of wheat per year. With the purse in hand, the finance division gives the go-ahead to the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco) for wheat supplies in a manner that subsidy should stay within the budgetary allocation.

During the current financial year, Rs8 billion was allocated for wheat procurement for GB, but the amount has been fully utilised with around 90,000 tonnes of supplies due to the high cost of imported wheat and increased transport charges.

As a result, supplies are held up and wheat prices in Gilgit-Baltistan’s shadow market have increased substantially.

In view of the situation, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the Kashmir affairs and GB ministry to present the case to the finance ministry, which raised concerns about the low sale price of wheat and the untargeted subsidy that reached the rich and the poor alike.

The matter was, therefore, placed before the ECC, which recommended political engagement to pave the way for broader consensus on realistic flour prices. Accordingly, the representative leadership of the region was engaged by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and the prime minister’s adviser on Kashmir Affairs and GB, Qamar Zaman Kaira, to develop a consensus on the issue.

In a March 1 meeting, Gilgit-Baltistan’s chief minister agreed that the region’s government would shortly announce a plan to increase the sale price gradually. He also shared a plan to incentivise wheat cultivation in the region along with the assurance to procure the local wheat on the official support price.

In a recent meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee, Gilgit-Baltistan’s finance secretary reported that the region’s cabinet had considered the proposal to have

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