

By alienating bureaucracy, Imran lost winning edge

SYED SAADAT

Win the crowd and you shall win the fight; this was the advice that would be dispensed to the gladiators as they prepared for their fights in Rome's Colosseum. The events that unfolded last week in the political arena of Pakistan were nothing less than those contests.

The opening line of this article can perhaps be adapted to local circumstances: it is said that if you win the bureaucracy, you win Punjab and if you win Punjab, you win Pakistan. As prime minister, Imran Khan failed to recognise that winning edge.

Dr Ishrat Husain, who was adviser to the former prime minister on institutional reforms, in his book *Governing the Ungovernable*, writes that "after all it was the imperative track record of the Punjab government under the leadership of Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif during the 2008-13 period which won the votes for PML-N". He further goes on to narrate how nepotism and party loyalty undermined merit, which became the cause of disillusionment with the PML-N among the educated middle class that subsequently led to the rise of the PTI.

Now coming to the fall of the PTI, the reasons for it might seem complex but, in fact, they are as simple as those of its rise. One of them is the inability of Imran Khan to deliver on his promise of good governance, especially in Punjab. He was unable to truly win the support of the bureaucracy and to motivate the latter to go beyond the line of duty to sincerely work for the people.

The bureaucracy saw Imran Khan as a threat, as someone ready to throw it under the bus to pursue an absolutely political agenda. This perception cemented the image of the former prime minister as someone in whose tenure civil servants had to lie low, stay idle, pass time in as uneventful a manner as possible so that they did not end up in trouble. Except for a handful of civil servants serving directly with the former



prime minister, this was the general idea in the bureaucracy, and sadly, in his tenure that spanned almost four years, no effort was made to allay these misgivings.

Imran Khan often said that the fear of losing makes you lose before the contest; ironically, he himself became the perfect proof of the theory. The fear of losing prominence kept Imran Khan from appointing a strong chief minister in Punjab and that fear resulted in the appointment of Usman Buzdar, a chief minister who failed to inspire the bureaucracy or the public.

The bureaucracy having worked with Shehbaz Sharif, who had set very high standards of governance, felt a certain disillusionment. Imran Khan's maxim seemed to have been 'I, alone, will fix it' rather than 'we,

together, will fix it'. And that sealed his fate.

Like, for example, Imran Khan failed to hold the high-powered board meeting to consider the promotion of officers from Grade 21 to 22, which had been due for almost two years by the time he left office. It sums up how preoccupied he was with opposing the opposition rather than focusing on governance.

Furthermore, it has been learnt that the prime minister was conducting informal interviews of candidates for promotion from BS-21 to BS-22, ahead of the high-powered board meeting in order to assess for himself before the official meeting. Such actions potentially overlook many able officers based on personal and political biases, which can further alienate them from their job.

In fact, there was a lot of uneasiness about this snap evaluation among senior bureaucrats. The proper way would have been to reform the system and trust it to pick the correct individual, evaluated over a period of three decades rather than 30 minutes of an interview. Individual judgement can never beat a systemic assessment, but no serious efforts were made in that direction. Trying to resolve every problem based on individual judgement can work on a cricket field but rarely does so in the running of a government.

Similarly, the civil service reforms prepared by a task force on civil service reforms headed by Dr Ishrat Husain and approved by the cabinet also did not see the light of the day and the document must now be gathering dust on some

shelf at the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

Lastly, Imran Khan came across as a prime minister in a hurry. A bit like a tsunami, which disrupted a lot of things, the initial waves he generated were very strong, but with time, they subsided, leaving almost all projects that were started unfinished. Or since we are fond of drawing cricketing parallels in politics, it was like a team chasing a huge total that started out strong, but lost wickets in the middle overs, followed by total collapse towards the end, thus falling well short of the target.

The question remains, can he reflect on his performance and make a comeback? For the sake of Pakistan, he should.

Dawn/ANN.

As the curtain descends on flights

ABHIROOP CHOWDHURY AND ARMIN ROSENCRANZ

'There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen," Vladimir Lenin had once observed. This holds true for the recent Russia-Ukraine war. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24 February, 2022 has shifted global politics. It has brought 'war' to Eastern Europe for the first time since 1945.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine seems to have reignited the cold war. The West has imposed strict sanctions on Russia. A total of 33 countries including the US, Canada and members of the European Union have closed their air space to Russian flights. Switzerland, a nation known for its neutrality in world politics, agreed to join the air ban on Russian flights.

In response, Russia has closed its air space to Canadian, American and EU-based airlines. This closure of air space has altered air navigation across the globe overnight. Russian space is vital for trans-Asiatic and Atlantic flights.

On 1 March 2022, a United Airlines flight from New York City to New Delhi needed to take a long detour through the North Atlantic Ocean, Europe and the Middle East before entering India. Similarly, European airlines are impacted by the changes in flight paths. A Finair flight is now



taking around 9 hours to reach New Delhi from Helsinki, by avoiding the Russian air space. It used to complete the same journey within 6 hours and 15 minutes before the air space closures.

This increased time of journey also translates into more fuel con-

sumption by the aircraft and more emissions of CO2. According to a 2018 report, global commercial operations emitted 918 million tonnes of CO2 that year. The air space ban will make the fight against climate change all the more difficult due to these higher emissions.

During the US-USSR cold war days, the closures of air spaces were a normal occurrence. The town of Anchorage, in Alaska, used to be the popular stopping and refuelling point for long haul, international flights. It took the implementation of the open economic policy, popularly known as

Glasnost, by the then USSR leader Mikhail Gorbachev, to open up the long closed 'iron curtain' over Russian skies. The permission to use Russian air space made trans-Atlantic flights less time consuming and more pocket friendly.

The situation is favourable for Asian air lines. According to a report by VariFlight, Chinese flights to Europe are facing no impact. This will, over time, reflect on the economy of flight management. More flight time can be translated to higher cost per passenger.

The current sanctions on Russian flights can have a dual effect. They will impact the economies of the western nations as much as it will hurt Russia and facilitate the dominance of Asian flight operators from China.

The Russia-Ukraine war has widened the West-East divide and the world is on the verge of reinstating the old rusty USSR 'iron curtain'. The start of the process is in the skies.

International organizations should intervene to manage the Russia-Ukraine crisis through moderated dialogues between the nations. If kept unchecked, sanctions alone will not be enough to minimize the loss of human lives, and the costs — including environmental - of this senseless war.

The writers are, respectively, Professor and Dean, at Jindal School of Environment & Sustainability, O.P. Jindal Global University, Haryana, India.

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Our special Late Mail brings a report of a women's conference held in London on public health questions, at which strong statements were made in regard to the shortage of houses in Great Britain. According to one speaker, one-and-a-quarter million houses are needed, and of these barely one-fifth are being built. More than 250,000 people in England and Wales are living in homes of one room, and more than 600,000 in homes of two rooms. Conditions are still worse in Scotland, where one and two roomed houses have long been common, and where, by the way, John Bright once astonished a Glasgow audience by quoting census returns on the subject - an illustration of the saying that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives. The London conference, after criticising the Ministry of Health, passed a resolution demanding a "national solution" of an "urgent problem." The solution is perfectly simple, and it is one which carries a moral applicable to wider questions than that of the shortage of houses. The "urgent problem" can be solved by making house-building and house-owning profitable. At present, apart from dearth of materials and labour, the landlord has long been the butt of every social reformer, while landlordism has been taxed and rated out of existence. Reverse the process, and capitalists may once more be tempted to build houses.

NEWS ITEMS

CORPORATION AND MARKET SHOPKEEPERS

The strong action taken by the Mandalay Municipality to suppress the hartal tactics of shopkeepers in the municipal market is endorsed by the major section of public opinion in Calcutta, and, in this connection, a representative of The Statesman interviewed Mr. J.N. Gupta, Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation yesterday. Our market is a much bigger affair than the Mandalay one, said Mr. Gupta, and this fact, of course, debars a fair comparison. The matter has not escaped me, however, but before taking action I should like to ascertain the feeling of the majority of the Commissioners, and especially of the Market Committee.

PEACE OF COUNTRY GRAVELY THREATENED

This morning H.E. the Governor of the Punjab visited the saw mills of Messrs. Spedding and Co. at Jhelum. In the afternoon he laid the foundation stone of the new Civil Hospital and attended a garden party given by the District Board, at which the Board presented an address to which His Excellency replied. He referred to the liberty and peace enjoyed by the Province for the last seventy years but said that that peace and liberty were now threatened by an organisation which gravely threatened the peace of the country. He also expressed hope of an early decision of the Turkish question and a return to the old feeling of trust between the Muslims and the Government.

JODHPUR WIN POONA POLO CUP

A hotly contested game was witnessed this evening when Jodhpur and the Cavalry met in the final of the Poona Open Polo Tournament. The play during the opening chukkers was fast and even, the score at the end of third chukker being five goals to three in favour of Jodhpur. The Cavalry after this found the defence of their opponents impervious. Jodhpur went on scoring at regular intervals and finished up with eleven goals in their favour to three scored by the Cavalry. At the close of the game Lady Marshall presented the Sir Pratap Singh Challenge Cup to the winners, as also four silver cups given by the Western India Polo Club.

COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE IN SOUTHERN INDIA

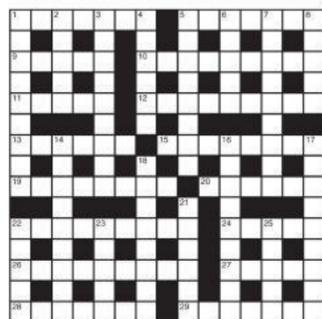
The latest manifestation of European commercial enterprise in Southern India is in Tinnevely district, where application has been made by the East India Distilleries and Sugar Factories Ltd., for permission to construct and maintain for public traffic a tram line between Tiruchendur and Tisayanvilai. The Madras Government have passed an order granting the permission sought for. This line besides tapping a rich sugar producing tract, will be a boon to the growing passenger and pilgrim traffic. It is understood that the line will be completed in three weeks time, and will be available for public use directly after its inspection by the Government Inspector of Railways.

FINANCES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Questions of finance bulked largely at the concluding sitting of the National Assembly of the Church of England at Westminster. It was decided to close the Knutsford Clergy Test School, which was established to train men for the ministry. The Bishop of Chichester pleaded for the retention of the school in a modified form with fewer bursaries for civilian candidates. He dwelt upon the great shortage of clergy, and said the service candidates would not nearly make up the deficiency. Sir Lewis Dibdin said the Assembly had no money to carry on the ordinary business, and had had to ask the bankers to lend money without security. Therefore it was impossible to assume new liabilities.

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SOLUTION FOR 14 APRIL

SEMICONDUCTOR
TITANIUM
EROS MITIGATED
TIGPHREX
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COVERINGLETTERS
RRPAA
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
HTRABT
DEFENCES SKOPJE
SLEHOUTUE
THEWINNER RILE
RMTAAEL
ABITGAILSPARTY

ACROSS

- Nasty head, as it were, seen round middle of wen (7)
- Images enthralling a singular old artist (7)
- Early Russian space traveller crashed in Baikal, losing head (5)
- Area to study supplied by syllabus (9)
- Cheers stories, but not Independent stories (5)
- What could fasten edges of frilly panties, loose? (6,3)
- Society indifferent about hospital training

DOWN

- Journalists getting around including member of royal family (8)
- Master of dark arts more unhappy about church, right? (8)
- More work? Extremely urgent work! advanced (6)
- £1000 outstanding? King's called in nobleman (5,4)
- Investigator actually overlooking it, causing annoyance (5)
- Form of ban omits cars when on the move (9)
- Description of some

DOWN

- Oral affliction? His is a lot, unfortunately (9)
- Test route requiring turn in main road? (5)
- Particularly marks way of speaking? It's something found on the street (9)
- Insect delineated path
- Buccaneers arranged a disturbed stretch of water on return (7)
- Uneasy over playing in hot weather, on reflection (7)
- Collection of rubbish? Difficulty, apparently, about height (9)
- Vast amount Italian writer picked up with article (5)
- What makes that man beam about end of scheme - future possibilities? (9)
- Location of writing? No record when consumed

DOWN

- A warning cry linked to golf target? It offers some protection (8)
- Credit frequently supplying Scottish farm (5)
- Lumpy son, unfortunate, requiring injection of energy (9)
- Elevated purpose in Volume 5 is engaging Unionist, a source of hot stuff (8)
- London guards desire securing house in part of East London (6)
- Collection of people climb, carrying rope to start with (5)
- Plan about river is not sound (5)
- Question computer experts over South American city (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

