



# Kh Asif calls May 9 riots ‘Faiz-Imran joint venture’

• Defence minister says accountability of ‘conspirators’ to continue • Says Pakistan being revived through ‘hybrid system’  
• ‘Plotters’ still trying to ‘facilitate Imran’s return’ • Alleges PTI leaders ‘bribe’ Taliban, want talks with ‘enemies’

By Abid Baig

NAROWAL: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Saturday maintained that the deadly riots on May 9, 2023 was a ‘joint venture’ between ex-spymaster Faiz Hameed and PTI founder Imran Khan, vowing that the process of accountability for ‘enemies’ of Pakistan, whether they were civilian or in uniform, would continue.

The minister also asserted there were still other charges against Hameed on which legal proceedings would be initiated soon.

He made these remarks after the former director general of Inter-Services Intelligence was sentenced to a 14-year jail term in a case related to violating secrecy laws, engaging in political activities, misuse of authority and causing harm to others.

Addressing a press conference in Sialkot, Mr Asif claimed both the ex-spymaster and the ex-premier were partners in the ‘plan to destroy Pakistan and its army’. “Faiz Hameed and Imran Khan were equally involved in planning what happened in Mianwali, Lahore, Peshawar, and in front of GHQ on May 9,” he said.

“Those who have put the country’s future at stake for power cannot be considered Pakistanis whether they are in uniform like Faiz or in a waistcoat and Peshawari sandals like Imran,” he added.

Calling the May 9 riots an ‘attack on the sanctity of the armed forces’, he said the same institution had restored national pride through Operation Bunyanul Marsoos against India in May, earning Pakistan international acclaim.

“God forbid, if the Faiz-Imran nexus still existed, perhaps there would not have been a need for war at all since they would have

ensured the country’s destruction from the inside,” he said.

**Nawaz’s ouster, parliament’s role**

The minister alleged Hameed was in charge of ‘Project Imran’, blaming him for the ouster of prime minister Nawaz Sharif in 2017. “The removal of Nawaz Sharif, the cases lodged against him, the allegations, and Imran’s [Khan] coming into power, this whole project was enacted under the supervision of Faiz Hameed. Nawaz Sharif was kept in prison during the 2018 elections. Imran [Khan] had put Nawaz Sharif, his family members and other politicians in jail through Faiz.”

**‘PTI promoted politics of character assassination’: Page 2**

**‘Military-led engineering’ in Balochistan led to govt’s fall: Zehri: Page 5**

He claimed Mr Khan was made the prime minister through rigging under Hameed’s supervision and alleged that they played a ‘dangerous game’ with the country during the next four years. He said the ex-spymaster facilitated the ‘imprisonment of political opponents’.

While terming the period a ‘shameful chapter’ in country’s history, the defence minister said parliament was converted into an ISI ‘subsidiary’. “During the Faiz’s tenure [as ISI chief], the agency used to dictate legislation to parliament.”

He claimed that after Hameed’s transfer, the ‘project’ started to slowly ‘unravel’, but as a corps commander he continued to facilitate Mr Khan. “Faiz used to plan mischief in Pakistan, and

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KOLKATA: Police and security clash with fans after Argentine soccer star Lionel Messi departs from Salt Lake Stadium during his GOAT Tour. Frustrated fans, many having paid more than \$100 for tickets, broke down barricades and stormed the pitch, after Messi, who is on a three-day tour of India, abruptly left the arena. Messi will now head to Hyderabad, Mumbai and New Delhi as part of the four-city tour.—Reuters

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## PM says economic crisis over as regulatory reforms go live

• Notes National Regulatory Reforms will woo investors, streamline business • Launches digital tracker ‘Regimeter’ to monitor regulatory reforms • Pledges to harness country’s ‘youth bulge’ through vocational training • Touts ‘wonderful’ relations with US and praises UK for its support

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif declared on Saturday the country has exited a period of economic turmoil, asserting that key indicators are now showing “wonderful” performance as he addressed the launch ceremony of National Regulatory Reforms.

The event, at which PM Shehbaz said the government’s efforts had steered the nation away from jeopardy, also marked the debut of “Regimeter”, Pakistan’s first digital regulatory tracker to monitor reform implementation.

“Through our outstanding teamwork, excellent planning and untiring efforts, I can say today with a sense of relief and achievement that Pakistan is economically out of the woods; our mega indicators are wonderful,” he said, citing the recent release of a \$1.2 billion tranche from the International Monetary Fund as evidence.

PM Shehbaz said the national economy was in a “very difficult situation” when his government took office. Now, he added, the focus has shifted toward economic growth through foreign investment in sectors like agriculture, information tech-

nology, and mines and minerals.

Addressing the demographic strengths of the nation, PM Shehbaz noted the potential of the country’s youth.

“We have a very young population, a youth bulge. We are offering them vast opportunities for vocational training and with international certification,” the prime minister said. “They will find productive jobs not only in Pakistan but abroad, making Pakistan richer and prosperous.”

The prime minister described the launch of the new regulatory framework and the Regimeter portal as a “quantum jump” that would streamline processes for businesses and investors.

He said the initiative would facilitate the business community, industry, and agriculture, while also helping to eliminate the “immense waste of time and resources” that can lead to corruption and nepotism.

The Regimeter platform will not only track the implementation of regulatory reforms approved by the Cabinet but also offer a feedback mechanism for the private sector.

“We are able to now announce and let

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## Justice Jahangiri likely to appear as defendant in his own court

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri is likely to appear as a defendant before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to face accusations that surfaced in a petition that challenged his appointment over a controversy related to his law degree.

A division bench comprising Islamabad High Court Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Azam Khan will take up the matter for further proceedings on Monday (tomorrow).

In a detailed written order issued on Dec 9, the IHC held that the question regarding the validity of Justice Jahangiri’s law degree fell squarely within the scope of a writ of quo warranto — his right to hold public office.

The two-member bench ruled that the petition was maintainable and set aside the office objection earlier raised by the registrar.

The bench had also granted Justice Jahangiri three days to respond to the facts unearthed till date.

The registrar’s office served the notice at the judge’s chamber due to time constraints. Sources said court staff of Justice Jahangiri received the notice and submitted it to his chamber. They added that Justice Jahangiri decided to appear before the bench at the next hearing.

While Justice Jahangiri along with four other IHC judges — Justices Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Babar Sattar, Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, and Saman Rafat Imtiaz — had earlier appeared before the Supreme Court as well on the same matter, it is not yet clear whether his fellow judges will accompany him in the IHC on Monday.

However, lawyers are expected to attend the proceedings to express solidarity

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## NJPMC seeks remedy for violations of production law

High courts told to clear within 30 days all cases of succession pending since 2019

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The 56th meeting of the National Judicial Policy Committee (NJPMC) on Saturday asked Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan to present, at the next meeting, a comprehensive mechanism to redress complaints of non-compliance with the legal requirement of producing a detained person before a magistrate within 24 hours.

Referring to the institutional response to emotive cases relating to enforced disappearances, an NJPMC meeting, presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi, however, appreciated the government’s initiative to address the issue.

At the previous NJPMC meeting held on Oct 17, the AGP had informed the forum that the issue of enforced disappearances had almost been resolved through an amendment to Section 11EEEEE of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997, which requires the production of a detained person before a magistrate within 24 hours.

The AGP had also assured that a comprehensive mechanism to redress complaints of non-compliance with this legal requirement was being considered by the government and would be placed before the committee.

On Saturday, the NJPMC deliberated on key policy issues while reviewing the implementation status of decisions taken in its 55th meeting. The committee unanimously reiterated its resolve to strengthen institutional capacity, accelerate access to justice and ensure efficient and effective justice delivery.

The meeting, convened at the SC building, was attended by the chief justices of all high courts, while the Federal Constitutional Court chief justice attended on a special invitation.

On the Commercial Litigation Corridor (CLC), the committee reviewed the recommendations of the subcommittee constituted to address protracted litigation and injunctive orders in commercial, revenue and fiscal cases.

The subcommittee’s report high-

lighted key reforms, including the establishment of dedicated benches, curtailment of frivolous litigation, constitution of a screening committee at the FBR level, avoidance of coercive revenue targets for state-owned enterprises, and improvements in tribunal structures. The report was shared with all high courts for input and was unanimously endorsed.

The NJPMC appreciated the endorsement by the high courts and unanimously decided to implement the recommendations, directing the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP) to share them with the FBR for implementation.

The LJCP was also directed to approach the FBR to put in place a mechanism for taxation and revenue

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## Lawful observation or meddling?

The summoning of Norway’s envoy over attending a court hearing has ignited debate over how far diplomats can go in observing sensitive domestic proceedings under the Vienna Convention

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office’s decision to summon Norwegian Ambassador Per Albert Ilsaas over his “unwanted presence” at a Supreme Court hearing involving rights activist Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her husband, Hadi Ali Chattha, has sparked debate over the boundaries of diplomatic engagement in sensitive cases and the interpretation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

While the Foreign Office has described the envoy’s presence as interference in Pakistan’s internal affairs and a breach of diplomatic protocol and Article 41 of the Vienna Convention, several diplomats and former envoys argue that observing open court proceedings does not, in itself, amount to meddling.

Former ambassador to India Abdul Basit, when asked whether the move could be construed as interference, said

that “in the strict sense of the word”, it could not. He added that there was no provision in the Vienna Convention that bound diplomats to stay away from public court proceedings.

However, he noted that diplomatic practice “would strongly suggest that diplomats in their host countries usually keep themselves away from internal politics”. But this doesn’t mean “they cannot interact with opposition politicians, which they do all the time, including our diplomats around the world”, Mr Basit added.

A senior European diplomat also insisted that mere observation of open court proceedings could not be labelled as interference.

Citing Article 3(d) of the Vienna Convention — which outlines the functions of a diplomatic mission and includes “ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State” — the diplomat said it was not a breach of protocol for an envoy to attend open proceedings in a host country.

Diplomatic immunity protected envoys from the jurisdiction of host-country courts but did not prevent them from observing public proceedings out of professional interest, the diplomat added.

The Vienna Convention also emphasises freedom of movement (Article 26) and does not explicitly prohibit attendance at public events, including court hearings, as long as diplomats do not interfere with proceedings or undertake actions that could be seen as official intervention in domestic affairs.

The diplomat said the Norwegian ambassador attended as a silent observer, sought no meeting with any judge and made no public comment about the case, which could not be viewed as an attempt to influence the judiciary or interfere with the judicial process.

“When foreign observers monitor elections in Pakistan, do they interfere in the electoral process?” he asked, arguing that independent observation strengthened transparency. “Observers should be welcomed if there is nothing to hide and the

trials are fair,” he said.

**‘Serious error of judgement’**

However, former ambassador to the European Union Naghmana Hashmi took a different view, saying Article 41 was explicit in requiring diplomats not to interfere “in any way” in the internal affairs of the host country.

“If I were to analyse the actions of the Norwegian ambassador, I would say that it certainly falls under a violation of Article 41 of the Vienna Convention. He should not have gone there. I think it is a very, very serious error of judgement,” she said.

Ms Hashmi acknowledged that the envoy did not make public statements or speak to the media, but she argued that the diplomat’s presence created an impression that he had been asked to attend by individuals facing accusations in a sensitive case.

She pointed out that no other ambassador was seen attending the hearing, adding that

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## Over 7,000 sit medical, dental licensing exam today

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: The National Registration Examination (NRE) for foreign medical and dental graduates will be held at major regional centres nationwide on Sunday (today), with more than 7,000 candidates set to appear for the mandatory test.

The NRE Step-I will be conducted by the National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) in Rawalpindi, in accordance with the policy of the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC).

A total of 7,076 graduates registered with the PMDC for the exam, including 6,989 medical graduates and 87 dental graduates, according to council data.

According to a statement from the PMDC, the examination will take place at four venues.

In Islamabad/Rawalpindi, 2,358 medical and 43 dental candidates will appear; in Lahore, 3,562 medical and 30 dental candidates; in Karachi, 499 medical and four dental candidates; and in Peshawar, 570 medical and 10 dental candidates.

The candidates are graduates who obtained their medical and dental degrees from various countries and are seeking licensure to practice in Pakistan.

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### ‘Tax evaders won’t be spared’

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb pledged to pursue tax evaders to run the economy, days after PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari criticised efforts to manage economic affairs “by force”. Mr Aurangzeb explained action against non-compliant sectors was not coercion but a response to demands from the business community. **Page 9**



### National Games conclude

The closing ceremony of the 35th National Games was held in Karachi on Saturday, with Pakistan Army taking home the highest number of gold medals — 196 — followed by Wapda, which bagged 85. Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir was the chief guest at the ceremony, which was also attended by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari. **Page 18**

